



Two story conc. Shelter House w/ tower  
by WPA 1940 - 21,716 = WPA 5,526 = PK 6,190 =  
Italian style arch./originally white.  
+ = Plaque on bldg. ("1936-'37")

2.8 Acres  
Purch. in 1910  
\$14,323 - '10 BF  
Jurisdict. in 1931  
"...for park + parkway purp."

511

1740 - 23rd Av. S.

COLMAN P.G.

112376

## HISTORY: COLMAN PLAYGROUND

The establishment of a Catholic Church (Our Lady of Mount Virgin) and the organization in 1908 of The Italian Club plus construction of Colman School in 1909 would indicate the extensive development of the two ridges and valley in this community. The priest was deeply concerned with the needs of the children and family recreation, the need for a playfield and family picnic grounds. The recreation director of the Park Department, J. Howard Stein, resided on the edge of the community. A close cooperation existed between the Park and School Boards. Apparently all these factors resulted in the purchase of a block of land to the south of the new Colman School, in spite of the objection of Supt. J. W. Thompson and H. L. McGillis, Park Engineer, that "the site is impractical and recommend only playground equipment for small children." By 1915 the playground had been graded "for ballground" (and picnic) purposes; a more recent Director of Recreation, Ben Evans, grew up nearby and recalls that the ballground was used for a popular Italian game of bowling.

Construction of wooden grandstand for the "Seattle Rainiers" in the community at Rainier and McClellan provided such a strong influence within the community that in 1926 the Colman PTA donated a ballfield backstop for Colman Playground.

(No official action to name the playground has been found. The name apparently was assumed from the adjacent school which was named in 1910 in honor of James M. Colman, prominent pioneer from Scotland (Refer: Colman Park). Some of the property for the playground was purchased after his death from J. M. Colman Co. The school playground, east of the school, was not acquired until 1948.)

In 1930 James Scavotto was elected to City Council where he served with distinction for 20 years; during 1938 he was Acting Mayor and proposed a "Metropolitan Park District" for Seattle (attempted 10 years earlier by A. S. Kerry et al). Scavotto succeeded in transforming a filled ravine to park purposes, later named Judkins PG. In 1932 another prominent family member, P. L. Rosaia, became a member of the Park Board. Since very little improvement had been made on the playground plus the availability of WPA assistance (there were many park and playground projects being done), the Italian Club, of which Scavotto and Rosaia were active members, together with the Atlantic Street Community Club and the Consolidated Club petitioned for "conveniences" and equipment; a shelterhouse, ballfield and tennis courts. The shelterhouse became a WPA project. The strong influence of Scavotto-Rosaia is evident in the work of WPA architect A. Wheatley, who designed an Italian-style building with appropriate landscaping by the Park horticulturist, Jacob Umlauff. The building was dedicated in 1940 with prominent citizens of the Italian community "accepting the field" from Beryl Wells of the Park Board. Then the clubs needed to petition "for a full time instructor to be assigned to the field."

Then the Empire Way "valley" was cleared for construction in 1942 of a large Stadium Homes Housing Project for WW II defense plant workers (so named because it was adjacent to the baseball stadium - the wooden stands burned down in 1932 and were replaced with a stadium built by Emil Sick). Demolition of the project in the 1950's left a long strip of wide terraces used for overflow parking for the stadium, while the project recreation hall and offices became the original Handicapped Center (replaced in 1966 with a residence for handicapped persons).

In 1966 Arthur P. Oberto with public spirited generosity gave a welcome and thoughtful gift of a Musclemans play equipment for Colman Playground.

During the National Convention of NRPA held in Seattle in 1968, a manufacturer's demonstration display of the "Astro-Slide" was installed on the playground. Upon request of the Mayor's office and Model City Program, the Department requested retention of the Slide, first for a 60-day trial and then permanently and it has proven its popularity.

The State Highway Department plan to widen I-90 threatened to obliterate both Colman and Judkins Playgrounds (and Colman School) raised a storm of controversy.

## HISTORY: COLMAN PARK

When the pioneers founded the town of Seattle in 1852, the forested hills abounded with springs: every homesteader had at least one of his own. As the town grew, some of the springs were needed to serve several neighbors, so the water was "piped" by means of elevated troughs flowing from a hillside spring. Henry Yesler is credited with the first system and by 1880 there were many private systems - by then underground in hollowed log pipes. In 1881 the Town Council authorized the first "municipal" water company which took over the maze of systems and was authorized to charge for water service.

Appropriately named "The Spring Hill Water Co.", they anticipated the needs of a growing town by building a pumping plant "all the way over here" on Lake Washington (the shoreline that is now in the park); the year was 1886 and the pump was steam operated. Failure of the main pump brought the designing engineers from the East; unable to find the difficulty, a Seattle engineer, James M. Colman, went to work and 36 hours (non-stop) later he had the pump back in service. This pump station worked "to heartbreak" during the Great Fire of Seattle in 1889. By this time there were several "public" water systems serving various segments of the city and in 1890 the Council authorized the purchase and consolidation of these into a city Department of Water. Soon thereafter the Cedar River Water System was developed and the "Lake Washington Pumping Plant" was placed on a standby-emergency basis.

Meanwhile, realtors like C. P. Dose and then the Hunter Tract Improvement Co. were carving the landscape into real estate and building trolley car lines and roads out from town to induce the townfolk to "come, look and buy". Dose built some steps down to the lake front, gave it and the adjacent slope to the city to be known forever as "Dose Terrace" (park) in 1907; matched with the gift of Mount Baker Park by the Hunter Company. Watching these developments, the Park Board successfully petitioned for the partial use of the Pumping Plant but were given jurisdiction in 1907 of the plant site plus part of the pipeline right-of-way up the hill. Following the route chosen by the Olmsteds, Frink Boulevard was extended southward curving down this slope, joining Lake Washington Boulevard, coming up from the south along the lakeshore. (The upland route was chosen "for physical and financial reasons.") Additional gifts plus purchases of property along the north side widened the park and in 1909 the State granted the shorelands for park purposes; at that time the lake level was some 9' higher, so that its waters splashed along the riprap at the edge of the boulevard. In 1910 the James M. Colman Estate filed a plat in which the "head" of the slope was deeded for park purposes and the "strip" from 31st down to the lake was named to the memory of Mr. Colman.

A native of Scotland, James Murray Colman came to the U.S. in 1854 and settled in Wisconsin where he married a girl also from Scotland. In 1861 he left his wife and two sons, Lawrence and Frank, and came to Puget Sound country to "establish a place for himself". An engineer, he managed the Port Madison sawmill for 3 years, purchased the Port Orchard mill which burned down in 1868 when he went to Yesler's mill. Historian F. Grant wrote that: "for the next 10 years the history of Mr. Colman is the history of Seattle." He brought his family to Seattle in 1872 and took his sons into his many business enterprises with him; many buildings including Colman Dock, many rebuilt after the fire; the Dock survived earthquakes but not the onslaught of the steamer Alameda in 1912; rebuilt again it was replaced after the state took over the ferry system. Though sold in 1946, the Colman Building at 811 1st Avenue still stands. Upon the death of Mr. Colman in 1906, his sons took over the management of his many enterprises. (Reference: Colman Pool/Lincoln Park.)

In 1909 "substantial barns and shops were constructed (besides the Pumping Plant) for the (maintenance of the) south division of the (Park) system", a frame "Bathing Station" was constructed on the beach and 3 ornamental bridges were built on (Frink) Boulevard. The Olmsted plan of path and planting for the Park was accomplished in 1911. The district had become known as "Mount Baker" from the large subdivision of the Hunter Co. and the bathing beach was so identified even though it was in Colman Park (causing considerable confusion in Department files!). The Olmsteds had recommended the bathing facility be part of the "Recreation Pier" adjacent to Mount Baker Park.

over

"On account of its popularity the bathing station was enlarged and 39,843 bathers were taken care of during the 1915 season." Then "additional facilities were provided in the service (barn)." Increased use of the beach, increased maintenance demands of a growing park system plus 20-year old frame facilities caused the now-abandoned Pump Station to be remodelled to contain bathhouse, comfort station, concession and service (store-room and equipment) in 1929.

The recurrence of landslides between the Park and Dose Terrace resulted in the acquisition of the entire slope between Colman and Mount Baker Parks between 1951-61; one owner stubbornly resisting.

A growing park system increased the service demands of the "Mount Baker" district, so that when space became available at Genesee PF the District HQ moved out of the "Bathhouse" in 1961. Immediately the Junior Rowing Commission requested occupancy. Their request was favorably received and funds appropriated for remodelling - including repairing of the badly leaking roof. Attempted repairs quickly revealed that the ancient building needed major restoration, a condition endorsed by the Building Department Structural Division. The question arose as to the "historic" value of the building in terms of funds needed for restoration and remodelling for shellhouse requirements (and bathhouse). The Municipal Art Commission in 196\_\_ recommended that this structure be saved and remodelled. \$70,000 was estimated for the work by consulting engineers and the City Council petitioned for funds - the old building was demolished in 1965, upon the completion of the remodelling of an old boathouse and moorage into a bathhouse/swimming-fishing pier just south of Dose Terrace. Now Mount Baker Beach was actually in Mount Baker Park! A prefabricated metal building was proposed but the Art Commission gave it a negative report, so in 1968 the "Mount Baker Sailing and Rowing Facility" became a Forward Thrust project.