In 1909 the construction of Lake Washington Boulevard along the water's edge was a current project, the segment connecting with the new Frink Boulevard, winding down through Colman Park, and ending with a turnaround loop at Charlestown and 43rd had been completed. The turnaround was located on the shore of the beautiful Wetmore Slough that extended nearly to the town of Columbia City, nearly a mile away. The east shore of the Slough was a steeply sloping headland with very little beach. However, the Boulevard Plan (by the Olmsteds) was to continue along the shoreline of Lake Washington "all the way" to a new park on Bailey Peninsula (Seward Park). So in 1912 a trestle was built across the Slough with a "hump" in it for boaters to enter the peaceful Slough, and the boulevard continued southward on planking, other trestles or macadam. The citizens of Columbia City had a big plan for the Slough: to dredge it and make their town into a seaport. But other big plans were under way: a ship canal from Lake Washington to Puget Sound. By design, it was to lower the level of the lake by 9' because a severe storm in 1867 flooded the tributary valleys to a devastating crest of 8'. So the 1917 opening of the canal drained the Slough - and dreams of Columbia City - and from the receding waters emerged an island/peninsula at the foot of the Slough's headland: during periods of "high water" it was an island because its "neck" was a low, narrow connection. In time the island developed a growth of willows. Filling of the Slough had actually begun with development of Rainier Avenue across it in the 1890s and the filling of Columbia Park and Rainier PF by 1920. A huge trunk sewer was built down the old Slough to the lake: it became an ugly, swampy valley.

The old boulevard trestle became unsafe, and was replaced with a fill by WPA in 1937. The growing community began to envision a playground in the "Slough" and put together a petition in 1945: the City bought the Slough and began filling it in 1947, a project that lasted until 1968.

The nearby Mount Baker Beach area was becoming over developed in its multiple uses: bathing beach, boat moorage and park district service area. When Stan Sayres won the Gold Cup hydroplane race in Detroit and brought the event to Seattle in 1950, it was headquartered in the Mount Baker Boathouse. So other sites were sought for the conflicting uses of "Mount Baker". Wetmore Island was chosen for the race headquarters, and new boat moorage - but the Mount Baker Club did not want to give up their "community" moorage.

So in 1957 the island was cleared and filled from dredging of the pit area, and full facilities developed for a race headquarters. But the man with "the slow smile and fast hydros" who had made roostertails a top sports event in Seattle had died the year before. The newly developed facility was named the "STANLEY S. SAYRES MEMORIAL PARK". (Stan Sayres (1896-1956) of Oregon, drove racing cars, bought a speed boat in 1926, then came to Seattle in 1931 as an automobile dealer. Powerboat racing was popularized by Guy Lombardo, Gar Wood (in Detroit) and Sir Malcolm Campbell (England), Harold Wilson, Jack Shafer and Don Arena; the Gold Cup race had originated in 1904 and never was held west of Detroit. Then Sayres took the cup in 1949 with a new unlimited-class powerboat named Slo-Mo-Shun IV and the race came to Lake Washington. His wife, Madeline, had named the boats. By 1954 Sayres had won five Gold Cups and set a new record of 178.47 mph. His crew included Ted Jones and Anchor Jensen, boat designer-builder, and drivers T. Jones, Lou Fageol, Joe Taggart and Stanley Dollar. In 1955 Joe Schoenith took the Cup back to Detroit. The following year Slo-Mo-Shun IV, "the grand old lady", flipped and sank in the Detroit River and Sayres died of a heart attack in his sleep that September.)

Caught up in Roostertail Fever, the Model Power Boat Club built a V-shaped breakwater across Wetmore Cove as a course for their models. But they were beset with problems: seepage from the sanitary fill, floating debris trapped in the basin, complaints of "noise pollution" - the breakwater was removed in 1971. Their activities shifted to the "course" in Green Lake.

History: STANLEY S. SAYRES MEMORIAL PARK
9/21/73

over
As intended, the facility began to serve many aquatic sports and events: water skiing, boat launching, power boat novice regattas, sailboat races, Sea Scouts, intercollegiate crew races, site of pumper demonstrations of Historic Society of Fire Fighters, and even a water-skiing elephant during the 1961 Seafair!

In 1965 the Chairman of Seattle's First Gold Cup Committee died: Clifford Cary Harrison - one of the first boosters of the roostertails in Seattle. (A newspaper man all his life: born in Oregon in 1890, he delivered papers in Portland as a boy, worked on Oregon Journal, Seattle Times, Star and P.I.; reporter, sports editor and Outdoors Editor of the P.I.; active in conservation, wildlife and fishing; member F & AM, Sigma Delta Chi, King County Sports Council, Humane Society, 101 Club, Trapshooters; a hydro trophy named "Harrison Inspiration Award:" ) Friends gave a flagpole and a plaque to his memory.
Stanley S. Sayres Memorial Park:

In 1957 the Park Board named the newly developed Hydroplane Docks and facilities to honor the memory of Stanley S. Sayres (1896-1955), the man with the slow smile and fast hydro who brought the Gold Cup to Seattle and made water tails a top sports event. Years of trials and tests by his "Slo-mo-shun IV-V" won the Gold Cup in 1950-51 and set a one-mile world record of 178.479 m.p.h. in 1951; his racing entry at Detroit in 1951 broke the existing record with 180.323 m.p.h. The Seattle automobile dealer joined forces with Ted Jones and Anchor Jensen, boat-designer and builder; his drivers were Jones, Lou Roof and Joe Tapert. Sayres' death occurred shortly after his favorite "Slo-mo-shun IV" was washed out on the Duwamish River in a collision with a panel boat; the "old lady" was restored and placed on display at the Museum of History and Industry.

A staff of memory of Clifford Cary Harrison, one of the first seconds of hydro in Seattle. A newspaper man all his life, began as a delivery boy in Portland. Crew, working toward the Oregon Journal, Seattle Times, then as a bureau chief, sports editor, sports editor, editor of The Seattle Star, Seattle Times, playing a leading role in development of American wildlife and fishing on Northwest. Chairman of the Gold Cup Committee. His trophy named Harrison Inspiration, given. Member of Puget Sound Audubon, 101 Club, 701 Club, Trans-Antarctic, C.W. of Humane Soc.

Air area developed in 1957 - 84.033; 84.033 contributed by private donors, the balance from the Emergency Fund of C.I.C. In 1962, the ramps and piers were built for $11,884 from the 1960 Bond Fund. Concession built in 1958 for $5,994 from Cumulative Reserve fund of C.I.C.

(Prior to this development, races were oriented to the "N.E. Clinton St. Fishing Pier.")
YEAR OF IMPROVEMENT: 1984
NAME OF DESIGNER: CALVIN/GRASSHT ARCH
COST OF IMPROVEMENT: $335,500
SOURCE OF FUNDING: FEDERAL THURST
16 ACRES; INCL. 10 ACRES SHORELANDS; 2.15 ACRES HIRER

PIT FACILITY, INCL. RACE COVER/1987
$68,200 (INCL. $12,060=97%)
2 PIER - 3 RAMPSS/181,844 = '60 A.F.

STANLEY S. SAYRES
MEMORIAL PARK
5800 L. WASH. BLVD. SO.

ALSO
MT. BAKER ROWING & SAILING FEDERATION