

# GRAND CENTENNIAL PARADE OF PROGRESS

OLYMPIA, WASHINGTON  
Saturday, May 6, 1950  
11:30 AM



*"Olympians have much to be thankful for as their city enters its second century. But as we celebrate, let us pause long enough to pay tribute to the memories of the pioneers who founded and started the development of a place which is home to 18,000 people - and to reflect that no city grows and improves without intelligent planning - and hard work."*

The Daily Olympian May 1, 1950

As you walk through Downtown Olympia on this spring day, you are likely to pass a log cabin and a stockade, farmers and lumberjacks with long beards, Native Americans wearing fringed buckskin, and pioneer women in sun bonnets and calico. You'll hear the clip clop of horses hooves and wooden wagon wheels rolling down the street. You might sit at a whittling bench, leaning up against an old tree, or head down to the water's edge and enter a "teepee" for a meal of steamed clams. But the frontier mood will soon be interrupted by the roar of a low-flying airplane, reminding you that the year is 1950, and Olympia's 100th birthday celebration is underway. The log cabin serves as Centennial Headquarters, the stockade is part of the Boy Scout float, and the old tree trunk you leaned up against is a parking meter covered by bark, courtesy of the lumber companies. The woman in the sun bonnet stands next to a teenage girl wearing modern clothes and saddle shoes, and the steamed clams you enjoyed are a fundraiser for the Junior Chamber of Commerce.

This is the sixth day of a week-long event which has brought record crowds to the capital city: 75,000 people have come to celebrate a historic milestone that began a century ago, when Edmund Sylvester staked out a few streets and named this place Olympia.

The Daily Olympian spent countless hours preparing a special edition to commemorate the city's century, and even though they printed twice as many copies as usual last Monday, the newspapers sold out almost as soon as they hit the stands. For now anyway, Olympians can't seem to get enough of local history. This week has been a whirlwind of activities, music, sports and shows, starting last Monday with the "Bunion Derby." At 7AM, 126 men and women took part in a footrace from the Spar Restaurant in Aberdeen to the Spar in Olympia, 48 miles and many hours away.

Today, all eyes are on the Grand Centennial Parade of Progress, which began at 11:00 AM down at the Armory. Since it is Armed Forces Day, a military color guard leads the procession while Navy and Air Force planes offer an aerial salute. Floats depicting the Indian War and the Territorial Capitol are followed by an early beer delivery wagon and an entry featuring bathing suits through time. Modes of transportation run the gamut from prairie schooners and an old hearse, to a logging locomotive and a steam powered fire engine. Lewis, Clark and Sacagawea greet the crowds, and the world's biggest fry pan, brought in from Long Beach, moves down the street. The lumber companies are well represented, with the Simpson Tree Planter clown entertaining the children, and the float sponsored by Saint Paul and Tacoma Lumber Company featuring white doves and a giant cake topped with 100 candles.

Besides the parade, you can take an excursion around Budd Inlet on the historic steamer Virginia V, visit the classic and modern car show on 9th and Capitol or tour the plywood plants at the port. You can ride the Octopus and the Dipper at the midway on 5th by the new Memorial Clinic, or take one of the surrey fringed busses to the airport to watch the air show. Down on Water Street between 5th and 7th, volunteers have created a "Street of Yesterday" where you can pose for an old-fashioned tintype picture, listen to a travelling medicine show, sample some of Olympia's famous oyster stew or watch silent movies at the Nickelodeon.

You can also take in a double feature starring Bob Hope at the Capitol Theater, buy a bestseller at Anna Blom's bookstore, get a nickel cone at Watson's Rexall soda fountain or bowl a game at Harbst Lanes on 4th.

When darkness falls tonight, huge crowds will gather again under the floodlights at Steven's Field for an encore performance of the extravaganza known as "The Olympian Century." This historical pageant which was months in the making, features almost 1,000 men, women and children, in costume, performing on three stages and using five different backdrops. A single narrator will recount the stories of Olympia's past, and in the background the Olympia High School drama coach will try to keep some order among the largest cast ever assembled in the town's history. After the pageant, all are invited back downtown to join in the street dance on 7th, complete with fiddle music and a square dance caller.

Olympians are enjoying their look back this week, but a number of projects currently underway are steering the city rapidly toward the future. On the isthmus by the Fourth Avenue Bridge, you can view the final stages of the Deschutes Basin Project. Capitol Lake, which has been a dream for decades, is about to become a reality. The shacks of Little

Hollywood have been gone for some time and soon the saltwater mud flats will be covered by a fresh water lake. The dam, fill, spillway and fish ladder are done, but work continues on the control house. They are also working on a parkway that will stretch along the west side of the currently-named "Deschutes Lake" to Tumwater. City officials predict the lake will be full and reflecting its surroundings by the end of summer. Some are hopeful it will one day boast a public swimming area.

However today, the beaches out at Priest Point Park have been closed to public swimming due to the raw sewage that is still being released into Budd Inlet. Efforts to build Olympia's first city-wide primary sewage treatment system began about a year ago and will be in progress for some time. When the project is completed, sewage will flow by gravity and pumps to a central facility between A and B Avenues on the east side of the port fill, where the material will be treated and then released in a 5,000 foot long pipe to deep water.

In the last two years the city has enjoyed the benefits of its new water system which now originates east of town at McAllister Springs. The capital can also boast three paved runways at the Olympia Municipal Airport, where West Coast Airlines operates eight flights a day. In contrast, the old Northern Pacific train depot at the foot of 7th Avenue has scaled back its passenger service to one trip to Seattle each day.

Throughout Olympia's 100 years, it has been clear that builders, planners, government officials and private citizens can change a city over time, but on April 13, 1949, Washington's capital learned that Mother Nature can change a city in a matter of seconds...45 to be exact. At 11:57 AM on Wednesday, downtown Olympia rumbled with a magnitude 7.1 earthquake which would later be recorded as the century's largest for the region. The tremor killed 2 people in Olympia, and caused eleven buildings to immediately be boarded up and declared unsafe. The landmark Kneeland Hotel was one of the casualties, and today the site is under construction with plans for Goldberg's Furniture to rise up three stories. The stately Richardson Romanesque capitol building on Sylvester Park lost 10 of its 12 turrets, and the top of Washington Veneer's giant smokestack collapsed onto the port fill. The historic Chambers Building and Labor Temple lost their signature bay windows, and the ornamental cornice and sidewalk canopy of the Reed Block crumbled. Due to all the debris from the quake, 4th Avenue and State Street were temporarily made one way streets, (and never changed back). Surprisingly, the terra cotta griffins still stand atop the Security Building with wings extended. Nancy Flynn and the seven cub scouts who had climbed to the Capitol dome cupola when the quake hit,

will be recounting their adventure for decades to come.

Edmund Sylvester's house survived the quake, and though it has been expanded, the third story tower remains unchanged. However the historic block that Edmund once called his own is now shared by a gas station, a Greyhound Bus Depot and the Art Deco style Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Building. Some of the new buildings in town have a streamlined look such as Miller's Department Store, while others reflect the Art Moderne style such as the Spar Restaurant and new State Theater on 4th, or the Rockway-Leland Building on Washington.

The Olympia School District just opened the new Roosevelt School last fall and hopes to have McKinley Elementary ready for students in September. Olympia High School on Capitol Way accommodates all 1,400 high school students in the region and is currently bursting at the seams.

In these post World War II days of the baby boom generation, and the start of suburban living and television watching, Harry Truman is America's president and Arthur B. Langlie is governor of Washington. The population in Olympia today is approximately 16,300, with another 2,200 in Tumwater. Lacey is a small community with a plywood mill, and plans for a drive-in movie theater run by the Zabel Family. Olympia Mayor Ernest Mallory goes to work at City Hall which still shares the building at State and Capitol Way with the fire and police departments.

Since the last scene, the number of car owners have more than doubled in Olympia and heavy traffic downtown is a daily occurrence. U. S. 99, the main north-south highway of the West Coast states goes through Olympia along Capitol Way, straining city streets. In addition, Highways 101 and 410, both leading out to the Coast, travel through the city and across the 4th Avenue bridge. Martin Way, a four lane highway from Fort Lewis to Olympia opened about 13 years ago. However, traffic patterns will change dramatically when the planned Interstate 5 Freeway opens eight years from now. Though the project will bypass downtown Olympia, it will cut a swath through the center of Tumwater's urban district.

Today, with all the local and cross-state traffic converging downtown, the topic of more parking is frequently discussed. In five years, the State will propose plans for underground parking below Sylvester Park. But a woman in the town square today named Margaret McKenny will successfully argue to protect the historic site. Margaret is talking with a young man named Robert Chamberlain and encouraging him to enroll in art school. Others in the park today, like Gordon Newell and Leonard Huber have been actively involved in the current Centennial celebration. Gordon just published a book about Olympia's history titled

So Fair A Dwelling Place, and Leonard is awaiting the arrival of the prize-winning daffodil float he created. From the viewing platform, Peter G. Schmidt, president of the Olympia Brewery, enjoys the parade and remembers the days when his company used horse drawn delivery wagons.

The two women on the eastern edge of the park are Amanda Smith and Winnie Olsen. Both will be strong role models for South Sound women in the 1950s: Amanda as Olympia's first woman mayor, and Winnie as a leader in education, and children's commentator on KGY radio.

Ralph Stormans, who runs the popular Ralph's Food Center behind Penney's, passes by the site of the old gazebo and fishpond in the park. Constant maintenance of the pond became a burden and it was agreed to have it filled in and covered with grass.

The Chamber of Commerce has just announced its two main goals for next year: 1) to make Olympia a regional center for the buying and selling of farm products and 2) to encourage more Fort Lewis employees to shop and live in Olympia. They remind everyone that agriculture is *still* the region's number one industry, and that Fort Lewis is currently the fourth largest population center in Washington State. Olympia's weekly newspaper The Olympia News offered another suggestion for the city: to build some public restrooms, since there are currently none. An added concern that will escalate in the next few years, is the movement of State agency headquarters from Olympia to Seattle. George Funk, a local lawyer, is discussing the economic impact of this worrisome trend with jeweler Noyes Talcott who is vice president of the Centennial committee.

The port area and West Bay Drive are bustling industrial centers where sawmills, fuel companies, welding and cement plants provide jobs. The cannery has expanded to both sides of Capitol Way connected by an aerial walkway. St. Paul and Tacoma Lumber Co. which took over Olympia Veneer four years ago has doubled its plywood production in that time. More than 200 ships will dock at Olympia's port this year, loading lumber off barges from the nearby mills and taking them to distant markets. In addition, the new cold storage plant offers farmers a place to store their produce until ready for shipment. In the distance on Budd Inlet, you can see the postwar "mothball fleet" of almost 100 surplus navy ships...a decidedly different look than the tall-masted brigs of early days.

Today the pages of Olympia's next century book lie unwritten and waiting. It's a time to look back with pride, and forward to tonight, when the floodlights will come on at Stevens Field and 1,000 friends, neighbors, parents, and kids will stand in costume and begin to tell the stories of this place we call home.