

- **THIRD Location of the County Fair – Southwest Longmont, CO**

1976 – After endorsement from the Longmont City Council, Boulder County bought the present site of the county fairgrounds from the Golden and Fredstrom families June 21, 1976. It consisted of 129.71 acres and the county paid \$301,123 for the property.

Historically the farm was known as Affolter Corner, or Affolter Place, named for Frederick Affolter and his brother Jacob who joined the Pike’s Peak Gold Rush from Missouri to Colorado and ended up in Boulder County. Frederick paid \$1,100 for the land claim in 1865. The historic, faux stone Affolter house, that is now the Fairgrounds office, is the only building remaining from the Affolter era. It was historically used as the residence for a ‘hired man’ who helped care for the farm and livestock on the property. Phil R. Pennock bought the Affolter Corner Farm in 1940 to use as a dairy farm and after his retirement in 1962 sold the north acreage to Golden’s for gravel mining and south part to the Fredstrom family.

Additional parcels were purchased north to the St. Vrain River from 1984 through 1997. Boston Avenue through the property did not exist at the time but it now divides the fairgrounds land the County manages to the south and that which the City of Longmont manages to the north.

Both the Natural Resources Building (Boulder Valley and Longmont Conservation District’s) and the Longmont Humane Society (private non-profit) are located on the Fairgrounds property and are under long-term leases with Boulder County.

The Little Wranglers Rodeo was a popular part of the fair this year.

1977 – The iconic Great Western Sugar Factory in east Longmont closes in 1977 after 74 years of operation.

Ground breaking for the new fairgrounds takes place 10-18-1977. The original draft plan for the fairgrounds included the possibility of a St. Vrain Valley all-city football stadium with shared parking. That part of the plan was later discarded by the school district in favor of them continuing to use Roosevelt Park. The City, however, was more interested in turning the Roosevelt property into a neighborhood park.

1978 - The inaugural county fair at the 3rd site opened August 7, 1978 and ran for 12 days. The fairgrounds event and site were officially dedicated August 16, 1978. The first buildings consisted of the indoor and outdoor arenas, grandstands, livestock barns, and a rustic camping area for fair exhibitors. The exhibit building construction was not quite finished so the home economics, flowers, crops, garden and art division exhibits remained at Roosevelt Park until construction was complete. Buildings added in successive years included the Rural Resources

Building, Red Cross Building, an additional pole barn for rodeo horses near the outdoor arena, a maintenance shop and an upgraded campground in 1984. The development of the fairgrounds lake on the north end of the property was spearheaded by the County in 1987-88 and the adjacent Rogers Grove Park development was under City direction in 1995-97.

Jack Murphy was always proud that the initial fairgrounds facilities at this new site were paid for the day they opened to public use in 1978. The first phase of buildings cost \$1.9 million and included the outdoor arena bleachers that were purchased used from the old Denver Broncos Mile High Stadium for \$5.45/seat. The seating capacity of the new grandstands approached 7000 vs. the 3000-seat grandstand at Roosevelt Park. Estimates for the 10-year development plan for the fairgrounds site were \$8 million.

1983 – 300 professional cowboys and cowgirls were registered to compete in a 3-night rodeo event.

The 1983 fair was dedicated to Chuck Bliss, the long-time CSU Extension agent who worked tirelessly to promote agriculture, 4-H and the county fair. He retired in early 1984 after 30 years of service to Boulder County.

1984 – The Junior Chamber of Commerce sponsored the PRCA rodeo during the fair. Rumblings again in Longmont City Council about annexing the fairgrounds for potential sales tax revenue. The County Commissioners balk.

1986 - The JC's announce that due to lack of manpower to pull it off, they can no longer continue sponsoring the county fair rodeo as they have been since 1965.

1988 – The Old Timers Rodeo event begins at the fair. In 2001, 150 cowboys and cowgirls were registered to compete.

1990's –

1994 – 125th celebration of the Boulder County Fair has record attendance.

1995 – 65 Emu's on display at the fair. 1st year of mutton busting, 1st year of pig races, and Grand Champion steer brings \$3,900.

1996 – Pedal power tractor pull attracts over 100 youth. Public opinion poll shows animal exhibits most popular.

1997 – Unplanned exhibit as 4-H goat gives birth to triplets while at the fair.

1998 – Salsa and Chili judging entered. Fair Board disbanded and re-formed to correct tax status.

1999 – Question of alcohol sales debated. Ricky Skaggs bluegrass band performs concert in outdoor arena.

2000's -

The Boulder County Farmers Market is a relatively new addition to the fairgrounds and quite popular. Located along a midway in the north parking lot, it is open for business with local and regional vendors on Saturday mornings from April through November.

Since opening, the schedule for the county fair has varied from 4 days to 10 as interests of the community also varied. After a number of years with a short run, the 10-day celebration returned in 2013. Some events such as dancing and draft horse shows and the Yesteryear Farm Show have also come and gone as schedules, space needs and costs have evolved. The carnival continues in the lot north of the Exhibit Building as does the outdoor food concessions and commercial booths along the midway. At various times there have been individual admission fees, vehicle parking fees and no fees.

Boulder County owns the fairgrounds property, staffs and manages it through the County Parks & Open Space Department, and schedules numerous events throughout the year.

The County Fair Board, a non-profit organization, leases the fairgrounds from the county for only the duration of the fair. Since promoting youth development through 4-H and FFA programs is a county goal with the site, the county gives their shows and programs priority dates the remainder of the year with minimal to no costs for use of the facilities. Other non-profits and commercial events pay standard rates and fill the remainder of the calendar dates that are booked years in advance.

2017 - The 2017 County Fair attendance was estimated at 152,143.

To attend a county fair, eat the turkey legs, cotton candy and corn dogs, lick away at ice cream cones from the 4-H dairy bar, enjoy the Slurpee's and beer while dancing to live bands, buckle in on the carnival rides, try out some new toys, and observe the elation and heartbreak of the competition by the 4-H, FFA kids, and adults is an experience etched in the hearts and minds of fair goers nationwide. 150 years from those modest beginnings, the Boulder County Fair remains a gathering place for friends, young and old alike.

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(Researchers: Sara Porterfield and Rich Koopmann, 2-4-2019)