

L.A. County Fair

Los Angeles Urban Rangers

Fair Exchange
Millard Sheets Gallery
Pomona, California
September 8 - October 1, 2006

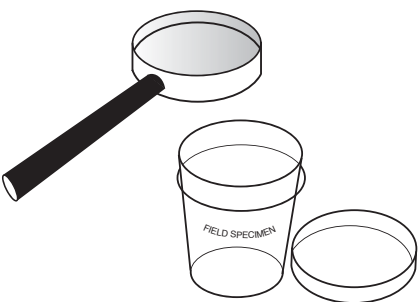
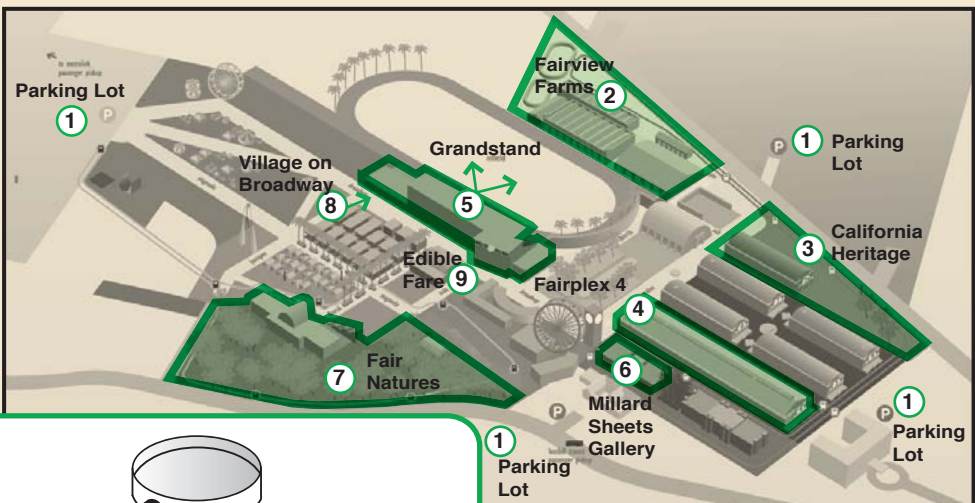


FAIR-GROUNDING: A SELF-GUIDED TOUR OF THE L.A. COUNTY FAIR

Welcome to the L.A. County Fair, a haven of lively farm animals, deep-fried delicacies, carnival rides, and hard-earned blue ribbons! This map and guide, produced by the Los Angeles Urban Rangers for the exhibition *Fair Exchange*, investigates the Fair as a found ecology, urban microcosm, and regional representation.

We encourage you to become an active Fair explorer – to closely observe the stories the L.A. County Fair constructs about regional culture and nature; to create your own thematic tours (e.g. geography of waste, corporate sponsorship, or bugs at the Fair); and to collect field samples that function as one-of-a-kind (anti-) souvenirs.

Also, please join the Los Angeles Urban Rangers for weekly ranger-led hikes, departing from the Millard Sheets Gallery each Sunday at noon (September 17, 24, and October 1).



Recommended tools for your Fair expedition include a map, binoculars, camera, field notebook, magnifying glass, and specimen containers.

1. PARKING LOT

Did you arrive by car today? Paved parking lots, a familiar fixture of L.A.'s topography, cover 238 of the Fair's 543 acres, and accommodate more than 30,000 cars. That's more cars than all the cows, pigs, sheep, chickens, horses and ponies combined in L.A. County! Here, one transitions from an automotive to pedestrian mode, encountering the dense crowds that characterize much of the Fair experience. Notice your sense of scale, speed, and ambient temperature as you exit the car, as well as how the parking lot is coded for navigation and social interaction. (Note: In the off-season, the L.A. County sheriff's department uses the main parking lot to practice high-speed driving.)



5. GRANDSTAND

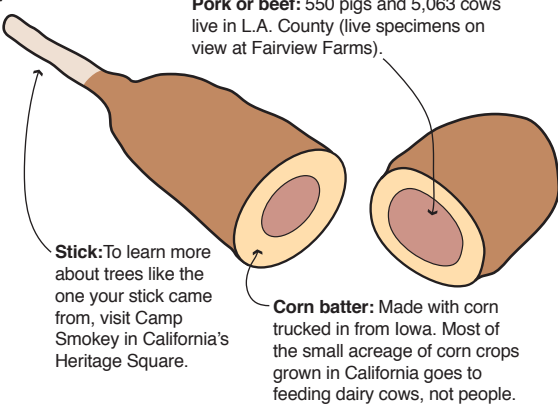
The vista from atop the Grandstand locates the fairgrounds at the heart of a geologic, transportation, and cultural crossroads. Looking northeast at both the San Gabriel and San Bernardino mountain ranges, you can make out the Cajon Pass that runs between them. This pass is also the path of the San Andreas Fault, the route that Mormon settlers followed on their way to founding the town of San Bernardino, and the modern-day rail and shipping trail from L.A. to points north and east. Can you see any mountains from your home in L.A. County? To what extent do topographic features help you to orient yourself in the city? See L.A. County map on reverse.



6. MILLARD SHEETS GALLERY

Since the Fair's inception in 1922, the "fine arts" have been a celebrated attraction. In 1937, the Works Progress Administration built this gallery. Controversies raged in the middle 20th century over whether modern abstract art should be displayed here, as critics questioned its skill and taste. While in the past, juried competitions determined which artworks graced the gallery's walls, this year curator Irene Tsatsos has invited contemporary L.A. artists to take on the subject of the Fair itself. As you move through the exhibit, consider if and how you view art differently than other attractions at the Fair.

Geography of a Corn Dog



L.A. is America's #2 hot dog consuming city, second to New York. (National Hot Dog & Sausage Council)



7. FAIR NATURES

A myriad of landscapes abound at the L.A. County Fair. Discover expansive deserts at the Moroccan-themed Flower and Garden Pavilion, bonsai topiary at the historic Fairplex Garden Railroad, a mini-wilderness at Camp Smokey, a court of redwoods behind the Millard Sheets Gallery, and scaped table settings at the Village on Broadway. How do these designed natures, both "wild" and ornamental, offer insights into the natural world? Which trees, birds, and bugs can you identify at the Fair?



The amateur work has finally been separated from the professional and given exhibition quarters under the grandstand. [...] Many of the exhibits are by women's club groups and the high quality of work is a fine indication of their intelligent interest in the crafts. – L.A. Times (1933)

8. VILLAGE on BROADWAY

The domestic habitat humans occupy, design, and perfect is on display in this feminized home-arts space. Eating surfaces become tablescapes, baked goods fermented ecologies, Christmas trees bejeweled. This year, *Fair Exchange* artworks are thrown into the mix (e.g. the Institute for Figuring's crochet models of hyperbolic space, Daniel Marlos's What's that Bug? quilt, Lisa Anne Auerbach's radical sweaters). Meanwhile, amateur contestants battle fiercely in such events as the Mother/Daughter Look-Alike Contest and Great American SPAM Competition. To learn about this building's military past, see timeline on reverse.

9. EDIBLE FARE

Prize-winning eggplants, cabbages, and other homegrown fruits and vegetables are not the only food at the Fair. Australian battered crocodile potatoes, ice-cold beer, Pink's chidogs, and deep-fried Twinkies are among the Fair's 3,000 culinary delights. Many come on a stick and are ready for the trail (e.g. pork chop on a stick, cream puff on a stick, egg roll on a stick). Before sinking in your teeth, ask of your edible: from what part of the world does its recipe originate? How many ingredients are locally produced and/or can be found on site? Keep your eyes open for artist Fritz Haeg's *Edible Estates* kiosks throughout the Fair, which provide information on how to grow your own edible garden in Southern California.



2. FAIRVIEW FARMS

The arguable epicenter of any county fair, the farm animal display offers a feast for the senses: Bask in the pungent aromas of fresh-tilled earth and beastly sweat, test your hand at the udder, indulge in freshly produced cow-to-cone ice cream, witness a live birth or mammalian oddities including exotic zebra hybrids and a 36" tall miniature Mediterranean donkey dwarfed by its 900-pound cousin. Cheer on your favorite sheep, chicken, or other Kountry Kritter in one of the regularly scheduled animal skillathons. What connections can be drawn between the farm animals here and other parts of the Fair (e.g. wool for knitting, eggs for baking, manure as fertilizer)? How do we view, smell, and touch these creatures differently from other "wildlife" in Los Angeles? To learn more about agriculture in L.A. County, see reverse side.

3. CALIFORNIA HERITAGE

Reminiscent of Disneyland or Universal Studios, California "heritage" here takes the form of a set. Costumed characters re-enact historical events while fair-goers have the chance to pan for gold, build adobe bricks, visit a Western trading post, and witness traditional blacksmithing. What stories about California are cast here? If you were to design a square dedicated to L.A. County culture, what would you include? (Note: Movies filmed at the fairgrounds include *The Grifters*, *Seabiscuit*, and *Pee Wee's Big Adventure*.)

4. FAIRPLEX 4

This vast and spare-looking hall hosts the Stars of the Peking Acrobats during the Fair and naturalization ceremonies for new U.S. citizens the rest of the year. For more on the glitzy "Palace of Agriculture" that formerly occupied this site, see timeline on reverse.

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“County Fairs in some instances may be ‘hick,’ but not ours. Its directors have a true concept of culture, whether culture of pumpkins, horseflesh, or the so-called ‘higher’ arts.” – Arthur Millier, art critic, Los Angeles Times (1937)

Evolution of the L.A. County Fair



1922
The first L.A. County Fair is dedicated to promoting “the agricultural, horticultural, and animal husbandry interests of the great Southwest.” Ground is broken for a 4,000-seat grandstand with half-mile racetrack. This same year, A.W. Ross establishes Wilshire Boulevard as a shopping district, the Port of Los Angeles is selected as the base of the U.S. Navy Pacific Fleet, the Rose Bowl is completed, and the Hollywood Bowl opens.

1931
The “Palace of Agriculture” is built and heralded as the largest exhibition building in the world, seating 16,000 people. Its lavish interior includes more than 100 chandeliers, 10,000 electric globes for illumination, 11 miles of Japanese crepe, and 5,000 feet of murals depicting Venetian canal scenes. This structure burns in 1941, but is rebuilt by the late 1940s as modern-day Fairplex 4.



1942-47
The L.A. County Fair is suspended as a result of World War II. The fairgrounds are used in the war effort: the U.S. Army sets up camp in the Home Arts Building and creates a desert training center, a community of 5,428 Japanese-Americans are housed in 420 pre-fabricated temporary buildings before being relocated to other parts of the country, and German and Italian POWs are briefly held onsite.

1959
A 400-foot-long subterranean corridor is built connecting the fairgrounds and main parking lot.

1996
A 90-foot-high electronic sign is erected on San Bernardino Freeway, for Fairplex informational and promotional purposes.



2005
The population of L.A. County is 9,935,475 in 2005, as opposed to 935,455 when the Fair began in 1922.

L.A. County Ethnicity:
46% Hispanic/Latino
30% White
13% Asian
10% Black
1% Other

1924
The Home Arts Building, for “women’s activities,” is built.



1937-38
The Works Progress Administration (WPA) constructs several permanent Art Deco-style buildings to replace formerly used circus tents.



Miss Marilyn Huber, 1938 Queen of the Fair

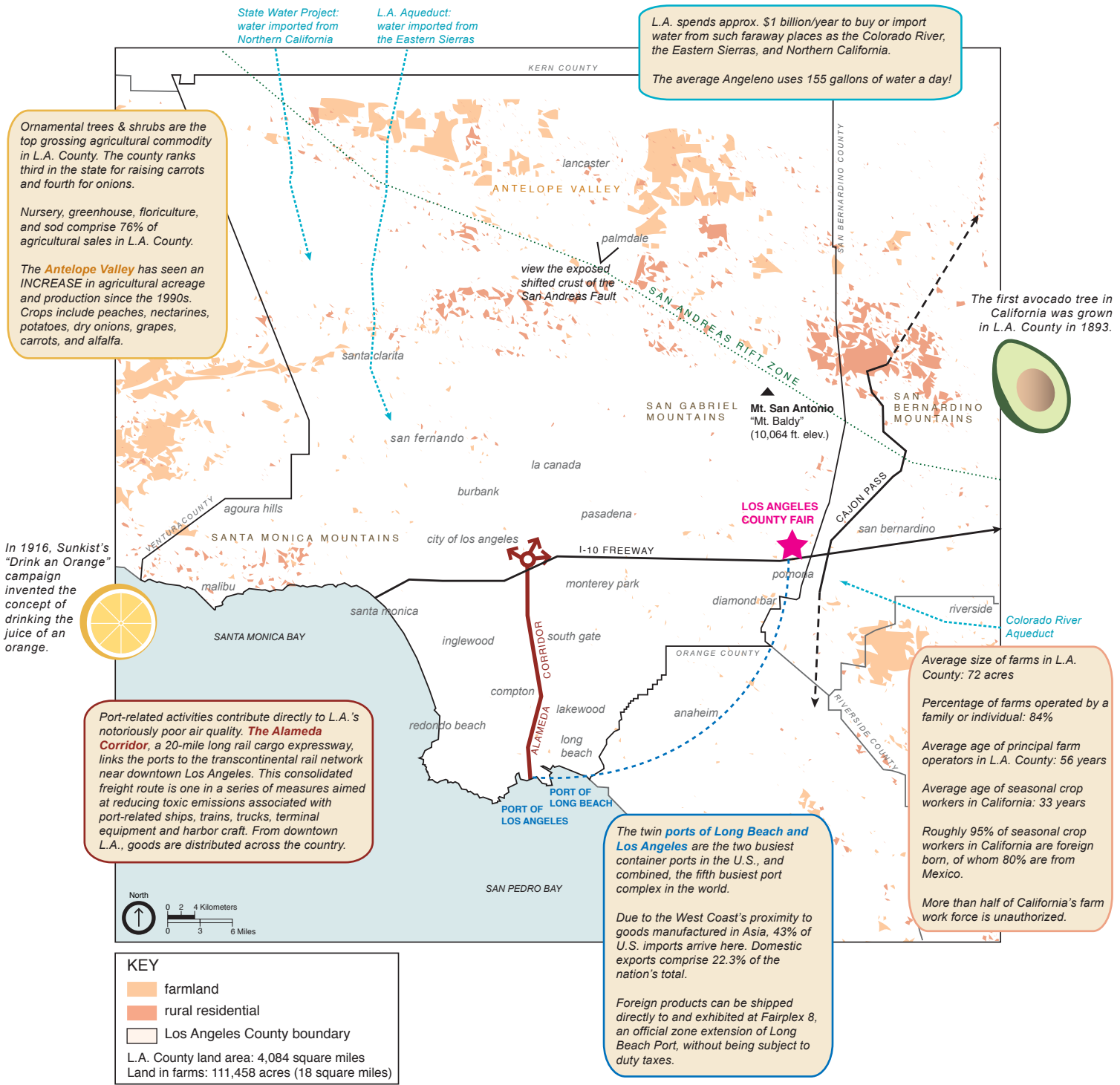
1921
The City of Pomona purchases a 43-acre beet and barley field owned by Pomona pioneer Ricardo Vejar in anticipation of a large merchant exhibition.

1999
Naturalization ceremonies begin taking place in Fairplex 4.

Top Ten Countries of Legal Immigrant Admissions to the area:
1. Mexico
2. Vietnam
3. Philippines
4. China
5. El Salvador
6. Soviet Union
7. Korea
8. Iran
9. Guatemala
10. India

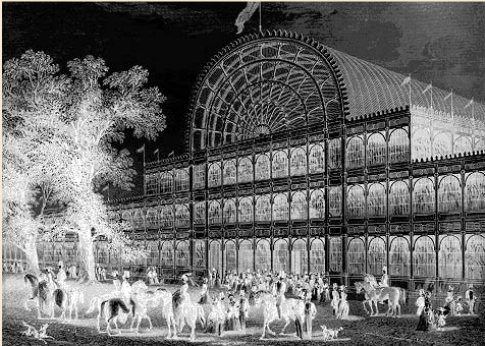
2001
The Fair closes on September 11th, for one day only, for the first time since World War II.

An Agricultural Portrait of L.A. County



For centuries, fairs have been social gatherings for the display and trade of goods as well as general merry-making and debauchery. Often occurring at dedicated fairgrounds and on an annual cycle – for instance during a holiday or harvest season – they are sister to flea markets, agricultural shows, trade shows, carnivals, festivals, and other such spectacles. Since the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, for which a temporary neo-classical “White City” was constructed and the world’s first Ferris wheel was unveiled (designed to rival the Eiffel Tower in Paris), “amusement” has been a key ingredient. London’s Great Exhibition of 1851, held at the sparkling new Crystal Palace, was also an important precedent, showcasing the latest and greatest in industry, but also Victorian England’s not-so-subtle sense of national superiority. American county fairs – known for their amateur competitions and display of traditional crafts, produce, and industry – are arguably provincial in nature by comparison.

Notice, however, as you explore the L.A. County Fair, which parts emphasize quality craftsmanship versus technological progress and/or regional, ethnic, and national pride.



above: View of the Crystal Palace in London, 1851.
at left: Aerial view of L.A. County Fairplex, present day.

Credits
We would like to thank Irene Tsatsos, curator, and Dan Danzig, director Millard Sheets Gallery, for their generous support in making this project possible.
Map & Brochure: Therese Kelly & Emily Scott
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Believe it or not, the L.A. County Fair, drawing 1.3 million people annually, is the largest county fair in North America! Like L.A. County itself, the scale of the fairgrounds is staggering. Its 350,000 square feet of indoor exhibition space, for instance, exceeds that of the Getty Center, Museum of Contemporary Art, and Los Angeles County Museum of Art combined! During the off-season, the site is continually transformed via a series of colorful expos (e.g. featuring bridal gowns, monster cars, swimming pools, reptiles, exotic birds, tattoos and body art).