

2023

MINNESOTA STATE FAIR

HISTORY WALKING TOUR

5 NEW
STOPS!



MINNESOTA
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY



MINNESOTA
STATE FAIR
FOUNDATION

WELCOME TO THE MINNESOTA STATE FAIR.

This History Walking Tour was developed by the Minnesota State Fair Foundation and the Minnesota Historical Society. It's your two-mile guide to some of the State Fair's most historically significant spots.

Complete eight stops and earn a prize!

- Start your tour at any of the 12 stops.
- Use the map on the last page of this brochure to find your way.
- Use the hole punch at each stop to punch out the corresponding number in your brochure.
- Complete 8 or more stops and collect a free prize—PLUS the added bonus of walking approximately two miles!
- To collect your prize, bring your brochure to the History & Heritage Center at West End Market, the MSF Foundation at the J.V. Bailey House, or the MNHS booth in the DNR Building.

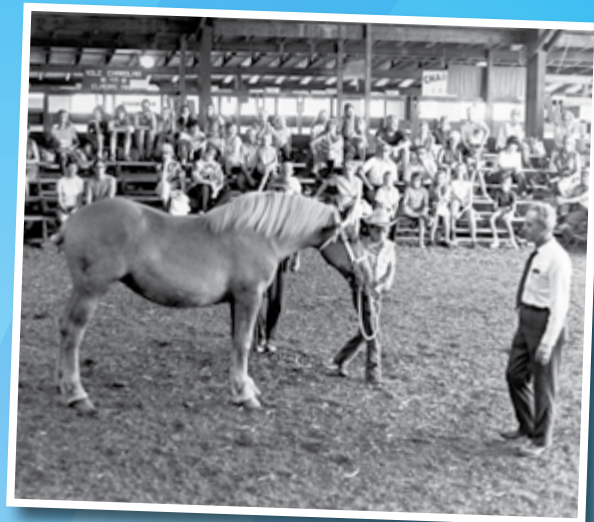


One-Mile Track

Constructed in 1885, removed 1939

Then: When the State Fair procured its permanent site in 1885, a one-mile dirt track was built for horse races. Speed barns were built south of the last turn of the track to house racehorses, including the Standardbred stallion, Dan Patch. After the 1939 State Fair the one-mile track was removed and replaced with a new half-mile track.

Now: The Transit Hub and Randall Avenue hug the curve of the racetrack that once was. The West End Market, opened in 2014, is located where the barns were. This same site was also home to the State Fair's Young America Center, also known as the Teen Fair (1964-1974) and then Heritage Square (1975-2013). Visit the History & Heritage Center to view a 1913 map of the State Fairgrounds, including the one-mile track, and learn all about the State Fair's rich history!



Judging Arena

Original built in 1964, replaced 2012

Then: In 1964, a 15,000 square foot structure with stalls and an arena was constructed to provide additional judging and stalling facilities. It was the location for the first ever llama show in 1988. In 2012, a larger and brighter 27,000 square foot structure with stalls and an arena replaced the original. It became the new home for off-season events, along with 4-H, FFA and open class competitions during the State Fair.

Now: Now known as the Compeer Arena, it continues to showcase animals. Depending on the day, you may see cattle, sheep, goats, horses, or llamas and alpacas. You can even see the Minnesota Livestock Breeders Association's 4-H Purple Ribbon Livestock Auction—a fast paced event that raises money for scholarships for 4-H'ers to attend the college of their choice.

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DNR Building

Built in 1934

Then: In the early 1900s, an aquarium full of live native fish was added to the fair. However, the popular exhibit did not have a permanent location until 1934, when the Department of Conservation log cabin was built by the Emergency Relief Administration, the precursor to Works Progress Administration (WPA). Visitors could also see wolves, coyotes and bears there. When the name changed to the Department of Natural Resources Building in 1971, the fair revitalized the exhibit, turning the formal south lawn garden and fountain into wetlands and a mesmerizing pond featuring approximately 40 native Minnesota fish species. Inside the building, 17 small aquariums that once featured individual species were replaced in 2013 with five larger tanks featuring the state's diverse aquatic habitats.

Now: Each year, the exhibit informs over 500,000 guests about stewardship of our state's natural resources in the areas of outdoor recreation, conservation, and sustainable commercial use. Current topics include wildflower identification, hunting regulations, protection against invasive species, and wildfire safety with Smokey Bear.



J.V. Bailey House

Built in 1911, restored 2006

Then: In 1904 a hospital and first aid station was built southeast of the Grandstand. This building remained there until the summer of 1911 when it was moved and extensively remodeled to become the Officers' Quarters - the fair-time home for members of the State Fair board who lived outside the Twin Cities. From 1916 through 2004, the State Fair's green thumbs "planted themselves" as this American four square style-home became a year-round home to the greenhouse superintendents and groundskeepers. They watched over the greenhouse and took care of the iconic cannas, the beautiful red and yellow flowering tropical plants that can be found by the thousands throughout the fairgrounds. In 2006 the house was named for J.V. Bailey, founder of Bailey Nurseries, Agricultural Society Superintendent of Horticulture (1912-1932) and State Fair Board Member (1924-1934).

Now: Since 2006, the Bailey House has been home to the Minnesota State Fair Foundation 501(c)(3). Celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2022, the Foundation has provided the State Fair with over \$16 million for preservation and improvements to the fairgrounds and State Fair buildings, and in support of the fair's educational programs.



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Bandshell

Built in 1971

Then: In the early years, if you wanted to see a band perform, it was often on a smaller stage within a building. In the 1960s, live entertainment expanded to new, outdoor themed areas. In 1971, the Bandshell was built—the largest of the free entertainment stages. People spilled out into the street to watch the performances—and the street that once separated the Space Tower and Bandshell was filled in to create an area to let people relax and enjoy the various acts throughout the day. Music is the standard attraction, but naturalization ceremonies, Princess Kay coronations, and official fair openings have happened here, too.

Now: The Bandshell continues to feature a diverse lineup of live entertainment and draws significant crowds. The Amateur Talent Contest semi-final performances have been a staple here since 1973, with the winners of each night then performing at the Grandstand on the second Sunday with thousands cheering them on—celebrating its 50th annual this year!

Creative Activities Building

Built in 1971

Then: The original building on this site was erected in 1904 to serve as a manufacturer's building. Just a few years later, it was converted to the Woman's Building, housing commercial exhibits for education, culture, art, music and homemaking activities. It was renamed Home Activities in 1952 as the exhibits appealed to all. The building was razed in 1970, and replaced by the Creative Activities Building.

Now: The Creative Activities Building showcases entries in over 1,200 categories, from needlework and handcrafts to baking and canning. One of the biggest thrills for thousands of Creative Activities competitors is looking to see if their entry has the coveted blue ribbon attached to it. The building also features daily free demonstrations on cooking, woodcarving, weaving, and more. Countless fair visitors have been inspired by exhibits and demonstrations in the building to take up new-found interests.





Fairborne

Born in 1983

Then: The State Fair's first gopher mascot, Fairchild, appeared in 1966 as a statue near the Bandshell. In 1967 he became a roaming mascot, visiting with fairgoers. In 1983, Fairborne arrived! According to the State Fair *Daily News* from 1983: "Fairchild met his little nephew in his hometown of Gopherville, MN while vacationing after the '82 State Fair. The resemblance is apparent at first sight... those big friendly eyes, plastered on smiles, and rhythmic waddle. Fairborne and Fairchild have a very busy schedule during the '83 exposition with television interviews, personal appearances, riding in the mall parades, and greeting fairgoers. We all hope that Fairborne has the stamina that Fairchild has displayed for the past few years. Good luck Fairborne and welcome aboard!"

Now: Celebrating his 40th birthday, Fairborne continues to delight fairgoers. His and Fairchild's look have evolved through the years, but they're still the same gophers at heart. You may find these mischievous gophers throughout the fairgrounds, but for a guaranteed view, visit the Visitors Plaza for their daily appearances (and shenanigans!), or watch them wave to onlookers during the parade.



Baldwin Park

1940

Then: In the early 1900s this block held Machinery Hall, a building filled with farm implements of all sorts, then later held poultry in 1928 and beyond. In 1939 the building was razed and, in its place, a landscaped area known as Machinery Park was created for people to sit and relax. The 1970s brought in 4-H performances, and high school bands, and in 1983 it was renamed Baldwin Park, with a stage built for entertainment that expanded to daily, hourly performances by various acts.

Now: Fun and educational components Alphabet Forest and Math On-A-Stick were added in 2010, and 2015, respectively. In 2016 a brand-new bandshell and shaded seating area replaced the original stage, built in 1983. The park was named to honor Doug Baldwin, the State Fair's General Manager from 1951 through 1962.

Parade

Since the beginning

Then: If you were to watch a parade on the State Fairgrounds, most likely it would have been at the Grandstand. Industrial parades featuring vendors gave fairgoers a glimpse of what could be seen on the grounds. Prize-winning livestock would be led on the dirt racetrack, showcasing the best-of-the-best of cattle and horses. Or during wartime, you might see thousands of soldiers on parade, or the "Women War Workers' Parade" consisting of 5,000 women of the Red Cross, and 2,000 women participants of the Y.W.C.A. and Liberty League. In the early 1960s bands started performing in "the Mall"—the southeast section of the fairgrounds. When three flagpoles were erected in 1965, it became the official starting point of parades.

Now: Parades are now a 2 p.m. daily event and the starting point remains by the flagpoles at the Bandshell. They wind their way through the fairgrounds and are one mile in length. Livelier than the parades of the past, today's parades feature the Minnesota State Fair High School Marching Band Competition, Princess Kay of the Milky Way, Fairchild and Fairborne, floats, and more.



Machinery Hill

Coined in 1909

Then: Farm implements have been part of the State Fair since its beginning. In 1907, an additional 40 acres was added to the north end of the fairgrounds principally for farm machinery displays, and the name Machinery Hill was coined in 1909. In its prime, nearly 80 acres of the fairgrounds were used for farm implements and vehicles that gave visitors a glimpse into the future of farming. Countless kids—and kids at heart—were in awe of the giant tractors and combines.

Now: As demographics change, vendors change, too. New agricultural and industrial equipment still finds a home on Machinery Hill, but on a much smaller scale. Today's farm equipment manufacturers rarely bring their products to public exhibitions, but instead build them to order. The Old Iron Show celebrates antique farm machinery—a nod to what once was. The hill also features the Little Farm Hands exhibit, a fun place for kids to learn about agriculture from the field to the grocery store.



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Farm Boys' Camp

Began in 1912

Then: In 1912, 84 boys from all but 2 counties of the state earned a trip to the State Fair via the Farm Boys' Camp. They were chosen by submitting essays about "Our Farm Home" and received free transportation, food, and lodging. In return, they were ushers at the Grandstand and Hippodrome events. For many this was their first time out of their county, their first train ride, or their first streetcar sighting. In 1916 a carriage building was transformed into a permanent home for the farm boys, and a new building was erected on the northeast corner of the fairgrounds in 1941. A Girls' Camp began in 1916, and they stayed in the dormitories at the neighboring State Agricultural College. In 1953 new dormitory facilities were added to the Farm Boys' Camp Building, enabling girls to stay on the fairgrounds as well. In 1975 it was renamed Youth Camp and continued through 1993. The building was razed prior to the 2000 State Fair and the North End Event Center, built in 2019, now resides in this space.

Now: Although the physical Youth Camp is no more, its presence still lives on. In 1994, it turned into a scholarship where 20 or more youth per year are awarded \$1,000 each to continue agricultural education.

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Pets at the Fair

Began in 1912

Then: In 1912, the State Fair held its first bench show, featuring 56 exhibitors with 95 dogs. But if you wanted to see your favorite pooches, you would have to pay admission. This lasted through 1916, and not until the late 1930s did puppy (and sometimes) cat shows return – held in the Poultry Building. In 1972 dogs moved to the Dog Exhibit building west of the Grandstand. In 1991, the Pet Center on the north end of the fairgrounds opened up to purebred dog breeders exhibitions, commercial displays, veterinary groups, and more.

Now: In 2018, the Pet Pavilions opened west of the former Pet Center. Open-air booths house man's best friend, with different breeds making appearances throughout the fair. Spay and neuter surgeries are performed on canines and felines, while a narrator explains the procedures to onlookers. A neighboring structure is filled with pet-centric items, and an outdoor area showcases agility and obedience demonstrations.

MINNESOTA STATE FAIR HISTORY WALKING TOUR MAP

Congratulations. You did it! After completing the tour, remember to pick up your prize at one of these locations:

- The MNHS booth in the DNR Building
9 am to 9 pm (8 pm Labor Day)
- The MSF Foundation at the J.V. Bailey House
8 am to 8 pm (7 pm Labor Day)
- The History & Heritage Center at West End Market
9 am to 9 pm (8 pm Labor Day)



History
Walking Tour
Punch Out

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WANT MORE HISTORY?

History & Heritage Center:
West End Market at the State Fairgrounds

Minnesota State Fair
Online Archives:
msffoundation.org

Minnesota Historical Society
online resources and historic
site information:
mnhs.org



The Minnesota State Fair Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that preserves and improves State Fair buildings, the fairgrounds, and educational programs. msffoundation.org