

E is for Exploring

Feeling a mixture of anxiousness and excitement - and who wouldn't stepping through the gates of The Big E? - my senses were thrown into overdrive as my friends and I stood staring, down one of the many vendor lined streets. Plotting our course for the day-- we were off.

As a senior at RWU I had heard of The Big E fair in passing but due to the fact it was an hour and a half away I had never been. However this year, I thought, why not go on an adventure to find out what all of the fuss was about?

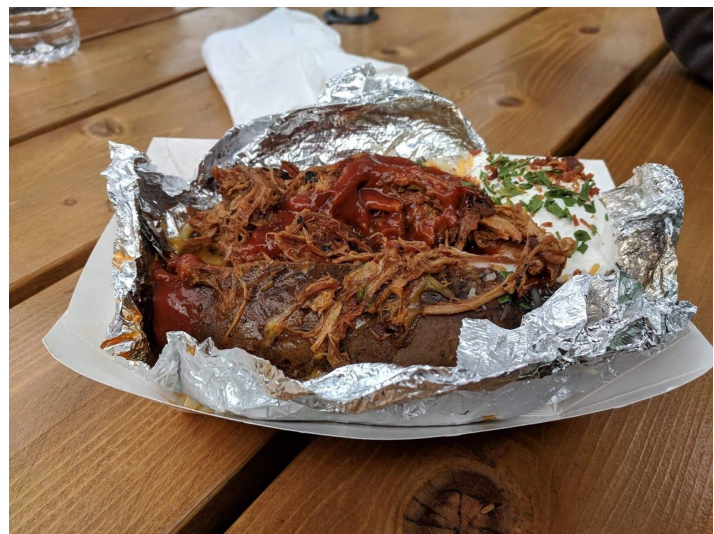
My friend had described The Big E as a large fair, however gargantuan would be more fitting. Eastern States Exposition, later known as The Big E started in 1916 as a way to inform young people about general skills and knowledge. Though the fair has expanded exponentially in the past 102 year, history is still the heart of this event.



The Big E has a very familiar setting to me as someone who grew up going to Disney every year as a child. The layout almost mimics that of the different "lands" in the parks. The historic section of The Big E was very similar to Liberty Square in Magic Kingdom. Full of quaint and timeless mystery. My friends and I had decided to go to the fair on Sunday, September 23rd. We wanted a day that wouldn't be too packed as The Big E draws people from all over New England.

We made our way up the bustling street where we could see the statehouses looming against a steely grey sky as throngs of people poured in and out of them. There was an unofficial way to go through the statehouses, you start with New Hampshire and end with Rhode Island.

Upon entering the first building the sounds of the people reverberated, off the walls, the perfume of the maple flavored sweets filled the air and every inch of the walls were lined with vendors from the state. Having lived in New Hampshire for a time in my childhood the building was filled with things that I remembered. It was like a postcard from the past.



We finished up our walking tour of the states and made our way to the tiny village. It was made up of historic buildings that were relocated from New England States and placed on the fairgrounds. We ventured into the shops, church, and even the old school house. There was a woman there giving a demonstration of what classes would have been like back in the days of Laura Ingalls and Anne of Green Gables.

My favorite place of all, however, was the Blacksmith's shop. Inside the small stone building were two older men who were demonstrating how to create things in the forge. Upon first sight, my smile grew until my face almost hurt. This astounded me, I have always been one who loves to not only see how things are made, but also how things were created in times before technology.

So with my dreams of forging my own sword dancing around in my head, I watched as one of the men demonstrated how to make something much less lethal. He had grabbed three pieces of metal and was going to forge an ornate bottle opener with a delicate leaf handle. My eyes went wide as I watched him work the lumps of metal into something so intricate. The clash of metal on metal sounded like the steady beating of a heart.

After what seemed like no time at all, the man held up his creation to the "oohs" and "ahhs" of the crowd. Not wanting to leave empty handed, I bought a small metal ring that had been made of a nail from a horseshoe. That way I would have a token that I could always look back and remember.

The rest of the day we ventured through the fairgrounds exploring everything we could. As the sun was setting--I turned and looked at the cotton candy sky, hearing the din of people and music in the distance, I let out a relaxed sigh. I couldn't have asked for a better experience for my first time at The Big E. I was with friends and having the time of my life. Who could want anything more?

The Big E
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