



Bathhouse by WPA 1938
 '31,345=

8.8 Ac. { 4.9 land
 3.9 shorelands
 Condmn. 1934 (\$39,000 = '32 B.F.)
 "...park + bathing beach purposes..."
 8400 - 55th Ave. So.
 PA 3-3887 Bathhouse

PA 5-3204

PRITCHARD ISLAND BEACH

080273

In 1889, the State's first and longest (8 miles) interurban (trolley car) line was completed from Washington Street at Pioneer Square "all the way" to the town of Rainier Beach, its route headed straight toward Mount Rainier - and named "Rainier Avenue Electric R.R." As was planned by the line's realtor-developers, it promoted real estate sales along the way and the Columbia City-Rainier Beach area was annexed to Seattle in 1907.

At that time an island still existed: Island Drive South was platted down the middle of it from one end to the other. The pioneer owner (1883-1900) was A. B. Youngs: It was known as Youngs' Island. He sold to a developer from England, Alfred J. Pritchard, who developed a beautiful forested estate on the island, crossing over the slough with a footbridge. An earlier settler (1870) was Joseph Dunlap on the adjacent mainland and the slough bore his name: he platted his land into large tracts, some of which were bought by C. D. Hillman Co., a portion of which became Atlantic City Park in 1907. By then Frank and Alfred Pritchard had platted the island into a loop-shaped street and lots platted into the slough, meeting the line of the Hillman plat. Several lots on the island were held by members of the Pritchard family. Also, in 1907 an 18' wide walkway, about 3 blocks north of here, was deeded to the Park Department to provide access from the trolley car line to this area (who had automobiles?): it stopped at the "county road" (now Seward Park Avenue South). Pritchard and others "matched" this with options to the Department for an extension of that pathway to the corner of three adjoining parcels on the lakefront for a proposed park, evidently to match Atlantic City Park. But Seattle was getting ready for the 1909 Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition; the Park Department was busy with implementing the Olmsted Plan for Parks and Playgrounds. However, the Olmsted Bros. reported that "This most important landscape feature (Pritchard Island, the marsh and some of the main shore) should be secured . . . as an objective point for the Lake Washington shore drive . . . eventually connected with Atlantic City Park." About this time the community signed a large petition for a bathing beach in this area: Atlantic City Park beach was not suitable especially with a sewer outlet alongside.

In 1917 the Lake Washington Ship Canal was opened: it lowered the level of Lake Washington by 9' - effectively draining the Dunlap Slough. The Pritchards renewed their offer to sell the "slough" and other property for bathing, boating and park use. Their offer was "taken under advisement." In 1920 the Department built a pier with bathers' facilities at the "end" of Keppler Street, known as "Rainier Beach."

Meanwhile a prominent musician built a home on this waterfront: Victor A. Meyers, leader of the famed Brunswick Recording Orchestra, playing at THE Seattle night spot, the Butler Hotel, next to the Pioneer Building. The hotel was a "Who's Who" of dignitaries who slept there and of musicians who performed there from its opening in 1890 until closed by Prohibition in 1928. "Vic" then entered politics as a "gag" in 1932; lost the race for mayor but won five terms as Lt. Gov. and one as Sec'y of State of Washington.

In 1927 the Pritchards renewed their efforts: The Department responded favorably but with some opposition to acquiring the "slough"; the community had clubs for the proposal and petitions against it. The north end of Island Drive was being used by the community as a beach and the controversy related to its development. It was proposed to enlarge and develop Atlantic City Park. Opposition began to develop within the Park Board and in the City Council. Then came the Depression. The acquisition of Pritchard Island Beach was included in the 1932 Park Bond proposition and was approved by the voters. A. S. Kerry resigned from the Park Board in opposition and the Park Board unanimously protested the Council action in proceeding with the condemnation of Pritchard Beach in 1934; the site acquired included the home of Vic Meyers as well as the beach that was posted as polluted.

Upon the petition of the Seward Park Community Club "and others" the City Council directed the Park Board to consider this park in applying for WPA projects. The basement of Vic's house was being used as a bathhouse with a lifeguard on duty and the Rainier Beach facility was abandoned in 1936. The following year the WPA wrecked Meyers' house and replaced it with a frame bathhouse. A gravel parking lot and road to Cloverdale Street was built.

History: PRITCHARD ISLAND BEACH
8/2/73

(over)

and a seawall at the end of Island Drive. The area was cleared and graded. (The "slough" was acquired in 1935 and added to Atlantic City Park for nursery purposes.) An effort was made in 1938 to discard "island" from the name, or find a new name: a change was resisted although "Island" was often replaced with "bathing" in correspondence.

By 1945 the Olmsted Plan for Lake Washington Boulevard to continue southward into Atlantic City Park and thence westerly had become impossible (\$\$) so a better entrance to Pritchard Beach became a project to acquire property for South Grattan Street and to gravel same. The street and the beach parking area were paved in 1952.

Meanwhile: the old 1907 walkway (known as Wildwood Lane) originally paved with bricks and planted with trees by this Department had become a continuous maintenance problem and after considerable bickering was transferred to the Engineering Department in 1954.