1962 Plans for a World Fair started as the hope of local boosters to put Seattle on the map. It was a sign of civic zeitgeist and forward-facing optimism that so many buildings could be erect-

Observation Deck

Revolving SkyCity Restaurant In 1962, dinner and a cocktail averaged \$7.50 per person.

# (1) Washington State Coliseum

FAIR

**NORLD'S** 

ed in such a short time and

that we would invite

dazzling six-month show.

What was built on the fairgrounds

creating a lasting gathering place.

was all about the future of Seattle -

BUILDING TORN

DOWN AFTER FAIR

the world to our

doorstep for a

World of Tomorrow exhibit showing a high-tech future (2) Flag Pavilion Flags from every state in the nation (3) Food Circus More than 50 concessions and the world's largest cake (4) Christian Pavilion and Children's Activities for 3- to 7-year-olds (5) United States Science Pavilion Six-acre science-themed pavilion (6) IBM Pavilion omputer display (7) The Bell System exhibit History and future of communication (8) General Electric Living exhibit Model West Coast home displaying electronic products of the future (9) Pavilion of Electric Power 40-foot-high model of a hydroelectric dam (10) Home of Living Light Model home featuring flexible wood paneling and movable skylights (11) State of Alaska building Exhibit of Alaska's social and economic history (12) Ford Motor Co. Pavilion Simulated rocketship ride and futuristic car called the Seattle-ite XX1 (13) Fashion Pavilion Fashion shows with models on "lily pads" on a perfumed pool (14) Monorail 1.2-mile track running between the fair and downtown (15) Gayway Rides and amusements (16) Hawaiian Pavilion Hawaiian food and entertainment (17) Memorial Stadium Temporary water stage for water skiing and ski boat shows (18) Show Street Adult entertainment (19) Opera House Variety of theater performances (20) Fine Arts Pavilion Works from Jackson Pollock, Georgia O'Keefe, Morris Graves, Monet and more (21) Union 76 Skytrain Cable-supported cars that ran above the fair (22) Boulevards of the World and International Fountain

Ethnic food booths and a fountain synchronized to music (23) International Mall Exhibits from countries around the world (24) International Plaza More exhibits from other countries

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE It could have been a very zany

**Broad Street** 

place. In Seattle Center's 40 years, proposals have surfaced to add an aquarium with a killer whale show, rifle ranges, a bungee-jumping tower, retail chain stores, an antique car museum and more.

Collectively, Seattle Center gets 10 million visitors a year and offers more than 5,400 performances, events and meetings annually, includ- of a steep slope, surrounded by ing 11 cultural festivals.

"I don't know of another place that has the mix of people and things and interests," says Virginia Anderson, director of Seattle Center for the past 13 years.

Another thing that characterizes this place is an unpretentious mixing of all social classes, according to local historian Walt Crowley.

"That's its magic," he says. "It's a class-free zone where the hoity-toity and the hoi polloi can mingle. And that's part of the traditional character died in 1993 and when John Lennon of Seattle."

The International Fountain is the emotional center of the Center,

like a beat-

ing heart.

On seasonable days, it's a magnet for small bodies to run through water streaming from its 283 jets and around its big silver orb. Larger bodies often watch with envy or toss Frisbees, play Hacky Sack and juggle on the surrounding green lawn.

It wasn't always so inviting. Water used to spout from sharp spikes, and the fountain hunkered at the bottom jagged rocks and signs that read, "Danger: Keep Out." A 1995 remodel made it people-friendly.

The fountain, and the rest of Seattle Center, is sometimes imbued with more serious purpose – as an epicenter for political action and collective grief.

It drew thousands of people and mountains of flowers for a moving community vigil following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. It was a gathering spot when Nirvana's Kurt Cobain was killed in 1980.

In the past,

such expressions and demonstrations at Seattle Center were more frequent, including a 1968 procession in tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and Vietnam War protests.

But locals and visitors are drawn to Seattle Center largely for fun and entertainment.

KeyArena is home to two professional basketball teams, the Seattle SuperSonics (1979 NBA champions) and the WNBA's Seattle Storm. It also doubles as one of Seattle's largest venues for concerts, drawing major recording stars.

The Fun Forest, originally dubbed the Gayway during the fair, offers amusement rides and an indoor arcade. There are rarely lines to hop on a gravity-defying roller coaster or the Jetspin – year-round, day or night. And while rides cost \$3 to \$4 each, it's the only amusement park in Seattle, complete with bright, flashing lights.

Seattle Center also has quiet spaces and little-known treasures, such as the massive bronze bell that was a gift from Seattle's sister city, Kobe, Japan, in 1962. It is housed under a curved-roof pavilion, and next to it stands a cherry tree planted by then crown prince and now Emperor Akihito.

The newest major project to be completed at the Center is the Experience Music Project, whose shiny iridescent architecture, designed by visionary Frank Gehry, undulates along Fifth Avenue. EMP offers music exhibits, history, performances and hands-on music making in high-tech studios.

## Background Built in 1962 for the World's Fair, the Space Needle was then the tallest building west of the Mississippi River. It has become Seattle's No. 1 tourist attraction averaging more than 1 million visitors each year. It took 400 days to complete the Needle. The original cost of construction was \$4.5 million. In 2000, a \$21 million revitalization was completed that included the pavilion-level Space Base retail store, SkyCity restaurant and Observation Deck redesign, Legacy Light installation, new lighting and painting.

Skyline Banque Facility Built in 1982

SpaceBase Retail store

Origins The Space Needle started as a scribble on a paper placemat in Stuttgart, Germany, by Eddie Carlson, a hotel executive who wanted an icon for the World's Fair. The privately-owned Space Needle is the most popular tourist attraction in Seattle, with more than 1 million visitors annually. Getting to the top A ride to the top of the Needle was \$1 in 1962. Now it's \$11 for adults.

Name game The 605-foot-tall landmark and paean to the future was originally called "The Space Cage."

Jumps There have been six parachute jumps off the Needle; two of them were unauthorized. In the '70s, before protective barriers were added, one person leapt to his death from it.

# From prairie to thriving complex: The evolution of the Center grounds

BY KRISTIN DIZON P-I reporter

POSTCARD FROM 19t.

Seattle Center started as a plain next to marshy swamp. Natives crossed it to get between shoreline villages on Elliott Bay and Lake Union and probably hunted birds there. Later known as "the

prairie," it became the home and grounds of David and Louisa Denny, one of Seattle's first pioneer couples. In 1881, one of the city's top saloonkeepers, James Osbore, died and left Seattle \$20,000

to build a civic hall, if the city

could come up with matching

the city built the Civic Auditorium on Mercer Street. Since it was started with funds from a Skid Road watering hole, it was sometimes called "The House That Suds Built." The auditorium was transformed into the Opera House in 1962.

funds. It wasn't until 1928 that

Built during the Depression were the Civic Ice Arena and Civic Field, a rocky site of professional baseball and football games and a memorable

prizefight. In 1946, Civic Field was bulldozed. Taking its place was Seattle High School Memorial World War II.

housed tanks and an indoor

500 feet, 94.5-foot diameter

MARKELLING MARK 520 feet SPANNAN ITTANK 138-foot diameter

111111111111111111

The last of the original elevators arrived just one day before the Fair began April 21,1962, which was also the day the Space Needle opened. New elevators were installed in 1993 and can go up to 10 mph. A trip from ground level to the top takes 43 seconds.

Elevato

TIME-WARP TRIVIA FOR THE SPACE NEEDLE

A bit wacky One group believes that the Space Needle was constructed to send transmissions to extraterrestrials in other solar systems.

Elevators The Space Needle's elevators travel 14 feet per second, or about as fast as a raindrop falls to earth. For every 10 mph of wind, the Needle sways about an inch. Theoretically, it can handle gusts up to 200 mph.

Restaurant The Needle's revolving restaurant, now called SkyCity, was only the second rotating eatery in the world when it first opened.

Just across the street is good viewing of skaters catching air on the concrete bowls at the Seattle Center

Skate Park, added in 2000. The Center's, and the city's, most popular attraction is the privately owned, 605-foot-tall Space Needle, Seattle's most recognized icon and scene setter. More than 1 million people a year zip up the 10 mphelevators to take in panoramic views of the city below and Puget Sound, Mount Rainier and the Cascade and Olympic mountain ranges beyond from the observation deck or to dine in the rotating SkyCity restaurant (at

the 500-foot level). Seattle Center is also a major font

of the arts. Until 2003, performances of the renowned Seattle Opera and refined Pacific Northwest Ballet are in the made-over Mercer Arts Arena. The Opera House is undergoing a major renovation and will be reborn in the summer of 2003 as the Marion Oliver McCaw Hall, with seating for 2,890. The Seattle Repertory Theatre was

started in 1963 and celebrates its 40th season this fall and spring. Winner of a 1990 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theater, the non-profit Rep produces a mix of classics, adaptations, contemporary plays and premieres.

Intiman Theatre, currently celebrating its 30th anniversary, came to the Center in 1987. In 1991, it premiered "The Kentucky Cycle," the first play produced outside of New York City to win a Pulitzer Prize. The 446-seat

Intiman Playhouse stages seven plays each season, with an emphasis on

# classics.

**Broad Street** 

For younger audiences and families, the Seattle Children's Theatre is nationally known and has produced more original works than any other major theater group in the state.

Kids also will enjoy the Children's Museum, which puts exhibits at eye-level and offers many handson activities in art, technology and world cultures.

Another place for people of any age to explore their curiosities is the Pacific Science Center, several buildings connected by reflecting pools and five distinct arches. It features interactive exhibits on everything from dinosaurs to physics, as well as two Imax theaters, a laser show and a planetarium.

If hunger starts to gnaw at you while exploring, casual dining awaits at the food court in Seattle Center House. During the 1962 World's Fair, it was dubbed the Food Circus. Today it has a few sit-down eateries and inexpensive food counters, many heavy on the grease or

sugar

This summer, the AT&T Outdoor Cinema comes to the Mural Amphitheater. Seattle skies don't always cooperate, but the wide, grassy green is a great place to take in a movie.

Or kick up your heels at an oldfashioned Saturday-night dance with a big band. Swing, salsa, waltzes,

cha-cha, tango and more fill the Seattle Center House as you sway and dip among couples of all ages and dress. The music starts at 8 p.m. (\$7 per person), and there's a 7 p.m. lesson (\$3 per person or \$5 per couple, that also gets you into the dance).



for everyone. And it's never static. It's a place that will keep changing and evolving with the rest of the city, says Center director Anderson "Who knows what it'll be 30 to 40

years from now?" she said.

P-I reporter Kristin Dizon can be eached at 206-448-8118 or kristindizon@seattlepi.com

Stadium, dedicated to local youth who'd lost their lives in

The Seattle Center House got its start in 1939 when the Washington State National Guard built the bunkerlike Armory. Seattle's third armory

firing range until its 1962 World's Fair makeover as the Food Circus. After organizers of the

World's Fair chose the Civic Auditorium and surrounding area as the site of the Century 21 Exposition, houses, apartment buildings and small busi-

nesses were razed to make way for the fairgrounds.

Cobbled together with federal, state, city and private money, the fair commission built amenities that still exist today, though many of their appearances are different. Other features, such as gon-

dolas running on cable above the fairgrounds, were only temporary. An advisory commission was set up to decide what would become of the site. Some attractions were razed, others sold and many were transformed. In 1983, Seattle Repertory

Theatre built the Bagley Wright Theatre, the first major new building constructed since the World's Fair. In 1993, the Seattle Children's Theatre rose north of the Pacific Science Center. In 2000, a skate park and the Experience Music Project went up, both

on Fifth Avenue

Currently, the Opera House is receiving a major overhaul as the Marion Oliver McCaw Hall, and the Flag Pavilion will be reborn next fall as Fisher Pavilion, with a rooftop plaza and an indoor space for cultural festivals.

BUILDING CONSTRUCTED AFTER FAIR

Home of the Su Thunderbirds a concerts and other events (2) Pottery Northwest Community pottery studio

> in fall 2002 (4) Seattle Children's Theatre children

5) Seattle Center House/ The Children's Museum Food, retail shops and public 6) Mural Amphitheater

(7) Pacific Science Center/ Boeing Imax Theater planetarium, and laser light shows arcade

Rides and amusements with restaurant, lounge, live

(11) Memorial Stadium Sounders and high school sports (12) Skate Park

8,900-square-foot outdoor park (13) Nate McMillan Basketball Court Outdoor basketball court (14) KCTS Television (15) Mercer Arts Arena Temporary venue for Pacific Northwest Ballet and Seattle Opera (16) Marion Oliver McCaw Hall (under construction) Future venue for Pacific Northwest Ballet and Seattle Opera scheduled to open in summer 2003 (17) Intiman Playhouse

Performance hall for classical and contemporary plays (18) Seattle Repertory Theatre Two stages, Bagley Wright and Leo K. theatres, for plays, educational programs and workshops (19) The International Fountain Renovated in 1995

(20) Monorail Extends into EMP

DAVID BADDERS/SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER



Today, the structures that comprise Seattle Center are often derisively referred to as a hodgepodge of architecture without any coherent style. But, with 10 million visitors and more than 5,300 free events a year, Seattle Center is still this city's cherished gathering

longer a tribute and a pathway to the future, but a place where the community comes together to play, be entertained and, sometimes, to grieve.

Home of the Supersonics, Storm and Thunderbirds as well as a venue for

(3) Fisher Pavilion (under construction) Festival pavilion for community gatherings and shows, scheduled to open

Performances, classes and workshops for

events/galleries, studio spaces and educational activities for children Outdoor performances, festivals and films Interactive science exhibits, a tropical butterfly house, two IMAX theaters, a

(8) Fun Forest Entertainment Pavilion Rides, laser tag, mini golf and video (9) Fun Forest Amusement Park

(10) Experience Music Project (EMP) Paul Allen's interactive music museum performances and event venues in building designed by Frank O. Gehry Concert venue and home field of Seattle

Sources: www.historylink.org, Seattle Center, Space Needle