Playfield was named in 1928 upon petition of C.G. Stephens on behalf of the Rainier Business Men's Club, changing original name of Columbia P.F. to Rainier, named for Mount Rainier, a prominent mountain in the region.

Oregon St. named to honor Oregon Territorial governor, and named for the Columbia River, which flows through the state.

Conover Wy. S. named for G.F. Conover, a prominent historian, who had coined the phrase "Evergreen State". Conover was also the captain of the first football team of the University of Washington.

Named in honor of the purchase of Alaska from Russia in 1867; became a territory in 1912, and the 49th state in 1959. The original inhabitants were the Alutiiq, who named the region for one of the Aleutian tribes - the Unalaska.

9.5 Acres Purchased in 1910 (58,837 sq. ft)

Community Center
3701 Oregon St.
PA 2-2150

Disc Foreman: PA 5-3204
A sawmill town was built upon the shore of Wetmore Slough. As the forests diminished, a dream began to grow: to dredge the slough and become a seaport. So they named their town Columbia City, for "Columbia" was the name proposed for the Territory north of the Columbia River. In 1889 some Seattle investors built a trolley car line from Pioneer Square down through "Rainier Valley" all the way to the town of Rainier Beach - the first and longest electric railway (interurban) in the new state. Of course, Columbia City was a station on the car line. As intended, the trolley car promoted the sale and development of the real estate along the way. The actual and potential growth were so great that the Columbia City and Rainier Beach areas were annexed to the City of Seattle in 1907. A country road had developed along the car tracks and improvement of the road came soon after, including a dirt fill across the ravine at the head of Wetmore Slough.

Columbia Park had already been given to the townfolk in 1891, so in 1908 the Olmsted Bros. recommended acquisition of some 9 acres for "Columbia" playfield on the east side of Rainier Boulevard from Conover to Crawford Streets: "It is fairly flat and by a moderate amount of grading can be made suitable . . . " So the site was condemned in 1910 and "a portion of the ground was cleared and graded, providing a ballfield and a tennis court . . . " But the open ditch that was the remnant of the stream flowing into the slough was a nuisance to athletes and prevented full use of the field so it was put into a sewer and covered with a garbage fill. A small comfort station was built in 1913. In 1916 the improvement of streets resulted in surrounding the playfield with fills, making it into a basin that resulted in problems when the drains became clogged or unable to cope with "the unusual storms of February 1916, coupled with the extraordinary height of Lake Washington (and the slough)."

The success of the "field house (recreation center) program" spurred plans for two more "of distinctive design and appointments not ordinarily found in field houses." The sites were Columbia PF and Green Lake. Bids for construction of plans by City Architect Frank L. Baker exceeded the appropriation "by a considerable sum" so just the gym and related facilities were constructed in 1928. In preparation for the dedication, the Rainier Business Men's Club successfully petitioned for a change of name, requesting "RAINIER PLAYFIELD" for the "suburb of opportunity" had become identified as Rainier Valley, absorbing the suburb of Columbia City. There had just ended a great controversy over the renaming of "The Mountain": the Indians had named it "Tah-ho-mah - high snow mountain" and Ta-Co-ma wanted to " annex" it. C. T. Conover (Conover Street) led Seattle's opposing forces. The 14,408' peak was named in 1792 by Captain George Vancouver to honor his friend Rear Adm. Peter Rainier, British Navy (1733-1808), a daring youth who enlisted as a seaman at age 15, spending most of his service in the East Indies - and never saw his namesake mountain. He became a full admiral and member of Parliament; a bachelor and true patriot, he willed 10% of his fortune toward Britain's national debt. (Mount Rainier has 26 active glaciers, was established as the fourth National Park in 1899.)

Almost immediately, the community began to petition for the completion of the center, in accordance with the original plans; then requests for night lighting of the football field. WPA assistance was urged in 1933; unsuccessful; a wartime Federal Works Agency project was sought in 1944 but the City could provide only $1,000 of the estimated $50-80,000 cost for the addition, plus most of the "beneficiaries" would be civilians, rather than "defense workers". Funding finally came with approval of the 1948 bond fund: "one generation started the field house, the next is finishing it", commented resident C. W. Weed in who campaigned for it in 1928. The dusty/muddy streets around the playfield were paved in 1950. Floodlighting was installed in 1953, rehabilitated in 1969. The old swings and slides were replaced with a new play area in 1972; the old clay tennis court was replaced with concrete in 1932.

History: RAINIER PLAYFIELD
10/3/73