

## INTRODUCTION

The Illinois State Fair was first held in 1853 and twelve cities hosted the fair during its first 40 years before Springfield became 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. Over the years, the Illinois State Fairgrounds doubled in size to its present 366 acres, with new structures taking their places next to turn-of-the-century buildings. Together, the old and the new tell a story of the fair's development. The Illinois State Fairgrounds were listed in the National Register of Historic Places in May 1990.

## MAIN GATE

The Main Gate is located along Sangamon Avenue and faces south, although you can view it from the street or just after you enter the Fairgrounds through its arched entrances. The sign "Gate 1" is visible from the street, as is the name "Illinois State Fair."

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. "Illinois State Fair" is printed across the center section on the south side.

## HAPPY HOLLOW

From the Main Gate, walk farther into the Fairgrounds, passing the giant slide on your right and the giant Abraham Lincoln statue on your left. Happy Hollow is the sunken area on your left with a large sign that reads "The Jungle."

For many years, state fair authorities demanded that the annual event maintain a dignified tone, forcing carnival activities and amusements to set up some distance away. Businessmen provided stage shows for the throngs of visitors who sought amusement. In 1907, though, the fair board reconsidered, and a midway developed that would become Happy Hollow. The addition of this amusement park-like atmosphere signaled a new emphasis on recreation. The overhead sky ride and giant Abraham Lincoln statue near the Main gate were added in 1967, and the nearby Giant Slide in 1968. The Happy Hollow area today hosts the The Jungle.

## EXPOSITION BUILDING

The Exposition Building is the large structure with “Illinois State Fair” written just below its eaves on the south side, and can be seen on a hill just north of the The Jungle. The number 11 can be seen on the building at the east public entrance along Main Street.

The Exposition Building, constructed in 1894, is the oldest existing and first permanent building on the State Fairgrounds. The 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago had an undeniable impact on the Fairground’s architecture. The Exposition Building was designed by Charles W. Shinn and J.I. Rinaker Jr., and was inspired by the monumental neo-classical architecture of the Columbian Exposition. The two-and-a-half story red brick building, purported to be the largest building of its type in the United States, was capped by a series of pressed metal domes. Hailed as the “Queen of the Fair,” it housed exhibitions of state-manufactured goods, ladies clothing, artwork, textiles, and vendor booths. It serves the same purpose today, and still looks much as it did when it opened in 1894.

## POULTRY BUILDING

The Poultry Building sits high atop a hill above the The Jungle and directly west of the Exposition Building. The name “Poultry Building” can be seen below its eaves on the south side of the building, and the number 15 on the north corner.

The Poultry Building dates from 1896 and was built following a disastrous storm in 1895 that killed many of the feathered entries, which had previously been housed in sheds. The State Fair Poultry Superintendent, future Governor Len Small, announced that, quote, “the loss of valuable fowls was considerable, and the necessity of a suitable building, obvious.” End quote. The large brick, stone and iron building was renovated in 1988 and is the current home of the Illinois Artisans’ Exhibit.

## COLISEUM

The Coliseum is located along Central Avenue just west of the overhead sky ride. The number 12 is on the north side of the building, and a modern sign along the boulevard bears the name, “Coliseum.”

The oval-shaped Coliseum is a brick and steel structure designed by the Peoria firm of Reeves and Baillie. It was built in 1901, then remodeled in 1958 to accommodate horse shows and livestock judging events. The enclosed amphitheater is constructed of steel, brick and limestone and features a two-tiered hip roof with a band of windows for air circulation. Bleachers around the entire building provide interior seating. The Coliseum is currently used for horse shows.

## CATTLE SHOW PAVILION/INDOOR WARM-UP RING

This building is not labeled or numbered, but is the large open, brick barn with a round window at the top that is immediately west of the Coliseum.

Chicago architect Richard E. Schmidt provided the design for the Cattle Show Pavilion/Indoor Warm-Up Ring constructed in 1909. The large Romanesque Revival-

styled brick barn features limestone trim and arched entrances surmounted by large circular windows. The raised center roof section has a band of windows along the roof line for ventilation. This building, which faced demolition in the 1990s, was rehabilitated and still serves as a warm-up ring for horses that compete in the nearby Coliseum.

## SWINE AND SHEEP PAVILIONS

To reach the Swine Pavilion, walk to Grandstand Avenue and turn west on the Avenue of Flags. The Swine Pavilion is marked with a modern banner sign on the building as well as the number 28. The Sheep Pavilion is directly north of the Swine Pavilion, and has a modern banner sign on the building and the number 33.

Mission-style pavilions for showing swine and sheep, which still serve that purpose, were built in 1912. The pavilions were designed by Danville architect C.M. Lewis, and feature terra-cotta plaques of swine and sheep that decorate the dormer walls. Both pavilions include concrete tile roofs and limestone trim with half-round-arch openings. The Swine Pavilion frieze panels display swine rather than the traditional Greek goddess.

## GRANDSTAND

The Grandstand is the huge structure with its ticket entrances facing Grandstand Avenue. The number 34 is on the end of the building.

Former State Fair Poultry Superintendent Len Small, who was elected Governor in 1920, took a particular interest in the Illinois State Fair. He moved the fair dates from October to August so more Illinoisans could attend the event. He also more than doubled the acreage at the fairgrounds and spearheaded a major building program. The most noticeable addition from Governor Small's tenure is the Grandstand, built in 1928 to replace the old grandstand which had been built in 1895. The current grandstand hosts spectators for horse racing and auto racing events and is the location for the fair's major musical entertainment performances.

## DAIRY BUILDING

The Dairy Building is located along Central Avenue just east of the overhead sky ride and just past the Illinois Fire Museum. The number 6 is on the building.

The Peoria firm of Reeves and Baillie designed the 1903 Dairy Building, the painted brick structure that has remained the home of the traditional butter cow since 1922. The large open interior includes exhibit cases, and the outside features a central arched entrance flanked by 12 arch-topped windows. Its hip roof and overhanging eaves make the Dairy Building one of the most recognizable structures on the Fairgrounds.

## SEARS BUNGALOW

This modest white clapboard residence is about a block east of the Dairy Building along Central Avenue. It has no sign or number on the exterior.

This one story wood frame residence was built in 1909 by the Sears Roebuck and Company as a permanent exhibit showing a house and its furnishings, all of which could

be ordered from the company. Until it was moved in the 1920s, the house sat atop the now-demolished Sears Pavilion just to the west. Farm machinery offered through the Sears Catalog occupied the first floor of the pavilion, while the full-size bungalow atop the pavilion was a unique way to display the company's domestic offerings. The house now serves as the on-site residence of the Illinois State Fair manager.

## CONSERVATION BUILDING

The Conservation Building bears the sign "Hobbies, Arts and Crafts Building" as well as the number 3. It is located at the far east end of the Fairgrounds along Central Avenue.

The Conservation Building was constructed in 1918 using material from the Dome Building, a magnificent iron-framed glass-domed 1895 structure that burned to the ground in 1917. Brick and iron ceiling trusses from the Dome Building found their way into the Conservation Building, a large open exhibit space with a modified hip roof and gable roof porches on the north and east entrances. The building is now called the Hobbies, Arts and Crafts Building and serves its original exhibit function.

## EMMERSON BUILDING

The Emmerson Building has its name and the number 8 by its main entrance, which is along Main Street directly east of the Exposition Building and underneath the overhead sky ride.

Governor Louis Lincoln Emmerson's \$2.5 million, 1931 state building program included a new women's building, which was officially named the Emmerson Building. Designed by State Architect Charles Herrick Hammond, the building broke tradition from the predominant neo-classical style and incorporated the popular Art Deco/Art Moderne style's angular shape and stylized ornamentation. It features the Beaux Arts symmetrical arrangement of the grand entrance, pilasters, and classical details.