

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

RECEIVED
APR 02 1990

National Register of Historic Places
Multiple Property Documentation Form

NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Type all entries.

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Historic Fairgrounds in Illinois since 1854.

B. Associated Historic Contexts

1. County Fairs
2. Illinois State Fair
3. Du Quoin State Fair

C. Geographical Data

The State of Illinois

See continuation sheet

D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Planning and Evaluation.



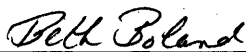
Signature of certifying official

3-20-90
Date

Illinois Historic Preservation Agency

State or Federal agency and bureau

I, hereby, certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.



Signature of the Keeper of the National Register

5/14/90
Date

E. Statement of Historic Contexts

Discuss each historic context listed in Section B.

JANUARY
REVISION

The Associated Historical Contexts named above treat the development of fairgrounds in Illinois under three subjects: 1. County Fairs, 2. The Illinois State Fair and 3. The Du Quoin State Fair. This document will develop only the latter two Historic Contexts because, at present, no county fairgrounds are being nominated to the National Register.

Illinois is unique in having not one, but two State Fairs. The two fairs initially developed for different reasons and therefore they are presented as two separate contexts. The Illinois State Fair was a public institution founded in the mid-19th century aimed at improving agricultural education in the state. The Du Quoin State Fair started as a private race track in the 1920s to host popular harness racing circuits due in part to the increasing pressure to limit horse racing and its related gambling activities at public fairgrounds--county or state. By 1930 the fair at Du Quoin had become so well-known that carnival, amusement, horse racing, auto racing and entertainment circuits which regularly booked with the Illinois State Fair began to play Du Quoin as well. It became, in effect, Illinois' second State Fair. In fact, a 1927 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Du Quoin labels the owner of the grounds the Du Quoin State Fair Association, lending support to the idea that the fair was founded with the idea in mind of becoming a major statewide draw. Therefore, the two fairs are discussed as two separate contexts.

The following statement will outline the national and state events which led to the development of state-owned and private fairgrounds in Illinois during those years and the historical forces in the half-century preceding that time period which promoted that development. The areas of significance of agriculture, recreation/entertainment and architecture will be discussed with regard to their relationship to Illinois fairgrounds. Each of these topics will be presented in thematic rather than in chronological order. County fairs will be touched on only briefly as they relate to those events.

AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION, FAIRS AND EXHIBITIONS IN ILLINOIS

"Until the 1830s," according to agricultural historian Allen G. Bogue, "few settlers entered the regions of Illinois that were dominated by the prairies."⁽¹⁾ But the following fifty years saw an amazing influx of settlers and exponential growth of agriculture in the state. By the 1870s the virgin prairies had been broken and turned into cropland. So great was their production and vast their reaches as to give rise to the term "corn belt" to refer to the states of the central midwest. During that same period the American industrial revolution was well underway. Agricultural historians Jer my Atack and Fred Batement describe as comparatively brief, the period in which "manufacturing had gained a sound foothold in a few eastern states...(and) would advance westward across the northern states toward the Great Lakes to form the industrial heartland of the New World."⁽²⁾ This combination produced changes in agrarian life on a scale never before experienced. The primary change was the move from subsistence farming to highly productive acreage

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number E Page 2

Historic Fairgrounds in Illinois since 1854

aimed at producing for a commercial market. In the view of Atack and Bateman,

Commercialism beckoned, and the northern yeomanry sought participation, often only haltingly, in the developing commercial markets. There was a strong drive to produce "marketable surpluses," a pursuit which depended upon raising the productivity, led northern farmers to mechanize, expand onto more fertile soils, and to experiment with what was to become "scientific farming." Not only did it drive innovation toward improved farm practices and implements, it encouraged the diffusion and acceptance of novel techniques among a generally conservative farm community. (3)

A major component in advancing these agricultural changes was the agricultural fair or exposition. Agricultural fairs in the United States originated in 1810 in New York State (4) and became popular in the Midwest by the mid-19th century. A recent study recounts the growing popularity of those fairs

By the 1860s the agricultural fair was all the rage in many Midwestern states, where rural residents were largely attracted by agricultural societies which promoted the fair as an educational event aimed at improving farming and domestic skills. Such societies offered cash prizes for a variety of exhibits and displays. On a statewide basis, the earliest example of these offerings was at the nation's first State Fair, which was held in 1849 in Detroit, Michigan. It was conducted by the Michigan Agricultural Society...(5)

Improvements in agriculture through education was an important topic in mid-19th century Illinois. The idea of a system of higher education open to members of the working Baldwin Turner, a Yale graduate and professor of Literature and Latin at Illinois College, Jacksonville, Illinois, became president of the Illinois Teachers Institute. In 1851, in an address for the Institute's annual meeting, Turner formally proposed a system of "universities for the masses," to be funded by grants of land given by the Federal Government to endow these state

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number E Page 3

Historic Fairgrounds in Illinois since 1854

institutions--later commonly known as land grant universities.
(6)

That same year a public meeting open to all Illinois farmers was held and the participants adopted a set of resolutions later called the Common Man's Educational Bill of Rights which read in part,

As representatives of the industrial classes, including all cultivators of the soil, artisans, mechanics, and merchants, we desire the same advantages for ourselves...and our posterity...as our professional brethren enjoy...Immediate measures should be taken for the establishment of a university, in the state of Illinois, expressly to meet those felt wants of each and all of the industrial classes of our state. (7)

This sentiment was eventually adopted in the form of an official state legislative resolution forwarded to the U.S. Congress. There a bill endorsing the land-grant college system was introduced by Congressman Justin S. Morrill of Vermont. The bill languished due to a general lack of support. When it finally passed both houses it was vetoed by President Buchanan in 1859. Deciding not to await Federal action, the state of Michigan gave its own grant of land to found the first U.S. Agricultural College near Lansing, which opened in 1855. Jonathan B. Turner, meanwhile, had secured a promise from presidential candidate Abraham Lincoln to sign that bill if elected president. In the first session of Congress after Lincoln's election the bill was passed and signed by the new president.

Another part of this passion for scientific agriculture and agitation for farmers' self-improvement showed in the founding of state agricultural societies to promote new farming methods and continuing education among the general farm population. Michigan, which had pioneered agricultural education with the founding of the nation's first agricultural college, also sponsored the nation's first State Fair; held in Detroit in 1849. It was conducted expressly to "promote the agricultural and household interests of the State." (8)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number E Page 4 Historic Fairgrounds in Illinois since 1854

State agricultural fairs were seen as one of the best ways to introduce new ideas and methods to farmers who could be enticed to these festivals, held in early fall, the traditional time to celebrate the harvest. Several Midwestern states, including Illinois, followed Michigan's suit. The Illinois Agricultural Society was organized in 1853 with an appropriation of "\$1,000 per annum, to be expended in the promotion of...agricultural arts." (9) The Society's first president, James N. Brown, Recording Secretary, Simeon Francis and Treasurer, John Williams, were all from Springfield or Sangamon County, Illinois. These men were deeply concerned that Illinois farmers, while they might have sons attending Illinois' new Industrial University at Champaign (later University of Illinois), were themselves not advancing satisfactorily in their methods. This sentiment was strongly expressed in the very first volume of the Society's Transactions,

However disagreeable to us, it must be confessed that, as a whole, home-bred farmers are necessarily among the most ignorant and bigoted members of the community. As they read little, and travel less, so has it been the more difficult to induce them to adopt improvements in their art...Education...they do value, and usually at too high a rate. But not for themselves. (10)

Agricultural Society leaders decided that the best remedy for this situation was to institute the large, periodical fairs which would prove relatively inexpensive and popular. The benefits which were expected to accrue were listed in these Transactions

-To encourage production through demonstration of the best in field and garden crops, livestock, labor-saving implements and new ideas.

-Help to elevate the individual farmer's opinion of his profession and other farmers as he mingled with them and came to know and respect them. (11)

Agricultural Society board members met at Springfield's American House Hotel on May 25, 1853, and voted to hold a fair

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number E Page 5 Historic Fairgrounds in Illinois since 1854

that fall. Springfield won the bid to host that first fair and it was held on the former Sangamon County Fair Grounds in that community (a "Sangamon County Fair" had been held in 1849). The first Illinois State Fair proved a great popular success. Illinois State Fair historian Patricia Henry recounted the events of that first fair where "so many prized stallions, mares, colts, jacks and jennies, cattle, sheep, swine and poultry were entered that additional accommodations were hastily built" (12) Altogether there were 765 individual entries. Thousands of visitors viewed the exhibition and, by the third day, attendance ranged between fifteen and twenty thousand people and "not one inebriated man was seen!" (13) Fairgoers viewed the best yoke of oxen, dairy products, fruit, grain, field crops including Illinois hemp and tobacco, garden produce, flowers, needlework, butter, baked goods, wines, artwork and hair wreaths. (14) Jonathan Baldwin Turner spoke to the crowds on the need for agricultural education.

The second State Fair was held on the same site the following year (1854) and then began moving to new locations each year, playing a total of twelve cities until 1874 when it located permanently in Springfield. From its inception the State Fair was such a prominent institution that Illinois cities were intensely competitive in the contest to play host. Henry notes a few examples.

In 1856 Alton outbid Salem and Jonesboro by subscribing \$5,000...In 1857 Peoria hosted the fair...in a beautiful wooded bluff location...Centralia was the location of the 1858 fair [where officials were] running free trains twice daily to towns as far away as Decatur so that fair-goers might find out-of-town rooms and commute to the fair...Decatur citizens donated \$15,000 to establish fine grounds in 1863. (15)

Exhibits of farm machinery, horses, poultry, livestock, grains, vegetables, household products and manufactured items continued to grow and made the fair the state's single largest public event. It was the leading agricultural event in Illinois, one of the country's leading states in agricultural production.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number E Page 6 Historic Fairgrounds in Illinois since 1854

FAIRS AND ENTERTAINMENT

Almost from the earliest days popular amusements and entertainment became as much associated with these fairs as agriculture. Horse racing, particularly harness racing, was the most important component of that entertainment aspect of fairs. "Its rise as a popular spectator entertainment reflects and illuminates a fundamental change in American society," says Peter Rathbun (16) which

...paralleled the 1815 to 1915 development of industrialized America. In the years before 1850, American sports were largely agrarian and participatory. The roots of America's enthusiasm for spectator sports today began in the horse racing and fox hunting of the colonial era...but the only organized sport which excited the minds of most Americans was horse racing. A general interest in horse racing began in the 1820s and 1830s. The first public trotting race that attracted much attention was in 1818 on a course near the Jamaica Turnpike on Long Island. (17)

In 1825 the New York Trotting Club drew up the first rules for the sport. After 1830 the trotters used harness and cart rather than racing under saddle, as previously. Rathbun reports that harness racing easily captured the public's imagination because "anyone with a horse and buggy had engaged in a form of it on a country lane." With the great Internal Improvements mania in the 1830s, American roads became greatly improved in quality and far more numerous in quantity--with the consequence that "road racing," a form of impromptu harness racing, became common.

Racing horses in harness was clearly distinguished from racing horses under saddle, the thoroughbred "sport of kings." Harness racing was seen as a common man's sport. By 1850...urban masses and rural industrial workers, including coal miners, no longer had the strength or time for participatory recreation. Missing the rustic pleasures of hunting, fishing and road racing, they were won to the support of commercialized entertainment and spectator sport...It was at this time that racing in

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number E Page 7 Historic Fairgrounds in Illinois since 1854

harness, as opposed to under saddle, really came into its own as a spectator sport. (18)

From the time of the first settlements in the Old Northwest, territorial codes had prohibitions on many forms of gambling--card games, animal fights and lotteries--laws which were mostly ignored in practice. As states were formed from this territory their early constitutions continued these prohibitions and added others aimed particularly at stemming the alarming rise of gambling on the new riverboats travelling the rivers of the Midwest. As a sample of that sentiment,

Anti-gambling fervor increased throughout the 1820s and '30s. In the wake of anti-gambling riots and lynchings, Ohio river towns expelled gambling hustlers...Once Iowa was declared an independent political entity the settlers were quick to enact their own laws, including a statute on gambling...Minnesota's anti-gambling statute forbade keeping, using, or betting on gaming tables. (19)

But an important precedent in slowing laws against horse race betting was set in an 1830s Iowa case which held that horse racing was not a game of chance as defined by the statutory prohibitions on gambling, and thus not forbidden by law. (20) It was the last years of the 19th century before anti-gambling forces overcame this early defeat and won legislation designed to eliminate or severely restrict horse racing on public grounds.

From the 1850s forward Illinois county and regional fairs provided a "...major outlet for racing including trotting races." (21) Horse racing and the corrupt gambling practices associated with it became epidemic by 1890 when the tide began to turn in favor of stricter regulation. Gambling historian Alice Fleming gives as an example of these abuses, a trio of St. Louis residents who owned racetracks in the Midwest where they earned as much as \$10,000 a day from each. These owners, as well as a

majority of other racing promoters, routinely rigged the races, usually by using drugs to make a horse run slower or faster or by substituting a slow horse at the last minute for a fast one.

Eventually these abuses prompted a public outcry against racing. A group that called itself the International

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number E Page 8 Historic Fairgrounds in Illinois since 1854

Reform Bureau was organized to pressure state legislatures into passing laws against racing. Newspaper editors and business and religious leaders got behind the movement, and racetracks all over the country began to shut down. By 1911 racing was legal only in Maryland, Oklahoma, Montana, Kentucky, Virginia and Utah...Horse racing remained illegal in most states until after World War I. (22)

This anti-gambling sentiment was a part of the larger reform era of pre-World War I America which produced much restrictive legislation including the famous Prohibition amendment of 1919.

Although horse racing made an eventual comeback and retained a consistently loyal following, private operators took the majority of circuit racing business from public fairs in those years and spectators often turned to private fairgrounds and racetracks. Says Peter Rathbun,

The public or quasi-public nature of the county [and State] fairs made them likely targets for anti-gambling forces. Around 1923, a resolution by the Illinois County Fair Association against gambling at county fairs and interpreted as an attack against racing, resulted in the formation of a separate association made up of southern Illinois fairgrounds. As a result of this action William Hayes and some associates created the Du Quoin Fair, which soon became an association member...[and which represented] the reaction of the race-loving public to the limitations reformers put on them. (23)

In 1870 the National Trotting Association formed the first comprehensive governing body for harness racing and racing circuits were developed by horse racing organizations. The Illinois circuit, founded in the 1870s, was composed of eleven fair organizations, including the Illinois State Fair. Horse races at the State Fair were an integral part of the festivities during its migratory years. By 1890 Illinois fairs were as associated with horse racing and other popular amusements as they were with agricultural education and exhibits. (24) Illinois fairs had become a broad-based, widely-known form of popular culture and entertainment for the state of Illinois.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number E Page 9 Historic Fairgrounds in Illinois since 1854

INFLUENCE OF THE GREAT 19TH CENTURY EXHIBITIONS

By 1890 many state fairs in the U.S. began to grow large, popular and successful and began to pattern their activities on the great international exhibitions of the 19th century. Though there had been earlier exhibitions, Britain's Great Exhibition of 1851, held in London, was a milestone in attracting world wide attention to a single fair. It was a fair on an immense scale, both in activities and in construction. Joseph Paxton's famous Crystal Palace--the first large-scale, prefabricated iron and glass building--was its centerpiece. The Paris International Exhibition of 1867 originated the idea of numerous exhibition buildings in a park-like setting and the Paris Exhibition of 1889--famed for its Eiffel Tower--carried those ideas even further in a number of grand, permanent buildings. But it was the Chicago World's Fair of 1893, the World's Columbian Exposition or "White City," which dominated all of the previous exhibitions in concept, design, scale and execution. A completely new, neo-classical city created by architects, artists, sculptors and landscape designers arose in Chicago.

The United States had hosted several trade fairs but only one full-scale international exhibition, that held in Philadelphia in 1876, the celebration of the centennial of American independence. The World's Columbian Exposition would be the fifteenth world's fair and the second American one. It was the 1889 [Paris] exhibition that inspired the World's Columbian Exposition. But the progeny far surpassed its forebears...[it] was not only larger than any previous exposition but also more elaborately designed, more precisely laid out, more fully realized, more prophetic. (25)

Indeed it prophesied, for many state fairs, including those of Minnesota, Iowa, Indiana, Michigan and Illinois, a new generation of large-scale, neo-classical "exhibition halls" set amid permanent landscaped grounds. In addition to the traditional mission of promoting agriculture, these state fairs set goals similar to those of the influential Columbian Exposition with its intention to

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number E Page 10 Historic Fairgrounds in Illinois since 1854

inform all visitors of the momentous achievements in such areas as fine arts, industry [and] technology...in short, the exposition was a celebration of America's coming of age--a grand rite of passage. It was also the primary representative of an era...aptly designated as the watershed of American history. (26)

Like the Columbian Exposition, the new, permanent state fairs represented the change taking place with the dawning of a new age and century. The U.S. was very conscious of this momentous change, both for good and ill.

On the one side lies an America predominantly agricultural; concerned with domestic problems; conforming, intellectually at least, to the political, economic and moral principles inherited from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries...On the other side lies the modern America, predominantly urban and industrial; inextricably involved in world economy and politics... experiencing profound changes in population, social institutions, economy and technology; and trying to accommodate its traditional institutions and habits of thought to conditions new and in part alien. (27)

It was in the Columbian Exposition and in institutions like state fairs (where they took their cue from the Columbian Exposition), that America's change from rural to urban becomes most apparent. "The East was already urban. The heartland of America was nearly so," writes David Burg. He quotes Arthur Schlesinger's description of places like Illinois where "...rural America, like a stag at bay, was making its last stand." (28) The message of the Columbian Exposition, with its dual promise of improved rural life through agricultural technology, hand-in-hand with a smooth-running urban machine leading America forward, was carried out in state fairs over the next generation.

THE ILLINOIS STATE FAIRGROUNDS.

As early as the 1870s agitation began to locate a permanent site for the State Fair. In earlier years, when the fair moved around, travel was slow, expensive or difficult and most farmers and the general public could attend only those

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number E Page 11 Historic Fairgrounds in Illinois since 1854

fairs held within a reasonable distance of their home. Individuals could attend whenever the fair was held in a nearby city. But rapidly improving, inexpensive rail transportation (common by the 1880s) made it possible for more Illinois citizens to travel greater distances in order to visit a fair. This, combined with the increasingly prohibitive costs of setting up new fairgrounds nearly every year made State Agricultural Board members decide that finding "...a permanent site seemed reasonable." (29) Though the permanent site was not actually established until the 1890s, after 1870 the fair did not travel as far into the southern and northwestern parts of the state as before, staying instead in the more populated central and north-central regions. In fact, "the fair was held for the last time in southern Illinois when its 1871 site was Du Quoin." (30) Peoria, Ottawa, Freeport, Chicago and Olney were the cities which hosted the fair during its remaining years of migration.

In the last quarter of the 19th century Midwestern state fairs in Iowa, Minnesota, Indiana and Illinois all became permanently located after years of wandering and were all, to a greater or lesser extent, directly influenced by the Columbian Exposition in the look of their fairgrounds. The layout and buildings of the Illinois State Fair were probably the earliest and most directly influenced of these. This is not surprising since some of the fair directors responsible for the development of the permanent fair had served on Chicago World's Fair committees and were responsible for having a major world's fair building transported to the Springfield fairgrounds. Other World's Fair accessories also came to Springfield at the time including iron arches placed on the four intersections of the public square.

No Illinois State Fair was held in 1893 because of the state's heavy involvement with the Columbian Exposition. But late that year Illinois Department of Agriculture officials, inspired by the beauty and impressiveness of the White City, decided at last to permanently locate the fair and develop extensive fairgrounds. A process of site selection began. Requirements needing to be met were sent to officials in cities interested in housing the fair. Each city representative submitted an application and gave an oral presentation at the Agriculture Department's board meeting in January 1894.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number E Page 12 Historic Fairgrounds in Illinois since 1854

Chief contenders were Bloomington, Decatur, Peoria and Springfield...Springfield and Sangamon County finally won on the eighth ballot by offering the 156-acre county fair site just north of the city [part of the present grounds], construction of a fence and sewage system, free electric lights for two years, free city water for as long as the fair is held there and \$50,000 in cash. (31)

This generous offer gives some indication of the economic and social importance of the Fair to cities in the state.

The original 156-acre site was connected with two major railroad lines by a spur and development of the grounds started. The first building constructed was the Main Exposition Building which remains standing today. Significantly, this building was designed to house

...nothing but the displays of small manufactured articles and fine goods shown by the merchants of Springfield and other cities, articles of fine wear made by ladies, and art specimens, for which one wing is reserved and made into an art gallery. A large gallery for textile exhibits and for vendors' booths encircles the entire inner area. (32)

No longer would the State Fair be totally identified with agriculture, but, like the Columbian Exposition, equally would it be a promoter of manufacturing, scientific and industrial interests of an increasingly urbanized society. The next permanent building to be erected was Machinery Hall. While designed to hold exhibits with especial appeal to farmers, these exhibits emphasized changing rather than traditional farming methods with their display of mechanized farm machinery. So much new mechanical equipment was appearing each year that finding display space gave "...renewed embarrassment to the managers by steadily increasing demands for space." (33) The Grand Horticultural Hall from the Chicago Exposition, with its imposing dome, was re-erected on the new State Fair grounds very soon after.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number E Page 13 Historic Fairgrounds in Illinois since 1854

Horse racing, despite the contention by some that it encouraged gambling (see discussion above), was prominently featured at the new fair. A mile track was constructed and in use by 1895, so great was the demand for the spectator sport. One of the first promotional tracts published about the grounds made a careful note of the superior qualities of the horse racing facilities there and of the support given by Fair authorities.

The generous purses offered by the Illinois State Board of Agriculture bring noted horses to the track and it is destined to become one of the greatest places for race meets in the country...[with] the finest grandstand in the western country...Speed barns which are models of beauty and comfort have been erected for the flyers...Every horseman who has visited them pronounces the accommodation for speed and track horses unsurpassed for safety and convenience. (34)

But, even while these words were being written, horse racing on public sites was coming under increasing public criticism for its direct relationship with gambling and bookmaking activities.

In the years after 1900 automobile racing joined horse racing as a second form of popular entertainment at Illinois fairgrounds. As early as 1905 the famous pioneer racer Barney Oldfield had included the original Illinois State Fair mile track on his barnstorming circuit with his Green Dragon racing car. By 1910 regular auto races had become a part of fair entertainment. In that year Oldfield returned for a spectacular race between his car and an airplane as part of a racing publicity stunt. That year also saw the race crash death of Springfield driver LaRue Vredenburg on the track. Events of national significance in automobile racing occurred at the Illinois State Fairgrounds and are detailed in a recently-published work.

Finally, in 1934, the State Fair management took a step which would make the track known throughout the country: they staged a AAA [American Automobile Association] 100 mile National Championship race. Just a handful of tracks conducted such events in 1934. So the contest made national news. Billy Winn not only won the race, he

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number E Page 14 Historic Fairgrounds in Illinois since 1854

also began a tradition which has lasted half a century...Other tracks have long ago been plowed up and paved over. Only Springfield remains in its original form. (35)

These State Fair races, later under the auspices of the United States Auto Club (U.S.A.C.), were part of the racing circuit which included the Indianapolis 500--featuring the same cars and drivers--and had been, in fact, directly inspired by the Indy. State Fair representatives, having visited the Indianapolis race in May 1934, began an active campaign to promote a similar Springfield race. Edward Collins, Fair manager,

...guaranteed success for the August event when he turned the promotion over to legendary Ralph Hankinson. The most successful race promoter in history, Hankinson had been in business for 24 years. Almost every Eastern AAA race was held under his direction...The AAA showed how important they regarded this first [State Fair] race when they assigned Eddie Edenburn as Chief Steward. It was the same role he filled at the Indianapolis 500...Prize money was \$5,000. (36)

All 20,000 grandstand tickets were sold days in advance and the race proved to be an unqualified success and continues to be held annually.

THE DU QUOIN STATE FAIR.

The Du Quoin State Fairgrounds is located on the south edge of Du Quoin, Illinois in the southern part of the state. It was originally a private horse racing track developed by William R. Hayes. Hayes had amassed a comfortable fortune made in soft drink and motion picture film distribution businesses, a dairy company and bottling plants in 39 cities. In 1923 Hayes, an avid horseman, opened a small fairgrounds with a half-mile track, grandstand (later destroyed by fire) and a half dozen horse stables. To compliment the harness racing events held there Hayes booked dog, auto, fashion and stunt shows. The production grew in size and renown to quickly become a major attraction in southern, and later all of, Illinois.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number E Page 15 Historic Fairgrounds in Illinois since 1854

Just as the Illinois State Fair became nationally famous for its auto racing circuit, Illinois' "other State Fair" at Du Quoin became as well-known for its horse racing circuit. The fair went on to host the first night horse show in the country in 1924, made possible by the novelty of electric lighting. Throughout the 1930s Hayes worked tirelessly to capture the Grand Circuit of Harness Racing for Du Quoin. He was finally able to do so in 1942 with the wartime suspension of horse racing at the Illinois State Fair. (37) Hayes died in 1952 without ever giving up his dream of bringing the Hambletonian, a major national sporting event and the United States' richest trotting race, to Du Quoin. Of the Hambletonian, Peter Rathbun writes that it

...began in 1926, just three years after [William] Hayes opened the Du Quoin Fairgrounds. That year the Hambletonian Society of Syracuse, New York held a race for three-year-old standardbred trotters and named in honor of the great [19th century] sire Hambletonian I. The race had the largest purse ever known in the history of harness racing to that date. In 1927, the Hambletonian was held in Lexington, Kentucky. In 1930 the race settled at Goodtime Park in Goshen, New York, for a 27-year stay...(38)

The race continued to be the most famous trotting event held in the U.S., where harness racing became increasingly popular.

In the post-war years racing, particularly harness racing, became big business. By 1946, the United States Trotting Association licensed close to 6,000 drivers and about the same number of owners...Meanwhile, the relative importance of the Hambletonian continued to grow. By 1950, when Hayes' horse won it, it had already emerged as "the Kentucky Derby of harness racing." (39)

After Hayes' death, his sons, Eugene J. and Don M., achieved their father's dream and secured the Hambletonian for the Du Quoin State Fair where it remained until 1980. In 1964, when ABC broadcast the race on its Wide World of Sports, the Fair received national television coverage, making it known to much of the general public. Although the actual coming of the Hambletonian to Du Quoin occurred after the historical period of the Fair, it was

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number E Page 16 Historic Fairgrounds in Illinois since 1854

actually the culmination of Hayes' original goal for the Fair--to become home to a famous trotting circuit and race.

ENDNOTES

1. Alan G. Bogue, From Prairie to Cornbelt: Farming on the Illinois and Iowa Praries in the Nineteenth Century, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963, p.8.
2. Jeremy Atack and Fred Bateman, To Their Own Soil: Agriculture in the Antebellum North, Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1987, p.3.
3. Ibid., p.11.
4. Michael Koop, Minnesota State Fair Historic District, (National Register of Historic Places Registration Form), Minneapolis: The Author, 1988.
5. Ibid.
6. Edwin Bay, The History of the National Association of County Agricultural Agents, 1915-1960, Springfield, Missouri: The Association, 1961, p.5.
7. Ibid.
8. Koop, op cit.
9. Newton Bateman and Paul Selby, Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois, Chicago: Munsell, 1901, p.12.
10. Transactions of the Illinois State Agricultural Society (Volume I), Springfield, Illinois: Lanphier and Walker, 1855, pp.1-2.
11. Ibid.
12. Patricia Henry, "Illinois State Fair: Then and Now," Illinois Magazine (Supplement), July-August, 1984, p.1A

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number E Page 17 Historic Fairgrounds in Illinois since 1854

13. Ibid, p.2A.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Rathbun Associates, Du Quoin State Fairgrounds Historical and Architectural Significance Statement, Springfield, Illinois: The Author, 1989, p.18.
17. Ibid, p.19.
18. Ibid, p.21.
19. National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, The Development of the Law of Gambling: 1776-1976, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, 1977, pp.308-325.
20. Ibid.
21. Rathbun, op. cit., p.22.
22. Alice Fleming. Something for Nothing: A History of Gambling. New York City: Delaacorte Press, 1978, p.54.
23. Rathbun, op. cit., p.23.
24. Henry, op. cit., p.1A.
25. David F. Burg, Chicago's White City of 1893, Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1976, p.xii.
26. Ibid, p.xii.
27. Henry Steele Commager, The American Mind, New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1950, p.41.
28. Burg, op. cit., p.3.
29. Stephan Sands, "State Fair Links People, Products, Past.", Life Times Magazine, August 1988, p.5.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number E Page 18 Historic Fairgrounds in Illinois since 1854

30. Henry, op. cit., p.5A.
31. Ibid, p.6A.
32. Illinois State Journal, Springfield in 1896, Springfield, Illinois: The Author, 1896, pp.18-19.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Roger Karban and Virginia Dowling, Dirt! Fifty Years of AAA/USAC National Championship Racing on the Springfield, Illinois State Fairgrounds Mile, Belleville, Illinois: Stellar Publications, 1984, p.1.
36. Ibid, p.6.
37. Rathbun, op. cit., p.25.
38. Ibid, p.27.
39. Ibid, p.29.

F. Associated Property Types

I. Name of Property Type Fairgrounds

II. Description

To qualify for nomination districts, buildings or structures need to be all or part of a permanent fairgrounds. Fairgrounds may be state, regional, county, private or other, but should be recognized as such by the general public. Fairgrounds routinely have one or more major exposition-type buildings for display of merchandise, equipment, crafts, produce, animal exhibition barns, often a horse or auto racetrack and a collection of smaller service buildings such as stables, refreshment or souvenir stands. Residential buildings for fair officers are sometimes present. An open area, often paved, is usually set aside for carnival rides, sideshows and midway acts. Large spaces are commonly devoted to automobile and truck parking--though these often extend beyond the fairgrounds proper--and sometimes camping facilities for visitors.

III. Significance

Illinois fairgrounds are important as reminders of Illinois' rich agricultural and entertainment history beginning the mid-19th century. Most fairgrounds will have statewide significance and be nominated as historic districts with the potential to be significant under at least the following criteria and areas of significance.

IV. Registration Requirements

Fairgrounds are most noteworthy when they are viewed as a historic district under both Criterion A and Criterion C. They must retain a strong integrity of association and location from the period of significance to represent their importance in the agricultural development of the region or state, or their importance in the local or regional rural society's recreational/entertainment pursuits. The fairground setting should be sufficiently intact in terms of the historic building and structure density and location, building setback, circulation system (roads, trails, paths, etc.), and landforms (race tracks, midway open area, demonstration cropland, parkland, picnic and parking areas). There should be a minimum of intrusive non-historic buildings, structures and landforms. The individual buildings should retain sufficient physical features to evoke their historic function. In most cases these features will have been retained as most will still be functioning fair buildings.

See continuation sheet

See continuation sheet for additional property types

G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.

In 1974 windshield surveys of Illinois State Fair and Du Quoin State Fair buildings were conducted by Paul Sprague as director of the Illinois Historic Structures Survey. Many buildings and structures were photographed and known dates of construction noted.

Rathbun Associates, under contract to the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, completed a study of the Du Quoin State Fair buildings and structures in early 1989. Rathbun used general histories of fairs and horse racing and interviews with descendants of the fair's founder, William R. Hayes, to compile a brief history of that fair and its place in Illinois history. The Rathbun report was corrected by Mrs. Jane Rader, granddaughter of William Hayes.

Individual buildings and structures on the Du Quoin and Illinois State fairgrounds were surveyed in 1989-90 by Edward Russo under contract to the Illinois Department of Agriculture. Determination was made of physical condition and integrity of each building or structure. Historical information was consulted in the Sangamon Valley Collection at Springfield's Lincoln Library and

See continuation sheet

H. Major Bibliographical References

ATACK, Jeremy and Fred Bateman, To Their Own Soil: Agriculture in the Antebellum North. Ames, Iowa; Iowa State University Press, 1987.

BATEMAN, Newton and Paul Selby, Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois. Chicago: Munsell, 1901.

BAY, Edwin, The History of the National Association of County Agricultural Agents, 1915-1960. Springfield, Missouri: The Association, 1961.

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional documentation:

- State historic preservation office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency

- Local government
 University
 Other

Specify repository: Sangamon Valley Collection/Lincoln Library, 326 South Seventh Street, Springfield, Illinois 62701

I. Form Prepared By

name/title Edward J. Russo
organization Lincoln Library date February 10, 1990
street & number 326 South Seventh Street telephone (217) 753-4910
city or town Springfield state Illinois zip code 62701

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number F II Page 2 Historic Fairgrounds in Illinois Since 1854

Dormitory housing is also not unusual. Boundaries are very often clearly visible and fenced. There is nearly always a distinctive Main Gate entrance and, usually, secondary entrances. An important aspect is in the grouping of buildings and structures in the landscape and their inter-relationship with one another.

Fairgrounds usually have high public visibility and are commonly located adjacent to a town or community rather than in isolated rural areas. In general, their physical condition can be expected to be good since, in most cases, existing fairgrounds will still be functioning as fair sites.

No Illinois fairgrounds have been listed to the National Register, nor has any comprehensive survey of Illinois fairgrounds been made. Thus a specific period of time or locations of related properties cannot be determined. However the survey of the Illinois State Fairgrounds and the Du Quoin State Fairgrounds made in the preparation of this document provides some basic description of the properties.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number F III Page 2 Historic Fairgrounds in Illinois Since 1854

CRITERION A.

1. Entertainment/Recreation.

Traditionally, fairgrounds are places of public gathering and popular entertainment for a large segment of the general population. As such they broadly reflect our society's entertainment and recreational pursuits. For example they are often scenes of horse and auto racing events.

2. Agriculture.

Fairgrounds may be closely associated with agricultural progress through machinery displays, dissemination of planting and crop variety information and exhibits of typical or outstanding crops and pure bred farm animals.

CRITERION C.

1. Architecture.

Most fairgrounds have been constructed over a period of years and often exhibit a collection of good representative examples of architectural styles throughout the historical period. Individual buildings on a fairgrounds may be exceedingly fine examples of a given style, represent the work of a master or possess high artistic value, and therefore can be listed as an individual property.

CRITERION CONSIDERATION G.

Fairgrounds might contain buildings or structures less than fifty years old that possess exceptional architectural importance. A good example of this building is the Du Quoin State Fairgrounds in southern Illinois. Many of the Du Quoin Fair's major buildings were constructed in the two or three years following World War II. However, historically and stylistically, they are exceptional examples of the Art Deco/Moderne style which was popular during the 1930s.

This form does not discuss other possible areas of significance, for example Art or Historic Archeology, for which some Illinois fairgrounds may be significant.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number F IV **Page** 2 **Historic Fairgrounds in Illinois Since 1854**

For individual properties to qualify under Criterion A, the resource must retain a strong association with the fairgrounds, and it must have retained its integrity of historic location. While it is expected that the resource will have undergone additions or alterations, these changes should not significantly change the historic appearance of the property. For a building or landscape to qualify for Criterion C, the property must be a well-preserved example of a period or type. It may also be a good representation of a particular designer's work. For Criterion C, a higher level of integrity of design, materials and workmanship from the period of significance is necessary. Sufficient stylistic and structural features should remain to identify it with its period of significance. Specifically for buildings, the integrity of the historic facade arrangement and fenestration is important and historic massing, historic roof shape and floor plan should be evident.

For buildings less than fifty years old to qualify under Criterion Consideration G, for their architectural merit, the building must be an exceptionally important example of a period or type or possess high artistic value. It must have excellent physical integrity from the time of construction. Specifically, it must have excellent integrity of design, materials and workmanship, and it can have only minor alterations or additions since the time of construction.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number G Page 2 Historic Fairgrounds in Illinois Since 1854.

the Illinois Department of Agriculture to determine (where possible) construction dates and other historical information.

Records from the Du Quoin Fair were in private hands until purchase of the fairgrounds by the state in 1986. Few of those records remained intact at the time of purchase by the state. Many Illinois State Fair administrative records were destroyed in the 1970s at the time of demolition of the Administration Building (formerly the Womens' Building). The Sangamon Valley Collection contains the single best collection of State Fair history from 1894 forward. This includes photographs, clippings and ephemeral materials arranged in files by decade as well as Fair histories published alone or within other works.

The Sangamon Valley Collection also contains much general Illinois agricultural history useful in researching State Fair history. No significant private collections for either fair are yet known to exist. Only the Sprague and Rathbun field surveys of Illinois fairgrounds (noted above) existed previous to this document. This document and the individual nomination forms for the Illinois State and Du Quoin State fairs will serve as those surveys for the present time. The Rathbun report served for much of the historical background used for the Du Quoin State Fair history in this document and in the individual nomination form.

An historical overview of national and state circumstances leading to the development of agricultural exhibitions and fairs was made to determine the significance of Illinois' two state fairs to that development (Section E. on this form). The relationship of the two fairs, one public and the other formerly private, was examined in light of this historical overview. It was determined that both originated and developed from the 19th century rural, agrarian traditions of interest in agriculture, husbandry, harness racing and the elevating aspects of public exhibitions with their emphasis on scientific, moral and cultural improvements offered in a festival or holiday atmosphere.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number H Page 2 Historic Fairgrounds in Illinois since 1854

- BOGUE, Allan G., From Prairie to Cornbelt: Farming on the Illinois and Iowa Prairies in the Nineteenth Century. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963.
- BOLIN, Steve, The Illinois State Fairgrounds. A Selected Bibliography: Permanent Fair Structures. Springfield, Illinois: Lincoln Library, 1986.
- BURG, David F., Chicago's White City of 1893. [Lexington]: University Press of Kentucky, 1976.
- COMMAGER, Henry Steele, The American Mind. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950.
- FLEMING, Alice, Something for Nothing: A History of Gambling. New York City: Delacorte Press, 1978.
- HENRY, Patricia, "Illinois State Fair: Then and Now," Illinois Magazine (Supplement). July-August 1984.
- ILLINOIS HISTORIC STRUCTURES SURVEY, Inventory of Architecture before World War II in Sangamon County, Illinois. Springfield, Illinois: Illinois Department of Conservation, 1974.
- KARBAN, Roger and Virginia Dowling, Dirt! Fifty Years of AAA/USAC National Championship Racing on the Springfield, Illinois State Fairgrounds Mile. Belleville, Illinois: Stellar Publications, 1984.
- KOOP, Michael, Minnesota State Fair Historic District (National Register of Historic Places Registration Form). Minneapolis: Minnesota Historical Society, 1988.
- NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE, The Development of the Law of Gambling, 1776-1976. Washington: U.S. Department of Justice, 1977.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number H Page 3 Historic Fairgrounds in Illinois since 1854

RATHBUN Associates, Du Quoin State Fairgrounds Historical
and Architectural Significance Statement.
Springfield, Illinois: Illinois Historic
Preservation Agency, 1989.

SANDS, Stephan, "State Fair Links People, Products, Past."
Chicago: Life Times, August 1988.

TRANSACTIONS of the Illinois State Agricultural
Society...Volume I, 1853-54. Springfield,
Illinois: Lanphier and Walker, 1855.