

McMENAMINS



Built to last just six months, this venerable structure has defied the odds and stood for more than 100 years! The quirky-looking building has been witness and host to extraordinary things, both sacred and profane. And while the vast majority of its brethren buildings from Portland's World's Fair have long since disappeared, this domed landmark stands poised, recharged for a second century.

Ten decades of renovations, patch jobs, and redecorations may have muted the building's original architectural opulence, but a raw current still churns in the dome room and an eclectic charm welcomes throughout. Please join us in raising a glass to

its longevity, as well as the remarkable people and episodes that have given the place its deep well of personality. And take some time to look at the many photos throughout the building that reveal various chapters of its past.

The National Cash Register Company (NCR) constructed the building for the 1905 Lewis and Clark Exposition, the World's Fair that drew more than two million visitors to Northwest Portland over a six-month period. Adorned with such flourishes as a cupola, pillared portico, colorful flags, and a tall, goddess-like statue, the miniature palace-like structure attracted tens of thousands of fair-goers to the company's presentations about modern employee relations. A key feature of the program was the screening of a short movie, the first that many people had ever seen.

When the fair closed, most of the pavilions and exhibits were razed, burned or dismantled. The ornate auditorium, however, escaped that fate when NCR donated the building to the First Congregational Church of St. Johns. Early in 1906, the domed structure was barged down the Willamette River to St. Johns, and hauled by horse teams up Richmond Street to its current location.



NCR's majestic little pavilion stood on Portland's fair grounds, 1905. *Courtesy a Montgomery County Ohio Historical Society.*

The Congregationalists gave the place a healthy remodel, removing its secular trappings and adding a pulpit and large, arched windows, including two of stained glass. In time, the sloping auditorium floor was leveled, the front portico enclosed, and a rectangular back wing was added.

Despite its handsome new house of worship, the First Congregational Church failed to sustain a loyal membership. Over a tempestuous quarter century, parishioners were lost to the temptations of St. Johns' saloons, billiard halls, and traveling evangelists. Of course, the church's first pastor did not set much of an



After the fair, the pavilion was barged to St. Johns and converted to a church. *OHS# CN 01029*

example. In the middle of one of his Sunday services, he was accused by a fellow preacher of being a traitor and wife stealer. *The Oregonian* called the sordid tale one of the biggest scandals in Northwest church history.

The First Congregational Church of St. Johns did not survive its various challenges and in 1931 the domed building became home to the St. Johns Lutheran Church.



By 1949, the church had lost a little off the top and filled out some around the middle. OHS, CrIII# 100852.

The Lutherans enjoyed a much more stable, fulfilling experience at the former NCR auditorium. For two decades, they kept the building brimming with activity--weekly services, Sunday School, Bible School, Fellowship, weddings, and other church functions. The only persistent problem faced by the Lutherans during this time was a perpetually leaky roof, the result of their removal of the cupola that originally topped the dome. When the Lutherans outgrew the unusual church building, many members were reluctant to leave. Despite their protests, however, the old dome was deconsecrated on New Year's Day, 1951.

The new owner, American Legion Post #98, would spend nearly four decades in the building--longer than anyone else (so far). Aside from their regular

meetings and special events, the Legionnaires leased out the hall for other functions, including programs like Mrs. Burley's School of Dance and rollicking wakes conducted by the local Gypsy community. Surprisingly, the event that caused the greatest stir was bingo. A torrid controversy erupted when thousands of dollars were discovered missing from the winnings of the Legion's bingo games. Fingers were pointed, but the money was never recovered.

The bingo fiasco depleted the Legion Post's building repair funds, prompting the sale of the decaying landmark. There to breathe new life into the place was Al Salazar. He had discovered the captivating building while campaigning in St. Johns for his mayoral run in 1988. Salazar lost his election bid, but succeeded in initiating a new chapter in the Legend of the Dome. He redecorated with an eclectic mix of chandeliers, mounted antlers, and concert posters leftover from his Pine Street Theater, added Guinness on tap, and called it Duffy's Irish Pub. Music became a main attraction of Salazar's curiosity shop. The acoustics of the domed room--as designed by NCR--were still rich and crisp. Some compared it to being inside an old guitar.

Since 1998, McMenamins has been continuing the fun beneath the dome. To cap off the first century, we returned movies to the building for the first time since its World's Fair debut. With an eye towards the pub's great past, we hope you help us create many new adventures in its second century.



Though much about the building has changed since 1905, the dome still elicits a feeling of wonder, just as it did during the World's Fair.