



History of Portland Saturday Market

Every Saturday and Sunday from March through Christmas Eve the Old Town/Chinatown neighborhood transforms into a thriving arts and crafts open-air marketplace. Seeing the Market's staff delegate booth spaces with precision each weekend for so many years, most of the neighborhood has come to think of Portland Saturday Market (PSM) as a business like any other. But it certainly wasn't always that way, and some surprising elements still lie at the core of this unusual non-profit operation.

Portland Saturday Market was the brainchild of two women, Sheri Teasdale and Andrea Scharf. Both were artists living in the area who had sold at the Saturday Market in Eugene; their idea was to create a similar style of market in downtown Portland. Beginning in December 1973, the two visited everyone they could think of in the city to sell their idea: an open-air market of all handmade food and craft items. It would be a win-win situation they insisted. Artists would have an economic outlet for their work, customers would gain better access to locally produced items, and the city would have a new attraction to draw customers into the downtown area.

The new organization was incorporated under Oregon law as a mutual benefit corporation, a special class of institutions that do not make a profit, but exist for the economic benefit of their members, making PSM a non-profit organization that is not tax-exempt. The founders could have set up the market as a for-profit venture, but they envisioned a market where craftspeople would share the cost of running the market collectively and would keep whatever profit they personally made. It was to be a market for the members, governed by the members. With legal standing firmly established, Scharf and Teasdale were able to apply for a startup grant from the Metropolitan Arts Council, which gave PSM \$1,000. But they still didn't have a location for the market. Enter Bill Naito. Naito offered them a parking lot, known as the "Butterfly lot" owing to the large butterfly mural looming over the market.

For the first year that the market operated, there was no site plan. Members set up booths wherever and they chose, working it out with their neighbors to make sure nobody's booth blocked anyone else's. As the market grew, vendors began arriving earlier and earlier to claim their favorite spots, leading to the establishment of the 'seven o'clock rule' at the start of the 1975 season, which stated that no one could start putting up a booth or claim a spot before 7:00 am. A few weeks later, a clear site plan was created for the first time, marking out 8' x 8' booth spaces, defining aisles and a pattern for customer traffic.

The market then moved to the site under the Burnside Bridge in 1976, and started staying open on Sundays the following year. The Market was there for 34 years before the redevelopment of Old Town starting up again in 2006 and a new home was slated for Waterfront Park. The Market officially moved into its new site in Waterfront Park May 2009. Things have changed a lot from the early days. PSM has over 350 members and generates an estimated \$8 million in gross sales annually. It has become a central economic engine for the historic Old Town/Chinatown neighborhood, and attracts an estimated one million visitors to this area each year.

But some important things have stayed the same. PSM could never have gotten started without the cooperation and aid of the city and of the Naito family, and still relies on those long-term partnerships. The PSM board of directors continues to be made up of a majority of market members, putting market governance in the hands of its members.

Seven full-time and ten part-time staff members administer the operations and various programs of the Market. And items are still sold by the people who make them, giving the customers the chance to talk directly with the artisan about their craft and why artists choose to make their living at the Market. In spite of how much the Market has grown, it is still, at heart, an artists' community.



FASCINATING FACTS ABOUT PORTLAND SATURDAY MARKET

- ❖ Founded in 1974, Portland Saturday Market located in Waterfront Park + Ankeny Park in Portland's historic Old Town.
- ❖ The Market is one of the most popular tourist attractions in the city of Portland, drawing an estimated 1 million people and annual sales of 10 million.
- ❖ Portland Saturday Market is the largest weekly open-air crafts market in the United States.
- ❖ Started with grant assistance from the Metropolitan Arts Commission, Portland Saturday Market has earned a national reputation for service to artists.
- ❖ Portland Saturday Market is a juried market. Every item is submitted for review to a panel of members who assure that it meets the Market's standards of quality and hand craftsmanship.
- ❖ Everything at the Market is handcrafted by the vendors and is being sold by the person who made it. The Market offers a unique opportunity for customers to meet the artists and often to see pieces being made right in the booths.
- ❖ The vendors who sell at the Market are individual small business owners from all over Oregon and Washington who participate in Market operations as members of the non-profit corporation.
- ❖ On average, over a dozen new craftspeople join the Market each month during the season.
- ❖ The Market has 258 regular spaces for craft and food booths each weekend. With almost 400 artists participating in the Market each season, there is a different mix of products here every weekend.
- ❖ The Market is open every Saturday and Sunday from March through Christmas Eve. The Market is also open the entire week prior to Christmas for its annual "Festival of the Last Minute".
- ❖ The first Sunday of every month July – October the Portland Saturday Market offers free Kids Activities ranging from puppet shows, science fairs, juggling school, creative arts activities and much more.
- ❖ The Portland Saturday Market's hours are Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday 11:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Admission is FREE.



MISSION STATEMENT

“The mission of the Portland Saturday Market is to provide an environment that encourages the economic and artistic growth of emerging and accomplished artisans. Central to this mission shall be to operate a marketplace. That marketplace, and other market programs, shall honor craftsmanship, design innovation, marketing ethics, and authenticity of product.”