



The City of Seattle

LPB-78/82

Landmarks Preservation Board

400 Yesler Building Seattle, Washington 98104 • (206)625-4501

REPORT ON DESIGNATION

Name of Property: Lake Washington Bicycle Path
Legal Description: Interlaken Boulevard between
Del Mar Drive East and 24th Avenue East.

At the Public Hearing held on April 21, 1982, the City of Seattle's Landmarks Preservation Board voted to approve designation of the Lake Washington Bicycle Path as a Seattle Landmark based upon satisfaction of the following criteria of the Landmarks Preservation Ordinance #106348:

Section 3.01 (3) It is associated in a significant way with a significant aspect of the cultural, political, or economic heritage of the community, city, state or nation;

Refinement of design and function of the bicycle, coupled with industrialized, production of the vehicle, made a positive contribution to the development of transportation from the middle through the end of the nineteenth century when it was superseded early in this century by the automobile and the gasoline engine; (this may be hard to realize, but the bicycle and the train were the first modes of transportation to exceed the horse!). Seattle appears to have been in the forefront of using the bicycle for basic transportation (on the West Coast at least), but, moreover, became nationally renowned for its development of a network of recreational paths and related functions (restaurants, resthouses, clubhouse, etc.) designed specifically for the bicycle. This has been particularly confirmed by Roberta Deering in research she completed several years ago for an Oregon Bicycle Transit Study co-sponsored by the University of Oregon's Departments of Urban Planning and Landscape Architects; this included an extensive study of bicycle path history and design, authored by Paul L. Deering and Bruce Balshone.

When the Bicycle network was superseded by automobile roadways and boulevards, the network and its auxiliary facilities were gradually replaced, lost or destroyed. The subject roadway through the woods of Interlaken Park is the last extant and visible portion of the network, even though it has been broadened to accommodate the horseless carriage.

FEATURES OF THE LANDMARK TO BE PRESERVED INCLUDE:

the route

ISSUED: May 5, 1982

Earl D. Layman, City Historic Preservation Officer

by: 
Roberta Deering, Landmarks Preservation Coordinator

cc: Walter Hundley
William Justen
Frank Cameron
Tim Wahl



City of Seattle
Department of Community Development/Office of Urban Conservation

Landmark Nomination Form

Name Lake Washington Bicycle Path **Year Built** 1897
(Common, present or historic)

Present name: Interlaken Boulevard

Street and Number _____

Assessor's File No. _____

Legal Description **Plat Name** _____ **Block** _____ **Lot** _____

1.2 miles of Interlaken Boulevard between Del Mar Drive East and 24th Ave. E.

Present Owner _____ **Present Use** City Street

Address _____

Original Owner _____ **Original Use** Bicycle Path

Architect George F. Cotterill **Builder** Queen City Good Roads Club

Description: Present and original (if known) physical appearance and characteristics

See enclosed History of Bicycling in Seattle, pages 12 - 16; and attached newspaper articles.

Statement of significance

Between 1894 and 1904, the City of Seattle, The Queen City Bicycle Club, and a private corporation constructed between 50 and 60 miles of bicycle path in the city. These paths allowed the bicycle to be the recreation and transportation for the thousands of Seattle citizens who participated in the first great bicycle era.

At a time when bicycles cost an average of \$100 and houses could be purchased for only \$1000, thousands of Seattleites bought bicycles from the forty bicycle dealers; watched races at the four tracks, read the weekly "Cycling" column, and rode the bicycle paths. The bicycle clubs provided social, recreational and athletic opportunity for the members.

None of the early bicycle shops remain in business. The tracks were torn down and forgotten years ago. Streets, freeways and parkinglots cover the sites of the early tracks and paths. The only remaining structure of that early bicycle era that resembles its original state is the section of the Lake Washington Bicycle Path now called Interlaken Boulevard.

By 1902 there was some women's track racing in Seattle.

Elsewhere in the country the bicycling continued to be primarily a white male recreational activity. Major Taylor was one of the few non-white competitors to be successful in bicycle competition. In Seattle, the only reference to non-white riders is to Mark Ten Suie, a Chinese store owner who participated in bicycle activities and contributed to the path fund.

SEATTLE BICYCLE PATHS 1896-1903

In its early years Seattle had little need (or funds) for city streets and roads. The town was small enough that transportation was of little concern. Large objects could be moved by boat or were dragged through the forests and "streets." Over the years, a few streets had been planked to give a hard surface, but the planks didn't last well. The streets of 1895 were described by George F. Cotterill as "strewn with wrecks of old planking which had survived from 5-10 years of traffic. Spikes, splinters, and holes were the principal features which distinguished the remains." The quality of roadway and streets discouraged and retarded the development of bicycling in Seattle. Other cities had large cycling clubs and large numbers of cyclists, but in 1895, cycling was very limited in Seattle. There were bicycles and bicyclists, but the combination of steep hills, poor streets, frail machines and the lack of a club to support the riders, combined to defeat even the strongest attempts to bring bicycling to the city.

In 1893, a series of changes began that promoted rapid growth in bicycling. It moved from a sport involving a dozen or so riders to a social and sports activity involving perhaps 10,000 riders in a very few years. One of the major elements of this dramatic transformation was the path system. The bicycle

allowed more people to ride, and these riders wanted more paths. In 1893-94 clubs formed, bicycle businesses opened, better bicycles were available, the first bicycle track was built, and there was money available for bicycle paths. In 1893 a section of First Avenue S. was paved with brick. This was a very small section (only 20 feet by 240 feet) to examine its usefulness as a street surface. In 1894 a whole block of Union between First and Second was paved with brick. During the Summer of 1895 Pike Street was paved all the way from First to Seventh Streets. Paving really caught on and during the Fall of 1895 and Winter of 1896, First and Second Avenues were paved with brick from Pioneer Place to Pike Street. In the Summer of 1896, with only one mile of paved street, there were 300 bicyclists in Seattle. With the support of several clubs, bicycle businesses, the availability of reliable safety bicycles, and the critical element of a few yards of rideable streets, the number of bicyclists jumped from 300 in 1896 to 3,000 in 1897 and continued to grow.

This many bicyclists needed and required miles of suitable roadways. Starting in 1896 they built, financed, paved, expanded and maintained a network of bicycle paths throughout the city. On September 19, 1896, 200 bicyclists, with their bicycles illuminated with lanterns and lamps and decorated with paper, assembled at Pioneer Place to ride and dedicate the first Lake Union Path. The path was narrow, but it was a beginning. Later this two and a half mile path on the east shore of the lake was connected with the half-mile path on the north shore, and with bridges and various sidewalks to complete a ten-mile route around Lake Union.

Two major bicycle routes were started in 1897. One of the first projects of the newly formed Queen City Good Roads Club was building a ten-mile cinder path to Lake Washington along the route of Lakeview and Interlaken Boulevards. This path opened June 19, 1897.

A company was formed to sell stock and raise funds to build the Seattle-Tacoma Boulevard, a bicycle toll road between Seattle and Tacoma. Eight miles of this roadway were built, including a two and one half mile section built on pilings and trestles across the tidelands that were then the south part of Seattle. Before going bankrupt, the business operated for one year.

The next year, the city of Seattle extended the Lake Washington Path one mile to Leschi, widened the Lake Union Path, and replanked the roadway to Pike Street and the bridge on the west side of Lake Union. This path was redesigned to avoid use of sidewalks. The Lake Union Path was extended to Green Lake, which was later circled with a path.

Other paths were completed to Fort Lawton and Magnolia Bluff, and from Ballard to Fremont. Thorndyke Avenue and Magnolia Boulevard follow the route of the bicycle path.

When the tidelands to the south of the city were being filled in and a new bridge was built to West Seattle in 1903, riders could follow this route to West Seattle and then ride the plank road to Alki. Another plank road connected with West Seattle.

The most popular path was the Lake Washington route. It received the most attention by the Path Committee, it was widened, extended, patrolled, and had mileage markers. The Lake Washington Path started at Eighth and Pine and paralleled streets north and east to Lakeview Boulevard. It followed Lakeview through the forest to the vicinity of Roanoke Park where it turned eastward through a "saddle" in the hill. At Roanoke Park it branched and a path continued to the University. The main path continued east and south along the route currently followed by Interlaken Boulevard to 23rd. Portions of the historic path are still visible alongside Interlaken between Del Mar Drive and 23rd in Boren Park. After

crossing 23rd, the path continued toward the Arboretum and turned toward Madison, following a route between Arboretum Boulevard and 29th to Madison. At Madison and 29th there was a large marshy area and stream. At first bicyclists crossed this area on the trolley trestle, later there was a two-block long bridge built as part of the pathway. At the east end of the bridge the path branched again, with one part going to Madison Park, and the main path continuing southward.

Bicyclists using the Lake Washington Path visited the half-way house located between Roanoke Park and 23rd. It provided a rest and meeting place for cyclists on their way to and from the Lake. Sandwiches, tea, and coffee and soft drinks were served as well as breakfasts for riders on an early trip to the Lake. The only customers were bicyclists, there were no cars and no local customers to serve. The design, financing, building, maintenance and expansion of the path system was made possible through the efforts of the Queen City Good Roads Club. Cost of the paths was paid by the city with funds collected for bicycle licenses. Additional funds were raised by the club through tours by boat to Tacoma, train to Westport, raffeling bicycles, sponsoring races, and obtaining subscriptions. Subscriptions were donations solicited from bicyclists and businesses that would benefit from the paths.

Although this combining of private donations and city funds to build paths across public and private land involved many people, and could have been an administrative nightmare, it seems to have been made possible through the efforts of one man, George F. Cotterill. During the period of path building, Mr. Cotterill was a civil engineer employed by the City of Seattle, and was the Second Vice President and Path Committee Chairman of the Queen City Good Roads Club. He surveyed, designed, studied and supervised the building and maintaining of the paths. The history of bicycling in Seattle, and even the history of Seattle

and Washington State might have been much different if it were not for this one citizen who went on to be elected state Senator and Seattle's mayor.

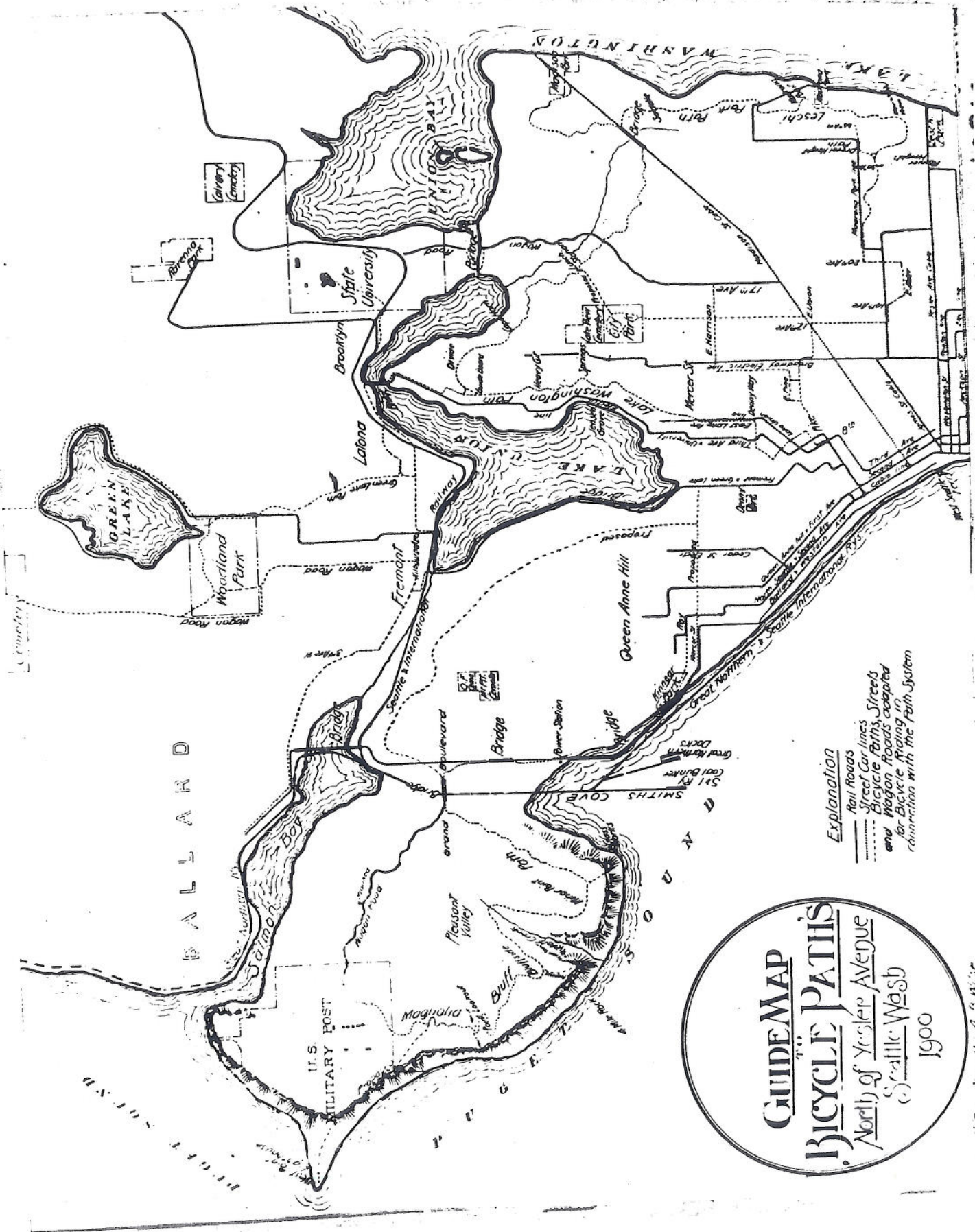
Maintaining the cinder paths was a continuing problem for Mr. Cotterill and the club. Seattle's weather caused washouts and landslides. Mountain beavers and gophers tunneled and burrowed in and under the paths. The soldiers at Fort Lawton repeatedly rode their horses on the Magnolia path and tore up the cinder surface. But the biggest problem was cattle. There were hundreds of cattle in Seattle, and, much to the distress of the Queen City Good Roads Club, some of them would graze along the bicycle paths and destroy the fine smooth cinder surface. Finally, in 1901, the Club retained an attorney to prosecute the owners of the wandering cattle. By 1903 the cattle were less of a problem, they were no longer running loose in the city, but the fences built to corral the cattle cut across the paths making them unuseable. The Magnolia Bluff path was abandoned in 1903 because of the fences.

In the summer of 1901 warnings were issued about bears frightening bicyclists on the Lake Washington Path on Capitol Hill.

As houses and fences and farms were built on the private land used by the paths, the paths were destroyed. Interest in bicycling and the paths declined. Some of the remaining sections of the paths were used for horse trails before they all became streets, parking lots, and freeways. Only Interlaken Boulevard remains as the same park-like forested path that it was originally.

LAW AND ORDER

The bicycle changed everything it touched from streets and transportation to manufacturing, law and law enforcement. The changes brought about for police and the courts were profound. For the first time a society had large numbers



GUIDE MAP
 TO
BICYCLE PATHS
 North of Yesler Avenue
 Seattle Wash
 1900

Explanation
 Rail Roads
 Street Car Lines
 Bicycle Paths, Streets
 and Wagon Roads adapted
 for Bicycle Riding in
 conjunction with the Path System

Copyright, 1900, by A. S. Miller

Photographs:

Five copies of photographs of the Lake Washington Bicycle Path and Halfway House taken about 1901.

Color photographs of Interlaken Boulevard taken in October, 1981.

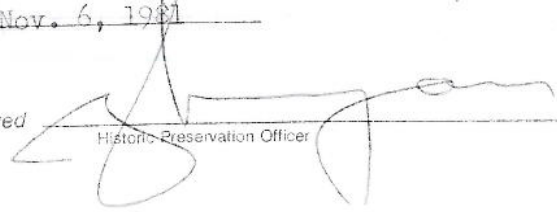
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Date Nov. 6, 1981

Reviewed



Historic Preservation Officer

Date 011082