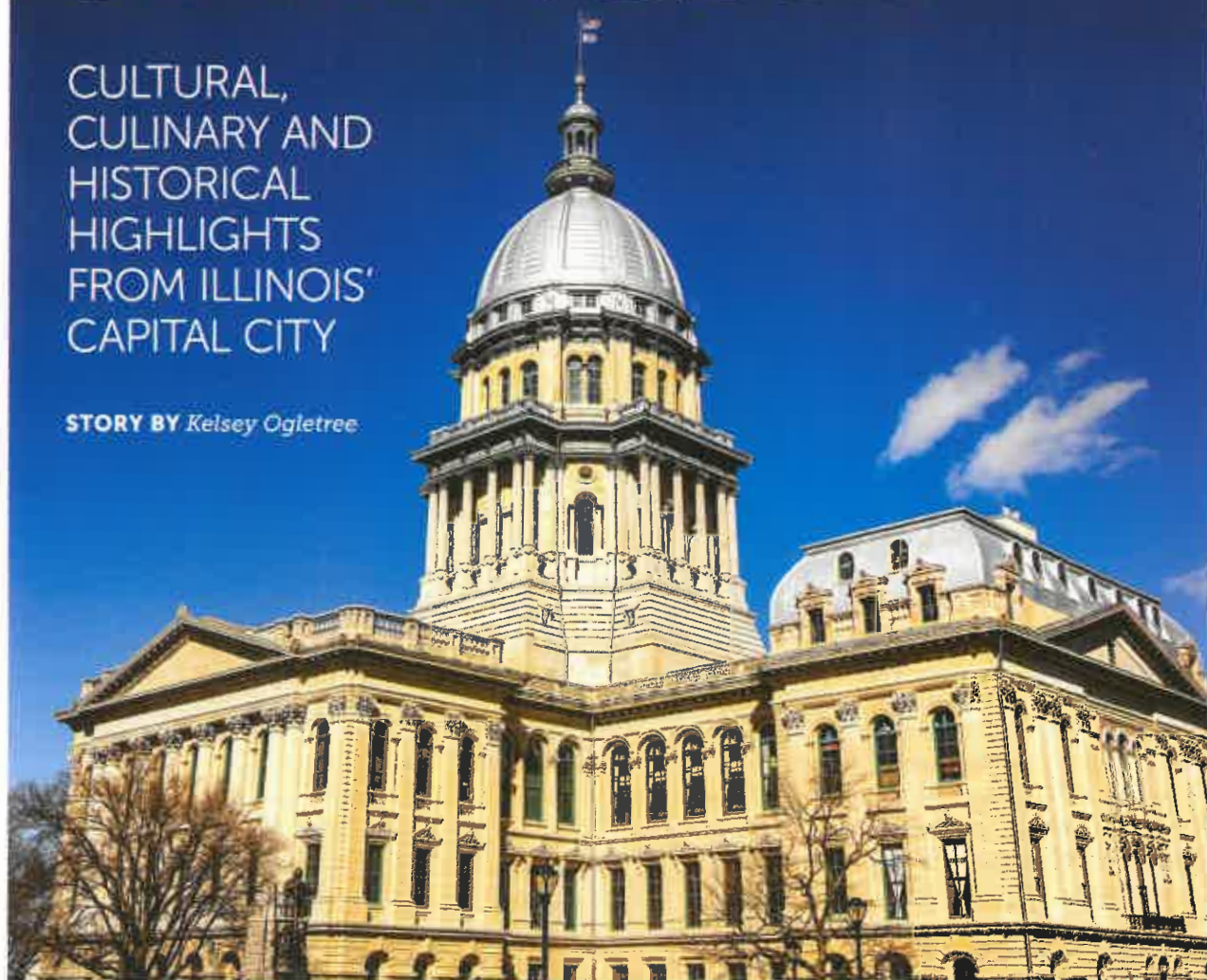


# 10 Winter To-Dos in SPRINGFIELD

CULTURAL,  
CULINARY AND  
HISTORICAL  
HIGHLIGHTS  
FROM ILLINOIS'  
CAPITAL CITY

STORY BY *Kelsey Ogletree*



**A**s the state's sixth-largest city by population, Springfield holds its own when it comes to history. The life and legacy of President Abraham Lincoln comes to life here, and the city is located along the famous Route 66, which will celebrate its bicentennial in 2026. Even when the weather outside is frightful, a trip to Springfield is delightful,

with attractions, museums, restaurants and more waiting to be explored.

"What's really great about Springfield is the hospitality," says Amy Beadle, sales and marketing manager at Visit Springfield. "Not every city can say that they really have an open-arm welcome when you come here."

Another great attribute:

the convenience of getting here. It's quite easy to reach Springfield by car, as it's located at the crossroads of interstates 55 and 72.

It's affordable, too. "People are pretty blown away by the food, drink and hotel prices," Beadle says.

Ready to plan your trip? Here are 10 can't-miss spots to add to your itinerary for the perfect winter getaway to Springfield.





### 1 COZY DOG DRIVE IN

Located along Route 66, this quaint spot is home to the original hot dog on a stick – aka a corn dog (or cozy dog, as it's called here). The drive-in is also known for its fries, burgers and homemade doughnuts. "It just brings a smile to your face when you go in," Beadle says.



### 3 D'ARCY'S PINT

If you go to Springfield and don't eat a "horseshoe," you didn't really go to Springfield. D'Arcy's Pint is home to one of the best: two pieces of toast topped with burger patties and fries, then smothered in cheese sauce. "It's a real gut-buster," Beadle admits, "but once in a while you have to have one."

### 2 MAHAN'S FILLING STATION

Across the way from the Illinois State Fairgrounds, this is said to be one of the oldest filling stations in existence, dating back to 1917. However, don't plan to fuel up here, as it's purely an attraction now. Stop in to the family-owned Fulgenzi's Pizza & Pasta right next door after snapping photos.



### 4 ACE SIGN CO. SIGN MUSEUM

This family-owned business sells everything from stickers to huge outdoor signage. Stop into the free museum to check out some of the amazing antique signs they've collected over the years, including neon ones.



### 5 ABRAHAM LINCOLN PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

Exhibits range from Mary Todd Lincoln's dresses to a rare copy of the Gettysburg Address in Lincoln's own hand, but the Ghosts of the Library holographic theater – where Lincoln himself seems to appear onstage – is one of its greatest treasures.



## 6 ILLINOIS STATE MILITARY MUSEUM

On the grounds of Camp Lincoln, this museum for military history buffs has possession of the famous Santa Anna's artificial leg from the Mexican War in 1847. "This museum is a hidden treasure that not everyone gets around to finding," Beadle says.

## 7 ROUTE 66 MOTORHEADS BAR, GRILL & MUSEUM

Nostalgia lovers will go nuts for owner Ron Metzger's collection of Route 66 memorabilia here, from Coca-Cola chests to gas station pumps. Order "The Twist," a jumbo Bavarian pretzel served on a giant hook with beer cheese sauce for dipping.



## 8 LOCAL BREWERIES

Obed & Isaac's Microbrewery and Eatery kicked off the brewery scene in Springfield in 2012, and since then, an informal brewery trail has sprung up here. Also explore Engrained Brewery & Restaurant, which has a farm-to-table restaurant, and Buzz Bomb Brewing Co., which is walkable from downtown hotels.

## 9 PEASE'S

This local favorite candy shop has been owned by one family for five generations. Stock up on delicious goodies like chocolate-dipped Oreos, roasted nuts, popcorn, gummies and Raggedy Anns (their version of a chocolate turtle) to enjoy on your trip home.



## 10 DANENBERGER FAMILY VINEYARDS

Besides producing highly sippable wines like dry rosé and Cabernet Franc, this women-owned vineyard offers live music every weekend and features a new concept restaurant, Saponi Italia at DFV, serving delicious brick-oven flatbreads.

**com** .....

For more about what's happening in Springfield, go to [visitspringfieldillinois.com](http://visitspringfieldillinois.com)





### IF YOU GO...

#### Charlie Parker's Diner

#### Location:

700 N. St. in Springfield!

**Hours:** Open Monday through Saturday, 6 a.m. to 2 p.m., and Sunday, 7 a.m. to 2 p.m.

#### Phone:

(217) 241-2104

[charlieparkersdiner.net](http://charlieparkersdiner.net)

# Forks Up

From indulgent horseshoes to pancakes the size of a pizza, Charlie Parker's Diner serves home cookin' with a side of nostalgia

Things can get a little – or a lot – cheesy at Charlie Parker's Diner, depending on the size of your appetite. A mainstay for Springfield locals since it opened in an old World War II Quonset hut in 1992, this breakfast and lunch spot is famous for its breakfast version of the region's iconic horseshoe. It comes with two pieces of toast layered with eggs cooked

any style, a protein (ham, bacon or sausage patties), potato (fries, tater tots or hashbrowns) and cheese – ooey, gooey, rich cheese that brings it all together. If cheese isn't your thing, you can substitute gravy, or even request both.

Not for the health-conscious diner, the horseshoe is a top seller.

"It probably makes up 80% of our orders," says William (Bill) Pope, who's owned the

restaurant since 2017. Guy Fieri helped make it even more popular when he ate one on an episode of Food Network's "Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives" 11 years ago.

But people don't only come for the horseshoe. More than just filling bellies, Charlie Parker's fills a little bit of your soul, too.

"People like the nostalgia," Pope says. "That's what a lot of them come in for."

For example, kids who've never seen a record before spot them covering the walls and think it's the greatest thing ever. There's an old coffee maker from the 1960s that regulars love. And the old neon sign behind the counter that bears the restaurant's name transports you

back in time.

The old adage "the early bird gets the worm" holds true here, as you'll have a hard time scoring a table between the hours of 8 and 10 a.m., with up to an hour wait on weekends. Pope recommends arriving early, when the diner opens at 6, to get your choice of eight counter stools or a booth.

If you're feeling up for a challenge, Charlie Parker's has a longstanding contest: Consume all four of the 16-inch hotcakes on the giant pancake platter (they're the size of a large pizza) and you'll win a T-shirt and a gift card. According to Pope, only three people in the history of the diner have actually finished it.

– Kelsey Ogletree



# Museum Milestone

FARM TECH EXHIBIT AT CHICAGO'S MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY TURNS 20

STORY BY *Carrie Muehling*

**T**wenty years ago, Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry (MSI) debuted "The Farm," an exhibit now known as "Farm Tech." But the groundwork for the agricultural display at the museum began years earlier with an idea from Illinois Farm Bureau (IFB) member Sharon Covert of Tiskilwa.

Covert had visited the museum with her young grandson and looked for the farm exhibit, but found only "Food For Life," which offered information about nutrition and

food groups but not production agriculture. Covert started to explore the idea of expanding the exhibit to educate visitors about modern farming.

She first took the concept to the IFB Women's Committee and then to the Board of Directors. The Illinois Agricultural Association Foundation worked with museum planners, initially on an exhibit that would simply update "Food For Life," but it ultimately became "The Farm."

Covert invited two museum employees to her family's farm in Bureau County. At the same time,

IFB began approaching agribusiness leaders, commodity groups and its own membership to secure support for the future of the exhibit. Archer Daniels Midland became the first to pledge a major donation. Nearly every county Farm Bureau also contributed to the project.

More museum representatives visited the farm to see different stages of the corn and soybean crop, including the executive director, who brought his family for a combine ride during harvest. John Deere would eventually donate the combine that remains a part of the exhibit today.





The hands-on exhibits of "Farm Tech" include a robotic milking simulator.

It took more than five years to bring the exhibit to fruition, but MSI officially opened "The Farm" in 2000.

Today, guests can climb behind the steering wheel of a combine equipped with GPS for precise rows or challenge friends and family to a speed contest on the robotic milking simulator. Visitors can also find a soy shed where they can see just how many of the items in their pantry use this versatile bean.

"When I've been there, there are always people in the ag exhibit," Covert says. "Kids and adults still like to climb in that combine and turn the switch, and a movie that shows harvesting corn comes up."

During its inaugural year, IFB included a museum tour with the annual meeting in Chicago so Farm Bureau members could experience it firsthand. In 2015, MSI staff facilitated a discussion with the 40 participants of the Illinois Agriculture Leadership Program about what's changing in agriculture, new trends and technologies, and what they anticipate farming will look like in the future.

MSI redeveloped the exhibit in 2007, renaming it "Farm Tech." New interactive elements encourage guests to engage with the science

and technology used to help raise the world's food and keep up with a growing demand.

"Farm Tech" showcases the ingenuity and the high level of skill needed by farmers to both adapt to and innovate – new ways to continue supplying food to people around the world," says Patricia Ward, MSI's director of Science and Exhibitions. "As a museum that is dedicated to sparking scientific inquiry and creativity in everyone, we understand the value in our guests engaging with and learning about what's involved in creating all that we consume."

Throughout its development, MSI has collaborated with and received donations from various organizations and companies to give guests an interactive experience with the science of farming. Covert says it was a complex project, but an important one for agriculture.

"It took a long time," she says. "The agricultural community and the museum were very receptive to doing the project to try to give the urban population a little idea of what goes on at the farm here in the Midwest."

MSI welcomes approximately 1.5 million guests each year, who interact with many exhibits that are included with entry into the museum, including "Farm Tech."

## More at the Museum

Check out these other exhibits at Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry

**Genetics and the Baby Chick Hatchery:** Learn about traits and genetics and watch baby chicks hatch out of their shells

**Science Storms:** Check out the science behind nature's storms, including tornadoes, tsunamis and lightning strikes

**U-505 Submarine:** Tour the only German submarine in the United States, now a national memorial to 55,000 American sailors who perished on the high seas during WWI and WWII.

**YOU! The Experience:** Run inside a human-size hamster wheel and watch your heart beat 13 feet tall.

**The Great Train Story:** Watch more than 20 scale model trains travel from the Rocky Mountains to Chicago skyscrapers.

**Transportation Gallery:** Board the 999 Steam Locomotive or a genuine Boeing 727, and see a "Jenny" biplane or WWII Stuka dive-bomber.

**Wired to Wear:** See global technologies from industry pioneers and creative visionaries that will make us stronger, smarter and healthier.

**Makers United:** Build a piece of wearable technology in the museum's newest hands-on experience.

**Christmas Around the World:** Experience the annual celebration including the four-story, floor-to-dome Grand Tree and more than 50 other displays representing holiday traditions from around the world.

To learn more or plan your visit, head to [msichicago.org](http://msichicago.org)