

SEATTLE CENTER - History

The vicinity of the present International Fountain and Memorial Stadium was the site for many years of ancient tribal ceremonies of the Indians and was known to them as "Potlatch Meadows". During "pioneer days" of the white man, it became the site for traveling carnivals and fairs, referred to as "the circus grounds".

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In 1900 the City paid \$3,407 for delinquent taxes on many properties in the area accrued by the City due to defalcation of the ex-City Treasurer, Adolph Krug. Then in 1910, a portion of this property, now the site of the International Foutain, was transferred to the jurisdiction of the Park Commissioners for Park and Playground purposes, plus o ther property condemned to "square off" the area: developed as "Mercer Playground."

In 1927, the Civic Auditorium was erected to the south of the playground and the Civic Ballfield with wooden bleachers. In 1929, the Park Department was authorized to plant shrubs, etc., about the site. During 1938-39, the basement of the Auditorium (now the Display Hall) was used as a Recreation Center with WPA leaders under Park supervision. After a long, heated controversy, the City Council in 1945 decided to replace the rotted grandstand at Civic Field with the new Memorial High School Stadium. (Some of the Park Board favored Lower Woodland for this facility.)

In 1960, a 74-acre area that included the above facilities was condemned for the purpose of a World's Fair "Century 21" - 1962. The Civic Auditorium was rebuilt into the Opera House; the National Guard Armory was leased for the "Food Circus" and the "International Bazaar"; the International Fountain "plays on"; the Mercer Playground; the Space Needle; Yamasaki's outstanding Science Pavilion; Exhibition Hall; the Playhouse; "Kobe Bell"; and the Coliseum were constructed and a "Gayway" (amusement rides and shows) installed; landscape design by Lawrence Halprin, San Francisco.

After the fair, the entire 74 acres were remodeled for a Seattle Center, including retention of the amusement rides (replacing the "Playland" sold in 1961 for purposes of Bitter Lake PF; an earlier one was "Luna Park" at Duwamish Head in West Seattle, destroyed by fire in 1931). Landscaping of the Center was modified by Richard Haag, U.W. And discussion about the Memorial Stadium returned - to relocate it!

In 1964 maintenance of the landscaping (exclusive of street trees) became a Park Department responsibility. In 1967 the Space Needle (a privately owned property) plantings were included in the maintenance.

6/10/68

