

Oregon Historic Site Record

LOCATION AND PROPERTY NAME			
address:	2330 17th St NE Salem, Marion County	historic name:	Oregon State Fairgrounds/Grandstand
assoc addresses:		current/other names:	
location descr:		block/lot/tax lot:	
		twnsHP/rng/sect/qtr sect:	07S 03W 14
PROPERTY CHARACTERISTICS			
resource type:	Site	height (stories):	3.0
elig evaluation:	demolished	total elig resources:	
prim constr date:	1929	NR Status:	
	second date:	date indiv listed:	
primary orig use:	Fair	orig use comments:	
second orig use:		prim style comments:	
primary style:	Spanish Revival	sec style comments:	
secondary style:		siding comments:	
primary siding:	Stucco	architect:	
secondary siding:		builder:	Prison Inmate Labor
plan type:			
comments/notes:			
Has been demolished.			
GROUPINGS / ASSOCIATIONS			
Survey/Grouping Included In:	Type of Grouping	Date Listed	Date Compiled
Salem Inventory Update RLS 2009	Survey & Inventory Project		2009
SHPO INFORMATION FOR THIS PROPERTY			
NR date listed:	N/A	106 Project(s):	None
ILS survey date:		Special Assess Project(s):	None
RLS survey date:	07/13/2009	Federal Tax Project(s):	None
ARCHITECTURAL / PROPERTY DESCRIPTION			
<i>(Includes expanded description of the building/property, setting, significant landscape features, outbuildings and alterations)</i>			
Refer to scanned documents links.			
HISTORY			
<i>(Chronological, descriptive history of the property from its construction through at least the historic period - preferably to the present)</i>			
<p>Oregon's State Fair was the product of modest beginnings in the form of County Agricultural Societies and County Fairs beginning in 1853 with the formation of the Yamhill Agricultural Society. Other Willamette Valley communities soon followed suit with Marion County establishing their Agricultural Society the following year in 1854. These groups held small fairs to exhibit livestock, produce, and enjoy horse racing. The first State Fair was held in 1860 in Oregon City in September for four days; J. Quinn Thornton gave the opening address. At that time the Oregon Fruit Growers were invited to join with the Oregon State Agricultural Society, which they did. There were nine classes of exhibits including sheep, swine, and poultry, plowing implements and machinery, and domestic manufacturers. Equestrian events played an important role with prizes given to men and women for "equestrianism" in horse racing, trotting, and running. There were 142 exhibitors and 268 premiums given. The next fair was scheduled for Salem; an eight-acre site was chosen and the date set for September 30 for four days. John Minto contributed \$1,200 for a board fence to enclose the grounds; it marked the beginning of his long involvement with the Oregon State Fair. The fair was sponsored by the Oregon State Agricultural Society and while not particularly successful financially, participants were enthusiastic and the events well-received. The fairgrounds gradually grew with the addition of 80 acres in 1864, five and 1/2 acres in 1865, and another 70 and 1/2 acres in 1870. The Salem Race Course, built in 1859, at a cost of \$3,500 and located four miles north of Salem, was used for horse racing. Beginning in the 1860s and lasting well into the 20th century, the State Fair grew to be an annual week-long outing for many families who came in wagons and later mechanized vehicles, and camped near the fairgrounds for participation in the fair and a welcome social event. In 1867 campers numbered about 3,000; in 1900 there were about 1,000. During the early days of the fair, size was the main criteria for judging animals. By the 1880s purebred animals began to appear, for instance Percheron and Clydesdale horses were great favorites. Another Salem resident active in fair activities for many years was John Gulliver West, a horseman and grandfather of Governor Oswald West. In 1885 the State finally assumed financial backing of the fair. A new race track, Long Oak Track, a fine one-mile loop was completed at the Fairgrounds in 1893. This was financed by an \$11,000 appropriation from the State and allowed other improvements to the grounds including renovation of some of the buildings and pavilions. Besides the agricultural events, there were musical entertainments, circuses, and in 1895 a bicycle race for the first time. In 1905 no State Fair was held out of deference to the Lewis and Clark Exposition being celebrated in Portland. The Fair did continue throughout the World War I years; with the increased ease of transportation, the Fair began to draw a more statewide participation rather than just the Willamette Valley residents who formerly had been the major participants. In 1921 the State Fair Grounds were annexed to the City of Salem; attendance that year was 132,330. Additional buildings and pavilions were added gradually as attendance and exhibits grew. In 1933 pari-mutuel wagering was allowed for the first time; the same year the admission fee was lowered from 50 cents to 25 cents. Attendance grew to 180,000 in 1934 and there were many improvements made to the grounds; a new one and 3/8 mile racetrack was built, a new restaurant was added, and an Indian Village was featured for the first time with a Snohomish tribe from Washington in attendance. Lumber and dairy interests were also stressed. In 1937 games of chance were prohibited. The yearly feature was the largest sportsmans show sponsored by the State Game Commission and the U. S. Biological Commission showing game birds and fish from the Malheur Lake Reserve. Attendance was 100,000. Livestock continued to be a major attraction at the fair and in 1939 a stock barn large enough to hold 5,000 animals was constructed along with a goat barn and a new restaurant. The Oregon State Fair suspended operations during World War II, resuming activities again at the end of the war.</p>			
RESEARCH INFORMATION			
Title Records	Census Records	Property Tax Records	Local Histories
Sanborn Maps	Biographical Sources	SHPO Files	Interviews
Obituaries	Newspapers	State Archives	Historic Photographs
City Directories	Building Permits	State Library	
Local Library:		University Library:	
Historical Society:		Other Respository:	

Bibliography:

City of Salem Context Statement, 1992; interview, Frank Thompson, State Fairgrounds facilities manager, 5/17/94