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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic name West Liberty Fairgrounds Historic District
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 101 N. Clay Street
city or town West Liberty
state Iowa code IA county Muscatine code 139 zip code 52776

N/A	not for publication
N/A	vicinity

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this x nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property x meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide x local

Steve King _____
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State Historical Society of Iowa
State Historic Preservation Office

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register _____ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register _____ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:) _____

Patrick Andrews _____
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property
 (Check as many boxes as apply.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

Category of Property
 (Check only one box.)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
 (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
16	16	buildings
2	0	sites
2	6	structures
0	0	objects
20	22	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
 (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE / fair

Current Functions
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE / fair

7. Description

Architectural Classification
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER

Materials
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Wood

Metal

roof: Asphalt

: Metal

other: Earth

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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The West Liberty Fairgrounds Historic District is located on the southwest side of West Liberty in the northwest corner of Muscatine County (Figure 1). The Muscatine County Fair continues to be held on the West Liberty Fairgrounds, and the overall character and design of the fairgrounds remains that of a historic landscape related to the evolving nature of county fairgrounds. A large tract of land was bought by the West Liberty Park Association in 1875, and they leased it to the Union District Agricultural Society to hold their fair on the grounds. Additional land was acquired at the southeast corner in 1889, and additional land within the boundary at the south end was acquired in 1963 (Figure 2). The boundary for the historic district includes this land historically associated with the fairgrounds throughout the period of significance from 1875 to 1969. The fairgrounds were historically and are currently located on the southwest edge of West Liberty, with a factory to the north, residential blocks to the east, Oak Ridge Cemetery to the south, and rural land to the west. Open grassy space, trees, drives, and buildings and structures related to fair functions define the character of the fairgrounds. Overall, the West Liberty Fairgrounds has good integrity, reflecting a combination of historic buildings with newer buildings constructed to sustain the use of the property as the county fairgrounds. While the fairgrounds has evolved as a historic landscape with a number of new buildings constructed and some older buildings demolished, the fairgrounds retain a large number of historic buildings that reflect historic operations of the fair. The majority of the larger buildings on the fairgrounds are historic buildings. Newer buildings have been constructed to serve particular functions related to the fair; there are no intrusions of non-fair uses among the non-contributing resources. These newer buildings have also tended to be smaller, with some exceptions. The race track, a significant historic feature, remains as one of the dominant features of the fairgrounds, along with the associated amphitheater/grandstands. Overall, there are 42 resources tabulated on the fairgrounds, including 20 contributing resources and 22 non-contributing resources. Contributing resources include 16 buildings, two sites, and two structures; non-contributing resources include 16 buildings and six structures. Several recent small portable buildings were not tabulated.

Several significant historic resources are found throughout the West Liberty Fairgrounds (Figure 3 and table starting on page 14). The grounds were originally improved in the 1870s and 1880s with several buildings and a race track. Horse races were a key part of early fairs to both compare horses and attract visitors to the grounds, and the early horse track was enlarged to the present one-half mile size in the 1930s. The earliest extant building identified is the vegetables hall built in 1897, relocated on the grounds in 1936 and remodeled for girls' 4-H exhibits (Map #6). Seven significant extant resources date to construction from the 1910s to 1930s, including the Exhibition Hall (1915, Map #7), Draft Horse Barn (1915, Map #25), Swine Pavilion (1918, Map #36), main gate entry piers (1927, Map #1), main gate ticket booth (1927, Map #2), amphitheater (1928, Map #16), and Baby Beef Barn (1934, Map #25). Each of these resources is directly related to important aspects of the county fair, including agricultural and home exhibits, livestock exhibits, entertainment, and youth entries. Continued growth of the West Liberty Fair in the post-World War II period as a true agricultural-based county fair resulted in the need for additional livestock facilities. Entries surpassed available space, resulting in significant improvements on the grounds in the 1950s including the construction of the Junior Cattle X-Barn (1954, Map #23). The race track, a prominent feature of the fairgrounds since the 1870s, was rebuilt for auto racing in 1960, as automobile races replaced the harness races that had been a key feature of the fair for decades (Map #20). Improvements and expansion throughout the 1960s related to increased numbers at the West Liberty Fair and prominence of the fair at a statewide level that resulted in the construction of new livestock judging pavilion in 1966 (Map #35) and a large building for girls 4-H exhibits in 1969 (Map #4), the last significant building within the period of significance.

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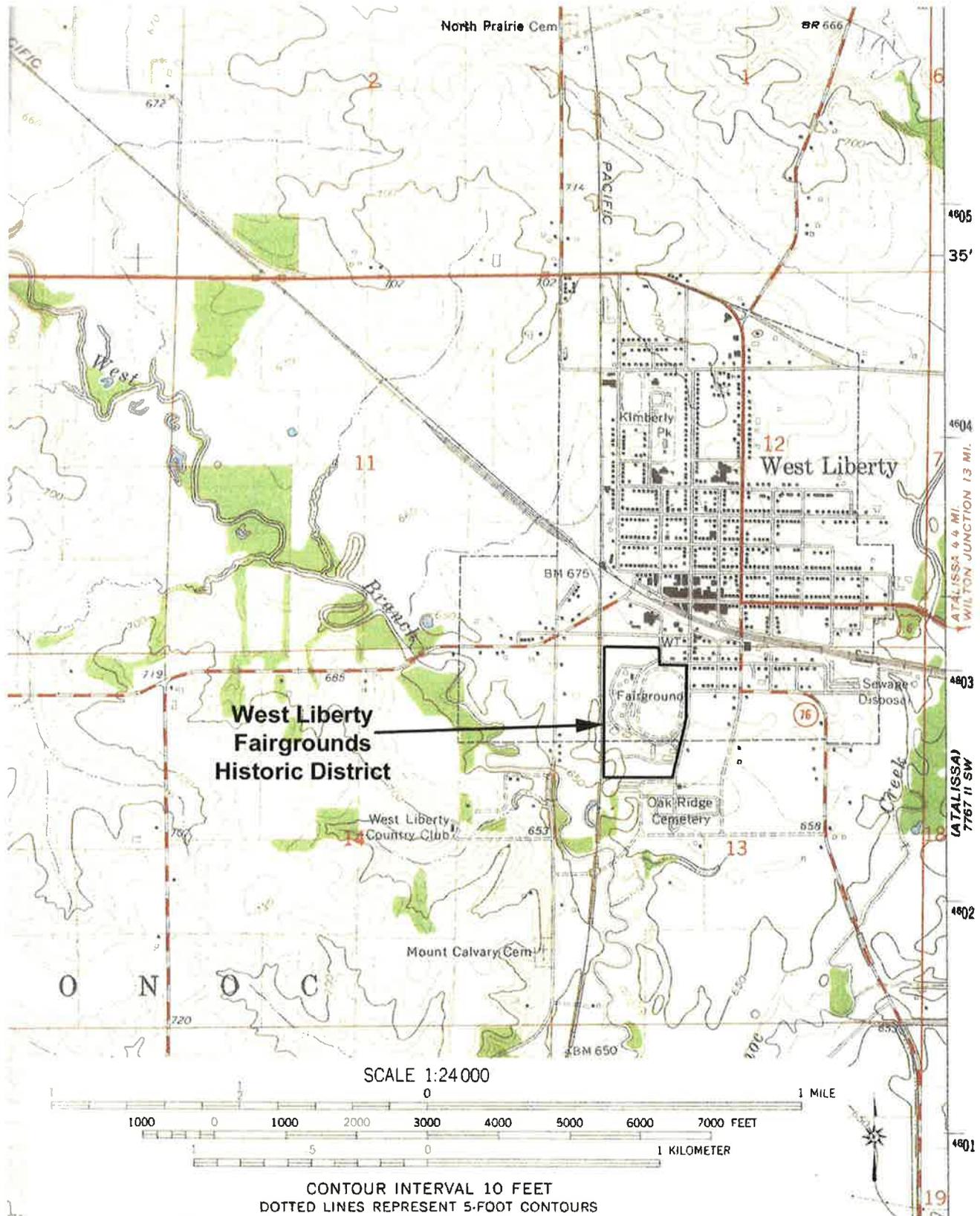


Figure 1. Location map for West Liberty Fairgrounds Historic District.

(USGS topographic quadrangle map, Iowa Geographic Map Server)

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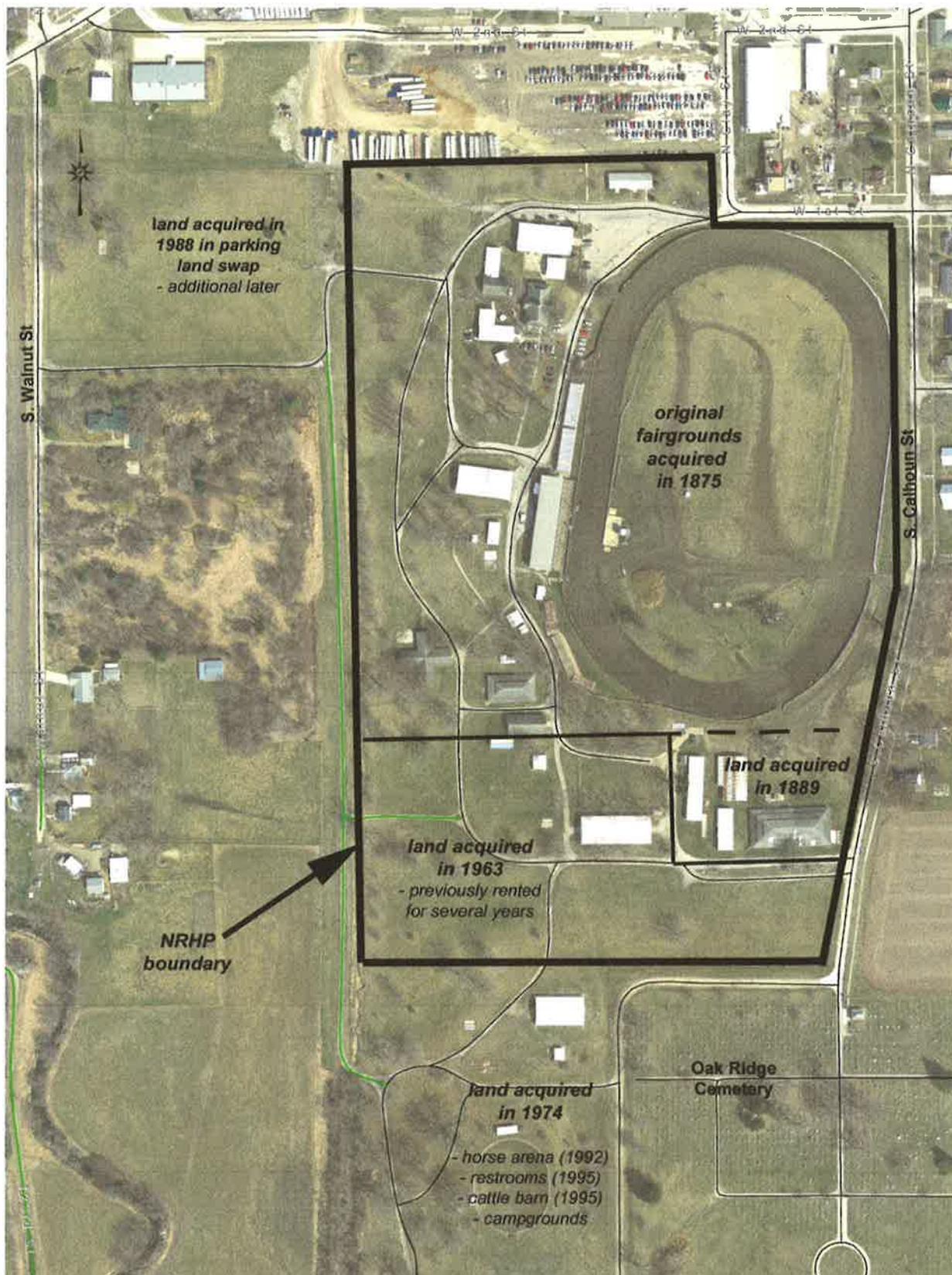


Figure 2. Map showing evolution of West Liberty Fairgrounds (McCarley 2015). Base aerial photography from spring 2014 from Muscatine County GIS. scale 1"=300'

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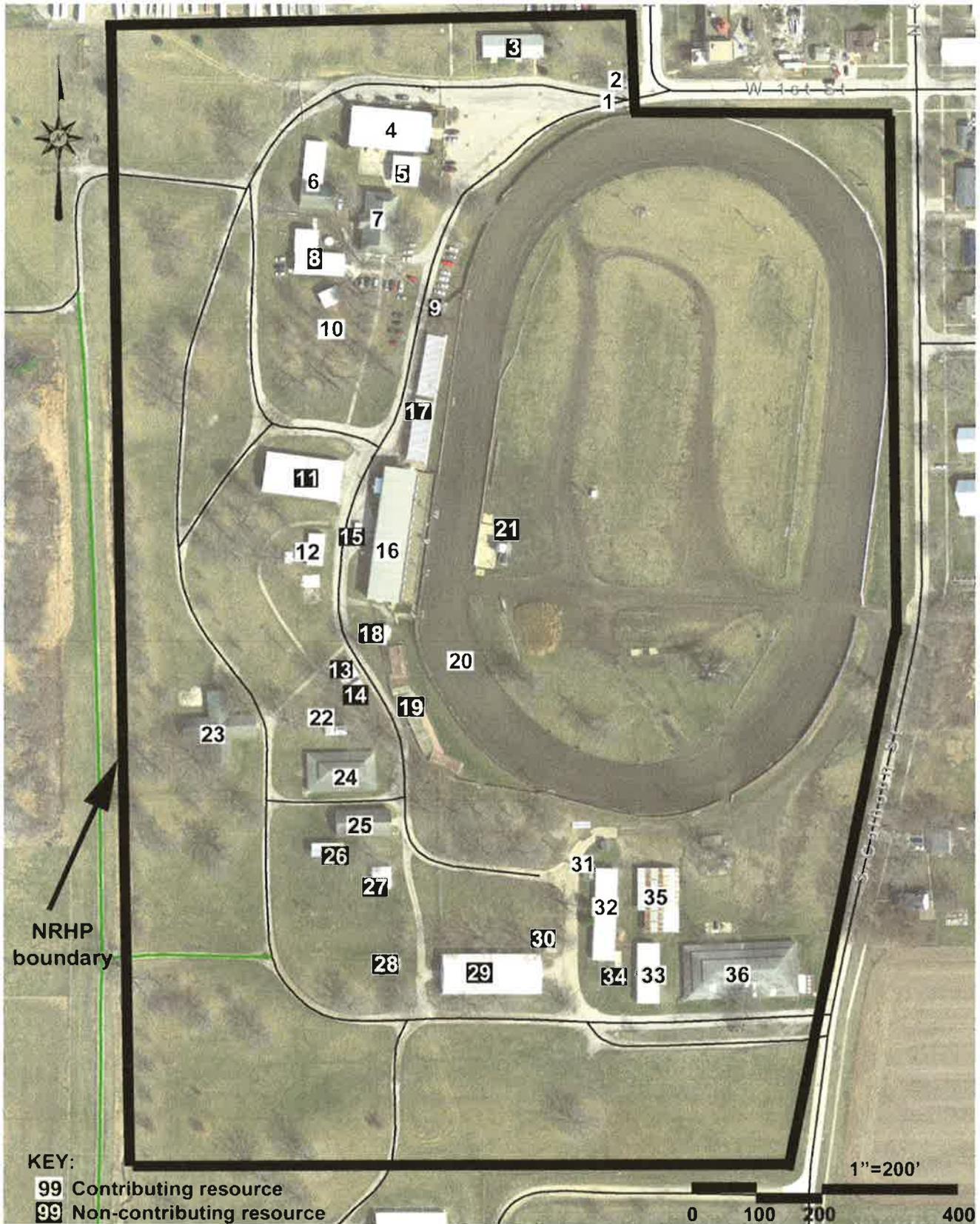


Figure 3. Site plan of resources within the West Liberty Fairgrounds Historic District (McCarley 2015).
buildings listed in table starting on page 14

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Narrative Description

The West Liberty Fairgrounds Historic District sits on the southwest edge of West Liberty, with the town's limits expanded to the south to continue to include the fairgrounds as they acquired land to the south (Figure 1). The town grew in this location in the late quarter of the 19th century with the crossing of two railroad lines, and the north-south railroad tracks historically extended along the west edge of the fairgrounds. The east-west tracks remain and are located two blocks to the north of the fairgrounds, with the core of downtown and residential development to the north of the tracks and additional residential blocks, the fairgrounds, and the cemetery to the south of the tracks. West Liberty reached a population of 1,690 in 1900, only growing to 1,866 by 1950. Thus, the overall setting of the West Liberty Fairgrounds remained similar throughout this period, without development constraining or impacting the fairgrounds. Growth in the second half of the 20th century expanded the town primarily to the north and east, closer to transportation corridors to Iowa City, Muscatine, and the Quad Cities. West Liberty is located in the northwest corner of Muscatine County, with the county seat of Muscatine about 15 miles to the southeast and Iowa City about 15 miles to the northwest. Thus, while historically a small town and not the county seat, the town was and is uniquely situated to serve a wide agricultural and rural area in multiple counties. The Union District Agricultural Society historically attracted entries to its fair from western Muscatine County, southwest Cedar County, and eastern Johnson County, as well as entries from the next tier of adjacent counties and throughout the region. The fairgrounds are also located physically between the Mississippi Valley Fair in Davenport further to the east and the Iowa State Fair in Des Moines further to the west, and they specifically coordinated their fair dates historically between these two fairs to attract exhibits, livestock entries, and entertainment accordingly. Thus, while other nearby fairs dwindled in numbers and closed, the West Liberty Fair grew stronger and prospered throughout the 20th century.

The topography is generally flat throughout the West Liberty Fairgrounds Historic District, as well as within West Liberty. The fairgrounds overall are counted as a contributing site, with the significant dates of 1875, 1889, and 1963 related to expansion. However, the original 31-acre purchase in 1875 composes the majority of the land of the fairgrounds historically and currently (Figure 2). Open grassy areas, without any built resources, were historically and are currently used for tents during the fair, providing additional space for concessions, entertainment, commercial vendors, and exhibits as needed. Historic articles note the number of shade trees found throughout the grounds, providing shade for fairgoers in August. The Grove was noted as the location for entertainment and addresses from the 1910s to 2010s, and it is also counted as a contributing site. Trees provide a constantly evolving character of the fairgrounds landscape, with a number of older trees remaining. The effort in 1928 to plant 100 elm trees on the grounds to continue to provide shade for patrons was thwarted in the early 1960s with the onset of Dutch elm disease, as these trees were then removed and replaced. Other older varieties of trees remain as well as a number of the trees planted in the 1960s that have now matured. Historically, there does not appear to have been a set layout of drives or paths throughout the fairgrounds, with automobiles entering the main gate at the north end and parking on the grounds to the north or the infield and later entering the secondary gate at the south end and parking there. A handful of current roadways are graveled throughout the grounds, providing a temporary nature to adjust as needed. No archeological sites have been identified or evaluated to date as part of this nomination project, though the potential may exist within the historic district, particularly where earlier fair buildings have been demolished or on sites of temporary fair tents.

The built resources throughout the West Liberty Fairgrounds Historic District reflect functions related to various aspects of a county fair, including exhibit halls, livestock barns and show rings, youth entries, entertainment resources, and concessions (Figure 3). The main entry, complete with its 1927 brick columns and ticket office, provides a historic flavor upon immediate arrival to the fairgrounds. The race track is a dominant built feature, occupying roughly one-third of the grounds. The amphitheater (1928, Map #16) on the west side of the track is visible from throughout the fairgrounds and adjacent to the fairgrounds. The built resources on the north end

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of the grounds were historically and are currently devoted to exhibits. The main Exposition Hall built in 1915 (Map #7) continues to be the building that attracts the most attention, with newer exhibit buildings now to the north and south. The original Girls 4-H building sits to the west (1897, 1936 move, Map #6), and the larger Girls 4-H Building (County Activity Center) sits to the north (1969, Map #4). The Grove with its small stage is situated to the south of the exhibit area, extending into the midway that is dotted with a handful of permanent booths and a number of tents and portable buildings during the fair. The Baby Beef Barn (1934, Map #24) and Draft Horse Barn (1915, Map #25) sit in what was historically the south end of the west half of the fairgrounds. The Junior Cattle X-Barn (1954, Map #23), significant for its overall cross form, is located to the west of these buildings. The main livestock area was historically located on the land added to the fairgrounds in 1889 at the southeast corner of the property and south of the race track. The Swine Pavilion (Map #36), with its three-tier roof design, is a noteworthy building in this area, with other frame buildings constructed and reconstructed as needed to meet evolving needs of the fair. The Livestock Judging Pavilion was built to serve various entries in 1966 (Map #35), partially with the need for additional space and partially with the loss of elm trees providing shade for outdoor judging. Land acquired to the west of these buildings in 1963 led to construction of two new buildings here a decade later: a large Show Barn in 1973 (Map #29) and new restrooms in 1974 (Map #27).

The overall design of these buildings is functional in nature, and the materials utilized are primarily wood and metal. The buildings constructed from the 1910s to 1950s are frame construction, either open with wood posts or closed with wood siding. The Exhibition Hall built in 1915 has the most stylistic design, including a row of windows with a band of wood shingles flared out under them, cross gable entry section with a gable pent roof, sloped side roofs to the side gable peak, and cupola (Map #7). Several other buildings constructed in the 1890s to 1920s were generally simple gable-roof buildings, with closed sides clad in wood siding and entries on the gable end (two extant: 1897 vegetables hall, Map #6; 1915 draft horse barn, Map #25). The simple design reflects their functional nature and is significant from this aspect. From 1918 to 1934, the tiered-roof system was utilized on several livestock barns, providing additional ventilation for these buildings. This roof design provided the key architectural element for these buildings and is significant for its architectural and functional quality. The first and perhaps most significant of this style of buildings constructed on the fairgrounds is the Swine Pavilion (1918, Map #36). This large 80 by 170 foot building has a three-tier roof system, with open space under the second and third tiers for ventilation. The building has open sides with wood posts and trusses as its architectural features. Other livestock buildings constructed over the next 15 years also utilized this tiered roof design, though only a two-tier rather than the three-tier design found on the Swine Pavilion. The other extant building with this roof design is the Baby Beef Barn constructed in 1934, with a two-tier roof design, partially open sides with wood siding on the lower half, wood posts, and wood trusses (Map #24). The design of this building is likewise significant for these features. The amphitheater built in 1928 is likewise largely functional in design, significant for this aspect, its size, and its prominent role for the fair and other year-round events (Map #16). The amphitheater has a simple shed roof design with the roof supported by large wood columns and trusses, which provide the main architectural components for the design for the main seating area and the booth section on the ground level. The main entrance to the fair reflects the other resources with a stronger stylistic influence, drawings on some Craftsman themes of this period. The entry was designed and built in 1927, including five wire-cut brick columns with stone caps (Map #1) and a ticket office (Map #2). This small 10 by 10 foot building has a flared hip-roof with rafter tails, small windows, and a wood door. The details of the roof design lend the stylistic flare to this building and provided a refined initial impression of the fairgrounds for patrons to the West Liberty Fair.

By the 1950s, additional buildings were constructed on the West Liberty Fairgrounds largely due to the increased number of entries in this period due to the success of the West Liberty Fair, predominantly an increase in boys' and girls' 4-H and junior department entries. Buildings were still primarily functional in design, and they shifted from wood frame construction clad in part or full in wood siding to wood frame construction clad in metal siding, particularly using Bonanza Building materials and building components. Major improvements were completed on the fairgrounds in summer 1954, with the construction of two cross-type barns and earlier livestock barns on the southeast section moved or demolished accordingly. The west x-

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barn, constructed for the junior department cattle entries, remains extant, defined by its overall cross form (Map #23). Each of the four wings are 30 by 40 feet connected to the center 30 by 30 section, and this form is the significant characteristic of this building. No particularly architectural features were incorporated, with the wood siding, wood posts, and wood trusses as the other design features. Portions of the 1954 east x-barn, built for open class cattle entries, were reused and relocated nearby as two separate rectangular barns in 1999 for sheep, goats, and calves, when its location needed to be cleared for better access to the race track. Improvements to the fairgrounds continued through the end of the 1950s and into the 1960s. The need for additional shaded livestock show facilities led to the construction of the Livestock Show Pavilion in 1966 (Map #35). This building was constructed by Bloom Builders of Oskaloosa, suppliers of Bonanza Buildings through a local sales agent and contractor. The open-sided frame building is clad in metal siding, providing additional protection for wood elements, while the wood posts and trusses continue to define the architectural character of the building. Restrooms were then relocated and remodeled to west of this pavilion in 1967 (Map #31). Growth in the girls' 4-H categories led to the discussion in the middle of the 1960s on the needs for an additional building, with a decision to proceed with a Bonanza Building from Bloom Builders in 1968. The wood frame building clad in metal siding was completed in 1969 (Map #4) to the immediate north of the 1915 exhibit hall (Map #7) and the moved/expanded girls' 4-H building (Map #6), and it is the last building falling within the period of significance for the West Liberty Fairgrounds Historic District. Two other Bonanza Buildings were then built by West Liberty Builders in 1973 (Cattle Show Barn, Map #29) and in 1974 (restrooms, Map #27), with a booth demonstrating their products and siding options also built on the fairgrounds around 1975 (Map #14). These later buildings are significant and would be included at a future date in a period of significance extended through 1976, as well as the fair office building moved to the grounds in 1972 (Map #3) and the grove stage originally built in 1973 (Map #10).

The evolving nature of the design of these buildings and fairgrounds overall is significant in the historic operations of the property. While a number of buildings were used for decades (and even continue to be used) for their original purposes, other buildings have found new uses related to the fair operations, resulting in changes in configuration and sometimes exterior features. For example, openings to provide ventilation for livestock may now be covered to protect exhibits or other interior functions. Buildings that were once useful in one location may have outlived their purpose there and were then moved to another location. Older buildings were utilized in whole and in part to expand and construct additional buildings. As the fairgrounds have evolved physically, the overall functions of the sections within the property have remained the same currently as historically, with moved and rebuilt buildings reflecting repurposed uses related to the nature of the fairgrounds section to which they were moved. The constant theme among these changes is fair buildings being recycled for fair buildings, maintaining their historic connection to the fair. The fairgrounds overall have functioned as a naturally evolving historic landscape from this perspective. These buildings are considered to remain contributing to the fairgrounds, as they reflect this aspect of the nature of this property type.

Organizational structure and historical development of the fairgrounds

There are several key aspects to a successful county fair, which are reflected in the built resources found on the fairgrounds. While the West Liberty Fairgrounds do not reflect a professionally designed or planned landscape, the concentration of these uses in various sections of the fairgrounds creates a distinct vernacular landscape. The main entry and office area at the north end are key for the year-round operations of the fair and providing access to and an outward face for the fair itself. The exhibit area is concentrated in the northwest quarter of the fairgrounds, including women's exhibits and girls' 4-H exhibits for nearly a century. The entertainment section stretching along the west side of the track provides space for attractions, concessions, and midway rides. The amphitheater and track provide the largest venue for multiple entertainment aspects, including races, performances, and contests. At the same time, the ground level of the amphitheater provided additional concessions and exhibit space, primarily related to displays for businesses and organizations. The section to the southwest of the track was developed primarily in response to increased

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youth participation in the fair, an aspect that proved key to the ongoing success of county fairs in the middle of the 20th century. The section to the south of the track historically and currently has resources related to livestock exhibits, a core value of the concept of a county fair. While each area historically may have also had some additional uses, these are the predominant functions in each section. The West Liberty Fairgrounds retains built resources related to each of these aspects of a successful county fair, conveying the full significance of a county fair. The following paragraphs describe each of these sections of the fairgrounds, historically and currently.

Fairgrounds entry and office section, Map #1-3

The main entry has historically and is currently located on the north end of the fairgrounds, at the end of W. 1st Street. Development of the entry area in 1927 included the construction of five brick piers and 10 by 10 foot ticket office (Map #1). Parking was historically located on the north end of the fairgrounds, with tents for automobile displays as well in the middle of the 20th century. Additional land for parking was acquired to the north and then swapped for open land to the west in 1988, with parking to the north then incorporated into parking for the adjacent factory (Louis Rich). The fair office was located in a downtown building throughout the middle of the 20th century. The former Northern Propane Gas Company office was then donated to the West Liberty Fair in 1972 and moved to near the fair entrance (Map #3). This location then reinforced the north end of the fairgrounds as the entry and public face of the West Liberty Fair. The north end continues to serve this purpose in 2015, with the entry piers, ticket booth, and fair office located here.

Exhibits section, Map #4-8

The area to the west of the north end of the race track has historically been and is currently the exhibition section of the fairgrounds. The main exhibition hall was built in 1915 (Map #7), and it dominates this section of the fairgrounds, visible from the main entrance to the east. It has historically and is currently used for various exhibits, particularly for women's departments and some youth entries historically. The 1922 Sanborn map shows smaller exhibit buildings in this section as well (Figure 16), with the poultry building enlarged by the 1941 map (Figure 22). The former vegetables hall had also been moved to this area by the 1941 map, remodeled in 1936 in this new location for the girls 4-H exhibits (Map #6). This building proved too small by the early 1950s, and a former cattle barn located in the southeast section of the fairgrounds was moved to the north side of the building as an addition. The building was remodeled with a stage for demonstrations at the north end. This group of three buildings remains here on the Sanborn map updated in the 1950s. The poultry house was converted to a floral hall, with women's floral exhibits and Farm Bureau booths moved here in 1962. The entries in the girls' 4-H building and women's departments continued to grow, and additional space was needed by the middle of the 1960s. The new girls' 4-H building, now known as the County Activity Center, was then built in 1969 (Map #4). By the early 21st century, the floral hall needed major repairs or replacement, and funds were raised to build a new Floral Hall, which was completed in 2008 (Map #8). A gazebo was added outside of the hall in 2009. In the space between the main exhibition hall and the County Activity Center, the American Legion built a permanent pavilion for bingo in 2007 (Map #5).

Attractions/concessions section, Map #10-14

The section of the fairgrounds from the exhibition halls and south to the youth livestock area to the west of the amphitheater has historically and is currently the section for attractions, entertainment, and concessions along the midway. The Grove is located at the north end, immediately south of the exhibition buildings (Map #10). This area was cited for its shade throughout the 20th century, with benches and stages erected for entertainment during the fairs. Various amateur acts, traveling shows, and contests were held on the stage in the Grove. The 1922 Sanborn map shows the women's comfort station (restroom) to the west of the Grove, and these west restrooms were in poor condition and demolished in 2006. The Rotary Club operated a "rest tent" in the Grove starting in 1927 for several decades. In June 1973, a permanent stage with backdrop was built in the Grove, enlarged slightly in 1981. In 2001, a permanent roof was added over the stage. A dining hall was historically located to the south of the grove, with the building used for exhibits and food in various years. This building was later demolished, and Midway Pavilion was built in 2003, providing modern bathroom facilities

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for the section of the fairgrounds as well as concessions/dining space (Map #11). Other food booths and attractions in tents erected for the fair stretched along the drive and in the grassy area to the south. Three permanent buildings reflect this historic function of this section of the fairgrounds, though two date to construction after the period of significance. In 1966, the First Church United Food Booth was constructed north of the amphitheater, and then it was moved to its current location in 1976 (Map #12). It was enlarged with additional dining space and a shed was built to the west at this time. West Liberty Builders constructed a commercial display booth further to the south around 1975, utilizing various siding colors on the building to demonstrate options (Map #14). A small food booth was built for Rotary Club north of the West Liberty Builders booth around 1987, and it was significantly enlarged around 1998 (Map #13). While this section has the least number of historic resources, the existing resources reflect a continuation of the historic function of this area of the fairgrounds.

Amphitheater and track, Map #9, 15-21

The race track dominates the east section of the fairgrounds, historically and currently (Map #20). Horse races were a key event to entertain and attract visitors to the fairgrounds through the 1950s. Improvements to the track are noted on a regular basis throughout the first half of the 20th century, with the track then improved for automobile racing in 1960. Additional concrete turns and walls were added to the track in the 1960s and 1970s, and improvements and maintenance on the track has continued to be ongoing. Earlier amphitheatres were located on the west side of the track, with the current amphitheater built in 1928 (Map #16). This amphitheater was designed with seating to view the track and booths on the ground level for commercial exhibits and vegetables/fruits exhibits, with additional displays such as antiques starting in 1930. The need for additional seating led to construction of bleachers to the south and then north of the amphitheater, with bleachers erected temporarily for the fair eventually replaced by permanent bleachers in the 1970s to 1980s (Map #17, Map #19). The ticket booth for the amphitheater/track was located at the north end, and a new ticket booth was built immediately to the west around 1960 (Map #15). The former booth continued to be utilized as an information booth for several years, replaced by new information booth in 1996 (Map #9). In 1988, a restrooms building was built between the amphitheater and south bleachers (Map #18). A number of different stages and judges stands were located in the infield of the track facing the amphitheater, and the current stage, concessions, and stand were built in 1999 (Map #21).

Youth livestock section, Map #22-27

At the south end of the midway and southwest of the racetrack is historically the southwest corner of the fairgrounds. The 1922 Sanborn map shows a single building in this area, the draft horse barn built in 1915 (Map #25). The elongated north race horse barn along the south side of the race track then stretched further to the east (demolished in 1962). The open space to the north and west of the draft horse barn was utilized for space for tents during the fair, particularly for the boys' 4-H exhibits. In 1934, the Baby Beef Barn was then built as a permanent facility for these exhibits, including stalls on the first story and a sleeping loft for the boys (Map #24). As noted, the two-tier roof design is significant on this building. The increase in the number of exhibitors in the post-World War II period led to the construction in 1954 of a large x-barn (cross form) to the west, for junior department cattle entries (Map #23). In 1962, the draft horse barn was then converted for use as a boys' dorm, and it was used as such through 1980. The need for additional restrooms to serve these buildings led to the construction of a restrooms/showers building to the south in 1974 (Map #27) on the land acquired in 1963. In 1981, the dorm was closed, and the building was converted for conservation exhibits, with antiques later sharing the space and the building becoming known as Heritage Hall (Map #25). Antiques were previously located in several other buildings, starting in the amphitheater with displays in 1930, and this move has given these exhibits historically part of the fair a more permanent location. A stationary saw mill was donated to the fair in May 1989, placed to the south of Heritage Hall. In 1991, a roof structure was built over the sawmill to protect it (Map #26). A windmill was also added in front of the building in 2008. The Baby Beef Barn continues to be used for small animal youth exhibits and as FFA's Kiddie Barnyard. Two small sheds north of the barn are used for storage (Map #22), with a portable storage building added here as well in 2013. The west x-barn is currently used primarily for storage and maintenance. In 1963, the purchase of land to the south of this corner

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of the grounds extended the fairgrounds further to the south, and some resources were then later built in this area, though it remains largely open land.

Livestock section, Map #28-36

The livestock buildings located to the south of the race track are located on an earlier and later addition to the original fairgrounds. The southeast section, north of the south entry drive and east of the livestock drive, is the corner of the fairgrounds acquired through purchase of land in 1889. This area was then developed for livestock facilities. The 1922 Sanborn map shows two race horse barns immediately south of the race track (elongated buildings, demolished). The Swine Pavilion built in 1918 and significant for its size and design is then located in the southeast corner of this section of land (Map #36). The large facility was historically and currently serves as the hog barn for the fair. Other cattle and sheep barns were historically located to the north and west of the swine pavilion. Two of these barns were relocated in 1954 to provide space for the construction of a larger x-barn for open class cattle, with one remaining as the addition to the old girls' 4-H building (Map #6). This barn was deconstructed in 1998 to clear this space to better access to the race track, with sections then rebuilt as a new sheep barn (Map #32) and bucket calves barn (Map #33). The earlier wash rack west of the old sheep barn was also enlarged (Map #34). These barns were built between earlier livestock show buildings. In 1966, a large livestock judging pavilion with open sides was built north of the sheep barn, providing covered space and seating for livestock judging (Map #35). Modern restrooms were then built to serve these buildings in 1967 (Map #31). The desire for interior judging space led to the construction of the larger judging building with closed sides to the west in 1973, on land acquired in 1963 (Map #29). An associated wash rack was built to the west in 1973 as well (Map #28). A small building for 4-H entries was constructed east of the building in 1990, to be in proximity with the judging facilities (Map #30). Other small portable resources are located among these buildings south of the track, used and moved as needed.

Integrity

The West Liberty Fairgrounds Historic District retains good integrity as a district and continues to strongly reflect the characteristics that define its historical significance. The district retains its historic location and setting on the southwest edge of West Liberty in northwest Muscatine County. The overall integrity of the design of the fairgrounds is intact, with historic workmanship and materials evident on a number of the buildings throughout the grounds. It retains its association to the West Liberty Fair (now Muscatine County Fair) and the overall feeling of a county fairgrounds. Specific aspects of the integrity of the property include:

Location: The West Liberty Fairgrounds Historic District has historically and continues to be located in West Liberty in northwest Muscatine County, centered between Muscatine to the southeast and Iowa City to the northwest.

Setting: The setting of the West Liberty Fairgrounds Historic District continues to be on the generally level land on the southwest edge of West Liberty, with the core of the town to the north and east. The town has not significantly grown in this direction in the last century, so the fairgrounds retain their historic setting on the southwest edge of town with residential blocks to the east, Oak Ridge Cemetery to the south, a business to the north along the railroad tracks, and agricultural/rural land to the west and to the south.

Design: The overall design of the West Liberty Fairgrounds Historic District remains intact, with the overall layout of the functions of the various sections remaining the same currently as historically. The main entry remains at the north end of the grounds, with the large amphitheater and race track to the south occupying most of the east half of the grounds. Exhibit buildings are found to the west of the north end of the track, including a mix of older and newer buildings. The Grove is located to the south, used for entertainment and leading into the concessions/midway area along the west side of the race track. A handful of later buildings dot this area, though reflecting the same function of the earlier tents and buildings found here. Youth livestock buildings are found to the southwest of the track, including all historic buildings and a newer showers/restroom building. The section south of the race track is devoted to livestock barns and show buildings, with this area evolving to the current configuration of older and rebuilt buildings. The fairgrounds

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have evolved over the last 100 years, with substantial and small buildings constructed through various periods. Smaller buildings have tended to be demolished or moved over time, with a higher number of large historic buildings remaining in use. These large buildings from the 1910s to 1950s retain a high degree of integrity, and they continue to be dominant features on the fairgrounds.

Materials: The materials on the West Liberty Fairgrounds include a combination of earth, wood, and metal. The overall landscape of the fairgrounds, including the grassy areas, dirt track, and trees provide natural materials within the historic district. The majority of the buildings are frame construction with wood siding or wood posts as the dominant exterior features. Later historic and non-historic frame buildings are clad in metal siding, with some metal siding utilized on parts of a few earlier historic buildings to protect the wood. Glass is found sparingly on the buildings, with generally open wall spaces rather than actual windows. The condition of the materials throughout the historic district is generally good, with ongoing maintenance for the painted wood buildings.

Workmanship: The historic workmanship of the buildings within the West Liberty Fairgrounds Historic District continues to be reflected in the individual design and materials. Overall, the building designs are functional in nature, and the workmanship is straightforward and reflected in structural systems such as columns and trusses. Additional workmanship is reflected in the simple stylistic elements found on the main gate ticket office (Map #2), exhibition hall (Map #7), amphitheater (Map #16), Baby Beef Barn (Map #24), and Swine Pavilion (Map #36). These elements that reflect workmanship throughout the buildings on the fairgrounds remain intact and visible from the exterior and interior of the buildings.

Feeling: The overall feeling of the West Liberty Fairgrounds Historic District continues to be a county fairgrounds located on the southwest edge of West Liberty. The grounds and buildings reflect this function as fairgrounds, as they continue to be used for this purpose.

Association: The West Liberty Fairgrounds Historic District retains a strong association to the West Liberty Fair (now Muscatine County Fair), as it continues to serve this role as a county fairgrounds.

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List of resources in the historic district

The West Liberty Fairgrounds Historic District is composed of 42 resources, including 16 contributing buildings, two contributing sites, two contributing structures, 16 non-contributing buildings, and six non-contributing structures. No additional buildings, structures, sites, or objects warrant individual tabulation within the district. Resources that are noted with an asterisk (*) on the table are historic resources that reflect a key aspect of the history of the fairgrounds, though all the resources are directly connected to the fair and significant for this association. Building history and information was collected in 2014-15 by Rebecca Lawin McCarley (SPARK Consulting), the Muscatine County Preservation Commission, Muscatine County Fair Board, and other volunteers. Additional information and photographs of these buildings has also been documented on basic Iowa Site Inventory forms.

Table of historic resources in West Liberty Fairgrounds Historic District

<p>West Liberty Fairgrounds</p> <p>Map #00 State #70-01542 Field Site #00</p> <p>District status: 1 site - contributing</p> 	<p>Resource type: fairgrounds Significant date/s: 1875, 1889, 1963 Contractor: - Materials: open land with trees, drives/paths Roof: - Window/doors: - Modifications: -</p> <p>2-1875 -land bought from William C. and M.A. Evans by The West Liberty Park Association (WLPFA) - core 31 acres of fairgrounds from First Street to section line (south side of track) and Calhoun to old railroad tracks ROW/ditch - fair held here by UDAS 9-1889 - land bought from Ephraim Fenstermaker to WLPFA - land in southeast corner along Calhoun street - original land south of track to south side of swine pavilion, Calhoun to east of show barn (livestock area) 1922 Sanborn map: fairgrounds 1870s-1950s - grounds leased to Union District Agricultural Society (UDAS) by WLPFA, 1920 - land to the north of First St bought for fair parking - later sold in 1988 in land swap, 1960 - incorporated as The West Liberty Fair (not UDAS) 1941 Sanborn map: fairgrounds 1-1963 - Eva Watson to WLPFA - land to south of section line and south of southeast corner - south to Calhoun St bend, also strip along old railroad, 3-1974 - West Liberty Fair bought Welkona turkey land to south - south of Watson land along Calhoun Street 1969 aerial: fairgrounds 3-1984 - reincorporated as Muscatine County Fair, WLPFA continue to own core land and lease it 1995 - WLPFA dissolved - assets transferred to Muscatine County Fair - operate fair and own grounds 1997 map: fairgrounds Current use: fairgrounds</p>
<p>Entry piers*</p> <p>Map #1 State #70-01550 Field Site #01</p> <p>District status: 1 structure - contributing</p> 	<p>Resource type: Five brick columns with stone caps Significant date/s: 1927 Contractor: - Materials: brick columns with stone caps Roof: - Window/doors: - Modifications: -</p> <p>October 1926 - annual meeting of UDAS - "voted that the association erect a new entrance at the grounds; article on 7-21-1927 notes that will be five posts each seven feet high and crowned with an electric light - entrance for vehicles - double capacity (unknown if lights were actually installed on the posts, as historic photographs do not appear to show lights and no evidence remains of wiring) 8-24-1927 article - "The handsome new entrance is practically finished...will afford greater facilities for handling the crowds and go a long ways in lessening congestion at this point" 1922 Sanborn map: not shown 1920s-2010s - continued to be used as main entrance to fairgrounds 1941 Sanborn map: gate house here 1969 aerial: columns 1997 map: not indicated Current use: main entry piers</p>

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<p>Main gate ticket office*</p> <p>Map #2 State #70-01550 Field Site #02</p> <p>District status: 1 building - contributing</p> 	<p>Resource type: Small hip-roof frame building (10 by 10) Significant date/s: 1927 Contractor: - Materials: frame walls with wood siding Roof: hip roof - asphalt shingles, rafter tails Window/doors: small windows with wood surrounds Modifications: -</p> <p>October 1926 - annual meeting of UDAS - "voted that the association erect a new entrance at the grounds; article on 7-21-1927 notes five posts to be build at new entrance - between two will be a fine new ticket office 8-24-1927 article - "The handsome new entrance is practically finished...will afford greater facilities for handling the crowds and go a long ways in lessening congestion at this point" 1922 Sanborn map: not shown 1920s-2010s - continued to be used as ticket booth at main entrance to fairgrounds 1941 Sanborn map: gate house 1969 aerial: small building 1997 map: gate ticket office Current use: main gate ticket booth</p>
<p>Office building</p> <p>Map #3 State #70-01551 Field Site #03</p> <p>District status: 1 building - non-contributing</p> 	<p>Resource type: 1 story, side gable building - Armco Building (32 by 92) Significant date/s: 1972 - c. 1960 bldg moved to fairgrounds Contractor: - Materials: Armco steel structure - metal panels with vertical lines Roof: side gable roof - metal Window/doors: some original metal windows in shop end (west) - north windows in office end (east) Modifications: -</p> <p>1922 Sanborn map: - 1941 Sanborn map: - c.1960 - Armco building (steel frame and panels) built for Northern Propane Gas Co - north of fairgrounds - supplier from Muscatine 1969 aerial: - May 1972 - Louis Rich Foods donated old Northern Propane Gas Co. building (on land to north) to be moved to fairgrounds, moved in July 1972 by Grunder & Sons of Wilton, 36 by 92 Armco steel structure - disassembled, moved, and reassembled within a week 1970s-2010s - use as fair office (east end) and women's project displays and commercial exhibits (west end - later shop at this end) 1997 map: main office Current use: fair office / shop</p>
<p>County Activity Center</p> <p>Map #4 State #70-01552 Field Site #04</p> <p>District status: 1 building - contributing</p> 	<p>Resource type: 1 story, gable-oriented building - Bonanza Building (60 by 120) Significant date/s: 1969 Contractor: Bloom Builders Materials: prefab building / wood frame - metal siding, laminated wood columns and trusses Roof: front gable roof - metal Window/doors: entries on east (main) and south side Modifications: -</p> <p>1922 Sanborn map: - previously - girls 4-H exhibits/demonstrations in building to west - increased entries - crowded 1941 Sanborn map: - spring 1969 - built as Girls 4-H building - complete by July, 8-1969 photo notes for Girls 4-H Exhibits, Farm Bureau work, and wood working projects - stage for demonstrations and moveable peg panels to create display booths 1969 aerial: large building Oct 1973 - heat added to building by Jaycees, Girls 4-H building renamed the County Activity Center - bingo held here by 1975 1970s-2010s - 4-H exhibits during fair, other events/meetings year-round - wedding receptions, dances, auctions, banquets 1997 map: activity center Current use: 4-H exhibits during fair (all non-livestock), rented as County Activity Center (events, meetings, etc.)</p>

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<p>American Legion Pavilion</p> <p>Map #5 State #70-01553 Field Site #05</p> <p>District status: 1 building - non-contributing</p> 	<p>Resource type: Medium gable-roof open pavilion Significant date/s: 2007 Contractor: ? Materials: open sides - wood columns, metal siding on gable Roof: front gable roof Window/doors: - Modifications: -</p> <p>1922 Sanborn map: - 1941 Sanborn map: - July 1958 - concrete pad 40 by 60 poured north of exhibit hall - tent over floor and fence around during fair - dances - part of concrete floor appears to remain adjacent to pavilion to west 1969 aerial: concrete pad 2007 - new pavilion and concrete erected by American Legion 1997 map: not indicated Current use: bingo pavilion</p>
<p>Girls 4-H Building*</p> <p>Map #6 State #70-01554 Field Site #06</p> <p>District status: 1 building - contributing</p> 	<p>Resource type: 1 story, gable-oriented, frame building (32 by 48 with 28 by 64 add) Significant date/s: 1897, 1930, 1936, 1954 Contractor: - Materials: frame walls with wood siding - both sections - some metal siding on north side Roof: front gable roof - asphalt shingles (original section), front gable roof - metal roofing (addition) Window/doors: large doors on ends, windows covered Modifications: some metal siding, metal roofing on addition, windows covered</p> <p>summer 1897 - built new vegetables exhibit hall - 34 by 48 - replaced earlier building (built at same time as octagonal poultry building) - large capacity filled by many exhibits at September 1897 fair 1930 - vegetables and grains exhibits moved to booths under amphitheater (built in 1928) 1922 Sanborn map: exhibition booth 1930 - 4-H girls exhibits moved into former vegetables building - located in tent in previous years - growth of 4-H entries; 1931 - wood floor installed in girls 4-H building - old vegetable hall - building noted as specifically remodeled for girls' work 1941 Sanborn map: 4H Building 1936 - building moved from south edge of grove to west of exhibit hall - exhibits and demonstrations held here into 1950s - increasing number of entries by early 1950s; 1954 - construction of new east x-barn resulted in move of old dairy cattle barn 1969 aerial: building with addition 1954 - old dairy barn added to north end of building - hole in wall to connect - stage constructed at north end for demonstrations - sewing, cooking, and home economics - photo in Journal on 8-20-1954 of enlarged 4-H building 1960s - 4-H entries continued to increase - new building constructed to east in 1969; 1970s - school dances held here; 1970s-2010s - photography and arts/crafts exhibits during fair 1997 map: exhibit building Current use: arts and hobbies</p>

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<p>Exhibition Hall*</p> <p>Map #7 State #70-01555 Field Site #07</p> <p>District status: 1 building - contributing</p> 	<p>Resource type: 1 story, side gable, frame building with cupola (45 by 88) Significant date/s: 1915 Contractor: (likely Ned L. Romaine) Materials: frame walls with wood siding Roof: side gable roof with hip-roof ends - cupola on center - asphalt shingles Window/doors: entry in gable-roof vesibule on front/east, row of small windows under eaves - fiberglass installed in 1970s - working on replacing with windows Modifications: 1970s - fiberboard in windows; 2013 - window restoration began</p> <p>earlier Floral Hall - large number of exhibits by early 1910s - addition of school exhibits here also 1915 - new exposition hall built - 8/26/1915: "The Exposition Hall especially was a big attraction on this year. Its greater capacity undoubtedly attracted many additional entries and all were displayed to a far greater advantage than in the past." 1922 Sanborn map: exhibition building 1910s-1920s - referred to as exposition hall or floral hall - exhibits for women's departments (food, fancy work, flowers, art) and schools (not fruits/vegetables/grains), 1930s-40s - culinary, arts, school exhibits, flowers, women's booths (Farm Bureau 1941 Sanborn map: exhibits 1950s-60s - exhibit hall - antiques, needlework, culinary skill, jellies, jams, and canned goods, Farm Bureau booths, agricultural org booths 1969 aerial: large building 1970s-1990s - referred to as women's building or women's exhibit hall - Homelife and Creative Arts (1983 - antiques, flowers/plants, needlework, handicraft, ceramics, baked goods, canned goods, fine arts, small pet show, etc.) 2000s-2010s - women's exhibit hall - quilts, baked goods, canned goods, etc. 1997 map: exhibit building Current use: women's exhibit hall</p>
<p>Floral Building and Gazebo</p> <p>Map #8 State #70-01556 Field Site #08</p> <p>District status: 2 buildings - non-contributing (hall, gazebo)</p> 	<p>Resource type: 1 story, L-shaped, gable-roof building (each side 30 by 32/62), medium gazebo to east in corner of L Significant date/s: 2008, 2009 Contractor: Morrison? Materials: frame walls with metal siding, brick veneer foundation Roof: gable L-shaped roof - metal roofing Window/doors: large doors at ends - no windows Modifications: -</p> <p>earlier 1897 poultry pavilion here - octagon with rectangular section to east - addition to north in 1929 to create L-shaped building with octagonal junction - 1900s-1950s - used for poultry exhibits - waterfowl pool to south in 1947 - continued in 1950s 1922 Sanborn map: - 1941 Sanborn map: - 1962 - need more exhibit space - old poultry hall remodeled for flowers/plants exhibits - also house boys' 4-H entomology collections, construction, and garden projects (second year for these projects), and Farm Bureau Women's booths through 1970s 1969 aerial: - 1980s-2000s - flowers and other exhibits 2008 - new floral building constructed, 2009 - gazebo built in L-corner outside of building 1997 map: - Current use: exhibits (flowers and horticulture) and meeting hall</p>
<p>Information booth</p> <p>Map #9 State #70-01558 Field Site #10</p> <p>District status: 1 building - non-contributing</p> 	<p>Resource type: Small side gable frame building (10 by 14) Significant date/s: 1996 Contractor: Morrison? Materials: frame walls with vertical wood siding Roof: side gable roof with wide eaves Window/doors: open window on west side, door on north end Modifications: -</p> <p>1900s-1920s - historic photos seem to show gable-roof building near here - may have been secretary's office 1922 Sanborn map: - 1941 Sanborn map: earlier small building near this location - no use noted 1950s-1970s - small building near here used as ticket booth for grandstands and info booth - note of larger ticket office being built in 1949 - new ticket booth to west of grandstands built around 1980 1969 aerial: earlier small building 1980s-1990s - small building near here used as info booth (1992 photo shows horizontal wood siding, wide eaves) 1996 - new 10 by 14 foot building constructed on placed on concrete slab here - similar in form/roof to older building 1997 map: information booth Current use: information booth</p>

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<p>The Grove</p> <p>Map #10 State #70-01557 Field Site #09</p> <p>District status: 1 site - contributing (grove), 1 structure - non-contributing (stage)</p> 	<p>Resource type: Grove of trees (shade for entertainment), small concrete stage/bandstand Significant date/s: 1973, 1981, 2001 Contractor: Morrison? Materials: open land with trees, concrete stage with backdrop clad in metal, gable roof with open sides and metal gables Roof: gable-roof with metal roofing Window/doors: - Modifications: 1981 - extended to west and south, 2001 - roof added</p> <p>1870s - notes on beautiful grove of trees for shade at fairgrounds 1910s-1920s - bands played in the grove - temp bandstand built for fair - also addresses here; 1928 - 100 elm trees planted around grounds, 1930 - fairgrounds has one of the most beautiful natural groves in the state of Iowa 1922 Sanborn map: - 1930s-1940s - bandstand in grove during fair - bands and speakers here - comfortable benches under trees, old vegetable hall moved for girls 4-H in 1936 - opened up additional space at south end of grove - noted as great improvement 1941 Sanborn map: - 1950s-60s - additional acts in Grove - bands and variety show acts; 1960s - removal of elm trees throughout grounds - Dutch elm disease - replaced by maple and ash trees 1969 aerial: grove of trees June 1973 - permanent 16 by 24 ft stage built in Grove in memory of past president, Ken Wagner, donated by his wife Ruth Wagner - Rotary Club built backdrop; October 1981 - donation by Ruth Wagner for extension on sides of grove stage - 5' west, 6' south 1970s-2010s - continued to be used for bands, variety acts and contests; 1997 map: not indicated 2001 - 24 by 30 ft roof added over grove stage in memory of Tom Heither Current use: Grove, Grove Stage</p>
<p>Midway Pavilion</p> <p>Map #11 State #70-01559 Field Site #11</p> <p>District status: 1 building - non-contributing</p> 	<p>Resource type: 1 story gable-oriented building - clad in metal (60 by 104) Significant date/s: 2003 Contractor: Ken Morrison Construction Materials: frame walls with brick veneer lower and metal siding on upper Roof: front gable roof - metal roofing Window/doors: doors on gable ends, small windows, canopy on east (front) side Modifications: -</p> <p>earlier dining hall built near here in 1914, turned and moved west in 1928 when new amphitheater built, 1920s - Methodist ladies serve meals here - concessions also on Midway to west and south of building, 1935 - dances held in former dining hall 1922 Sanborn map: earlier restaurant building 1940 - addition to north - Junior Aid rent to serve meals, 1941 - vegetables/seeds moved from amphitheater booths to former dining hall, 1949 - flowers and potted plants into building with vegetables - new roof on "Vegetable Hall" in 1958 1941 Sanborn map: earlier restaurant building - cross-form building 1962 - floral/plant exhibits to former poultry house for more space for vegetables here (in earlier building) 1969 aerial: cross-form building in trees 1982 - vegetables/fruits moved to Conservation Bldg (Heritage Hall), 1983 - Agriculture department (fruits/vegetables, grain/seeds) 1990s - beer garden (earlier building), 2003 - new Midway Pavilion built - bathroom and beer garden 1997 map: beer garden here Current use: entertainment/food during fair, community events year round</p>

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<p>First Church United Food Booth</p> <p>Map #12 State #70-01560 Field Site #16</p> <p>District status: 1 building - contributing, 1 building - non-contributing</p> 	<p>Resource type: 1 story, side-gable building - clad in metal, 1 story shed to west Significant date/s: 1966, 1976 Contractor: West Liberty Builders Materials: frame walls clad in metal siding Roof: side gable roof Window/doors: large open windows - covered when not in use Modifications: 1976 - moved here and enlarged</p> <p>1922 Sanborn map: - concessions/Midway historically in this area 1941 Sanborn map: - 1960s - Christian Church stand to north of amphitheater - permanent stand built in 1966 about 20 feet north of old stand 1969 aerial: - 1976 - need bleachers space north of amphitheater - First Church United moved food stand to north of Lone Tree stand (later Maid Rite - demo) - built 16 ft on north end of stand when moved - installed metal siding on all, also built shed to west 1970s-2010s - First Church United food stand, 2011 - raised building to add 18" to bottom for more height on interior 1997 map: Crusaders food stand Current use: First Church United food stand</p>
<p>Rotary Club Food Booth</p> <p>Map #13 State #70-01561 Field Site #17a</p> <p>District status: 1 building - non-contributing</p> 	<p>Resource type: Small gable-roof building - clad in metal Significant date/s: c.1998 Contractor: Morrison? Materials: frame walls clad with vertical wood (2 sides), metal (2 sides) Roof: side gable roof - metal roofing Window/doors: small windows, door on end Modifications: c.2012 - north canopy added</p> <p>1922 Sanborn map: - concessions/Midway historically in this area 1941 Sanborn map: - Rotary Club historically operated "rest tent" in grove - started in 1927, late 1940s - offer chairs and cots for women and children - refrigeration for storage of milk for infants - first aid also available 1969 aerial: - 1992 photo shows smaller shed-roof building here c.1998 - built around earlier building - created gable-roof building with canopy to east, c.2012 - added gable-roof to north for additional seating 1997 map: not indicated Current use: Rotary Club food booth</p>
<p>West Liberty Builders Booth</p> <p>Map #14 State #70-01562 Field Site #17b</p> <p>District status: 1 building - non-contributing</p> 	<p>Resource type: Small gable-roof building - clad in metal Significant date/s: c.1975 Contractor: West Liberty Builders Materials: frame walls clad with metal siding of various colors Roof: front gable roof - metal roofing Window/doors: large opening on east with later overhead door installed, door on north Modifications: 2000s - overhead door installed on east, concrete floor added</p> <p>1922 Sanborn map: - business/commercial booths historically in booths under amphitheater after built in 1928 1941 Sanborn map: - 1969 aerial: - 1970 - West Liberty Builders formed by Ken Ruegsegger - former local salesman for Bloom Builders of Oskaloosa - Bonanza Buildings - sold Bonanza Buildings and provided local labor for construction c.1975 - built business booth at fairgrounds - color options for Bonanza Buildings on booth - displays on farm and commercial buildings 1997 map: not indicated Current use: booth</p>

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<p>Grandstands Ticket Booth</p> <p>Map #15 State #70-01565 Field Site #12</p> <p>District status: 1 building - non-contributing</p> 	<p>Resource type: Small gable-oriented metal building Significant date/s: c.1980 Contractor: West Liberty Builders Materials: frame walls clad in metal (Bonanza Building materials) Roof: front gable roof Window/doors: double-hung windows, door on east/rear Modifications: -</p> <p>1922 Sanborn map: - 1941 Sanborn map: - earlier ticket booth for amphitheater sat to north of amphitheater 1969 aerial: small building c.1980 - small building constructed - metal siding 1980s-2010s - amphitheater ticket booth 1997 map: small building Current use: amphitheater ticket booth</p>
<p>Amphitheater (grandstands)*</p> <p>Map #16 State #70-01564 Field Site #13a</p> <p>District status: 1 building - contributing</p> 	<p>Resource type: Shed-roof building with booths/storage on ground level (40 by 200) Significant date/s: 1928 Contractor: Harry A. John (contractor) Materials: frame walls clad in wood siding, concrete foundation Roof: shed roof with metal roofing - roof deck boards appear to be reclaimed lumber - remnants of painted signs/ads Window/doors: wood seating on concrete stepped rows, booths under amphitheater Modifications: reserved seating modified several times - currently no benches</p> <p>earlier grandstands built in this area - replaced by new with gable roof in 1910 - vender stalls under seats, 1920s - crowded conditions - not have funds to build new 1927 - new law that county permitted to have tax levy to support fair - for permanent improvements not operating costs; Nov 1927 - decision to build new grandstand by August 1928 fair - W.C. Nichols to draw plans and specs - built by Harry A. John 1922 Sanborn map: (earlier grandstands) 1930s-1950s - amphitheater for fair and other events - horse races, attractions, and band concerts, booths under seating for commercial exhibits, vegetables/fruits, antiques (start in 1930) 1941 Sanborn map: grandstand 1940s-1980s - seating inadequate - bleachers built to north and south, restroom to south added in 1988 1969 aerial: grandstand 1960s-2010s - amphitheater for fair and other events - auto races, attractions, and band concerts 1997 map: amphitheater Current use: amphitheater / grandstands, exhibit booths on ground level - rented storage not during fair</p>
<p>North bleachers</p> <p>Map #17 State #70-01565 Field Site #13b</p> <p>District status: 1 structure - non-contributing</p> 	<p>Resource type: aluminum bleachers Significant date/s: c.1976, 1978 Contractor: - Materials: aluminum bleachers Roof: - Window/doors: - Modifications: -</p> <p>1922 Sanborn map: - 1941 Sanborn map: - 1976 - need space for bleachers at north end - church food stand moved, 1976 - bought aluminum bleachers from Stadiums Unlimited of Grinnell - capacity of 860 - 90 feet - 15 rows, 1978 - additional bleachers for 800 bought 1969 aerial: - 1970s-2010s - bleachers 1997 map: bleachers Current use: bleachers</p>

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<p>Grandstands Restrooms</p> <p>Map #18 State #70-01565 Field Site #14</p> <p>District status: 1 building - non-contributing</p> 	<p>Resource type: 1 story side gable building Significant date/s: 1988 Contractor: Ken Morrison Construction Materials: brick veneer Roof: side gable roof - metal roofing Window/doors: doors on east/front - canopy over Modifications: -</p> <p>1922 Sanborn map: - 1941 Sanborn map: - 1969 aerial: - Nov 1987 - bid for new restrooms, 1988 - restrooms building constructed south of grandstand 1990s-2010s - restrooms 1997 map: rest rooms Current use: restrooms</p>
<p>South bleachers</p> <p>Map #19 State #70-01565 Field Site #13c</p> <p>District status: 1 structure - non-contributing</p> 	<p>Resource type: three sets of metal bleachers Significant date/s: c.1970 Contractor: - Materials: metal/wood bleachers Roof: - Window/doors: - Modifications: -</p> <p>1920s - need for additional seating - first set of bleachers built to seat in 1924 - seat 1,000; 1945 - note that bleachers secured for additional 1600 people 1922 Sanborn map: - 1949 - new bleachers built for seating 1941 Sanborn map: - 1967 - bought new bleachers, 1970 - bought additional bleachers from Carter Steel Co of Oskaloosa 1969 aerial: - 1998 - bleachers sandblasted and painted, 2001 - some boards on bleachers replaced with treated boards 1970s-2010s - bleachers 1997 map: bleachers Current use: bleachers</p>
<p>Race track</p> <p>Map #20 State #70-01565 Field Site #15a</p> <p>District status: 1 structure - contributing</p> 	<p>Resource type: dirt race track Significant date/s: 1960 (rebuilt for auto racing) Contractor: - Materials: dirt Roof: - Window/doors: - Modifications: -</p> <p>1870s-1890s - track used for horse races, 1910s - races for Cedar Valley Circuit here 1920s - track widened, new fences built; 1925 - State Fair Racing Circuit organized - coordinate fair dates for horse races, 1930s - horse and chariot races, 1933 - ticket booth added at south end of track, 1937 - no harness races 1922 Sanborn map: smaller race track 1938-1940s - effort to attract good horses for races, 1939 - first auto race, 1941 - track reworked, 1940s - races for West Liberty Racing Club and Hawkeye Racing Club, 1947 - track reworked to meet US Trotting Assn standards 1941 Sanborn map: race track 1950s - annual races and horse show by Silver Stirrup Club; July 6, 1958 - first race for Big Speedway Cars; 1960 - track reworked for auto races - admitted to Mississippi Valley Speedway Club race circuit in July - harness races eliminated from fair 1969 aerial: race track 1969/1971/1974/1975 - cement turns and finally walls built around track 1960s-2010s - auto races on track 1997 map: race track Current use: race track</p>

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<p>Infield stage and building</p> <p>Map #21 State #70-01565 Field Site #15b</p> <p>District status: 2 buildings - non-contributing</p> 	<p>Resource type: concrete stage with crow's nest and concessions, infield electrical building Significant date/s: 1983, 1996 Contractor: J&J Steel (stage) Materials: concrete stage, frame stand/building clad in metal, shed clad in metal - metal roofing Roof: - Window/doors: - Modifications: -</p> <p>various earlier judges' stands and stages always located on the infield of the track, 1934 - new judges stand (old moved to south grounds) - located about 125 north of wire - new amplifying system installed, 1935 - Saddle Horse Show started early 1900s-1950 - high school football field on infield, field reworked in 1933 - start night games, 1910s-1930s - baseball games on infield, 1950s - horse shoe tournaments on infield, infield also used for school field days and other events 1922 Sanborn map: - 1964 - new stage and backdrop constructed 1941 Sanborn map: - 1940s-1970s - nationally known musically acts perform on stage during fair 1969 aerial: - 1983 - new permanent stage built (J & J Steel); 1999 - stage remodeled/moved stage/judges stand and new concessions built (Morrison/fair); 2000 - wings on stage, cement pad for stage lights/sound 1996 - new building for electrical controls (infield) 1997 map: infield stage, infield electrical building Current use: stage/judges stand, building</p>
<p>Storage sheds</p> <p>Map #22 State #70-01563 Field Site #19</p> <p>District status: 2 buildings - contributing</p> 	<p>Resource type: Small frame sheds - 2 historic (both 10 by 12), 1 portable (2014) Significant date/s: c.1950s Contractor: - Materials: frame walls with vertical wood siding, one on poured concrete foundation, other on rubble concrete foundation Roof: gable roofs - metal roofing Window/doors: doors on one gable end Modifications: -</p> <p>1922 Sanborn map: - sheds on grounds for storage historically - notes on moves around grounds - unknown if these were built here or moved/reused from elsewhere 1941 Sanborn map: - note in 1934 that ojudges' stand moved to south end of main grounds and remodeled into a tool house, tool house was vandalized in 1935 1969 aerial: two sheds 1962 - "several tool sheds" were painted, also three Baby Beef barns (near here) 1960s-2010s - storage sheds, 2014 - new red portable shed placed next to two earlier sheds 1997 map: sheds Current use: storage sheds</p>
<p>Junior Cattle X-barn*</p> <p>Map #23 State #70-01566 Field Site #18</p> <p>District status: 1 building - contributing</p> 	<p>Resource type: cross type barn (four wings - each 30 by 40) Significant date/s: 1954 Contractor: (volunteer labor) Materials: frame walls with some vertical wood siding and some metal siding Roof: cross gable roof with asphalt shingles Window/doors: large doors on ends, openings on sides covered Modifications: 1996 - some metal siding installed</p> <p>post WWII - increasing number of cattle/livestock entries - 4-H, junior, and adult - need additional space 1922 Sanborn map: - July 1954 - cross type barn built by volunteer labor (4-H, Farm Bureau groups, Lions Club) - also built x-barn in southeast corner of fairgrounds and moved old cattle barn from there as addition to girls 4-H building and one to near near new west x-barn 1941 Sanborn map: - 1950s-1990s - 4-H/junior cattle 1969 aerial: cross barn 1986 - doors added to use building for rental storage, 1990s - flea market held during part of fair - part cattle 1996 - some steel siding installed, 2004 - memorial funds used for concrete walkways in barn 1997 map: west x-barn Current use: storage/maintenance building</p>

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<p>Baby Beef Barn (4-H Barn)*</p> <p>Map #24 State #70-01567 Field Site #20</p> <p>District status: 1 building - contributing</p> 	<p>Resource type: open livestock pavilion with two tiered hip roof (56 by 100) Significant date/s: 1934 Contractor: Harry A. John (and volunteer labor) Materials: frame construction with open sides - exposed wood columns/supports, wood siding on lower exterior walls Roof: two-tier roof design (significant) - asphalt shingles Window/doors: - Modifications: -</p> <p>1918 - three boys' clubs – Baby Beef Club, Pig Club, and Acre Corn Contest – also judging contest for boys (precursor to boys' 4-H), Baby Beef entries grew from 21 in 1921 to near 103 in 1930 - exhibited in tents, also 71 in Pig Club in 1930 1930s - need additional space for Baby Beef entries, July 1934 - decided to build Baby Beef Barn (beef calves, dairy, and colts) - near draft horse barn - built with donated labor under direction of contractor Harry John, completed in August 1934 1922 Sanborn map: - 1934 barn design - tiered roof design - similar to 1918 swine pavilion (extant), 1919 cattle barn (demo), and 1924 sheep barn (demo) 1941 Sanborn map: open building August 1934 - building accommodated 100 baby beeves with sleeping quarters on upper floor for 50-60 boys; cement wash rack added in 1947 and removed in 1990; 1949 - 165 Baby Beef entries from Muscatine County, plus over 40 from Johnson and Cedar counties 1969 aerial: large building 1940s-1960s - baby beef auction held on last morning of fair; new junior dept barn built in 1954 - old barn has space for 120 calves; 1966 - 11 boys 4-H and three FFA clubs operate in county and exhibit at fair 1980s-2010s - Kiddie Barnyard run here by FFA, also kids animal exhibits 1997 map: Kiddie Barnyard Current use: Kiddie Barnyard, kids' animal entries – rabbits, chickens, horses, etc.</p>
<p>Draft Horse Barn*</p> <p>Map #25 State #70-01568 Field Site #21</p> <p>District status: 1 building - contributing</p> 	<p>Resource type: 1 story gable-oriented frame building (36 by 90) Significant date/s: 1915 Contractor: Ned L. Romaine Materials: frame walls with wood siding Roof: front gable roof - asphalt shingles Window/doors: large doors on ends, side windows/openings covered Modifications: -</p> <p>April 22, 1915 – contractor Ned L. Romaine began building new horse barn at West Liberty fairgrounds – 34 by 70 feet - house 28 show draft horses during fair, also used for race horses during summer; 1919 - noted as newer draft horse barn for show horses 1915-1930s - draft horse barn; 1945 - fewer draft horse entries in past years - reduce Draft Horse Show to Tuesday; 1950 - draft horse barn converted to race horse barn - need additional space, 1950s - horse barn 1922 Sanborn map: building 1962 - draft horse barn converted for boys dorm; showers/restroom building added to south in 1974, 1979-1981 - boys dorm not used - closed in 1981 1941 Sanborn map: building 1981 - boys dorm converted to Conservation Building - Muscatine County Conservation Board and Soil Conservation exhibits; 1982 - fruits/vegetables exhibits moved to Conservation Building - also some ag commercial exhibits 1969 aerial: large building late 1980s - antiques moved from exhibit hall to Conservation Building ("old relics" first displayed in booths under amphitheater in 1930 - very popular, here into 1950s then into exhibit hall) 1990 - Conservation Building shared by fruits/vegetables/grains (north half) and antiques (south half) 1997 map: Heritage Hall Current use: Heritage Hall - antiques</p>

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<p>Sawmill Pavilion</p> <p>Map #26 State #70-01568 Field Site #21</p> <p>District status: 1 structure - non-contributing</p> 	<p>Resource type: open pavilion constructed over antique sawmill (20 by 48) Significant date/s: 1991 Contractor: (volunteer labor) Materials: wood posts Roof: front gable roof - metal roofing Window/doors: - Modifications: -</p> <p>1922 Sanborn map: - 1941 Sanborn map: - 1969 aerial: - 1989 - Larry Nelson donated stationary saw mill to fair 1991 - pavilion/roof built over sawmill - used light poles and donated trusses 1997 map: - Current use: sawmill pavilion</p>
<p>Yellow Restrooms</p> <p>Map #27 State #70-01569 Field Site #22</p> <p>District status: 1 building - non-contributing</p> 	<p>Resource type: 1 story restrooms/showers building clad in metal - Bonanza Building (28 by 30) Significant date/s: 1974 Contractor: West Liberty Builders Materials: frame walls with metal siding Roof: side gable roof - metal roofing Window/doors: door on each end Modifications: 2000s - painted</p> <p>1922 Sanborn map: - 1941 Sanborn map: - 1969 aerial: - July 1974 - Bonanza Building erected for showers/restroom building south of boys' dorm by West Liberty Builders 1992 photo shows "Bonanza Building" sign on east side before painted, 1997 - new water fountain installed 1997 map: yellow showers/restrooms Current use: restrooms</p>
<p>Cattle Wash Rack</p> <p>Map #28 State #70-01570 Field Site #23</p> <p>District status: 1 structure - non-contributing</p> 	<p>Resource type: concrete wash rack Significant date/s: 1973 Contractor: - Materials: concrete pad with wood hitching fence Roof: - Window/doors: - Modifications: -</p> <p>1922 Sanborn map: - 1941 Sanborn map: - 1969 aerial: - 1973 - construction of new cattle show barn to east, July 1973 - new water line to boys' dorm with branch to new wash rack 1970s-2010s - wash rack for show barn 1997 map: not indicated Current use: wash rack</p>

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<p>Cattle Show Barn</p> <p>Map #29 State #70-01570 Field Site #24</p> <p>District status: 1 building - non-contributing</p> 	<p>Resource type: 1 story, gable-oriented building clad in metal - Bonanza Building (60 by 150) Significant date/s: 1973 Contractor: West Liberty Builders Materials: frame walls with metal siding Roof: front gable roof - metal roofing Window/doors: large doors on each side Modifications: -</p> <p>1922 Sanborn map: - 1941 Sanborn map: - March 1973 - bid for new 4-H/cattle barn accepted from West Liberty Builders for Bonanza Building (60 by 150 by 12) - located on Watson property acquired in 1963; August 1973 - note that new market beef barn added to facilities 1969 aerial: - 1976 - bleachers bought for new Beef Barn from Stadiums Unlimited, 1977 - Show Barn rented for storage during off season 2000 - wood posts in Show Barn repaired 1997 map: show barn Current use: cattle show barn - Judging Pavilion</p>
<p>4-H Office</p> <p>Map #30 State #70-01571 Field Site #25</p> <p>District status: 1 building - non-contributing</p> 	<p>Resource type: 1 story, gable-oriented frame building (12 by 16) Significant date/s: 1990 Contractor: Army Reserve School labor Materials: frame walls with vertical wood siding Roof: front gable roof - asphalt shingles Window/doors: door on front, paired 1/1 windows on both side Modifications: -</p> <p>1922 Sanborn map: - 1941 Sanborn map: - late 1980s - office space provided for 4-H and FFA during fair; 1989 - vote to build own building 1969 aerial: - January 10, 1990 - \$600 pledged for new 4-H office – carpenter classes from Army Reserve School would build with donated labor; May 1990 - 14 by 16 concrete slab poured for 4-H office building; July 1990 - 4-H office moved here 1990s-2010s - office for 4-H/youth entries; 2014 - portable concessions building placed to north of office (Ringside Café) - not tabulated 1997 map: youth entry office Current use: youth entries</p>
<p>East Restrooms</p> <p>Map #31 State #70-01572 Field Site #26</p> <p>District status: 1 building - contributing</p> 	<p>Resource type: 1 story, side gable frame building (12by 16) Significant date/s: 1967 Contractor: - Materials: frame walls with vertical wood panels Roof: side gable roof - asphalt shingles Window/doors: door on each end Modifications: -</p> <p>1922 Sanborn map: - 1941 Sanborn map: - 1966 - new show pavilion built to south - need new set of restrooms on south end of grounds - some discussion on moving/reusing old mens' toilets - bid for new toilets in April 1967 to Dexter plumbing - new drinking fountain also installed 1967 - property ledger notes that old toilet moved from north of beef cattle barn and converted to a modern restroom for men and women at cost of \$1626 1969 aerial: small building 1970s-2010s - restrooms 1997 map: east rest rooms Current use: restrooms</p>

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<p>Sheep Barn</p> <p>Map #32 State #70-01573 Field Site #28</p> <p>District status: 1 building - contributing</p> 	<p>Resource type: 1 story, gable-roof frame building (30 by 136) Significant date/s: 1954 barn split in 1998 Contractor: - Materials: frame construction with upper open walls and lower clad in vertical wood siding Roof: front gable roof - metal roofing Window/doors: - Modifications: -</p> <p>1922 Sanborn map: - 1941 Sanborn map: - rebuilt from east cross barn: July 1954 - moved old cattle barn for addition to girls 4-H building and one to near new west x-barn - cross type barn built by volunteer labor (4-H, Farm Bureau, Lions Club) - also built x-barn on west side of fairgrounds 1969 aerial: - 1950s-1980s - east cross barn used for open class beef cattle entries; 1990s - east cross barn used for cattle entries 1998 - deconstructed east cross barn to provide access to track for large car haulers - tore down old sheep barn and old race horse barn to west of swine pavilion - used section of old cross barn for new sheep barn west of old sheep barn (site of race horse barn) - new roof trusses - completed in 1999 1997 map: - Current use: sheep barn</p>
<p>Dairy Barn</p> <p>Map #33 State #70-01573 Field Site #29</p> <p>District status: 1 building - contributing</p> 	<p>Resource type: 1 story, gable-roof frame building (30 by 88) Significant date/s: 1954 barn split in 1998 Contractor: - Materials: frame construction with upper open walls and lower clad in vertical wood siding Roof: front gable roof - metal roofing Window/doors: - Modifications: -</p> <p>1922 Sanborn map: - 1941 Sanborn map: - rebuilt from east cross barn: July 1954 - moved old cattle barn for addition to girls 4-H building and one to near new west x-barn - cross type barn built by volunteer labor (4-H, Farm Bureau, Lions Club) - also built x-barn on west side of fairgrounds 1969 aerial: - 1950s-1980s - east cross barn used for open class beef cattle entries; 1990s - east cross barn used for cattle entries 1998 - deconstructed east cross barn to provide access to track for large car haulers - tore down old sheep barn and old race horse barn to west of swine pavilion - used section of old cross barn for new dairy barn west of swine pavilion (site of sheep barn) - new roof trusses - completed in 1999 1997 map: - Current use: bucket calves barn</p>
<p>Wash rack</p> <p>Map #34 State #70-01573 Field Site #30</p> <p>District status: 1 structure - non-contributing</p> 	<p>Resource type: concrete wash rack Significant date/s: 1980, 2001 Contractor: - Materials: concrete pads with wood fence around edge Roof: - Window/doors: - Modifications: -</p> <p>1922 Sanborn map: - 1941 Sanborn map: - 1969 aerial: - June 1980 - cement for sheep wash rack poured May 2001 - 12' extension for wash rack for sheep and dairy cattle 1997 map: - Current use: wash rack</p>

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<p>Livestock Judging Pavilion</p> <p>Map #35 State #70-01574 Field Site #31</p> <p>District status: 1 building - contributing</p> 	<p>Resource type: 1 story, gable-roof, frame open pavilion - Bonanza Building (50 by 96 feet) Significant date/s: 1966 Contractor: Bloom Builders Materials: frame construction with open sides - gables/angles clad in metal siding Roof: front gable roof - metal roofing Window/doors: - Modifications: -</p> <p>1922 Sanborn map: - 1941 Sanborn map: - 1966 - new judging building constructed - loss of elm trees on grounds - need building for shade for livestock judging - Bonanza Building constructed by Bloom Builders of Oskaloosa - local crew under direction of Ken Ruegsegger 1969 aerial: large building 1960s-1970s - judging pavilion (show barn) for 4-H, junior classes, and open classes 1980s-2010s - show barn for livestock other than cattle 1997 map: show barn Current use: show barn for swine, sheep, goats, etc.</p>
<p>Swine Pavilion*</p> <p>Map #36 State #70-01575 Field Site #32</p> <p>District status: 1 building - contributing</p> 	<p>Resource type: 1 story, three-tier hip roof, frame open pavilion (80 by 170 feet) Significant date/s: 1918 Contractor: Ned L. Romaine Materials: frame construction with open sides Roof: three tier hip roof design (significant) - provides ventilation - asphalt shingles Window/doors: - Modifications: -</p> <p>1918 - new hog barn built by Ned Romaine on south end of grounds - 80 by 180 feet - capacity of 600 animals - completely filled with overflow in August 1918 - continued large number of entries through 1920s 1922 Sanborn map: open pavilion 1930s-1970s - swine pavilion 1941 Sanborn map: open pavilion 1969 aerial: large building 1980s-2010s - swine pavilion 2012 - discussion on whether to repair or replace swine pavilion - result in efforts to fundraise for restoration and nominate fairgrounds to NRHP 1997 map: swine barn Current use: swine pavilion</p>
<p>South gate ticket booth</p> <p>District status: not tabulated (portable bldg)</p>	<p>Resource type: small gable-roof building - south of swine barn along drive (2013)</p>
<p>Small portable resources (south of track)</p> <p>District status: not tabulated (portable)</p>	<p>Resource type: south of track - small gable-roof frame pit gate booth (c.2005), small metal building (Ringside Café - 2014), portable stage (1990s)</p>

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Social History

Agriculture

Period of Significance

1875-1969

Significant Dates

1875

1889

1963

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Romaine, Ned L.

John, Harry A.

Bloom Builders

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The West Liberty Fairgrounds Historic District is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A at a local level of significance. The district is historically significant within the social and agricultural history of West Liberty and the surrounding rural area. The period of significance begins in 1875 when the initial 31 acres of land on the southwest edge of West Liberty were purchased by the West Liberty Park Association and extends through 1969 when the last of the expansion and improvements in the 1960s for the fairgrounds were concluded with the completion of the new girls' 4-H exhibit hall. Significant dates are noted for the expansion of the fairgrounds within the boundary through the purchase of the original land in 1875 and additional land in 1889 and 1963.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

The West Liberty Fairgrounds Historic District is significant under Criterion A for the historical significance of the property within the social and agricultural history of West Liberty and the surrounding rural area. County fairs are significant within the local and regional level as the showcase of livestock, agricultural products, home economics, and craftwork for men, women, and children. The Union District Agricultural Society organized in 1862 and initially held fairs in southwest Cedar County starting in 1863, moving to West Liberty in 1871. The West Liberty Park Association formed in 1874 to purchase land for the society, which was completed with the purchase of 31 acres in January 1875. The grounds were developed with early buildings and a race track, providing space for livestock and other exhibits and attracting people to the fair for horse races and other attractions. These early buildings were replaced with larger buildings by the 1910s, such as the exhibit hall (1915) and swine pavilion (1918). Agricultural exhibits and contests remained the focus of the West Liberty Fair into the 20th century, and the fair publicized its quality of exhibits and attractions as well as timing immediately before the Iowa State Fair. The increased focus on practical rural education for children led to the inclusion of youth in the fair by the 1910s. Initial school exhibits evolved to formal categories and clubs, with boys exhibiting livestock and girls participating in home economics exhibits and demonstration. Increased participation led to buildings on the fairgrounds repurposed and built for these youth entries in the 1930s. At the same time, the demand for spectator space was at a premium in the old amphitheater along the race track in the 1920s, and a new amphitheater was built in 1928 after a new law passed permitting counties to support infrastructure improvements for county fairs through a tax levy. The West Liberty Fair in the late 1940s proudly publicized their shady fairgrounds, quality exhibits, and record of continuous fairs since 1863 with all premiums paid. Growth of the fair in the post-World War II period resulted in record entries in consecutive years, as well as in comparison with other agricultural county fairs in Iowa. The West Liberty Fair is noted as standing out among the 103 other county fairs in Iowa in 1961 due to their acceptance of entries from throughout the country (one of four) and their financial success and profit (one of 21). They were noted as having the largest number of exhibitors of any county fair in the state, with 4,389 entries in 1961.¹ Improvements and expansion throughout the 1960s related to the prominence of the West Liberty Fair at a statewide level and increased numbers at the fair that resulted in the construction of new livestock judging pavilion in 1966 and a large building for girls' 4-H exhibits in 1969, the last significant building within the period of significance. In addition to the use of the fairgrounds for the fair, the property was also used for community purposes throughout the year. Horse races and then automobile races were held on the track through the summer months, and the stalls and track were used for rental and training purposes. The grounds provide sites for family reunions, picnics, holiday celebrations, and community events. Thus, the West Liberty Fairgrounds Historic District has played a key role in the agricultural and social history of West Liberty, Muscatine County, and the surrounding area.

¹ CHC 1962: 14, 18

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Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

County fairs are significant within the agricultural and social history of localities throughout the Midwest, bringing rural populations together and providing an opportunity for exhibition and entertainment. Historians have noted several defining qualities of a county fair, qualities that also distinguish it from a typical festival or annual event. County fairs are inherently tied to the agricultural roots of the country, and successful fairs typically continue to serve the original purposes of a fair historically. The county fair is an annual event, held around the same time each year and embedded within the cycles of seasons in agricultural life. Competition is a key part of the fair, and the annual premium book outlines the categories for entries. The fair is held on fairgrounds, which provides a permanent physical place for the event and includes dedicated buildings such as livestock barns, exhibition halls, and grandstands. These buildings are tied to key aspects of the county fair that define its nature. Additional space is found throughout the grounds for temporary venues that address additional aspects of competition, entertainment, and concessions for the fair.² The West Liberty Fairgrounds Historic District reflects these significant qualities of social history and agricultural life related to a county fair, as further illustrated in the following sections.

Development of agricultural societies and fairs

Historians have noted that the “the first authentically American fair was the agricultural or county fair.”³ Agricultural societies were formed in the northeast in the late 1700s to introduce European agricultural innovations to America. While these societies provided an intellectual discourse on methods, the typical farmer was not involved. Fairs also existed to promote rural and domestic economy, though were not specifically related to agricultural improvement. Elkanah Watson is then credited as the first American to create an intersection between these purposes. Watson had observed the benefits of improved agricultural practices particularly related to selective breeding, seed stock, and soil methods when traveling in Europe, and he was concerned about American dependency on European cloth. In an effort to attract the attention of farmers interested in improving sheep breeding and thus the quality of wool, Elkanah Watson acquired and exhibited two Merino sheep on the common green in Pittsfield, Massachusetts in 1808. He was pleasantly surprised at the interest, and he worked to organize a larger livestock exhibition in 1810. The success of this fair led to Watson to establish the Berkshire Agricultural Society in 1811 for the purpose of holding a county fair. Premiums valued at \$70 were offered to those farmers who exhibited the best livestock in the county. The fair included a parade complete with a band and floats, providing an entertainment quality that attracted additional rural residents. This fair held in September 1811 is considered the first modern agricultural fair, attended by an estimated 3,000-4,000 people. The fair was held in succeeding years, bringing rural residents together for exhibition, education, entertainment, and socializing. Women were included with the introduction of cloth weaving in 1813, with 63 premiums awarded for agricultural products, domestic manufacture, and livestock and a formal ball held as the closing event.⁴

The concept of the agricultural fair quickly spread to other towns in Massachusetts, New York, and New Hampshire, spurring discussion on their value and resulting in public financial support. With the increase in participation and premiums, the Berkshire Agricultural Society successfully requested \$200 in state support in 1816, similar to the support provided to the Massachusetts Society for Promoting Agriculture. In 1818, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and New York enacted general subsidy laws for premiums awarded at county fairs, hoping to promote national economic development through agricultural improvements.⁵ In 1819, Watson provided written direction for those farmers interested in starting their own societies and fairs. His

² Hokanson and Kratz 2008: 12-14; McCarry 1997: 37, 60, 64, 85, 106, 111, 136

³ McCarry 1997: 14

⁴ McCarry 1997: 14-17, 35; Hokanson and Kratz 2008: 29-36; Marti 1986: 7

⁵ Marti 1986: 7

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outline included a fair to be held for at least two days in a permanent location with pens for livestock; membership dues for the society accepted on the first day of the fair with entries for the competitions; an opportunity for patrons to view livestock, modern implements, and agricultural products; contests such as plowing matches for entertainment during judging; and a parade ending with a gathering with addresses and music for a ceremony for awarding of the premiums.⁶ This agricultural fair in Berkshire mold quickly spread throughout the Northeast, then extending into the South and to the western frontier of Ohio. By 1823, similar fairs existed in nearly every county in Massachusetts and 35 of 46 counties in New York, supported by the state subsidies. In 1833, the legislature in Ohio appropriated \$50 for every county agricultural society, a system that evolved to grants to fairs under the Board of Agriculture modeled after New York by 1846. By 1860, 84 societies existed throughout Ohio. These fairs grew in the 1830s and 1840s as a venue for agricultural competition and education, as well as a showcase for new agricultural innovations such as John Deere's steel plow and an important social event providing a reason for widespread rural residents to rest and gather in the company of each other.⁷

When the first Iowa territorial legislature met in 1838, they thus had exposure to these endeavors found in the Northeast and Ohio, areas that provided a number of settlers into the new territory. In 1838, the legislature passed an act providing for the incorporation of agricultural societies. The goal was "clearly to encourage and help farmers solve their problems through discussions, competitive exhibits, and the wide dissemination of known agricultural information."⁸ Agricultural societies and fairs were the best educational method at the time to bring about general agricultural improvement, a significant need for a new territory. The act was further strengthened in the 1841-42 session with \$1,200 from the federal government designated to pass through to county agricultural societies. Societies were authorized to regulate and award premiums for improvements and best methods.⁹ Van Buren County is noted as hosting the first county agricultural society meeting and fair in Iowa on October 12, 1842, awarding premiums of \$30 cash, 16 copies of *Prairie Agriculturalist*, and 28 certificates for the society. The fair was held again the following year but was then not repeated again until 1851. Early fairs were also held in Jefferson County and Lee County. State support proved critical to the growth of county fairs. In 1851, the Iowa State Legislature appropriated state funds to agricultural societies, matching funds up to \$50 raised by a local agricultural society for premiums. The amount was increased to \$200 in 1853 to encourage agricultural improvement and "on-the-job" education for farmers through discussions, exchange of opinions, competitive exhibits, and wider dissemination of agricultural information. Reports were required to be filed to receive the funds, with reductions applied if a report was missing. As a result, societies formed and fairs were held in several additional Iowa counties in the 1850s.¹⁰

The period from 1850 to 1870 has been dubbed the Golden Age of agricultural fairs, linked to the significant expansion of these institutions. Additionally, through this period, the fairs provided a significant intellectual and social outlet for farm residents, with the educational emphasis of the fair primary and the entertainment quality secondary. However, entertainment, such as horse races, was a key part of fairs through this period, with fairs that strove to do without quickly and quietly folding. Inclusion of women in horse events sparked debate but little action. The morality of the amusements and entertainment at fairs would continue to be debated into the 20th century, with a focus on improving the quality of these aspects of the fair. However, agricultural competition and exhibition clearly remained the focus. Fairs were particularly popular in the Midwest, with the seven states from Ohio to Iowa boasting 28% of the country's population but 49% of the agricultural societies in 1858.¹¹ The first state fair was held in Detroit, Michigan in 1849 and the concept quickly spread across the country. The State Agricultural Society organized in Iowa in December 1853 in Fairfield, with five counties involved (Henry, Jefferson, Lee, Van Buren, and Wapello) and communication from three additional counties

⁶ Hokanson and Kratz 2008: 36-40; Marti 1986: 5

⁷ Hokanson and Kratz 2008: 40; Marti 1986: 7-8; McCarray 1997: 17

⁸ Bliss 1960: 3

⁹ Bliss 1960: 3-4

¹⁰ Bliss 1960: 4-5; Iowa State Fair Board 1930: 293-295

¹¹ Marti 1986: 11-12; Hokanson and Kratz 2008: 40-41

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(Scott, Muscatine, and Keokuk). The first State Fair was then held in Fairfield on October 25-27, 1854, with attendance estimated at anywhere from 7,000 to 12,000. The fair included exhibits of livestock, crops, farm implements, pantry supplies, and needle work; educational addresses; and entertainment including female equestrianism. The legislature then appropriated \$1,000 to the State Agricultural Society for a state meeting and fair, increased to \$2,000 in 1857. The State Fair was held in various locations over the next decades before finding a permanent home in Des Moines in 1886. It was then noted as “a great school, teaching by object lessons, when rival breed and rival machines and rival varieties of trees and seeds come in active competition, their merits are decided by competent committees.” The educational value of the Iowa State Fair was noted at the time, even in comparison with other nearby state fairs.¹²

County fairs further grew across the country following the end of the Civil War. In this period, fairs continued to typically follow Watson’s model – an annual event held on permanent but undeveloped grounds on the outskirts of a town (often the county seat) with permanent buildings supplemented by tents, outdoor pens, and other temporary structures. The grounds typically had livestock pens, exhibit tents, a race track, and stables. Most were enclosed by a fence by the Civil War in order to charge an admission fee, which was an important source of income. The inclusion of vendors offering food and amusements on fairgrounds also provided additional revenue, with a charge for space as well as a portion of intake. Through the end of the 19th century, county fairs worked to stabilize their finances, improve their yearly events, and build permanent buildings on the fairgrounds.¹³ County fairs also further developed in Iowa in this period. State appropriations continued to play a key role in the support of local agricultural societies. In 1866 the law was revised to remove the match requirement for state funds, replacing it with funds provided up to a maximum of 40% of amount paid on premiums up to \$500 (or \$200). Thus, funding was tied to the size of the fair. It also gave the county board of supervisors the authority to donate \$100 to any society that owned ten acres of land and improvements sufficient to hold fair.¹⁴ Thus, the stage was set for the organization, character, and establishment of the West Liberty Fair.

Organization of the Union District Agricultural Society and early fairs in West Liberty, 1852-1909

With the passage of legislation in Iowa in 1851 to provide state funds for premiums for fairs held by agricultural societies, a number of groups held fairs and formed societies over the next decade, including the forerunner of the Union District Agricultural Society which then sponsored the West Liberty Fair. A group met in the fall of 1852 at the farm of Samuel Mather in Iowa Township in Cedar County, located to the southwest of the Cedar River and about six miles northeast of West Liberty. Men compared horses, cattle, and sheep; women compared quilts, dresses, yarn, and jellies. It is locally recognized as the first fair in Cedar or Muscatine counties. No agricultural society formed at this time, but the same individuals would later meet again for that purpose and to hold a second fair in 1859.¹⁵ Meanwhile, the Muscatine County Agricultural Society organized in Muscatine on October 9, 1852, with fairgrounds on the edge of the county seat through the end of the century until they disbanded. The northwestern Muscatine County and southwestern Cedar County group met again on April 25, 1859 in District #2 schoolhouse in Springdale Township in Cedar County, and they formed the Cedar County Agricultural Society. They held a fair on Moses Butler’s farm between Springdale and West Branch from 1859 to 1862. A Tipton group (northeast of the Cedar River) then incorporated with that name in 1862, filing papers with the county before the Springdale group (southwest of the Cedar River). They briefly considered uniting with the Tipton group but noted that they had 509 entries in 1862 with poor weather conditions while the Tipton fair only had 307 entries with good weather. So, they then reorganized as the Union District Agricultural Society instead in December 1862, with Moses Varney as president. They held their first official fair on September 28-29, 1863 on land of Delbert Smith about 1/6 mile north of the Muscatine

¹² Marti 1986: 10; Bliss 1960: 6-8; Page et al 1986: 8: 2-3

¹³ Hokanson and Kratz 2008: 42

¹⁴ Iowa State Fair Board 1930: 295

¹⁵ Ivan Noland, “History of West Liberty Fair,” *Muscatine Journal*, August 18, 1950, 3

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County line and two miles north of West Liberty, near the Wapsie River on the road from West Liberty to Springdale. The 1863 fair was noted as held "on the open prairie at the place designated, with a few open pens for the stock and a tent to protect the grain, fruit, vegetables, and finer exhibits." In 1864, the Union District Agricultural Society bought 40 acres of land from Delbert Smith, making improvements to this site in 1864 and 1865. They held fairs here through 1871.¹⁶

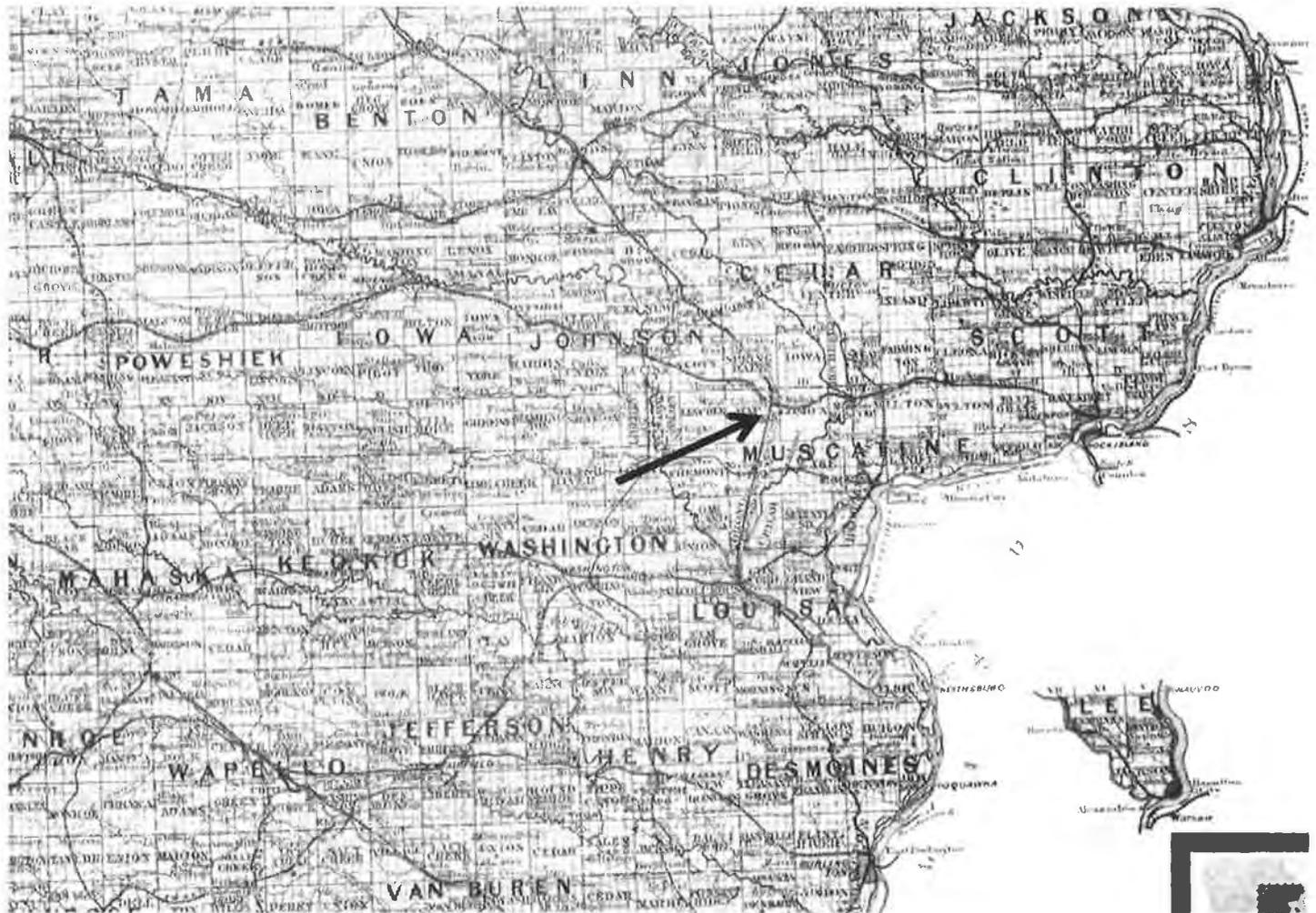


Figure 4. Southeast Iowa in 1875, with West Liberty indicated.¹⁷

In 1871, the Union District Agricultural Society decided to move their annual fair into West Liberty. The village of Liberty was originally built on the stage road from Davenport to Iowa City. Tracks for the Chicago, Rock Island, & Pacific Railroad were then laid about one-half mile to the south in 1856, with a new town then platted here in 1858 and named West Liberty. Some earlier buildings were then moved to the new town site. The town did not have substantial growth until the Burlington, Cedar Rapids, & Northern Railroad was planned through the community in 1869. A committee looked into securing land in West Liberty in 1869 and 1870, with a final recommendation in 1871. At the annual meeting on December 1871, the Union District Agricultural Society accepted an offer from W.C. Evans for a 10 year lease on land in West Liberty for \$50 for four weeks for fair purposes and sold their old grounds in Cedar County to L.W. Henderson. A committee raised money

¹⁶ Ivan Noland, "Union District Agricultural Society's Organization Told," *Muscatine Journal*, August 18, 1950, 6; "Records of 1863 Tell About Present Fair's Beginning," *Muscatine Journal*, August 18, 1950, 7; CHC 1962: 1-4; *Portrait and Biographical Album of Muscatine County 1889*: 632

¹⁷ Andreas 1875: 20-21

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for improvements for the new grounds, and \$1,000 was soon pledged. The first fair was held here on September 25-27, 1872. The location was noted as conveniently located near the railroad tracks with a beautiful grove of trees for shade.¹⁸



Figure 5. Muscatine County in 1875, with West Liberty indicated.¹⁹

In 1874, the West Liberty Park Association formed with its object noted as “purchasing, holding, and improving a certain tract of land used by the Union District Agricultural Society.” They were authorized to spend up to \$3,500 to purchase this tract of land on the southwest side of West Liberty, financed by 62 shares sold to 30 investors. On February 27, 1875, about 31 acres was sold by William C. and M.A. Evans to The West Liberty Park Association. The grounds started at the southwest corner of First Street and Calhoun Street, extending south to the quarter section line and west to the Burlington, Cedar Rapids, & Northern Railroad tracks (Figure 6).²⁰ They immediately began improving the grounds and rented them to the Union District Agricultural Society for the fair. They received income from other uses throughout the year, including hay, pasture, and stalls on grounds rented to trainers who utilized the track. A fair office was then built in 1876, and stalls on the grounds were rented for \$2 per month. In 1878, 25 hitching posts were installed, with hitching to trees then prohibited. Early meeting minutes also note fences being installed. In 1882, the lease for the grounds was renewed for \$30 per year for five years. Horse racing was a focus at the early fairs, and entertainment included various contests of strength, baseball games, and games on the midway. While some food was sold by vendors, most

¹⁸ WLSC 1988: 2; “Records of 1863 Tell About Present Fair’s Beginning,” *Muscatine Journal*, August 18, 1950, 7; CHC 1962: 7-8, 23; *Portrait and Biographical Album of Muscatine County* 1889: 632, 657-658; Richman 1911, Vol. 1: 226.

¹⁹ Andreas 1875: 20-21

²⁰ Muscatine County Lands Book 13: 743

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families brought a picnic lunch. The fair was noted as successful, with 984 entries in 1884. A Floral Hall had been built by 1885, as broken windows were noted in that year.²¹

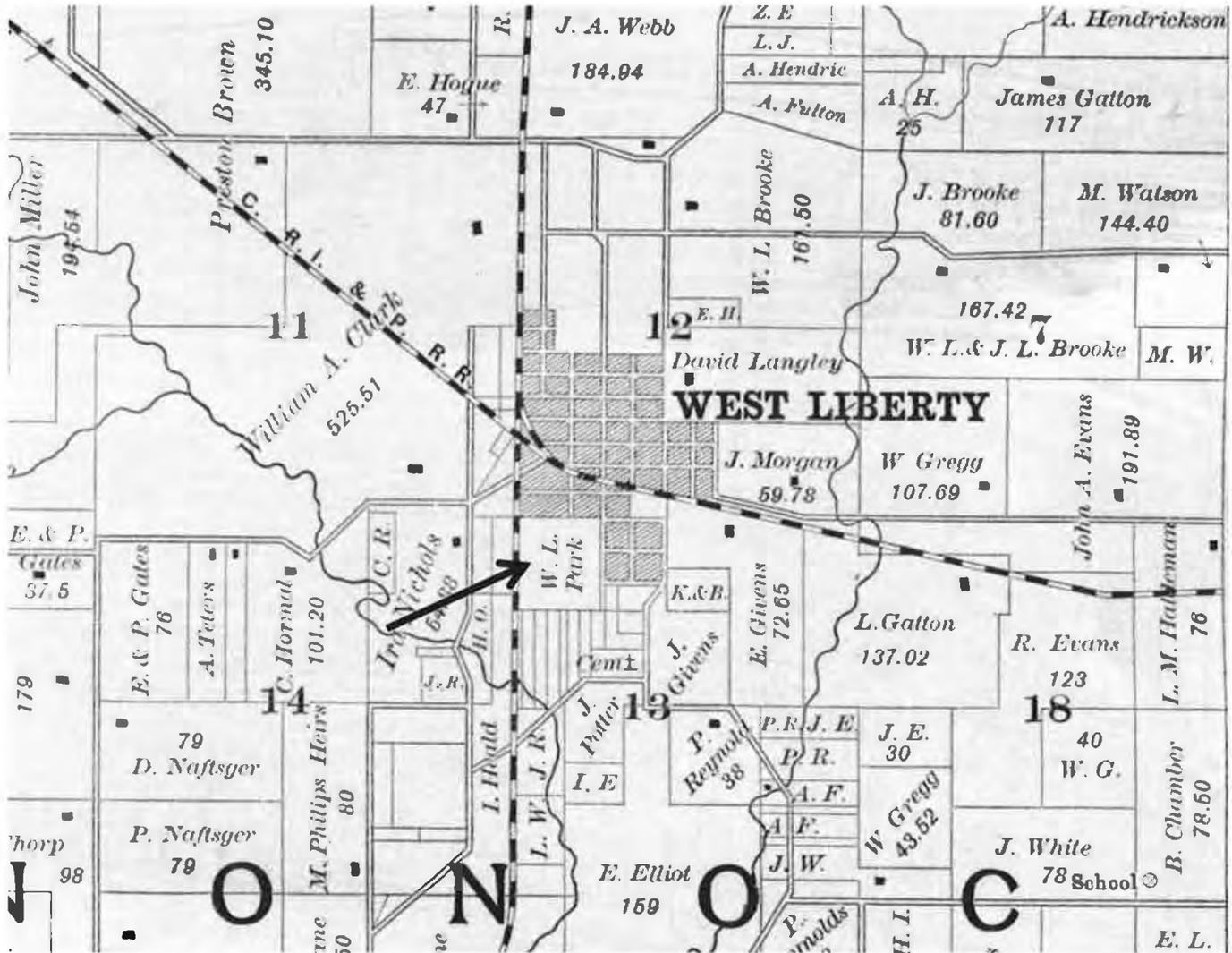


Figure 6. Map of West Liberty and surrounding area in 1884, with fairgrounds indicated.²²

The success of the West Liberty Fair led to the acquisition of additional land and further development in the 1890s. On August 1, 1889, the West Liberty Park Association bought two acres of land from Ephraim Fenstermaker, located south of the east third of the original land.²³ This area would then be developed with facilities related to livestock entries. The population of West Liberty grew to 1,268, compared to 11,454 in Muscatine to the southeast and 1,212 in Wilton to the east in Muscatine County. The fair was increased from three to four days in 1890. Bicycle races were added to the events in 1895, with seven races held. In 1896, entries included a fine livestock exhibit of horses, cattle, swine, and poultry and a fine display of agricultural products (produce of meadows, gardens, orchards, and conservatories). The Floral Hall and Domestic Pavilion included exhibits of women's industry and handiwork, including fine drawings, paintings, crayons, engravings, photographs, oil and water colors.²⁴ The 1896 report filed with the secretary of the State Fair

²¹ CHC 1962: 8, 10, 28-30; Annual Meeting Minutes Book: 32, 40

²² Haskell 1884: 22-23

²³ Annual Meeting Minutes Book: 45; Muscatine County Lands Book 33: 31

²⁴ CHC 1962: 12, 32

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indicated that the fair received the full \$200 in state aid. Gate receipts totaled \$1,868.65 for 1896, with \$1,260 paid in purses for horse races and \$1,126.31 paid in livestock and other premiums. The Tipton Fair Association in adjacent Cedar County reported similar numbers.²⁵

With finances in good standing, the Union District Agricultural Society worked on further improvements to their grounds in 1897. The *West Liberty Index* reported on May 13 that the Warren Brothers had torn down the old vegetable hall, an eyesore on the grounds, and they had commenced building a handsome new 34 by 48 hall on a good foundation (Map #6, moved in 1936). The interior of the hall would be well arranged with benches. They would soon also start building a new poultry pavilion, which would be built west of the present building and be octagonal with 12-foot sides and a 30-foot diameter (later expanded/remodeled, demolished in 2008).²⁶ Various horses were utilizing the race track for training, which was also being improved. A newspaper advertisement for the fair on August 26 encouraged everyone to bring their best to exhibit, highlighting cattle, horses, hogs, sheep, and poultry. It noted that the "new Vegetable Hall will draw a crowd," and Floral Hall will also have strong exhibits (Figure 7).²⁷ The newspaper noted on September 9, 1897 that the 35th annual fair "was the finest exhibit in years, attracting and pleasing hundreds of visitors." The "new agricultural hall had its capacity emphasized by the small percentage of space occupied by the big exhibit already there." Secretary W.H. Shipman had his office in the southeast corner of the new building, coordinating the over 1,200 entries from here. In addition to the exhibits and entries, the implement dealers arranged interesting display of new machinery. The merry-go-round was found in its usual place, with a dozen stands to the south of it. Horses entered in the races were noted from West Liberty, Nichols, Tipton, Atalissa, Muscatine, Iowa City, Springdale, Columbus Junction, Oxford, Washington, Baxter, Dewitt, Cedar Rapids, and Marengo, demonstrating the regional draw of the fair at this date.²⁸ In 1898, the number of entries rose to 1,655, and a half mile foot race was added on the track.²⁹ Anyone purchasing a membership ticket for the fair became a member of the Union District Agricultural Society and eligible to attend the annual membership meeting held in the month after the fair (Figure 8).

By 1900, West Liberty had developed significantly, boasting an electric light plant and water works as well as a strong fair. Population grew to 1,690 by 1900, compared to 14,073 in Muscatine and a fairly stable 1,233 in Wilton. Around 1900, the Muscatine County Agricultural Society disbanded and sold their fairgrounds in Muscatine, leaving fair operations to small towns further west in Muscatine County.³⁰ The 1901 reports of district and county agricultural societies include local reports from the Union District Agricultural Society (West Liberty, Muscatine County), Wilton Agricultural Society (Muscatine County), and Tipton Fair Association (Cedar County). The West Liberty Fair was comparable in gate receipts and premiums to the Tipton Fair, with the Wilton Fair appearing to have been slightly smaller.³¹ The fairs in West Liberty and Tipton received the full \$200 in state aid, while the smaller Wilton Fair received only \$183.60. The fairgrounds in West Liberty were also utilized for community activities outside of the fair, other than horse training. Family reunions and picnics were held on the grounds, with the first annual picnic of the Nichols family noted as held here in 1900 (J. Nichols was president of the Union District Agricultural Society in 1901). The Fourth of July celebrations for

²⁵ Reports of District and County Agricultural Societies, Iowa Historical Society

²⁶ "Suggestive Activities," *West Liberty Index*, May 13, 1897, 1; Two years later, the Tipton Fair Association built an octagonal Floral Hall on their grounds in Tipton (Cedar County) in 1899, which was listed on the NRHP in 1975. Other fairgrounds also had octagonal buildings constructed in this period.

²⁷ *West Liberty Index*, August 26, 1897, 4

²⁸ "The 35th Annual Fair," *West Liberty Index*, September 9, 1897, 1

²⁹ CHC 1962: 18, 32

³⁰ WLSC 1988: 6-7; Richman 1911, Vol. 1: 105, 423

³¹ Reports of District and County Agricultural Societies. Gate receipts for West Liberty were \$1,190.10, Tipton were \$1,456.85, and Wilton were \$925.54. Premiums paid for the West Liberty Fair included \$775 for speed, \$634 for livestock (horse, cattle, swine, sheep, poultry), and \$595.50 for other entries (art hall, agricultural products, pantry/kitchen), while premiums paid for the Tipton Fair included \$800 for speed, \$782.65 for livestock, and \$403.62 for other entries, and premiums paid for the Wilton Fair included \$1,562.75 for speed, \$291 for livestock, and \$168 for other entries.

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35TH ANNUAL FAIR!

—OF THE—

UNION DISTRICT AGR'L. SOCIETY,

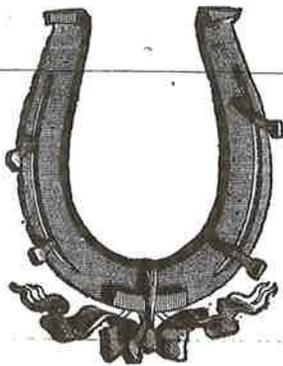
WILL BE HELD

SEPTEMBER 6TH, 7TH, 8TH AND 9TH.

AND YOU SHOULD BE THERE AND MAKE A EXHIBIT OF THE
BEST YOU HAVE.

THE CATTLE DEPARTMENT

PROMISES TO BE THE BEST IN YEARS.



THE HORSES

ARE ALWAYS HERE BOTH IN THE SHOW RING AND IN THE SPEED CLASS.

The Hog Pens will be full of Iowa's best. The Sheep are beginning to tell of the tariff on wool. The new Poultry Pavilion will prove an attraction worth the price. The new Vegetable Hall will draw a crowd, and the Floral Hall will be better than ever before.

EVERYBODY COME!

ALBERT WHITACRE, Pres.

W. H. SHIPMAN, Sec'y.

Figure 7. Newspaper ad for West Liberty Fair in 1897.³²

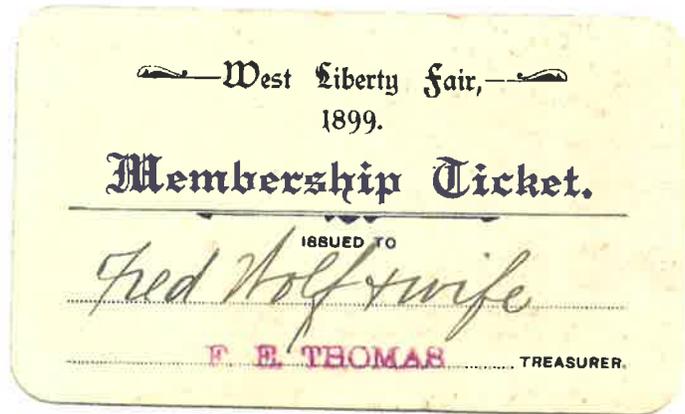


Figure 8. Membership ticket for 1899 and Reward of Merit.³³

³² West Liberty Index, August 26, 1897, 4.

³³ Lehman collection.

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West Liberty were held at the fairgrounds in 1901, complete with a hot air balloon ascension gone slightly awry. Football was introduced into West Liberty High School in this period, and the West Liberty Park Association donated the use of the infield as the gridiron. This remained the only athletic field in town until Memorial Athletic Field was built in 1950.³⁴ A new horse barn was built for the 1905 fair. The newspaper noted on August 3: "The West Liberty fair is the only live thing of its character in all this region. All other organizations of a similar nature are either dormant or financially bankrupt. Exhibitors at the West Liberty fair get their premiums in cash without shave or discount. It is invariably a good show, liberally patronized by people from a wide territory. It is always a clean and moral agricultural fair, where neighbors vie with each other in showing the best production of herds, flocks, and fields."³⁵ The fair was held on Wednesday August 23 to Friday August 25 immediately before the start of the Iowa State Fair, reducing the full exhibit of agricultural products. An article on the fair noted: "The vegetable hall could contain a larger display, but what there is is first class in quality – notably a stalk of corn 14 feet high with two big ears."³⁶ The 1905 fair reports to the State Fair board continued to show the West Liberty Fair larger than the Wilton Fair, as well as more balanced in attracting strong horse races, quality livestock exhibits, and strong exhibits in home, art, and agricultural products categories.³⁷

Development of the West Liberty Fairgrounds and West Liberty Fair, 1910-1928

While significant improvements were made to the fairgrounds from 1875 to 1909 to develop facilities for the West Liberty Fair and other community activities, the period from 1910 to 1928 ushered in development of the fairgrounds with larger buildings that have become permanent fixtures on the grounds. The West Liberty Fair also emerged in this period as a strong fair in southeast Iowa, as well as becoming the only fair in Muscatine County. After holding their 47th fair in August 1909, the Union District Agricultural Society (UDAS) entered into a 10 year lease starting on January 1, 1910 with the West Liberty Park Association (WLPA) to lease the fairgrounds for the purpose of holding an exhibition or fair each year. The UDAS would have full access and use of the grounds during the weeks before, during, and after the fair, with the WLPA reserving the entire use and control of all stables, pens, wells, and buildings of the UDAS on grounds except for Floral Hall during entire year other than three weeks reserved for UDAS. The UDAS was considered the owner of all the buildings, stalls, pens, fences, and water supply on grounds, except for the sales pavilion (belong to neither) and except for the horse barns painted red running north and south along the west line of the addition to said grounds (owned equally). The UDAS reserved the right to remove its real property from the premises at the end of the lease. The UDAS also agreed to put up and maintain suitable hitching posts throughout the grove for hitching teams and to provide policemen during the fair to insure that no teams were hitched to trees on grounds. New articles of incorporation were then filed for the Union District Agricultural Society on March 1, 1910, noting that its "general nature of its business shall be the holding of agricultural fairs." The society would continue for 50 years, unless dissolved by vote of the membership earlier. Members of the society included any owner of a membership ticket, with voting privileges to elect the 12 people to serve on the board of directors and five officers that comprised the executive committee. The Union District Agricultural Society periodically bought shares of stock in the West Liberty Park Association over the next years.³⁸

³⁴ CHC 1962: 16-17, 23, 33; WLSC 1988: 145

³⁵ "West Liberty Fair Prospects," *West Liberty Index*, August 3, 1905, 5

³⁶ "All Aboard for the Fairgrounds," *West Liberty Index*, August 24, 1905, 4

³⁷ Reports of District and County Agricultural Societies. Union District Agricultural Society – total receipts - \$5,459.28 (including gate receipts - \$1,927.70, entry fees (speed dept) - \$717.50, other entry fees - \$274.40, state appropriation (anticipated) - \$200); total expenses - \$5,158.01, (fair expenses - \$765.29, debt paid - \$0, improvements - \$1,205.47, attractions - \$100, premiums for speed - \$1645, livestock premiums (horse, cattle, swine, sheep, poultry) - \$859.50, other premiums (art hall, agricultural products, pantry/kitchen, other) - \$582.75); Wilton Fair Association – total receipts - \$3,272.21 (including gate receipts - \$1,514.85, entry fees (speed dept) - \$168, other entry fees - \$192.86, state appropriation (anticipated) - \$200); total expenses - \$3,272.21, (fair expenses - \$684, debt paid - \$0, improvements - \$680, attractions - \$312, premiums for speed - \$1,100, livestock premiums (horse, cattle, swine, sheep, poultry) - \$322.50, other premiums (art hall, agricultural products, pantry/kitchen, other) - \$222.50)

³⁸ Lease in Muscatine County Fair files. Incorporation papers found in various abstracts as well as Book C of Incorporations, page 396. Eight shares of stock bought at \$50 each in 1912, "Agricultural Society Meeting," *West Liberty Index*, October 17, 1912, 1

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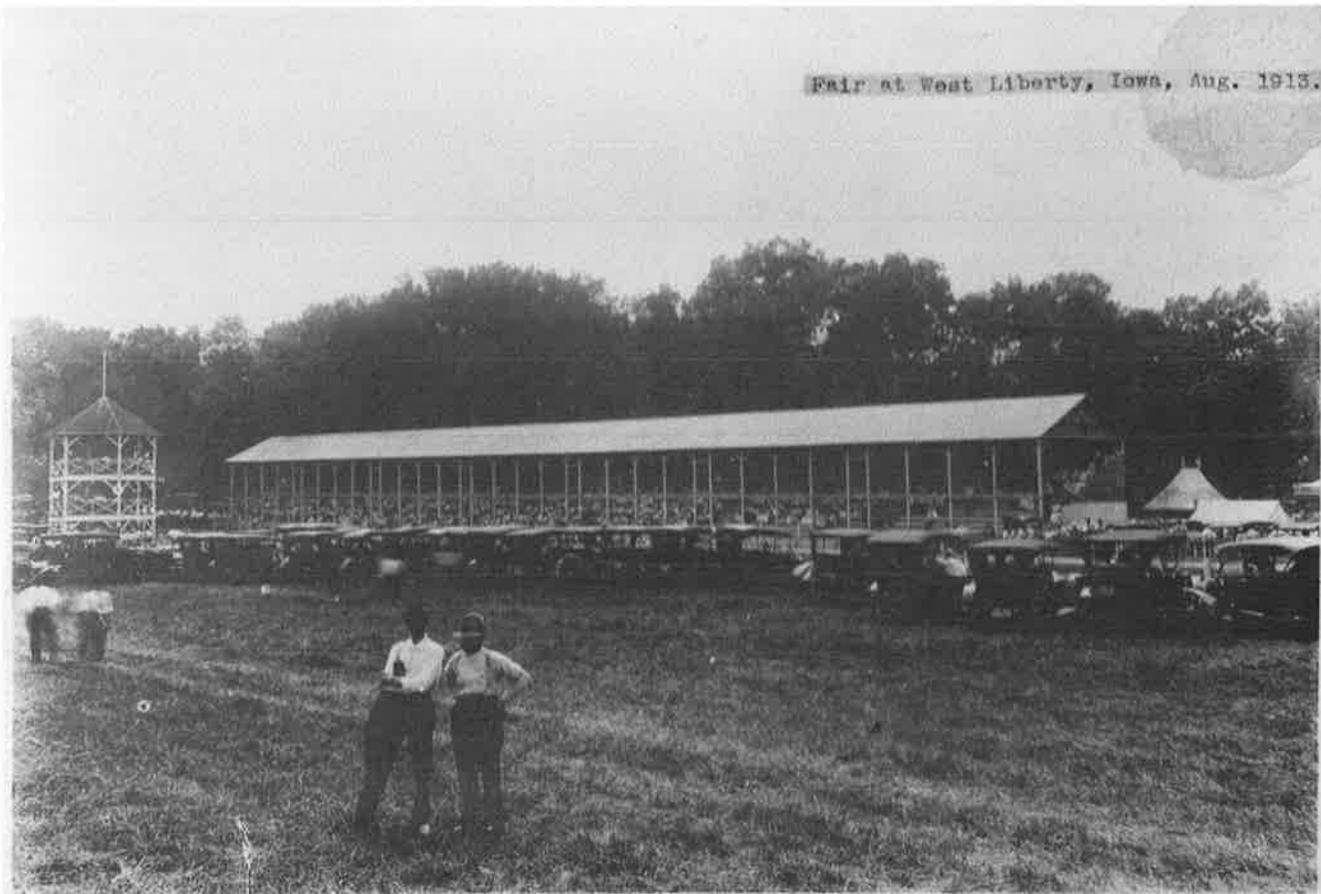


Figure 9. View from infield of track looking southwest to grandstands built in 1910 and infield parking.³⁹

With legalities clearly outlined, the Union District Agricultural Society began to work on expanding and improving their facilities. In 1910, a new grandstands with a gable roof, seating capacity of 2,500, and stalls for merchants on the ground level was built along the west side of the race track at a cost of \$2,400 (replaced in 1928). Admission remained a quarter for 1910, but then was raised to the 35-cent price of the surrounding fairs in 1911. Neighboring societies also reorganized by 1910, with The Wilton Fair Association and the Cedar County Fair Association in Tipton replacing the earlier agricultural societies. The Johnson County Agricultural and Mechanical Society also organized in Iowa City in this period.⁴⁰ Historian Irving B. Richman noted in 1911 that the fairgrounds in West Liberty were where “one of the leading annual agricultural exhibitions in the state has been held from year to year.”⁴¹ Special noon trains brought patrons to the West Liberty Fair in the early 1910s, and 255 automobiles were counted on the grounds in 1911 on Wednesday, the big day of the fair. The 50th fair of the Union District Agricultural Society was celebrated in August 1912. A new dining hall was built at a cost of \$1,000 in 1914 (demolished). The fair was advertised in July 1914 by a parade of automobiles traveling from West Liberty through Nichols, Lone Tree, Downey, West Branch, Springdale, Rochester (stop for a basket dinner), Atalissa, and Wilton, a tradition that would continue and expand through the 1930s. Their efforts resulted in a reported 10,426 paid admissions for the West Liberty Fair in 1914, with nearly 12,000 noted on the grounds on Wednesday with 1,000 automobiles. The fair through this period ran from Monday to

³⁹ Lehman collection, photograph also printed in *West Liberty Index*, August 28, 1913

⁴⁰ CHC 1962: 33; “Admission to the Fair Unchanged,” *West Liberty Index*, August 11, 1910, 1; “Fair Was The Best Ever Held,” *West Liberty Index*, August 25, 1910, 1; “Agricultural Society Meeting,” *West Liberty Index*, October 13, 1910, 1; Reports of District and County Agricultural Societies.

⁴¹ Richman 1911, Vol. 1: 229

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Thursday in the last week of August, with Monday reserving for entries and set-up and judging starting on Tuesday. Horse races and baseball games were then held on three days, providing the main attraction to the grounds outside of the exhibits.⁴²

The concepts of education and exhibition for the county fair were further expanded in this period as well with two key trends across the country. By the 1890s, there was a growing movement to educate rural children on agricultural experimentation and the study of nature, promoted by Cornell University and other agricultural colleges. In Iowa, Miss Jessie Field in Page County is noted as including these principles during the year that she taught at the rural Goldenrod School in Page County in 1901. In 1902, Albert Belmont Graham organized the Boys' and Girls' Agricultural Experiment Club in Springfield Township, Ohio, focusing on experimental plots of corn and presenting findings at the Clark County Fair. He then expanded the program through cooperation with Ohio State University and advocated for more clubs throughout Ohio. Graham is thus credited with organization of the first 4-H club. Iowa State College in Ames began to take on an increased role in agricultural and practical education of both current and future farmers. W.M. Beardshear, president of Iowa State College, was a leading proponent of the overall training of children, including the head, heart, and hands. County superintendents began to heed the call, with superintendent Captain E. Miller in Keokuk County holding a series of meetings to expand education to include the heart and hand as well as the head in 1903-1904. As a result, the Boys' Agricultural Club and Girls' Home Culture Club were created in March 1904. In 1906, the extension service was organized at Iowa State College, providing support for teachers introducing practical training into the curriculum. In the southwest corner of the state, Miss Jessie Field returned to Page County in 1906 as superintendent for the rural schools, introducing agricultural subjects into the rural schools and starting boys and girls clubs as well. Perhaps most notably, O.H. Benson became superintendent of schools in Wright County in 1905, expanding corn test plots that he started in the Goldfield school previously to a comprehensive effort to teach agriculture to rural schools in each township. Exhibits of school work were displayed at township graduation exercises initially and then incorporated into township school fairs in fall 1909. He used a three-leaf clover emblem as a symbol for the clubs, reflecting the head, heart, and hands.⁴³

At the same time as efforts increased to incorporate agricultural training into the school curriculum, efforts also increased on promoting better farming methods for current farmers. In Iowa, the Department of Agriculture was created in 1902, and the State Fair was then shifted under their control. The Office of Cooperative Demonstration Work was created as part of the United States Department of Agriculture in 1903, and Dr. Seaman A. Knapp was hired, working on demonstration plots in the South to reduce dependency on cotton. He was also a supporter of corn clubs, pig clubs, and other methods of spreading agricultural enlightenment among youth. He visited his son in Clarinda, Iowa, and met with O.H. Benson. Due to his interest in Benson's work, he then brought Benson to D.C. where he began work for the USDA on January 1, 1911. Benson then worked to develop boys' and girls' club work in southern states in 1911 and 1912, and he then moved to working with northern states in 1913. When discussions began for a national emblem for the program, he suggested his clover emblem, with the additional H added for health for a four-leaf clover, and it was adopted in 1911 for boys and girls clubs, which were then known as 4-H clubs in 1918. In Iowa in the early 1900s, Iowa State College was called on to send speakers to farmers' institutes and other gatherings, conduct demonstrations on county demonstration farms, and judge county fairs, providing a certain level of expertise. This work led to the passage of the Agricultural Extension Act in April 1906, which is noted as the earliest specific state legislation in the country creating an agricultural extension educational service and appropriating funds for that purpose. The Extension Service of the college then offered assistance to county superintendents of schools in July 1907 on conducting corn growing and corn judging contests, continuing their involvement in schools. By 1910, club work became part of practically every activity of the Extension

⁴² "West Liberty Fair," *West Liberty Index*, August 24, 1911, 1; "The West Liberty Fair for 1913," *West Liberty Index*, August 21, 1913, 1; "Fair Booster Trip," *West Liberty Index*, July 30, 1914, 1; "West Liberty Fair Making Great Plans," *Muscatine Journal*, August 19, 1914, 7; CHC 1962: 18; "Fair of Superlatives," *West Liberty Index*, August 27, 1914, 1

⁴³ Marti 1986: 18; Hokanson and Kratz 2008: 55-56; Bliss 1960: 85-95; Cassat 1993: 8:5

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Department. Per the report on July 1, 1912, 1,409 teachers were enrolled in teaching agriculture and home economics in Iowa.⁴⁴

Additional statewide and national efforts in the early 1910s further expanded the educational efforts in rural America. In Iowa, county extension agents were organized starting in 1912 when Professor M.L. Mosher from the Extension Department of the Iowa State College began work in Clinton County in eastern Iowa, largely due to the efforts of the Clinton Commercial Club. In 1914, the Clinton County Farm Improvement Association was then formed, with the county agent located in Dewitt. Also on September 1, 1912, extension horticulturalist G.R. Bliss was hired as a full-time county agent in neighboring Scott County. County agents soon started in Montgomery County and Black Hawk County followed by Muscatine County and Clay County in early 1913. The county agent became the local clearinghouse for farm questions and difficult farm issues, as well as providing services of the Extension Department such as a county demonstration farm, judging at the county, short courses for farmers, a series of winter corn meetings, and visiting farms. With the Extension Department called upon to "give educational help at all sorts of farm events, including fairs," judging became more standardized, providing an educational value to the patrons.⁴⁵ At the national level, the Smith-Lever Cooperative Extension Act was then enacted on July 1, 1914, as a result of rapidly growing extension work to create a new cooperative relationship between the state extension services and USDA as well as provide some federal funding. Nine counties in Iowa had county extension directors on July 1, 1914, and the number increased to 27 by April 1917. County farm improvement associations were organized, later known as the Farm Bureau. Boys and girls club work in Iowa then began to grow significantly in this period, with 4-H clubs gradually replacing the extension work within the rural schools. County fairs then evolved as the primary place for exhibition of this work.⁴⁶

In the 1910s, county fairs across the country drew strength from the youth movement and reflected the move towards extension services. Both aspects aligned with the original purpose of the county fair to provide solid agricultural exhibition and education for improved agricultural products and livestock. Competitions were initially held on the fairgrounds, and then school exhibits were incorporated into county fairs. By the late 1910s, the movement gave county fairs a renewed sense of purpose. Perhaps correlated, county fairs continued to be popular throughout the Midwest in this period. While the Midwest had less than one-third of the population in 1913, it boasted nearly half of agricultural societies that sponsored fairs (1,337 of 2,740). These county fairs continued to focus on exhibition and education, while other fairs began to shift more towards entertainment over agriculture.⁴⁷ The movement is reflected in the West Liberty Fair by the early 1910s. The newspaper noted on August 24, 1911: "Exhibits in all lines were better than ever and too numerous to permit a recital. In pausing, however, the exhibit of work done by the school children of the county should be mentioned, deserving of special credit."⁴⁸ The floral hall at the fair in August 1913 was noted for its usual high class exhibits, with the section reserved for schools of the county being of its usual interest and having a constant crowd. The exhibit on the results of scientific farming sent from the extension department at Iowa State College was highlighted in fair promotional articles in July 1913, and it was noted as a "constant center of interest."⁴⁹

With financial success of the preceding fairs, the Union District Agricultural Society constructed two new buildings in 1915. On April 22, the *West Liberty Index* reported that contractor Ned L. Romaine had begun building a new 34 by 70 foot horse barn on the West Liberty fairgrounds that would house 28 draft horses during the fair (Map #25). It would also be used for race horses at other times during the year, including for the

⁴⁴ Marti 1986: 18; Bliss 1960: 44, 90-92, 98; Hokanson and Kratz 2008: 55-56

⁴⁵ Bliss 1960: 63-69; Marti 1986: 13

⁴⁶ Bliss 1960: 99-101, 107-109; Hokanson and Kratz 2008: 56

⁴⁷ Marti 1986: 7, 18-19

⁴⁸ "West Liberty Fair," *West Liberty Index*, August 24, 1911, 1

⁴⁹ "Ames Exhibit at the Fair," *West Liberty Index*, July 17, 1913, 1; "The West Liberty Fair for 1913," *West Liberty Index*, August 21, 1913, 1

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upcoming season of the Cedar Valley Circuit opening on June 1-3. A number of horses were reported as training on the fairgrounds track in May for the circuit, including entries from Idaho, California, Illinois, Indiana, and Texas.⁵⁰ The board of directors then made a final decision in June to build a new Exposition Hall prior to the fair in August: "This new building, which will greatly increase the worth and attractiveness of the grounds, will be of ample dimensions, probably about 40 by 100 feet" (Map #7, Figures 11-12).⁵¹ Framework on the site of the former floral hall was visible in July. The *West Liberty Index* noted that in planning for the new hall, ample space was allotted for proper showing of exhibits by schools of the county, which encouraged the best work of pupils.⁵² With space available, secretary W.H. Shipment met with the county superintendent of schools E.D. Bradley to plan for the finest school exhibit ever shown at any fair. The new exposition hall was nearly complete by July 29, with high windows to provide good ventilation not possible in the old floral hall and that were protected by wide eaves so that they might remain open even during heavy rains.⁵³ The article on the success of the fair on August 26 noted that "The Exposition Hall especially was a big attraction on this year. Its greater capacity undoubtedly attracted many additional entries and all were displayed to a far greater advantage than in the past. The hall, large enough to accommodate its visitors and throughout the Fair, was crowded... The many beautiful exhibits housed in this large hall were shown to perfection and scarcely a visitor there but voiced his admiration of the building and its contents. There is no question: The building is a great asset to the grounds." The vegetable building was also noted for excellent exhibits, particularly of fruit (Map #6, moved in 1936), and the local livestock entries played even with the finest from other parts of Iowa and the adjoining states.⁵⁴ With an increase in state aid for county fairs to \$800 in 1915, the officers reported at the annual meeting in October that the loan for the construction would be paid off with \$100 to spare.⁵⁵

While enjoying success, the Union District Agricultural Society looked to further bolster their numbers over the next few years with the introduction of new features. At the annual meeting in October 1915, they decided to include a night show in the program. Lights were strung around the fairgrounds in August 1916 prior to the fair to provide sufficient lighting. Free attractions included the Flying Lamys, The Valentinos, Peter the Great (an ape), Berlo Sisters, and the Diving Nymphs, performing in the afternoon and evening on the stage in front of the grandstands. Fireworks were a popular part of the night show, and total attendance for the fair was estimated at 13,000, with 6,000 remaining on the grounds on the big day of Wednesday for the night show. Both town and country school children from primary to high school grades were noted for their exhibits, and Miss Agnes Ruess won the rural school stock and grain judging contest over several boys. The Baby Beef Club formally organized in the fall of 1916, with 15 boys involved.⁵⁶ The touring company of automobiles were again out in full force in 1917 to advertise the West Liberty Fair from Mt. Vernon to Columbus Junction and Riverside to Walcott, noting that "West Liberty's reputation as the home of the genuine goods is winning her fair more friends each year." Ticket prices increased to 50 cents during the day, with a night ticket available for the evening only for 25 cents. The newspaper noted: "West Liberty's location on the direct line to the state fair and her dates in the week just preceding the state show work to her benefit, and with the introduction of the special fast freight accommodations to Des Moines on the final night of the local fair assures us many of the big exhibitors of this state as well as Illinois and Missouri."⁵⁷ Additionally, "The West Liberty fair has long been known as the best fair in eastern Iowa....it is a fair in every sense of the word, where the choicest cullings of herd and flock and field is on exhibition and a place where the whole family may find edification and instruction without encountering the slightest offense to their moral convictions."⁵⁸

⁵⁰ "New Horse Barn at Fairgrounds," *West Liberty Index*, April 22, 1915, 1; "Local Track Popular," *West Liberty Index*, May 6, 1915, 1

⁵¹ "New Hall for Fairgrounds," *West Liberty Index*, June 24, 1915, 1

⁵² "Fair Building Rising," *West Liberty Index*, July 15, 1915, 1

⁵³ "Planning the Big Fair," *West Liberty Index*, July 29, 1915, 1

⁵⁴ "Fair Closes a Winner," *West Liberty Index*, August 26, 1915, 1

⁵⁵ "Fair Leaders Reelected," *West Liberty Index*, October 14, 1915, 1

⁵⁶ "Miles of Exhibits," *West Liberty Index*, August 17, 1916, 1; "Hanging New Moons," *West Liberty Index*, August 10, 1916, 1; "13,000 on Fairgrounds," *West Liberty Index*, August 24, 1916, 1; "Fair Makes Money," *West Liberty Index*, August 31, 1916, 1; CHC 1962: 12, 14, 35

⁵⁷ "Advertise Big Week," *West Liberty Index*, August 9, 1917, 1

⁵⁸ "Big Fair on Next Week," *West Liberty Index*, August 16, 1917, 1

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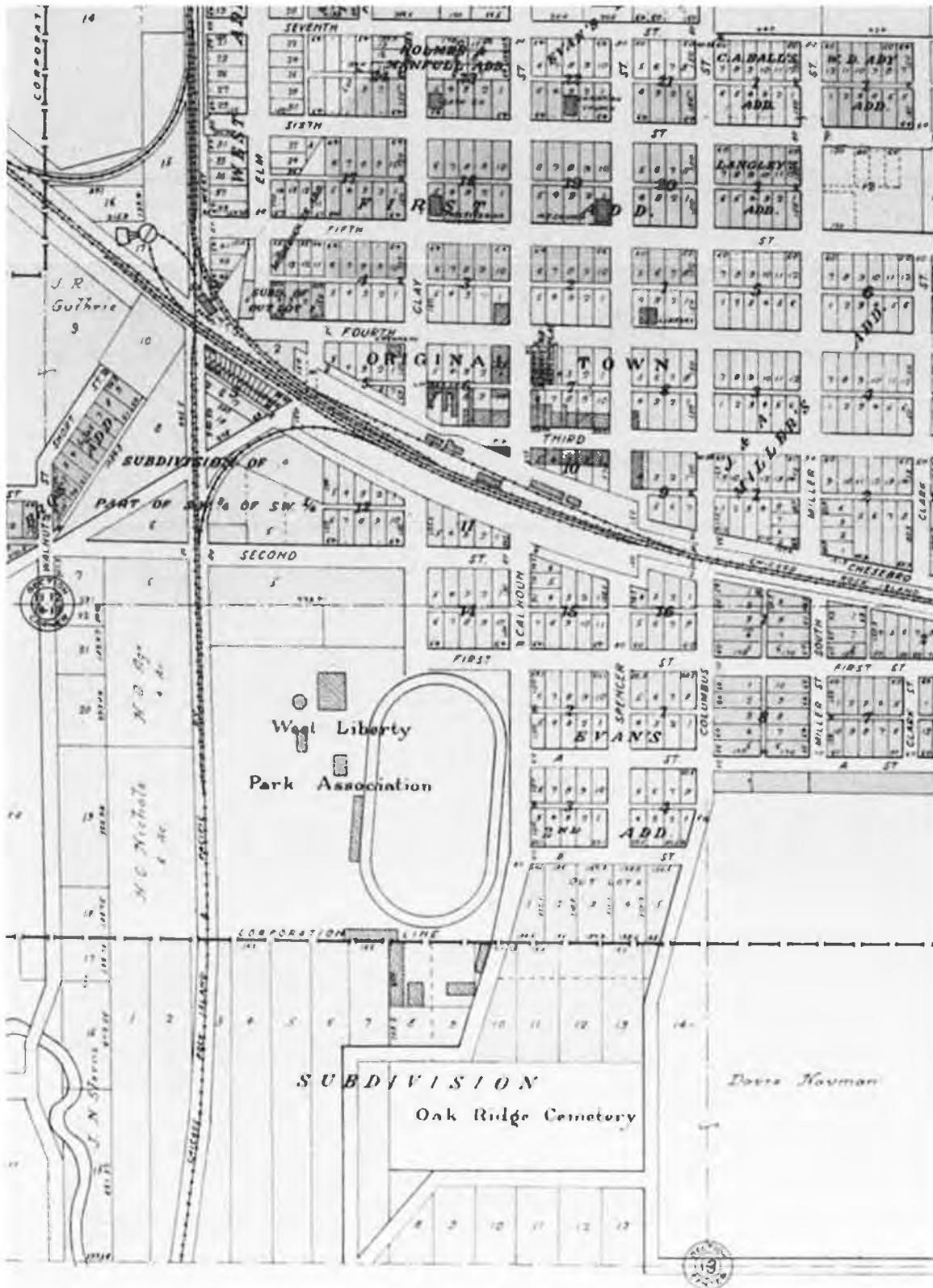


Figure 10. Map of West Liberty in 1916 showing location of fairgrounds.⁵⁹
buildings indicated on fairgrounds seem abstract rather than specific

⁵⁹ Atlas of Muscatine County 1916:

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Figure 11. View from water tower looking southwest to fairgrounds in 1918.⁶⁰
1910 grandstands visible at left, 1915 exhibition hall in top center with tents to the north and parking to the north/west, grove of trees to west of grandstands and south of exhibition hall

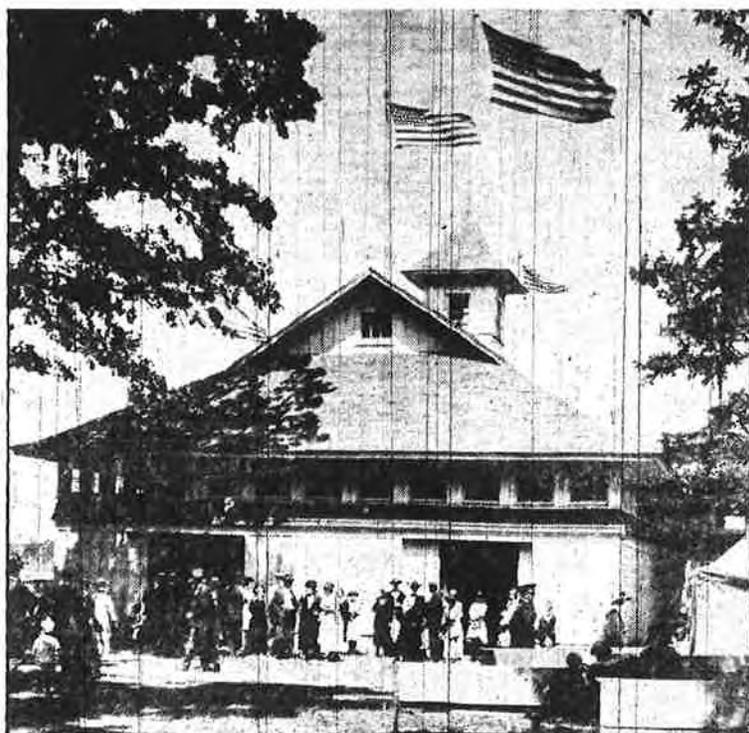


Figure 12. Stock newspaper photo from the 1920s of one side of the Exhibition Hall, printed in several years.⁶¹

⁶⁰ WLSC 1988:145

⁶¹ *Muscatine Journal*, August 15, 1934, 5

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Figure 13. Photograph of a fair crowd used on the cover of the 1918 program for the West Liberty Fair.⁶²
gable-roof building appears to be the 1897 vegetable hall with secretary's office in the southeast corner

The increase in livestock entries led to temporary tents in 1917 and the construction of a large new swine pavilion in 1918, despite the presence of World War I. On July 25, 1918, the *West Liberty Index* noted that a new building had been needed for several years, and contractor Ned L. Romaine had a new hog barn under construction among the trees at the south end of the grounds to be ready for the fair. The building was completed in early August, ready for the "largest exhibit of hogs ever assembled on the grounds." Overall, "The barn, in size and arrangement, takes its place with the best in the state, and its construction entitles the local association to another medal." Predictions were accurate, with the *West Liberty Index* reporting "The hog exhibit stands out as the finest ever assembled in Iowa, outside of the State Fair. The new barn, with its capacity for 600 animals proved too small, and additional room was rustled for the overflow of prize porkers."⁶³ The fair was held in 1918 despite World War I. Restrictions on food meant no restaurant (dining hall) on the grounds and limited concessions, resulting in the return of the old-time lunch basket. There was still plenty to see and do on the grounds, with excellent exhibits, band concerts, free attractions (Ishiwaka Brothers, Ebenezer the trained mule, The Flying Valentinos, The Four Roses), horse races, and Thearle-Duffield fireworks shows. In fact, as several other communities did not hold fairs, the West Liberty Fair had high attendance and was noted for high quality exhibits, which reflected its reputation: "Under present circumstances, West Liberty is the logical and about the only showground for the herds of this part of the state,

⁶² Lehman collection

⁶³ "New Fair Building Rising," *West Liberty Index*, July 25, 1918, 1; "Get Your Tickets Early," *West Liberty Index*, August 15, 1918, 1; "Liberty Fair to be Best Ever," *Muscatine Journal*, August 16, 1918, 4; "Scores 56th Success," *West Liberty Index*, August 22, 1918, 1

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and the live stock men are fully alive to the fact. Poultry, vegetable, grain and other departments promise equally well." Exhibits in the main exposition hall as well as the vegetable and fruit building reflected some lower numbers but were still noted as a fine showing.⁶⁴



Figure 14. 2014 photograph of the Swine Pavilion (Map #36).⁶⁵

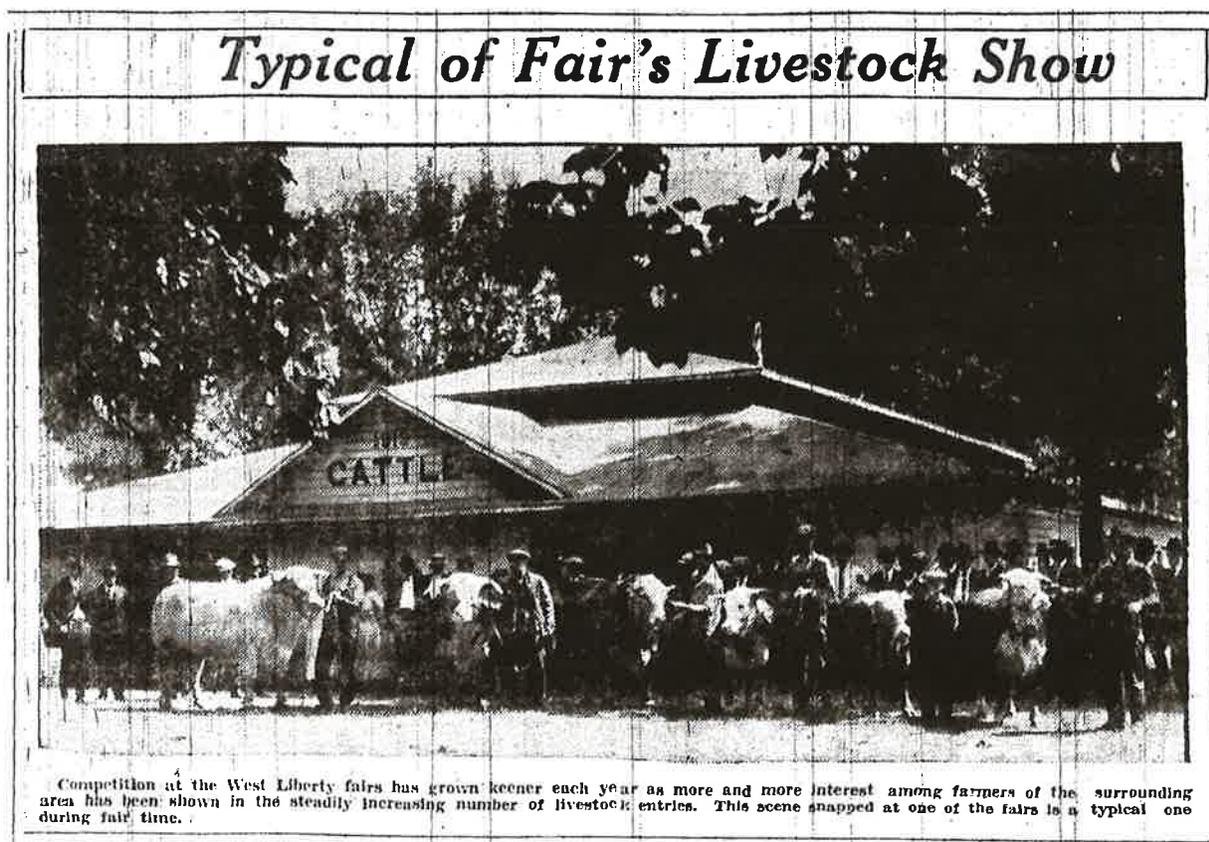


Figure 15. Photograph of cattle barn in 1923, printed in several later years.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ "Same Good Old Fair," *West Liberty Index*, August 8, 1918, 1; "Get Your Tickets Early," *West Liberty Index*, August 15, 1918, 1; "Scores 56th Success," *West Liberty Index*, August 22, 1918,

⁶⁵ McCarley 2014

⁶⁶ *Muscatine Journal*, August 15, 1934, 5

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The recent and ongoing development of the West Liberty Fairgrounds was particularly noted at the time of the fair in 1919, which was noted as a true "victory" fair and boasted record attendance of 20,000 on Wednesday. At the north end of the grounds: "Our great floral hall made entirely new a few years ago with its spacious walls is soon to be redecorated with a magnificent array of art, while the culinary department will be filled with toothsome articles with the taste which mother used to instill" (Map #7). Stretching to the south, "Our roomy agricultural halls and the beautiful shade trees overhanging our machinery display are always in evidence and enjoyed by the vast throngs" (Map #10, Map #6, moved in 1936). Draft horses were then found to the south: "A new barn was built a few years ago for this class and the exhibitor can feel assured of good treatment and a splendid place to keep his show horse while in our care" (Map #25). In the southeast section, "The swine pavilion, which was so popular last season when it was dedicated for the first time, is a marvel of comfort to stock and exhibitor alike. This part of the industry does not need a visiting committee to invite the several breeders to make a show. We know they will come and our greatest ambition is to make it as comfortable and at home as home itself. The overhanging bough of the natural forest trees and the commodious and cool pavilion is an ideal place for the greatest meat and fat producer of the world and we bespeak for all a great treat in store" (Map #36). Immediately to its north, a new cattle barn was completed by the time of the fair in 1919, assuring the "largest exhibit of cattle within our history" (demolished).⁶⁷ New elongated race horse barns were added in 1920, then replaced in 1922 after fire destroyed the new buildings (demolished). Ned Romaine also constructed buildings for a hundred additional livestock pens for overflow from sheep and hog classes in 1920 (moved/demolished). The race track and these buildings throughout the fairgrounds are depicted on the 1922 Sanborn fire insurance map for West Liberty (Figure 16).

With cooperation between town and country, the *West Liberty Index* stressed that it was "possible to give to ourselves and our children a clean, moral, and educational Fair unsurpassed anywhere."⁶⁸ With the inclusion of more children in the fair, there was a movement across the country to "clean up" the more unsavory carnival aspects of the fair, while focusing on wholesale family entertainment. Carnival operators themselves were part of the effort, though adherence to their pledges varied in the early 1920s. A traditional fair continued to focus on educational aspects, with quality entertainment acts.⁶⁹ New fairs also started in this period, including the Mississippi Valley Fair in Davenport in 1919. These themes echo through the publicity for the West Liberty Fair throughout the 1920s. The number of boys' club entries increased to 28 baby beef, 56 pig, and 15 lamb entries at fair in 1920. Three girls' clubs were also organized in 1920: Cheese Club, Garment Club, and Own Your Own Room Club. By 1921, 10 clubs existed in Muscatine County with 157 girls involved, creating 630 garments and 13 household articles. Quality vaudeville artists were lined up for 1921, performing at the fair in Davenport, then West Liberty, and then continuing west to Des Moines to perform at the State Fair.⁷⁰ Due to their expense, fireworks were dropped for 1922, with vaudeville acts as the focus of the night shows. A horseshoe contest was added, which would be a popular feature of the fair in future years. The Ladies Band of West Branch performed on the platform in front of the grandstands in 1923, along with vaudeville acts from the well-known Barnes Association. The livestock parade became part of the night show on Wednesday, the big day, in 1923 to exhibit the best of the entries judged at the fair. This parade would become a traditional feature of the Wednesday night show for subsequent decades.⁷¹ The increase in sheep entries led to a new 24 by 80 foot sheep barn with 26 pens constructed in August 1924 to the west of the swine pavilion, completed in time for the fair (demolished). Temporary bleachers were also built south of the amphitheater for additional seating, and a hydrant was added next to the drinking fountain at the exposition hall for ease in filling buckets.⁷² The dates of the fair shifted from Monday to Thursday in the last week of August (with the State Fair starting in Des Moines on Friday) to Saturday August 22 to Wednesday August 26 in 1925. This maintained West Liberty

⁶⁷ "Attendance at West Liberty Fair Will Break Records," *Muscatine Journal*, August 23, 1919, 4; "Our Annual Comeback," *West Liberty Index*, July 17, 1919, 1; "A Good Fair Always," *West Liberty Index*, July 24, 1919, 1

⁶⁸ "A Good Fair Always," *West Liberty Index*, July 24, 1919, 1

⁶⁹ Hokanson and Kratz 2008: 67, 129-130

⁷⁰ CHC 1962: 14; "Heading This Way for Fair," *West Liberty Index*, August 11, 1921, 1

⁷¹ "Ladies' Band Here for Fair," *West Liberty Index*, July 5, 1923, 1

⁷² "All Set for the Big Fair," *West Liberty Index*, August 7, 1924, 1

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Fair's timeframe after the fair in Davenport closed and before the State Fair opened, while providing additional time for entries on Saturday and judging closing by Wednesday to permit Thursday to be a travel day to the State Fair. A musical program was then offered on the fairgrounds on Sunday, in keeping with the day.⁷³

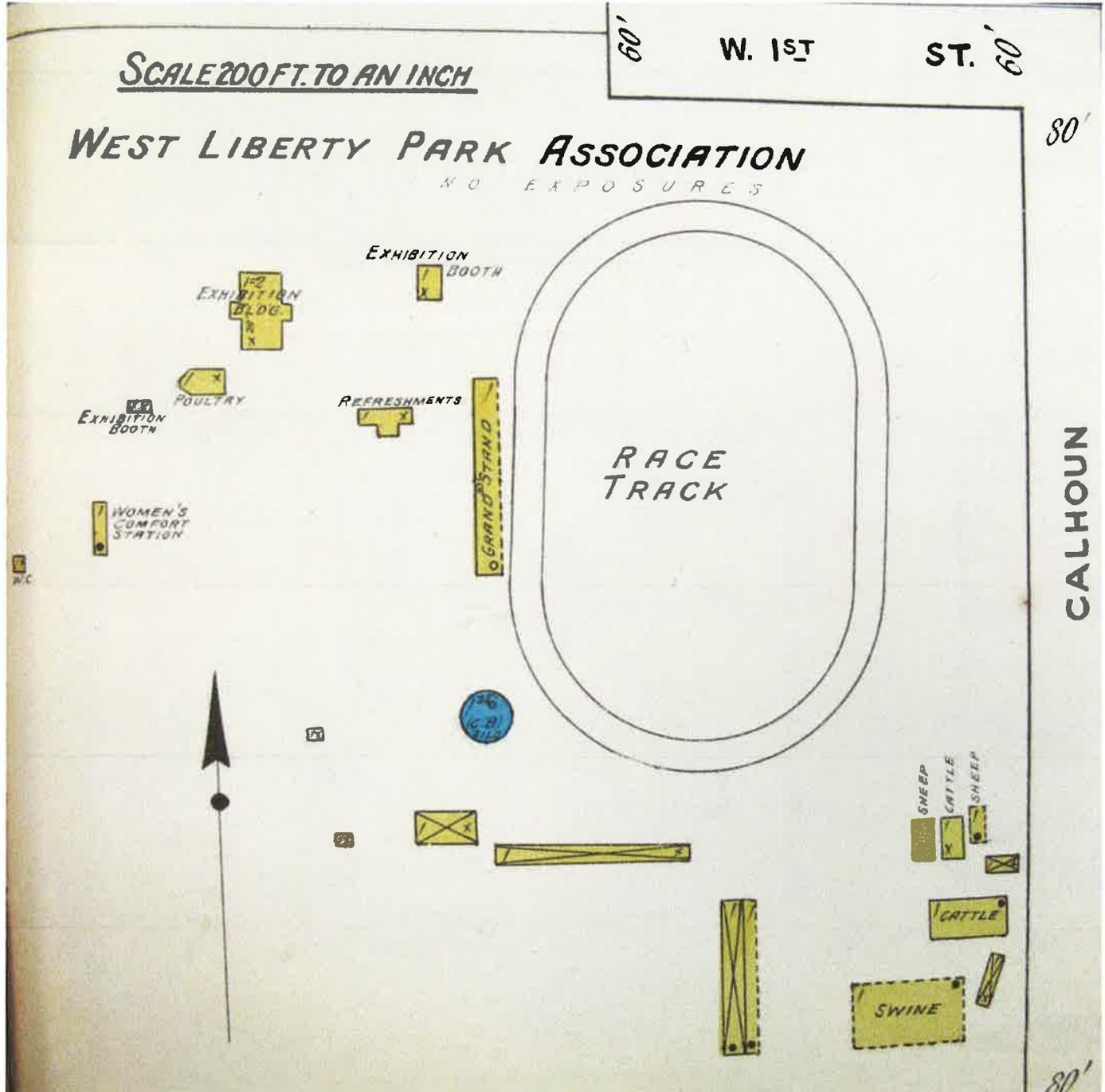


Figure 16. Fairgrounds on the 1922 Sanborn fire insurance map.⁷⁴

yellow indicates frame buildings, blue indicates concrete block, dotted lines indicate open sides, three large buildings with x through them are horse barns, numbers in corners of buildings indicate height

⁷³ "1925 Fair to Open Saturday," *West Liberty Index*, October 16, 1924, 1. Dates would later shift to Saturday to Thursday.

⁷⁴ "West Liberty," Sanborn Map Company, 1922.

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The efforts of the Union District Agricultural Society to provide a quality fair in terms of both exhibits and entertainment ranked the West Liberty Fair among the top county fairs in Iowa by 1925. Annual reports to the Iowa State Fair Board were required to be submitted through this period, with attendance at the annual State Agricultural Convention a requirement to receive state aid. The Iowa Fair Managers' Association met annually immediately before the state convention, and joint minutes and statistics were published by the state starting in the 1920s. Speakers at both meetings addressed various issues related to fair operations as well as providing education on new methods and essentials for success of fairs. Exhibits, entertainment, and visitors were noted as the three key ingredients for a good fair. Overall, Iowa had 97 county and district fairs in 1925, second only to Ohio with 104. Seven counties had no fairs while 14 counties had more than one fair.⁷⁵ Reported statistics list the 1925 fair in West Liberty with attendance of 23,941, the 16th largest among the 97 fairs.⁷⁶ Admission remained \$.50 for adults and \$.50 for vehicles, with an additional charge for grandstands shows. No other fairs were noted in Muscatine or Johnson counties, with the fair in Tipton in Cedar County listed with 6,500 in attendance.⁷⁷

Interestingly, the "good roads" movement was noted as impacting the quality and numbers at fairs in 1925, permitting better attendance even during rainy conditions.⁷⁸ In July 1928, paving of Highway No. 32 (later Highway 6) from Iowa City to West Liberty was completed, with leaders from Iowa City traveling to West Liberty for a chicken dinner held at the fairgrounds on August 16 in celebration.⁷⁹ With no fair in Iowa City or Johnson County throughout the 1920s, the West Liberty Fair often included an "Iowa City Day" designated for one of the days of the fair, along with days designated for Muscatine, Wellman, and West Branch in various years. Improved roads and increased automobile traffic throughout the 1920s brought additional visitors through West Liberty throughout the year, located on the main highway from Davenport to Iowa City and points further to the east and west. The Community Club sponsored a Tourists' Camp Ground at the West Liberty Fairgrounds in several years, opening in 1923 on May 1 and in 1925 on April 1. The club leased the west side of the fairgrounds from the West Liberty Park Association, utilizing the ground within the grove primarily for tourists. As the grounds here were maintained with tables and benches, local residents were likewise invited to use the grounds for picnics.⁸⁰ The grounds were also utilized for other community events and picnics throughout the year. The first Community School Day was held on the fairgrounds on May 24, 1923, including a march of over 1,000 children from every township in the county from the high school to the fairgrounds, a program, dances, contests, and baseball game.⁸¹ A similar event for school children was held in May in subsequent years. In 1927, a picnic was held for members of the junior congregation of the Christian Church on the fairgrounds, "which is an ideal spot for such occasions."⁸² Maintenance of the grounds was thus important year round, as well as maintaining the shade that characterized the fairgrounds. Several trees died or sustained damage by 1924, and an effort was made to remove and plant additional trees in 1926 as "The beautiful grove is one of the very attractive features of the grounds and the association is anxious that this shall be preserved" (Map #10).⁸³ Additional work was ongoing over the next few years, with 100 young native elm trees planted in 1928.⁸⁴

⁷⁵ "Our Fair High in Comparison," *West Liberty Index*, December 18, 1924, 1; Iowa State Fair Board 1925: 164-166, 342-343, 305

⁷⁶ larger attendance: Waterloo (Black Hawk Co) - 86,210, Alta (Buena Vista Co) - 24,381, Mason City (Cerro Gordo Co) - 39,022, Spencer (Clay Co) - 70,021, Bloomfield (Davis Co) - 35,000, Burlington (Des Moines Co) - 37,500, West Union (Fayette Co) - 46,500, Newton (Jasper Co) - 25,000, Oskaloosa (Mahaska Co) - 35,850, Marshalltown (Marshall Co) - 47,768, Sac City (Sac Co) - 25,559, Davenport (Scott Co) - 76,001, Eldon (Wapello Co) - 24,052, Fort Dodge (Webster Co) - 30,112, and Sioux City (Woodbury Co) - 73,644 (Iowa State Fair Board 1925: 52-53)

⁷⁷ Iowa State Fair Board 1925: 53, 55

⁷⁸ Iowa State Fair Board 1925: 134-135

⁷⁹ "Iowa Cityans Coming Over to Celebrate," *West Liberty Index*, August 9, 1928, 1

⁸⁰ "Tourists' Camp Open For Season," *West Liberty Index*, May 3, 1923, 2; "Tourist Camp Grounds Open for Season," *West Liberty Index*, April 9, 1925, 1

⁸¹ "Thousands Enjoy Community Day," *West Liberty Index*, May 31, 1923, 1

⁸² "Young People Enjoy Plenty at Fairgrounds," *West Liberty Index*, July 21, 1927, 1

⁸³ "Fair Board Appoints Attraction Committee," *West Liberty Index*, January 14, 1926, 1

⁸⁴ "Trees Wanted to Beautify Fairgrounds," *West Liberty Index*, April 19, 1928, 1

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The Union District Agricultural Society undertook additional improvements to the grounds in 1927. A new roadway was built around the west side of the grounds to provide better access to parking around the knoll. A new sanitary drinking fountain was installed near the exposition hall, replacing an iced tank here in previous years. The conditions of the track were improved, and tiling was installed for better drainage at the main entrance.⁸⁵ The major improvement for the outward face of the fairgrounds was the installation of a new entrance, complete with columns and gate ticket booth. At the annual meeting in October 1926, they voted to move forward with the project. On July 21, the *West Liberty Index* reported that the new entrance was progressing nicely and "will add much to the beauty of that mecca of fair goers." The entrance included "five new posts, each seven feet high and crowned with an electric light. Between two of these posts a fine new ticket office is to be located and on either side of this will be an entrance for vehicles. This will double the entrance capacity and facilitate traffic very much." Cables were being laid for underground wiring for the lights. On August 4, the newspaper noted: "The handsome new entrance is practically finished, save for a few touches of paint here and there and the installation of the lights. Not only will it impart its share of effectiveness in appearance, but it will afford greater facilities for handling the crowds and go a long ways in lessening congestion at this point." They also noted: "It is bromidic to say that the West Liberty grounds are the finest to be found anywhere, everybody knows this, and this year they are looking just a little bit better than ever before."⁸⁶



Figure 17. Entrance to fairgrounds after completion in 1927.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ "Fair Directors Plan Improvements at Grounds," *West Liberty Index*, June 16, 1927, 1

⁸⁶ It is unknown if lights were installed on the posts, as historic photographs do not appear to show lights and no evidence remains of wiring. "Sunday Fair Voted Down," *West Liberty Index*, October 21, 1926, 1; "New Entrance to Our Fair Under Way," *West Liberty Index*, July 21, 1927, 1; "Final Marcel Under Way at Grounds," *West Liberty Index*, August 4, 1927, 1

⁸⁷ Lehman collection.

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The fairgrounds' organization was further described in an article on the success of the West Liberty Fair on August 25, 1927. After entering through the main gate, there was a large tent set up for the display of 1928 model automobiles. The exposition hall was found at the north end, with exhibits of culinary, art, flowers, etc., school displays, and booths for Farm Bureau women. A tent for girls' club work was set up west of the exposition hall, where they conducted demonstrations. The poultry house to the south had an excellent display, and farm implements were on display just beyond it. The vegetable hall was then noted as nicer than usual. A table was run by Arthur Romaine for old settlers just before the north entry to the vegetable hall, registering long-time attendees, with T.M. Dodge of Downey noted as attending even back to the old grounds at Springdale. A bandstand was set up in the grove between the halls, with the West Branch band and Zeigler's of Muscatine playing here while Grant Nichols and the West Liberty band played at the amphitheater. The Rotary Club ran a rest tent for the first time, which was noted as popular and used by 110 mothers and babies, and it would become a permanent fixture of the fair. Numerous concession stands lined from the Merry Mixer at north end to the dance platform at south edge of grove with places to eat and drink. The ladies of the Methodist Church served more than 1,000 meals in the dining hall. Livestock barns were then found at the south end of the grounds. More than 60 entries were noted in the Baby Beef department, with an increase in numbers in the pig and lamb clubs as well. The horse races continued to be the large draw on each afternoon, with 14,000 or 15,000 noted in attendance on Wednesday and total attendance marked at 28,961. By the Monday following the fair, all checks had been mailed for premiums.⁸⁸ Their numbers are particularly notable as nine fairs in Iowa had closed due to financial difficulties since 1925.

The success of the 1927 fair left the Union District Agricultural Society in a strong financial position. At the annual meeting in October, they had a balance of \$5,670.71 with \$2,000 state aid forthcoming (\$1900 in fall and \$100 after the annual state convention). In addition, a new state law permitted counties to utilize a tax levy for financial assistance for local fairs, providing that the funds went towards permanent improvements not operating costs. Muscatine County officials had agreed to a quarter mil levy, which was estimated to be another \$2,000. The initial thought from the board was that the money would be used for a new amphitheater for the fairgrounds, with a committee formed to further investigate it.⁸⁹ Construction of an amphitheater had been previously studied in the early 1920s, without sufficient funds to move forward with the project. The committee (W.C. Anderson, Dr. L.A. Royal, and W.P. Nichols) reported back in November 1927 and the decision was made to move forward. W.C. Nichols was employed to draw plans and submit specifications and figures on cost.⁹⁰ Plans called for a frame structure on concrete foundations, consisting of 10 sections each 20 feet in width and 54 feet deep. It would have box seats at the front, and space underneath configured to provide a number of booths for exhibitors and other purposes. The amphitheater would have two entrances as well as a central entrance from the rear to the foot of tiers. The cost was estimated at \$7,400.⁹¹

Construction of the new amphitheater spanned throughout 1928, completed by the West Liberty Fair in August. Harry A. John was hired for the construction, with volunteers called upon to assist as needed. Demolition of the old grandstands occurred on a Friday and Saturday in early March, and several trees to the west were removed to clear the way for the deeper amphitheater. Concrete for the foundation was poured in the middle of April, designed to withstand a heavy load without settling. On July 12, the *West Liberty Index* reported: "The new amphitheatre is completed, and with its coat of paint, looms up as a fine addition to the grounds. Even from a distance along South Calhoun street one may gain an idea of the roominess of the new structure and of its increased comfort for the crowds which patronize it." The reserved seat section was built high so that those patrons would have an excellent view of the track and vaudeville platform. The concrete floor was not poured in April, but the newspaper reports that concrete floors were finished in April, in the seating section and on the

⁸⁸ "Fair Comes and Goes in Fine Success," *West Liberty Index*, August 25, 1927, 1; "Fair Check Shows Big Ticket Sale," *West Liberty Index*, September 1, 1927, 1

⁸⁹ "Fair Names Addleman Secretary," *West Liberty Index*, October 20, 1927, 1

⁹⁰ The only match for this name in local records is Wayne C. Nichols, a 34-year-old bookkeeper at the creamery per the 1930 census, renting a house at 400 E. 3rd St. The Nichols family was large at this time, so it may have been another family member.

⁹¹ "Fair Decides to Build New Amphitheatre," *West Liberty Index*, November 24, 1927, 1

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ground floor where merchants would have exhibits. Grading was finished around the amphitheater as well, with grass to be planted at a later date.⁹² Final touches were completed in the week before the fair, and the radio address of President Herbert Hoover from West Branch was broadcast at the amphitheater on Tuesday night during the fair. Governor John Hammill also spoke on Tuesday at the fair. To accommodate the larger amphitheater, the dining hall was moved further to the west and turned to face north. No other changes were noted in the overall layout of the fairgrounds. The local businesses sponsored a new contest in 1928 for Queen of the Fair, the start of another new tradition for the West Liberty Fair.⁹³

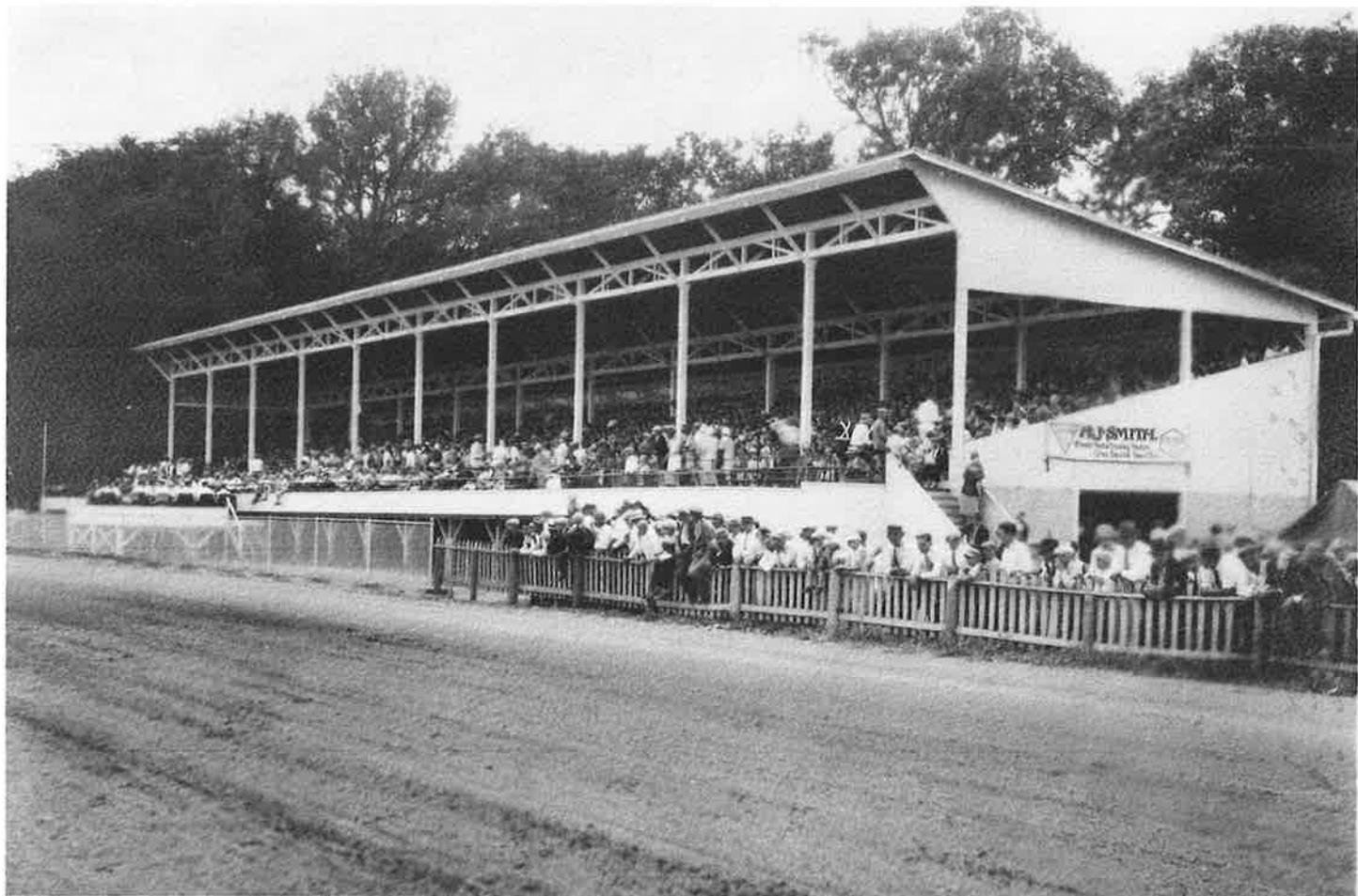


Figure 18. New amphitheater constructed in 1928.⁹⁴

⁹² "Razing Old Grandstand to Build New," *West Liberty Index*, March 8, 1928, 1; "Trees Wanted to Beautify Fairgrounds," *West Liberty Index*, April 19, 1928, 1; "Signs Have It There'll Be A Fair," *West Liberty Index*, July 12, 1928, 1; "Fair Season Opens, Our Turn Soon," *West Liberty Index*, August 9, 1928, 1; "Fair Season Opens, Our Turn Soon," *West Liberty Index*, August 9, 1928, 1

⁹³ "Who Will Be Queen – Race Under Way," *West Liberty Index*, August 2, 1928, 1; "And Monday Brings the Big Week," *West Liberty Index*, August 16, 1928, 1; "Rain Hurts But Doesn't Spoil Fair," *West Liberty Index*, August 23, 1928, 1

⁹⁴ Lehman collection.

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Emergence and evolution of the West Liberty Fair, 1929-1945

While a number of fairs struggled to survive the 1920s, not knowing the hard years yet to come, the West Liberty Fair emerged in a strong position entering the 1930s. Free vaudeville acts lined up for the 1929 fair were on their way to the Iowa State Fair, with three of the four playing in Iowa for the first time at the West Liberty Fair (Harem & Scarem, Six Galanoe from Italy, Francis Trio, and Flying Sullys). The *West Liberty Index* noted that they were willing to play the fair partially due to the quality of music furnished by Grant Nichols and West Liberty Band, as music was key to a successful act.⁹⁵ A large number of entries in the poultry house resulted in an addition built to the north end, and a large tent was acquired for nearly 100 entries in the Baby Beef category. A tent was also set up for girls' 4-H club work. Dates were again strategically set between the Davenport fair and the Iowa State Fair, and a special train conveyed stock from West Liberty to Des Moines, a tradition for 20 years. Winners at the West Liberty Fair often also took home prizes at the State Fair. The vegetables and fruits department moved into space under the new amphitheater, which continued to have merchant booths as well.⁹⁶ The Union District Agricultural Society signed a new ten-year lease in October 1929 with the West Liberty Park Association. Terms included that the society would lease the grounds for the entire year for \$300, with the right to sublet as appropriate.⁹⁷ The 68th annual fair in August 1930 touted itself as "The Best Fair in Eastern Iowa" and "The Old Reliable Fair." Boys' and girls' 4-H club entries continued to increase, with a noted expansion in girls' club work in the last year. With the vegetables moved into the amphitheater, the old vegetable hall was then used for girls' exhibits and demonstrations and for booths for Farm Bureau women. A new wood floor was then installed in the building prior to the fair in 1931. A new rotating amplifying system was installed at the amphitheater, and a new booth under the amphitheater had "old relics" on display. The exposition hall continued to have displays of fancy work, flowers, and school exhibits.⁹⁸

The West Liberty Fair also continued to stand out among the other county and district fairs in Iowa in this period. The number of fairs in Iowa decreased from 97 in 1926 to 88 by 1928 and to 82 by 1929. The number remained at 82 in 1930, with only 48 reporting a profit (compared to 64 in 1929). The West Liberty Fair received the maximum amount of state aid of \$2,000, and they reported a profit of \$2,656.99, the 10th highest among the 82 fairs.⁹⁹ Their profit was linked to the reported 27,500 in attendance, the 14th highest in the state, as well as their 782 exhibitors, tied for the 8th largest number among the 82 fairs.¹⁰⁰ The Iowa Fair Managers' Association meeting included an address by W.E. Drips of *Wallace's Farmer* on the importance of the county fair and recommendations for success. He noted that local fairs seemed to be wavered under tough economic times and with the advent of the automobile, providing ease of transportation to larger fairs and the State Fair. The fairs were once the annual gathering place for rural residents to socialize and see agricultural exhibits on display, and they still had importance for these reasons as well as providing the foundation of agricultural education. He advocated that the modern fair needed to be properly conducted with good exhibits as well as quality horse races and quality entertainment to attract visitors.¹⁰¹ These qualities would continue to result in the success of the West Liberty Fair through the 1930s.

⁹⁵ "Fairgrounds Primps for Heavy Dates," *West Liberty Index*, July 18, 1929, 1; Grant Nichols had experience from working for Ringling Brothers' Circus, and his band was the accompaniment for free attractions throughout the 1920s and 1930s (CHC 1962: 14).

⁹⁶ "Extra Space Needed for Fair Shows," *West Liberty Index*, August 1, 1929, 1; "Fair offers Best in All Departments," *West Liberty Index*, August 8, 1929, 1; "Fast Harness Races at Fair," *Muscatine Journal*, August 2, 1929, 13

⁹⁷ Annual Meeting Minutes Book: 132; Muscatine County Fair office files

⁹⁸ "Fair Official Give Lowdown on What's in Store," *West Liberty Index*, August 7, 1930, 1; "West Liberty Fair Opened," *Muscatine Journal*, August 18, 1930, 10; "Fair Comes Thru a Winner; Big Crowds; Big Time," *West Liberty Index*, August 21, 1930, 1' Fair minutes, Book 2: 9-10

⁹⁹ Iowa State Fair Board 1930: 76, 78-81

¹⁰⁰ Iowa State Fair Board 1930: 92-93; Other towns with over 700 exhibitors reported included Waterloo (Black Hawk Co) – 2,621, Algona (Kossuth Co) – 2,224, Cresco (Howard Co) – 1,481, Hampton (Franklin Co) – 1,400, Spencer (Clay Co) – 1,349, Mason City (Cerro Gordo Co) – 1,078, Emmetsburg (Palo Alto Co) – 795, West Liberty (Muscatine Co) – 782, Davenport (Scott Co) – 782, Decorah (Winneshek Co) – 772, Waukon (Allamakee Co) – 726 (Iowa State Fair Board 1930: 86-89)

¹⁰¹ Iowa State Fair Board 1930: 308-309, 312

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Page Eight WEST LIBERTY INDEX Thursday, August 13, 1931

Fun For All FAIR WEEK

69th Annual West Liberty Fair And Night Show

The Old Reliable Fair *Your Fair*

Monday - Tuesday - Wednesday - Thursday
August 24 - 27

Mammoth Dance Platform
Dancing each evening under cover
Good Floor Good Music
GOOD ROLLER SKATING RINK

Boys and Girls 4H Club Exhibits
Livestock Poultry
See the 4H Girl Club Exhibits and demonstrations

THE ENTRANCE
to
Iowa's Shadiest and Most Beautiful Fair Grounds

Providing plenty of good seats in the grove where everyone may visit and enjoy the excellent band concert Wednesday Afternoon

SNAPPY RACE PROGRAM
Tuesday - Wednesday - Thursday Afternoons
Race Entries Have Never Before Been So Well Filled CHARIOT RACES Wednesday - Thursday Afternoons

Antique Display Under Amphitheatre
Under the direction of P. M. Schooley and E. C. Kerr Bring in your old pieces and place them on display

Buy a Season Ticket and Enjoy the privileges

Tell Your Friends About It

NEW COMFORTABLE AMPHITHEATRE

Be Sure To See The Finest Lineup Of Free Attractions
Afternoon and Evening

Livestock and Poultry Entries close Thursday, August 20th All others Monday, August 24

W. W. WATTERS, President J. M. ADDLEMAN, Secretary

Figure 19. Advertisement for the 1931 fair in the *West Liberty Index*.¹⁰²

¹⁰² *West Liberty Index*, August 13, 1931, 8

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WEST LIBERTY, IOWA, *Aug. 25, 1930*

No. 568 To The Treasurer of The
Union District Agricultural Society
PAYABLE AT ANY BANK IN WEST LIBERTY

PAY TO *Francis Schneider* OR ORDER
Two and ^{no}/₁₀₀ DOLLARS

ON ACCOUNT OF *Premium*
\$ *2⁰⁰* *J.M. Addleman* Secretary
Asst. Secretary

WEST LIBERTY, IOWA, *Sept. 1, 1932*

No. 1173 To The Treasurer of The
Union District Agricultural Society
PAYABLE AT ANY BANK IN WEST LIBERTY

PAY TO *Mrs. Albert Jennings* OR ORDER
Only - seventy five cents DOLLARS

ON ACCOUNT OF *Premium*
\$ *00⁷⁵* *J.M. Addleman* Secretary
Asst. Secretary

WEST LIBERTY, IOWA, *Sept. 2, 1932*

No. 1225 To The Treasurer of The
Union District Agricultural Society
PAYABLE AT ANY BANK IN WEST LIBERTY

PAY TO *Wayne Long* OR ORDER
Only - twenty five cents DOLLARS

ON ACCOUNT OF *Premium*
\$ *00²⁵* *J.M. Addleman* Secretary
Asst. Secretary

WEST LIBERTY, IOWA, *Aug. 24, 1935*

No. 957 To The Treasurer of The
Union District Agricultural Society
PAYABLE AT ANY BANK IN WEST LIBERTY

PAY TO *Morris M. Coy* OR ORDER
Only ²⁵/₁₀₀ DOLLARS

ON ACCOUNT OF *Premium*
\$ *25²⁵/₁₀₀* *J.M. Addleman* Secretary
Asst. Secretary

Figure 20. Premium checks for West Liberty fairs in the early 1930s. ¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Muscatine County Fair office files

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Adjustments were made for the fairs in the early 1930s to maintain good attendance and as a reflection of the economic conditions at the time. Advertising crews drove around the countryside from Davenport to Williamsburg and Cedar Rapids to Mt. Pleasant to draw in exhibitors and patrons.¹⁰⁴ A roller skating rink was included on the grounds in 1931 for the first time in 20 years, used as a dance floor in the evenings.¹⁰⁵ Horse races and chariot races continued to be a main draw, with a kittenball tournament added in 1931. The Girls' 4-H building was improved with a new wood floor for their demonstrations and exhibits, and an overflow tent had to be erected for the baby beef entries.¹⁰⁶ While farmers from nearby Tipton were politically active in 1931 in their opposition to testing of cows for tuberculosis, no reference to this "Iowa Cow War" appears in any article for the West Liberty Fair. The fair budget was adjusted in 1932, providing a good program within more conservative bounds. Admission prices were lowered to reflect the times, and some premiums were also decreased. A \$3 membership-privilege ticket admitted the ticket-holder and his wife to all days and all shows at the amphitheater. Exhibitors were encouraged to enter early, with entries only accepted until space was filled. A three-day kittenball tournament was added in 1932, with chariot races on each afternoon and Thursday designed as Derby Day for other horse races.¹⁰⁷ With the end of Prohibition, the board did pass a motion on May 4, 1933 that no alcoholic drinks were be permitted or offered for sale on the fairgrounds, maintaining their focus on a quality fair with wholesome entertainment.¹⁰⁸ The Merrell Circus Troupe presented novel vaudeville acts in the afternoon and evening in 1933, provided by the Barnes-Carruthers Association of Chicago who was known for providing the best vaudeville acts for fairs in the country.¹⁰⁹ With "New Deal" programs working well, they anticipated a strong fair in 1933, with ticket prices for a membership-privilege ticket reduced to \$2.50. A full section on the West Liberty Fair appeared in the *Muscatine Journal* on August 16, 1933. They noted that with highway improvements that one no longer had to plan contingent on rain, as West Liberty was connected by hard roads in every direction. A ticket booth was added at the east entrance along Calhoun Street primarily for use of stockmen, though the public was invited to use it as well. The fair was promoted as "an ideal combination of all that is best in both education and recreational features," with various departments with ideas and lessons to keep pace with agricultural advancement. Educational opportunities were likewise offered in women's and girls' departments.¹¹⁰ Thus, the fair was promoted for its solutions to the agricultural woes that plagued the country.

The West Liberty Fairgrounds were described thoroughly in an article on August 17, 1933, leading up to the 71st fair. Ample parking was noted for thousands of cars, with visitors anticipated from Muscatine, Cedar, Johnson, and Scott counties. The exposition hall (Map #7) was located at the north end near the main entrance (Map #1), with exhibits in culinary skill, fine arts, work of schools of the county, flowers, etc. A drinking fountain with pure water was found next to the east entrance of the hall. The poultry building was just beyond the hall at the edge of shady grove, with exhibits of machinery to the south. A bandstand was built in the grove (Map #10) with "comfortable benches are arranged beneath the trees" for speakers and morning, afternoon, and early evening band concerts. The building for girls' 4-H work (former vegetables building) was located at the south end of the grove, with their daily demonstrations noted as one of the outstanding features of the fair (Map #6, moved in 1936). An avenue of concessions, shows, games, refreshment stands, and other entertainment stretched from the north end of the grounds to the south end of the amphitheater and across the avenue south of the 4-H building. The booths under the large comfortable amphitheater included merchants'

¹⁰⁴ "Fair Crews Ready to Spread Word of the Big Week," *West Liberty Index*, July 30, 1931, 1

¹⁰⁵ "West Liberty Has New Skating Rink," *Muscatine Journal*, August 18, 1931, 6

¹⁰⁶ "Wapsie's Own Fair in Readiness for Opening Monday," *West Liberty Index*, August 20, 1931, 1; "Great Fair Comes Through Okeh in Spite of Season," *West Liberty Index*, August 27, 1931, 1

¹⁰⁷ "West Liberty to Offer Great Fair," *West Liberty Index*, July 14, 1932, 1; "Fair Offers all Privileges with Popular Ticket," *West Liberty Index*, July 21, 1932, 1; "Derby Day Will Provide Thrills at Liberty Fair," *West Liberty Index*, August 11, 1932, 1; "Mid-West's Best on Display Next Week at the Fair," *West Liberty Index*, August 18, 1932, 1

¹⁰⁸ Fair minutes, Book 2: 43-44

¹⁰⁹ "Fair Advertises on Their Rounds with the Tidings," *West Liberty Index*, August 3, 1933, 1

¹¹⁰ "Stage is Set for Bigger 'N Better Fair and Crowds," *West Liberty Index*, August 10, 1933, 1; "Good Roads Lead to West Liberty in All Weather," *Muscatine Journal*, August 16, 1933, 9; "Everyone'll Be at Fair," *West Liberty Index*, August 17, 1933, 1; "Opportunity Here for Farmers Who Seek New Methods," *West Liberty Index*, August 17, 1933, 1

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displays, antique show, fruits and vegetables exhibits, checking booth, and telephone booth with long distance accommodations (Map #16). The amphitheater had box seats for favored views, and the wooded knoll to the west of the amphitheater provided shade throughout day (Map #10) with a dance platform with orchestra music every evening at the south end of knoll and concessions avenue. The south end was devoted to livestock and barns (Map #25, Map #36), with the best entries in state exhibited here immediately prior to the State Fair. The fair was noted for its long successful history, as free from questionable practices and attractions, and yet distinctly modern in every way.¹¹¹ The fair had good weather, good attendance (around 9,000 on Wednesday), and good exhibits (high quality of swine and draft horses noted), but not sufficient income to immediately pay all premiums. The final premium checks were mailed after the state aid was received.¹¹²



Figure 21. 2014 photograph of the Baby Beef Barn (Kiddie Pavilion) (Map #24).¹¹³

While the girls' 4-H club work found a remodeled yet permanent home in 1930 in the former vegetable hall, the boys' 4-H club work remained housed in increasingly larger tents in the early 1930s. The cost of a new baby beef barn was discussed at the meeting of the Union District Agricultural Society on April 26, 1934, and a decision was reached on July 9 to build a new baby beef barn directly north of draft horse barn at a cost of \$1,250.¹¹⁴ With the fair less than two months away, plans were quickly put in motion for "one of the most needed improvements to the grounds in the past few years." The barn would house baby beeves, dairy, and colts, with work to be done largely by volunteer labor of supporters of the fair under the direction of C.P. Gibson and contractor Harry A. John. By July 19, grading was completed by volunteers, and construction of the new 50 by 100 foot barn was ready to begin. The baby beef barn was noted as completed at the board meeting on August 8. Local volunteer labor had been augmented on the last Friday by a number of friends from Wilton, Durant, and Muscatine for the finishing touches – a fine and friendly gesture that was appreciated by the West Liberty community. The *West Liberty Index* noted: "the barn has added much to our already well equipped grounds; in fact, this barn would be a credit to any fair grounds in the state." The barn had a capacity for 100 baby beeves while the upper floor served as sleeping quarters for the 50 or 60 boys who were

¹¹¹ "West Liberty Fair Offers the Crowd Many Attractions," *West Liberty Index*, August 17, 1933, 1

¹¹² "Fair Comes Through in Fine Shape," *West Liberty Index*, August 24, 1933, 1; "To Await State Aid in Payment of Fair Premiums," *West Liberty Index*, August 31, 1933, 1

¹¹³ McCarley 2014

¹¹⁴ Fair minutes, Book 2: 67-70

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exhibitors. In addition to the new barn, a complete amplifying system was installed this year, including the judges' stand and vaudeville platform, amphitheater, and barns. Also, an "inter-ground" telephone system connected the main gate, secretary's office, vaudeville platform, and barns to greatly facilitate the handling of the business of the fair. A new judges' stand was built further north at the race track, with the old one moved to south end of main grounds and remodeled into a tool house. The fair ran from Saturday August 18 to Wednesday August 22, with a show by performers from Original National Barn Dance from Chicago WLS on Saturday evening and a union church service on Sunday evening before the core of the fair activities started on Monday. Carl Hamilton of Oskaloosa was the starting judge for races, and he provided explanations between races utilizing the new amplifying system. Income for the fair was reported as \$2,586.74.¹¹⁵

With additional space for exhibitors and promotion through new yellow banners for automobiles, the West Liberty Fair regained strength in the middle of the 1930s. The 1935 fair included attractions that performed at the Century of Progress exposition, trotting and pacing races each day, and a Saddle Horse Show sponsored by the Business and Professional Men of Muscatine.¹¹⁶ The fair exceeded 1,000 exhibitors, with 1,011 reported in state statistics, the 7th largest number of exhibitors among the 76 fairs held in 1935. The West Liberty Fair also reported 28,527 in attendance, making it the 11th largest in that aspect.¹¹⁷ In spring 1936, a decision was made to move the girls' 4-H club building located just north of the dining hall to the north end of the grounds west of the main exposition building, providing a quieter setting for demonstration teams. The interior was remodeled, and a dressing room added at this time as well for the 25 girls' clubs utilizing the building. The *West Liberty Index* noted after the fair: "If comment counts, that was the greatest move the Fair has made for a long time. The beauty of the grove is enhanced many times over, the hall's new location is much to be preferred, the newly opened vista certainly an improvement, and several additional acres seem to have been added to the grounds."¹¹⁸ The midway included a merry-go-round and two Ferris wheels, with good concessions also noted. The fair had a large number of livestock entries, with some turned away for lack of room. In keeping with rural education and improvements, the fair in 1936 included an exhibit on the Rural Electrification Administration (REA), as Muscatine County had been one of the first to sign up in the state and work was to begin soon.¹¹⁹

Celebrations in back to back years resulted in strong fairs in West Liberty through the end of the 1930s. The Diamond Jubilee of West Liberty Fair was celebrated in August 1937, marking 75 years of consecutive fairs by the Union District Agricultural Society. Horse races were included on the program, but insufficient entries eliminated harness races. The livestock parade on Wednesday afternoon and parade of transportation were highlights of the fair. The fate of horse races and potential for inclusion of automobile racing were discussed at length at the annual meeting in October.¹²⁰ The West Liberty Centennial Celebration over Fourth of July in 1938 included an elaborate pageant held on fairgrounds. A fair theme was utilized by many organizations, with many organizations then bringing exhibits to the fair. Merchants' displays filled the booths available under the amphitheater as well as an overflow tent. Livestock entries also required overflow tents. Advertising booster trips on August 8 and 9 for the fair complete with automobiles, a band, loud speaker, vocalists, and advertising nick-nacks for children extended for a 50 mile radius, including into western Illinois. An extensive effort was made to recruit horses for the horse races in 1938, and the racing programs were filled (Map #20). The

¹¹⁵ "Fair Directors Make Plans for 72 Meeting," *West Liberty Index*, July 12, 1934, 1; "Work Begins for New Stock Barn at Fair Grounds," *West Liberty Index*, July 19, 1934, 1; Fair minutes, Book 2: 71-72; "Barn Completed; Track All Ready for Wapsie Fair," *West Liberty Index*, August 9, 1934, 1; "New Stock Barn Ready for Fair," *West Liberty Index*, August 9, 1934, 1; "Fair Gets Ready for 72nd Annual Gala Exposition," *West Liberty Index*, August 2, 1934, 1; "Only One of Its Kind in the World," *West Liberty Index*, August 16, 1934, 1; Fair minutes, Book 2: 75-76

¹¹⁶ "West Liberty Fair Opens Saturday," *West Liberty Index*, August 15, 1935, 1

¹¹⁷ Iowa State Fair Board 1935: 232, 238

¹¹⁸ Fair minutes, Book 2: 92; "Improvements Under Way at Fairgrounds," *West Liberty Index*, July 23, 1936, 1; "Caught on the Backstretch," *West Liberty Index*, September 3, 1936, 1

¹¹⁹ "Fair All Ready for the Word," *West Liberty Index*, August 6, 1936, 1

¹²⁰ "Our Fair and Its Birthday," *West Liberty Index*, July 29, 1937, 1; "75th West Liberty Fair Finds Crowds Enjoying Day and Night Shows," *West Liberty Index*, August 26, 1937, 1; Fair minutes, Book 2: 112-14

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livestock parade returned to Wednesday evening, and a Young Rodeo was the finale of the fair. A letter from James W. Ady of Cedar Rapids was published in the *West Liberty Index* in the month after the fair, noting that the fair had one of West Liberty's best racing programs. Only a few fairs continued to have horse races of that caliber, and Des Moines, Spencer, Sioux City, Davenport, and West Liberty were the most outstanding. Old timers had made West Liberty famous for standard bred horses and as a race center, and it continued to fill that role.¹²¹ Horse races were held during the 1939 fair on August 21 to 24, with the addition of Pony Polo as well. On the Sunday following the fair, West Liberty's first auto race was held on the fairgrounds. Ray Doan's Tin Can Derby included a 20 mile race for souped-up Model T's won by Lester Raymond of Washington and a 15-mile race for regular Model T's won by Lee Brandt of Davenport, the champion of the southeast district. With its success, another Tin Can Derby was scheduled for Sunday September 17 at the race track.¹²²

The 1941 Sanborn map depicts the development of the West Liberty Fairgrounds over the last few decades (Figure 22). Buildings throughout the grounds are colored yellow, indicating frame construction. Through this period, the general organization of the fairgrounds was set, and it continues to reflect this organization currently. The gate house built in 1927 is indicated at the end of 1st Street at the north end (Map #1, #2). The track dominates the east half of the grounds (Map #20), with the grandstands constructed in 1928 on the west side (Map #16). The small building to the north along the track appears to be indicated in some photographs as the secretary's office (demolished). The main exhibition area is then located to the west of the north end of the track, including the exhibition building (1915, Map #7), girls 4-H building (1897, remodeled/moved here in 1936, Map #6), and poultry building (1897 with additions, demolished). The Grove is then located within the open area to the south (Map #10), with the original restrooms building to the west (demolished). The dining hall (restaurant) is located to the west of the grandstands, located along the midway with other concessions and amusements in temporary structures not indicated on the Sanborn map (demolished/replaced). The long race horse barns are found at the south end of the track (demolished), with the draft horse barn to their west (1915, Map #25). The baby beef barn (boys' 4-H) is indicated to its north (1934, Map #24). The additional land acquired to the southeast of the track in 1889 was developed with livestock facilities, including the large swine pavilion with open sides (dotted lines) (1918, Map #36). The cattle barn is indicated to its north (1919, demolished), and the sheep barn to its west (1924, demolished). Smaller overflow livestock buildings are then found to the north of the cattle barn (demolished/moved).

While other societies chose not to hold fairs during World War II or shifted to solely youth entries, the West Liberty Fair not only continued throughout the war years of the early 1940s, but it prospered and grew. Plans for the 1942 fair started in April, with the sentiment that agricultural production was even more important at this time. The official decision to hold the fair occurred in June, noting that it was not felt that the fair would cause undue expenditures on fuel or tires as most people would attend from nearby and that the fair would help boost the general morale. The fair was a success, with high attendance noted.¹²³ Two new classes for youths were added to the West Liberty Fair for 1943, and the planting of Victory Gardens was noted to result in a large number of exhibits accordingly. Preparations for the fair were impacted with the housing of 300 Italian prisoners of war on the grounds from July 18 to August 8, brought from a prison camp in Missouri to help detassel corn by the Pioneer Hybrid Seed Corn company of Durant with the cooperation of the war department and Union District Agricultural Society. The prisoners bunked under the amphitheater (Map #16), and the Floral Hall (Map #7) and 4-H Building (Map #6) served as quarters for the 100 soldiers assigned as guards.¹²⁴

¹²¹ CHC 1962: 24; "Many Plans Made for West Liberty Fair," *West Liberty Index*, August 4, 1938, 1; "Wapsie Tell the World The Big Fair is Coming," *West Liberty Index*, August 11, 1938, 1; "One for the History Books: West Liberty Fair Proves Title to 'Iowa's Best,'" *West Liberty Index*, August 25, 1938, 1; "He Knows His Fairs," *West Liberty Index*, September 29, 1938, 1

¹²² "Big Crowd See Model Ts Perform," *West Liberty Index*, August 31, 1939, 1; "The Other Big Fair Opens Monday," *West Liberty Index*, August 17, 1939, 1; "Another Tin Can Derby," *West Liberty Index*, September 7, 1939, 1

¹²³ "West Liberty Fair Starts Rolling," *West Liberty Index*, April 16, 1942, 1; Fair minutes, Book 2: 173; "West Liberty Will Have a Fair," *West Liberty Index*, July 2, 1942, 1; "Crowds Return the Verdict: 'The Best Fair Ever Held,'" *West Liberty Index*, 1

¹²⁴ "West Liberty Fair is Coming; Premium Lists Being Mailed," *West Liberty Index*, July 8, 1943, 1; CHC 1962: 24; "Fairgrounds Proved Ideal Place for Housing 300 War Prisoners Who Gave Aid Detassling Corn," *Muscatine Journal*, August 20, 1943, 3

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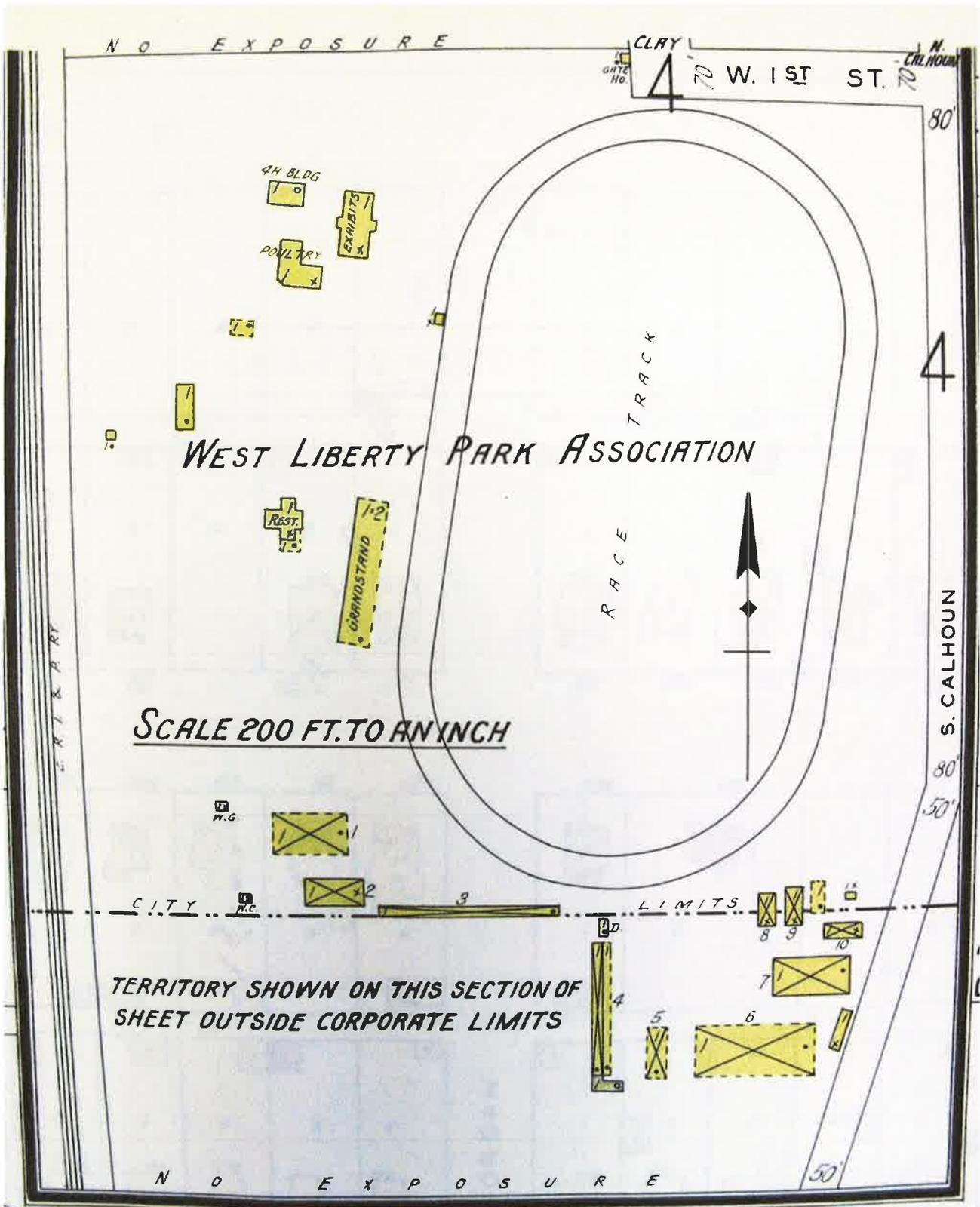


Figure 22. Fairgrounds on the 1941 Sanborn fire insurance map.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ "West Liberty," Sanborn Map Company, 1941, 4.

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As they moved out, final preparations were made for the 1943 fair, which included several aspects related to the war. In addition to displays on botany and plants from Iowa State College, there was also an exhibit of war material from the Ordnance Plant at Burlington, and scrap metal was collected at the fair for the war effort. The Red Cross also had a booth and was set up to send military and civilian messages to those overseas. Attractions of the 1943 fair included harness races, band concerts, Society Horse Show on Tuesday evening, livestock parade on Wednesday evening, and Lewis Brothers Three Ring Circus on Thursday evening.¹²⁶ The Society Horse Show on Tuesday evening was a new feature, an event that was then repeated in subsequent years. At the State Agricultural Convention in 1946, it was noted that horse shows came into their own during the war years, when it was hard to get free acts, thrill shows, and automobile races. These shows filled the gap with clean, wholesome entertainment. The number of horse shows grew from 25 in Iowa in 1942 to over 200 in 1946.¹²⁷ The amphitheater was improved in 1944, including a new permanent attraction stage with new lighting system.¹²⁸ Headlines for the upcoming West Liberty Fair were only trumped by the end of the war in August 1945. The Draft Horse Show was reduced to one day (Tuesday) for the 1945 fair, with the entries lagging in recent years. The Livestock Parade continued to be held on Wednesday evening, with the Baby Beef auction on Thursday morning, harness races in the afternoons, and the Society Horse Show and Stock Horse Show on Thursday evening. Bleachers were installed to provide 1,600 more seats for patrons.¹²⁹



Figure 23. Headlines in the West Liberty Index on August 16, 1945.

¹²⁶ "The Fair is Next Week," *West Liberty Index*, August 19, 1943, 1

¹²⁷ Iowa State Fair Board 1946: 180-182

¹²⁸ "Amphitheater Improved for Big Fair Next Week," *Muscatine Journal*, August 19, 1944, 3

¹²⁹ "83rd Annual Fair to Be a Great One," *West Liberty Index*, August 9, 1945, 1; "Everything is Ready for the 83rd Fair," *West Liberty Index*, August 14, 1945, 1

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Strength of the West Liberty Fair in the middle of the 20th century, 1946-1969

The West Liberty Fair emerged from the difficult years of the 1930s and from the war years of the early 1940s in a strong position, locally as well as statewide. They continued to be the only fair in Muscatine County, also serving western Cedar County and eastern Johnson County. The fair continued to grow in 1946, with the addition of a fireworks show by the nationally-known Thearle-Duffield Fireworks company of Chicago.¹³⁰ Statistics reported at the State Agricultural Convention in 1946 show that the West Liberty Fair had emerged as one of the largest fairs in Iowa among the 89 held in 1946. They reported a total of 1,462 exhibitors in 1946, the highest reported from any fair in Iowa.¹³¹ The number included 587 livestock entries, second only to the fair in Waterloo with 640. Their attendance was reported at 21,942, ranking it the 14th largest in the state.¹³² The West Liberty Fair received the maximum of \$2,000 in state aid, as well as \$2,607.10 in county aid, contributing towards its profit of \$4,550.00 for the year, the 10th highest in the state.¹³³ Thus, public support for agricultural fairs remained key to their success in this period.

Continuing to build on their success, the Union District Agricultural Society made a number of improvements to the fairgrounds in the late 1940s. The race track was improved to meet the United States Trotting Association standards in spring 1947, and the annual summer race meet of Hawkeye Racing Club was then held on the track in June.¹³⁴ New cement wash platforms were poured for hogs, baby beeves, and cattle in 1947. A new outdoor water fowl pool was added, and the roadways were graveled in prep for the 1947 fair as well.¹³⁵ Box seats at the amphitheater remained in high demand, and a plan was adopted in July 1947 to triple the number of available seats by the 1948 fair as a community project (Map #16). The amphitheater seated 3,000, with an additional 408 box seats. The existing two rows were removed, with five stepped rows of permanent box seats built in their place and extending forward. The 170 new boxes with six chairs (1,020 seats) were sold for the five fairs from 1948 to 1952 for \$50, with money from the advance sales funding the construction.¹³⁶ The new box seating was completed by early August, with a renewed focus on the quality of races then presented in 1948. Purses were increased for harness races, and M.E. "Pat" Bacon of Aurora, Illinois was procured as the presiding judge and announcer, bringing over 30 years of experience at state and county fairs including 12 years at the Iowa State Fair. A Litzenberger Starting Gate was utilized for the races, owned and operated by Mr. and Mrs. Fred Ronan of Decorah, the first of its kind in Iowa.¹³⁷ Demand for additional seating in 1949 led to the acquisition of a larger number of bleachers for the fair than in any previous year, and a new larger ticket office for sale of amphitheater tickets was constructed. The roof on the amphitheater was extended to provide additional shade over the box seats, and new lights were installed. The judges' stand was also moved to south of the free attractions platform, and the secretary's office was remodeled to better handle the many thousands of entries for exhibitors.¹³⁸ Throughout these years, articles and advertisements for the fair included the reference to the "Fairgrounds Nature Planned," highlighting the number of shade trees throughout the grounds.

¹³⁰ The company was noted as the largest producer of fireworks display in world, and the company that produced displays for World's Fairs in New York and California. "Fireworks Display on Thursday Night of West Liberty Fair," *West Liberty Index*, July 25, 1946, 1

¹³¹ 89 fairs in 1946 – fairs with more than 500 exhibitors: West Liberty (Muscatine Co) – 1,462, Waterloo (Black Hawk Co) – 1,138, Mt. Pleasant (Henry Co) – 690, Monticello (Jones Co) – 665, Boone (Boone Co) – 603, Moville (Woodbury Co) – 600, What Cheer (Keokuk Co) – 589, Davenport (Scott Co) – 564, Audubon (Audubon Co) – 544, Alta (Buena Vista Co) – 539, Mason City (Cerro Gordo Co) – 550, Spencer (Clay Co) – 500, Cedar Rapids (Linn Co) – 503 (Iowa State Fair Board 1946: 192-195)

¹³² Iowa State Fair Board 1946: 202-203

¹³³ Iowa State Fair Board 1946: 184-187, 204-205

¹³⁴ Fair minutes, Book 2: 209; "Harness Races Sunday on Fairground Track," *West Liberty Index*, June 12, 1947, 6

¹³⁵ Fair minutes, Book 2: 210-11; "The Fair is Close at Hand – Aug. 18-21," *West Liberty Index*, August 7, 1947, 1

¹³⁶ "Fair to Build New Boxes for the 1948 Exposition," *West Liberty Index*, July 24, 1947, 1; "Additional Box Seat Accommodations will be Provided for Patrons at West Liberty Fair," *Muscatine Journal*, August 16, 1947, 5;

¹³⁷ "Plans Progressing for The West Liberty Fair," *West Liberty Index*, July 8, 1948, 1; "'Pat' Bacon to be at West Liberty Fair Races," *West Liberty Index*, July 15, 1948, 1; "Starting Gate for Races at Fair," *West Liberty Index*, July 1, 1948, 1

¹³⁸ "West Liberty Fair Only One Month Away," *West Liberty Index*, July 21, 1949, 1; "Welcome Fair Visitors," *West Liberty Index*, August 18, 1949, 1

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The *Muscatine Journal* noted in August 1950: "Like other organizations, West Liberty's fair tells a story of progress. As the community grew and prospered, the fair expanded and displays offered with worthwhile programs presented continued to attract and meet with the approval of more and more patrons."¹³⁹ The 88th consecutive fair held in 1950 continued the trend of evolution and growth. Monday continued to be devoted primarily to entries and set up, with three harness races in the afternoon and performances by the high school band between races on the new band stand built south of the grandstands. A full program of free attractions from the Charles Zemater Company of Chicago was held each day and night. The Pony and Stock Horse Show with around 80 riders was held on Tuesday evening under the direction of Hub Elder. Three harness races were held on Wednesday afternoon, with the livestock parade starting at 7:30 sharp in the evening followed by the night show of free attractions. The Baby Beef sale was again held on Thursday morning, with two horse races in the afternoon and a parade of new farm machinery, trucks, and automobiles in the evening followed by the night show. A large machinery display was set up, and the Rotary Club again had their rest tent in the shade of the grove. Over 100 horses were on the grounds for the races, with the draft horse barn converted to a race horse barn. A new track record was set by Mrs. Alice Weber of Eldora, Iowa on Wednesday. Other riders traveled from Maquoketa, Sac City, Aurora (IL), Marshalltown, Monticello, Chicago (IL), Columbus City, Boone, Waterloo, Marshalltown, Dorset (MN), Estherville, Solomon (KS), Maquon (IL), Stockton (KS), and Hastings (NE) to race at the fair. The large number of livestock entries resulted again in the need for tents for overflow of horses and cattle. A total of 136 baby beeves were entered in the junior department, and the fair had the largest showing of purebred beef cattle in open class in years. The big day, Wednesday, had a crowd estimated at over 15,000, compared to the population of the town of West Liberty in 1950 of 1,866. As usual, the stores in West Liberty closed on Wednesday at noon for the remainder of the day and closed on Tuesday and Thursday at noon until around 4:00 when races were done.¹⁴⁰

One reason for the success of the West Liberty Fair through this period may have been its focus on traditional fair activities and expositions. At the annual meeting of Fair Managers' Association of Iowa in December 1950, Dr. Floyd Andre of Iowa State College presented on address on the role of the county fair. He noted that its strengths continued to be its purpose as both an educational and social endeavor. While the fair brought together urban and rural people, the educational role was of equal importance to the social qualities. The fair promoted the best in livestock, crops, and home economics, and patrons took home new ideas to try. He noted the strong relationship between Iowa State College and fair boards, with exhibits provided to demonstrate new techniques and machinery to improve performance. He also stressed the importance of the 4-H and FFA programs in teaching young people self-reliance, the ability to think, the ability to draw conclusions, and skills for later in life.¹⁴¹ Statistics continued to show that the West Liberty Fair was among the largest fairs in Iowa. In 1950, they reported 3,307 exhibitors, the highest number among the 94 fairs in the state.¹⁴² This number included 1,136 livestock entries, also the largest number of any fair in the state. They reported total attendance at 28,000, ranking it ninth among the 94 fairs.¹⁴³ By comparison, the fair in Tipton in nearby Cedar County had 517 exhibitors and 7,344 attendance. The West Liberty Fair cleared a profit of \$2,827.86, including the \$2,100 in state aid and \$4,900 in county aid.¹⁴⁴

The flow of finances was key to the successful operations of the West Liberty Fair. In addition to income from the fair, a number of buildings on the fairgrounds were rented for storage throughout the remainder of the

¹³⁹ "Historical Background of Fair Reviewed in Articles by Noland," *Muscatine Journal*, August 18, 1950, 2

¹⁴⁰ "88th Annual Fair is Next Week," *West Liberty Index*, August 17, 1950, 1; "Bands to Play Big Part at the West Liberty Fair and Night Show," *West Liberty Index*, July 28, 1950, 1; "Fine Program Planned Final Day of the Fair," *West Liberty Index*, August 24, 1950, 1; "Another Successful Exposition Held by West Liberty Fair and Night Show," *West Liberty Index*, August 31, 1950, 1

¹⁴¹ Iowa State Fair Board 1950: 166-168

¹⁴² Fairs with more than 700 exhibitors: West Liberty (Muscatine Co) – 3,307, Spencer (Clay Co) – 2,850, Waterloo (Black Hawk Co) – 1,768, Mason City (Cerro Gordo Co) – 1,404, Lorimor (Union Co) – 1,100, Cedar Rapids (Linn Co) – 1,046, Alta (Buena Vista Co) – 865, Davenport (Scott Co) – 838, Algona (Kossuth Co) – 815, Decorah (Winneshiok Co) – 810, Merville (Woodbury Co) – 750, Monticello (Jones Co) – 723, Marshalltown (Marshall Co) – 717 (Iowa State Fair Board 1950: 188-191)

¹⁴³ Iowa State Fair Board 1950: 198-199

¹⁴⁴ Iowa State Fair Board 1950: 180-183, 200-201

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year. In 1951, they included Floral Hall (\$200, Map #7), Amphitheater (\$220, Map #16), Baby Beef Barn (\$100/\$100, Map #24), Beef Barn (\$150/\$150, demo), draft horse barn (\$3-\$4 per month per small combine, Map #25), girls 4-H building (\$75, Map #6), west dairy barn (\$70), and east dairy barn (\$75).¹⁴⁵ Box seats were sold in July 1952 for the three fairs from 1953 to 1955 at the rate of \$45 per box with six chairs. The money from the sale of the box seats was put into a trust fund and paid into the fair treasury one-third each year, with funds then available early in the year to apply to entertainment contracts in spring. Drawings for locations for box seats were held each year at the end of the fair.¹⁴⁶ Entries also continued to provide a traditional source of income. In 1952, livestock entries were accepted until the Thursday evening prior to the fair, with other departments accepting entries through Monday at 6:00. Entries were made at the fair office at the West Liberty State Bank Building.¹⁴⁷ Harness races, free attractions, and the Buck Steel Frontier Days show drew people into the fair and assisted with ticket sales. The fair board strove to provide new attractions as well. In 1952, the detailed miniature village of Rosedale with more than 5,500 moving parts was displayed on the midway, constructed over four years by Mr. and Mrs. Amos Youngblood of Grand Junction. The village had been exhibited in 15 states but only a few times in Iowa.¹⁴⁸ The 1953 fair was noted as having the largest display of farm machinery, automobiles, and trucks in the history of the fair, another traditional draw for patrons. Days were designated for particular towns to draw in additional people, with Iowa City Day on Tuesday and Muscatine Day on Wednesday in 1953. Thursday was Children's Day, as well as Thrill Day, drawing in spectators interested in seeing a thrill show in the evening (automobile daredevil shows). A large number of exhibitors were noted in 1953 as well. Over 200 entries were made in the Baby Beef department, resulting in one of the largest baby beef auctions in fair history. The grand champion of Louis Danner of West Liberty sold for \$40 per hundred. As the *West Liberty Index* stated: "The variety in displays and activities make it a fair for all – of all ages."¹⁴⁹

The increased number of exhibitors in several departments led to major improvements on the fairgrounds in 1954. On March 3, 1954, the Fair Board approved moving forward with the construction of two new cattle barns. Plans were then made over the next few months, with plans also set in June to relocate the two small dairy cattle barns from the southeast section of the grounds for the construction of the new east barn. The new barns were designed with a cross-plan layout – four wings that were 40 feet long and 30 feet wide connected at the center. Each barn could hold approximately 200 cattle. The two x-barns, as they were later dubbed, were constructed at a cost of \$10,000 with volunteer labor. The west x-barn (Map #23) was built to the west of the Baby Beef Barn (Map #24), and it was constructed for the junior department entries. The east x-barn (deconstructed) was built for open class beef entries to the north of the 1923 cattle barn (demolished) and to the north of the swine pavilion (Map #36). The earlier cattle barn was then used for dairy cattle entries. Two smaller dairy barns on this site were relocated. One was moved to near the west x-barn for additional space (30-stall barn destroyed by fire in 1975). The other 28 by 56 foot barn was moved to the north side of the girls' 4-H building (Map #6). A portion of the north wall of the earlier building was removed to connect the two buildings on the interior, and the enlarged building was remodeled with a stage on the north end for demonstrations. Volunteer labor for the construction of the two x-barns and the addition to the girls' 4-H building was provided by organizations that included the Montpelier 4-H, Seventy-Six 4-H, Nichols 4-H, Fulton 4-H, Wilton 4-H, Wapsie 4-H, Lake Township 4-H, Bloomington 4-H, Goshen 4-H, Sweetland 4-H, Pike 4-H, West Liberty FFA, Wilton FFA, Sweetland Grange, South Prairie Grange, Sweetland Farm Bureau, Fulton Farm Bureau, Lake Township Farm Bureau, South Prairie Farm Bureau, Goshen Farm Bureau, West Liberty Rotary Club, and West Liberty Lions Club. Work was completed primarily in July, with "finishing touches" by the four officers from each 4-H club under the direction of county extension director Harold Craig in early

¹⁴⁵ Fair minutes - Book 3

¹⁴⁶ "Box Seats Being Sold for 1953-55 West Liberty Fairs," *West Liberty Index*, July 17, 1952, 1

¹⁴⁷ "90th Annual Fair and Night Show," *West Liberty Index*, August 14, 1952, 1

¹⁴⁸ "To Show Miniature Village at West Liberty Fair," *West Liberty Index*, August 14, 1952, 7

¹⁴⁹ "Four Day Exposition," *West Liberty Index*, August 20, 1953, 1; "Danner Baby Beef Brings \$40 Per Hundred at Fair," *Muscatine Journal*, August 27, 1953, 1)

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August. Record entries were then received in the junior department for the 92nd fair in 1954, with a larger number of entries in other cattle classes than previous years as well.¹⁵⁰

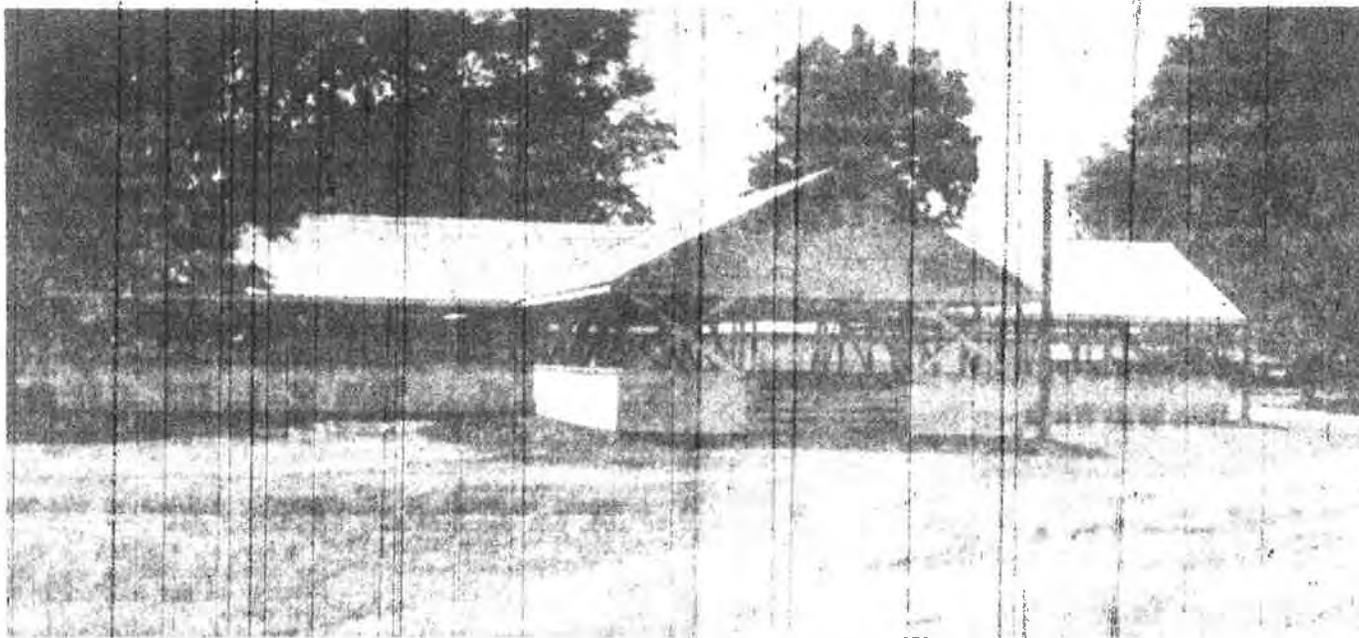


Figure 24. New x-barn built in 1954.¹⁵¹

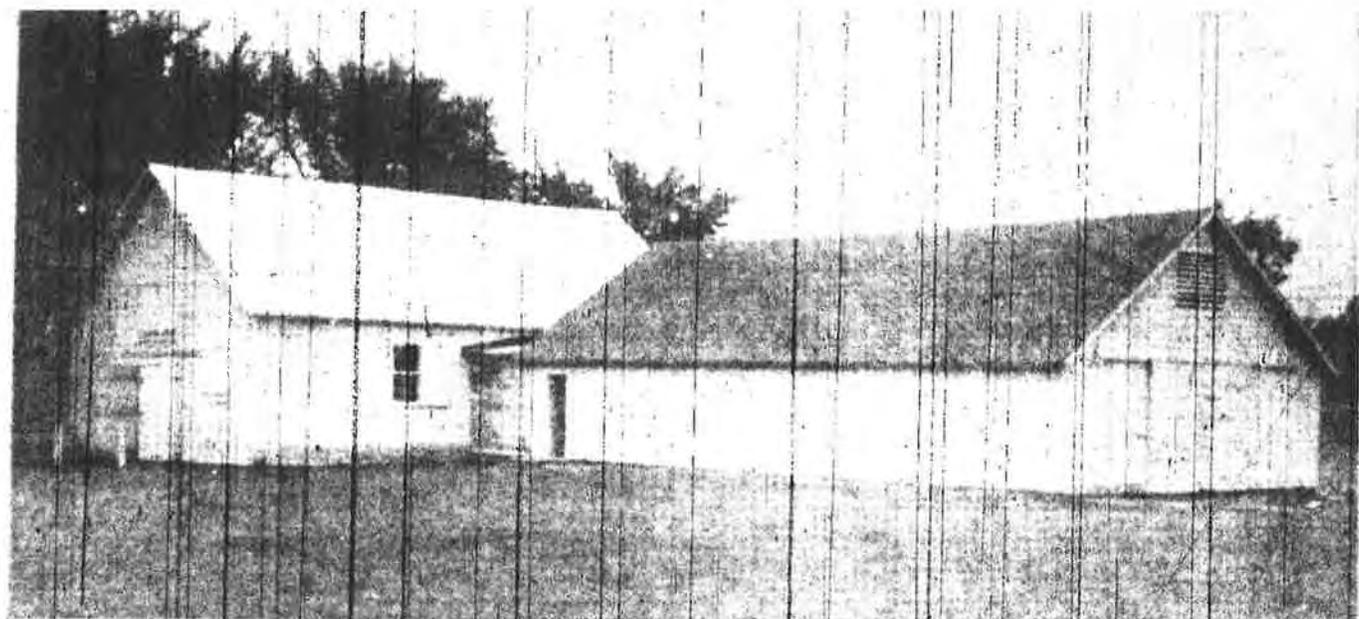


Figure 25. Girls' 4-H building with former cattle barn addition in 1954.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ Fair minutes - Book 3; "Work Schedules on New Fair Barns," *West Liberty Index*, July 1, 1954, 1; "Two New Cross Type Cattle Barns Are Being Constructed at West Liberty Fair Grounds," *Muscatine Journal*, July 2, 1954, 2; "Rotarians to Paint on Fair Barns," *West Liberty Index*, July 8, 1954, 1; "Work Progressing on New Fair Buildings," *West Liberty Index*, July 15, 1954, 1; "Work Schedule for New Barns at Fairgrounds," *West Liberty Index*, July 22, 1954, 1; "New Barns Add Needed Space for Four-H Animals," *Muscatine Journal*, August 5, 1954, 10; "Four-H Officers To Work on Fair Barns This Week," *Muscatine Journal*, August 10, 1954, 10; "92nd Annual Fair and Night Show Here Next Week," *West Liberty Index*, August 19, 1954, 1

¹⁵¹ "New Cattle Barn," *Muscatine Journal*, August 20, 1954, 15

¹⁵² "Exhibit Hall Enlarged," *Muscatine Journal*, August 20, 1954, 16

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Statistics and activity continue to demonstrate the strength of the West Liberty Fair through the end of the 1950s. Per state statistics, the West Liberty Fair had 2,848 exhibitors in 1955 including 841 livestock exhibits, ranking it handily as the largest in terms of entries, ahead of the fair in Waterloo that had 1,567 exhibitors including 684 livestock exhibits. Attendance was reported around 30,000 (20,996 paid), ranking it 13th among the 102 fairs held in 1955.¹⁵³ Annual maintenance was completed on buildings throughout the fairgrounds, with repairs and modifications as needed to accommodate the year's activities. With the need for additional space, an addition was built along the side of the sheep barn to accommodate 50% more pens (demolished). The 1956 fair was again a large success, with entertainment by Ken Wagner and others from WOC-TV in Davenport. Secretary Robert Barclay also presented an engraved plaque to Ivan Noland for 50 years of service working with the promotion and preparations of the West Liberty Fair and Night Show.¹⁵⁴ The West Liberty Park Association continued to own the majority of the land for the West Liberty Fairgrounds, and they renewed their articles of incorporation in October 1956. Their purpose continued to be to hold property in whole or in part, partially within and partially adjacent to the town of West Liberty, which has been used as fairgrounds by the Union District Agricultural Society.¹⁵⁵ A horse shoe contest was held at the 1956 fair, and the popularity of the event led a more structured tournament in 1957. Rev. David A. Shaeffer of West Liberty then organized a horseshoe pitching contest held at fairgrounds courts on Labor Day, with contestants from throughout Muscatine County and the surrounding area. The players contributed to a fund to construct concrete pitching platforms at the fairgrounds courts.¹⁵⁶ Other community events were held on the fairgrounds over the course of the year in this period through the efforts of other organizations. For example, the West Liberty Lions Club sponsored a tractor pulling contest several years on Labor Day, and the Silver Stirrup Saddle Club sponsored the West Liberty horse show and races in June.¹⁵⁷

Part of the success of the West Liberty Fair and the operations at the fairgrounds was the ready ability of the Union District Agricultural Society to adapt and evolve with the times. While harness races continued to be found on the fair program through the 1950s, their popularity was waning as automobile races were increasingly popular. On July 6, 1958, big Speedway cars raced at the fairgrounds under the direction of United Speedways of Anderson, Indiana – the first appearance of large Speedway type racers at the West Liberty track. The cars were slated to race on 31 dates in six Midwestern states in 1958, including returning to West Liberty for races during the fair. Drivers from Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, and Minnesota competed in seven events including the 20 lap feature race.¹⁵⁸ The 1958 fair also adjusted to a schedule that ran from Sunday August 17 to Wednesday August 20. With less concern about Sunday activities than in previous decades that included a Sunday fair date, a full harness racing program was held on Sunday with the Muscatine Brass Band playing between races. The Mariners from the Arthur Godfrey show then performed in the evening. The horseshoe pitching contest started with a qualifying round on Monday morning, ending with the final tournament on Wednesday morning. Harness races were held on Monday afternoon, with the Silver Stirrup Saddle Club of West Liberty presenting their show in the evening including mounted drills, a parade, and square dancing on horses. The "Queen of the Furrow" regional contest (11 counties) was also held on Monday, and the West Liberty Community Band played. Tuesday was noted as Derby Day at the fair, with running races in the afternoon. The Wilton Band provided music between races, and the Red Foley Ozark Jubilee Show performed in the evening. Automobile races including time trials, heats, and a 30 lap feature race presented by United Speedways were the feature on Wednesday, with the parade of livestock also remaining on Wednesday evening. While the fair was technically over on Wednesday, the auction of Baby Beef, a key feature of the fair for decades, remained on Thursday morning. Throughout the fair, there was also

¹⁵³ Iowa State Fair Board 1955: 162-165, 172-173

¹⁵⁴ "More Space for Sheep Provided at Fairgrounds," *Muscatine Journal*, August 17, 1956, 8; "All is Ready for a Splendid Exposition," *West Liberty Index*, August 16, 1956, 1; "Noland Honored by West Liberty Fair Association," *West Liberty Index*, August 29, 1956, 1

¹⁵⁵ Muscatine County, Book G of Incorporations, page 88

¹⁵⁶ "Horse Shoe Tournament," *West Liberty Index*, July 25, 1957, 1; "Horseshoe Pitching Contest Held on Labor Day," *West Liberty Index*, September 5, 1957, 1

¹⁵⁷ "Tractor Pulling Contest at Fairgrounds," *West Liberty Index*, August 29, 1957, 1; "Tractor Pull to Be Held at West Liberty," *Muscatine Journal*, August 28, 1957, 1; "Horse Show and Races," *West Liberty Index*, June 26, 1958, 1

¹⁵⁸ "Speedway Cars to Race at West Liberty," *West Liberty Index*, July 1, 1958, 1

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a full midway of rides, concessions, and exhibits. Again, the shade and benches were stressed as attractive qualities of the fairgrounds - "where fairgoers may rest and visit with old friends."¹⁵⁹ A 40 by 60 poured concrete floor with a high finish was installed north of the Floral Hall (Map #7) for dances, with different bands engaged each evening (a concrete pad remains west of the later bingo pavilion, Map #5). A tent was erected over the floor to provide cover.¹⁶⁰

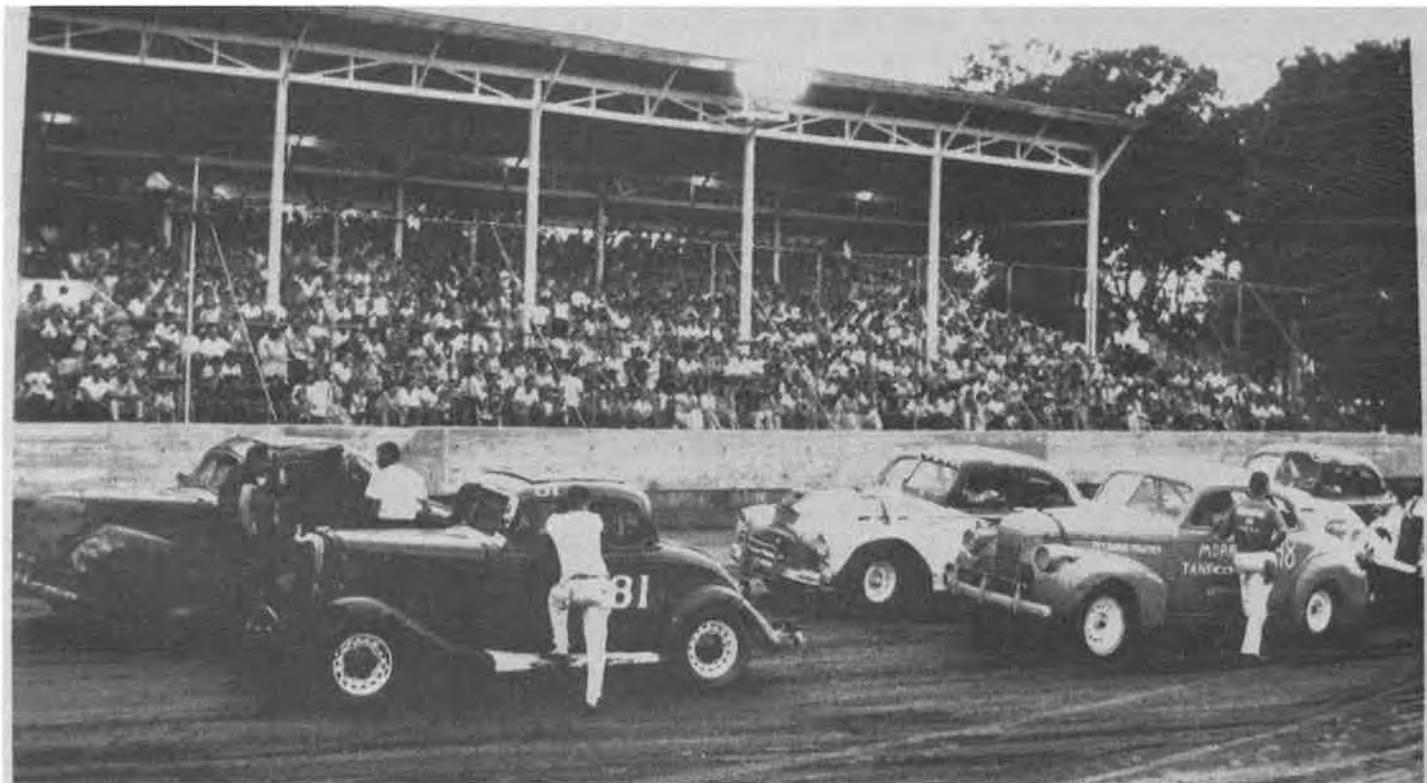


Figure 26. Jalopy races at the West Liberty Fair in 1960.¹⁶¹

The articles of incorporation for the Union District Agricultural Society were due for renewal in 1960, and they instead officially reincorporated as The West Liberty Fair, Muscatine County, reflecting their informal name for several decades. Their purpose was "to hold an agricultural fair and other similar exhibitions tending to the encouragement and improvement of agricultural pursuits and of the breeding of livestock of all kinds; to promote and encourage other outdoor community activities and recreational exhibitions; to acquire, operate, and maintain the grounds or any interest therein or part thereof, improvements and appurtenances necessary and incidental to these purposes; and to buy, sell, rent, assign and mortgage such real and personal property and perform such business as may be necessary or expedient for the successful attainment of such purposes." The articles also authorized the board to buy and sell stock in other organizations that may own land used for the fairgrounds.¹⁶² While the organization was noted as The West Liberty Fair, the board operated with people from throughout Muscatine County, including the city of Muscatine. Additional work was then completed on the race track at the West Liberty Fairgrounds in 1960 to adapt it to automobile racing. Approximately \$20,000 was spent to widen and bank curves, install property lighting for night races, and build guard railings and fences to protect spectators. With work completed, the track in West Liberty was admitted to the Mississippi Valley Speedway Club in the summer, a circuit that included sanctioned races held at Columbus Junction, Mt.

¹⁵⁹ "Four Days and Nights of Exciting Action," *West Liberty Index*, August 14, 1958, 1

¹⁶⁰ "West Liberty Fair and Night Show," *West Liberty Index*, July 31, 1958, 1; "Four Days and Nights of Exciting Action," *West Liberty Index*, August 14, 1958, 1

¹⁶¹ WLSC 1988: 146; "Jalopies to Race at West Liberty," *Muscatine Journal*, August 19, 1960, 6

¹⁶² Muscatine County Book H of Incorporations, page 44

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Pleasant, and Burlington as well. Jalopy races were held on Monday evening during the West Liberty Fair as well, including a 30-lap feature race.¹⁶³

While projects were undertaken on a regular basis to maintain and adapt buildings on the fairgrounds, a series of projects was completed in advance of the celebration of the centennial of the West Liberty Fair in 1962. While a number of buildings continued to serve the same use as they had since their original construction, other buildings had been adapted to a new function as the needs of the fair changed, maintaining their utilization for fair purposes. In February 1962, the fair board decided to drop the poultry show and renovate the poultry house for the flower show, resulting in additional space for vegetable exhibits in the former building. The poultry house was remodeled and painted inside and out for the flower displays, and a new class of table settings was added to the fair. The booths for the Farm Bureau Women were also moved into the new Floral Hall. The exposition hall then had its usual display of antiques, needlework, culinary skill, jellies, jams, and canned goods, as well as fine arts and junior departments (Map #7).¹⁶⁴ The increase in the boys' 4-H livestock exhibits resulted in the need for additional sleeping quarters, which had been accommodated in a tent near the Baby Beef Barn (Map #24). In summer 1962, the former draft horse barn to the south (Map #25) was completely remodeled with a new roof, concrete floor, and addition of a spacious shower and toilet room to serve as the boys' dormitory, with space for at least 100 cots. The northwest part of the building had an office for the Extension and Junior Department executives. In addition to these two major remodeling projects, a new roof was put on the girls' 4-H building, and it was painted along with the three Baby Beef barns, secretary's office, and several tool sheds. As a result, "The buildings and the grounds have never presented a better appearance, thus adding to the anticipation of the Centennial Fair as 'one to be remembered.'"¹⁶⁵

The West Liberty Fair celebrated its Centennial Fair on August 18 to 22, 1962, marking its 100th consecutive fair since the Union District Agricultural Society was formed. In honor of the centennial, a book, *History of West Liberty Fair (Muscatine County), 1863-1962*, was compiled on the history of the fair, documenting the history and evolution of the fair to date. The history asserted that the fair had always operated in the black, noting that it was one of 21 out of the 103 fairs held in 1960 to do so. The West Liberty Fair was one of only four in State to accept any entry (listed in the catalog) from any part of the country, and as a result it had the largest number of exhibitors of any county fair in Iowa.¹⁶⁶ The Centennial Fair was no exception to this history of successful fairs. Attendance on Monday alone was estimated around 15,000, with the jalopy races as the main draw. Exhibits were similar as in previous years, with some recent additions such as the boys' 4-H entomology collections, construction, and garden projects added the previous year. In honor of the centennial, there was an expanded Civil War display and display of old dresses. The year coincided with the centennial of the United States Department of Agriculture, and there were special exhibits by various agricultural services in county accordingly as well.¹⁶⁷

With the centennial under its belt, the West Liberty Fair board continued to look towards additional growth in the future. Seven acres of land had been rented in prior years from Eva Watson at the south end of the grounds, providing sufficient space for the machinery display and parking. The West Liberty Park Association then purchased land to the south from Watson on January 2, 1963 (Figure 2).¹⁶⁸ This addition of land provided space for the displays and parking as noted, with some building development in the 1970s. The *West Liberty*

¹⁶³ "30-Lap Jalopy Feature Slated Monday," *Muscatine Journal*, August 19, 1960, 6; CHC 1962: 16; Fair minutes - Book 4

¹⁶⁴ "Make Changes for Expanded Exhibits During West Liberty Centennial Fair," *Muscatine Journal*, July 19, 1962, 13; February 23, 1962, Fair minutes - Book 4

¹⁶⁵ "New Boys Dormitory Built for Centennial Exposition," *West Liberty Index*, August 2, 1962, 1

¹⁶⁶ CHC 1962: 18

¹⁶⁷ "New Attendance Mark Set at Fair; Jalopy Races Popular," *Muscatine Journal*, August 21, 1962, 1; "Make Changes for Expanded Exhibits During West Liberty Centennial Fair," *Muscatine Journal*, July 19, 1962, 13

¹⁶⁸ Muscatine County, Lands Book 124: 31; "New Boys Dormitory Built for Centennial Exposition," *West Liberty Index*, August 2, 1962, 1

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Figure 27. Ribbons and buttons from the West Liberty Centennial Fair in 1962.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁹ Muscatine County Fair office files.

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Index noted success again for the 101st fair in 1963, as "Entries filled all the buildings to overflowing and the quality as always was tops."¹⁷⁰ The "Fairgrounds Nature Planned" was hit hard by the onset of Dutch elm disease. A total of 24 elm trees were removed in 1962, followed by 42 elms, five oak, and two hickory in 1963. The property ledger book indicates that five ash, four soft maple, and three oak trees were planted in 1963 to begin to replace the dead trees.¹⁷¹ Improvements to the amphitheater in 1964 included a new stage with backdrop.¹⁷² The Harmonicats, well known on TV and stage, and the Browning Family then performed on the "new stage on the track before the grandstand" at the 1964 fair. The fair ran from Saturday August 15 to Wednesday August 19, with a tractor pull added on Saturday afternoon sponsored by West Liberty Lions Club.¹⁷³ The West Liberty Fair continued to stand out among the other district and county fairs in Iowa in 1965. Statistics reported to the State Agricultural Convention show that the fair had 2,575 exhibitors, including 619 livestock exhibits. Thus, it retained its title as the fair with the largest number of total exhibits in the state and the second largest number of livestock exhibits.¹⁷⁴ The West Liberty Fair reported a profit of \$1,979.85, which though a narrow margin was the 6th highest profit reported in 1965 and placed it among the 23 fairs out of the 103 fairs held that showed a profit. The county aid of \$10,000 thus continued to play a key role in the profitability of the fair.¹⁷⁵ In 1966, the *Muscatine Journal* noted that there were 11 boys 4-H clubs, 19 girls 4-H clubs, and three FFA clubs that operated in the county and exhibited at the fair. Overall, there was an average of 61 commercial and educational exhibits each year.¹⁷⁶

The success of the West Liberty Fair through the 1960s led to the construction of two additional major buildings prior to the end of the decade. Additional judging space was required by 1965, and the Fair Board contracted with the Bloom Builders Company of Oskaloosa for a 50 by 96 building with open sides to use as a judging building for 4-H and other livestock classes (Map #35). The Bloom Builders Company supplied Bonanza Buildings, and they worked through local salesman/contractor Ken Ruegsegger for the construction on the fairgrounds. The site selected in June was among buildings in the southeast section of the grounds, in close proximity to the swine pavilion, cattle barns, and sheep barn. It was located immediately west of the remaining race horse barn (north one demolished in 1963), which was then converted for use as a sheep barn.¹⁷⁷ The \$3,600 cost of the building was covered by donations. Bleachers were built in the pavilion for spectators, and articles noted that it was large enough to have three classes judged inside at one time in case of inclement weather. Several photographs in the *Muscatine Journal* showed various judging and shows that took place within the pavilion.¹⁷⁸ The *West Liberty Index* reported: "The new judging building has made possible a very pleasing and instructive showing of the livestock."¹⁷⁹ The *West Liberty Index* also noted: "The loss of all the elm trees on the grounds made the new building imperative so the judging can be in the shade."¹⁸⁰ A total of 29 elm trees were removed yet in 1966, leaving one left on the grounds that was removed in 1967. The trees were replaced in part by ash and maple trees.¹⁸¹ At the same time, the *West Liberty Index* stated in caption: "Note the beautiful background of shade trees. This is in spite of the fact that some 150 elm trees have been removed because of elm disease. Many new trees have been planted and coming

¹⁷⁰ "101st Fair Develops Into A Very Successful Exposition," *West Liberty Index*, August 22, 1963, 1

¹⁷¹ Property ledger book, Muscatine County Fair office.

¹⁷² January-June 1964, Fair minutes - Book 4

¹⁷³ "102nd Annual West Liberty Fair Starts Saturday," *West Liberty Index*, August 13, 1964, 1

¹⁷⁴ Fairs in 1965 with more than 500 exhibitors (103 total fairs): West Liberty (Muscatine Co) - 2,575 (619 livestock), Waterloo (Black Hawk Co) - 1,613 (1,165 livestock), Cedar Rapids (Linn Co) - 1,500 (402 livestock), Decorah (Winneshiak Co) - 1,004 (339 livestock), Davenport (Scott Co) - 976 (297 livestock), Spencer (Clay Co) - 750 (200 livestock), Cherokee (Cherokee Co) - 594 (Iowa State Fair Board 1965: 74-76)

¹⁷⁵ Iowa State Fair Board 1965: 66-69, 86-87

¹⁷⁶ "Interesting Facts Concerning the West Liberty Fair," *Muscatine Journal*, August 9, 1966, 20

¹⁷⁷ March 28, 1966, April 15, 1966, May 19, 1966, June 3, 1966, Fair minutes - Book 4

¹⁷⁸ "Bleachers for Spectators," *Muscatine Journal*, August 9, 1966, 24; "Light Horse and Pony Show," *Muscatine Journal*, August 15, 1966, 3; "Baby Beef Judging," *Muscatine Journal*, August 17, 1966, 8

¹⁷⁹ "Thrilling 1966 West Liberty Fair Unfolds," *West Liberty Index*, August 18, 1966, 1

¹⁸⁰ "Livestock Judging Under Cover at Fair," *West Liberty Index*, August 11, 1966, 2

¹⁸¹ Property ledger book, Muscatine County Fair office.

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generations will not know that at one time the shade got a little skimpy.”¹⁸² Interestingly, the 114th fair was held on August 13 to 17, 1966, after the 103rd fair had been held in 1965. The number shift reflects the first agricultural fair held in 1852 rather than the formal organization of the Union District Agricultural Society in 1862, with its history of consecutive fairs since 1863.

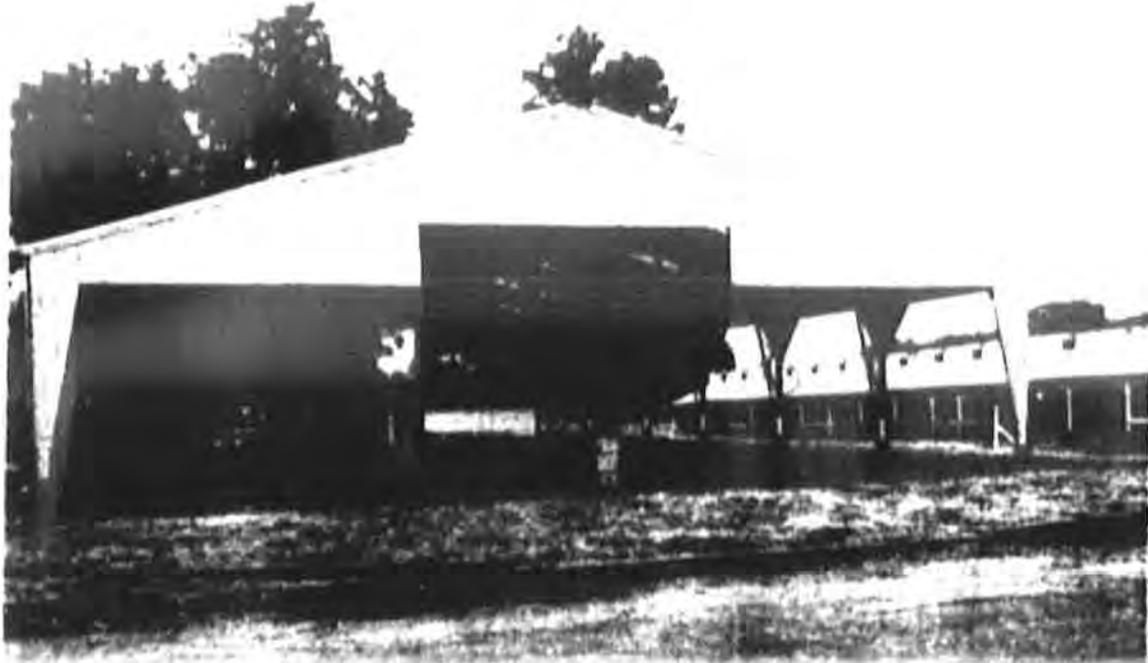


Figure 28. New livestock judging pavilion constructed in 1966.¹⁸³



Baby Beef Judging

Judging of the Junior Beef division held in the new judging pavilion, this year in most classes. One of the Angus classes is being judged in this picture. Occupied most of the day Tuesday at the West Liberty Fair. Entries were heavy.

Figure 29. Interior of livestock judging pavilion constructed in 1966.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² "View of Amphitheater During Tractor Pull," *West Liberty Index*, August 18, 1966, 1

¹⁸³ *West Liberty Index*, August 11, 1966, 2

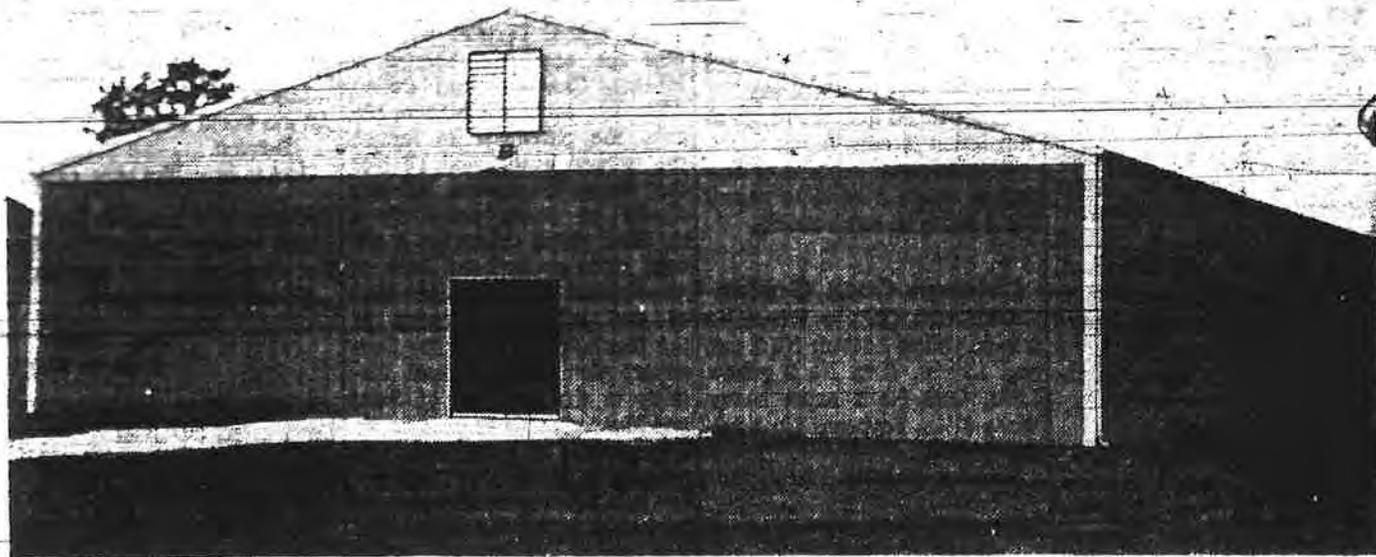
¹⁸⁴ *Muscatine Journal*, August 17, 1966, 8

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Smaller buildings were also constructed on the grounds in this period. Concessions were typically located in temporary stands, and in 1966 the Christian Church requested permission to build a permanent food stand. The stand was then built north of the grandstands, and it was later moved to the main section of the midway to the west of the grandstands (Map #12).¹⁸⁵ With the new judging building on the south end of the grounds, the fair board moved forward with construction of new restrooms on the south end as well. Property ledger records indicate that the old men's toilet was moved from north of the beef cattle barn and converted into a modern restroom for men and women in 1967 at cost of \$1626.25 (Map #31).¹⁸⁶ New bleachers (90 feet) were also purchased to replace the old wooden set north of grandstand prior to the fair in 1967. Minnie Pearl and the Grand Ole Opry Show performed for the 1967 fair, with races on Monday and Wednesday evenings. The fair continued to evolve as well, adding a Quarter Horse Show as a new feature.¹⁸⁷ The Grove continued to have the Variety Box performances, including a talent show competition as well as amateur performances (Map #10).¹⁸⁸

Muscatine Journal—Friday, August 8, 1969 11



New girls 4-H building

~~This new building will be in use today as entries are due working projects will be housed in this facility. The new building on the fairgrounds. This is the newly constructed Girls 4-H building is situated near the front gate of the fairgrounds. Building Girls 4-H exhibits, Farm Bureau work and wood~~ (Journal photo by Jan Griesenbrock)

Figure 30. Photograph of new girls' 4-H building after completed in 1969.¹⁸⁹

With the large number of girls' 4-H exhibits and demonstrations through the 1960s, the crowded condition of the old building was increasingly an issue (Map #6). The need for larger space was again discussed in fall 1968, and the building committee was directed to proceed with plans and finances on November 11. Plans were made throughout the winter, and a site north of the main exhibition hall was selected in March. A bid from Bloom Builders of Oskaloosa for a 60 by 120 by 11.5 foot building was accepted on April 10 (Map #4).

¹⁸⁵ April 15, 1966, Fair minutes – Book 4; Ruegsegger 2015

¹⁸⁶ Property ledger book, Muscatine County Fair office; October 12, 1966, January 26, 1967, April 19, 1967

¹⁸⁷ "115th Annual Fair is Acclaimed a Success," *West Liberty Index*, August 17, 1967, 1

¹⁸⁸ "These Was Entertainment in the Grove," *West Liberty Index*, August 17, 1967, 3

¹⁸⁹ "New girls 4-H building," *Muscatine Journal*, August 8, 1969, 11

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Construction of the wood frame building clad in metal siding proceeded in June.¹⁹⁰ The building was nearly complete in early July, and the *West Liberty Index* noted that it "will be one of the finest exhibition buildings in the State." The interior included a stage and prep rooms for 4-H demonstration programs.¹⁹¹ The annual superintendents' dinner was then held in the completed building on July 31, 1969. The girls' 4-H displays, boys and girls 4-H demonstrations, and Farm Bureau booths were located in the building for the fair in August 1969. Ed Eichelberger, president of fair board, noted: "The building cost us a lot of money, but we thought it was needed to keep improving the fair facilities" to maintain West Liberty's status as "Eastern Iowa's Little State Fair."¹⁹² The building was also utilized for community event year-round, and it was renamed the County Activity Center in 1973 to reflect this larger role on the fairgrounds.

The completion of the new girls' 4-H building marks the culmination of the success and growth of the West Liberty Fair through the 1960s. The 1969 aerial photograph depicts the development of the fairgrounds by this date, which also reflects the current organization of the fairgrounds (Figure 31). The main entry continues to be located at the end of 1st Street on the north side of the racetrack, with the main gate ticket office (Map #2) and five brick entry pier (Map #1) were constructed in 1927. The area to the west and north of the entry was open space, used for parking. The new girls' 4-H building (County Activity Center) is visible with its large footprint (Map #4). The older girls' 4-H building is located to its west (Map #6), with the 1915 exhibition hall visible to the south (Map #7). The Grove to the south is the section of the fairgrounds with the most concentrated number of trees, providing ample shade for the Variety Box performances held here (Map #10). The old floral hall is found among these trees, not visible on the aerial photograph. The race track dominates the east section of the fairgrounds (Map #20), as it had since the earliest days of the fair. The amphitheater built in 1928 is clearly visible along the west side (Map #16), with the Christian Church food booth to the north (moved, Map #12). The boys' 4-H and junior department buildings are located to the west of the south end of the track, including the x-barn built in 1954 (Map #23), Baby Beef Barn built in 1934 (Map #24), and the draft horse barn converted to boys' dorm (Map #25). Machinery display and parking was then located on the land to the south acquired in 1963, extending to the westward jog in Calhoun Street. Several livestock buildings are depicted south of the race track, with the elongated race horse barn converted to sheep barn along the west edge (demolished) and rebuilt restrooms at the north end (Map #31). The judging pavilion built in 1966 is located to its east (Map #35). The large swine pavilion built in 1918 is clearly visible across the south section, with the dairy cattle barn (demolished) and the east x-barn for beef cattle to the north along the east edge of the grounds (deconstructed/rebuilt). While the fairgrounds continued to evolve and adapt to meet changing needs of the West Liberty Fair, the overall organization and land use of the fairgrounds remains the same in 2015 as it was in 1969.

¹⁹⁰ November 11, 1968, March 8, 1969, April 9, 1969, April 10, 1969, Fair minutes - Book 4

¹⁹¹ "New Girls 4-H and Ladies Department Building Nearly Completed at Fairgrounds," *West Liberty Index*, July 3, 1969, 1

¹⁹² "Superintendents' dinner held at new fair building," *Muscatine Journal*, August 1, 1969, 9

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Figure 31. June 1969 aerial photograph of West Liberty Fairgrounds.¹⁹³

¹⁹³ USDA image on Iowa Geographic Map Server, ortho.gis.iastate.edu

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Continued development and evolution of the West Liberty Fair, 1970-2015

While the period of significance currently ends at 1969 to remain close to the typical 50-year timeframe for recognizing historic significance, a number of significant changes and construction projects were undertaken on the West Liberty Fairgrounds in the 1970s. At a future date, the period of significance may be extended through 1976 to include these projects. Maintenance and improvement projects continued to be ongoing through this period, as well as through the current fair in 2015. These ongoing projects contribute to the evolving nature of the fairgrounds as a historic landscape.

A number of projects were completed on the West Liberty Fairgrounds in the first half of the 1970s. New bleachers were purchased from the Carter Steel Company of Oskaloosa in 1971, providing additional seating along the west side of the race track. Cement turns and finally walls were built around race track from 1971 to 1975. The Northern Propane Gas Company building on land acquired by Louis Rich Foods (West Liberty Foods) was donated and moved to the north end of the fairgrounds near the main entry in 1972 (Map #3). The 36 by 92 Armco steel structure was disassembled, moved, and reassembled within a week. The east end was remodeled for a fair office, while the west end then housed women's project displays and commercial exhibits.¹⁹⁴ A large enclosed building was constructed for cattle judging in 1973, currently known as the judging pavilion (Map #29). The 50 by 150 foot Bonanza Building was constructed by West Liberty Builders, the local company formed by Ken Ruesegger to construct this type of building. The building was sited on the land acquired in 1963, north of the south road and south of the machinery area¹⁹⁵ An associated wash rack was then built to its west (Map #28). West Liberty Builders also constructed a Bonanza Building for a restrooms/showers building (Map #27) south of the boys' dorm in 1974, and they built a permanent display booth on the grounds along the midway, including examples of various colors of steel siding on the exterior (Map #14).¹⁹⁶ In June 1973, a permanent 16 by 24 foot stage was constructed in The Grove, with funds donated by Ruth Wagner in memory of her late husband Kenneth Wagner and Rotary Club building the backdrop (Map #10). The stage was later extended to the west and south in October 1981 with additional funds donated by Ruth Wagner.¹⁹⁷ In March 1974, the fairgrounds itself was extended to the south with the purchase of the Welkona Turkey property, including two turkey sheds that were used for cattle buildings for two decades before being replaced. The property was otherwise leveled and cleared for parking and camping.¹⁹⁸ The full extent of the fairgrounds were annexed into the City of West Liberty then on June 18, 1975. The First Church United food booth located north of the amphitheater was moved to the west of the amphitheater in 1976 and enlarged with a 16-foot addition to the north.¹⁹⁹ Additional bleachers were then constructed north of the amphitheater (Map #17).

An article on the local county fairs in the *Muscatine Journal* on December 12, 1977 noted the success of the West Liberty Fair. In 1977, they showed a profit of \$46,070.21, with roughly \$4,000 from the fair and \$42,000 from other operations. Other income included rental space for storage under the grandstands, stock car and harness races, and building rentals during the year. Overall, while several of the 104 county fair organizations showed profits on the year, most county fairs had operated at a deficit, with gaps covered by other income throughout the year. The West Liberty Fair and Cedar County Fair were among the exceptions that turned a profit. In 1977, the West Liberty Fair had income of \$144,197 and expenses of \$140,316, and their non-fair income for the year was \$410,106 compared to non-fair expenses of \$367,916. They had 68,000 in attendance at the fair, with 1,301 open exhibitors and 1,186 junior exhibitors.²⁰⁰ Conway Twitty and Crystal Gayle performed at the West Liberty Fair in August 1977. Harness races were held on the fairgrounds on

¹⁹⁴ "Louis Rich Foods, Inc. Donates Building to West Liberty Fair," *West Liberty Index*, July 13, 1972, 1; WLSC 1988: 144

¹⁹⁵ March 12, 1973, Fair minutes - Book 5

¹⁹⁶ July 21, 1974, Fair minutes - Book 5; Ruesegger 2015

¹⁹⁷ "Fair Preparations in Full Swing," *West Liberty Index*, August 2, 1973, 1; June 11, 1973, Fair minutes - Book 5

¹⁹⁸ January 14, 1974, September 16, 1974, Fair minutes - Book 5; Muscatine County Lands Book 150: 253

¹⁹⁹ April 1, 1976, May 13, 1976, Fair minutes - Book 5; Ruesegger 2015

²⁰⁰ "County fairs," *Muscatine Journal*, December 12, 1977, 1

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Figure 32. Fairgrounds in the late 1970s (schematic building footprints).²⁰¹

²⁰¹ Muscatine County Fair office, West Liberty

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Labor Day.²⁰² The fair program through the 1980s showed a continuation of similar categories and entries. The 1983 Premium and Program Catalog lists four main divisions: Livestock (beef, horses, swine, sheep, etc.), Agriculture (fruits/vegetables, grain/seeds), Homelife and Creative Arts (antiques, flowers/plants, needlework, handicraft, ceramics, baked goods, canned goods, fine arts, small pet show, etc.), and 4-H and FFA Youth Divisions (home economics, communications, livestock, dogs, horse and pony show, rabbits, poultry, expressive arts, etc.).

While exhibits remained at the core of the fair, entertainment played an increasingly larger role in the 1980s and several projects reflect related improvements. The ticket booth for the grandstands was located to the north, and a new booth was built to the west of the grandstands around 1980 by West Liberty Builders (Map #15).²⁰³ Johnny Johnson of Morning Sun built a new announcer's stand and stage platform with concessions in front of the grandstands in 1983. Improvements were also made to widen the track for racing. A new steel roof was also installed on the amphitheater.²⁰⁴ New restrooms were then built to the south of the grandstands in 1988.²⁰⁵ Other changes were also made to the fairgrounds in this period. The boys' dorm, located in the converted draft horse barn, was closed due to decreasing use and need for supervision. The building was remodeled as the Conservation Building, with displays for Muscatine County Conservation Board and Soil Conservation in 1981 and fruits and vegetables exhibits moved here as well in 1982 (Map #25). Small antiques exhibits were then moved into the building by 1986. In 1990, the building housed fruits, vegetables, grains, and seeds on the north half and antiques on the south half.²⁰⁶ This building continues to house antiques and has been known as Heritage Hall since the 1990s. A stationary saw mill was donated to the fair in May 1989, placed to the south of Heritage Hall. In 1991, a roof structure was built over the sawmill to protect it (Map #26).²⁰⁷

Perhaps the largest change in this period was amending the articles of incorporation in March 1984 to modify the name from The West Liberty Fair to the Muscatine County Fair, more correctly reflecting the scope of the fair.²⁰⁸ The fair was selected as one of seven fairs included in the *Historical Directory of American Agricultural Fairs* published in 1986, which noted that it was a "relatively small but venerable show in West Liberty" with around 20,000 attendance and 4,900 entries in August 1984.²⁰⁹ The sesquicentennial history of West Liberty in 1988 notes: "The Muscatine County Fair is an asset to the community and the county, not only as one of the largest and more complete county fairs in the state, but as a year round center for various community activities." The fair had a long standing record of success, with premiums always paid in full and the fair held every year despite the Depression and wars. Additionally, it was truly a community volunteer effort for its success: "With this kind of community spirit, the County Fair which is 'a heritage to be preserved' should continue to thrive for innumerable years to come."²¹⁰ The West Liberty Park Association continued to own the core of the fairgrounds until 1995, when the association was dissolved and all assets were transferred to the Muscatine County Fair.²¹¹

A handful of changes to the fair and fairgrounds are noted in the 1990s. In January 1990, \$600 was pledged towards materials for a 4-H office, with the Army Reserve School donating labor for construction of the 14 by 18 foot frame building (Map #30). The building was constructed on the south end of the grounds, completed for the office to move into this new space in July.²¹² The land acquired in 1975 to the south was developed for

²⁰² *West Liberty Index*, September 1, 1977, 12

²⁰³ Ruegsegger 2015

²⁰⁴ December 15, 1982, February 23, 1983, September 24, 1983, Fair minutes - Book 6

²⁰⁵ November 30, 1987, March 9, 1988, Fair minutes - Book 6

²⁰⁶ July 7, 1981, June 9, 1982, July 9, 1986, January 17, 1990, Fair minutes - Book 6

²⁰⁷ February 8, 1989, May 15, 1991, Fair minutes - Book 7

²⁰⁸ Book M of Incorporations, page 1167

²⁰⁹ Marti 1986: 125

²¹⁰ WLSC 1988: 147

²¹¹ July 31, 1995, Annual Meeting Minutes Book: 385, October 20, 1995 transfer, Muscatine County Lands Book 412: 518

²¹² January 10, 1990, February 21, 1990, May 16, 1990, July 11, 1990, Fair minutes - Book 7

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additional usage in the middle of the 1990s. In 1992, a horse show ring was built on the land, moving these events during the fair and throughout the year to this location. The old turkey sheds were demolished in 1995 and replaced by a new cattle barn, with associated entries then shifting to this building from earlier buildings. Restrooms were then completed in this south area in 1995 as well.²¹³ In spring 1996, a new 10 by 14 frame building for an information booth north of the amphitheater was built (Map #9).²¹⁴ The east x-barn constructed for open class cattle to the north of the swine pavilion was dismantled after the fair in 1998, with the wings then moved to west of the swine pavilion and reconstructed into two rectangular barns in 1999. The larger one to the west was built as a sheep barn (Map #32), and the smaller one to the east was built as a dairy barn (now bucket calves) (Map #33).²¹⁵ The earlier sheep wash rack between the buildings was then enlarged in 2001 (Map #34).²¹⁶ In 1999, the infield stage along the race track was also remodeled/moved, along with the judges' stand, and a new concessions building was constructed. The stage was expanded then in 2000 with wings on the sides (Map #21).

Two larger buildings and a pavilion have been constructed in the last 15 years on the West Liberty Fairgrounds. A large 60 by 104 foot building, known as Midway Pavilion, was built to the west of the amphitheater in 2003, providing a handicap accessible building for concessions, dining, and restrooms (Map #11).²¹⁷ Efforts to replace the Floral Hall (1897 poultry building with later additions) began in 2005, with initial plans set in 2006 and fundraising continuing through 2007. The earlier L-shaped building was interestingly replaced by a new L-shaped Floral Building in 2008, with a donation for a gazebo in front of it in 2009 (Map #8).²¹⁸ The American Legion also built an open pavilion to the south of the County Activity Center in 2007 to use for bingo (Map #5).²¹⁹ The south entry gate booth was replaced by necessity in 2013 when a vehicle struck and toppled the old booth (Map #33).

In 2014, the Muscatine County Fair was held from July 16 to July 20 on the West Liberty Fairgrounds. The fair continues to be dominated by livestock, agricultural, craft, art, and children's exhibits and entries, reflecting the early years of the fair and core values of county fairs. Various contests are held throughout the fair, and entertainment is provided throughout the day and the evening. Attractions and food are found along the midway. Revenue is generated throughout the course of the year through rental fees from buildings utilized for community and family events, including both the Midway Pavilion and Community Activity Center. Additional income is generated by entertainment at the grandstands, concessions, and races on the track. Weekly races are typically held from April to October, including a racing series that spans a weekend.

The Muscatine County Fair board is currently assessing its buildings on the grounds for potential future projects, either working to maintain the historic buildings or replacing them with newer facilities. Thus, they are interested in listing the fairgrounds on the National Register of Historic Places to recognize the historic significance of the property and to qualify the various buildings and structures for financial incentives to assist with preservation efforts. In 2014, they began an extensive fundraising effort to restore the swine pavilion, maintaining this significant historic building on the grounds rather than replacing it.

²¹³ April 15, 1992, June 15, 1994, September 21, 1994, November 9, 1994, September 21, 1994, November 9, 1994, Fair minutes – Book 7

²¹⁴ February 29, 1996, March 20, 1996, Fair minutes - Book 8

²¹⁵ August 26, 1998, September 16, 1998, June 17, 1999, August 4, 1999, Fair minutes - Book 8

²¹⁶ May 17, 2001, June 14, 2001, Fair minutes - Book 8

²¹⁷ September 19, 2002, November 21, 2002, January 16, 2003, Fair minutes - Book 8

²¹⁸ October 23, 2005, March 16, 2006, April 20, 2006, August 17, 2006, October 16, 2006, October 25, 2006, January 18, 2007, Fair board minutes

²¹⁹ June 21, 2007, Fair board minutes

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Hise, George A.T., editor. *One Hundred Years of History*. Centennial booklet, West Liberty, June 29, 1938.

Hokanson, Drake, and Carol Kratz. *Purebred and Homegrown: America's County Fairs*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008.

Iowa Geographic Map Server. Historic aerial photographs. Online at ortho.gis.iastate.edu.

Iowa State Fair Board. *Complete report of Iowa State Fair and Exposition; Proceedings of the State Agricultural Convention; Proceedings of the Iowa County and District Fair Managers' Convention*. Des Moines, IA: State of Iowa. Annual reports published from 1924 to 1970. In collection of State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa.

Lehman collection. Collection of historic photographs and information on the West Liberty Fair. In possession of Tom Lehman, West Liberty, Iowa.

Marti, Donald B. *Historical Directory of American Agricultural Fairs*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1986.

McCarry, John. *County Fairs: Where America Meets*. Washington D.C.: National Geographic Society, 1997.

Muscatine County Fair records, West Liberty, Iowa

- Abstracts for fairgrounds property

- Fair Board minutes (annual meetings, executive board meetings, etc.), 1875-present

- Maps of fairgrounds, various dates.

- Premium List booklets for Union District Agricultural Society, West Liberty, earliest dates to 1923, several from 1940s to current

Newspapers, various years and various dates as cited.

- Muscatine Journal*, Musser Public Library, Muscatine.

- West Liberty Index*, West Liberty Library, West Liberty.

West Liberty Fairgrounds Historic District
Name of Property

Muscatine County, Iowa
County and State

Page, William C., Lowell J. Soike, and Jacobsen, James. *Iowa State Fair and Exposition Grounds Historic District*. National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form. State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines, August 1986.

Portrait and Biographical Album of Muscatine County, Iowa. Chicago: Acme Publishing Company, 1889.

Reports of District and County Agricultural Societies, 1893-1913. Collection of documents in four boxes at State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines, Iowa.

Richman, Irving B. *History of Muscatine County, Iowa*. Two volumes. Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1911.

Ruegsegger, Ken, West Liberty, Iowa. Telephone interview with Rebecca Lawin McCarley, February 23, 2015.

Sanborn Map Company. "West Liberty, Iowa," fire insurance maps, 1922, 1941, 1950s.

West Liberty Library collection:

Annual reports of West Liberty Fair, earliest dates to 1977

Premium list booklets and fair programs for Union District Agricultural Society, West Liberty, earliest dates to 1947 – format through 1982

"Come to the West Liberty Fair – Premium and Program Catalog" – earliest dates to 1983

West Liberty Sesquicentennial Committee (WLSC). *Rolling into the Future, West Liberty, 150 Years, 1838-1988*. West Liberty, 1988.

The research and development of this nomination is supported in part by a grant from the Historical Resource Development Program, State Historical Society of Iowa. Matching funds were also provided by the Muscatine County Fair and Muscatine County.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

Iowa Inventory #70-01542, also see table of resources

West Liberty Fairgrounds Historic District
Name of Property

Muscatine County, Iowa
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approximately 45 acres
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1 _____
Latitude Longitude

3 _____
Latitude Longitude

2 _____
Latitude Longitude

4 _____
Latitude Longitude

or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map): NAD 1927 or x NAD 1983

1 15 644410 4603250
Zone Easting Northing

4 15 644780 4603210
Zone Easting Northing

2 15 644655 4603250
Zone Easting Northing

5 15 644725 4602715
Zone Easting Northing

3 15 644655 4603215
Zone Easting Northing

6 15 644410 4602715
Zone Easting Northing

West Liberty Fairgrounds Historic District
Name of Property

Muscatine County, Iowa
County and State

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The map on the following page depicts the boundary for the West Liberty Fairgrounds Historic District in West Liberty, Muscatine County, Iowa. The boundary starts at the northwest corner of the current and historic parcel/property line, extends east along the parcel line for approximately 775 feet, extends south along the parcel line along N. Clay Street for approximately 160 feet, extends east along the parcel line along W. 1st Street for approximately 405 feet, extends south and then slightly southwest along the parcel line along S. Calhoun Street for approximately 1615 feet, extends west from this point along the parcel line for approximately 1000 feet to the old railroad right-of-way parcel line, and extends north along this parcel line for approximately 1750 feet to the point of beginning.

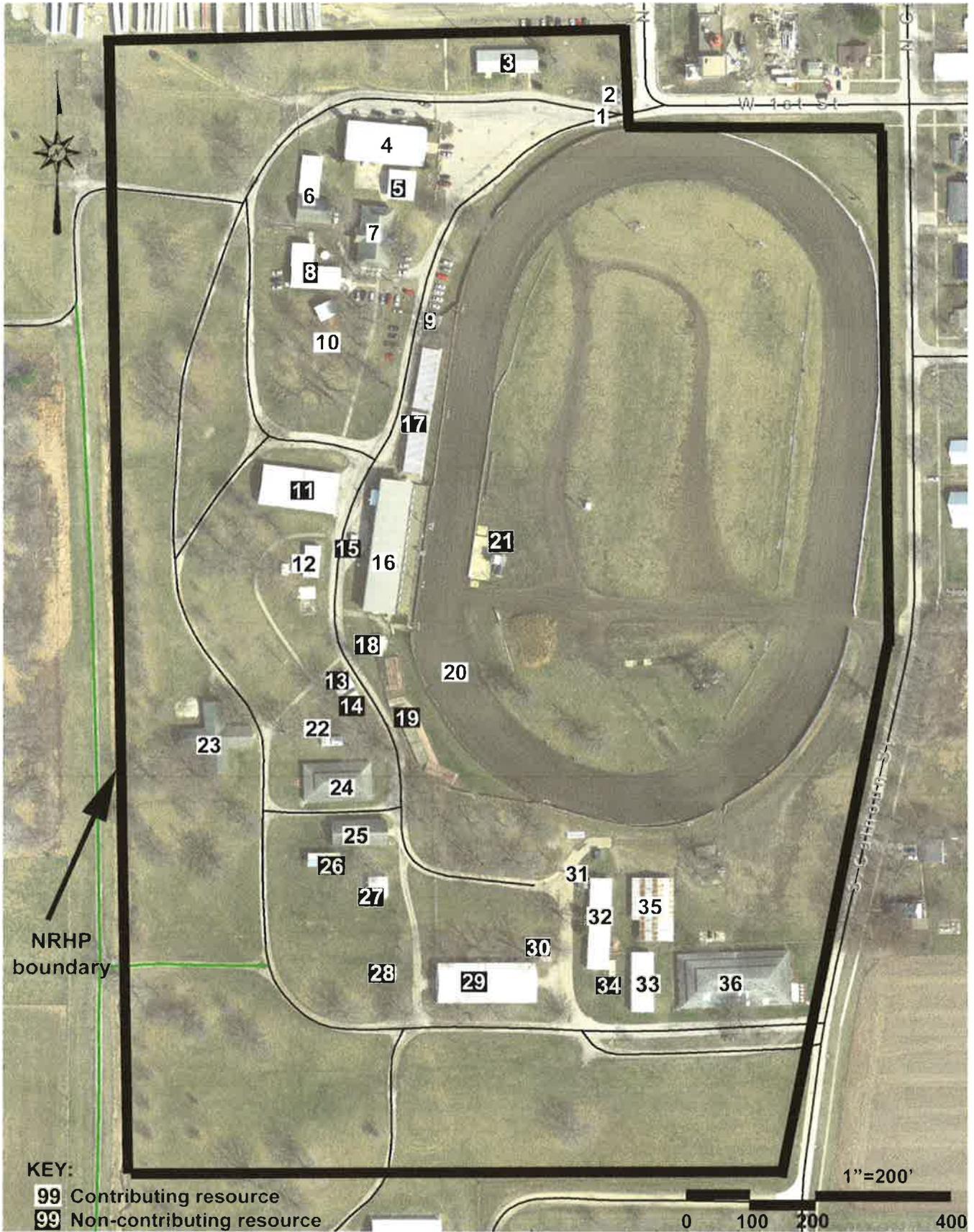
Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary for the West Liberty Fairgrounds Historic District has been drawn to include the parcels of land that were historically included within the main operations of the fairgrounds and reflect the significance of the historic district from 1875 to 1969. As depicted on Figure 2, the boundary includes the original grounds purchased in 1875, the additional land bought in 1889 for the livestock area, and the additional land purchased in 1963 for additional livestock and parking grounds. The boundary includes land historically owned by the West Liberty Park Association and currently owned by the Muscatine County Fair. Additional parcels acquired after the end of the period of significance in 1969 to the south and to the west of the north end have been excluded from the boundary.

Though historic archaeological sites have not been identified at this time, they could potentially contribute to the West Liberty Fairgrounds Historic District. If necessary, the boundary could be adjusted to include these sites. Since the boundary includes the grounds historically associated with the fairgrounds, it is anticipated that these sites would likely fall within the boundary. No current sites have been identified or evaluated for archeological potential or significance.

West Liberty Fairgrounds Historic District
Name of Property

Muscatine County, Iowa
County and State



West Liberty Fairgrounds Historic District
Name of Property

Muscatine County, Iowa
County and State

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Rebecca Lawin McCarley, Architectural Historian
organization SPARK Consulting date October 26, 2015
street & number 17 Oak Lane telephone 563-324-9767
city or town Davenport state Iowa zip code 52803
e-mail sparkconsulting@octaspark.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property owner info (as requested to be completed by SHPO):

name Muscatine County Fair
street & number PO Box 261, 101 N. Clay Street telephone n/a
city or town West Liberty state IA zip code 52776

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

West Liberty Fairgrounds Historic District
Name of Property

Muscatine County, Iowa
County and State

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo log:

Name of Property: West Liberty Fairgrounds Historic District

City or Vicinity: West Liberty

County: Muscatine State: Iowa

Photographer: Rebecca Lawin McCarley

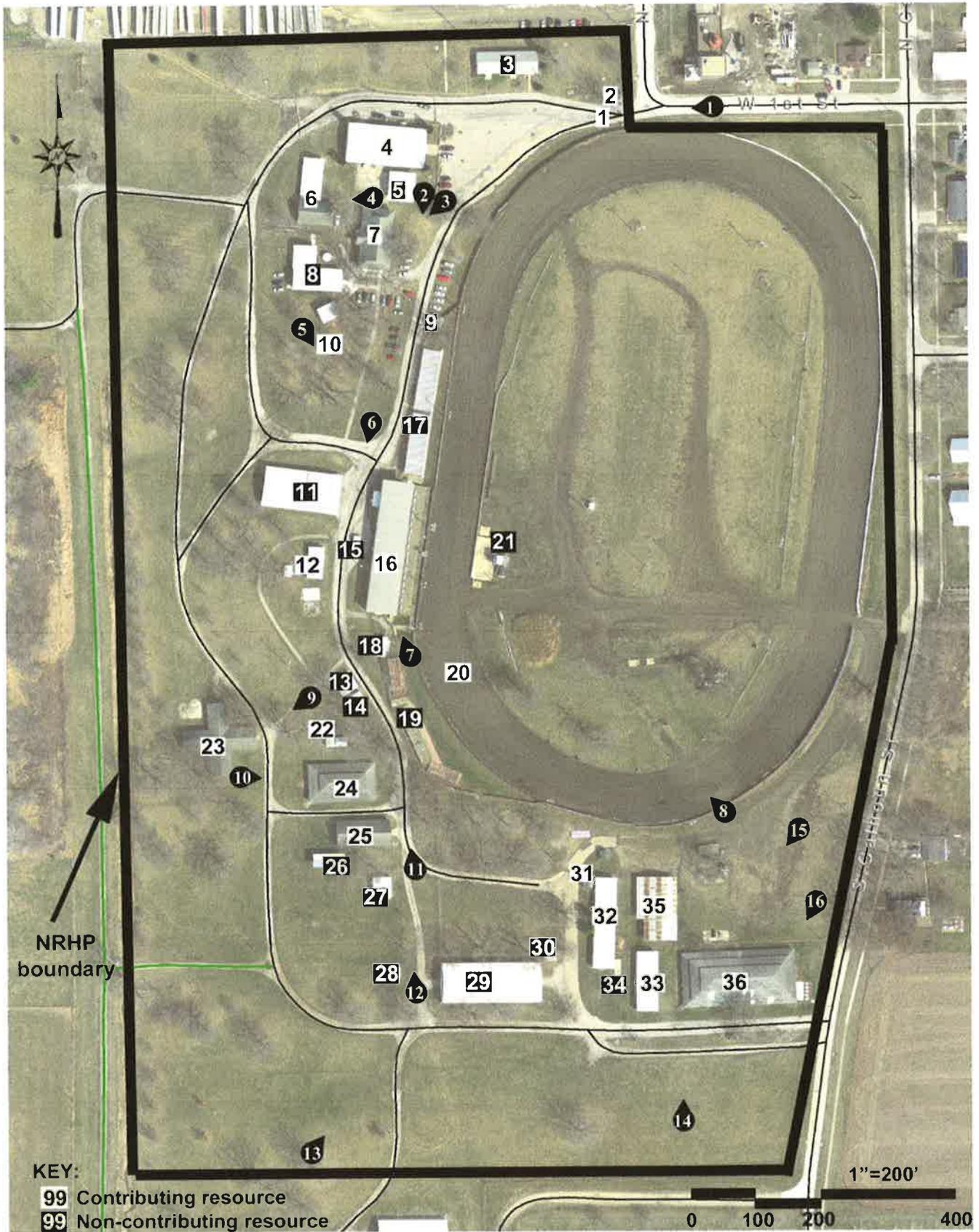
Date Photographed: December 26, 2014

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1. Looking west from 1st Street into main gate of fairgrounds (1927, Map #1-2), camera facing west.
2. Looking south from near exhibition hall (Map #7), camera facing south.
3. Exhibition hall (1915, Map #7), camera facing southwest.
4. Girls' 4-H building (Map #6), camera facing west.
5. Looking through The Grove (Map #10) to amphitheater, camera facing southeast.
6. Looking south along amphitheater (Map #16) and Midway Pavilion (Map #11), camera facing east.
7. Amphitheater (1928, Map #16), camera facing northwest.
8. Race track (Map #20) looking towards amphitheater (Map #16), camera facing northwest.
9. West x-barn (1954, Map #23), camera facing west.
10. Sheds (Map #23), Baby Beef Barn (1934, Map #24), and draft horse barn (1915, Map #25), camera facing east.
11. Looking north along drive from near draft horse barn (Map #11), camera facing north.
12. Looking north along drive from near judging building (Map #29), camera facing north.
13. South section of fairgrounds, camera facing northeast.
14. Sheep barn (Map #32), bucket calves barn (Map #33), and swine pavilion (Map #36), camera facing north.
15. Swine pavilion (Map #36) and judging pavilion (Map #35), camera facing west
16. Swine pavilion (1918, Map #36), camera facing southwest.

West Liberty Fairgrounds Historic District
Name of Property

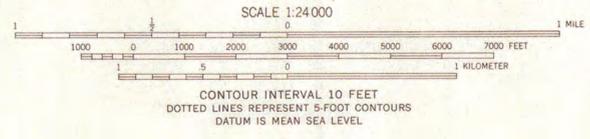
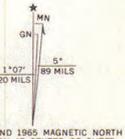
Muscatine County, Iowa
County and State



Photograph key (McCarley 2015)



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS and USC&GS
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial
photographs taken 1963. Field checked 1965
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Iowa coordinate system, south zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 15, shown in blue
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where
generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked



USGS
Historical File
Topographic Division

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Heavy-duty	Light-duty
Medium-duty	Unimproved dirt

U.S. Route State Route

QUADRANGLE LOCATION

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225 OR WASHINGTON, D.C. 20242
AND BY THE IOWA GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, IOWA CITY, IOWA 52240
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

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