

2024

MINNESOTA STATE FAIR

HISTORY WALKING TOUR

3 NEW
STOPS!



 MINNESOTA
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

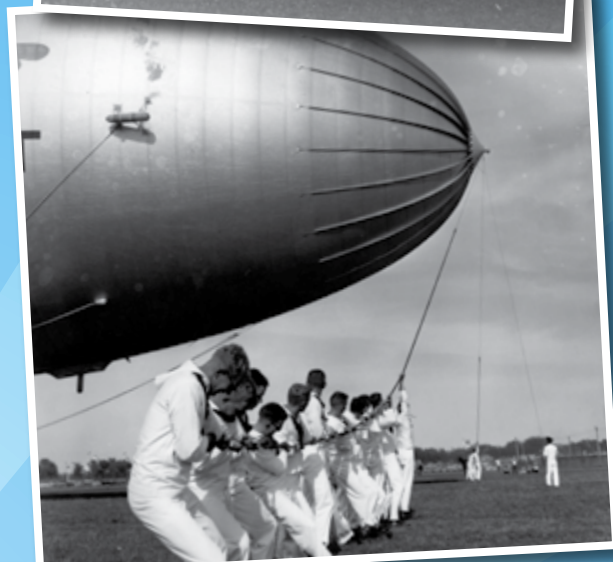
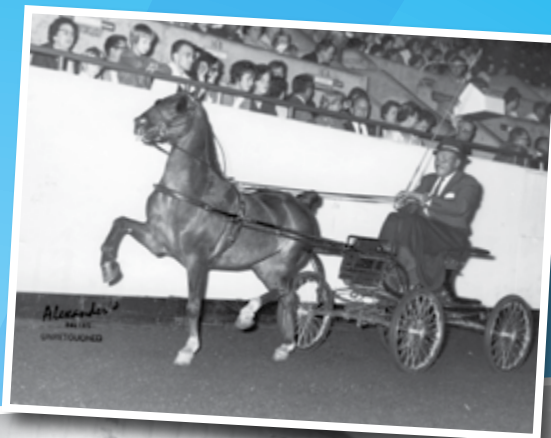

MINNESOTA
STATE FAIR
FOUNDATION

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 next to the DNR Building.

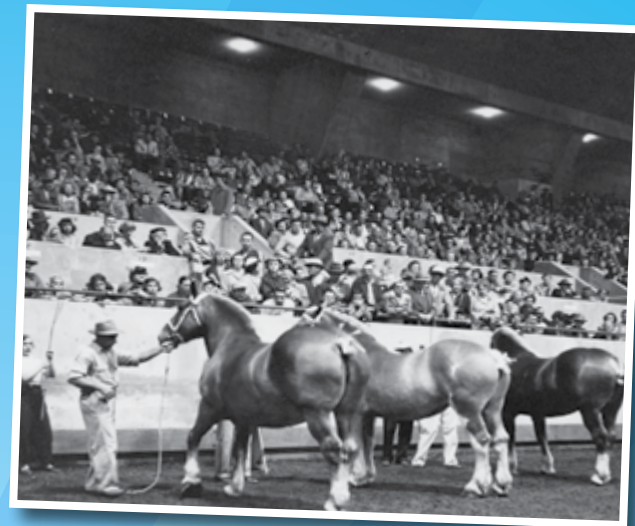


Teen-Age Fair

Opened 1966

Then: In the 1960s, the Teen-Age Fair was a wildly successful area where teens danced to rock n' roll bands such as The Grass Roots, watched fashion shows, enjoyed custom car shows, and generally just hung out. This "fair within the fair" was north of the carnival midway and required a separate admission. It was later renamed Young America Center, but by the 1970s, it was ready for a new idea. Heritage Square opened in 1975 and expanded in 1976 to celebrate America's Bicentennial. Visitors traveled back to the 18th and 19th centuries to discover an authentic log cabin, an original Royal American Shows train car, the State Fair History Museum, and more. In 2013, the area was leveled, and the West End Market was constructed.

Now: The West End Market is an accessible area filled with vendors, delicious eats, entertainment (like History on-a-Schtick!), and the History & Heritage Center—a new museum that celebrates the State Fair's history.



Lee & Rose Warner Coliseum

Opened 1951

Then: State Fair livestock competitions were held in large tents until 1906, when the Livestock Amphitheater (also known as the Hippodrome) became the home to horse shows and livestock judging in summer, and an ice rink during winter. After being used as a military aircraft propeller factory during WWII, the building became structurally unsound and was razed. The present building, which opened in 1951, seats 5,200 and has housed numerous livestock shows and non-fair events. It even hosted a visit from President John F. Kennedy for a Democratic Bean Feed on October 6, 1962.

Now: Beginning in spring 2025, the Lee & Warner Coliseum will undergo a multi-year renovation, including roof replacement and mechanical and electrical upgrades. Like the WWII era, the livestock area will be closed to non-fair events. Unlike that time, it will be open for the State Fair, allowing fairgoers to visit this popular destination, home to events like the Supreme Six-Horse Hitch class, 4-H Llama-Alpaca Costume Contest, and more.

01

02

Streetcar Arch

Installed 1934, reinstalled 2014

Then: It's hard to believe, but horses and mules were once used as transportation to the State Fair. By the 1890s, a different type of horsepower took over: trains and streetcars. From Como Avenue, streetcar loops brought visitors into the heart of the fairgrounds—right next to the Grandstand Ramp. In 1934, those tracks were shortened a block, allowing for the Conservation (DNR) Building to be constructed and Judson Avenue to be extended to the west. A new gate entrance and steel arch inscribed with “State Fair” was also installed to welcome guests fresh off the rails. Streetcars remained popular until the 1950s when their usage declined with a new mode of public transportation: the bus. In the 1980s the arch was removed, but was later refurbished in 2012.

Now: In 2014, the restored Streetcar Arch was moved to its current location next to the Transit Hub and West End Market and has become a popular landmark for photographs. It welcomes fairgoers today as it did in the past and will for generations to come.



Military at the Fair

Since 1860

Then: Military has had an important role with the State Fair since the early years. The fair was held at Fort Snelling in 1860 and 1863. In 1898, the 14th Minnesota Volunteer Infantry, mustered into service in the war with Spain, was stationed at the current fairgrounds for weeks of drill. In 1943, members of Fort Snelling's 710th military police battalion set up an encampment on Machinery Hill and demonstrated maneuvers and equipment to fair guests. In 2005, a Veterans Memorial Garden was dedicated south of the Agriculture Horticulture Building, recognizing the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II. Plaques have been added through the years including one for Gold Star Families dedicated in 2015.

Now: Tuesday during the State Fair is designated as Military Appreciation Day. Programs are held at the Veterans Memorial Garden, Leinie Lodge Bandshell, and Dan Patch Park, along with special additions to the daily parade. Look for memorial plaques in remembrance of 1898 volunteer infantrymen at the SW corner of Baldwin Park and the base of the Grandstand Ramp.

03

04



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). For over 20 years, 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.

University of Minnesota

Since 1875

Then: The State Fair has been at this location since 1885 and has had the same neighbor to the west ever since—the University of Minnesota. Even before the physical proximity, the University has exhibited at the fair. Demonstrations included horticulture and agriculture, poultry husbandry, a century of progress in swine feeding, health exhibits, and more. The Minnesota 4-H is a University of Minnesota extension program - it began with a handful of children participating in 1913 through a corn club and has grown to over 4,000 4-H'ers participating at the State Fair!

Now: The University of Minnesota continues to exhibit throughout the fairgrounds, including at the University of Minnesota Driven to Discover Building—a collaborative research facility between University departments and fair guests. The University's marching band makes a special appearance during the parade—you may even be lucky enough to hear "Minnesota March," composed by John Philip Sousa and debuted at the State Fair in 1927. "Rah, Rah, Rah! Ski-U-Mah!"



05

06



Fine Arts Center

Built 1907

Then: Like today, sculptures could be seen here in the early 20th century - not of metal or clay, but of butter! This building was originally built for dairy exhibits long before becoming the permanent home for the fine arts exhibition in 1980. Opened in 1907, it and its neighbor to the north (built as a Poultry Building, now known as the Progress Center) are the oldest buildings on the fairgrounds. Butter sculptures then were usually farm-themed, but an occasional politician or historical moment would be depicted. In 1965, the Princess Kay butter sculpture debuted - a tradition that lives on to this day.

Now: Butter sculptures are now in the Dairy Building on the south side of the fairgrounds. In the Fine Arts Center, the walls are filled with work from talented Minnesota artists. The lighting cast on these works is similar to what it would have been like in 1907. This year, new windows and doors were installed to update the building while still maintaining the look of years past.

Farm Boys' Camp

Began 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.



07

08



Media

Since the beginning of the fair

Then: For more than a century, newspapers were the main source of State Fair news. From advertisements about when the fair would begin to lists of premiums, one could read all the latest fair headlines in the papers. By the 1920s, radio stations began to broadcast live from the fairgrounds. In 1939, an exhibit showcased a new phenomenon—television. By the 1950s, television had become a mainstay, completing this media melting pot.

Now: Print, radio, and television media still have a presence at the fair. Newspapers cover State Fair stories leading up to and throughout the 12-day run of the fair. Radio remains a constant, bringing live broadcasts and entertainment to delight passers-by. Television is a fundamental part of the State Fair experience too, as news anchors mingle with crowds and report live from the fair multiple times each day. Social media has become the newest medium to connect audiences with the Great Minnesota Get-Together.

One-Mile Track

Constructed 1885, removed 1939

Then: When the State Fair procured its permanent site in 1885, a one-mile dirt track was built for horse races, which took up a quarter of the fairgrounds. A half-mile track was added within its footprint in time for the 1899 fair. In 1907 another type of horsepower was added: auto racing. After the 1939 State Fair, the one-mile track was removed, and the existing half-mile track was replaced. With the removal of the one-mile track, it allowed Underwood Street to be extended to the north. Horse racing ended in 1949, but autos still zoomed around the half-mile track until 2002.

Now: The Transit Hub and Randall Avenue hug the curve of the racetrack that once was. Even the Grandstand still exhibits a little-known piece of racing history—the Grandstand was built at an angle to afford the best view of the fourth turn down through the home stretch.



Roller Coaster & Carousel

Built in 1914

Then: In 1914, Austin McFadden brought new excitement to the State Fair with two rides—a roller coaster and a carousel. “A long deep dip is taken that leaves a great empty space in your stomach,” read an advertisement for the coaster, “You shoot up a hill, take a sharp turn, another dip, a dozen more ascents, dips, and dives, and back you are again ready for another ride.” The coaster was razed in 1935, but the carousel remained for decades. In 1988, the privately-owned carousel was set to be dismantled, but a local group—Our Fair Carousel, Inc.—was able to purchase it. It remained at the State Fair for another year before moving to Town Square Park in St. Paul.

Now: In 2000, the carousel moved to Como Park in St. Paul, where it remains today. Its former footprint is now the Visitor’s Plaza, a place to shop and visit with the State Fair mascots, Fairchild and Fairborne. Today, the oldest permanent amusement ride at the fair is Ye Old Mill, built in 1915!

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DNR Building

Built 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 Conservation Department 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.

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 next to 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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History Hunt

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