

/THE AMERICAN RENAISSANCE FESTIVAL/

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION.....	1
I. WHERE ARE THEY?.....	8
II. WHAT DO THEY OFFER?.....	13
III. WHAT TYPE OF ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE DO THEY UTILIZE?.....	32
CONCLUSION.....	37
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	38

ILLUSTRATIONS

Page

Figures

1. Photograph/Business Card of Marco Perella.....	16
2. Dean Hanus as Sir Snot.....	17

Table

1. Administrative Organization of the Texas Renaissance Festival.....	35
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INTRODUCTION

Festivals, carnivals and faires have been popular world-wide activities for hundreds of years. However, within the last few decades, a new type of festival has been created. It is a festival that celebrates the past by recreating an older world. This new kind of festival allows its participants to journey backward in time and experience one of history's most fascinating eras, the renaissance.

In 1963, a California high school English and History teacher, Phyllis Patterson, organized and created a special event which was to grow and expand at a remarkable rate. This event, according to the Renaissance Pleasure Faire of California, was America's first renaissance festival. The festival is funded by the Living History Center and states its purpose is to educate by displaying a replica of Elizabethan life.¹

Many carnivals and faires celebrate past cultures and display art forms from colorful eras, but these festivals do not necessarily encompass the particular qualities of the new American renaissance festival. The festivals discussed in this report are defined as renaissance festivals because their event is a staged environment depicting either the lifestyles of the English or Italian Renaissance, and they are open for public viewing at some point during the calendar year.

The information about renaissance festivals, presented in this paper, is mostly comprised of material received from personal interviews and a

¹Phillippa Winkler, Public Relations Director; Rahm Public Relations, Renaissance Pleasure Faire Publicity Package, Oakland, California, November 8, 1984.

survey mailing. Of the twenty-two questionnaires sent out, seven were returned. Those responding were the Renaissance Faire of California, Colorado Renaissance Festival, Kansas City Renaissance Festival, Minnesota Renaissance Festival, New York state's Pleasure Faire of the Renaissance and Summer Market, Ohio State University Medieval and Renaissance Festival, and the Texas Renaissance Festival.

A copy of the questionnaire is included in the following four pages. Many of the questions concerning salary and profit were left blank by the participants. The Pleasure Faire of the Renaissance and Summer Market, of New York, did not fill out the survey. Instead they sent a publicity package. California's Renaissance of the Pleasure Faire did not complete their survey but did supplement it with copy from their public relations firm.

Using the interviews and survey results as a basis, we may gain insight as to the workings of the typical renaissance faire. The information collected and presented in this study attempts to answer the questions, where are the festivals located, what do they offer the public, and how are they administratively structured? The answers to these questions do not provide a comprehensive account of this new trade. Nevertheless, the report does orient the reader to a relatively new type of entertainment and furnishes heretofore unavailable data which should prove helpful in future investigations.

This special form of entertainment is theatre. The renaissance festival provides a living stage for actors, singers and spectators. As with any theatrical production an admission fee is charged and exhibitions

FESTIVAL TITLE: _____

MAILING ADDRESS: _____

CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION: _____

1. When was the festival formed?
2. Describe the process that led to the festival's formation.
(who funded the project, how were original funds and properties obtained, etc...)
3. Has the festival occupied other locations? If so, where?
4. Does the festival have a statement of objectives or goals?
If so, what are they?
5. What specific dates of the Renaissance and which specific country is given the most emphasis?

6. Is this festival a commercial enterprise or a non-profit organization?
7. How many food/craft establishments work on a non-profit basis?
8. How many food/craft establishments are privately owned businesses?
9. Who sponsors the festival?
10. Does the festival hire a publicist or booking agent?
11. How does the festival keep in contact with entertainers on the renaissance circuit?
12. How many publications and pieces of literature are circulated by the festival? (Please send copies of any literature you can spare.)
13. How are publication costs supported?
14. What is the administrative structure of the festival? (Is the festival run by a board of directors, owner or executive personnel?)
15. In what fields of study do the executive personnel hold degrees, if any?
16. How many positions are there on the operating staff? What are their titles and functions?
17. How many persons on the staff work on a volunteer basis?

18. What special training, if any, is given to employees before and during the festival's run?
19. What is the approximate annual operating cost of the festival?
20. What is the admission cost?
21. Please give a financial break down of income, in percentages. (admission, booth rental, souvenir sales, donations, etc...)
22. Please illustrate, in percentages, how funds are distributed to meet operating costs. (salary, publicity, maintenance, etc...)
23. What percentage of the food/craft establishments are local as compared to those on the renaissance circuit?
24. What fees are charged to operators of food/craft booths?
25. What percentage of entertainers are local as compared to those on the renaissance circuit?
26. How many entertainers receive a salary from the festival?

27. Briefly describe the audition procedure used in selecting entertainers.

28. How many people have visited your festival (annually) in the last three years?

29. What are the festival's future aspirations?

like singing, play production, improvisational comedy and juggling take place. Yet, the renaissance festival offers more than the typical play or musical. The festivals, like theatre, expose the human condition, evoke responses from their audiences, and hopefully educate. However, traditional theatre, in its most popular form, does not offer the viewer a total, sensual experience. The renaissance faire does.

At the renaissance faire, the guest purchases a ticket to another world. The festivals make a great effort to encompass the actual characteristics of the period which they emulate and provide amazing replicas of the era's lifestyle. The faires are highlighted by the use of period costumes, appropriate architectural structures, authentic music and food, and bawdy conversation from roving personnel. Therefore, the visitor is not simply seated and performed to, he becomes an active part of the re-created world and is able to evaluate the experience through all of his senses.

Because the faires offer their guests an ultimate journey in to another place and time, they are able to attract a diversified audience. Thus, renaissance festivals have capitalized on the theory that it is more fun to do than to watch. Perhaps traditional theatre will someday be forced to conform to this style of entertainment and offer for its patrons more interaction between audience and performer.

I.

WHERE ARE THEY?

A very general, but surprising answer to the question, where are renaissance festivals located, is, simply, North America. The International Directory of Theatre, Dance and Folklore Festivals, a project of the International Theatre Institute of the United States, has been written as a response to requests from theatre and dance companies, as well as tourists, to provide information on existing festivals.² The book does not include festivals in North America and does not list any foreign faires as renaissance festivals. Although festivals listed do present plays from the Elizabethan or the Italian Renaissance eras, these festivals do not meet the criteria of renaissance festivals as established in this report, since they do not create a total living environment for their spectators. Frances Shemanski's A Guide to World Fairs and Festivals also does not list any foreign renaissance festivals.³ The appendix of the guide mentions many types of festivals, including religious, drama, wine, and sports faires. None of these faires present themselves in such a way that they might qualify for the title of renaissance festival.

After narrowing down the location of these historic carnivals to a mere continent, the next task was to locate and query as many festivals as possible. Festivals, U.S.A. and Canada, by Robert Meyer, Jr., listed nine

²Jennifer Merlin and Elizabeth B. Burdick, International Directory of Theatre, Dance and Folklore Festivals (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979), p. i.

³Frances Shemanski, A Guide to World Faires and Festivals (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985), p. 247.

organizations that fit the general definition of a renaissance festival.⁴ Letters of inquiry were sent to all the listed addresses. Four letters were returned with no forwarding address, but responses were received from the Renaissance Pleasure Faire of Los Angeles, which now resides in Novato, The Minnesota Renaissance Festival, and the Visitor's Center in Columbus, Indiana. While the Visitor's Center sent many brochures about current events in their city, they indicated that their May Faire is no longer in operation. I then sent a letter of request to the Renaissance Pleasure Faire and The Minnesota Renaissance Festival for a mailing list of other festivals.

This procedure, plus some educated guesswork, led to the eventual discovery of twenty-two locations. Of the sources contacted, Ye Olde Newes, a historical magazine associated with the Texas Renaissance Festival of Plantersville, Texas, provided me with the most complete list.⁵ This list included fourteen festivals. Of the twenty-one other organizations contacted, only three, California's Pleasure Faire, the Kansas City Renaissance Festival, and the Minnesota Renaissance Festival, possessed a mailing list of other festivals. None of these lists were complete or up-to-date.

Each festival seems very successful in advertising itself within its own locale. Of the faires that returned their surveys, most are attended by well over 100,000 people. Still, few of them are proficient in making

⁴Robert Meyer, Jr., Festivals, U.S.A. and Canada (New York: Ives Washburn, Inc., 1970), pp. 2547-2566, p. 2618, p. 3394.

⁵Libby Stapleton, "Other Renaissance Festivals," Ye Olde Newes, TRF Edition (1984), pp. 68-69.

themselves known to other faires. This phenomenon creates an obvious problem for the researcher who wishes to assimilate information concerning the entire industry. The researcher must first play "private eye" and seek out all those in hiding. The letter writing method was not always successful in accomplishing this. At one point I became so desperate I called for operator assistance in the major area codes of rumoured cities. By luck, a knowledgeable operator helped me locate King Richard's Faire in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

More important than trying the researcher interested in surveying existing faires, the lack of communication between the festivals must be an unfortunate disadvantage for the industry's administrators. It is widely believed that one can learn a great deal from his competition, though in this particular industry individual faires are so geographically spread, they do not compete for the same audience and thus, can hardly be considered competitors. This fact should invoke a friendly sharing process between organizations. Many ideas, ranging from effective programming of events to creative landscaping of the site, could be traded and developed through some type of unifying communication.

After compiling a near complete festival list, I decided to use my hard earned information as a bargaining tool. The faires that did not answer my surveys were sent a short reminder and plea for the item's return and were told of my intentions to send an up-to-date mailing list for their files. This ploy has been successful in obtaining only one other completed questionnaire. The renaissance festival mailing list is not a sought after commodity by those in the business. It is this philosophy that may be the

culprit prohibiting the growth and expansion of the renaissance festival as a widespread, viable entertainment industry.

The following page contains a list of known, existing renaissance faires in alphabetical order by state. The organizations listed conform to this paper's definition of a renaissance festival as their locations are open for public viewing. These festivals are considered to be active in that they possess a working telephone number.

ALASKA RENAISSANCE FESTIVAL
Anchorage Parks & Recreation
Ponch 6 - 650
Anchorage, AK 99503
(907) 264-4674

Renaissance Pleasure Faire
c/o Living History Center
P.O. Box 8
Novato, CA 94948
(415) 892-0937

ONTARIO RENAISSANCE FESTIVAL
178 Tiffin Street
Barrie, Ontario L4N 2N4
CANADA
(705) 722-4811

Colorado Renaissance Festival
2660 S. Monaco Pkwy.
Denver, CO 80222
(303) 756-1501

Bay Area Renaissance Festival
306 W. Bay Drive
Largo, FL 33540
(813) 586-5423

RENAISSANCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
1122 NE 91st Street
Miami Shores, FL 33138
(305) 759-6651

RINGLING MUSEUM'S MEDIEVAL FAIRE
P.O. Box 1838
Sarasota, FL 33578
(813) 351-1660

Middle County Renaissance Festival
Rt. 2, Box 137
Thorntown, IN 46071
(317) 436-2401

LOUISIANA RENAISSANCE FESTIVAL
Jefferson Performing Arts Society
P.O. Box 704
Metairie, LA 70004
(504) 834-5727

King's Faire, Inc.
P.O. Box 419, Route
Carver, MA 02330
(617) 866-5391

Maryland Renaissance Festival
P.O. Box 871
Columbia, MD 21044
(301) 596-4673

Michigan Renaissance Festival
1411 North Woodward
Birmingham, MI 48011
(313) 645-9640

Minnesota Renaissance Festival
3525 Renaissance Festival
Shakopee, MN 55379
(612) 445-7361

Kansas City Renaissance Festival
3706 Broadway, Suite 228
Kansas City, MO
(816) 561-8005

St. Louis County Renaissance Festival
2394 Creve Coeur Mill Rd.
St. Louis, MO 63141
(314) 878-6035

Pleasure Faire of the Renaissance
& Summer Market
c/o Gerald and Virginia Young
McIntyre Rd.
Sterling, NY 13156
(315) 947-5782

New York Renaissance Festival
Box 1688
Westhampton Beach, NY 11978
(212) 475-3130
(516) 325-1331

OSU Medieval & Renaissance Festival
Dept. of Classics & Medieval Study
322 Dulles Hall
230 W. 17th Ave.
Ohio State University
Columbus, OH 43210
(614) 422-7924

PENNSYLVANIA RENAISSANCE FAIRE
P.O. Box 685
Cornwall, PA 17016
(717) 665-7021

Texas Renaissance Festival
Rt. 2, Box 650
Plantersville, TX 77363
(713) 356-2178

Scarborough Fair
P.O. Box 538
Waxahachie, TX 75165
(214) 937-6769

King Richard's Faire
12420 - 128th Street
Kenosha, WI 53142
(414) 396-4385

II.

WHAT DO THEY OFFER?

The renaissance festival is a truly unique entertainment package. In many ways its atmosphere is similar to a carnival or state fair, for there are plenty of contests and activities offered to suit the entire family. The renaissance faire is also much like the museum, or even the zoo, as it educates by displaying an environment rarely experienced by most individuals. Perhaps the most precise comparison one can make regarding the festival is that it is akin to a great party; one held in celebration of a spectacular event. As with any wonderful party, the renaissance festival offers continuous entertainment, amusing sports and games, delicious food and drink and authentic, (but costly), "party favors." An examination of these offerings helps provide a better understanding of this attractive industry.

The various entertainments offered at America's renaissance festivals include singing, dancing, juggling, rope-walking, street theatre, full play productions and more. These attractions have an especially redeeming quality compared to most present day distractions in that they are, for the most part, highly educational. In some cases, however, it may be debateable as to who is learning the most, the performer or the spectator. Eve Gabbert, an actress with the New Directions Theatre Company describes her experience at the 1984 Kansas City Renaissance Festival.

The prevalent attitude of our company was that we were serious actors doing Shakespeare, in probably the closest thing to the environment in which he wrote. It was physically miserable, but an exciting challenge to hold an audience that is roving, eating, talking and is free to walk out at any moment. Also, of course, we were playing out of doors on a wooden stage that did have a covering but was far from ideal and what we, as actors, had been used to. The first four weekends were unbearably hot, the last two were freezing! We learned a lot!⁶

Many actors on the renaissance festival circuit feel they are teaching as much as they are learning. One such actor is Marco Perella. Perella is seen each year at the Texas Renaissance Festival in Plantersville, as a character called Womba the Fool. This jester-like character is modeled after Sir Walter Scott's serf character, Womba, of Ivanhoe. As Womba, Perella dances, performs magic tricks and improvises with the audience. Never fearing he will encounter a lawsuit, Perella often lifts, tosses, and spins the bodies of his good humored male and female spectators.⁷ The majority of his dialogue deals with historical facts and, like Gilbert and Sullivan's Modern Major General, "he knows the kings of England and can quote the fights historical."

Like most festival actors, Perella does not earn a living from touring the faires. He is a model and singer and resides in the city of Austin, Texas. He has been booked by the Shakespeare Festival of Dallas as an educational act and is currently working on a public television pilot that

⁶Eve Gabbert, personal letter, November 1984.

⁷"Womba The Fool," Ye Olde Newes, p. 46.

deals with British history. The program is hosted by Perella's character, Womba the Fool.⁸

Similar to Womba's English history discourse, is Professor Alan K. Brown's rendition of a medieval bard. Professor Brown teaches English Literature at Ohio State University. Each year he parades through the Ohio State University Medieval and Renaissance Festival and recites from memory, in Old English, the entire epic poem, Beowulf. Also wandering through the grounds of this same festival, is Annemarie Kuhn. Ms. Kuhn entertains and educates her spectators with tales of Camelot, King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table.⁹

Of course, not all renaissance festival entertainments have such high educational ideals. It is obvious, by the mention of their name alone, that the duet acting team of Puke and Snot are interested mostly in seeking laughter and money from their many fans. This dynamic duo can be seen each year at both the Kansas City and Minnesota Renaissance Festivals.

"The Puke and Snot Show," subtitled "Shakespeare for Transients," is the brain-child of Dean Hanus. In a personal interview with Mr. Hanus, or Sir Snot as he prefers to be called, Hanus described the act as a comedy routine which "combines elements of Shakesperean dialogue and plot with elements of modern characters and situations." During their act, frequent mention is made of such contemporary stars as Michael Jackson, Cyndi Lauper

⁸Marco Perella, interview held with Steve Durant Pontiff, Texas Renaissance Festival, Plantersville, Texas, October 1984.

⁹Ohio State University Medieval and Renaissance Festival, "In Search of the Unicorn," Columbus, Ohio, p. 18.



Fig. 1 Marco (Womba the Fool) Perella's business card displays his varied career goals.



Fig. 2 Dean Hanus, (Sir Snot of "The Puke and Snot Show"), leaps across an outdoor stage at the Kansas City Renaissance Festival.

and Bo Derrick. The act is mostly scripted, but Sir Snot always welcomes the opportunity to improvise cutting remarks to loud and drunken hecklers.

Though the team makes considerable money from passing the hat (or in this case, beer steins) after a show, Hanus still works full time for a Minnesota banking firm. He says he must make many sacrifices for his hobby. He often works overtime, volunteers to substitute for colleagues when he can, and gives up all his vacation days so that he may pursue this dream.¹⁰

Another group of entertainers, also from Minnesota, not seeking to merely educate the masses, is the team of Smee and Blog, the singing executioners. These hard-working hooded minstrels stroll about the fair grounds, one gripping an axe and the other, a rope. They sing bawdy songs and joke with the faires' many visitors. Smee and Blog are portrayed by Al Olson and John Doering, respectively. They may be seen annually at the Colorado, Texas, Minnesota and Kansas City Renaissance Festivals. Even though they tour among these major festivals, they earn the bulk of their living from writing and producing albums of contemporary music.¹¹

By far the most popular and well established performing group on the renaissance festival circuit is a group called SAK Theatre. SAK Theatre, home based in Orlando, Florida at Disney World's EPCOT Center, was established in 1977. It was created and developed by a small group of people who, while working at the Minnesota festival, decided they wanted to

¹⁰Dean Hanus, interview held at Kansas City Renaissance Festival, Bonner Springs, Kansas, October 5, 1985.

¹¹"Singing Executioners," Ye Olde Newes, p. 30.

form an improvisational street theatre act. They began to amuse crowds by adopting innocent spectators and placing them in their shows. They travel from faire stage to stage by means of a little wooden wagon and carry all their props and costumes in burlap sacks, thus the term SAK Theatre.¹²

At first glance, SAK Theatre seems to adopt the traditional form of the *commedia dell'arte*. SAK, like the *commedia* tradition, employs the art of improvisation while also making use of fairly detailed scenarios. However, Rick Kunst, an actor with SAK, stated during a personal interview in Kansas City, that this type of troupe differs greatly from the *commedia* in that it strictly avoids making use of stock characters. "Our members do not want to be limited to a certain personality type. . . I don't think many of us would want to stay with it if we couldn't be challenged by different roles."¹³

Many of SAK's scenarios are actually take-offs on classic plots. The titles alone are enough to amuse; "The Menice of Venice," "McDeath," "The Great Impasta," and an unusual version of OKLAHOMA entitled, "Nebraska."

SAK Theatre now consists of seventy performers and crew workers. While some members remain at the homebase in Florida, most are sent out in troupes of six or seven to perform at the major renaissance faires. SAK Theatre can be seen annually in Florida at the Bay Area Renaissance Festival, the Maryland Renaissance Festival, the Renaissance Pleasure Faire of California, the New York Renaissance Festival and many others.¹⁴

¹²Terrence L. Olson, Managing Director of SAK Theatre, letter of response, Orlando, Florida, March 20, 1985.

¹³Rick Kunst, interview held at Kansas City Renaissance Festival, Bonner Springs, Kansas, October 5, 1985.

¹⁴Ibid.

Such independent associations of traveling performers are popular among the renaissance market. Most festivals do, however, hire or accept volunteers to amuse the crowds as regular "town's folk." Participants such as these must sometimes go through a training process before they are allowed to rove the grounds in character. In 1985, the Kansas City Renaissance Festival established their own "performatory." It serves as a workshop to educate all who are directly involved with the audience, including workers of food establishments. The workshop prepares and instructs the amateur on how to use the proper dialect, how to choose the correct costume, and how to establish a distinct personality or character.¹⁵

The Pleasure Faire of the Renaissance and Summer Marketplace in Sterling, New York, has developed an even more structured program for creating an authentic town populace. Each year, the faire auditions and hires a group of rovers called "The Bless the Mark Players." The Pleasure Faire advertises that these people are all professional actors who have come from various parts of the country. These players are assigned a character stereotype for the entire season and stroll about the grounds individually representing the local wench, blacksmith or community monk. The actors are trained in improvisational techniques by the festival's Artistic Director, Gary Izzo and Associate Directors, Kathyryn Aronson and Larry Walsh.¹⁶ This careful attention to the faire's overall atmosphere is proudly noted in the

¹⁵Gale Tallis, Assistant Director of Entertainment; Kansas City Renaissance Festival, Survey Response, Kansas City, Missouri, November 20, 1984.

¹⁶Virginia Young, Manager; Pleasure Faire of the Renaissance and Summer Marketplace, Pleasure Faire Press Release, Sterling, New York, October 31, 1984.

organization's marketing approach. Virginia Young, Co-manager of the marketplace faire writes:

The Faire teaches its own techniques in improvisation, dialect, and mannersism. A "Bless the Mark Player" emerges from the group with a grasp of Shakespearian language (phrasing, vocabulary, wit, etc.), and the ability to extemporize in this tongue. It is an asset in performing any classical English drama. It also affords an actor the rare and unusual opportunity to test his theatrical ability by performing directly with our audience on a one to one basis, thereby breaking down the "wall" between actor and audience found in stage performing.¹⁷

The Minnesota Renaissance Festival in Shakopee also runs a school to train its entertainers. The first two weeks are actually an audition period since some students are dropped after that point. These decisions are made by the Artistic Director, the production staff, and the School Director. The training in this program must be fairly extensive, as students are required to study for six weeks, attending nine hours of class per week.¹⁸

Festival sponsors, like good party hosts, realize that they must offer their guests more than mere entertainment to insure full participation from everyone. While many faire goers are lovers of music and drama and are probably satisfied just to roam about, dropping money into the hats of performers, many are sports fans and require physical action and personal challenge to compensate for missing Sunday afternoon baseball. Most festivals have provided a creative outlet for these customers. Sports and

¹⁷Young, Pleasure Faire Press Release, October 31, 1984.

¹⁸Marilyn Hagerman, General Manager; Minnesota Renaissance Festival, Survey Response, Shakopee, Minnesota, November 27, 1984.

games are big business in the festival world and they, like other facets of the industry, are presented in historical and unique fashion.

Since its inception in 1963, The Renaissance Pleasure Faire in Novato, California has always included sports and games in its offerings. In honor of the Olympics held in Los Angeles, special attention was given to sports in their 1984 festival. In the spotlight that year was an event called "Celebration of the History of Sports." Four hundred Northern California athletes from such teams as the 49ers and the San Francisco Rugby club participated in various mock sports of the sixteenth century. Some of the sports exhibited were "foote ball," "whench lifting," fencing, archery, and the "steeple chase." These events, and others, were modeled after games described in an Elizabethan rule book entitled "Ars Dubrensia." The Pleasure Faire claims that the contests described in this authentic manuscript actually took place in Costwold, England, during the 1500's.¹⁹

Many festivals offer games in which faire visitors are, for a small fee, of course, allowed to participate. One very popular game featured at many faires and particularly boasted about by the Pleasure Faire of the Renaissance in Sterling, New York, is the human chess game. This game was often played by renaissance royalty. In this event, spectators take on the role of chess pieces and are directed to move about upon an immense chess board. Other unique offerings at the Sterling festival include axe throwing and oddly enough, pillow fighting.²⁰

¹⁹Phillippa Winkler, Renaissance Pleasure Faire Publicity Package.

²⁰Virginia Young, Pleasure Faire Press Release.

The Renaissance Festival of Kansas City has taken special pains to give its sports and activities catchy titles. Visitors are enticed by such "game names" as "Drench a Wench," an old world dunk tank, and "Deck the Duke," an ancient form of our modern day punching bag exercise. Though these titles may seem a bit corny to some, they are typical examples of creative festival packaging. True adventurers, seeking thrills at the Kansas City festival, may also opt to take a ride on an elephant named Stoney or a giant "King's Swing." Younger patrons may be more fascinated by the "Free the Unicorn" game. In this ring toss game, a wooden ring must be thrown around a pony's false unicorn horn. If successful, the marksman is given a toy unicorn.²¹

In addition to hosting the usual faire games of archery and sword throwing, The Texas Renaissance Festival has devoted much of its landscape to an enormous race track, called the New Market Race Track. This facility houses a program called "Corrousel of Horses." Various presentations are held throughout the entire festival day and include three major horse races, three chariot races, and an on-going jousting tournament. These events are entered by professional sportsmen. Jack Lilley, a festival charioteer, is a Hollywood stuntman. He has appeared in the film "The Ten Commandments" and the television series "High Chaparral" and "Little House on the Prairie." Horse racer and trainer Larry McKinney is also featured at the New Market Race Track. He is the 1968 World Champion Clown Bull Fighter.²²

²¹Kansas City Art Institute, Kansas City Renaissance Festival Program, Kansas City, Missouri, 1985.

²²"Combat With Horses," Ye Olde Newes, p. 62.

The Texas Renaissance Festival also hosts the revival of a very ancient sport, falconry. Falconry was practiced by Asians as early as 400 B.C. It is a form of hunting, on horseback, which makes use of predatory birds to hunt ducks or geese. The falconer featured at the Texas faire is John Karger. He demonstrates methods of caring for and training birds of prey.²³

Perhaps it is all the activity and excitement of the games that give faire guests their unquenchable thirst and insatiable appetites. This is not a problem, as there seems to be no better place to satisfy one's hunger than at the renaissance festival food booth.

Of the festivals that responded to the survey, only one, the Renaissance Pleasure Faire and Summer Marketplace of Sterling, New York, serves food that is provided by a non-profit organization. All other festivals lease booth space to privately owned food/drink establishments.

The food and drink offered at the Sterling faire are provided by the "Renaissance Performing Artists' Guild, LTD," the same organization that sponsors the faire.²⁴ The guild provides for fifteen food/drink houses, a very small number compared to Texas' thirty-two booths and Kansas City's thirty-eight booths. However, the food services at Sterling are placed in large commons halls, unlike the usual festival method of using small booth/stands for each vendor. The halls are probably able to serve people faster and have the advantage of offering the customer a place to sit, eat and relax.

²³"Falconry Lives Today In the King's Royal Mewes," Ye Olde Newes, p. 15.

²⁴Virginia Young, Pleasure Faire Press Release.

Most festivals seem to offer the same wide selection of fare. The most popular items are those we traditionally associate with royal feasts of the renaissance period. Turkey legs, corn on the cob, scotch eggs and meat pies are all in great demand. Exotic dishes like stuffed grape leaves and empanadas (Italian crepes) give the faire guest chance to explore a different culture. In fact, dishes from almost every major foreign country can be sampled at a large renaissance festival. Scandinavian fish, English puddings, English breads and oriental tempura are all available. Main course items, like turkey legs or gyro sandwiches, usually cost between \$2.75 and \$3.75.

Each year, when advertising the Renaissance Pleasure Faire of California, the Rham Public Relations firm publishes descriptive copy that takes its reader on a culinary journey. The faire's creator, Phyllis Patterson believes the authentic food served is vital in maintaining the event's atmosphere. She states: "I started out thinking what would be the right thing to have that people would enjoy and would look like renaissance food."²⁵ The Pleasure Faire hires a catering coordinator who is responsible for approving the twenty-three businesses allowed on the site. Some of these businesses are asked to permit, for publication in the Rham Public Relations publicity package, one of their more popular recipes. The following pages include a copy of the Renaissance Pleasure Faire's poetic menu and the recipes of faire caterers, Manny Suarez and Galina Kauffman.

²⁵Phillippa Winkler, Renaissance Pleasure Faire Publicity Package, quoting Phyllis Patterson.



The 18th Annual Celebration of the
RENAISSANCE PLEASURE FAIRE.

To honor the victors of the Elizabethan Games and to bring pleasure to all her subjects, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth I has decreed that a lavish banquet of distinctive and intriguing dishes be prepared that will captivate the appetite and delight the senses at the 18th Annual Renaissance Pleasure Faire in Black Point Forest, Novato. The Faire opens Saturday August 11 for six consecutive weekends through Sunday, September 16, including Labor Day.

Delicacies and morsels for Renaissance revellers to sample at their leisure come from the far flung corners of the earth as well as close to home. Whether it's oysters or churros, Turkish coffees or zesty ciders, an exciting adventure awaits the worldly palate.

The culinary festivities begin at Straw Weaver's Way, with the churros made famous by Manny Suarez. Pleasure seekers may sample the artichokes with herb butter and steamed vegetables with mayonnaise and hollandaise sauce. Next to Mr. Suarez, Evan Sanchez serves delicious Florentine and dessert crepes.

Foods and spices from distant, exotic lands that excited Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth I and her court are to be found at Trader's Market. There Faire-goers may sip the coffees of Don Brown, who has invented the spiced Chia Tea, especially for the Faire.

- more -

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 The Renaissance Pleasure Faire is a production of the Living History Centre, Inc. a California non profit public benefit corporation

Trader's Market also features Mark Hayachi's Japanese tempuras. And Galina Kauffman has prepared Russian Beet Borscht, dolmadas and piroshkis from old family recipes. Gyros -- pita bread stuffed with spiced meat and vegetables -- and feta Greek salads are the Faire offerings of Richard Redemonte.

At Knight's Crossing awaits a perennial Faire favorite -- toad-in-the-hole, a sausage encased in puff pastry. It's prepared by Klaus Diederick.

At Cook's Court, Elizabethan-style eating reigns supreme: hearty and satisfying meat pasties, fish and chips, oysters, ribs, chicken and turkey legs, roast beef, culinary pleasures popular 400 years ago and today as well.

Step into Printer's Market for the traditional English tea-time treat that's beginning to be very popular: scones. Robert Rinaldo says his scones, spread lavishly with butter and jams, are a secret recipe that is so well-liked it may soon be franchised.

Other Faire favorites are: chicken pyes, steak sandwiches, bangers, jellies, fluffs, fruit ices, cinnamon buns, ice cream and waffles. To refresh and restore: a toast of either fine wine, hearty English ale, sparkling wines, ciders and pure juices.

The Cook's Credo at the Faire is: no junk food and all fresh ingredients. Says Faire creator Phyllis Patterson: "I started out thinking what would be the right thing to have that people would enjoy and would look like Renaissance food." Consequently, the Faire has built a reputation for high standards and quality among food lovers everywhere.

This year, says catering coordinator Gail Leone, about 25 different food booths and 23 caterers will be at the Faire offering more than 75 different foods and dishes to an estimated 175,000 revellers. Many of the caterers have been involved with the Faire for several years.

If you'd like to re-create some of the dishes in your own home, here are some recipes:

18th ANNUAL RENAISSANCE PLEASURE FAIRE / RECIPES

CHURROS

Cooking oil	2 eggs
2½ cups flour	2/3 cup granulated sugar
3 teaspoons baking powder	3/4 cup milk
¼ teaspoon salt	2 tablespoons butter, melted
¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon	¼ teaspoon vanilla
¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg	Powdered sugar

Heat oil (1½ to 2 inches deep) to 375°F in 12 inch skillet or electric fry pan.

Mix together flour, baking powder, salt, cinnamon and nutmeg.

Beat eggs until thick and lemon-colored, about 5 minutes.

Beat in granulated sugar gradually. Beat in flour mixture alternately with milk. Stir in butter and vanilla.

Fit a pastry tube with a large star tip. Fill with dough. Squeeze dough into hot oil in 6 to 8 inch lengths, cutting off the ends with knife. Fry until golden brown, about 1½ to 2 minutes on each side.

Drain on paper towels; keep warm. Repeat with remaining dough. Sprinkle with powdered sugar. Makes 18 to 20 churros.

PIROSHKI

1 package active dry yeast
 ½ cup warm water (105° to 115°F)
 ¾ cup warm milk
 1 tablespoon sugar
 ¼ teaspoon salt
 2½ to 2¾ cups flour
 Beef Filling

Dissolve yeast in warm water in medium bowl. Stir in milk, sugar, salt and enough flour to make dough easy to handle.

Turn dough onto lightly floured board. Knead until smooth and elastic, about 5 minutes. Place in greased bowl; turn greased side up and cover with towel. Let rise in warm place until doubled, about 45 minutes (dough is ready if impression remains when pressed with two fingers.)

Meanwhile, prepare Beef Filling.

Punch down dough. Divide dough into 10 equal pieces. On a floured board, roll each dough piece into a 5 inch circle. Place about ¼ cup filling on each circle. Bring ends of dough together at center. Pinch edges together to seal so that piroshki are plump in the center with tapered ends.

Place piroshki, seam side down, on greased baking sheets. Cover lightly with waxed paper. Let rise until puffy, 40 to 45 minutes.

Bake in preheated 375°F oven 18 to 20 minutes or until golden. Serve hot with a dollop of sour cream, if desired. Makes 10 piroshki.

BEEF FILLING

¾ pound lean ground beef	1/8 teaspoon pepper
1 medium onion, finely chopped	1 teaspoon dried dill weed
1 clove garlic, crushed	1 hard cooked egg, finely chopped
½ teaspoon salt	

Cook beef with onion and garlic until beef browns. Stir in salt, pepper dill weed and egg.

Since the renaissance era gave us the phrase, "Eat, drynke and be merry," it is only fitting that festivals serve alcoholic beverages. Of the festivals contacted, all serve light and dark beer. Most festivals, with the exception of Ohio State University and the Kansas City Renaissance Festival, serve wine as well. If one wishes to quench his thirst and still remain sober, he may opt for lemonade, apple cider or coffee. Soft drinks are available in a few booths.

Hopefully, the renaissance patron will not spend all of his money on entertainment, games and food, though it would be easy to do. Booths selling authentic crafts, or "party favors," also provide an excellent way to rid the visitor of unwanted cash.

The crafts one finds at a renaissance festival consist mainly of leather goods, pottery and jewelry. Some booths sell art pieces, such as paintings, sculpture and glass work. The craft booth workers definitely add spice to the faire's atmosphere. At first glance they seem harmless, even docile, for they are usually dressed in earthy nature-loving costumes. But these people do know the value of the hard sell and practice it daily. Eve Gabbert, actress from The New Directions Theatre Company, has a very accurate, but amusing way of describing her fellow workers:

Mainly it's the craft-makers who are the gypsies. They are the most fascinating group to me. they live at the festival sight during the festival, travel from festival to festival, eat only organically grown vegetables, wear organic clothing, never cut their hair, shave their arm-pits, shower or use deoderant. Their names are Megan, Flower, Sunshine...you get my point?²⁶

²⁶Eve Gabbert, personal letter.

I have not yet been able to interview a Megan or a Sunshine, though I am sure some exist in the festival craft-world. I did however, discover a woman named Donna at the Kansas City Renaissance Festival. She is employed by a small jewelry business called "Silver Art." "Silver Art" is owned and operated by Linda Sexton. Sexton designs rings, earrings, necklaces and small knick-knacks from sterling silver. Sexton employs Donna as a clerk and ring maker. Donna says they spend most of the winter months making the items, then in spring and summer travel to various craft shows. Unlike some craft-businesses, the Kansas City festival is the only renaissance festival "Silver Art" participates in. "Silver Art's" first booth at the Kansas City faire was leased in 1981. Donna enjoys the atmosphere at the festival and says that "it gets in your blood."²⁷ It is not however, her favorite place to work in terms of restroom facilities!

Authentic wooden instruments can also be purchased at many renaissance faires. Mac McKinney, of "The Mountain Dulcimer," is a favorite craftsman among Kansas City spectators. He sells handmade hour glass and large tear drop dulcimers. He is always willing to demonstrate the string instruments and enjoys teaching his customers how to play old mountain tunes.²⁸

Some craft booths are actually service booths. The services provided by these outlets usually consist of fortune telling by means of palm or card reading or peering into the traditional crystal ball. One such booth at the Kansas City faire belongs to Aurora. In a personal interview, Aurora stated

²⁷Donna, employee of Silver Art, interview held at Kansas City Renaissance Festival, Bonner Springs, Kansas, October 5, 1985.

²⁸Mac McKinney, interview held at Kansas City Renaissance Festival, Bonner Springs, Kansas, October 5, 1985.

that her type of service provided the customer with a better understanding of the time period. She claims that fortune telling became popular during the Middle Ages and, for some people, became an accepted way to plan their lives. Aurora reads tarot cards and, in order to interview her, I agreed to pay five dollars for a reading. The reading was very positive and full of hope but she admitted that all of her readings came out this way. "I want to make people happy and make them feel good. I look for the good things and ignore the bad. I think that is what people want to hear, and it certainly isn't going to hurt them."²⁹ Aurora's business card advertises that she also teaches witchcraft classes to interested persons.

The amusements just described are only samplings of the entertainment, sports, food and crafts available at America's renaissance festivals. They should, however, provide the reader with an accurate image of the typical attractions offered at most faires. This relatively new industry has been successful in providing an atmosphere in which virtually everyone can find some satisfaction.

²⁹Aurora, interview held at Kansas City Renaissance Festival, Bonner Springs, Kansas, October 5, 1985.

III.

WHAT TYPE OF ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE DO THEY UTILIZE?

The inaccessibility of a complete festival mailing list and the varied but often loosely supervised attractions offered at each faire are factors which may give the reader the impression that the American renaissance festival industry is run casually, like the local church bazaar. This is not entirely true. Though most of the festivals were lax about responding to letters of inquiry or phone calls, some were more than helpful and were quick to seize the opportunity to have their festival explored and written about. The three festivals that were the most cooperative were the Kansas City Renaissance Festival, the Ohio State University Medieval and Renaissance Faire, and the Texas Renaissance Festival. By examining the brief survey responses of these individual faires, we may gain a better understanding as to their formation process and present administrative structure.

The Kansas City Renaissance Festival was formed in 1977 by Marie Evans. Evans proposed the project as a possible fund raiser for the Kansas City Art Institute. The faire continues to be sponsored by the art institute and operates on a non-profit basis. For the last three years, it has been attended annually by about 145,000 persons and its booth space currently leases for \$175.00 per season.³⁰

During its first years, the faire was staffed completely by volunteers. Now, however, the faire has only one volunteer staff member.

³⁰Gale Tallis, Survey Response.

The positions that make-up the renaissance festival's administration include the titles: Administrator, Public Relations Director, Assistant Public Relations Director, Entertainment Director, Assistant Director of Entertainment, Craft Coordinator, Ticket Coordinator, and Secretary. Most of these jobs do not exist during the off-season.³¹

The Ohio State University Medieval and Renaissance Festival is unique in that it is a university event. It does, however, conform to the criteria for defining a renaissance festival as proposed in chapter one. It presents a staged renaissance environment and is open to the public.

The OSU festival debuted in 1974. This non-profit faire was formed as an activity that would provide students with organizational and performing experience. It is sponsored by the Anheuser-Bush Corporation, the OSU Council on Student Affairs, the Honors Committee Association, the Ohio Union, the University Honors Office and the Ohio-Drake Union Activities Board. It is attended by approximately 25,000 people a year, and its booth space rents for \$25.00 per weekend.³²

The OSU Medieval and Renaissance Faire does not have much of an administrative hierarchy. Major decisions are made by two OSU staff members who volunteer to oversee the production each year. They are Jack Cooley of the Arts and Sciences Honors Office and Carla Mattmiller of the Ohio Union Program Department. The production staff consists entirely of students.

³¹Tallis, Survey Response.

³²Jack Cooley, Ohio State University Medieval and Renaissance Festival, Survey Response, Columbus, Ohio, December 3, 1984.

Some of the staff positions include: Student Director, Assistant Director, Media Relations, and Program Design.³³

The most professionally-run festival surveyed is the Texas Renaissance Festival. The land for this festival was purchased and developed in 1974. It is a privately-owned business headed by two brothers, George and David Coulam. The Coulam brothers are the previous owners of both Utah and Minnesota festivals. The Utah faire is no longer operating. The faire's future goals, listed on the survey by Comptroller Bob Burns, is "to make more money."³⁴ Perhaps this faire's administration is more structurally sound because it is a commercial endeavor. Not only is it required by law to meet certain standards of organization, but it is strongly motivated to run efficiently for profit's sake, as well. The Texas Renaissance Festival does have the highest booth real estate value of all festivals surveyed. Space leases for \$450.00 per season (12 days). It is attended by about 280,000 people each year but only makes a clear profit of five percent on its sales.³⁵

The table on the following page displays the administrative organization of the Texas Renaissance Festival.

³³Cooley, Survey Response, December 3, 1984.

³⁴Bob Burns, Comptroller, Texas Renaissance Festival, Survey Response, Plantersville, Texas, November 14, 1984.

³⁵Ibid.

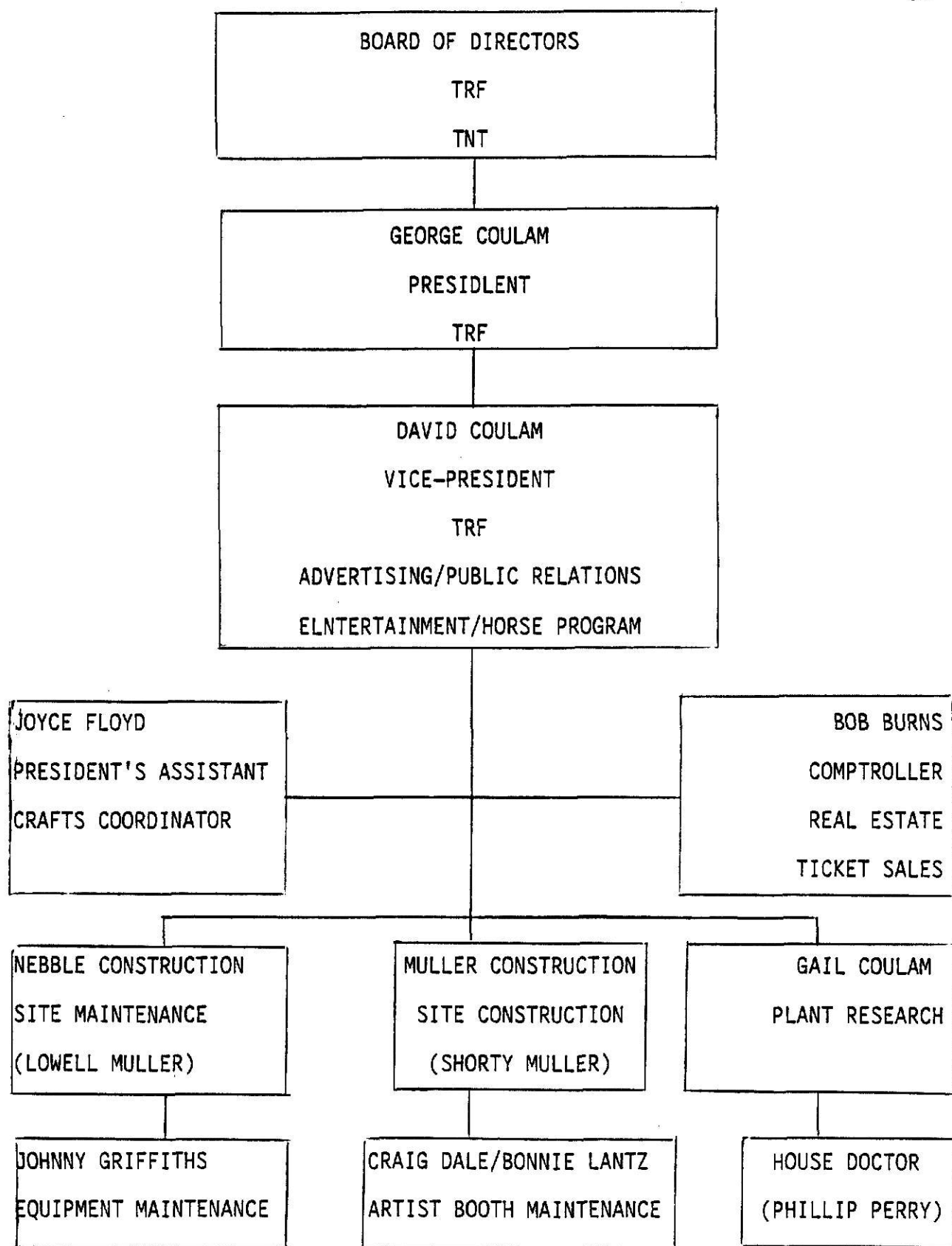


Table 1. The Administrative Structure of the Texas Renaissance Festival

It is difficult to obtain a great deal of information about the actual workings of most festivals. I am not sure why some festivals did not respond to the survey. A staff member of the New York Renaissance Festival, in Westhampton Beach, refused to support my investigation on the grounds that I might reveal vital information to their competitors. Many simply stated that their fees and profits were confidential matters. Perhaps some festivals were not able to respond because the person opening the mail did not know the answers. A questionnaire from the California Renaissance Pleasure Faire came with an attached memo. The survey had been sent to Public Relations Director, Philippa Winkler, who was unable to answer any of the questions. She sent the questionnaire to the faire's Production Manager, Bud Coffey. Of the twenty-nine survey questions, he was able to answer seventeen. Still, the material collected may serve as a basis for more in-depth studies.

CONCLUSION

The American renaissance festival is now twenty-three years old. The many components of these faires will, no doubt, be studied further in new investigations. By locating the festivals, this report should serve as an invaluable tool for those future explorations.

Through interviews and survey replies, the report also gives a good sampling of what actually happens at a renaissance festival. The festivals offer a great deal in terms of entertainment, sports, food, and crafts. It is also clear, from interviews, that festival workers enjoy their work and feel it serves a definite purpose, mostly to educate.

This study's report on the administrative structure of the faires is complete only in-so-far as those festivals which responded to that particular portion of the questionnaire. Perhaps now that a mailing list is available, this information will, in the future, be easier to retrieve.

The answers to the issues where are the festivals located, what do they offer the public, and how are they structured help the interested faire goer to develop a better understanding of this new American pastime. As understanding increases, so will the number of these great institutions.

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THE AMERICAN RENAISSANCE FESTIVAL

by

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

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Festivals, carnivals, and faires have been popular world-wide activities for hundreds of years. However, within the last few decades, a new type of festival has been created. It is a festival that celebrates the past by recreating an older world. This new kind of festival allows its participants to journey backward in time and experience one of history's most fascinating eras, the renaissance.

This report examines events termed as "renaissance festivals." It is a collection of information gathered from personal interviews and a survey mailing. A copy of the survey questionnaire, sent to twenty-two festivals, is included in the report. Those responding to the questionnaire, the Renaissance Pleasure Faire of California, the Colorado Renaissance Festival, the Kansas City Renaissance Festival, the Minnesota Renaissance Festival, New York state's Pleasure Faire of the Renaissance and Summer Market, the Ohio State University Medieval and Renaissance Festival, and the Texas Renaissance Festival are used as models to partially represent the renaissance festival industry.

Using the interviews and survey results as a basis, a better understanding of the typical renaissance faire may be gained. The material accumulated in this study attempts to answer the questions, where are the festivals located, what do they offer the public, and how are they administratively structured? The answers to these questions do not provide a comprehensive account of this new trade. Nevertheless, the report does orient the reader to a relatively new type of entertainment and furnishes heretofore unavailable data which should provide helpful to future investigations.