

Teacher's Guide to

THE LONG ISLAND FAIR

Grades 4-12

OBJECTIVE

To get the most out of your class visit to the Long Island Fair and Old Bethpage Village Restoration, we urge you to prepare your class by reviewing the information in this Guide and implementing some of the ideas. Decide on one or two main objectives for your class and gear your visit toward achieving those goals.

Example Objectives:

To compare 19th century county fairs with today's fairs and identify 5 differences between them. To understand and explain why the fair, as the principal event of the year, was important to early Long Island communities.

Also, please be sure to read the sheet titled "Procedures for School Groups" for information on arrival procedures, fees, lunches, etc.

HISTORY OF THE LONG ISLAND FAIR

THE EARLY YEARS

Fairs have been a traditional part of American life from the time of the colonists in the late 1600's. The county fair was generally held in the fall, around harvest time, so local farmers could exhibit their produce and livestock and compete with other farmers for prizes (premiums). In 1842 the Queens County Agricultural Society sponsored their first fair, which was held in Hempstead under tents. During the next 23 years this annual event took place in Hempstead, Flushing, Jamaica and Newtown.

These early fairs were held in tents, and while they were a great success, it was decided that a permanent home was necessary. In 1866 the Town of Hempstead gave 40 acres of land to be used for the "permanent" fairgrounds. The area was south of Old Country Road in Mineola (which today is the site of the Nassau County Court complex). Fencing and carriage sheds were built to surround the entire 40-acre fairgrounds, and several wood buildings were constructed making this the permanent site of the Mineola Fair for the next 85 years;

During the 1800's many farmers and their families would arrive in their farm wagons early in the morning and stay all day. The farmers were interested in viewing all the exhibits and new farm implements and possibly entering various competitions such as the spading or "ploughing" contest. Women were also eager to see the displays, such as the latest in cooking stoves or in food preservation, and to see who won the ribbons for the best pies, preserves, vegetables, flowers, needlework, etc.

The following is a list of exhibition classes from the 1899 fair:

Horses	Swine	Fruit	Farm Implements
Cattle	Poultry	Flowers	Carriages & Wagons
Sheep	Vegetables	Grains	Articles for the Table
Fine Arts			Domestic

To encourage children to attend, the 1878 Fair included the first school exhibition. Children, as well as adults, enjoyed the games, competitions and the exciting new inventions such as the wooden wheeled velocipedes (predecessor to the bicycle). In 1878 Thomas A. Edison demonstrated his new invention, the phonograph at the fair.

In 1899, when Nassau County was created from Queens County, Theodore Roosevelt, who was then governor of New York State delivered an address at the fair and attended a luncheon there. Various events such as dog shows, baseball, La Crosse, horse racing, and auto racing came and went according to their popularity.

THE FAIR EVOLVES

The Mineola Fair was held on the Old Country Road site from 1866 to 1952. But with the growing Nassau County Court complex, a new location was needed. In 1953 the Fair was moved to Roosevelt Raceway where it was combined with the L.I. Industrial Exposition. It was during the 1950's that the sponsoring Society changed its name to the Agricultural Society of Queens, Nassau and Suffolk Counties to better convey the areas it represented. Reflecting the changing times, the emphasis of the Fair during this period was on industry and commerce, with agriculture holding a much less important place. In 1961 the "Mineola Fair" officially became the "Long Island Fair".

By the end of the 1960's it was apparent that again a new location was needed, this time due to the conflict of the racing schedule with the Fair. In 1970 the Long Island Fair found its final home, here at Old Bethpage Village Restoration, and the spirit of today's Fair has returned to its original 1866 agricultural roots with some modern additions.

TODAY'S LONG ISLAND FAIR

What to see, what to do

At Old Bethpage Village Restoration we have re-created the original Mineola fairgrounds of the late 1800' s. Structures include: the large Exhibition Hall, which provides space for exhibiting the entries in the categories of domestic arts, horticulture and vegetables; the business office; "carriage sheds", which today we use for food vendors, and special displays; the actual Mineola Fair Superintendent's Office which was built in 1884;

CLASS PREPARATION

GENERAL

Since there is so much to see and do during your visit to the Fair, please read all the information enclosed with your reservation form (yes, there's lots to read) to help you plan the areas that you want your class to visit and the ways to prepare your class.

Please review the following with your class: arrival procedures, proper behavior, the theme of the fair, etc. Make sure children understand that this fair is a re-creation of the fairs from the later 1800's with some modern additions.

If your class is large it may help to divide them into groups of 10 to 15 children per group and assign one or more adult chaperones to each group. Students must be supervised the entire time they are here. Each group leader should get a map of the Village and a map of the Fairgrounds from the cashier on arrival.

SUGGESTED PRE-VISIT IDEAS

To make their trip educational as well as fun, students of all grades could have a specific assignment that they must work on while at the fair.

Prepare a list of questions that students must answer during or after their visit to the fair. They may find the answers by asking the staff on the fairgrounds and by looking at the L.I. Fair map and schedule. Questions can be simple or complex.

Ex.: Who sponsors the Long Island Fair? (*The Agricultural Society of Queens, Nassau & Suffolk Counties; Nassau County Department of Parks, Recreation & Museums*)

What colors are the 1st, 2nd and 3rd place ribbons? (*Blue, Red, White*)

What building on the fairgrounds is the only original surviving one from the Mineola Fair? (*Superintendent's Office*)

Which is your favorite display (vegetable fruit, hobby, etc.) and why?

Guess how much the heaviest pumpkin weighs, based on the other pumpkins on display.

On a map of Nassau County, locate the Nassau County Court complex; this was the old site of the Mineola Fair.

Make up a simple unlabeled map of the fairgrounds with a list of the following structures to be found on the fairgrounds: Exhibition Hall, Livestock Sheds, Carriage Sheds, Flagpole, Superintendent's Office, Business Office, Circus Tent, and Horse Stalls. During their visit the students try to match the name with the structure.

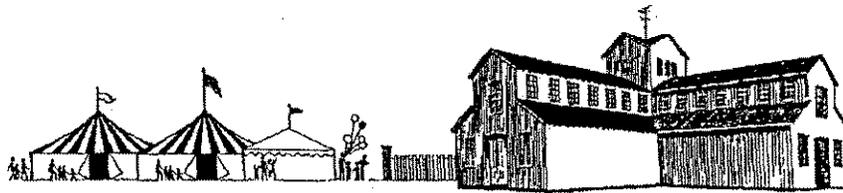
SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR REPORTS

For more ambitious classes or upper level grades, students can use the visit to research and report on specific subjects relating to the fair such as: The creation of Nassau County, Teddy Roosevelt, the Rough Riders and the Spanish-American War; history of the Long Island Fair and the importance of the county fairs to the people in the 1870's. Children and entertainment in the late 1800's; compare this Fair to other fairs the students may have visited-types of displays, rides, general theme. The loss of farms on Long Island; how Long Island has changed from an agricultural to industrial to technological based economy.

SEPTEMBER 16th SCHEDULE OF EVENTS*

TIME	EVENT	LOCATION (see Fair map)
10:00-1:30	Races for Children	Next to the Schenck House
TBD	<i>"The Magic of Amore"</i> (old time magician)	Fairgrounds Flagpole Stage
TBD	<i>The Flying Cortes Trapeze Spectacular</i>	Fairgrounds Center Ring
TBD	<i>"Circus Dubois"</i>	Fairgrounds Circus Tent
TBD	Rough Rider Demonstration	Next to the Schenck House
10:00 – 1:30	Traditional Music	Behind Noon Inn
10:00 – 1:30	Petting Zoo & Camel Ride	Fairgrounds Center Ring

*Schedule Subject to Change



www.lifair.org

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www.nassaucountyny.gov/parks

Nassau County Department of Parks, Recreation and Museums
 Bruce A. Blakeman, County Executive Darcy Belyea, Commissioner

