East Portland Waterfront, 1898

By H.A. Hale

Here, Mt. Hood rises behind the East Portland waterfront in 1898. A barge and a steamship can be seen in the photo at lower right. The double-decker docks along the river offered ships the ability to load and unload cargo at either high or low water. In 1898, Portland was still the major Northwest port, but Seattle was growing fast and threatened to overtake Portland’s influential position. In this photo, the outlying areas of the city are still primarily to the west of Mt. Tabor. Even within the city, parcels of undeveloped land dot the landscape. Just two or three years after this photo was taken, Harvey Scott promoted Hawthorne Park, between Belmont and Hawthorne, for the site of the Lewis and Clark Exposition. Hawthorne Park’s close proximity to downtown Portland and streetcar access from both the Madison and Morrison bridges made the site an appealing prospect for the Exposition. It also boasted a ready supply of clean drinking water from Bull Run. Despite these attributes, Hawthorne Park and the adjacent and undeveloped land in Ladd’s Addition, were turned down by Exposition coordinators and Guild’s Lake, in Northwest Portland, was eventually chosen as the final site for the fair.

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