

A model for the future

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IN JANUARY 1955, SEATTLE CITY COUNCILMAN ALFRED ROCHESTER GAMELY INTRODUCED A RESOLUTION for a fair to mark the 50th anniversary of the 1909 Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition. The state Legislature allocated \$5,000 to fund a seven-member commission's study of the idea. Seattle's Edward Carlson, hotelier and consummate civic volunteer, chaired that commission.

And so began the long march to 1962's Century 21, a World's Fair of international science, culture and fun -- and a defining moment for the city.

The commissioners fumbled for a theme, a scope, a site. Celebrating the hoary A-Y-P E embarrassed the go-go 1950s; how about the Festival of the West? Or the Pan-Pacific Age of Science Exposition? Or the World Science Pan-Pacific Exposition? Perhaps, if the fair opened in 1961, it could commemorate the 100th anniversary of the boundary survey between Canada and the United States -- an event notable for its obscurity.

And where should the fair be held? Duwamish Head, Fort Lawton or First Hill, Midway or Seattle's Civic Center, Lake Sammamish's southern shore or the Army Depot in Auburn?

Dogged by indecision and litigation from critics, including property owners around the proposed sites, the project seemed adrift. But the vision of the fair's core planners slowly grew more confident.

In 1958 Carlson, project manager Ewen Dingwall, and publicist Jim Faber headed to Washington, D.C. As Times reporter Alice Johnson wrote, their excitement was "an invigorating wind from the West" in the echoing corridors of power. With Sen. Warren Magnuson's help, the three began knocking on doors at the National Science Foundation, the National Academy of Science and the American Association for the Advancement of Science to build the fair's planning board of nationally renowned scientists.

In the wake of American anxiety over the launching of the Soviet satellite Sputnik, the exuberant audacity of the Seattle greenhorns hit paydirt. Distinguished scientists eagerly cooperated to develop a new showmanship for physics, chemistry and technology that people, young and old, could understand and enjoy.

By July 1958, the fair had become a national festival of science, officially called the Century 21 Exposition, and had chosen the unlovely Civic Center as its site, a motley collection of the new Memorial Stadium and the aging armory, arena and auditorium -- "huge, horrible, echoing, drafty caverns," as one planner later shuddered. A Design Standards board of local architects began to develop an integrated look for the fair-to-come at this hodgepodge site.



By night, the Gayway 21 was a fairyland of bright lights, music and thrills, featuring the Calypso, Cake Walk, Olympic Bobsled, LeMans, Wild Mouse, Scrambler, Allotria, Distel, Space Whirl, Crystal Maze and the Skyride, gliding high above the fair. Photo Credit: Seattle Times.

THROUGHOUT 1958 AND '59, THE PACE OF PLANNING QUICKENED AND GAINED MOMENTUM THAT CARRIED THE FAIR OVER BUMPS IN THE ROAD. But it wasn't until June 1960 that the International Bureau of Expositions voted to certify Century 21 as a world's fair under their guidelines. Ecstatic, Dingwall phoned exposition president Joe Gandy from Paris with the news. This was the ultimate stamp of approval.

Century 21 found strong, even uncritical, support from both local dailies -- tough-minded Times commentator Ross Cunningham was a fan from the start, admiring "the biggest bootstrap enterprise in history." Likewise, Times editorials rallied enthusiasm for the fair during its seven-year gestation, calling for the "energetic support of this community and the entire state" to celebrate the future of science and technology for citizens of Planet Earth.

But Century 21 was a Cold War fair. When Dingwall went to Moscow to request Soviet participation, a downed United States U-2 spyplane was on display in the local park. No invitations to exhibit at the fair were sent to Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, or to the People's Republic of China, North Vietnam and North Korea.

&American planners hoped the fair would "attract talented young persons into careers in science," and redress the U.S. lag in the space race. To that end, the federal government committed a whopping \$9 million to build Minoru Yamasaki's U.S. Science Pavilion -- a technological wonderland. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) agreed to display full-scale models of the Saturn V booster and John Glenn's Mercury capsule. The real Friendship 7 arrived in the fall. Boeing -- a latecomer to the Century 21 team -- hired Cinerama to design the Spacearium experience which would take fairgoers on a tour "across Earth, past the Moon and Sun, passing through the rings of Saturn and out to the

remote galaxies . . ."

Sperry Rand displayed its \$1 million computer, a machine that covered more than 100 square feet but only mustered computing power of about 3 megahertz. But no one could really grasp the scientific potential of this "electronic brain," and UNIVAC was a curiosity in the libraries exhibit, programmed with excerpts from Great Books of the Western World.



Model technology at the fair's Centuria offered fast, hot food from automatic vending machines. These brave customers, Mrs. R.M. Akin, Lt. Gov. John Cherberg and concessionaire James Ward, chose from a menu of french fries, hamburgers and hotdogs, as well as salmon and salisbury steak. Photo Credit: Seattle Times.

But, as Dingwall sagely observed, "Electronic wizardry is no substitute for a beautiful woman," and the fair's Show Street would offer "A Night in Paradise," a Las Vegas-style showgirl revue. Promoter Gracie Hansen teased scandalized locals that her production would be "naughty but nice." Nonetheless, the Seattle Board of Censors only passed her show and the risqué "Les Poupées de Paris" within days of the fair's opening. "Les Poupées," a French puppet farce, was hastily rewritten to suit local standards of propriety.

Newly cosmopolitan fair planners reminded Seattleites that they would play host to the world. They argued that many foreign visitors would be puzzled by a law forbidding wine with Sunday dinner, but the state Liquor Control Board was unbending, and the fair ran dry one day a week. However, Century 21 staff did talk the board bluenoses out of a ruling that the French pavilion must display only empty bottles of wine, lest underage fairgoers be tempted to steal them.

Wanting to be good hosts, Washington people turned on the charm. The Times supported the "Ask Me, I Live Here" campaign, publishing articles on local history and hotel accommodations that readers were expected to clip, bind and keep in their cars so they would always be ready to answer any tourist question. One booster went so far as to advise all Washington residents to grin throughout the entire fair.

Century 21 looked to the next century with sunny optimism, confident in

the benefits of science and industry. Model technologies, from the futuristic Monorail to the direct-dialing phone system, promised a better "World of Tomorrow." The fair brought high tech home, prominently featuring novel vending machines that stocked hamburgers, chicken salad and even baked salmon. Folks marvelled at self-serve, automated photo-booths and a machine that -- sometimes -- gave you change in return for your dollar bill.

The fair showcased "out of this world" fashions and science-fiction gadgetry for the lifestyle of highly traditional housewives. Commercial exhibitors like General Electric and Johnson's Wax built model home interiors that featured "push-button ease to take care of all your household duties except for changing the baby." Likewise, Vogue magazine produced four daily fashion shows alongside a perfumed pool in the Fashion Pavilion.

Pained, The Times' Dorothy Neighbors had begged local women who visited the fair not to disgrace the Pacific Northwest with their dowdy clothes and casual hairstyles. She advised them to shorten the hems of their dresses, not mistake high heels for high style, and -- above all! -- to leave their slacks in the closet.

From the wild rides of Gayway 21 to the gravity-defying Coliseum and the airy grandeur of the U.S. Science Pavilion, the fair surrounded visitors with an extraordinary environment that excited the imagination. Nearly 10 million visitors passed through Century 21's turnstiles in 184 days; they came away exclaiming over this "jewel of a World's Fair," exquisitely crafted in an urban setting between mountains and sea.

At the fair's close, The Times pointed out some of its enduring legacies, "in commercial growth, in the arts, in athletics, in physical properties, in all the areas essential to metropolitan stature." And, like the A-Y-P E, Century 21 had brought the world to Seattle, and Seattle to the world. In 1962, the experience introduced a new cultural sophistication: from Van Cliburn to Henry Moore -- and Elvis Presley! -- Seattle people sampled the world's array of art and music.

And between 1955 and 1962, a nondescript Seattle neighborhood was transformed into a glittering international tomorrowland, then into an urban campus. After the fair, Seattle Center remained -- the Opera House, the Science Pavilion, the International Fountain, the theatre, the Coliseum, and the Food Circus and midway -- the city's great plaza.

The Space Needle had become Seattle's icon in the eyes of the world. But as Seattle people gazed from its observation deck, they were dazzled by their hometown that spread from Everett to the University of Washington to Mount Rainier, from Elliott Bay to the Cascades. Century 21 empowered people to look critically and creatively at their city, their surroundings.

The fair began with lop-eared charm, a homegrown "Hey, kids, let's put on a show!" frolic; it ended with professional élan, a triumph designed and managed by topnotch talent from here at home and throughout the nation. It wasn't just what had been done, but how it was done. Century 21 was a training ground for civic activists, both well-known and obscure, who volunteered by the hundreds to direct and administer, to raise money, to brainstorm, to type, to telephone, to work together toward a common civic goal. Their experience may have been the fair's greatest legacy, as the city shared this defining moment that changed forever its view of what was possible.

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universities and do research, writing and oral history. Original newspaper graphics courtesy of the Seattle Public Library.

Century 21 explored changes that science and technology would bring to the life of the woman of tomorrow, fulfilling the social role of the woman of today. Here, a model displays Brazilian ready-to-wear couture, designed in easy-care fabrics.

Photo Credit: Seattle Times.



Science and ENGINEERIng – optimistic faith about what sci and eng could bring to the future

Sci pavilion has many photos – Bellevue Coll archives – of girls

WAS generationally gendered

Young women can change the world; older women can't

Film introduced EAMES co. has a sci film introducing people to the pavilion (Disney used them for introductory filmmaking) – has a # of women scientists

Serious intellectuals smoking cigarettes

Lots of products and experiences

Were there AYP fashion shows? Go to Online Seattle time (digitized from 1900 on – get in May – Oct period 1909 and key in household, fashion

Juanita Russell was entrepreneurial genius – daughter still living and could be interviewed – she's shaking hands w/ and greeting a lot of African nationals in Native costume

Puget Cd Regional Archives – Bellevue

#6419 (exotic painted models – far east exotification)

#6301 Vogue Model (flipped up hair, have her already?)

Go to PBS “The First Measured Century” have kids look at:

Divorce rates

Marriage ages

Fertility

Cohabitation

Children born outside marriage (illegitimate)

See if I can specifically find contraception

Seattle Times is hard cause need to know exactly what you're looking for – use key wds to find stories that might be accompanied

Can print out article and ask for photo from them

Weyerhaeuser, GE and many others had "House of the Future" – WHAT IS THE HOUSEWIFE free to do? Again, promise of the future