DATA ON HISTORY OF

SEATTLE PARK SYSTEM

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COMPILED BY

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CITY OF SEATTLE (WASH.)

DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
Building a new town in the "wilderness" of Puget Sound Country was a large undertaking for the Pioneer Homesteaders of 1852. The various settlers had as many concepts of what the town should be: a Sawmill Company town, a farm-oriented town, a fishing town, a seaport & lumber, coal & mining,... A. A. Denny, leader of the Pioneer Party of Settlers who landed at Alki in 1851 had the Big Plan: a bourgeois city encompassing all these endeavors—and more, all kinds of commercial ventures. But Denny was not a "Planning Commission", even though he tried, in his way, and probably did the most to shape the growing city. The Oregon Territory Donation Land Claim Act of 1850 gave each claimant 320 acres (double that if married) to "clear, cultivate & occupy for four consecutive years." Each of the Land Claims around the town site was divided into tracts and thereafter platted into town streets & lots. At a much later date, City Engineer George Cottrell noted that "anybody plotting a piece of land did pretty much as he pleased: he didn't bother to join up with the streets of adjacent plots nor use the same names for streets—resulting in one street having many names along its length, or many streets about town with the same name (i.e. half a dozen named Lake St., Pine St., etc.") Under a new City Charter in 1892, the Engineering Dept. began a long & painful process of renaming streets—painful because the residents were fond of the pioneer names or national heroes, etc. It was a problem still being dealt with in the 1970s.

One of the early appearances of the street name "Broadway" was on a plat filed in 1858 by A. A. Denny & Wm. H. Bell: platted 80 ft. wide, from the waterfront just west of Front St. (now First Ave.) to Depot St. (now Denny Way) and is now (re-)named Broad Street—it was only 3 blocks in length. (It does give a clue as to the origin of that name.) In 1869 "Broadway" appears again on a plat by C.D. Boren (Eastern Addn.), again 80 ft. wide, from Fir St. to Cherry St., running northerly on the ridge of First Hill. Apparently there was a "Gentlemen's Agreement" on this name and location, for subsequent plats filed in 1872, 1880, 1883, 1890 ....... firmly established the name of BROADWAY from Mill St. (Yesler Way) on top of First Hill and up along Capitol Hill. McKee's Correct Map of 1874 shows it continuing as far as Prospect where it runs easterly to 10th and continues on towards First Hill. Then, in 1874, Broadway became the eastern edge of the town's development, with only scattered clusters of houses amongst the farm tracts on east to Lake Washington. In the matter of the origin/location of a street named BROADWAY, C.T. Strover (Stites) noted that "every town has to have a Main Street and also a Broadway."

The 1880 plat was filed by D.T. Denny for the Estate of John H. Nagle, a part of Nagle's Donation Land Claim. It was bounded on the west by Broadway and on the south by Gould St. (now Pine St.), extending northerly and easterly for several blocks. It included an "open" tract one block east of Broadway to the east side of (1848), and from the north side of Gould St. to the south side of Hawthorn St. (now Denny Way). This clearly indicates that this tract was being considered for "something big!" In 1887 it was purchased by the City: 111.133 acres for $10,000 - $3,179 paid out of Park Funds, the balance from Water Dept. funds as a site for a low-service Reservoir & Seattle's first Hydraulic Pumping Station, pumping water to reservoirs at Volunteer Park, Queen Anne and Magnolia. It went into operation in 1900 and was named LINCOLN RESERVOIR by the Water Dept. As part of the development, Nagle Place was developed along the west side of the Reservoir and 11th Ave. along the east side, & the Realtor was free to plat the balance of the tract.

[John H. Nagle was a native of Germany who was educated in Indiana and then crossed the Plains to Seattle in 1853. He cleared and improved (forming, in doubt) his Claim and together with the A.A. Denny & Mrs. David Blaine, organized Seattle's first Protestant Church, First Methodist by 20th & Columbia in 1853. Nagle became a paper manufacturer until his death in 1896.]
Improved condition, but development and planting plans have been prepared by
the Olmsted Bros. (famed firm of Landscape Architects of Brookline, Mass. hired
by the Park Dept. in 1902 to develop a Comprehensive System of Parks & Parkways
for Seattle.) 1904 Annual Report.

By this time Capitol Hill and Broadway were undergoing great changes;
the arrival of 1897 at the steamer Portland with a "Ton of Gold" from the Klondike
brought a massive Gold Rush and Seattle became the Port of Departure for the
prospectors - completely outfitted by Seattle merchants - and the Port of Return,
complete with Entertainment to help the victorious prospectors celebrate. The "Pioneer"
Millionaires had built their mansions on the hill immediately adjacent to the
new townsite - and the hill was appropriately named First Hill. The new (Gold Rush)
Millionaires chose to build their mansions on Capitol Hill - Queen Anne - "away from the
mixed living of First Hill & Denny Hill - the selection of being away from the bustle of
town" (R. Sale). [sc: Volunteer, Parkways & Parks] The population of Seattle went
from 42,837 in 1890 to 80,571 in 1900: one result being a demand for more schools.
Mrs. David Blaine (noted above) had opened the first school in 1854 with 12 pupils,
his kitchen serving as a temporary classroom. The School District's first high school
was a frame building at 43rd & Alder built in 1883 named Central: it burned in
1888 and was replaced with a brick building; but with the population surge it soon
turned overcrowded. So, a new Seattle High School was built in 1902 at the north-
west corner of Broadway & Pine St. In 1906 the name was changed to Washington
High School which resulted in confusion with the University of Washington, so the
School Board adopted Broadway High School as the name in 1908. The last senior
graduating class was in June 1946, when Broadway Hi became a vocational training
school renamed Edison Tech - a Depression-born school program born in 1930 +
using quarters in many parts of the city, win a national recognition. This program
was phased out at Broadway in 1955 to become a two-year Seattle Central
Community College program. The old stone building proved to be inadequate for the
new demands put into it plus some community pressure to replace the "old" building.
Whereupon, in 1974, it was placed upon the National Register of Historic Places by the
State which caused a great controversy - and "history" lost except for the stone auditorium
added to the west side of the High School in 1911. During the demolition enough of
the stonework was carefully removed and stored until the new brick Community College
building was completed in 1972 and 1976 - that the east face of the auditorium, originally
an interior wall, could be rebuilt with the old stonework. (J.Aimpo, J.Redman, R.Sale, Sis.Dist.)

In 1914 another school opened across the intersection of Broadway & Pine from the
High School in the Booth Building (currently occupied by the Bumley School of
Art and Savings Bank). It was a school of Music & Allied Arts founded by Miss
Hattie Cornish (1876-1955) a native of Nebraska, who had frequently taught music in
Seattle since 1910. Beginning with music classes, expanding to include art and then in
1921, expanding into a new Spanish-style building at Harvard and Roy and adding ballet
in 1923 with a small theatre for dance & music. In 1977 Cornish became an accredited
4 year college Institute of Allied Arts; and the building placed on the Nat. Register of
Historic Places. Relics of a Russian student musician established The Samovar
Restaurant in 1931 across the street from Cornish, adding a new flavor to the main
campus being offered along Broadway. (D.Sutjita, H. Belanger, C.Gleason)

Another school had opened nearby in 1921 at the corner of Broadway & Madison:
Seattle University, founded and taught by Jesuit priests; one of the original regents
and long-time benefactor was the real-estate broker, Henry Bradley. The school
had humble beginnings with a handful of buildings, until Father Lemieux, a French-Can-
adian from Idaho, graduate with B.A. & M.A. from Gonzaga Uni., became president of
S.U. from 1948-65. During his tenure, the S.U. added new buildings & several
renovated buildings & extended the campus: "he practically built S.U." (N.B.Clarke)

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BROADWAY P.F.
Broadway was not only "getting educated" but the street was getting "commercial," as well: shortly after 1897 the most advanced form of transportation - the electric trolley car - had its tracks laid on Broadway, from the James St. cable car terminal at Broadway down to 10th & E. Lynn, then the north boundary of the city. (In 1936 the trolley car was replaced with the more maneuverable electric trolley bus) (L. Blanchard). In 1900 there appeared another new form of transportation - the automobile. Just as people had looked at - and feared - the horseless streetcars in 1889, they did with the horseless carriage - "a toy for the rich and the young sport." they said. And, since the rich lived on Capitol Hill, then Broadway became the place to sell the automobile to the nearby poor. By 1909 Broadway was known as "Automobile Row" which Henry Ford came to settle in, as much as the A-Y-P Expo. As late as 1929, Automobile Row was credited with handling 70% of Seattle's automobile sales, accessories, repairs, used autos & wholesaler automotive equipment - a commerce that totaled over $10 million per year; and it covered 5 square blocks about Broadway. (Kirk Herro) And still there was room on Broadway, between Union & Roy St. for small markets, shops, restaurants, apartment houses, homes... a home built in 1904 at 1822 Broadway that was converted into a rooming house during World War I and continued as such until 1975 when it was restored as "the last house on Broadway" and turned into a "Do-it-yourself picture framing shop." (N. Reed, CHN) Some of the more renowned apartment buildings were built just off-Broadway by Fred Arabah around 1928 and shortly after that Arthur Haeless built a handsome Tudor style complex of shops and apartments surrounding an inner courtyard of Broadway and Roy - "probably the city's first shopping center." (J. Kremmer) And so on.

Thus the park acreage just off-Broadway at Pine was assigned to the attention of the Olmsted Bros., in 1903; preparing detailed plans for any specific park area was in addition to the original contract for a Comprehensive System. (The Olmsteads frequently complained that their advice as to the improvement of an area was sought by the Park staff with no offer of a contract or even an hourly stipend permitted under existing contract - Letters in file) According to the Olmsted's, (1907), the Olmsted Bros. prepared 15 drawings for the development and planning of LINCOLN'S PARK. (So known then because it was part of the Lincoln Reservoir tract) but by 1915 none of the plans would be found in Park Dept. files (of the 375 drawings prepared by the Olmsted Bros. for 37 Park projects in Seattle, only 29 drawings would be found in 1975; the estimate then by the O. Assn. to reproduce the missing drawings was for $45,000). From the Annual Reports and some Olmsted correspondence of 1903 - 104, here is a condensed description: 1903 - the narrow strips around the reservoir are mostly occupied by a steep turf bank, while the ground of the reservoir, of a comparatively gentle slope, has come to be used as a ball field much to the annoyance of neighbors. (The 1908 Report Ventifies the annoyance as "men and boys who played their games without regard to the properties of decency in regard to the use of profanity, vulgarity and undesirable dressing.") So, the 1903 Olmsted scheme was for a landscape park whose design allowed no provision for the more vigorous forms of play... particularly... baseball. A formal design of park was proposed with the north-south axis centered upon the stone gazebo (pumphouse) of the reservoir, with a row of beech and holly trees along each side of this axis. A purple foliage would give this park a very marked individuality. The east-west axis would be centered upon the High School and the Olmsted's strongly urged the acquisition, of the block of property between Broadway/ Pine/Exley & Olive. Almost immediately the "city... instructed us that under no circumstances would this property be acquired so the new axis of the design became "the great jet of water at the center of the reservoir... and to accent this idea and also to unfit the lawn for baseball", an oval walk lined by the trees and enclosing a central lawn; this oval would permit short-cutting across the park past avoiding straight lines. "We suggest a pergola at the lower end of the oval where visitors may sit in the shade and watch the jet." Floral bedding designs and low ground-covering plants (to avoid the artificiality of trimming) was planned for the perimeter.
Scursely a month later came a Preliminary Plan No. 2: "In accordance with your (the Park Board) instructions, we have devoted the greater part of the portion south of the reservoir to a rectangular ball field... covered with turf... which will need to be protected from the development of short-cut paths... by surroundings, a vine- and shrubbery-hidden fence, further softened with varied and interesting irregular masses of foliage and summer flowers between the fence and promenade walk. (Perhaps this was U-shaped - the open end to the reservoir west.)"

Absolutely essential for public convenience, especially as one of the approaches to the High School, is a walk across the park, centered upon Olive St. In order to make this walk harmonize with the playfield (which was to be on an even slope from the level surrounding the reservoir to the level at Pine St.), "this will involve steps, but the height is not excessive." North from this walk was a semi-circular walk, intersecting the one around the reservoir to accommodate short-cutting. In the midst of this semi-circle was proposed "various amusements"; a wading pool also useful for sailing toy boats - only 15 inches deep with a bottom of clean sand over a layer of puddled clay. To the east and west of this, areas of hard gravel surface, upon which may be disposed see-saws, teeter-totters, swings and other apparatus for children. The rest of the semi-circle to be turf for lawn games.

At the center of the "Olive St." walk, the Olmsteds proposed a shelter building to afford accommodations for toilet rooms, a policeman, a fireman, other such workmen, a tool room, storage room and a room for heating apparatus to allow for winter use; these rooms extremely useful during a sudden shower or for the workman at noon during cold or inclement weather. Shelter for the public, women and children would be provided by an open shelter, arranged with a convenience of opening curtains or shutters - a very popular feature in Boston." Benches in the open shelter would provide a view of the wading pool, play apparatus and the jet in the reservoir. "It will be necessary to be unusually liberal with the depth and quantity of top soil and with fertilizing and cultivation for two or three years at least," because the soil was composed of excavation material from the reservoir + from basements of nearby buildings. 1908 Report.

Until 1907 this park (Lincoln Park PLAYFIELD) received little attention, being used merely as a field by students of the nearby High School. During 1907 an agreement was reached between the Park + Water Departments that the cost of improvements designed by the Olmsteds would be shared proportionally by both departments: Waters 3/6 and Parks 3/6 plus maintenance + control by the Park Dept. Park Department funded $4,634. The pergola-type Shelter House was completed in time for use by the neighboring church of Broadway, Olive St. and Maple (built in 1892/ rebuilt in 1922) for a Christian Endeavor Convention. A half-mile wide running track for the spring events of the High School was built around the reservoir - outside the existing concrete Promenade Walk around the reservoir and a wire fence was placed on top of the low ornamental wall around the inner edge of the Promenade. The grading plan of the whole park was changed: the "Olive St." walkway across the park was level from Maple to 1/8 along the north side; the slope went more steeply up to meet the grade of the reservoir; upon this was accommodated the circular walk and into the slope was placed the wading pool, sand boxes + see-saws - all arranged upon the axis of the jet fountain. The playfield south of the "Olive St." walkway was also shifted to this jet axis: the new Promenade U-shaped Walk around the field was now of center - as was the reservoir - so that the planting beds were wider on the west side than on the east. Also, the Practice (Ball) Field was not large enough for regular games by the larger boys because along the south side of the Olive St. walk, were located the Shelter House + south of that a Tennis Court at the west corner. Later on the playground was placed on the northwest portion of the ball field - swings, rings, ladders, climbing poles except the see-saws (chair swings) which were installed under the roofed, open wings on each end of the Shelter House. (When the Promenade Walk west of the battlefield is open, the four lines of shuffleboard may be seen embedded in the concrete.) All of this was

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Olmsted Development
was completed in accordance with the importance of this location: the number of people in the community and the addition of a great many apartment houses in the vicinity—it bids fair to become one of the most popular and useful of the inside parks. And the community was pleased with the "well-thought scheme...which created a whole new scene, so that the undesirable elements vanished" (McKee, 1924).

By 1928 the Washington/Broadway High School was using the field for practice games; the Grammar School played a regular schedule as did the Seattle Church Leagues, Mall Carriers, Wholesale (Auto parts) Teams & Independent Leagues so that scheduling was required ten days in advance! [By 1933, city-wide scheduling was required in advance of each season.]

This period marked the beginning of the Playground Division of the Seattle Park Dept. It was part of a national trend to provide playfields both for the larger as well as the smaller children. The Olmsted's believed that playground supervision should be undertaken by qualified teachers; but the trend went in another way and by 1929 Seattle had a Superintendent of Recreation, J. A. Stein: supervising a man and woman placed in charge of activities at Lincoln Park P.F. and other Department playgrounds. In 1940 the first Interplayground Athletic Meet ever held in Seattle was held here because of its central location and access by trolley cars. One of the officials was from the YMCA and another was William Hill, of the Geo. Hill Co. (Geo. Hill became a Park Commissioner from 1915-1920).

In 1922 the Department purchased a large new park in West Seattle, just north of Fauntleroy Cove and the Park Board named it Lincoln Park. Fortunately, they renamed this playground as BROADWAY PLAYFIELD; fortunately, because it has not been a policy to avoid the confusion of similar names for several parks.

Evidently additional Tennis Courts were added - at the north end of the ballfield area west of the original one - for the High School requested the use of one of your tennis courts (at Broadway) for High School girls on school days. (1924) The original design of all tennis courts was a clay playing court which presented difficulties in playing due to slippiness from wet and in maintenance - maintaining a smooth surface and controlling the growth of weeds. These factors, plus the demand for more courts and more ballfield space resulted in the relocation of and construction of 3 new concrete courts in 1932. By some coincidence, it was noted that the planting bed area between Nagle Place and the west Promenade Walk was wide enough and long enough - from the Olive St. walk to First St. - for the 3 courts. A new activity, now developed on the tennis courts: roller-skate hockey - with no damage to the surface.

Checkers is a game that was known to "the ancients" (5000 yrs ago according to one enthusiast, W. A. Kettman) and played in Europe since the 16th Century, and known in England as draughts. The game quickly became one of the activities in the Shelter House of Broadway, for the Room and Boarding Houses in the neighborhood were home to many of the city's retired folks. It appears to have been a community activity for them for it was the only park where the activity was promoted by the Dept., so that in 1928 an outdoor large scale concrete checkerboard was constructed at the south west corner of the reservoir; half of the $500 cost was donated by the Pioneer Sand & Gravel and the Superior Portland Cement Company. The checkers were one foot square and two inches thick of white or black concrete; the pieces were round and made of means of hooks and eyes with a long hooked slide; a storage box and benches were alongside the Board. By 1933 the Board was so popular that "about one player in ten got a chance to play it he awaited his turn" and the loser of every game gave his piece to the next player waiting in line. So they petitioned for more boards and the Dept. countered with the proposal to relocate it on the north side of the reservoir where there was more space for games (presumably for additional checkers) but the petitioners rejected the plan (too far from the Shelter House?)

In 1938 the residents of the community were new families with young children - pupils of the period. A great number of children using the play equipment. As in previous years, the new families settle on the outer perimeters (suburbs). So by the 30's much of the play equipment had been removed and there were complaints about the deteriorated

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wading pool - and worn out ballfield. Some of the play equipment east of the Sherman House had been replaced with Horse shoe Pitching Courts. And about this time the two wing "porches" were removed from the ends of the Sherman House.

This was also the period of the Great Depression. To cope with it the Federal Govt initiated a series of Relief programs: first as work programs and then as construction projects of public facilities - the Feds funding the labor costs and the public agency (city) funding materials & equipment; the largest program was the Works Progress Admin. (WPA) and the improvements to Seattle Parks were many and varied.

The WPA "remodeled" Broadway P.F. rather extensively and particularly the area between the reservoir and the Olive St walk. This whole area was raised to prevent a low retaining wall was built along the north side of the walk, forcing the entire length across the P.F. into this were set two sets of steps from the north-south axis and another opposite the west Promenade Walk; the east Promenade Walk was absorbed into the ball field area. A new Wading Pool was built just east of the Checkers Board. And play equipage was located at the opposite corner, next to NE fencing was placed around the entire playfield - as had been suggested by the Olinists - but this was a much higher one, to keep batted balls out of the now busy streets. Some screening was attempted with shrubbery & trees, but many of the neighbors had become commercial establishments rather than residences. Also, the old wooden back stop and wing fences were replaced with the new pipe frame hoop design, the one wing fence running just south of the Sherman House. Jump pits were placed along the levees and field lights were installed for ball field & tennis evening games.

Seattle University was expanding its student body and began to supplement its own athletic field at 14th + Jefferson by scheduling special events and games at Broadway. In 1948 SL requested the use of Broadway P.F. by the Air Corps ROTC unit. The Department resisted this non-recreation use, but later gave permission.

"The 1940s witnessed a tremendous country-wide interest in recreational problems and the growing conviction that the need for recreation is almost as important as food & shelter." (Planning Comm.) In 1948 the City Council requested that the Planning Commission prepare a Study on the Capitol Hill Broadway Recreation Needs. Their 23 page Report recommended that the needed indoor center & additional athletic fields would best be sited at the Miller P.G./Meany School where land acquisition & combination of Park/School facilities was more feasible. Though Broadway P.F. was more centrally located - referred to as Seattle's "Central Park" in 1949 by M. A. Knuttila (Stime) - it was lacking in by commercial establishments and cut off from Edson Tech facilities by a major arterial. Evidently the petitioned replacement of the old Sherman House as a WPA project had been withheld pending a Study. The old Sherman House continued to serve, but with diminishing efficiency until 1963, when a new brick one was built up on the north side of the Olive St. Walkway, between the two sets of steps - on the axis. At the time, the 1907 building was the oldest park building in the system. This then permitted the enlargement of the playfield to the present A hardball softball football: the entire field was resurfaced with Crinex in 1974 and new floodlighting.

Sometime during the 1940s a new fence was built around the reservoir, placed between the Running Track and the walk around the reservoir. When the Turbont "60s exploded in Watts, Detroit, Newark, and Campus protests at Kent U. etc. against prejudice, the establishment & police brutality were incidents of "foreign substances" - including a swimmer being thrown into the city's reservoirs. A guard was hired to patrol each of the reservoirs while the Water Dept. put together a $20 million program to put a lid on all 12 reservoirs: Lincoln/Broadway and Volunteer Park topped the list. The ensuing controversy produced schemes for tennis courts on the Broadway lid and a shallow reflecting pool on the one at Volunteer. To be financed by Bond issues, the program was to begin in 1973 but was "postponed"

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The WPA-built Wading Pool was named in honor of Joseph Lee, pres. of Natl. Arc. Assn.

G. BROADWAY P.F.

DMS/04/478
Bobby Morris P.F.

Previous name: Adairway P.F.

Name change 3-21-80