

In the boom period of rebuilding following the Great Fire of 1889, Seattle became a "wide open" town: a "reform party of purity candidates" was voted into City Hall in 1892. The new City Treasurer was Adolph Krug, a baker whose popularity was based upon an accommodating nature. The rebuilding process had exhausted the City's till and the accommodating Krug had prosperous friends who were willing to buy Treasurer Warrants at a discount as fast as he could stamp them "Unpaid for lack of funds" - and the cash he obtained was loaned to his needy friends. When City Council found out what was happening, Krug fled but was tracked down and sent to prison. The buyers and borrowers were also arrested but never tried. In the process, property was acquired by the City with the payment of delinquent taxes; one such parcel was this block now known as ROANOKE PARK. It was withdrawn from the Sheriff's sale in 1896, paid for in 1900, and transferred to Department jurisdiction in 1908.

ROANOKE Street was so named on a plat of Denny and Fuhrman (A river in Virginia derived its name from the Algonquin word for "white shell wampum (money in ceremonial pledges). The city on the riverbank - Roanoke - was the faltering first settlement founded by the English in America under Sir Walter Raleigh in 1585.) Roanoke Street was a key name in 1908 because it was the identification of the west terminus of the proposed Interlaken Park Boulevard. It had been in use as the identification of the trolley car "stop" for persons wanting to enter upon the very popular bicycle path that became the basis for Interlaken Park and boulevard. So the choice of a name for this park seems obvious.

The Olmsted Bros. proposal for the Roanoke terminus of Interlaken Park was for a large semi-circular concourse with walks, entrance gates, shelters, etc., including the steep slope down to Portage Bay. A portion of the viewpoint became BAGLEY VIEWPOINT, and much later the steep slope was taken for the freeway route to the Evergreen Point Bridge. The 1909 Annual Report envisioned Roanoke Park as part of the concourse and viewpoint. But plans were changed immediately, for the following year it "was transformed from an unsightly . . . bare wasteland to an attractive community park" with walks, broad lawns, flowers and shrubbery. "An unsightly line of electric light poles still stands (since 1905) across the tract, but an early removal of these is anticipated . . ." An estimated cost of pole relocation in 1941 was from \$2,634 to \$5,264. In 1974 the poles still stand - but are no longer "unsightly" because trees have grown up around them, restoring their appearance as tree trunks and the primary and secondary service wires are rather lost among the leaves.

In 1929 the Park Board, in response to frequent requests for sites for various memorials, chose Roanoke Park and "the public squares of street intersections" - and no other place! By 1974 there wasn't even a "memorial" tree in the park, although an effort was made in 1941 to place the bust of Dr. M. A. Matthews, reformation preacher, but it went to Denny Park.

As the population surrounding the park changed from older couples to young families, the use of the park began to change and in 1932 a request came through Mayor J. F. Dore to allow boys to play ball there - but the Park Board resisted in favor of mothers with small children. Repeated efforts to halt ball playing were met with a "hands off" policy that seemed to come from Mayor Dore. By 1940 publicity was under way to redevelop the park as a playground. A community petition supported the Park Board's opposition. That ended the controversy except for the inevitable complaint that "kids are playing ball in the park!" One game of ball became permissible after 1964 when a basketball hoop was installed near the lighted center of the park.

In 1948 the Fire Department fingered the park as a site for its new fire station but the Soroptomist Club "came to the rescue" to protest this use of even a portion of the park.

History: ROANOKE PARK
7/3/74