

ILLINOIS STATE FAIR BUILDINGS HISTORY

The first Illinois State Fair was held in Springfield in 1853, then was hosted by twelve cities around the state for the first 40 years until making Springfield its permanent home in 1894. At that time, an ambitious construction program began as the 156 acre fairground site was developed into a forum for Illinois agriculture and education. In the 1920's , the Illinois State Fairgrounds doubled in size to its present 366 acres. The Illinois State Fairgrounds were listed in the National Register of Historic Places in May 1990.

Artisans Building

History

The **Artisans Building** was constructed in **1898** and is complete with hardwood floors, restrooms, and an open floor plan. This flexible facility is an excellent location for wedding receptions, high school proms, or meetings. ADA accessible restrooms, four entrances, heating, and air conditioning are added conveniences.

This facility is the second oldest building on the Illinois State Fairgrounds, and was once the home of over 2,000 coops. It underwent major renovation in 1988 and is now one of the most rented buildings on the State Fairgrounds.

The Coliseum

History

The **Coliseum** was constructed in **1901** and is a large, three-story, enclosed oval-shape amphitheater housing a show ring for horses. The first level is constructed of brick with limestone trim, which originally formed an open gallery of arched openings with pier walls. These were enclosed with glazed brick in **1958**. Entry areas have permanent ticket windows. Other added conveniences include ADA accessibility, concession space, and restrooms.

This facility is ideal for horse shows, quarter midget racing, motorcycle training, and concerts.

Covered Outdoor Arena

History

The Coliseum Outdoor Arena was recently reconstructed in **2002**. The original dirt ring was constructed in 1950. This facility is ideal for outdoor concerts, horse shows, dog shows, and other outdoor events.

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Emmerson Building

History

The **Emerson Building** was constructed in **1931**. It is detailed in an art deco form accompanied with modern styling.

Generally, this building is where a majority of the offices dealing with the Illinois State Fair are located. It was recently remodeled in an effort to expand for fair usage.

Exposition Building

History

This historic structure was originally constructed in **1894**, which makes it the oldest facility on the fairgrounds. It is a spacious two level building with iron framing, brick walls, and segmented arched windows. A large overhead door helps accommodate large item entry. An elevator that has the capacity to hold approximately 4,000 pounds provides access to the second level.

Being the largest building on the fairgrounds, the Exposition Building is known for accommodating a variety of major events.

Grandstand

History

The **Grandstand** was rebuilt in **1928**, and is known for holding an assortment of concerts, horse, automobile and motorcycle races, and tractor pulls. This grandstand was build to replace the old grandstand which had been built in 1895.

There are 8,912 permanent seats available, which are roofed by a large metal truss. In addition, there are 2,700 bleacher seats that have a supported canopy covering. This grandstand has the capacity to hold over 13,000 people.

The north and south sides of the interior are joined by a walkway that leads to the entrance going under the track and out to the pit are where the stage is located. It consists of three-stories, complete with well- designed arched windows that extend upward two stories. Another added feature is the office space and large open area available inside of the grandstand to accommodate vendors and event organizers.

Illinois Building

History

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This three-story facility, constructed in **1949**, has many amenities that frequently are of service to events such as wedding receptions and proms. An overhead door, concession area, walk-in cooler and storage area are available to provide you with added conveniences. For entertainment purposes, an appealing 470-seat theater is available with dressing rooms.

Other notable features are the international trends incorporated into the styling and the large, plate glass exhibit windows, which are set into the walls underneath the porch area. This area is located on the roof of the Illinois Building and is topped by a covered deck, which provides an amazing view of the fairgrounds, and would be an exceptionally ideal location for private parties.

Orr Building

History

The **Orr Building** has many amenities that will aid in hosting large special events. It was constructed in **1990** and is complete with two overhead doors, a loading dock for easy entry, office space, restrooms, and a finished kitchen with a refrigerator and a stove/oven.

There is a fountain in the center of the open area, which adds elegance to a wedding reception or dance. Glass windows throughout the building allows for the natural sunlight to shine in. Electrical outlets at every support post, and water faucets at every other support post are added conveniences.

Goat Barn

History

This is an open-air barn that was constructed in **1980** and is complete with ADA accessible restrooms and shower facilities. It contains metal pens and is primarily used for goat shows.

Horse Paddock

History

This large, barn-like facility was reconstructed in **1994**. The facility consists of three structures, one of which is the VIP pavilion, that contain 74 horse stalls when combined together. They each possess a steel frame and a metal roof. Added conveniences include ceiling fans, office space, and storage space.

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Carriage House 26

History

This barn has been on the fairgrounds since **1929**. It is brick with a concrete floor. Windows are decoratively cast throughout the barn. Major renovation was done in 2002 replacing the roof, the floor, plumbing, and mechanical and electric systems. In addition, windows were restored and two new overhead doors were installed.

Livestock Center

History

This phenomenal facility was constructed more recently in **1992**. There are two floors available with a flexible amount of space for livestock events, trade shows, and cattle and horse sales. It is also available for livestock auctioning.

There are many features that attribute to the multitude of this building. The lower level has large overhead doors for easy entry. There is an exhibit space and approximately 80 tie-outs. Bleacher seating is on hand for 900 people as well as a show ring on the first level that is accompanied by removable gates. In addition, there is an auction ring with 379 seats.

Sheep Barns

History

The **North Sheep Barn** was constructed in **1980**. It is an open steel beam barn with a concrete floor. Numerous metal pens are available for sheep.

Similar to the north sheep barn, the **South Sheep Barn** is an open barn with a concrete floor. It contains metal pens for sheep and is used for show and sales.

Individual breed shows and national show and sales have been held here. Between the two open sheep barns there are 850 pens.

Stabling Barns

History

The fairgrounds has 916 stalls located over 28 barns throughout the fairgrounds. The number of stalls per barn varies. All barns provide quality stabling facilities.

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Barn 13

This barn was constructed in 1909 and is complete with a 181 x 111 dirt show ring, oversized round arched entrances, and restrooms. This facility is excellent for horse warm-up, horse stabling, cattle storage, and livestock seminars. The structure underwent major renovation in 1995 and in 1997. This consisted of window installation, wall and roof replacement, and new restroom facilities.

Swine Pavilion

History

This barn was originally constructed in **1912** and throughout the years has been rehabilitated in a manner that highlights its historical character. It is a mission style brick barn with a concrete tile roof and a limestone trim. Open porches join the gables and are supported by paired columns. The main roof has a structure of metal roofing covering it to aid in reducing damage caused by water. Individual breed shows and national show and sales are typically held in this barn. The Swine Pavilion was designed by Danville architect C.M. Lewis, and features terra-cotta plaques of swine and sheep that decorate the dormer walls. It has a tile roof and limestone trim with half-round arch openings. The Swine Pavilion frieze panels display swine rather than the traditional Greek goddess.

Tie-Out Barns

History

The fairgrounds has 1445 Ties located over 17 barns throughout the fairgrounds. The number of Ties per barn varies and barns provide first rate tie out facilities.

Commodities Pavilion

History

The **Commodities Pavilion** was constructed in 1971. It is a large, open pavilion that contains a asphalt floor and beam supports.

Food-A-Rama Pavilion

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Garden Pavilion

History

The **Garden Pavilion** is a wood frame open pavilion with a concrete floor and a roof finished with asphalt. It has decorative vertical boarding in the end gables.

Labor Pavilion

History

The **Labor Pavilion** is located behind the Ethnic Village. It contains a concrete base and a wooden roof that is covered with tile.

Lincoln Stage

History

The **Lincoln Stage** area has a concrete floor and steel supports leading up to the roof structure. A raised stage encloses the south end of the facility.

Multi-Purpose Arena

History

Being the newest addition to the fairgrounds, this six- acre arena has accommodated large consumer shows such as the famous National High School Finals Rodeo, the Monster Truck show, and motorcycle racing. Construction for this premier facility cost \$9.6 million dollars. It has the capacity to seat approximately 10,000 + spectators. Sound system capabilities are accessible that will surely top off any event. With an announcer's stand, ADA accessibility, eight gate entrances, office space, storage and beautiful landscaping, the possibilities acquired with this facility are virtually endless.

Quonset Hut

History

This steal frame structure covered with ridged metal was constructed in **1975**. It has a single space interior that is lined with metal bar pens for animals. A double overhead door is located on the east end of the hut, which makes it convenient for moving in and out.

Campgrounds

History

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The campgrounds are a great place to utilize throughout the year. There are more than 300 full-service hookups. Shower facilities and restrooms are added conveniences available in various locations across the grounds. The fairgrounds have the capability of housing over 800 campsites. Electric and water utilities are also available. In 2003, the campgrounds underwent a \$1 million upgrade for electrical.

The campgrounds provide a quiet, safe atmosphere to make the most of one's experience here on the Illinois State Fairgrounds.

Infield, One Mile Track

History

The infield of the mile track is a large grassy area that can hold parking for approximately 3,000 people. It has historical significance for being Springfield's first golf course. When it was introduced in **1895**, it consisted of only four holes.

Midway Area

History

This large, open area consists of a combination of pavement and gravel. It is a flexible space for parking or temporary camping.

Traditionally, the Midway Area houses the carnival rides, games, and side shows during the Illinois State Fair.

Main Gate

History

The Main Gate is located on Sangamon Avenue at Gate 1 with the words "Illinois State Fair etched near the top. The Main Gate was built in **1910** and remains the official Fairgrounds entrance. The brick and stucco structure with a raised center section and two complementary wings features a hip roof covered in clay tile. The central section has a large open arched passage and the side wings also include smaller arched openings. The exterior walls have limestone bases topped by brick halfway up. Bands of electric lights outline the arch tops and the area beneath the eaves, providing a beautiful nighttime display.

Abraham Lincoln Statue

History

Just inside gate 1 is the Abraham Lincoln statue built in **1967**

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Giant Slide

History

Just inside gate 1 is the Giant Slide was built in **1968**

Dairy Building

History

Built in **1903** at a cost of \$20,000, the Dairy Products Building has provided a two-fold function on the Illinois State Fairgrounds. It not only promoted the Dairy Industry but also provided a favorite venue of food and fun to fairgoers. When mechanical refrigeration was introduced after WWI, management bricked in the windows on the East wall and half of the North wall to accommodate a walk-in cooler. The Peoria firm of Reeves and Baillie designed the painted brick structure. With the advent of modern refrigeration, a butter cow was introduced at the 1921 Illinois State Fair and was an immediate hit. This has been a feature of the fair ever since with the exception of two years (1941-and1942) during WWII when there was a shortage of butter for anything but the military. The building was operated under the supervision of the Illinois Department of Public Health for many years until the mid 1960's when it was felt that the effort took too much time from the duties of the inspectors. An independent operator was selected to run the operation. Mr. VanBuskirk, secretary of a Chicago-based organization of co-operating dairies was named the Superintendent and General Manager. In 1969 Mr. VanBuskirk retired and a local restaurant operator from Springfield was hired to operate the building. He made many changes, which angered the dairy farmers (putting in imitation milkshakes, etc.) All dairy processors in the state boycotted the building that year. A Chicago judge was indicted for "scalping" space and taking payoffs. The Superintendent of the Dairy Products Building was named in the indictment but died before any action took place.