

President Taft Presses A Telegraph Key

by John Olson

Let us consider President Taft. He sits, a large man with a walrus mustache, pondering a gold telegraph key. He cracks his knuckles. He leans forward. He presses the key. A surge of electricity travels through thousands of miles of wire to the west, across mountains and prairies and rivers and mills, factories and forests and bridges and trains, to put the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition into motion.

Mounted on a slope of picturesque Seattle commons, punctuated with towering firs and palatial exhibits, a huge gong strikes five times, an enormous American flag unfurls from a high scaffold, and Japanese and American fleets in Elliott Bay boom their tributes. Volumes of smoke drift over the water as the reports from the cannons resound in monumental concussions thrilling the crowd of people gathered for the opening of the fair into eruptions of unbridled joy.

The famous Bicket family performs at the foot of the Pay Streak and later there is a shoe contest. Everyone removes their shoes and puts them in a barrel. The barrel is placed in the center of a large open field. At the sound of a whistle everyone rushes out to the barrel to find their shoes. The winner must have his or her shoes laced throughout, and must stand at attention.

Calista Leach, the first American woman to visit Alaska, heads straight to the Alaska exhibit. Eight Inuit men join hands and begin circling to the left, chanting and leaping into the air, notwithstanding their heavy Oxfords.

Gas balloons carry toy flags over the crowd.

The Navy band plays Sousa marches.

There is a tug of war and a relay race and an exhibition drill by a company of blue jackets.

Beautiful snow white carrara marble statuary ornaments the entrance of the Oriental Building where there are displays of coral, cut silver, and Roman pearls.

Strains of music pours from the D.S. Johnston Company's Krell Autogrand upright player piano housed in the spacious Manufacturer's Building.

Bud Mars makes his first ascension in a big dirigible balloon and circles the grounds while Princess Lala dances the barn dance with writhing reptiles in the Turkish Village.

Curtains are drawn on The Baby Incubator Exhibit, housed in a two-story neoclassical pavilion with Ionic columns and ornamental pilasters, between the Temple of Palmistry and the Gold Camps of Alaska.

Shouts and laughter come from the Fairy Gorge Tickler.

The Theater of Sensations opens its doors.

