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Through the easy times and the hard, Portland residents have always managed to enjoy themselves in diverse recreational pursuits.

After all, living in the Northwest has its recreational advantages. The nearby ocean, mountains, forests, parks, lakes and rivers all offer natural playgrounds for those willing to use them.

And use them they did. Early photographs show Portlanders out on the Willamette and Columbia Rivers, hard at their boating, crewing, rowing, sailing, waterskiing, fishing and swimming.

In the Cascade range, local enthusiasts were photographed while climbing, hiking, camping, snow skiing, hunting and high lake fishing.

Portland's many beautiful parks served as backdrop for the gentler pursuits such as picnicking, romancing and, weather permitting, a little frozen lake iceskating.

The Columbia River Gorge, a world class natural beauty, was a favorite family outing. The irresistible charm of the old Columbia River highway with its inspirational viewpoints and cascading waterfalls attracted a steady stream of picture takers from the City.

In the other direction was the largest ocean in the world with its many fine beaches and coastlines. For Portlanders, Cannon Beach, Gearhardt, Rockaway, Seaside and Astoria were favorite destinations.

Ideally situated as Portland was for natural diversions, many of its popular recreational attractions were manmade.

Early pavilions, such as the Mechanics' Fair Pavilion, built in 1879 on the site now occupied by the Portland Civic Auditorium, provided indoor space for sports, art, photography exhibits and concerts.

In 1905, Portland hosted the Lewis & Clark Exposition, a world's fair that actually turned a profit for its investors and was the crowd pleaser of the decade (see our 1981 Calendar for a detailed treatment of this event).

During the summer months it was open, over 2,500,000 visitors - 135,000 of whom came from east of the Mississippi River - passed under the curving, double colonnaded entrance at 26th & Upshur in Northwest Portland.

The Exposition was primarily an exhibition and celebration of turn-of-the-century industry and technology. However, there was also an amusement area known as "The Trail." There, fairgoers could visit 24 concessions ranging from the highly popular infant incubators to a dancing exhibition by "Little Egypt" to "A Trip To Venus." Most fares ran 10¢.

In a public address on the Lewis & Clark Exposition grounds, Mayor Harry Lane suggested Portland's need for a "festival of roses." The notion won support and in 1907 the first Rose Festival came into being (see our 1982 Calendar for a detailed account).

The first festival featured horse-drawn floats in the grand floral parade, aquatic events in the harbor and fireworks at night. It was an undeniable success. By 1917, the International Rose Test Garden was established in Washington Park and the Rose Festival had become a tradition that but for two lapses - in 1918 and 1926 - has been an annual event ever since.

In anticipation of the expected throngs to the Exposition, Portland's first and only surviving amusement park opened to the public. The venerable Oaks Park, built along the east bank of the Willamette River, offered amusement rides, picnicking,

skating, swimming, vaudeville, dancing, rides
Originally called "The Oaks."

One attraction that staggered everybody was the daredevil flight over the city of Lincoln Beachey in a sausage shaped dirigible. That made the crowds stand and gape. When in flight, Beachey stood on a tenuous, spiderlike catwalk which hung below the gas bag. At one end was a rudder; at the other a small propeller; and in between a sputtering gas engine. The thing could navigate only when there was no wind.

On the day of the great flight, Beachey coaxed the dirigible off the fairgrounds and headed for the city center. When over the Chamber of Commerce Building on Stark Street between 3rd and 4th he hovered long enough to shake hands with some prominent personages. Then he sailed over the Oregonian Building at 6th and Alder Street—thoughtfully dropped a message to the editor and finally took off for the mooring post at the Fair.

The round trip of three miles took 50 minutes including time for the amenities mentioned. Man, was that something! Would wonders never cease?

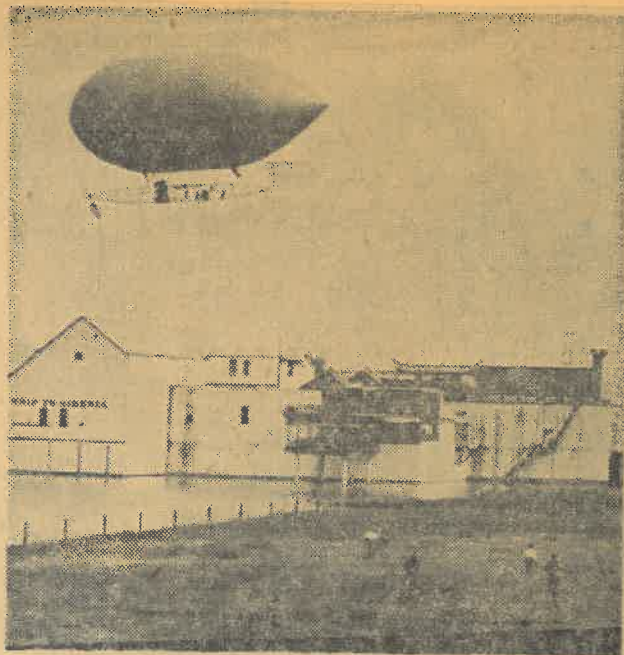
As I look back today at that old Fair, I marvel how so much was produced in so short a time and at such a small cost. True, the dollars were full value then. Wages were low. A good cigar cost only a nickel. But those huge buildings were built at a price that wouldn't pay for a de luxe ranchhouse today. Of course, there was no building code, and no fire marshal to harry the builders. You paid two dollars for a permit, and you were on your way.

Consequently, the structures were studs and slats—lath and plaster with everything swished up with stucco ornamentation, whitewash and paint.

But the buildings, though cheap in cost, were well designed and harmoniously grouped in landscaped surroundings resplendent with roses, and at night when the electrical illuminations were bright, the effect was breathtaking. It was only a huge stage set, but it was wonderful.

In those simple days of long ago, folks who lived away and who wanted to go places and see things faced an effort that was heroic. Transportation was on the steam cars in the hot, old summertime. You traveled in grimy coaches and slept in stuffy berths—hot—dirty and often with a cinder in your eye. You had to be a dedicated person to make that effort.

Today, when I examine my photograph of the 1905 fairgrounds, and then look at the artist's rendering of the 1959



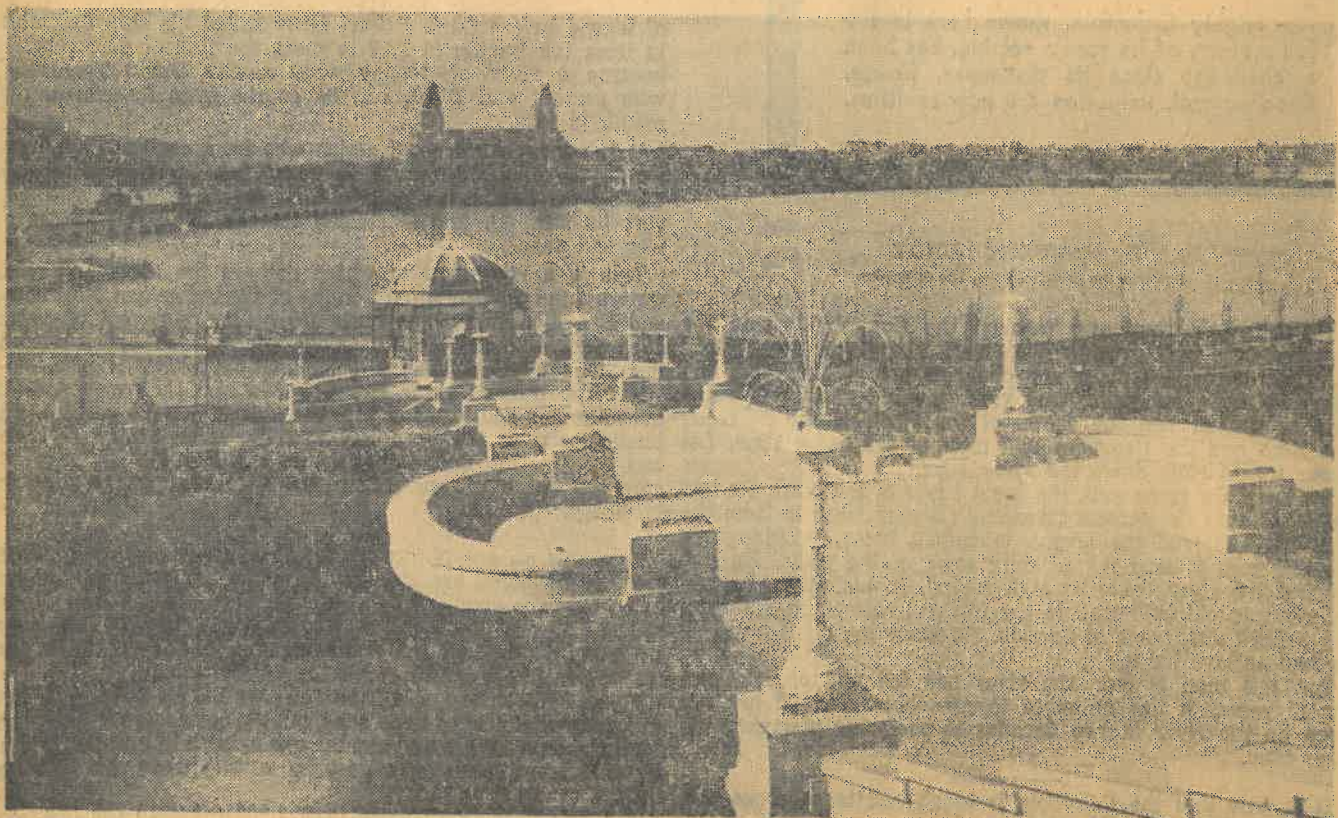
Lincoln Beachey's daredevil flight over Portland in a sausage-shaped dirigible caused crowds to stand and gape. Beachey stood on spider-like catwalk.

Centennial setup, I sense the change in modes of travel. The first picture looks like a Garden Club Festival. The second shows a huge pavillion surrounded by acres of parking lots.

This year our visitors principally will come by autos. Our 1959 Centennial Fair is not crowded into the confines of a single building nor in a single, central location. The show is to be state-wide. It is the wonderland of Oregon. It is snow-capped mountains, coastlines, rich valleys and the wide-open spaces east of the Cascades—the Columbia Gorge and the charm of our cities.

That is what we will show them, for this time our public will be on wheels and going places.

The 1905 Fair did wonders for Oregon. The blood transfusion, so badly needed, did the business and our 1959 Centennial will do the same for us today. Let's get the show on the road.



Grand stairway in foreground with ornate statuary formed an imposing entrance to the Lewis and Clark Fair. Spacious nature of exhibit grounds is apparent in this view of Guild's Lake in northwest of Portland.