

# BIG in The Past: PIONEER DAYS AT THE WASHINGTON STATE FAIR

## PIONEER DAYS AT THE WASHINGTON STATE FAIR

In 1900, Washington State Fair's own "pioneers" (a group of businessmen, farmers and residents of the Puyallup Valley) joined together to create the Valley Fair. Much like today's Washington State Fair, the Valley Fair was developed to promote and educate residents on the local agricultural, horticultural, dairy, stock-raising, mining and manufacturing industries. The opening dates of the Valley Fair were Oct. 4 to 6, 1900. Instead of six brightly colored gates like today, a ten-foot fence surrounded the fair and was the first official fair "gate." Leftover wood from the fence was used to build sheds to house the exhibits. Instead of a merry-go-round or Ferris wheel, children rode on the back of a bull. Look at how far the Fair has come in the last 115 years.



**OCTOBER 4, 1900** .....

The Fair opened with an admission of just \$1. Newspaper writers were admitted for free



**1903** .....

Railroad companies began running special trains to the Fair from Tacoma.

**1906** .....

A Ladies Auxiliary and Women's Day were formed at the request of the Washington Equal Suffrage Association.

**1910** .....

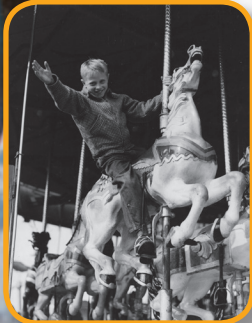
The Fair purchased five more acres of land and began advertising with small signs and posters.

**1914** .....

A new grandstand was built for \$3,500.

**1917** .....

Due to World War I, the Fair did not open until mid-October.



**1923** .....

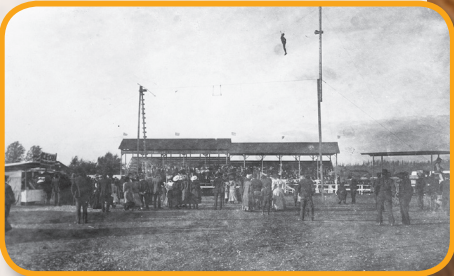
The first fair merry-go-round arrived on a horse-drawn wagon base. This same merry-go-round has been restored and is now located in front of Expo Hall.

**1901**

For the second year of the Fair, the location moved to a larger site at the corner of 9th Ave S.W. and Meridian South, near the center of present-day fairgrounds. The most popular attraction at The Fair was horse racing.

**1905**

The Fair became a six-day event.



**1908**

With the Fair's popularity spreading, a working police force was brought in to handle the crowds.

**1913**

The Valley Fair was renamed "The Western Washington Fair Association" with new special attractions including horse racing, auto polo, vaudeville acts, a three-ring circus, high wire acts, log rolling and fiddler contests.



**1915**

Fisher Scones with jam came to the Fair.

## PIONEERS AT THE FAIR

Did you know that some of the Fair's early pioneers had ties to the Klondike Gold Rush? Each of these men were early supporters of the Fair and still have family in the Puyallup Valley.

Ezra Meeker, Puyallup's first elected mayor, first earned his living growing hops, which are flowers used in beverages and herbal medicine. Later, during the height of the Klondike Gold Rush, he shipped food products to Dawson City.

Robert Montgomery and Marcus Porter, the second attorney to hang his shingle in Puyallup, each bought claims in the Yukon and sought to strike it rich. Mr. Montgomery later founded and published the Puyallup Valley Tribune and served as the mayor of Sumner.

Dr. John H. "Harry" Corliss, who owned a medical practice in Sumner, ventured to the Klondike during the Gold Rush to care for the miners. Later he went on to serve in the legislature and as a Fair Director.

Visit Pioneer Farm and Timber Gulch, the new pioneer town at the Green Gate, to learn about the early days of the Pacific Northwest. Timber Gulch features Carbon River Mining where you can sluice for gemstones, a jail set, gunfight shows, a saloon and photo opportunities galore. Pioneer Farm gives you hands-on experience with pioneer work including churning butter, grinding flour and pumping water.

At Tumbleweed Crossing kids can watch a comedy gunfight show packed with comedy, stunts and special effects. Three shows are held daily at 2, 4 and 6 p.m. Learn more at [www.thefair.com](http://www.thefair.com).

At Cowboy Boot Camp you can visit animals, milk a cow, learn to lasso and steer rope, dress like a cowpoke, pedal a tractor and more. Timber Gulch hours are Mondays - Thursdays: 11 a.m. - 9 pm, Fridays and Saturdays: 10 a.m. - 9 p.m. and Sundays: 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Learn more at <http://greatamericanpettingzoo.com/cowboy.html>.

## GOLD!

On July 17, 1897, the steamship Portland from Alaska docked in Seattle announcing that prospectors aboard the ship had struck gold in the Yukon Territory of Canada. Newspapers gradually spread the word. Soon, Seattle was poised in a perfect position to lure those who wanted strike it rich to stock up on supplies. Seattle merchants exploited the rumor that prospectors bound for the remote Yukon needed a year's supply of food, encouraging prospectors to shop in abundance. Seattle was promoted as the "Gateway to the Gold Fields," thus bringing in 30,000 to 40,000 people and, as a result, almost doubling the population.

Today's Pioneer Square, along First and Second Avenue, was packed with shops selling camp supplies, carts and even animals such as horses and cattle. Businesses used the term "Klondike" to promote all kinds of goods including food, clothes, and gear.



**When you try your hand at gold panning at Carbon River Mining, reflect on how far our local miners have come.**