Name: Licton Springs Park

Street and Number: 9536 Ashworth Ave N

Assessor’s File No: 431070-1685

Legal Description: Licton Springs Park Addition, all of Block 9, together with Licton Springs Reservation, together with the North ½ of the vacated North 95th Street adjacent and together with the South ½ of said vacated street adjacent to Lots 1, 2, and 3, Block 15, less a portion thereof defined as, beginning at the Northeast corner of said Lot 3, Block 15, then North along northly produced of East line of said Lot 3, 15.84 feet, then north 88°33'33" West 75.01 feet, more or less to Northly produced of East line of Ashworth Avenue North, then South 00°40'07" West along said Northly produced 27 feet to Northwest corner of Lot 1 then Easterly along Northerly line of said Lots, 1, 2 and 3 to point of beginning.

Plat Name: Licton Springs Park Addition  Block: 9  Lot: 1 thru 24

Present Owner: City of Seattle, Parks & Recreation Department

Present Use: Park

Address: 100 Dexter Ave N, Seattle WA 98109

Original Owner:

Original Use: Traditional Cultural Site

Architect: Jones and Jones

Builder: NA

Submitted by: Matt Remle

Address: 3029 South Brighton Street, Seattle, WA 98108

Phone: (206) 639-3610  Date: June 6, 2019

Reviewed: (Historic Preservation Officer)  Date: 

(page 1)
Architectural Description

Neighborhood Setting and Site

Located in the Licton Springs neighborhood, Licton Springs Park is sited on a 7.57-acre parcel. The park is bounded on the east by Densmore Avenue N, on the west by Ashworth Avenue N, on the south by N 95th Street and single-family housing, and on the north by N 97th Street. Single and multiple family housing surrounds the park. The park is approximately 1,200 feet east of Aurora Avenue N and 700 feet west of the North Seattle College campus (established 1999). The park is one block north of the Robert Eagle Staff Middle School (built in 2016, formerly the Woodrow Wilson Jr. High School/Wilson-Pacific School, a City of Seattle Landmark) (See figures 1 to 3)

Licton Springs Park

Licton Springs Park contains the iron oxide and magnesium sulfide springs that are the subject of the traditional cultural use. The nominated property boundary encompasses the full park. The nominated features are the springs within the park. The following description addresses the springs as a water feature within the park.

Spatial Organization

Park spatial organization follows general landform conditions arising from the stream channel through the park. The park is oriented length-wise north to south. The overall organization consists of a central riparian area that follows the stream alignment from north to south through the park with a small pond at the south end. A lawn, comfort station, and children’s play area occupy the central west portion of the park, along Ashworth Avenue N. Lawn areas extend along the length of the park’s east side along Densmore Avenue N. A network of trails traverses the park, with sidewalks around the park perimeter. (See figure 3)

Topography

Site topography generally slopes from a high elevation of 295 feet at the north end to 270 feet at the south end. The shape of the park’s ground plane generally relates to the park’s spatial organization. The children’s play area and comfort station occupy a level area, with the lawns consisting of gently sloped grade. The approximately 10-foot drop in grade from the children’s play area to the stream occurs steeply at the north end of the park and gently at the south end. This steeper topography at the north end constrains the stream flow and then broadens out to the south for a more expansive riparian area and pond. (See figure 3)
Vegetation

The park consists of different groups of plants based on spatial area. The riparian area contains a range of trees, ferns, perennials, grasses, and shrubs related to the stream edge and standing water. These include but are not limited to red alder, cedars, willows, western skunk cabbage, currants, and ferns. The lawn areas consist of mown grass with Tulip trees along the park perimeter as street trees. The play area has a wood chip play surface. (See figures 45, 47, 59, 61-63, 66-69, 80)

Circulation

Concrete sidewalks extend around the perimeter of the park and provide linkage to the continuation of sidewalks along adjacent streets. Concrete sidewalks extend into the park to provide access to the comfort station and the play area. Gravel trails traverse the park, extending along and across the riparian area in a meandering fashion allowing users to immerse themselves in the park experience. Three wood frame bridges extend across the stream. The bridges have a wood plank walking surface with wood hand railings and metal mesh along the railings. A small stone bridge spans the stream at the south end of the park. A corrugated metal culvert with gravel built up on both sides provides a walking path over the stream at the south end of the park. A short set of stone steps near the play area traverses a step descent along the trail. Pressure treated wood posts and stacked rubble stones serve as retaining walls along a section of trail. (See figure 39-44, 48-49, 53-54, 56-60, 62, 75-79)

Water Features

Water features are both functional and aesthetic components of the landscape. The springs and stream predate the park. The springs are connected to the area's natural hydrologic system and mineral deposits and contribute to the stream flow and alignment through the park. They consist of the main iron oxide spring at the north end of the park, two lesser iron oxide springs (lesser based on flow rate), and a magnesium sulfide spring at the south end of the park. The magnesium sulfide spring resides below and contributes to the pond water volume. The stone ring around the iron oxide spring directs water flow to a narrow channel that feeds the stream. Iron oxide is brought to the surface by the water flow in solution with the ground water and deposited in solid form in the spring basin, on the stone ring, and along the channel to the stream. (See figure 21, 34-35, 70-73)

The stream flows from two culverts at the north end of the park that discharge drainage and groundwater. At the south end of the park the stream returns to a culvert, continuing its flow and eventually entering the piping of the City’s drainage system at N 88th Street. Within the park the stream channel generally ranges from one to three feet wide. The wetland area at the south end of the park accommodates increased standing water volumes during periods of heavy rains and area drainage. Plant material across parts of the stream help to slow the rate of stream water flow through the park. The stream channel is natural in character, meandering along its course with vegetation, rocks, exposed tree roots, and decaying tree branches extending down to the water edge with mixed rock and soil stream bed. (See figure 25-26, 37, 50-52, 66, 84)

The pond consists of a shallow basin in the south portion of the park that fluctuates in depth based on seasonal water flow rates. The shoreline is natural in character, organic in shape with vegetation, rocks, exposed tree roots, and decaying tree branches extending down to the water edge. Water-tolerant vegetation grows throughout the pond basin. (See figure 30, 33, 36)

Structures, site furnishings, and objects

The park’s structures, site furnishings, and objects are associated with recreational use of the park. A ca. 1974 comfort station north of the play area provides restrooms and interpretive signage related to the park’s history. The building consists of a log posts with dimensional lumber panels framed
between the posts and clad with lap siding. A standing seam metal clad hip roof with broad eaves shelters the interior spaces. Heavy timber beams provide the roof framing with exposed beam ends along the eaves. A concrete slab floor extends throughout the building. The building is open on the southwest corner, enclosed with screens on the northeast corner, with restrooms and utility spaces in the northwest and southeast corners. Play equipment within the play area includes several slides, a merry-go-round, and other equipment and stems from ca. 2016 upgrades to the park’s equipment. A low, plywood formed concrete retaining wall is located to the northwest of the play area. Refer to circulation for information on the bridges. Interpretive signage is located at the comfort station, the iron oxide spring, and along the riparian area and pond to educate visitors on the cultural and natural history of the park. (See figure 57-58, 60, 64, 65, 83)

Character Defining Spaces and Features

The Duwamish Tribe’s sacred site liq’tad (Licton Springs) cannot be re-located, replaced, or re-created. The site remains in active traditional cultural use since time immemorial by the Duwamish Tribe and other Puget Sound tribes for place-based spiritual practice. The following list identifies the essential physical features related to traditional cultural use.

- Four springs (iron oxide, two lesser iron oxide, and the magnesium sulfide springs)
- Flowing mineral water from the springs

The location of the springs is inseparable from the land and ongoing traditional cultural use patterns. The springs are dependent on the unique mineral and hydrological conditions of this location with only one other such location in the state. This is the only publicly known location, which enables a greater interpretive and educational role for this unique site.

Native plants extant within the park, particularly those that relate to the riparian and wetland site characteristics strengthen the integrity of setting, feeling, and association relative to the traditional cultural use of the springs.

Alterations

The following provides a reference summary of known alterations to the park.

- Time immemorial: periodic burning of vegetation within the broader landscape to aid in cultivating wild plants and the construction of sweat lodges in proximity to the springs for ceremonial purposes.
- 1870: David Denny 160-acre land purchase, inclusive Licton Springs. Denny constructed a summer residence near the springs by the 1890s.
- 1909: C. R. and Pearl M. Harold and the Licton Park Mineral Springs and Land Company, a Washington state corporation, purchased and platted the area as a residential subdivision named Licton Springs Park. Within the 1909 plat, the majority of the park area was designated the Licton Springs Reservation and was not included in the dedication to the public, instead reserved by the above plated land owners. W. M. Elliott was president and T. Jerome secretary of the Licton Park Mineral Springs and Land Company. The plat was filed for record at the request of land developer Calhoun, Denny and Ewing, Incorporated on May 29, 1909. (See figure 16)
- 1920s through ca. 1934: development and use of the site as a picnic area.
- 1931: City diverts water from the springs into storm drains due to pollution from septic systems (and presumably outhouses) in the area.
- Ca. 1935: development of the magnesium sulfide spring as a bathing area.
- 1950s to 1960s: silting in and discontinued use of the bathing area.
• Ca. 1961: site purchased by the City and used for depositing soil excavated from Interstate 5 grading, including filling in of the former bathing area. The City demolished Jensen’s building, the shed at the iron oxide spring, and the concrete ring at the magnesium sulfide spring. (See figure 11)

• 1974: park renewal including removal of fill to create the pond and existing topography within the site. The pond was developed as filtering mechanism for drainage water entering the park. Development of the existing circulation systems, comfort station, and vegetation within the site. Installation of the existing granite ring around the iron oxide spring. (See figures 12-15)

• 1987: additional improvements made to the park using Seattle 1-2-3 bond funds. These included planting of trees and replacement of the play structure.

• Ca. 2016: reforestation and improvements with considerable volunteer assistance from the Licton Springs Community, and upgrades to the play area equipment.

Historic Context and Significance

The following text is adapted from writings by Thomas Speer, Duwamish Tribe member, and Matt Remle, Hunkpapa Lakota Tribe member with their permission, and The Schooner Project (funded by Seattle Department of Neighborhoods) and HistoryLink.org. Licton Springs Park is in the North Seattle neighborhood of Licton Springs. Both the park and the neighborhood take their name from the Duwamish dialect word for the red ochre mud (iron oxide) flowing from the main iron oxide spring, liq’td. The pronunciation sounds close to “LEEK-teed”, but “Licton” came into use as a pronunciation simpler for, and favored by, English speakers.

Land Use

Native American history of this area

The area around and including Licton Springs Park was once heavily forested, with cedar, Douglas fir, hemlock, alder, and willow trees along with understory of ferns and salal. The local terrain included numerous mineral springs, bogs, and marshes. According to Duwamish Tribe oral history, the area known today as Licton Springs Park had three springs used by Duwamish Tribe members for their mineral content. The site analysis from Jones and Jones done prior to the design of the current Licton Springs Park in 1974 shows four springs, three iron oxide and one magnesium sulfide. The water flowed from the springs south towards Green Lake. The Duwamish Tribe identifies the main iron oxide spring as liq’td, meaning red, colored, or painted, due to the iron oxide laden mineral water that bubbles up from the ground.

Collectively, these springs are an important place in the dxw’dwʔábsʔálʔaltad or (the Duwamish Tribe’s ancestral homeland). Duwamish people used and continue to use this site and the derived minerals for sacred and therapeutic activities, described in more detail in the next section. The springs served as a location for spiritual gatherings for the Duwamish people, where they would gather annually to build sweat-lodges for cleansing. The iron oxide derived red ochre pigment was also collected from the springs and used as face paint for different ceremonies and to decorate longhouses and other items with spiritual imagery. The red ochre pigment derived from the iron oxide spring mud was also utilized as an ointment by traditional healers of the Duwamish Tribe.

Native American tribes from the surrounding region visited the springs to collect the red ochre pigment derived from the iron oxide spring water for use as paint for ceremonies and spiritual activities. West of the springs, beyond the boundary of Licton Springs Park, there was a marsh
approximately 85 acres in size, which the Duwamish Tribe called sluqʷač or “bald head.” Native Americans from around the region harvested cranberries from the nearby marsh. (See figures 5-6)

Euro-American colonists arrived to the dxw’dawʔábsʔálʔaltád (Duwamish Ancestral Homeland) in 1851 at Alki Point and set up settlements in what is now Seattle. In 1855, the Treaty of Point Elliott created a Government-to-Government relationship between the United States and the dxʷdawʔábs (“Duwamish”). In 1859, The Treaty of Point Elliott was ratified by the United States Senate, guaranteeing hunting and fishing rights and reservations to all Tribes represented by the Native signers.

In return for the promise of a reservation and other benefits promised in the treaty by the United States government, the Duwamish Tribe exchanged over 54,000 acres of their homeland. Today those 54,000 acres include the cities of Seattle, Renton, Tukwila, Bellevue, and Mercer Island, and much of King County, including the site of Licton Springs Park.

Traditional cultural use of the springs continued following the Treaty of Point Elliott despite the ceremonies and practices associated with traditional cultural use of the springs becoming illegal through the 19th Century and into the 20th Century.

Euro-American history of this neighborhood

(This section adapted from the HistoryLink.org essay)

In 1870, settler David Denny (1832-1903) purchased 160 acres of land in north Seattle from the US government for $1.25 per acre, including the current Licton Springs Park. David Denny and his family built a summer cabin on this property and spent time there. Denny had the water at Licton Springs tested in 1883 and it was determined to be healthful. There were two springs in the area at that time; the iron oxide spring to the north, and a magnesium sulfide spring at the south end, pooled as a large bathing area. Denny constructed a two-story frame house at Licton Springs and contemplated building a health resort for invalids and pleasure seekers.

Following her father’s death, Emily Inez Denny offered the 81-acre Denny property, which included the current Licton Springs Park to the City of Seattle for development as a public park. The City declined this offer. In 1909, C. R. and Pearl M. Harold and the Licton Park Mineral Springs and Land Company acquired the site and Calhoun, Denny and Ewing, Inc. developed the property.

The Olmsted Brothers of Brookline Massachusetts were retained by Calhoun, Denny and Ewing, Inc. to prepare plans for the new subdivision and a park around the mineral springs. The Olmsted Brothers proposed an organic layout with a park, rustic drives, paved streets and home sites. It included rustic shelters over the two spring basins, bridges, paths, and clearing the reserve around the springs as well as preservation of the original, rustic Denny cabins. The Olmsted Brothers plan for the subdivision and park were not built. (See figures 17-18)

Instead the C. R. and Pearl M. Harold and the Licton Park Mineral Springs and Land Company platted 600 building lots, retaining only a smaller area as open space within the development. One remnant of the Olmsted proposal that was built, however, is a portion of the street network, where Woodlawn Avenue curves to connect with N 95th Street. (See figure 16)

The water from the springs within the current Licton Springs Park drained southward to Green Lake via Becker’s Creek. In 1920, Becker’s Creek was enclosed in a buried pipe to Green Lake, presumably to protect the lake’s water supply. In 1931, the City of Seattle diverted water from the springs into storm drains because of pollution from septic systems (and presumably outhouses) in the area. (See figure 31)
The area which is currently Licton Springs Park was a favorite picnic spot in the early years of the 20th Century, and its healing waters attracted Euro-American use. (See figures 21-22)

In 1935 Edward A Jensen opened a spa at the mineral springs, offering thermal baths that purportedly included 19 minerals. He bottled the water and sold it. Jensen died in 1951 before he realized his dream of developing a sanitarium. His widow, Mabel M Jensen, sold the property to A.R. Patterson who planned a $500,000 sanitarium. (See figures 20, 27-28)

In 1960 voters approved the spring site for a park, and the City bought the property in 1961. The City of purchased the 6.3-acre property for use as a park. Since the City did not have funds for development at that time, the only immediate improvements were the demolition of Jensen’s building, the shed at the iron oxide spring, and the concrete ring at the magnesium sulfide spring. (See figures 23-26, 30)

In 1968, the Forward Thrust bond issue passed, providing funds to build Licton Springs Park. The park was designed by Jones and Jones in 1974, with work completed in 1975. (See figures 29, 32, 34-38)

Traditional Cultural Use

Líqʔtd (Licton Springs) has been a sacred site to the Duwamish people since time immemorial. It is a sacred place within the ʔałʔałʔłtd (Ancestral Homeland) that has special meaning and significance in the Duwamish Tribe’s history and traditions.

Traditional cultural use sites, referred to as a sacred place by the Duwamish people, derive their status from their association with specific activities and historic events of the Duwamish Tribe’s spiritual, communal, and cultural traditions. Traditional cultural use sites are intrinsic to a continuing body of practices and beliefs emanating from historic Duwamish teachings, traditions, and oral history. Traditional cultural use sites give meaning to the natural landscape of the ʔałʔałʔłtd (Ancestral Homeland). They anchor cultural values and spiritual and kinship-based relationships in the land. They are inseparable from the cultural fabric and heritage of the dxw’dowʔásł ʔałʔałʔłtd (Duwamish Ancestral-Homeland).

For countless generations, the Duwamish people gathered at Licton Springs, together with their relatives by marriage, in the proper season for harvesting sacred red ochre pigment, necessary for spiritual celebration and renewal. This site hosted significant cultural practices and ceremonial activities in accordance with traditional culture. It has been used since time immemorial and continues to be used by the Duwamish people.

From Bellingham to Olympia, liq’td (Licton Springs) was known to Native American tribes along Puget Sound as a source of sacred red ochre pigment, necessary for spiritual ceremonies, healing, and celebrations. Neighboring tribes consider liq’td to be a xāxāʔ’ali (sacred place), a tangible cultural property inherited from their Duwamish ancestors. Because of inter-marriage, neighboring tribes have an interest in the access to - and the preservation of - the sacred place liq’td.

For Chief Seattle’s Duwamish Tribe of Indians, Licton Springs is one of the last sacred sites remaining in the ʔałʔałʔłtd (Ancestral Homeland).

Líqʔtd (Licton Springs) was a therapeutic resource for the Duwamish Tribe, who built a wūxltd (sweat-lodge) near the springs. A wūxltd was used to cleanse and revitalize a person’s spirit, as well as their body. For the Duwamish Tribe, red ochre (liq’td) derived from the iron oxide spring was a sacrament and an essential component of their annual religious traditions.
For spiritual gatherings and ceremonies, the Duwamish people painted their faces and other parts of the body with red ochre pigment, derived from the iron oxide spring. The red ochre pigment was also used to decorate their longhouses and other objects with spiritual images. Duwamish doctors administered herbs and soothed aching bodies with the healing mud from the springs. It was a highly valued and highly desired trade commodity.

The liq’td red ochre spring itself has been preserved throughout history and is a prominent feature in the current design of the Licton Springs Park. The spring defines both the name and establishes an authentic character-defining feature of the park. The flowing waters and iron oxide minerals comprise a rare cultural and spiritual feature of traditional significance that have survived intact, continuing to flow from the ground as spring water and continue in traditional cultural use by the Duwamish people.

The magnesium sulfide spring to the south, although a character-defining feature of the property, ceased from traditional cultural use when it was covered. This spring remains under the pond.

Generations of Euro-American redevelopment of the region have drastically altered the former hydrological network of springs and streams in this area. Urban development has wiped away most of the forests, creeks, wetlands and natural springs that once defined the natural terrain and hosted the traditional cultural practices of this region. The springs at Licton Springs Park are the only remaining components of this cultural landscape that remain intact. They have long been a sacred site for prayer, medicine, and nexus for Native American gathering. The springs exists today as a persistent presence connecting our current generation of Duwamish people to the ecosystem and sacred/cultural life of the Duwamish Tribe.

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Unpublished interviews


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Figure 38. ca. 1974 view during the park renewal of the existing conditions. Source: Jones and Jones.
Figure 39. View south along Ashworth Ave N.

Figure 40. View north along Ashworth Ave N.
Figure 41. View looking east of the play area.

Figure 42. View looking south over the lawn area south of the play area.
Figure 43. View looking northeast over the lawn area towards the riparian area.

Figure 44. View looking southwest over the southwest corner of the park.
Figure 45. View looking northeast towards the pond area, which is behind the row of trees in the foreground.

Figure 46. View looking east along the south portion of the park.
Figure 47. View looking north towards the pond.

Figure 48. Vicinity, view looking south along Woodlawn Ave N.
Figure 49. View looking east along N 95th St.

Figure 50. Culvert detail where water leaves the park.
Figure 51. View looking north along the stream.

Figure 52. View of the culvert and gravel trail over the culvert.
Figure 53. View of a gravel trail looking northwest.

Figure 54. View looking west along the south end of the park.
Figure 55. View looking north towards the east lawn area.

Figure 56. View looking east along N 95th St.
**Figure 57.** View of the southernmost bridge, looking west.

**Figure 58.** Detail view of the bridge, looking west.
Figure 59. View looking northwest along the trail on the west side of the stream.

Figure 60. View of the pressure treated retaining wall along the trail, looking north.
Figure 61. View of western skunk cabbage within the park.

Figure 62. View looking south along the trail.
Figure 63. View looking northeast into the riparian area along the stream.

Figure 64. View of the southeast corner of the comfort station.
Figure 65. View of the concrete retaining wall north of the play area, looking west.

Figure 66. View looking south along the stream from the bridge.
Figure 67. Plant detail within the park.

Figure 68. Fern detail within the park.
Figure 69. Plant detail within the park.

Figure 70. Iron oxide spring, looking southwest from the trail.
Figure 71.  Iron oxide spring detail, showing the granite ring.

Figure 72.  Iron oxide spring detail, looking northeast towards the spring.
Figure 73. View looking southwest of the narrow channel from the iron oxide spring that flows to the stream.

Figure 74. View looking northeast.
Figure 75. View looking north along the trail towards N 97th Street.

Figure 76. View looking east along N 97th Street.
Figure 77. View looking east along N 97th Street.

Figure 78. View looking east along N 97th Street.
Figure 79. View looking south over the lawn area.

Figure 80. View looking south from the slight knoll.
Figure 81. View looking west from the slight knoll.

Figure 82. View looking southwest along the trail heading back towards the riparian area.
Figure 83. View of the middle bridge looking west.

Figure 84. View looking northwest along the stream towards the north bridge.
Figure 85. View looking south over the play area.