

PIKE PLACE MARKET

THE SOUL OF THE CITY



In the early 1900s, commission men had a monopoly on the sale of fruits and vegetables to Seattle citizens. The brokers on Western Avenue between Yesler and Seneca streets bought produce from local farmers and sold it at a much higher price. They also imported fruits and vegetables from California, effectively shutting out many of the Italian and Japanese farmers from Rainer Valley, South Park, Puyallup, and Vashon and Bainbridge islands.

Consumers disliked being overcharged and farmers disliked being underpaid. Responding to their complaints, Seattle City Councilmember Thomas P. Revelle — a progressive Republican in the mold of Teddy Roosevelt — won passage of an ordinance

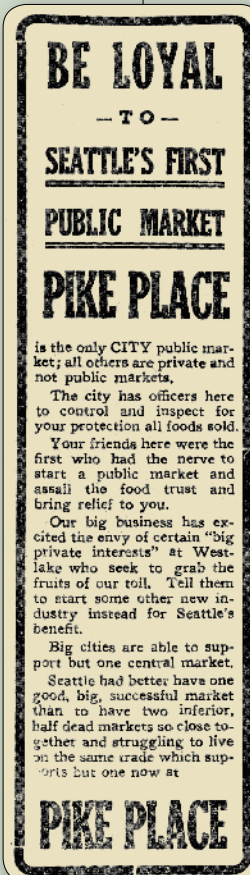
ABOVE: South Park farmer Giuseppe "Joe" Desimon (later Desimone) became quite successful by acquiring property at Pike Place. By 1941, he owned the Pike Market Company. Seattle Municipal Archives

RIGHT: Because scales were a source of suspicion and complaints, Frank Goodwin supplied free scales on which customers could check weights for themselves. Seattle Municipal Archives

in 1907 to establish a farmers' "public market" at Pike Place, effectively eliminating the middlemen. Saturday, August 17, 1907, was proclaimed as Market Day, and thousands of consumers showed up with baskets in hand.

Unfortunately, most of the farmers were absent. Heavy rains delayed some from outlying areas, but many were cowed by threats made by the commission merchants to boycott any farmer who showed up to sell produce. Only eight farmers arrived with their wagons, and they sold out their goods almost immediately. A few other carts soon arrived, but a group of women spotted California labels on the crates and realized that these were hucksters hired by the Western Avenue merchants. The women stood by and warned others not to buy from them.

Although many people returned home empty-handed, local papers deemed the market a success. Word spread throughout the farming community, and by the



next Saturday, 70 wagons were lined up on Pike Place. Three months later, John and Frank Goodwin erected the first permanent farmer's market building, with money they had made during the Gold Rush. The Western Avenue monopoly was broken, and consumers have been able to "meet the producer" ever since.

ABOVE: Since its inception, the market has always been a popular subject for postcards. This shot from the early 1900s looks north from the corner of Pike Place and Pike Street.

LEFT: Advertising helped draw customers to the market, much to the dismay of rival establishments.

RIGHT: Frank Goodwin, along with his brother John, erected the first farmer's market building, and on November 30, 1907, more than 120 farmers set up in the covered stalls. Kerry Serl

BELOW: This classic shot of the market was taken in 1907, looking north from the corner of Pike Place and Pike Street. University of Washington Libraries Special Collections.



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