

# A QUICK HISTORY OF THE PIKE PLACE MARKET

The Pike Place Market is one of the oldest continuously-operating farmers markets in the United States. It started August 17, 1907 as an experiment by the City of Seattle. Its mission: to create a public place where farmers could sell their fresh produce directly to local shoppers instead of to middlemen or wholesale “commission houses.”

With the new open-air public market, farmers could get more money for their goods, and local shoppers could “meet the producer” and buy fresh produce at good prices.

Only about ten farmers came to the Pike Place with their wagons full of fresh produce on the rainy morning of opening day, August 17, 1907. But there were thousands of shoppers waiting to buy—thanks to publicity in the Seattle Daily Times newspaper—and all the farmers sold out by lunchtime.

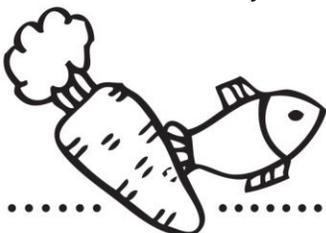
The Market’s location was chosen because of its closeness to trolley transfer points in the central part of downtown. One of the first construction projects in the Market was to cover the sidewalks to keep shoppers out of the rain.

The Market’s popularity spread quickly—within a week 70 farmers sold at the Market, and by the early 1930s, over 600 farmers sold their homegrown produce on Market stalls. They sold everything from fresh eggs and butter, to fruits, vegetables, flowers, and live poultry.

Market stalls and shops grew around the city’s sidewalks in the 1910s. Soon there were bakeries, butcher shops, fish markets, flower shops, and restaurants that represent the Market’s many cultures. Today, countries like Italy, China, the Philippines, Japan, Greece, Turkey, France, Mexico, Bolivia, Germany, and many others are a part of the Market. Many in Seattle’s immigrant communities, such as the Sephardic Jewish community from Turkey, started businesses without many resources.

The Market was well known as a community center as well as a place to buy inexpensive food, even during the Great Depression in the 1930s. There was a dance hall, a post office, and a branch of the Seattle Public Library here.

Sadly, during the 1940s and 1950s the bustling Market started to lose business. During World War II, starting in April 1942, about half the Market’s farmers were evacuated to internment camps because they were Japanese-American; many of them lost their lands permanently. In addition, much of the best farmlands in the Seattle area were bought by new business and industry, and new suburban supermarkets began to entice the many families moving away from the city. People now had automobiles and refrigerators, meaning they could now live away from downtown and not do their shopping every day. With few



farmers and downtown shoppers left to use the Market, it lost its bustling energy, and its buildings started to fall apart.

Because of its prime location, new development plans were suggested for the Market in the 1960s, and in 1971, the people of Seattle were asked to choose: Keep the old Market, or develop a new one. With the help of a local citizens' action group called Friends of the Market, Seattle voters voted to renovate and preserve the old Market, and it became a national historic district. Buildings were fixed to look much like they did long ago. Tradition lives on, not only in the physical look of the Market, but also through the activities and products in the Market.

The looks and uses of the Market are preserved and protected because of city regulations overseen by the Market Historical Commission. Human interactions give customers a chance to continue the "Meet the Producer" tradition.

In 1973, the city government created the Pike Place Market Preservation and Development Authority (PDA) to be the organization that manages most properties in the historic district. The city's charter for the PDA continues to guide the operations of the Market.

In November 2008, the citizens of Seattle voted to pay for needed renovations to electrical, plumbing, structural and mechanical systems in the Market. Work began in spring 2009 and finished in late spring 2012.

Currently the Market is involved with how the neighboring waterfront will look in the future. Plans are to connect the Market and the waterfront through sloped walkways and new development where a parking lot exists today.

To see important years in the Market's history, see the Market Timeline:  
<http://www.pikeplacemarket.org/history>.

