

# Night View of the Lewis and Clark Fair

By O. W. Watson

The 1905 Lewis and Clark Exposition and Oriental Fair in Portland was illuminated at night by 100,000 lamps that outlined the graceful fair buildings, streets, and walkways. "No more enticing sight has ever been seen anywhere" asserted the Exposition's secretary and historian, Henry E. Reed. The Exposition also featured a 30-by-110-foot sign with the numbers 1905, displayed on a nearby hillside and seen up to 30 miles away.

The Portland General Electric Company, whose president Henry W. Goode was also the Exposition president, provided electricity for the lamps. In 1902, the company built a steam-generation plant near 21st Avenue and Nicolai Street, in part to supply power to the Exposition. Electrical transformers were hidden in underground pits and buildings throughout the fairgrounds.

In 1906, Portland General Electric merged with a number of other power and electrical rail companies creating the Portland Railway, Light and Power Company, which monopolized power in the north part of the Willamette Valley. The company was renamed Portland General Electric in the 1940s.

O.W. Watson was a Spokane-based photographer who worked in the Pacific Northwest and the West between 1890 and 1908.

**Further Reading:** Wollner, Craig. *Electrifying Eden: Portland General Electric 1889-1965*. Portland, Oreg., 1990.

Coldwell, O.B. "Early Days of Electricity in Portland." *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 42, 1941: 281-92.

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