

# Official web site of Oregon Secretary of State

(<https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book>)

## Lewis and Clark Exposition Web Exhibit

### Introduction: Origins of the Exposition

The idea of Portland hosting a world's fair began before the turn of the century, but serious discussion among Portland's business elite began in late 1900. The centennial commemoration of the Lewis and Clark expedition was suggested as a theme, thus setting a date of 1905. Promoted originally as the commemoration of a historical event, the focus evolved to emphasize the potential of commerce with the Pacific rim and the abundant resources of the region. The exposition would also highlight the pleasures and possibilities of 20th century technology. It featured airships and automobiles, included an exhibit of infant incubators and provided a fairy-tale setting at night through the elaborate use of electricity.

Although there had been a string of expositions and fairs in the United States leading up to 1905, the Lewis and Clark Exposition was the first held in a western city. It was followed by expositions in Seattle in 1909 and San Francisco in 1915.

### Planning and Construction

The Oregon Legislature endorsed the idea of the exposition in February 1901, with a pledge of state aid. A five-member commission was appointed and directed to report on the progress at the next legislative session in 1903. In October 1901, articles of incorporation for the Lewis and Clark Centennial and American Pacific Exposition and Oriental Fair were filed with the state. A subscription stock offering quickly sold out. In early 1903 the legislature appropriated \$450,000 for an exhibition of Oregon's "...Arts, industries, manufactures, and products." A new governmental commission of ten members was appointed to "...pay for many of the necessary buildings, to obtain state and county exhibits, and to keep an eye on those running the show in Portland." Despite aggressive lobbying by the exposition's representatives the federal government did not pass legislation specifically endorsing the fair, but it did make a \$475,000 appropriation to help fund the undertaking.



Paper lithographed fan. The fan features the seal used by the fair, depicting Lewis and Clark escorted by Lady Liberty, walking "into the setting sun." (Courtesy Columbia Gorge Discovery Center)



Souvenir leather purse depicting the Art Palace at the fair.  
(Courtesy Gov. Victor Atiyeh)

After considering a number of potential sites the exposition board selected Guild's Lake in northwest Portland. It was a 400-acre parcel just beyond the edge of settlement. The Portland Railway and the City Suburban Railway companies both ran from downtown to within one block of the proposed entrance. The site included a grove of trees, 180 acres of pasture and 220-acre waist-deep lake. John Olmstead, stepson of the famed landscape architect, Fredrick Law Olmstead, was paid \$5,000 to develop a plan for the exposition grounds. The plan he developed capitalized on views of the Willamette River and Mt. St. Helens.

Ion Lewis of the Portland firm Whidden and Lewis was chosen Director of Architecture for the exposition. His firm designed five of the fair's buildings. Four other major buildings were designed by prominent Portland architects. The plans were for Spanish Renaissance buildings with domes, cupolas, arched doorways and roofs covered with red tile or paint. The major exception to this formula was the Forestry Building. Described as the world's largest log cabin or the "Timber Temple," it was constructed of unhewn logs, the largest of which were 54 feet long and five feet wide. Inside, it contained exhibits of wildlife dioramas and Oregon forest products. Its walls were decorated with 300 photographs of North American Indians by Edward S. Curtis.

The average construction cost of the buildings was 79¢ a square foot, since they were mostly plaster skins over wooden frames and not intended to be permanent structures. Their classical facades were oriented in a formal layout along wide walkways and punctuated with monumental statuary. The statues included Alice Cooper's 'Sacajawea' that today stands in Portland's Washington Park and Fredric Remington's 'Hitting the Trail,' which marked the entrance to the Sunken Garden. Electric power lines were strung to the site, and 100,000 light bulbs were used to outline every building, bridge and statue and create a spectacular nighttime effect.

## A Look at the Exposition

Visitors could catch a streetcar from downtown for a 20-minute ride to the fairgrounds, or for 10¢ they could board a steamer and ride down the Willamette River to the site. Tourists found exhibits that had taken 3 years to assemble. Twenty-one nations and 16 states participated in the exposition. Japan spent a million dollars on its exhibit, which included cases with silks, porcelains, and lanterns. Seventy-six souvenir sellers were on the grounds, along with 15 ice cream and soft drink stands and a dozen restaurants. The amusement park area was known as 'The Trail' and offered typical carnival attractions of the day, including a mirror maze and a haunted swing. More unique exhibits included the infant incubator and Professor Barnes and his educated horse and diving Elk. There were free motion pictures and concerts were performed 4 times a day. Two motor-driven blimps made excursions from the fair grounds, and on June 21 the winners of the first transcontinental auto race arrived at the site with great fanfare. Thirty-four national conventions were hosted by Portland in 1905 and there were special conferences on education, civics, Indian affairs, industrial relations, and the future of



Bronze medal with the fair seal, Lewis and Clark being escorted "into the setting sun" by Lady Liberty. (Courtesy Benton County Historical Museum)

the United States in the Orient.



Commemorative stein with  
pewter lid and thumb rests.  
(Courtesy Southern Oregon  
Historical Society)

## An Economic Success

The fair was well attended by local residents as well as people throughout the Northwest. Average daily attendance was 11,600 visitors. Admission to the fair was 50¢ for adults and 25¢ for children. Opening day, June 1, 1905, was attended by 40,000 people. Fourth of July festivities attracted over 50,000 people and Portland Day, commemorating the incorporation of the city, set attendance records with 85,149 visitors. Attendance for the fair's entire run (June 1-October 15) was an impressive 1,588,000 paid admissions. Free passes accounted for another 966,000 visits. Fully 34% of the visitors came from Portland, 40% were from elsewhere in Oregon and Washington, 16% were from California or the mountain states, and only 10% were from east of the Rockies.

The exposition company surprised even its backers by showing an operating profit. Few fairs and expositions from this era were profitable. When the corporation's business was finished in early 1906, the cash-on-hand difference between receipts and expenditures was \$84,461. The profit was distributed as a 21% return on the original capital invested by stockholders.

The real economic benefit outside the Exposition grounds was significant. Records showed that more than one million out-of-town visitors came to the fair. It is estimated that hotel revenues alone would have infused approximately \$8,000,000 into the Portland

economy during the course of the fair. This compares to \$7,000,000 that Portland's workshops and factories paid in wages in 1905. The construction of the fairgrounds was estimated to have added an additional 1,000 construction jobs alone. Real estate values in Portland increased between 25% and 50% in the year after the fair. From 1905-1911 every economic indicator reflected extraordinary prosperity.

### **Source**

This introduction is derived from *The Great Extravaganza: Portland and the Lewis and Clark Exposition* by Carl Abbott (Third edition, Oregon Historical Society, 2004).



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## Lewis and Clark Exposition Web Exhibit

This exhibit displays memorabilia from the 1905 Lewis and Clark Exposition in Portland.

### Catalogue Cover

Cover of the Official Catalogue to the Lewis and Clark Exposition. (Courtesy Oregon State Library)

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### **Agricultural Palace**

View of the Agricultural Palace. (Courtesy Al Staehli)

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### **Grand Stairway**

View of the Grand Stairway and lakefront looking across the lake to the U.S. Government Building. (Courtesy Al Staehli)

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### **Sunken Gardens**

View from the entrance through the Sunken Gardens with monumental sculpture by Fredric Remington in the foreground. (Courtesy Al Staehli)

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### Commemorative Plate

China plate depicting: Lewis, Clark, President Jefferson, the current President Theodore Roosevelt, the emblems for Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana, and a view of Portland surrounding the center image of the fair emblem. (Courtesy Gov. Victor Atiyeh)

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### **Souvenir Cigar Holder**

Souvenir cigar holder engraved with Lewis and Clark Exposition. (Courtesy Gov. Victor Atiyeh)

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### **Decorative Ribbon**

Decorative ribbon with medallion celebrating July 29th as Scandinavian Day at the fair. (Courtesy Gov. Victor Atiyeh)

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### **Letter Opener**

Brass letter opener embellished with the fair seal entitled “Into the Setting Sun.” (Courtesy Gov. Victor Atiyeh)

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## Lewis and Clark Exposition Web Exhibit

This exhibit displays memorabilia from the 1905 Lewis and Clark Exposition in Portland.

### Exposition Officers

Officers and operations directors of the Lewis and Clark Exposition Corporation, which oversaw the development and operation of the fair. A state commission worked in conjunction with the corporation to assure legislative support and accountability. (Courtesy Oregon State Library)

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### **Match Box**

Metal match safe embossed with an image of the fair's Forestry Building. (Courtesy Gov. Victor Atiyeh)

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### **Souvenir Tray**

Souvenir metal tray depicts major attractions from the fair, including the U.S. Government Building, Sunken Gardens, Forestry Building, Foreign Exhibit Building, Industrial and Liberal Arts Building, Agricultural Palace, and the Bridge of All Nations. (Courtesy Gov. Victor Atiyeh)

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### **Award Banner**

Award banner presented to Oregon Agricultural College for a “collection of birds” exhibited at the fair.  
(Courtesy Benton County Historical Museum)

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### **Commemorative Stein**

Commemorative stein with pewter lid and thumb rests. The stein incorporates several images, including Meriwether Lewis and the "Into the Setting Sun" seal. (Courtesy Southern Oregon Historical Society)

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### **Souvenir Purse**

Souvenir mother of pearl purse, imprinted with the fair name, location, and date. (Courtesy Gov. Victor Atiyeh)

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### **Souvenir Leather Purse**

Souvenir leather purse depicting the Art Palace at the fair. (Courtesy Gov. Victor Atiyeh)

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**Official Daily Program of the fair. The program included a map, schedule of events, advertisements, and other promotional information on the fair and its host city.**

**(Courtesy Oregon State Library)**

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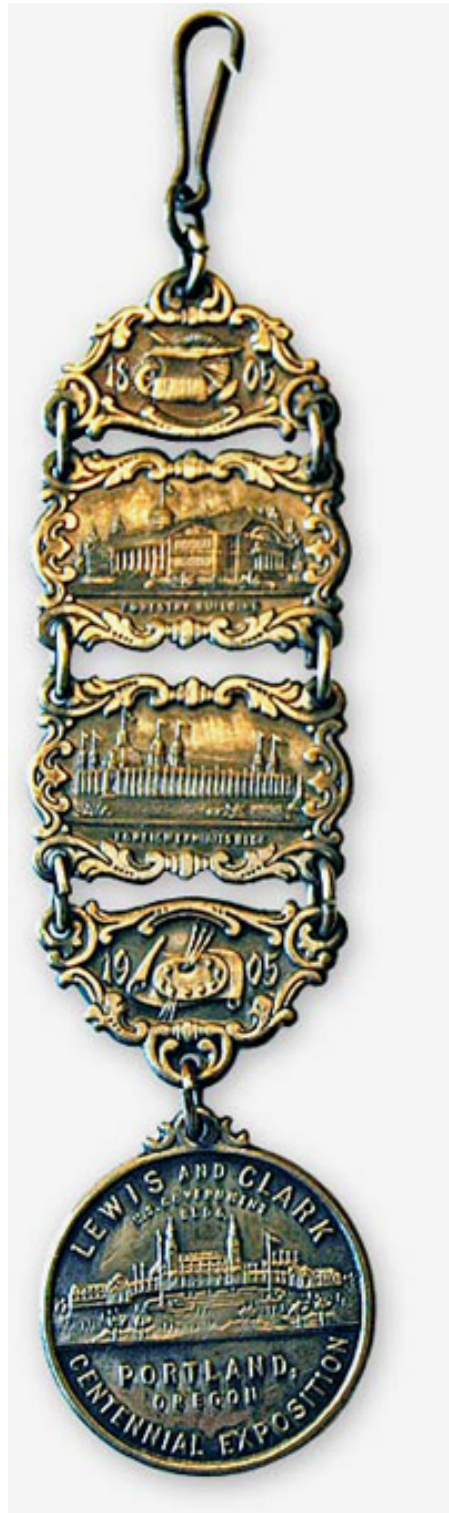
## Lewis and Clark Exposition Web Exhibit

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### Watch Fob

Souvenir watch fob depicting the Forestry Building and Foreign Exhibit Building, with a medallion of the U.S. Government Building. (Courtesy Gov. Victor Atiyeh)

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### Participant's Ribbon

Participant's ribbon for 33rd annual reunion of the Pioneer Association. Gilt braid adorns the bottom edge and an applied medallion depicts Lewis, Clark, and President Jefferson. (Courtesy Gov. Victor Atiyeh)

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This exhibit displays memorabilia from the 1905 Lewis and Clark Exposition in Portland.

### Paper Lithographed Fan

Paper lithographed fan. The fan features the seal used by the fair, depicting Lewis and Clark escorted by Lady Liberty, walking “into the setting sun.” (Courtesy Columbia Gorge Discovery Center)

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### **Porcelain Plate**

Porcelain plate with gilt decoration and transfer image of Festival Hall. (Courtesy Gov. Victor Atiyeh)

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### **Pocket Watch**

Pocket watch with an image of the fair seal “into the setting sun.” (Courtesy Gov. Victor Atiyeh)

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## Lewis and Clark Exposition Web Exhibit

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### Exposition Diploma

Officers and operations directors of the Lewis and Clark Exposition Corporation, which oversaw the development and operation of the fair. A state commission worked in conjunction with the corporation to assure legislative support and accountability. (Courtesy Oregon State Library)

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### Medal and Coin

Left: Souvenir heart shaped pin embossed with a relief of the Forestry Building. (Courtesy Gov. Victor Atiyeh) Right: Bronze medal depicting the fair seal, Lewis and Clark being escorted “into the setting sun” by Lady Liberty. (Courtesy Benton County Historical Museum)

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### Pin and Coin

Left: Souvenir pin back button commemorating Oakland and Alameda County Day at the fair. (Courtesy Gov. Victor Atiyeh) Right: Souvenir coin portraying Lewis and Clark in profile wearing expedition apparel. (Courtesy Columbia Gorge Discovery Center)

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### Wooden Shingle Plaque

Wooden shingle plaque depicting the fair's Forestry Building, the "world's largest log cabin."  
(Courtesy Southern Oregon Historical Society)

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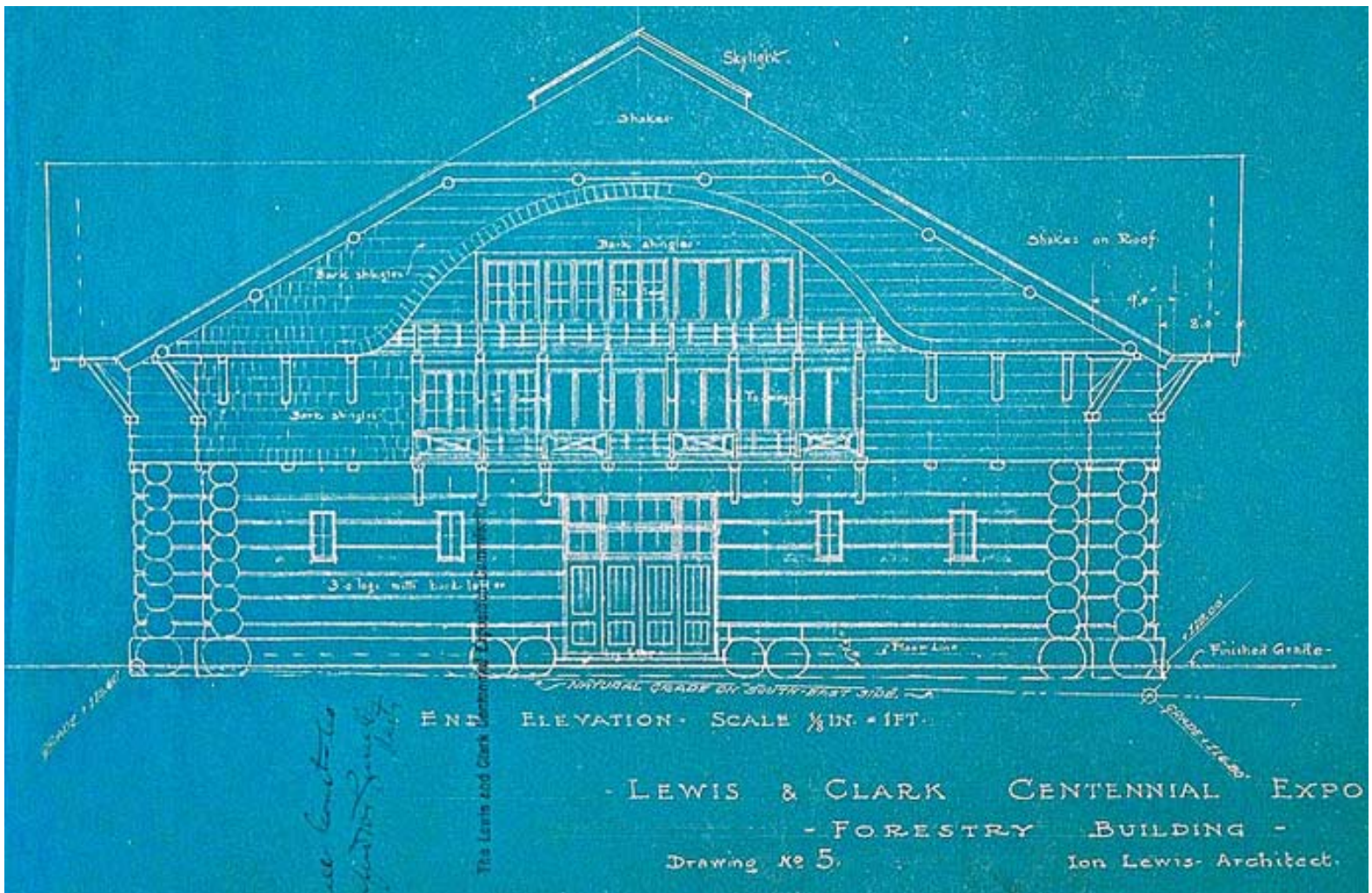
## Lewis and Clark Exposition Web Exhibit

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### Forestry Building

Architectural drawing of the Forestry Building designed by Portland architect Ion Lewis. Billed as the world's largest log cabin, the structure measured 105 feet by 209 feet and was constructed completely of unhewn logs. The largest foundation logs weighed 32 tons and measured 54 feet in length by 5 feet across. Fire destroyed the building in 1964. (Oregon State Archives Image)

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### **Panoramic View**

Panoramic view of the fairgrounds. The Forestry Building depicted in the middle stands out because of its brown color. The U.S. Government Building is shown to the left across the lake. The sprawling fair covered 400 acres of what is now an industrial area in Northwest Portland. (Courtesy Al Staehli)

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### **Fairgrounds Illustration**

Cover image from the “Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition Illustrated” showing a view of the fairgrounds looking back from the Lake View Terrace. The bandstand, depicted in the lower left, is now located on the grounds of the Deepwood Estate in Salem. (Courtesy Al Staehli)

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