

A Bit of Fairplex History

Donald DeLano



October 17, 1922 – first Los Angeles County Fair

Put together by a group of Pomona businessmen, the city of Pomona secured 43 acres from a local beet grower, facilitated by the sale of \$23,000 in stock to local businessmen, \$15,000 in personal loans to additional businessmen, the County Board of Supervisors in Los Angeles reluctantly appropriated and additional \$10,000 to finish the deal. It was incorporated as the Los Angeles County Fair Association and the name 'L.A. County Fair' was registered.



Construction on cattle and livestock barns July, 1922

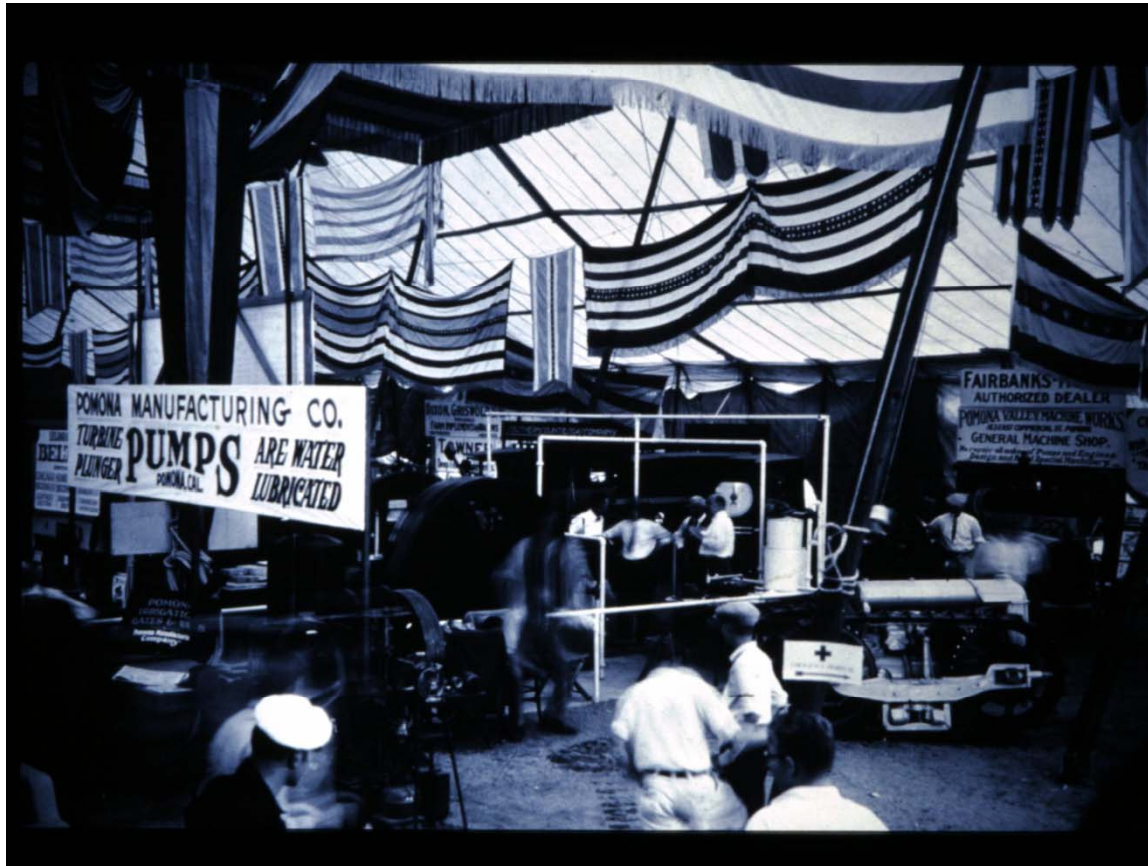


Used circus tents purchased to house agricultural and horticultural displays, August, 1922



Opening day, October 17, 1922

Inaugural L.A. County Fair ran for 5 days and was visited by 49, 461 paid attendees. At a cost of \$63,000 to build and run, all obligations were paid. Harness racing, chariot racing and airplane wing-walking were the major highlights. A small administration building and entrance arch were also constructed.



Inside one product tent of the 1922 fair



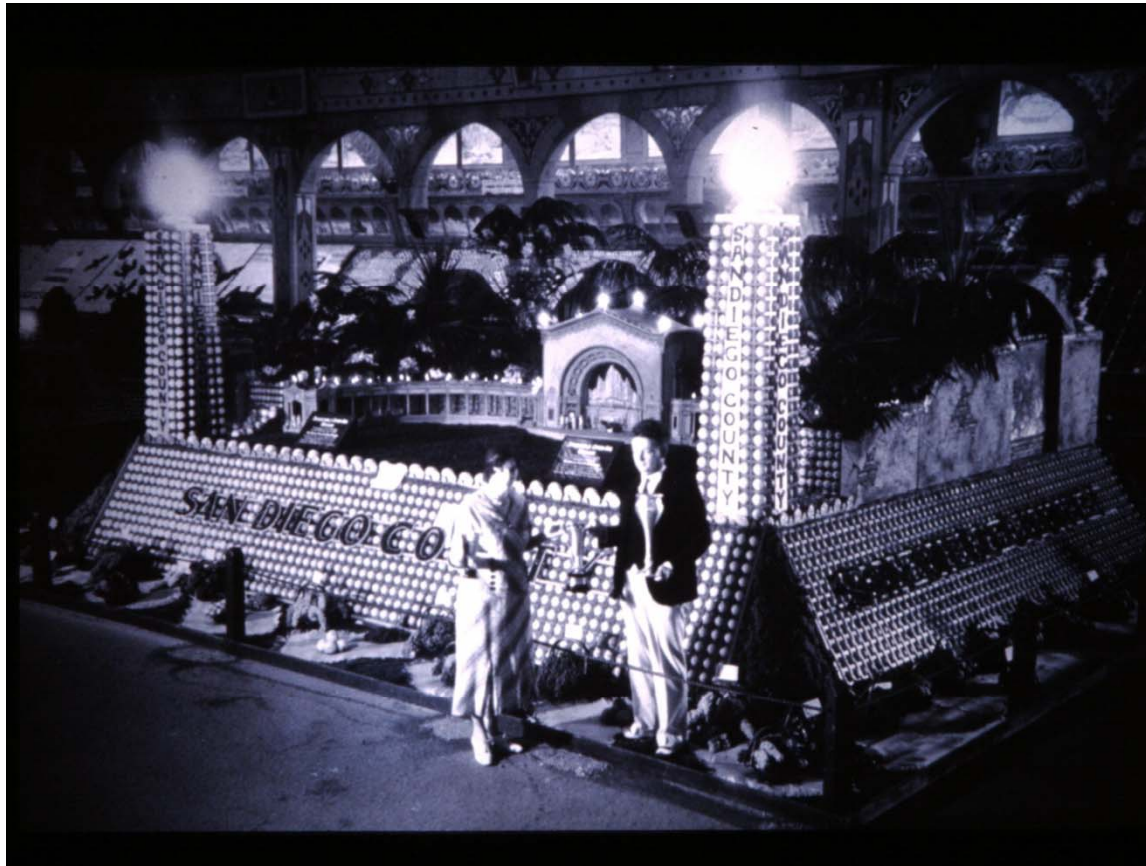
1925 opening of the Domestic Arts building

This photo was taken in 1930. In the early years, since the grounds was only used to host the fair, landscaping was a once a year project. There were a few year round maintenance employees, but landscape maintenance was started in June and ended in October.



1929 saw the fair crowned its first queen.

This photo, of the queen and her court, was taken on top of Picnic Hill in 1932 prior to the announcement of just 'who' was going to be queen.



1930 the 'Palace of Agriculture'

Billed as the 'largest exhibit building in the world' cost \$250,000 and measured 800' x 135', a stage at one end and seating for 16,000 people. Fair attendance topped 265,000.



1930-31 – Herbert Hoover created out of citrus fruit

This replica honoring President Herbert Hoover, was made entirely out of various types of citrus fruit. To obtain the odd color shades and hues, the fruit was wrapped in tissue paper. Due to the nature of the fruit, it was changed quite frequently. This is just one example of the numerous fruit murals produced over the years that showcased produce from the area.



1932 opening of the Grandstand

At a cost of \$204,000 and seating 12,500, it also contained the Household Arts exhibits below. All of the land, owned by the city of Pomona and the buildings, owned by the Fair Association, were deeded to the County of Los Angeles. This photo is from the late 1930's. 1933 saw the legalization of pari-mutuel wagering in California and the Fair meet became the first in Southern California to allow fans to gamble at the track.



1935, the lagoon area was added

This photograph estimated to have been taken in 1940. The new administration building just above the pond was finished in 1937.



1936 – the Arts and Crafts building was added

Currently used as Administration II. As the grounds expanded out, a few more basic maintenance staff were added, but it was still landscaping started in June and ended in October. Trees were topped as needed to limit growth.



2010 Administration II



1937 and 1938 saw a construction boom spurred by the government's Works Progress Administration, or WPA

4 more exhibit buildings, Anthony's at the Fair (now known as Avalon), the Fine Art's building and new administration building among other structures were completed.



**October 3, 1941 – the Agriculture Palace burned just 3
days after the close of Fair**

1940-41 The Los Angeles County Fair Corporation was reorganized as the Los Angeles County Fair Association at the suggestion of the WPA so there was no question regarding the Fair's operation on a strictly not-for-profit basis. Additional land and buildings were transferred to the County of Los Angeles. As visible, year round landscape pallet was limited to Cedrus, Cupressus, Citrus, Quercus and low maintenance shrubs. The beds of zinnias for color were just starting to be planted and visible just above the buildings below the track. Grass was Cynodon and maintained by mowing from July to October.



**1941 – 46 the fairgrounds was taken over by the U.S.
Army**

During these trying times, the fairgrounds was turned into a motor base, served as a Japanese-American internment camp, became home of the Pomona Ordnance Base and Command shop, was used as a desert training center for army recruits and as a German and Italian prisoner of war camp.



1947-1948 the Agricultural Palace was rebuilt

Many improvements were made to the grounds. More land was deeded to the County of Los Angeles in return for signing a 49-year lease for the Association's long-term uses and building boom of buildings, barns and other structures was undertaken.



1948 - the new Agricultural Palace

This photograph taken in 1952.



1948 – 'Thummer the Pig' welcomed as the Fair mascot

This display contained locally grown lemons, grapefruit and oranges and displayed a small model/replica of the valley highlighting various citrus groves and packing facilities.



January 1, 1949

Our first entry into Pasadena's 'Tournament of Roses' parade. It was taken on to advertise that the Los Angeles County Fair was back in business.



1950 – the fair was expanded out

Where the fun zone used to be, a 125' casting pool was created to anchor Sports Plaza. In the background, some of the extensive beds of Zinnia can be seen. Over the years, these beds would be started by direct seed sowing, using State Fair Zinnias, whose seed lines were somewhat founded here.



1953 – horse racing and carnival

This shot shows the permanent fun zone that was created farther out into the parking areas and featured the 'Sky ride' wheel, originally the Phoenix Wheel from Celoron Park, New York.



1952 – The Flower and Garden Building

Designed to showcase exotic flowers and plants, the central building created a fairytale of cut flowers, waterfalls and plants. The left garden area demonstrated up to date landscaping ideas in a tropical setting of flowing water, while the right garden area included vendors of all things green and growing.



**1952 – one of the Alpine displays presented in the
Floral Building**

This setup is typical of the floral and plant displays involving numerous waterfalls and fountains with backdrop props of various foreign lands that came to life inside the main building.



2009 Floral and Garden 'Trip to Africa'

Every year the floral theme visits another country. 2012 is Brazil. It is like building a multi-piece float in that everything is covered with flowers of plant material of some sort.



April 11-12, 1953 first sanctioned event

The Southern California Championship Drag Race was held by the National Hot Rod Association— 375 cars ran 850 runs.



1954 John Svenson carved 'The Ranchero'

This led to the development and dedication of the Court of the Redwoods This photograph is from 1972.

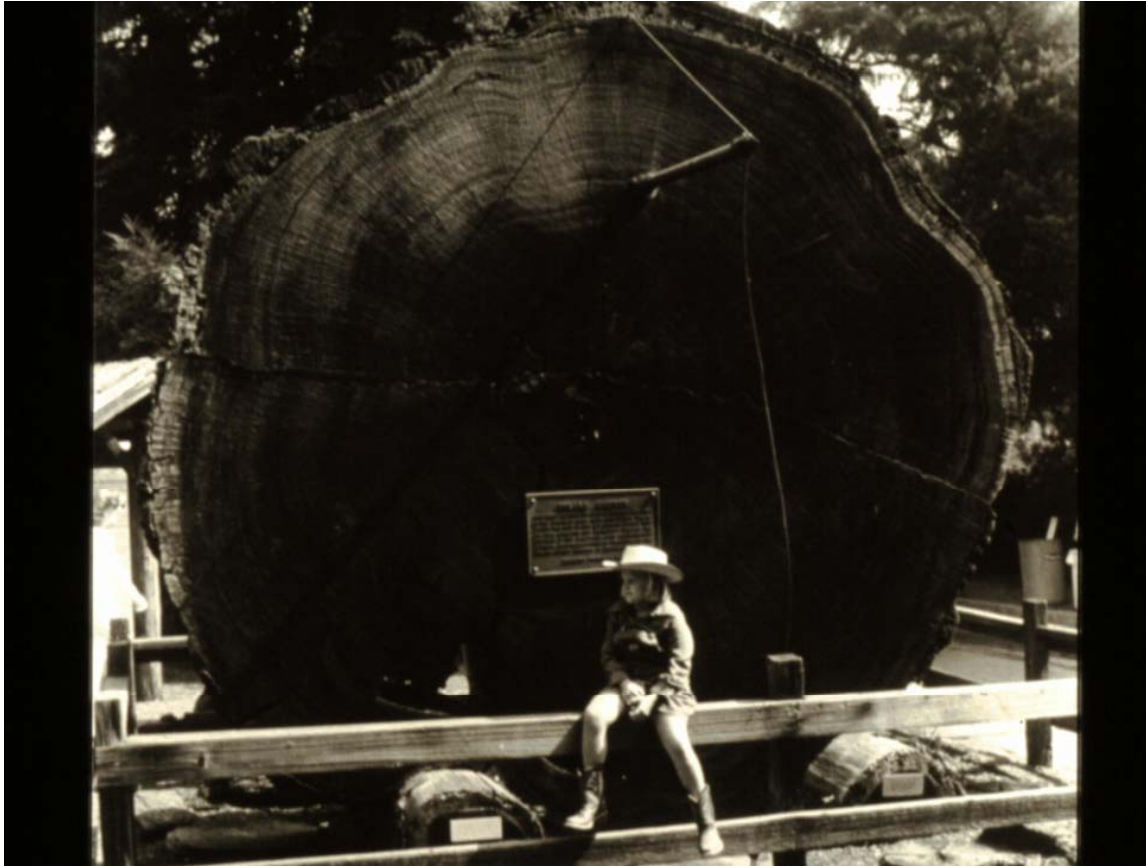


1954 Formation of the Railway and Locomotive Historical Society Southern California Chapter

Southern Pacific 5021 is the only remaining member of the 49 engines built between 1925 and 1927. 5021 remained in operation until 1955. Donated to the Railway and Locomotive Historical Society of Los Angeles, it is one of only four 3-cylinder steam locomotives known to exist.



As the grounds appeared in 1960



1961 – dedication of the Court of the Redwoods

Young coastal redwood trees were donated by Northern California counties, brought down to represent the various groves along the California coastline and planted in their new home.



1962 Mile-long Monorail

14 air conditioned automatic suspended cars seating 24 passengers made their way across much of the fairgrounds.



1962 Storybook Farm

Showing life and times on a farm from the mid-states Set in the 1910 time period complete with an old farm house, barn, root cellar and one room school house. In the 60's, there was a larger year round maintenance facility, but no separate landscape department. Trees were still topped as needed and most maintenance started in June and ended in October. The farm was planted in July, and the zinnia flower beds were direct sown late June.



1980 Child Development Center

Regarded as one of the top facilities of its kind in California. This photo shows its latest expansion in 2008.



1984 Agricultural Palace was remodeled

Reopened as Fairplex 4, its 105,000 square feet of column free exhibit space made it popular for year-round usage. It's success prompted a forthcoming major renovation of the grounds. Air conditioning helped. At this time, more effort was put into the year round maintenance of the grounds. A separate landscape crew of 4 was kept on staff year round, and some of the tree trimming was contracted out.



1985 $\frac{1}{2}$ mile track was expanded to $\frac{5}{8}$

Also of note for the Fair of 1985 - 177,612 people attended the fair on September 21, establishing a daily record that still stands.



1986 construction of the RV Park

Built with 185 RV sites with full hookups, additional Kamping Kabins and tent camp sites were added as the RV Park changed operation status to become a KOA campground affiliate in 1998. With the addition of the RV park, and an additional staff member was added to the landscape crew for mowing.



1989 \$27 million bond marked major renovations

Buildings 5,6,7,8 and adjacent landscaping and hardscaping were updated. Other areas of the grounds saw improvements over the next few years. All of the construction and landscape installation was contracted out. Fairplex decided to keep the crew responsible for the post 6 month landscape installation maintenance warranty and signed an annual contract with the company for grounds maintenance.

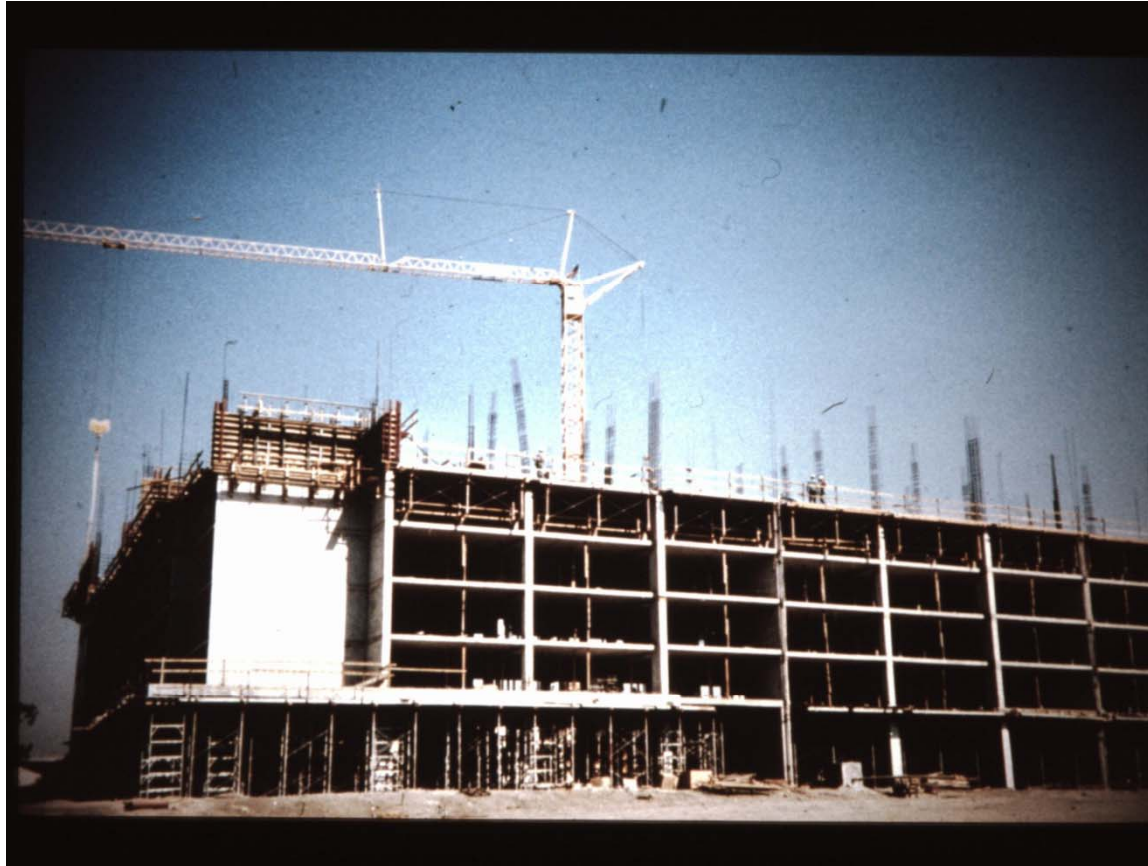


1990 Barretts Equine Sales Ltd.

Barretts Equine facility consisted of the Hinds Pavilion, nine new barns and associated facilities. In 2009, the facility was renovated into the present day Finish Line Sports Grill and satellite wagering destination. Auctions are still a major part of this facility.



2010 Inside Barretts Barns complex



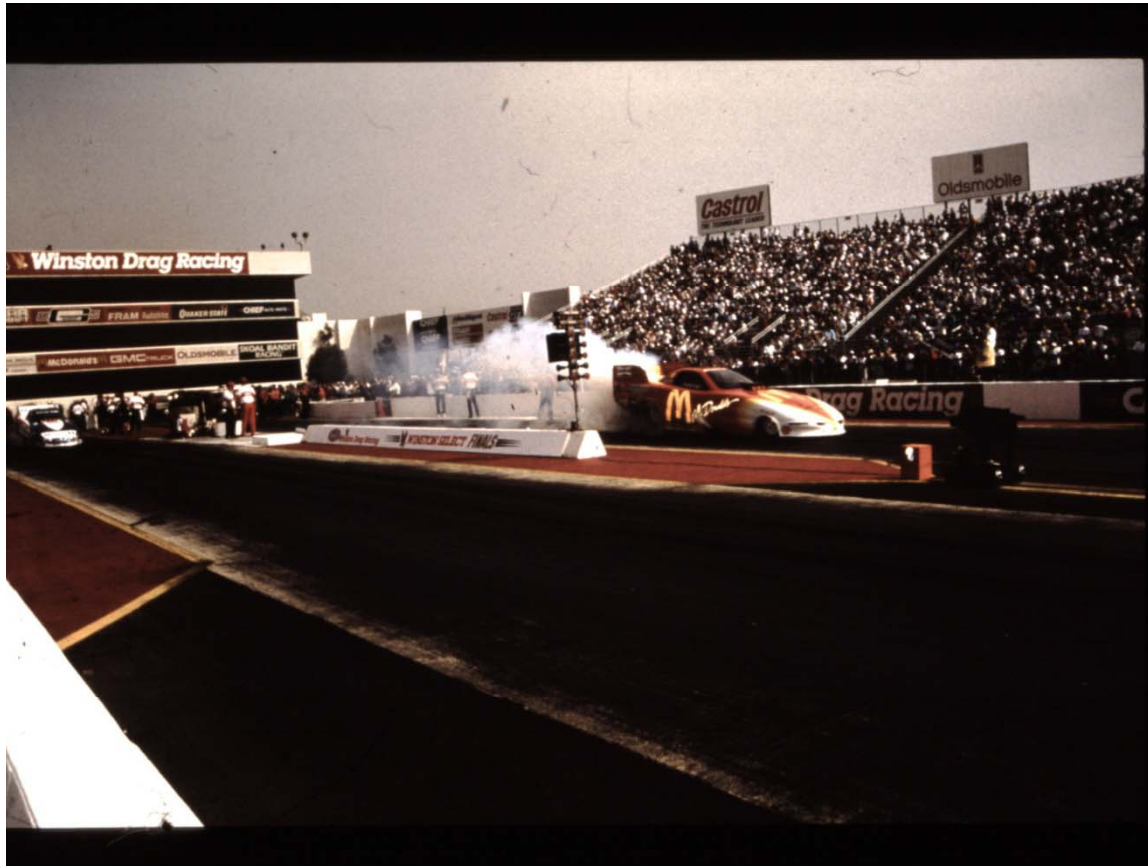
1991 Ground breaking Sheraton Suites Fairplex Hotel

1991 set the largest single-season fair attendance record of 1,612,097. At the end of 1991, the landscape company under contract for maintenance suffered financial difficulties and stopped paying employees. After 2 months of bounced checks, the employees brought this to Fairplex managements attention. This set off a chain of events that led to the development of the inhouse Horticulture Department in 1992.



1992 opening of the Sheraton Suites Fairplex Hotel

The Horticulture Department was set up as part of Facilities, with a Horticulturist and 10 year round laborers union employees. This crew expands in the early summer by 2, then an additional 6 union member in mid summer as we gear up for fair.



1993 NHRA The Tower Suites

\$4.5 million renovation was completed at the drag strip, adding new bleachers, sound walls and tower suites.



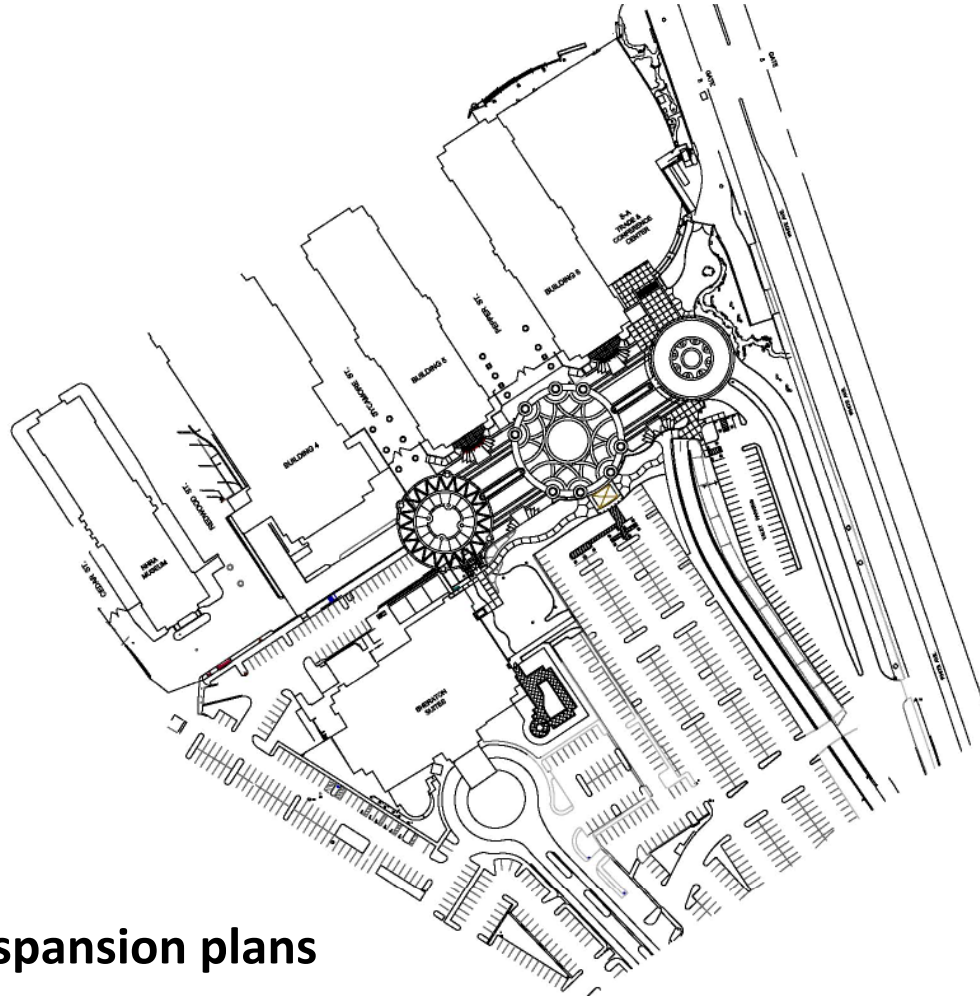
1993 Sky Ride

This portable attraction is now among 2 at the Fair which travel all over the west coast and somewhat east to various venues throughout the year. This required extensive modification to trees in the vicinity.



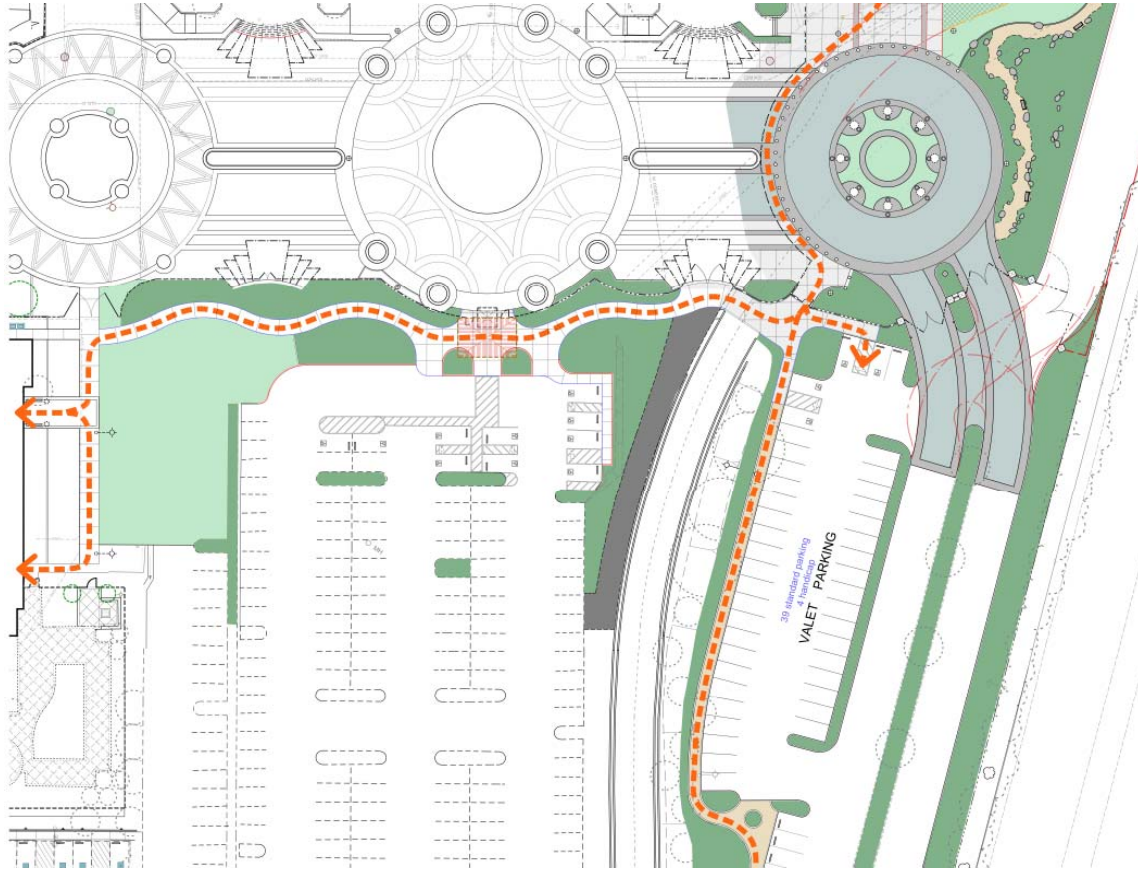
2010 Groundbreaking for the Conference Center

This photograph was taken on the second Saturday of the 2010 fair.



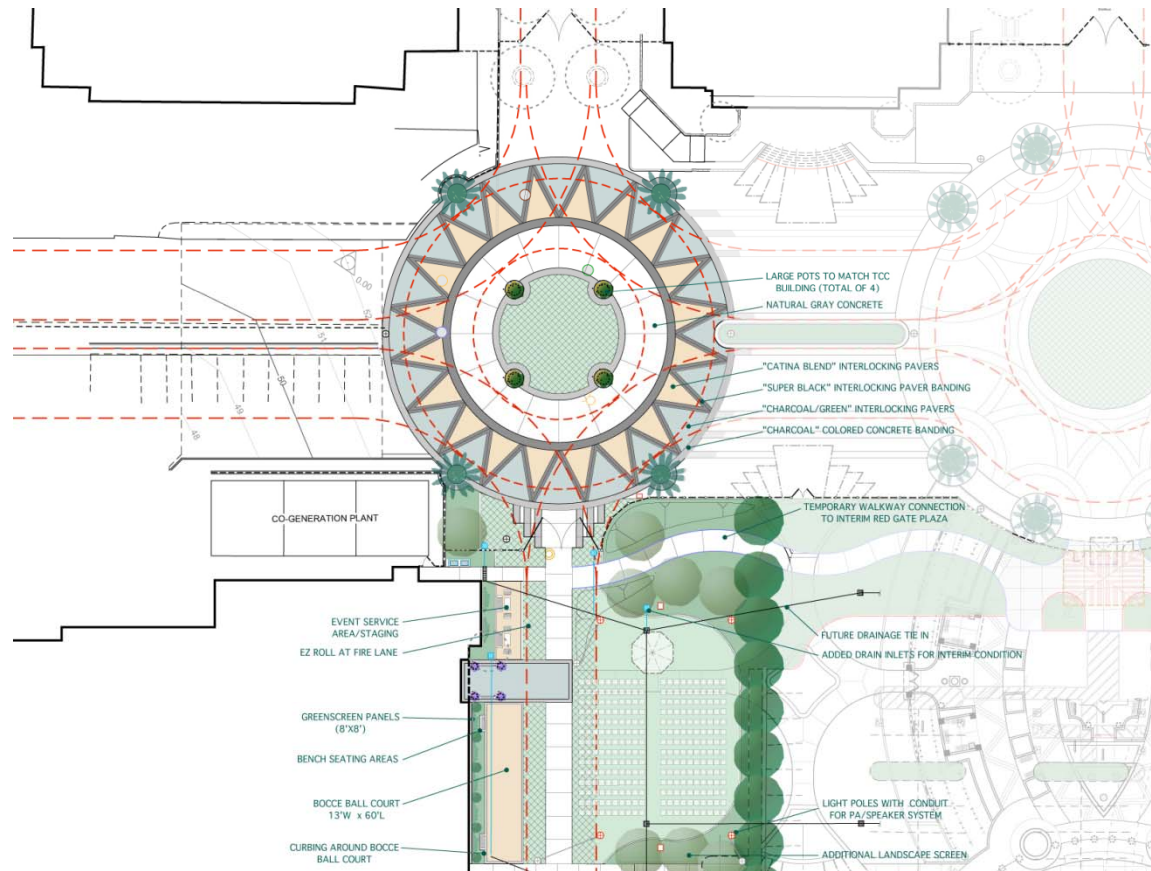
Expansion plans

Concept drawing connecting the Conference Center and the rest of the grounds with new plazas and walkways.



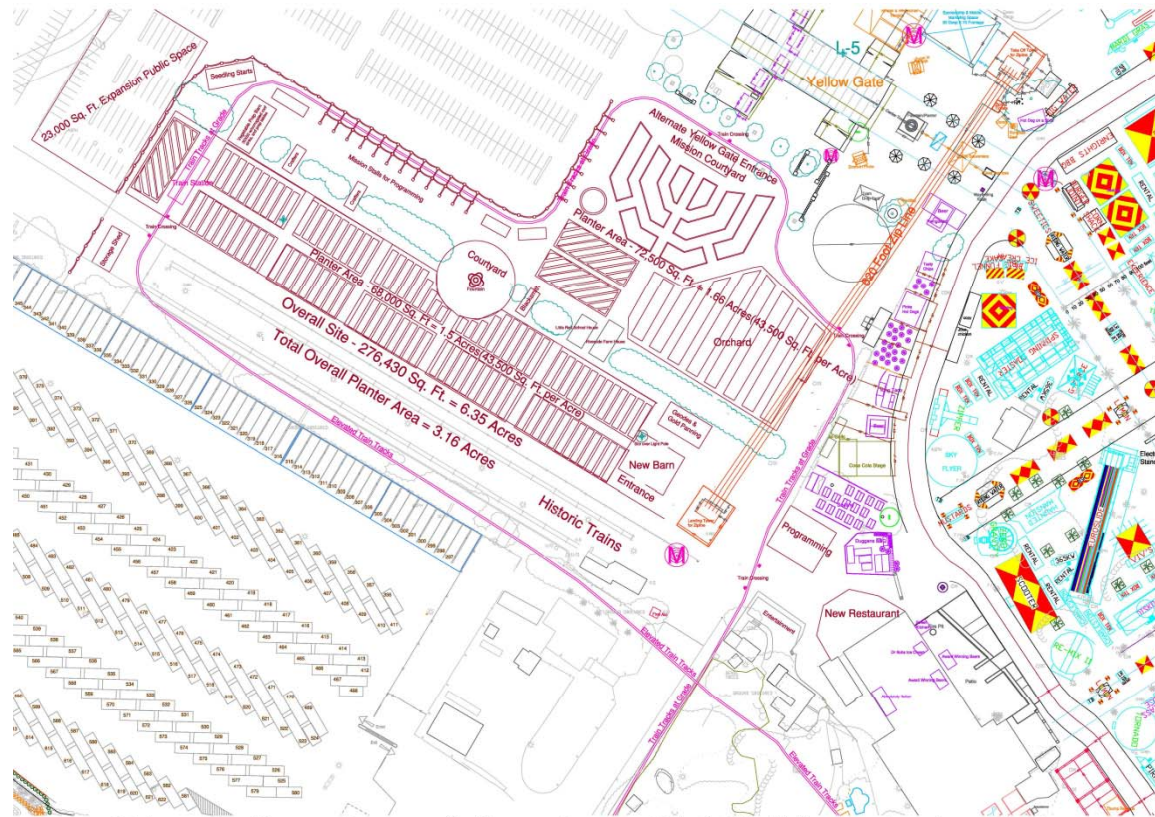
2011 Finalized plans

Close to as built drawings (in green) showing work carried out over 2011 and 2012. The next phases are still undergoing design changes.



2012 Wedding Garden

The Wedding Garden is almost completed, but some architectural changes are being contemplated for the above plaza.



Proposed New Heritage Square & Farm Area with 1.08 Mile Perimeter Train 12/

2013 Proposed New heritage square and Farm Area

After 4 years of work, we received a CDFA Specialty Crop Grant to focus on educating the public. It will be used to help build the new farm area and educate visitors on a year-round program combined with school activities. This is the latest concept sketch for groundbreaking estimated to be in March.

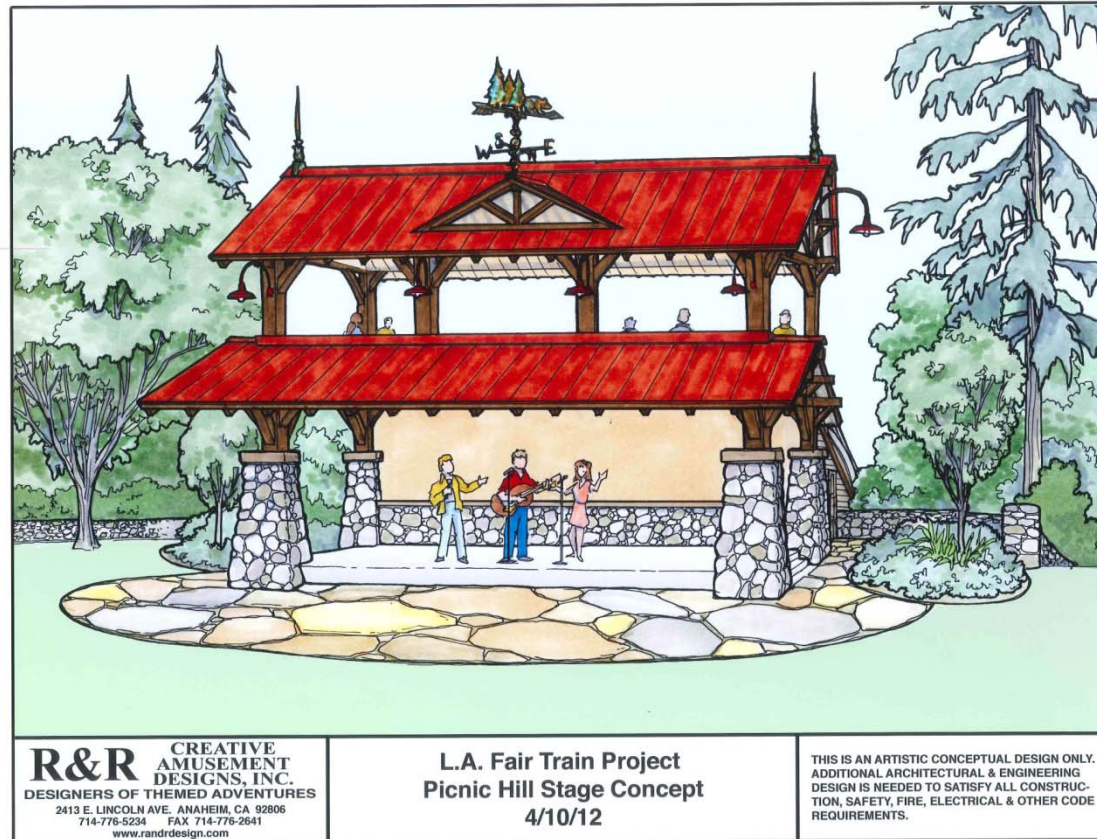


Concept plan 2012 for relocation of the Giant Slide



2012 Timber Mountain Slide

The original Giant Yellow Slide sponsored by Hot Dog on a Stick for many years in its new format.



Concept Plan for the Building of stage/slide combo



2012 – hill view of Timber Mountain Slide

Combination take of point for slide and lower stage and service room.
Still under construction for stage parts. Landscaping to follow.

Design Concept



Subject To
Without Notice
Michael Converse
November 15, 2006



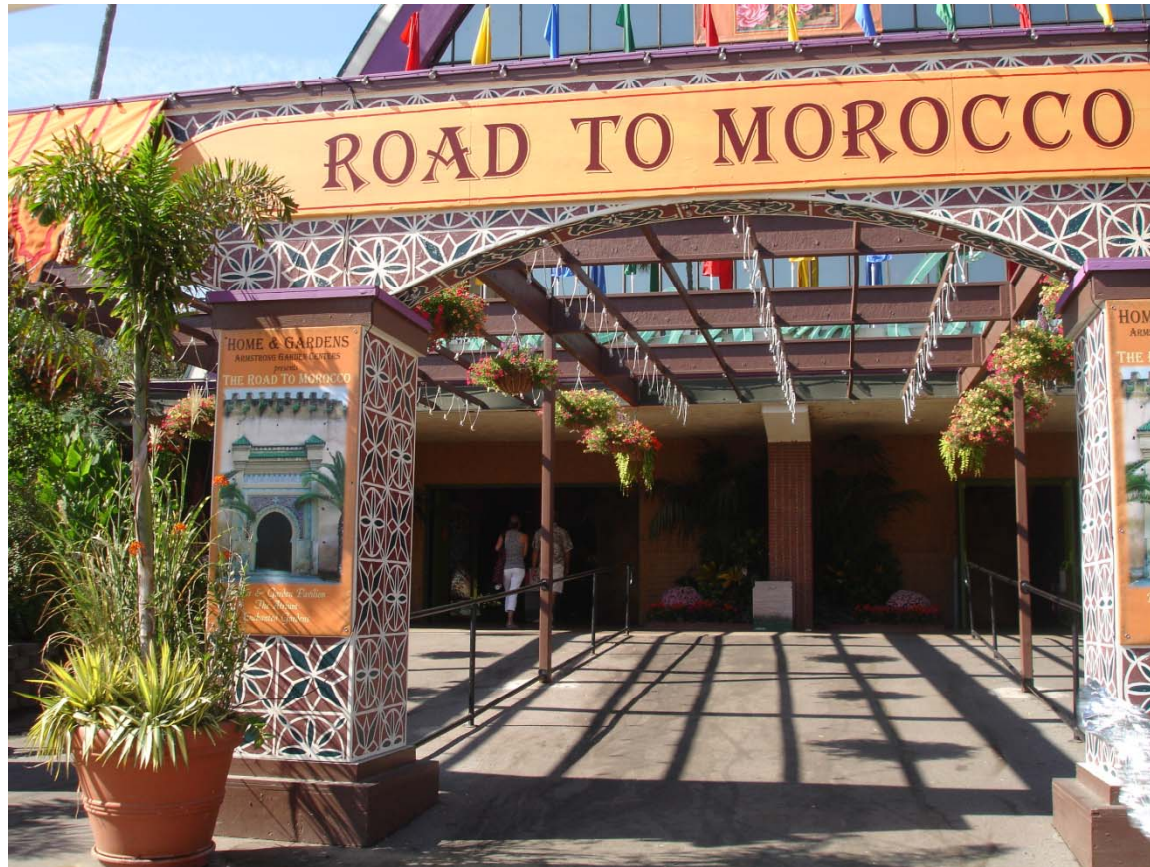
© 2006 L. A. County Fair Association

Concept for 2007 Flower Building Front Elevation

Design concept for 2007 Floral Bld



Waterfall building



Trip to Morocco in the Floral building



Waterfall in September



2010 Table to Farm Dinning

In conjunction with Executive Chef David Tieg and our International Wine and Spirits coordinator Mary Ellen Cole, year round production was started - foods are harvested and prepared on site as patrons became part of the dinner. This concept has proved quite popular, and diners paired with a program from a specific winery or distilled liquor producer designed to compliment the menu. Menu planning is usually 10-12 months in advance to allow growing time to produce the necessary crops.



One way to support grafted tomatoes

Due to confined space, there is not the necessary areas to rotate crops for best management, so disease resistant root stock is grown and grafted over to strains of heirloom tomatoes needed for the upcoming dinners.



Farm Strawberry towers

When you lack space, go up. We try to show novel ways to produce crops in limited space, as many home owners may find helpful.



First strawberry crop



Kiwi



Broccoli



Temporary plant installations

Due to the year-round use of the facilities, much done during fair-time is temporary. These planters were installed in 2 days and torn down over one night to make way for incoming events the week after fair.





Some temporary planting are less obvious







Centerpieces for a function at the Sheraton





Outdoor Chess

No pieces were stolen until the last week of fair. It was interesting watching parents have their younger kids take the place of a Bishop or Knight as they would play the game.





Interesting use of bunk bed parts



Fairplex houses a lot of portable plants

These are used at fair time, some grown 2 years in advance for specific attractions. They are also rented out to various shows and exhibitors over the year.













Keeping up with changes





Preparation of Conference Center site

Numerous mature pines., oaks, crape myrtles and Tabebuia were transplanted to other areas of the grounds or stored for future use.



Relocation of *Phoenix canariensis*

Most of the palms for the Conference Center and plaza development have been relocated from other areas of Fairplex.



Relocation of *Tabebuia impetiginosa*

Development of the Wedding Garden was based on the reuse of existing trees move for the building of the Conference Center. They had been stored on grounds for 3 years.



Vans Warped Tour attendance 26,000 over 10 hours



Paintball competition







Occasional fires started by vendors



Did not expect this

Hero-Rush show had participants walking across live coals for 12 hours.



Oops

Nice thing to happen a few days prior Fair opening.





Yes I can back up the horse trailer



Things I would rather not see in planters