

This Day in History... September 29, 1841

First State Fair in America

On September 29, 1841, New York held the first state fair in the US. Today, it's the oldest and one of the most highly attended of all US state fairs.

The Great New York State Fair began with the establishment of the New York State Agricultural Society in February 1832. The group was made up of farmers, legislators, and others who wanted to advocate for agriculture and local fairs. After years of planning, the first New York State Fair was held in Syracuse from September 29-30, 1841. Between 10,000 and 15,000 people visited the fair during these dates and witnessed events such as speeches, animal exhibits, plowing contests, and samples of farm and home goods.



These stamps were issued in 2019 to honor state and county fairs.



Most fairs center around local agriculture.

After the first New York State Fair, the location of the event changed several times over the next few decades. Finally, in September 1890, the Syracuse Land Company gave 100 acres to the Agricultural Society for a permanent fairground. Management of the fair was turned over to New York State in 1899, and permanent buildings were constructed not long after.

During World War I, the fairgrounds became Camp Syracuse, serving as a training station for 40,000 soldiers. In 1938, the fair was renamed the New York State Agricultural and Industrial Exposition and it was expanded to 14 days and included entertainment acts. The fairgrounds served as a military base during World War II and installed the Mighty Wurlitzer Theatre Pipe Organ in 1967. In 2010, the fair hosted the first outdoor game in American Hockey League history, also setting a league attendance record of more than 21,500 fans.

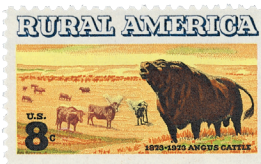
Today, the fair's attractions include the Chevy Court concert theater and a Midway filled with games and rides. Agriculture is still a central focus of the fair, offering displays, events, competitions, and more to share the importance of the industry to the state. Among these exhibits is the dairy building, where visitors can sample different kinds of milk and see the butter sculpture, a fair staple since 1969. Fun fact – after the fair is over, the 800-pounds of butter used for the sculptures is made into biofuel for use by college buses for the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry. To date, the 13-day attendance record for the New York State Fair was over 1.3 million in 2019. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the fair did not occur in 2020, but returned for an extended run of 18-days in 2021.



Many fairs have 4-H events and activities.

Wisconsin hosts a "Moo-La-Palooza" where the person with the best moo gets \$1,000.

• Texas holds the record for the highest attendance of any state fair with 3.5 million visitors each year. Minnesota has the largest single-day attendance at 200,000. And Alaska had the highest attendance by population in 2015, with 41%.



Wisconsin holds the World Beef Expo, one of the largest cattle expos in the Midwest.



Many fairs include Future Farmers of America exhibits and demonstrations.

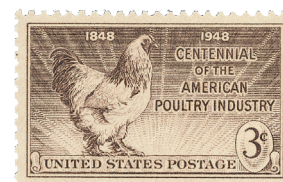
Want more fun fair facts?

• America's early fairs were held as early as 1745 to buy and sell livestock. Massachusetts hosted the first US county fair in 1807, though it was mostly a sheep shearing demonstration and contest.

• Massachusetts hosts "the Big E" Eastern States Exposition, which is a combined fair for Massachusetts, Maine, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. Pennsylvania doesn't hold a state fair. Instead, they have over 100 smaller fairs.

• Michigan was the second state to host a state fair beginning in 1849.

• The Georgia State Fair includes the Banana Derby, in which monkeys race dogs. Minnesota hosts a Llamarama in which llama owners dress their animals in fun costumes. And Wisconsin



Poultry exhibits and competitions are found at many fairs.

• Hog calling is common at several state fairs. However, some states, such as Illinois and Iowa, have husband calling, in which wives call their husbands, bringing a humorous twist to this tradition. Iowa also stages an Outhouse Race, with the winner receiving a golden toilet seat.

• In states where it's legal, such as Oregon, marijuana plants are judged in agricultural competitions.

• Alaska's fair is older than the state itself. The first fair was held in 1936, more than two decades before Alaska became a state in 1959. Alaska also has a giant cabbage weigh-off; in 2012 they set the world record for the heaviest green cabbage at 138.25 pounds.

• California's state fair is the only one with its own monorail.

Mystic Stamp Company • Camden, NY 13316

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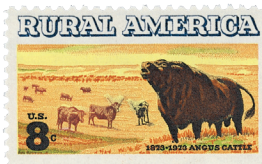
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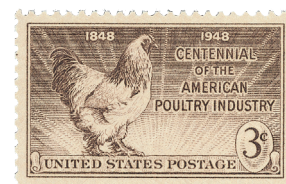
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