

HISTORY: HARBOR VIEW PARK

The arrival of the European explorers visiting (discovering and claiming in the names of their respective monarchs) the shores of Puget Sound caused the Indians to express great curiosity over the white-winged boats and white-faced men wearing strange clothes. The coming of the Hudsons Bay Co. trappers and traders evoked a lively interest in the strange utensils and ornaments they brought. But when the schooner Exact arrived in 1851 with a group of pioneer settlers who built a village and began logging, hunting and fishing far in excess of their own needs - and without consulting the tribes whose ancestral home it was - the Indians were exceedingly curious about this new way of life, but some were downright apprehensive of this wholesale invasion of their homelands. Friction soon flared, especially with the Indians who were so curious about the strange ways and foods that they would camp beside a cabin, watch everything, and inviting themselves to dinner. Some of the settlers "wanted to do right by the Indians" and eventually treaties were drawn up - by the white man - who interpreted their meaning to the several Chiefs. Their signing was influenced by Chief Seattle who saw in the settlers' "smoke sticks that kill" a protection from their ancient marauding foes to the north and cures from tribal illnesses in Doc Maynard's little pills. But when the tribes discovered that the treaties evicted them from their homelands and hunting/fishing grounds, some of them protested in the one way that both sides could understand - the Battle of Seattle in 1856. The settlers had seen the tribes gathering and preparing for war so they built a log fort and thanked their good fortune that the war sloop Decatur happened to be in port. The battle was brief, for the superior firepower of the Decatur's cannon soon devastated the Indian forces. The settlers' casualties numbered two. In 1964 when the State Highway Department was excavating for Interstate 5 freeway across the hillside, several cannon balls were found, believed to be from the Decatur.

The town was founded on the waterfront and the frame buildings spread quickly over the lowlands and up onto the hillsides. After the Great Fire destroyed most of the waterfront "tinder town", stone buildings were built. The king County government needed a more suitable Courthouse so a classic "temple of justice" was built on this hilltop in 1890. Even though a cable car climbed up the steep hill, it frequently was out of service and the lawyers had to pack their briefcases and legal books on foot, and by the time they reached the top they were muttering unkind words, and it was named Profanity Hill. When the courts were transferred back down the hill to Third and James, profanity of a different original was heard, for the old Courthouse was converted to prison cells, no better than ancient dungeons. Upon completion of a new jail in the newer building, this profanity hall was torn down in 1928 to be replaced with the King County Hospital. The Seattle Times held a contest for the best name submitted for the new hospital; of 6500 suggestions, the winner (\$100) was a secretary in the Seattle Park Department - Mrs Elva Patterson (appointed 1926, became Secretary to the Superintendent in 1948 and retired in 1957). Her suggestion: HARBOR VIEW.

When plans for the I-5 freeway were developed, the City made efforts to create viewpoints and sit-in parks along the right-of-way and several were acquired on a lease-maintenance basis. One for consideration was the magnificent viewpoint from this hillside in front of the Harborview Hospital. (This same site, including the slope to 6th Avenue, was proposed as "Central Park" in 1908 by realtor E. S. Goodwin who foresaw use of the abandoned Courthouse to become a museum or art gallery). Although the concept was thoroughly endorsed by J. C. Olmsted, he felt that the estimated \$1 million cost could be better spent around the city. In 1926 the Department landscape architect, L. G. Hall, drew a plan for "Harborview Park" - a grandiose scheme of stairways, fountains, pools, gardens and playgrounds - tied in with the City Engineer's new thoroughfare plan. It died again for lack of funds.) The state readily agreed to the Viewpoint plan in 1962 but the County was gravely concerned about space for additional parking and additional medical facilities. An interim vista-parking was not successful and by 1969 the hospital was into planning for expanded facilities. The construction of Jefferson Terrace (Retirement) House (1965) increased the demand for park space (above the existing need of Yesler (low income) Housing Development). So the County was awarded a Federal grant for Phase I development - the north half of a parking garage with a Viewpoint Park on the roof; completed in 1974.