SPRINGFIELD, Ill. – Fairgoers have the opportunity to discover some State Fair history as they enjoy this year’s Illinois State Fair.

The Illinois State Fair Museum Foundation hopes to educate fairgoers about the history of the buildings and traditions of State Fairs past, through a walking tour. The foundation is a volunteer organization that works to preserve and promote awareness about the Illinois State Fair history.

“Fairgoers can learn about history of the buildings,” museum director Pam Gray said. “The general public doesn’t know that the state fair manager’s home located in the fairgrounds was a Sears’ catalog home. Most people don’t know that.”

Maps for the walking tour can be found at the fairground’s information booths. Along with the map, fairgoers will receive a card that they can punch at each of the six walking tour locations. Those who have smart-phones can also scan an area on the sign markers that takes them directly to websites for even more information. Once fairgoers have visited the six history spots, they can take their card to the U.S. Cellular booth in the Expo Building to claim a prize.

“The walking tour is good for kids and family, and they can get a free gift,” Gray said.

Fairgoers can visit the six history spots that include the Grandstand, Horse Barn #25, Kids Korner, the Artisans Building, Sears Bungalow across from Hobbies and Crafts Buildings, and the Women’s Building near the High Dive Show.

This is the first year for the walking tour. More history spots are expected to be added next year.

For more information on all that is happening during the 2011 Illinois State Fair, visit
2011 Illinois State Fair Attendance

Halfway through the ten-day Illinois State Fair, attendance is up 23 percent. According to fair management, 390,963 fairgoers passed through the gates the first five days of the fair, or 72,190 more than a year ago. The fair attributes the increase to pleasant temperatures and an appealing Grandstand entertainment line-up, including country superstar Jason Aldean’s concert that drew a record 15,329 fans to the fairgrounds last Sunday. A day-by-day breakdown of the attendance follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>66,010</td>
<td>58,728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>72,029</td>
<td>55,577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>135,956</td>
<td>89,934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>58,600</td>
<td>59,943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>58,368</td>
<td>54,591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>390,963</td>
<td>318,773</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

-more-
UPCOMING EVENTS: Friday, Aug. 19
Futures for Kids Day

Many of the activities on this day are centered around younger fair visitors. Several competitions are held, including the decorated diaper, diaper derby, ponytail contest and smile contest.

The Arena: Redneck Weekend – Mud Bogs and 4 Wheel Burn Outs, 6 p.m.
Come watch the mud bogs as trucks try to get through the mud pit without getting stuck. The winner is determined by the fastest time or who gets the farthest in the pit. Four wheel burnouts are a combination of speed, agility, and noise. Don’t miss this evening of mud flinging, tire burning and racing fun!

Farmer’s Little Helpers: “Learn to Grow – Grow to Learn,” Daily 10 a.m.-7 p.m. – Located in Heartland/Gate 2
Little helpers learn about Illinois agriculture by raising farm animals, tending to crops, and taking the harvest to market. When the work is done, Farmer’s Little Helpers sell their bounty for a “Market Dollar” and then spend it at the grocery store for a tasty treat!

The Shed: Ponytail Contest (11 a.m.), Smile Contest (1:30 p.m.), Decorated Diaper Contest (3 p.m.), Diaper Derby Contest (4 p.m.)
Racing at the fair isn’t limited to horses and cars. Parents, grandparents and all who love babies will be glad to know that the ever popular diaper derby is back. In the derby, eight babies and their parents line up across from one another; the first baby to reach their parent and cross the finish line will win.

Grandstand: 38 Special, Loverboy, Head East & the Tubes, 5 p.m.
38 Special will perform hits like "Hold on Loosely" and "Caught Up in You.” Loverboy, Head East and The Tubes also will rock the stage before 38 Special.