

Lewis and Clark County
Gail Hamilton
Helena, Montana

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300 words

America Eats:

Notes on the Strawberry Festival

Sources: Informants (1). Norman Bb Holter, Holter Hardware, 113 N. Main Street Helena Nov. 26, 1941
(2). Lottie Rumsey Willett, 1001 Sixth Ave. Helena
(3). Mrs. Will Clarke, 52 Old National Bank Building, Helena. (A daughter of Thomas Ray, of Davenport and Ray-sheep)

For two weeks preparations would be made for the strawberry festival. Some women would donate a cake; others would donate so many boxes of berries; and some would help with money. (2) (The primary purpose of the festival would usually be to raise money for a church.) On the day of the festival certain ones, usually girls, would come early and hull the berries until late in the afternoon. (3) Tables were prepared by older women who decked them out with flowers and gleaming tablecloths. A plate two spoons, and a forked marked the places. Sometimes there were three or four long tables; again there would be individual tables. Sometimes there were booths around the hall filled with articles for sale, to increase the returns of the social. (3)

These festivals were held in church parlors (1) or public halls. (3) People came and went. In Helena, D.W. Curtiss had a triangular plot of ground bordered on the east by Howie and on the north by Lawrence Street, watered by water from the Yaw Yaw ditch. He furnished berries to the Helena people. They were cheaper if ^{people} picked ^{them} than if one bought them. The price of berries shipped in was extremely high. They were served with sugar and cream. (1) Cake and coffee accompanied them but there was no candy (2). At some festivals, the berries surrounded the ice cream and were not mixed in--that was left to the different tastes. (3) Several hundred people attended; the affair was informal, lasting from 8 to 11 o'clock. (2)

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High school boys featured these dinners as well as certain young men about town. Light talk and band[~]ange current at the time characterized the festal occasion. One informant said the one thing she remembers best whan waiting table/~~was~~ as a young girl~~s~~ was when she returned change to Judge Eddy, who remarked, "Well, I see you can make change." (3)