# Volunteer Park
# Landmark Nomination

"Concourse, concert ground and formal garden on top of hill. Cemetery beyond Conservatory, Reservoir on left has straight flaring sides with which walks with steps line up," caption on photograph written by Roland Cotterill, Secretary of Board of Park Commissioners, 1913
Photo by Frank H. Nowell, Photo #2695-22, Olmsted Brothers Volunteer Park Photo Album
Courtesy of the National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site

*"...a birdseye view of Volunteer Park as taken from the water tower recently. We are very proud of this picture...inasmuch as it sets forth so comprehensively the great variety of landscape and other formal work which has been carried out in Volunteer Park in accordance with your plan."*

-Roland Cotterill Secretary of Board of Park Commissioners, to Olmsted Brothers, Oct 23, 1913

**Submitted by**

## Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks

**February 2011**

The City of Seattle

# Landmarks Preservation Board

Mailing Address: PO Box 94649 Seattle WA 98124-4649
Street Address: 700 5th Ave Suite 1700

Name Volunteer Park Year Built 1909-1910
(Common, present or historic)

Street and Number 1400 East Prospect Street .

Assessor's File No. 2925049087 .

Legal Description: The northeast quarter of the northeast quarter (NE ¼ NE ¼) of Section Twenty-nine (29) in Township Twenty-five (25) north (N) of Range Four (4) east (E), Willamette Meridian, also beginning at the northeast (NE) corner of the northeast quarter (NE ¼) of Section Twenty-nine (29) in Township Twenty-five (25) north (N) of Range Four (4) east (E), Willamette Meridian, thence south one degree thirty-six minutes forty-eight seconds (1°36'48") west a distance of fourteen hundred thirty-three and fifty-two one-hundredths (1433.52) feet along the east line of Section 29 in Township 25 north Range 4 east, thence north (N) eighty-eight degrees eighteen minutes twenty-seven seconds (88°18'27") west a distance of four hundred eighty-two and ten one-hundredths (482.10) feet, thence north (N) eighty-eight degrees eighteen minutes thirty-one seconds (88°18'31") west a distance of two hundred seventy-two and five one-hundredths (272.05) feet, thence north (N) eighty-eight degrees eighteen minutes thirty-eight seconds (88°18'38") west a distance of two hundred seventy-two and four one-hundredths (272.04) feet, thence north (N) eighty-eight degrees eighteen minutes twenty-nine seconds (88°18'29") west a distance of three hundred eleven and seven one-hundredths (311.07) feet to a point on the west line of the northwest (NW) quarter of the northeast (NE) quarter of the northeast (NE) quarter of Section 29 in Township 25 north Range 4 east, thence north (N) one degree eighteen minutes twenty seconds east, more or less, a distance of fourteen hundred five and sixty-nine one-hundredths (1405.69) feet, more or less, to a point on the north line of Section 29 in Township 25 north Range 4 east,

thence south (S) eighty-nine degrees thirty minutes and five seconds (89°30'05") east a distance of one thousand three hundred forty-five (1345) feet, more or less, along the north line of Section 29 in Township 25 north Range 4 east to the point of beginning. Also the east one-half (E ½) of blocks E and F of Phinney's Addition to the City of Seattle as recorded in Vol. 1, Page 175 of King County Plats. Also the portion of Eleventh (11th) Avenue North in the City of Seattle from the north line of Furth's Addition to the City of Seattle and the north line of Phinney's Addition to the City of Seattle as vacated by ordinance 26793.

Plat Name: _____ Block _____Lot _____

Present Owner: Seattle Department of Parks & Recreation

Present Use: Public Park, Reservoir

Address: 100 Dexter Avenue, Seattle, WA 98109

Original Owner: Seattle Board of Park Commissioners

Original Use: Public Park, Reservoir Site

Architect: John Charles Olmsted, Olmsted Brothers Landscape Architects

Builder: Seattle Board of Park Commissioners, Seattle Public Works Department

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## I. Physical Description

Seattle's Volunteer Park was designed by John Charles Olmsted (1852-1920), the senior partner of the national firm Olmsted Brothers Landscape Architects, located in Brookline, Massachusetts. The Olmsted brothers (John Charles and Frederick Law, Jr.) were trained in and continued the practice and design philosophy of their father, Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. The senior Olmsted founded the profession of landscape architecture and designed New York's Central Park, Brooklyn's Prospect Park, the Boston park system, and hundreds of other parks, estates, campuses, exhibition grounds, subdivisions and other designed landscapes across the nation.

John Charles Olmsted prepared a comprehensive park system plan for Seattle in 1903, meeting with city leaders during a month-long trip to Seattle. He expanded the plan in 1908 to include areas recently annexed to the City, including Columbia City, Ballard and West Seattle. Olmsted visited the sites of the nearly one hundred parks and boulevards proposed in the plan. His observations have shaped the form and design of the park system Seattle enjoys today. The Olmsted Brothers firm prepared designs for more than twenty individual parks, squares, and boulevards as well. Volunteer Park stands out as one of the most complete and well-preserved example of the firm's design approach for city parks in Seattle. *(Figure 1 - Vicinity Map)*

Overall, few substantive changes to Volunteer Park have occurred since 1975, the date that the park was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The most notable alterations since 1975 include a series of changes to the Art Museum forecourt plantings (c. 1990 to present), redesign of the children's play area and replacement of the play equipment (1991), and construction of a new greenhouse in the maintenance area (1991). The park, including the Reservoir and Gate House, retains an overall integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Volunteer Park is remarkably well-preserved a century after its construction.

### A. Overall Character and Style

Volunteer Park is an urban park designed in the naturalistic, pastoral/picturesque American romantic style that is closely associated with the Olmsted firm. The elements of this style include irregular open lawns bordered by shrub and tree plantings, carefully framed and modulated views, one or more circulation loops, and areas intended for crowds and social interaction which are treated in a more geometric and formal manner.

The Olmsted Brothers retained Olmsted, Sr.'s belief that people would receive psychological benefits from being surrounded by and contemplating natural scenery. This view was widely-held during the late 19$^{th}$ and early 20th centuries and continues to have adherents. As a result, Olmsted-designed parks emphasize space for non-programmed, passive recreation and flexible activities. Volunteer Park's open, interconnected lawns and bordering masses of trees express that design philosophy.

Like New York's Central Park, Volunteer Park incorporates a reservoir. It is one of the first two built as part of the City's Cedar River water supply system. The park also includes the Seattle

Asian Art Museum, a Conservatory and related support facilities, a water storage standpipe/observation tower, a bandstand, a shelter house, a play area with wading pool, and tennis courts.

The park plays a dual role as a destination park within a citywide park system, and as a neighborhood park in one of Seattle's most prominent neighborhoods. The plantings reflect this formal and informal character. The extensive variety of non-native plant species and rows of trees emphasize formality while incorporating remnant native trees and clustered informal plantings to define irregular open spaces. While most of the plants are not native, they are arranged in a naturalistic way that makes them appear to belong to a native matrix, but with added variety and color.

In the 1903 park system plan, John C. Olmsted proposed that Volunteer Park be the most urban and refined of Seattle's parks. He recognized that its setting in a fashionable new neighborhood required a character different from more wild and natural parks, such as Ravenna Park and Bailey Peninsula (now Seward Park), in outlying neighborhoods.

**B. Spatial Organization**

Approximately square in plan, the 48-acre park measures roughly 1500 feet from east to west and 1380 feet from north to south. It is bounded by Lakeview Cemetery to the north, 15th Avenue East to the east, East Prospect to the south, and midway between East 11th and East Federal Avenues to the west (behind residences facing west on Federal Avenue). The park occupies the high point of Capitol Hill, straddling the north-south ridgeline. From a high point at the Museum's front, the park slopes downward to both its western and eastern edges. *(Figure 2 – Current Park Plan, Figure 3 – Current Aerial Photograph, and Figure 7 - Topography)*

Within the nearly square boundaries formed by the street grid, the park is composed of irregular lawns separated by groupings of trees and understory. The irregular woodland/lawn framework contrasts with the formal Concourse drive at its center. The Concourse forms an active promenade along the ridge top between the Water Tower and the Conservatory, flanked by an allée of trees. It crosses a perpendicular view axis running west from the Museum (site of the original music pavilion) across the Reservoir to the city and mountains beyond. The landscape design along this view axis is also formal, descending in symmetrical terraces from the Concourse to the Reservoir. The Concourse axis continues south of the Water Tower into the Capitol Hill neighborhood as 14th Avenue East. The section north of East Mercer Street is a Parks-owned boulevard referred to as Volunteer Parkway. John C. Olmsted considered this the main driving entrance to the park. It was called "Millionaire's Row" during the first part of the twentieth century due to the opulent mansions lining the street. *(Figure 4 - Park Axes)*

Within this formal cross-axial pattern, the park can be divided into a center area and somewhat unequal quadrants for reference purposes.

- The center area, where the Concourse and view axis cross, includes the Museum and its plaza, the Black Sun sculpture plinth, and the included portion of the Concourse. The Reservoir lies to the west, on the boundary between the SW and NW quadrants. The

Water Tower is to the south between the SW and SE quadrants; and the Conservatory and Seward monument are to the north between the NE and NW quadrants.

- The SW quadrant contains small lawns along East Prospect Street, the Gate House, part of the Reservoir and the slopes and terraces below it.
- The SE quadrant contains the lawns and plantings south and east of the Museum and Water Tower.
- The NE quadrant contains the park's facilities for children (the Shelter House, children's play area, lawn and wading pool); the Comfort Station; the large open lawn north of the Museum; and part of the Conservatory.
- The NW Quadrant includes park maintenance facilities (Keeper's Lodge, greenhouse, and maintenance buildings), two double tennis courts, the Bandstand, the lawn north of the Reservoir, and parts of the Conservatory and Reservoir and slopes and terraces below The Carriage Drive loops from this quadrant through the park to the southwest quadrant. *(Figure 5 - Spatial Organization)*

Between and at lawn edges lie defined activity areas and built elements. Some are part of the visual and circulation axes that cross in front of the Museum, while others are dispersed and connected by the looping Carriage Drive.

The built elements of the park reinforce the axial design and serve to anchor the visual and circulation axes. The park's large interconnected, meadow-like lawns provide an important spatial framework as well. These flat and rolling expanses are hemmed by trees and shrubs and contain groves of trees within them. Connecting the lawns and activity areas are entry walks, promenades along the central Concourse drive and around the reservoir, and paths in quieter areas around the lawns and at the periphery of the park. The informal meadows give the illusion that the park is an untouched pastoral landscape, with hints of views and expanses beyond. Defined by elongated groups of evergreen conifers, these meadow-like areas fade into shaded woodland walks, connecting to other paths and smaller glades. At the park edges, trees and understory plantings screen outward views to varying degrees on all four sides.

**C. Vehicular and Pedestrian Circulation**

A circulation system comprised of roads and walking paths knits park activity areas, built elements, and open lawns together. The roadway system has two parts: the broad, formal and level Concourse, which connects the Water Tower with the Conservatory along the park's central spine; and the narrower, sloping Carriage Drive, which loops through the park. Pedestrian sidewalks border the roads and paths meander throughout the park. *(Figure 6 – Circulation)*

The Concourse provides access to the busiest and most social facilities within the park -- the Museum, the Water Tower, and the Conservatory. Its tree-lined, gently sweeping curve meanders along the park's north-south ridgeline. Extending seven hundred feet from the Water Tower to the Conservatory, the Concourse has circles at both ends that reduce circulation conflicts and slow traffic. The 44-foot paved roadway is flanked by concrete curbs and specially-detailed eight-foot concrete sidewalks, with parallel parking along both sides. The Water Tower circle is a 26-foot asphalt roadway approximately 240 feet in diameter (outside). The Seward Statue circle is 100 feet in diameter, with a 42-foot roadway. Between the circles, trees occupy ten-foot

planting strips. At the Museum forecourt the paving is tinted concrete 60 feet wide, with head-in parking.

Both ends of the two-way Concourse intersect with the 24-foot wide Carriage Drive. Management of the Carriage Drive has changed over the years. Initially, all roads were two-way, but between the mid-1970s and 2009 the Carriage Drive became a one-way route through the north and west side of the park, entering the park from the northeast corner, continuing to the north Concourse circle in front of the Conservatory and then continuing west and then south and east around the Reservoir. The two one-way segments have two separate functions. The western segment of the Carriage Drive which provides access to the park west of the ridgetop Concourse, was closed in 2009 to general vehicular traffic. It starts at the Conservatory circle, descends toward the west side of the reservoir, climbs eastward to the circle around the Water Tower. This half-mile-plus route connects all of the park's destinations except the Museum and previously provided parallel parking along one side. The eastern segment starts at the park entrance at East Galer Street and 15th Avenue East and leads to the north Concourse circle.

The main vehicular park entries are at East Galer Street and 15th Avenue East in the northeast corner of the park, leading to the north Concourse circle, and at 14th Avenue East and East Prospect Street on the southern side of the park, leading north to the Water Tower circle. A third, minor entry is further west at 12th Avenue East and East Prospect Street. It leads to the long loop of the Carriage Drive as it passes south of the reservoir, but this entrance is now closed to general traffic. The original vehicular entries near the southwest corner from 11th Avenue East and from East Highland Drive from the west have been removed, but the grading still exists.

Graveled or asphalt-paved pedestrian paths enter the park from each corner and the south, east and west midpoints. The entire north side of the park is fenced from the adjacent Lakeview Cemetery. Peripheral paths run along the east and west sides of the park and around the reservoir.

Branching off the Concourse, meandering paths lead to other areas within the park. Paths are generally six to eight feet wide and are surfaced primarily with asphalt, although some routes on the west side are packed soil, wood chips or gravel. One pathway loops around the reservoir; a second path loops around the lawn northwest of the reservoir. On the northeast lawn, a path runs northwest from a point slightly north of the Art Museum. This path splits into a "Y," with the second arm leading behind the museum toward the southeast corner of the park. Just east of the water tower it crosses another path extending from 14th Avenue East at East Prospect Street to 15th Avenue East. Another loop begins at the lawn north of the reservoir, skirts the west side of the tennis courts and terminates at the northwest corner of the park.

Above and below the Reservoir, stairways negotiate steep pathway grades. Double sets of stairs and paths fan out symmetrically on both sides of the "Black Sun" sculpture and lead down the terraced slopes. The paths become more informal at the reservoir. In addition to these Olmsted-designed paths, a social path has developed at the edge of the fenced, inaccessible original walkway built as part of the reservoir.

Paths in the park were initially surfaced with gravel or cinders, while the roadways were paved with macadam. As the Museum became more heavily used, the Museum's director complained about damage to the floors from grit tracked in by visitors. Proposals to surface paths with concrete were denied due to materials shortages in 1942, but in 1948 the Park Board contracted with Harris Asphalt Company for a $2000 paving project. (Sherwood, Board of Park Commissioners minutes, 1948) The post-war period also brought expansion and utility upgrades for the Museum, in 1947, 1953, 1955 and 1968. (Sherwood)

## D. Topography and Grading

Visitors experience the park as a broad, linear plateau at the top of the ridge with lawns that fall away gently to the west and east. The 48.5 acre site actually slopes significantly from center to corners, with a grade difference of 75 feet from the high point of the park, just west of the Museum (roughly 455 feet above sea level) to the low point at the southwest corner, and 25 feet to a low point near the southeastern corner. The steepest slopes are immediately above and to the west of the reservoir, although some steep slopes are hidden by vegetation in the northwest corner. *(Figure 7 –Topography)*

The land west of the ridge top was graded between the Concourse and the reservoir at a two-to-one overall slope, broken by two intermediate terraces running north to south. The first terrace below the Concourse is the broadest and contains a pathway and flower beds terminated at each end by circular lily ponds within groves of trees. The slope west of the reservoir was engineered to retain the large body of water. It descends steeply approximately 34 feet to the Carriage Drive. Slopes from the Carriage Drive down to the southwest corner of the park are also steep, requiring a concrete stairway for pedestrians.

East of the Concourse the park's grade changes are hidden within tree groves and masked by the two-story Museum, which is entered on the upper level but has lower-story windows facing east. Elsewhere in the park, grades are generally gradual, except in the northwest corner. The 1909 grading plan reveals that, except for major grading around the reservoir and museum site, most of the designed gradients were created to smooth slopes for the Carriage Drive roadbed. *(Figure 8 –Topography and Grading)*

Changes to grading since initial construction have been minor. Installation of the *Black Sun* sculpture in 1969 required extending the Concourse-level terrace above the Reservoir slightly to the west. Renovation of the park in the mid-1970s included regrading of part of the lawn east of the Bandstand/Stage to create a shallow bowl for better audience seating and a slight regrading of the "Little Folks" lawn east of the Shelter House.

## E. Vegetation

General Character of Vegetation

The general character of the vegetation of Volunteer Park is naturalistic, informal and irregular, in a style strongly associated with the Olmsteds. Landscaped beds are, for the most part, large

and multi-layered. The large meadow-like lawns are defined by mixed groups of conifers and deciduous trees which spill out from the central axis and give the park much of its scale. Lawn edges are broken up with extended sweeps of spring-flowering shrubs. Clumps of mid-sized trees such as dogwoods and cherries provide layering while contributing seasonal color. Edges are soft and undulating, transitioning into secluded glens and narrower walks. These mixed plantings and varied open areas offer a variety of sun and shade, depending on the time of day and year. Over-mature tree and shrub growth now obscures many of the original views beyond the Park from the top of the Water Tower, to the west across the reservoir from the central Concourse, and across expanses of lawns. The lawns have become less expansive as trees and shrub plantings have spread. *(Figure 9 – Vegetation)*

The landscape plan incorporated native and introduced species. The firm documented (now-invasive) species of holly, ivy, and laurel already growing in the park, along with species of European larch, beech, Japanese cryptomeria, eastern white and ponderosa pines. Several of these trees are still alive. Olmsted's species choices, using what was available through nurseries and propagation, complemented native vegetation. For the most part Olmsted retained native vegetation that was already growing in the park, and added those natives that would enhance new ornamentals in the planting design.

Tree groves and shrub beds throughout the park are now mature or in decline, although a few shrub beds have been renovated in the last decade. Generally, tree groves utilize central groups of tall eastern and western white pine (*Pinus strobus* and *monticola*), Norway spruce (*Picea abies)*, Japanese cryptomeria (*Cryptomeria japonica*), or western red cedar (*Thuja plicata*). These are intermixed with deciduous oaks (*Quercus rubra),* London planes (*Platanus x acerifolia 'Pyrimidalis'*), sugar maples, *(Acer saccharinum*), black walnuts (*Juglans nigra*) and other large non-native deciduous trees. These large trees in turn are surrounded by lower-growing hawthorns (*Crataegus spp.*) and cherries (*Prunus serrulata* cultivars), Japanese maples (*Acer palmatum*), and viburnums (*Viburnum tomentosum*). These are, in turn, surrounded by even shorter spring and summer blooming shrubs such as spiraea, forsythia, hydrangea, boxwood, evergreen azaleas (*Azalea karume*), deciduous azaleas (*Azalea mollis*), and rhododendron hybrids. Beneath those layers are carpets of groundcovers and sweeps of bulbs in the spring.

The exceptions to the naturalistic design are in the central allée of horse chestnuts (*Aesculus hipocastanum*) along the Concourse, the four groups of Atlas and deodar cedars (*Cedrus atlantica* and *deodara*) around the Museum forecourt and the terraces between the Concourse and Reservoir, a row of lindens (*Tilia platyphyllos*) along the Carriage Drive west of the Water Tower, the formal terrace and lily pond plantings below the Concourse, and the beds in front of the Conservatory.

Changes to plantings since initial installation are most obvious in the slopes between the Concourse and the Reservoir. Initially planted with perennials and annuals on the top level and tiers of rose beds between stairways descending to reservoir level, the slopes bounded by the stairways, Concourse, and Reservoir are now turf-covered. Beds at the main entry at 14th Street have also been noticeably simplified and changed in character. More widespread and subtle, but also significant, are park-wide alterations to vegetation. The composition of the tree and shrub

understory plantings has changed periodically over time. These changes are primarily due to three causes: natural plant death and replacement; shrub pruning and maintenance techniques that are not consistent with the original Olmsted design intent; and shrub thinning at the request of the Seattle Police Department for improved security and visibility. The original layered approach, with a thick understory of shrubs below towering native trees and lower-growing ornamental trees and surrounding beds of ground covers, has become simplified with the loss of ground covers and some shrubs. In addition, some trees are becoming over-mature and need replacement, particularly along the Concourse. For a detailed analysis of the planting changes and proposals to renovate or restore the plantings, refer to the park's Vegetation Management Plan.

Outstanding Trees

The 2005 draft Volunteer Park Vegetation Management Plan identifies 147 "Outstanding Trees" in the park, representing 116 different taxa. The trees on the list are either outstanding examples of their species, rare in the Pacific Northwest, memorial trees, or have an aesthetic quality worthy of note. Ten taxa found in the park are considered rare by a local tree expert hired to evaluate them.

According to the draft Volunteer Park Vegetation Management Plan, seventeen taxa growing in the Park today are found on the original Olmsted Brothers' list of plants for Volunteer Park. Of these, fourteen are considered true trees, and another three were planted as shrubs but have matured into trees. Several Olmsted-specified rhododendrons and viburnums have also matured into trees.

Although not included in the 1909 planting plan or plant list, individual trees from eighteen genera found frequently in Olmsted Brothers' designs are mature trees today in Volunteer Park. Of the park trees evaluated for condition, 85% were deemed to be in good condition, 13% fair, and 2% in poor condition. Tree size distribution indicates significant crowding of tree canopies due to the many tall and mature trees. In brief, few of the trees intended as such can be considered understory trees today.

Vegetation of the Central Area (including Concourse) *(Photo 1)*

The landscape on the west side of the Seattle Asian Art Museum complements the stone façade of the building with formal beds of osmanthus, Zabel laurel and boxwood. Today, Hollywood junipers (*Juniperus chinensis 'Torulosa'*) serve as focal points on each side of the entry walk, flanked by formal shrub beds on both sides of the building. The forecourt itself is paved with golden-colored sandstone and holds containers of summer annuals. The view west over the reservoir from the Museum forecourt is one of the iconic postcard views of Seattle, though now obscured by mature trees growing on the west side of the reservoir.

The open area between the Museum and reservoir is defined by four groupings of atlas and deodar cedars (*Cedrus atlantica* and *deodara*). A disorganized complex of boxwoods, roses, heather, barberry, hebes and mixed perennials fill the flower borders along the stairs leading down from the forecourt to the reservoir. This is in marked contrast to the original design for

these beds, which consisted of large drifts of single species of roses or perennials, one species per bed. Water lilies today grow in the ponds on the larger terrace. The ponds are surrounded by hebes inside a low green wire fence.

North and south of the Museum forecourt, the Concourse is lined on both sides with a mature allée of horse chestnuts (A*esculus hippocastanum)* spaced roughly 50 feet on center. Expansive lawns and planted beds on either side of the Concourse are viewed through the trunks of these mature trees.

At the south end of the Concourse, the Water Tower is set on a large wooded mound rising sixteen feet above street level. The mound is planted with a disorganized mix of tall mature conifers (chamaecyparis, fir, cedar, spruce, yew, pine, and larch), deciduous trees (willow, birch, maple, dogwood, and laburnum) and shrubs (snowberry, rhododendron, boxwood, azalea, cotoneaster, viburnum, lonicera, skimmia, euonymus, and Zabel laurel). The mature trees to the northwest and east of the Water Tower now block the view from the top in all directions except south.

Further south at the park's formal entrance at 14th and Prospect are shrub beds replanted in 2003 with *Abelia grandiflora*, *Rosa wichuriana* and *Mahonia nervosa*. The *Rosa* were removed in 2009 and have been replaced with *Polystichum munitum* (sword fern), consistent with the Parks Department's Native Plant Policy. Running east and west from these beds are mixed perimeter plantings of mature maple, beech, London plane, English holly, birch, and other deciduous trees growing in the lawn or in old or recently-renovated planting beds.

At the north end of the Concourse the Conservatory is fronted by curving beds of mixed perennials, annuals and bulbs. To the east lies a backdrop of dogwood, rhododendron, New Zealand flax, and redbud. Flanking the entry door are two containers filled with mixed shrubs and perennials. On the west side of the Conservatory is a planting of annuals, with ferns and rhododendrons behind. Behind that is a backdrop of Japanese maple, rhododendron, New Zealand flax, yew, dogwood, larch, and chamaecyparis.

Vegetation of the Southwest Quadrant *(Photo 2)*

Deodar cedars, Norway spruce, and hemlock dominate the glade southeast of the reservoir. Steep slopes to the west of the reservoir are planted with English laurel, hawthorn, spirea, spindle tree, plum, yew, and drifts of azaleas and rhododendrons. These plantings are effective in downplaying the steepest part of the park though they are overgrown and neglected. Some of the large shrubs have been cut back to renovate them. Short-statured trees and shrubs allow partial views over the reservoir to Seattle's downtown, Puget Sound and Olympic mountains, although trees such as tilia, Lombardy poplar, and black locust are now blocking views that were open in the original design.

The western border of the park features a long meandering walk under mature pines, spruces, and cedars that leads into a sunny glen of flowering azaleas. A path leads west into the neighborhood or east to the park's tennis courts and service area. Here the dominant species are white pine, western red cedar, spruce, and yew while further inside the park are groves of mixed

deciduous species (such as sycamore maple, black walnut, horse chestnut, beech, oak, and London planes) alternating with mixed groves of conifers. Mature rhododendrons are massed into shrub beds near the park entrance on Highland Drive.

A row of little-leaf linden, planted 50 feet on center, lines the south side of the section of the Carriage Drive between the Water Tower and the Gate House.

Vegetation of the Southeast Quadrant *(Photo 3)*

East of the Museum and in the southeast lawn, mature giant sequoias, with their buttressed trunks and towering blue-green foliage, serve as focal points of view corridors. They and other conifers and deciduous trees undulate along a large lawn. The mature tree and shrub border has a mix of conifers and deciduous trees. The adjoining lawns are now much smaller in scale than designed, having been in-filled with a number of trees.

In places along 15th Avenue East the lawn now extends to the sidewalk, although most of the street edge is contained at the curb by a two and a half-foot retaining wall of stacked pre-cast concrete slabs. Compact plant materials are used in recently-renovated shrub plantings, including *Viburnum tinus compacta* and *Spirea nipponicum*. This reflects both maintenance and perceived security issues. The police like to be able to shine their lights under the foliage at night far into the park.

Originally, the corner of 15th Avenue East at Highland Drive was the trolley stop and the entry point for most people coming from the city. It has been recently replanted, but this area of the park is no longer a major entrance, since bus stops have been moved further to the north and more people now arrive in cars.

Vegetation of the Northeast Quadrant (including Playground) *(Photo 4)*

Like the northwest and southeast lawns, the northeast quadrant is bounded and punctuated by groves of mature trees, including native and introduced conifers and deciduous trees. The irregular forested edge is indistinct and undulating, with open passages into smaller, more secluded areas that lead the eye and invite walking. An inventory of the park's northeast quadrant was undertaken in 2002. This quarter of the park had 254 trees consisting of 28 genera. The four most prevalent genera were conifers, accounting for half of all trees inventoried. By far the most abundant genus was *Pinus*, with 20%, followed by *Thuja*, *Pseudotsuga*, and *Picea*. Many individual specimen trees in this quadrant are outstanding in size. The copper beech (*Fagus sylvatica purpurea*) northeast of the Museum is the largest of its species in the city.

The mature pines, Douglas fir, beech, spruce, and maples on the northern park boundary are offset by a grove of younger katsura trees (*Cercidiphyllum japonicum*) framing the lawn between the Shelter House and the wading pool, which is filled during warm weather. East of the wading pool, the Playground is one of the most popular areas of the park. Significant canopy over the play area comes from mature beech, pine, katsura, elm, maple, larch and giant sequoia. Cherries were recently planted along the drive. At the northeast entry there is a mature mix of azalea, viburnum, boxwood, and recently planted hellebores.

Vegetation of the Northwest Quadrant *(Photo 5)*

Specimen conifers thrive at the edge of two broad lawns that were originally designed as one. A rare locust (*Robinia x ambigua "Decaisneana"*) found in this area, is Seattle's largest. The rare *Quercus prinus* by the bandstand is one of the state's largest. Groves of conifers have become so large and have shaded the understory planting beds so much that little remains of the shrub layer. Old rhododendrons have been limbed up in recent years to increase visibility and safety in this darkly-shaded part of the park at the expense of a sense of enclosure from the roadway.

Further north and west near the tennis courts, plantings have received little maintenance in the past decades, providing opportunities for invasive species, weeds, and an unkempt appearance.

## F. Buildings, Structures, and Water Features

Volunteer Park contains a number of notable buildings, engineered structures, and water features. Some of the water features, notably the Reservoir and the children's wading pool, are important structures. Buildings and structures vary in size, purpose, use and style. *(Figure 10 – Buildings, Structures, and Water Features)*

The following briefly describes these built elements in chronological order:

Reservoir and Gate House (1901) (*Photos 6 through 10*)
Although it pre-dates the Olmsted plan, the reservoir's surface reflections, symmetry, opening to distant views, and water color provide significant design features for the park. The reservoir's location and triangular shape created a cross-axis with the ridgetop Concourse and thus suggested the location of the music pavilion (now the site of the art museum).

The open, in-ground concrete reservoir is triangular with rounded corners. (City of Seattle Historic Resource Inventory (HRI), #SPU025) It holds 20.5 million gallons of water and measures roughly 515 feet on each side, covering roughly 4.5 acres. It is located approximately 30 feet below the Concourse and 135 feet north of the southern park boundary. The basin of the reservoir, located in a natural ravine, is partially excavated from the slope and partially supported by fill from the excavation. Several large underground pipes supply water from the Landsburg diversion dam on the Cedar River via Lake Youngs and Cal Anderson Park (historic Lincoln Park), the site of a former companion open reservoir.

The inner sides of the reservoir descend gradually to the floor at a slope of 1.5:1. When full, the pool is approximately 22 feet deep. The reservoir lining has been patched over the years due to deterioration of the original hand-mixed concrete. At the rim is a three-foot concrete parapet wall capped with an overhang and decorated with a raised diamond design between pilasters on six-foot centers, surrounded on the outside by an eight-foot concrete walkway. The walkway includes an integrated drainage channel along its outside edge. Modern globe lights atop tapering sixteen-foot concrete posts, spaced approximately 150 feet apart, illuminate the walkway. The wall and adjacent concrete walkway are enclosed within a more recent 8-foot chain link fence, installed by mid-1935 (SMA, Photos #50575-50578), topped with three strands of barbed wire,

set approximately eight feet from the parapet wall. A small, portable guardhouse is located inside the fence on the concrete walkway on the southwest radius of the Reservoir (date unknown, prior to 2005). Outside the chain link fence is a dirt jogging path. The reservoir contains submerged aerating/chlorinating equipment visible in aerial photographs and during water draw-down, but not clearly evident when the pool is full. A flared aeration pipe extends about eight feet above the surface just east of the Gate House. The system was changed from small domed vertical inlet/outlet structures to a long, horizontal one with inlet/aerator structures in the pool (date unknown; may be pre-1975).

The round-ended rectangular concrete Gate House perches in the southwestern corner of the Reservoir. (HRI #SPU026) The cast-in-place, flat-roofed building measures 48 by 26 feet, and rises approximately 21 feet from the first floor level to the top of the parapet. The first floor level is approximately four feet above ground level, approximately three to four feet above the surrounding grade. Stylistic elements include Beaux Arts/Renaissance Revival-influenced exterior walls with deeply incised divisions between simulated blocks of stone, window apertures with projecting cast blocks and voussoirs, Neo-Classical dentils and cornice brackets, and inset decorative rectangular patterns along the parapet. Surveillance cameras and several antennas project above the parapet on the water side of the building.

Decorative concrete pillars frame the concrete steps leading to the entrance. Concrete steps lead down from the reservoir rim to the water on the east side, while a ramp slopes to the water on the west side. The entrance has been partially filled with concrete to reduce its size; modern, unornamented steel exterior doors provide entry to the interior. Window openings are filled with flat-surfaced concrete (date unknown, post-1930; SMA, Photo #6981).

The Gate House interior is functional and unornamented. The first floor houses automated controls for the inlet and outlet valves, which are located in a recessed partial floor below. Steel rails surround the first-floor deck and the steel staircase leading to the valve floor. (Seattle Municipal Archives (SMA), Images #7067-7069)

Both the Reservoir and Gate House retain most of their original exterior features despite periodic repairs to deteriorating concrete and security-related alterations to fencing, entry, lighting, and windows.

<u>Water Tower (1906-08)</u> *(Photos 11 through 14)*
A brick-enclosed, 60-foot high cylindrical stand pipe marks the south terminus of the Concourse, 200 feet north of the park's southern boundary. (HRI, #SPU027) The Tower provides additional water pressure for the surrounding neighborhood and offers a high viewpoint for public observation. The Water Tower, located on axis with 14$^{th}$ Street and the Concourse as recommended by John C. Olmsted, sits atop a 16-foot mound landscaped with a rockery and dense tree and understory planting. On the west side at street level, an inverted J-shaped steel overflow pipe protrudes from the ground. An eight-foot wide concrete walkway circles the mound at mid-level and another walkway circles the Water Tower at the top of the mound. Two flights of eight-foot wide granite stairs, broken by a mid-level walkway, lead directly to the south entrance. At the north side a four-foot pathway ramps upward to the right to the mid-level walkway and then to the left to the top walkway, leading to the north entrance.

The entries are framed by projecting granite surrounds, with pediments above brackets and dentils. Below each pediment is the inscription, “Aqua Pura – MCMVI”. Openings measure five feet wide by nine feet high. Set in the brick to the right of the north entry is a bronze plaque dedicated to L. B. Youngs, Water Superintendent. Inside the south entry is a bolted hatch opening into the standpipe. The standpipe inside the tower holds 883,000 gallons of water and is constructed from nine riveted sections of curved steel plate. This tank is enclosed within a separate cylindrical masonry wall with an exterior of clinker brick laid in a common bond with sixth-course headers. The interior of the masonry wall is composed of common bricks laid in a common bond with sixth course headers. At its base the wall is approximately 27 inches thick and at its top approximately 17 inches. Three 16-inch bands of granite project from the exterior at decreasing intervals to create an illusion of greater height. Below the roof on the exterior are a band of large dentils that simulate beam-ends and a series of bands of molding, all made of pressed metal. The tower is covered by a low-pitched, 18-segment slate shingle roof supported by radial built-up steel beams.

The brick wall is separated from the steel tank by a gap of four feet. The interior gap holds two steel staircases with handrails at each side winding in a double helix from the entries to an observation deck, each with 106 steps broken by two short landings. The deck has a concrete floor between the brick wall and a fence surrounding the top of the tank. Sixteen semi-circular arched openings that provide views from the observation deck have granite sills and are filled with wrought iron fencing and more-recent welded wire mesh. The view openings measure approximately 4.5 by 6.7 feet. Smaller two by five-foot arched openings along the two spiral stairways provide intermediate views, as do gun slit-like openings. The observation deck is open to the public, and contains a six-panel Olmsted Interpretive Exhibit along with a park system map and exhibit description panels installed in 1997 by the Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks.

Lily Ponds (1910) *(Photo 15)*
Built on the long terrace just below the Concourse, two symmetrical circular concrete lily ponds are approximately 300 feet on center apart, 44 feet in diameter and three and one-quarter feet deep. The ponds have recently been restored, with surrounding low hedges and pond plantings of water lilies in underwater boxes. Outside the low hedges are circular eight-foot paths of packed fine gravel. A gravel path connects the ponds across the terrace, while paths and stairways lead north and south as well as up to the plaza and down to the terrace above the reservoir. The planting beds between the ponds and Concourse were renovated in 1992 following a plan by Park landscape architect Joe Neiford.

Shelter House (1910) *(Photo 16)*
Located immediately east of the Conservatory at the north end of the park, the Shelter House is at the west end of the children’s playground complex. (HRI, #DPR098) It consists of two east-facing 12 by 19-foot restroom pavilions connected by a long open loggia that faces east onto planting beds and lawn. The restrooms are clad with stucco and have steep clipped gable-front roofs covered by composition shingles. Each restroom has a single vent on its outside wall. Centered entries on the east elevations have decorative projecting gable roofs with Arts and Crafts-influenced exaggerated rafter tails, brackets and curved cross braces.

The restrooms are connected by an open wooden loggia measuring 8 by 58 feet. The loggia contains a full-length sitting bench at the rear (west) and is covered by a composition-shingled gable roof set about four feet below the pavilion peaks. The loggia roof is supported on each side by two rows of paired six-by-six inch square columns running six and a half feet on center and six feet and seven inches apart. Scissor-like, decorative two-by-six-inch rafters support the roof. The built-in bench has a slatted back and solid seat, while the floor is paved with common red bricks laid in a basket weave pattern with square/diamond-shaped cast concrete inserts. The "Little Folks" lawn slopes down to the east from the Shelter House. It was placed in this location so that mothers could sit on the long bench under the loggia to watch their children. The original sand box area just east of the Shelter House has been filled with plantings, renovated in 1991 following a design by Parks landscape architect Joe Neiford.

Wading Pool (1910 replaced in 1973) and Children's Playground (1990) *(Photos 17, 18, and 40)*
Children from throughout the city use the concrete wading pool and play area in the northeast section of the park. The wading pool is filled for summer use and is empty at other times. The pool, 105 feet in diameter and ringed by a six-foot concrete apron, ranges in depth from ten inches at its periphery to approximately eighteen inches in the center, where it drains. It was rebuilt in essentially the same dimensions and location in 1973. The current playground is located east of the wading pool in an open grove of conifers. It is surrounded by low stone or concrete walls in an irregularly rounded shape measuring roughly 100 by 100 feet. A gazebo play structure with a stone base to the east and a slide built into a rock wall to the west are linked by a low wall around an irregular wood chip-filled area containing a climbing structure, swings, and a commemorative white play sculpture. The pool and playground are the park's only active recreational facilities for children

Comfort Station (1910) *(Photos 19 through 21)*
The Comfort Station at the northeast corner of the park is now used solely by Metro bus drivers. (HRI #DPR094) The building measures 15 by 16 feet, with the long dimension east to west, and has an inset bay containing a built-in bench on its south elevation. The Comfort Station has a composition shingle hip roof with soffited eaves and is clad with stucco. Of three original entries, only the east one is now used. Entries and openings on the west side are now either boarded shut or locked. One small window centered in the north elevation provides ventilation.

Maintenance Facilities: Keeper's Lodge (1910), Maintenance Buildings (1910 and later), Open Shed (1910) and Production Greenhouse (1991) *(Photos 22 and 23)*
The Keeper's Lodge, west of the Conservatory and east of a complex of maintenance buildings, was built to house the park's caretaker and his family. (HRI, #DPR096) The Lodge now provides offices and crew quarters for the Park's maintenance crew. It is located on the north boundary of the park, west of the Conservatory and east of a complex of maintenance structures. All are screened from the rest of the park by trees and shrubs. The Lodge faces south and is a wood frame 1-1/2 story front gable residence in a Craftsman-influenced style, clad with rustic drop siding and possessing wide verge boards, exposed rafter tails, and knee brackets. The footprint is roughly 25 by 34 feet (the longer dimension north-south). There is a shed-roof attic dormer on the east slope of the roof. A south-facing recessed entry porch at the southeast corner is partially enclosed by an arbor and shelters the front door and two windows, one small and fixed, the other double hung with one over one pane sash. The rear (north) porch is covered by a full-width shed

roof. A fireplace and exposed brick chimney stand near the middle of the west wall. Windows elsewhere are double-hung one over one: one centered in the south facing gable, two pairs on the east elevation, and a single and a pair on the west elevation.

Behind (north) of the house is a 22- by 60-foot shade house and to the east is another measuring roughly 18 by 60 feet. A production greenhouse, lath house, and other maintenance buildings (HRI #DPR097) surround a paved yard west of the Keeper's Lodge. The Lodge and maintenance area are surrounded by chain link fence; the yard slopes to the west below a modern 10,400-square foot production greenhouse (roughly 80 by 130 feet), which replaced an earlier greenhouse in the same location in 1991. Other buildings include a gabled lath house, a small Quonset hut and several small sheds and cold frames. A 25 by 75-foot open-sided wooden barn/garage is the westernmost building in the complex. With simple decorative details similar to the Lodge, it has a gable roof with exposed rafter tails and bargeboards, shingle cladding, and boarded-over windows. Nearby to the east, along the north boundary, is a 20- by 34-foot utility building that is similar in style.

Tennis Courts (1912/15, 1932) *(Photo 24)*
Two pairs of fenced concrete double tennis courts measuring roughly 105 by 120 feet are located in the northwest section of the park on pads cut into the slope separated by approximately five feet. One double court was built in 1912 and another in 1915. They are now surfaced with a rubberized composite material and surrounded by tall chain link fencing. The tennis courts are the park's only facilities dedicated to active recreation for adults.

Conservatory (1912) (*Photo 25)*
The Conservatory and adjoining potting shed were designated as a City landmark in 2002 and are not described in detail here. The full City Landmark nomination and design information are on file with the City's Historical Preservation Office. The Conservatory is sited at the north end of the Concourse along the edge of the park. Built from a pre-fabricated kit purchased from the Hitchings Company of New Jersey, it was erected by Parks staff at a total cost of $20,000. Though it has been substantially renovated over the years, it retains its original appearance as a Victorian iron and glass conservatory and is one of the park's distinctive features. It measures 200 feet from east to west and varies in width from 21 to 41-1/2 feet. The center Palm House is 50 feet tall, leading from an entry vestibule. In 1981 a stained glass canopy by Richard T. Spaulding titled *Homage in Green* was installed in the top of the entry vestibule.

The Palm House is joined on two sides by 17-foot high symmetrical gable wings. The Conservatory has a total of five rooms, each with a varied climate to grow plants from cool tropical, warm tropical and desert ecosystems. Accessed through a door on the north side of the Palm House are two offices. The west one was recently remodeled into a gift shop that is operated by the Friends of the Conservatory. (HRI, #DPR095)

Seattle Asian Art Museum (1932) and Forecourt/Entry Garden (1930/1990) *(Photos 26 through 29)*
The Seattle Asian Art Museum with its forecourt was designated as a City landmark in 1988 and is described only briefly here. The full City Landmark nomination and designation information are on file with the City's Historic Preservation Office. Sited where Olmsted had placed the

pergola and music pavilion on axis with the Reservoir, the building opened to the public in 1933. Designed by Carl Gould, head of the UW's School of Architecture, it is an excellent example of the Art Moderne style. Flanking its west entrance are two camels which are replicas of statues in the collection from fifteenth-century China. At each end of the west façade lie two fountains which are integrated into the building's design.

The museum's main entrance is centered on the east-west view axis across the Concourse and Reservoir. The front elevation of the building is clad with a warm, slightly golden veneer of Wilkinson sandstone.

After several additions since its construction, the Museum has a roughly rectangular footprint measuring approximately 220 by 110 feet, facing the Concourse and views across the reservoir. At each end of the front elevation are round bronze fountains in niches which are integrated into the building's design. The north and south sides of the museum are undecorated and are largely screened by plantings which hide a loading dock and small parking area to the north as well as a small concrete block pump house associated with the city's water system.

The forecourt or plaza in front of the Museum was designed by local landscape architect Noble Hoggson, Jr., in a spare style compatible with the Art Moderne style of Gould's building. (University of Washington Libraries Digital Collections, images ARC0638 and 0666) The restrained planting design emphasized evergreens, both broad-leaved shrubs and coniferous trees, and avoided beds of colorful annuals and perennials. (SMA, Photos #3046 and 10588, dated 1932 and 1936) Although the entry garden/terrace area has been reworked somewhat, it retains its initial spatial composition, grading, form and many materials.

Changes to the plantings in the forecourt area since Hoggson's initial plan was installed can be seen by comparing aerial photos and photographs from the 1930s with current conditions. (King County Interactive Mapping Tool, SMA, Photo #30466 and 10588) The net effect of the alterations has been the addition of more noticeable color and texture in front of the Museum entry. Extant alterations include installation of historic globe light standards, expansion of the display beds at the inner corners of the lawns and the front sidewalk inset, loss of full-width shrub and perennial beds below the entry terrace (pre-1959; SMA, Photo #61742) and small display beds at the western corners of the lawns, and removal of all sculptures other than the replica Bactrian camels on the entry terrace.

As part of the mid-1970s renovation of the park, parking and curbs were removed and sandstone paving extended across the Concourse to the upper terrace and sculpture to the west. Concrete bollards and four-foot-square concrete planter boxes were installed to separate auto traffic from pedestrians (1974); the inner two planters on each side of the Concourse have small slat benches installed on brackets facing away from the roadway.

More recent alterations include construction of a curving wheelchair access ramp from the street to the museum terrace through the southern lawn in 1989-1990. The display beds flanking the entry walk near the Museum were planted with Hollywood junipers (pre-1985; SMA, Photo #57724), and recently supplemented with low broadleaf evergreen shrubs and day lilies (2010).

The walkway, stairs and full-width fountain level terrace are paved with Wilkinson stone. The terraces are laid in a random ashlar pattern. The paved lower terrace levels vary in width to a maximum of 75 feet; most of the middle level is lawn. The sidewalk level is approximately 27 feet deep, the middle level is 56 feet deep, and the fountain level is 30 feet deep, including a narrow planter along the building between the entry and fountains.

Both the sidewalk and paved middle levels include small planting areas enclosed by walking areas. Four symmetrical, rounded planting beds in the flanking lawns, measuring roughly fifteen feet square, mark the corners of the middle level entry walk. A single-globed cast iron light standard flanks each planting bed. Low, clipped boxwood hedges screen the grade change from the lawns to the entry terrace. Narrow beds planted with *Osmanthus x burkwoodi* run along the building between the fountains and central entry. Osmanthus was substituted for the original boxwood in 1989-1990, following plans by Parks landscape architect Joe Neiford.

Band Stand/Stage (1971) *(Photo 34)*
The current band stand is constructed of concrete and oversize clay tile laid in a running bond. Two bathrooms and space for storage and dressing are hidden behind the east-facing stage in a 19- by 33-foot building. The irregularly hexagonal stage is raised approximately 2.5 feet from the lawn and measures roughly 50 feet across and 30 feet deep, partially enclosed by the building and wing walls. It faces uphill toward the subtly-dished amphitheater-like portion of the NW lawn.

**G. Small Scale Elements (Memorials, Site Furnishings, Art Works)**

Like many large urban parks, Volunteer Park has always been a focus for civic memorials and artworks. Several memorials and pieces of public art are important for their place in the design and history of the park. These works are under the jurisdiction of the Seattle Arts Commission. *(Figure 11 – Small-Scale Elements)*

Seward Monument (1909) *(Photo 35)*
Placed at the northern terminus of the Concourse in 1910 after the close of the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition, the bronze statue of Secretary of State William H. Seward is the oldest monument in the park. The statue and pedestal were created by New York sculptor Richard E. Brooks (1865-1919) to recognize the importance of Alaska to Seattle's growth and development after the Klondike Gold Rush of 1897. First located on the exposition grounds (held on the University of Washington campus) the monument was installed in the park after the Olmsted firm resolved controversy about an appropriate location. The life-size bronze figure stands atop a 10-foot polished granite cylinder that flares downward and has bronze surface decorations and incised commemorative text.

L.B. Youngs Memorial (1930) *(Photo 36)*
The L.B. Youngs memorial plaque in the wall of the Water Tower measures approximately two by three feet. Youngs (1858-1923) was the Water Department Superintendent from 1895 to 1923. The vertical, low-relief bronze casting, with text and a portrait designed by sculptor V. T Goumas, was dedicated on August 2, 1930. It reads, "L.B. Youngs Supt of Seattle Water

Department from 1895 to 1923. Under his administration, the Cedar River Water System was planned and installed. This memorial dedicated in 1930."

Burke Monument (1930) **(***Photo 37)*
The north-facing bas-relief monument to pioneer Seattle Judge Thomas Burke (1849–1925) was created by artist Herman A. McNeil. Carl F. Gould, who designed the Art Institute of Seattle (now the Seattle Asian Art Museum) following this commission, set the bas-relief on a broad pedestal at the rear of two stepped plazas surrounded by bench-walls. The monument is located southeast of the reservoir, nestled in a now mature planting of magnolias and flowering cherries at the north edge of a grove of spruces. The plazas together measure approximately 36 by 45 feet; the rear portion is flanked on three sides by a continuous granite bench built into the low surrounding wall. The plazas are entered diagonally via short granite stairways built into the lower plaza's northern corners.

Memorial Tree Plaque - Rotary International (1932*) (Photo 38)*
A plaque located at the base of a Blue Atlas Cedar north of the reservoir identifies the month and year this tree was planted. The plaque reads, "Dedicated to the advancement of understanding, good will, and international peace through a world fellowship of business and professional men united in the ideal of service." The tree was planted by Sydney W. Pascal, President of Rotary International from 1931 through 1932.

Volunteer Memorial (1952) ***(****Photo 39)*
Northeast of the Water Tower is an inconspicuous granite boulder with a plaque honoring volunteers of the Spanish-American War. Designed by writer and veteran Cassius Beardsley, it was originally placed opposite the Art Museum. The memorial was put in storage when the Black Sun sculpture was installed in 1969 and installed at its current location in the early 1970s.

*Playform* (1962) ***(****Photo 40)*
This white, modern sculpture was created by University of Washington sculptor Charles Smith for the Children's Play Area in the northeast part of the Park. Created in memory of Dorothy Block, a Parks Commissioner at the time she died in 1961, it was donated by the Block Foundation. Smith was active in the region for more than two decades and created numerous public art pieces in the city.

*Black Sun* (1969) ***(****Photos41 through 43)*
The most prominent of the park's outdoor artworks is a sculpture by internationally-known Japanese artist Isamu Noguchi (1904-1988). The location chosen by the sculptor is at the western edge of the Museum plaza, a few feet south of the central view axis over the Reservoir. The setting provides distinctive views both of and through the sculpture along the primary view axis of the park. Carved by master carvers at Noguchi's workshop in Japan from polished black Brazilian granite, the sculpture is a massive stone torus, pierced slightly off-center. It is nine and one-half feet in diameter and three feet thick. Large, rounded indentations are scooped from the sides of the disk. The disk is set vertically on a raised, gray granite base measuring12 by 45 feet, designed by Seattle architect Fred Bassetti. Installing the sculpture in 1969 required relocating the Volunteer Memorial and removing two small formal planting beds along the Concourse. A small, shallowly recessed plaza measuring 12 by 38 feet lies between the Concourse curb and the

sculpture's granite base. The base is raised 23 inches from the recessed plaza. Slopes and paths below the sculpture were re-graded for the installation, extending the terrace level outward in a bowed curve to accommodate the sculpture and bowing out the path connecting the Lily Ponds. (King County Interactive Mapping Tool, 1936 and 2007 aerial photos)

Schwagerl Rock *(Photo 44)*
Identified as the Schwagerl Rock by Don Sherwood , the large unmarked boulder in a planting bed north of the Art Museum honors early Seattle park superintendent, Edward O. Schwagerl (in office from 1893 to 1895), who worked on Volunteer Park prior to the Olmsted Brothers.

Bactrian Camels on west side of Art Museum ***(****Photo 45)*
Two concrete replicas of seated Ming Dynasty Bactrian camels flank the entrance to the Art Museum parallel to the building facade. The original marble sculptures were moved from this location to the lobby of the downtown Seattle Art Museum when it opened in 1991.

Miscellaneous Site Furnishings *(Photos 46 and 47 – Globe Light Fixtures)*
Thirty-one twelve-foot, single-globed cast-iron light standards stand along both sides of the Concourse. Most are set in pairs at roughly 160-foot intervals along the Concourse, but four stand along the entry paving in the Museum forecourt area and one on the Water Tower circle. In addition, a solitary 5-globed cast iron street lamp donated by the City of Victoria, British Columbia is located southeast of the Water Tower where the circle and entry drive intersect.

The Reservoir flag pole, centered on-axis at the western end of the Reservoir, was installed by the end of 1925 (SMA, Photo #5544).

None of the original benches, play equipment, or garbage receptacles remain. Historic memorial benches include one located to the north of the reservoir. Since 2003 new benches in Volunteer Park have been in the style of pre-cast concrete supports with wooden slats, referred to as the "Olmsted Wood & Concrete Bench" in the Seattle Parks' *Olmsted Park Furniture Standards*.

Other park furnishings include modern pipe/slat and older concrete/slat benches set in concrete, various styles of picnic tables, contemporary 16-foot tapering hexagonal exposed aggregate concrete globe standards (around the reservoir and along the east-west interior path from 15th Avenue East, crossing the Concourse on the north side of the Museum, and ending at the Carriage Drive near the Bands Stand), and a variety of dark metal can holders, dome-topped drum cans and concrete box receptacles. Stair railings, where they exist, are typically made of two or two and one-half inch galvanized steel pipe.

Small-scale elements of the park have also been altered inconsistently over time. Park furnishings are mixed and do not follow the Olmsted style recommendations for historic parks adopted by the Parks department in 2003 with the encouragement of the Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks, but the intent is that new and replacement benches will be in a consistent historic style.

## II. Statement of Significance

### A. Summary

Volunteer Park is the most articulated example of Olmsted design in Seattle and is associated with the city's civic response to urban expansion and prosperity following the Klondike gold rush at the end of the 19th century, the City Beautiful movement promoting aesthetic urban design, and the development of urban park systems in the Pacific Northwest in the early 20th century. Volunteer Park is directly associated with landscape architect John Charles Olmsted, the senior partner in the firm Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects, at the height of his career. Olmsted carried forward and expanded upon the seminal work of his father, Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr.

The Volunteer Park Reservoir/Gate House and Water Tower preceded construction of the Olmsted design and are separately also significant as the sole remaining intact above-ground representatives within Seattle of the city's initial Cedar River water supply system. They are also directly associated with City Engineer Reginald H. Thomson, who planned, designed and oversaw construction of the first two phases of the system.

Other discrete elements of the park are individually significant as well. The Shelter House (1910) is the most intact of several such facilities in the city built or planned by the Olmsted firm. The Conservatory (1912) is the only historic example of a large glass house and tropical botanical collection in the city park system, and is already a City landmark, as is the Seattle Asian Art Museum (1932), considered by some to be architect Carl Gould's finest buildings.

### B. National, Local, and Neighborhood Historic Contexts

<u>National and City Historic Context</u>

Design of urban parks and park systems in United States was pioneered by Frederick Law Olmsted, Senior (1822-1903) and his business partner Calvert Vaux (1824-1895) in New York City in the late 1850s, in part as a response to increased immigration and the rapid growth of the nation's urban areas. Olmsted and other urban reformers of the 1850s viewed parks as places in which the oppressive and unhealthy stresses of urban environments could be mitigated through passive recreation and the beneficial psychological effects of viewing naturalistic landscape scenery.

Olmsted, Sr.'s landscape design approach was based primarily on the English pastoral and naturalistic romantic style developed in the early 18th century, in contrast to formal, geometric Dutch and French landscape traditions. The English romantic style was popularized in the United States by A.J. Downing and others in the 1840s and 1850s for estates, suburban developments and private parks. Frederick Law Olmsted Sr. adapted and democratized this naturalistic style for a variety of public urban places as well, integrating contemporary advances in civil engineering, architecture, horticulture, and environmental understanding. (Kelly et al., 5-15; Rettig in Kelly et al., 79-85; Beveridge; Beveridge and Rocheleau; Rogers)

As demonstrated by Central Park's design, the Olmsteds envisioned that a park's purpose "was the creation of rural scenery that evoked a poetic mood lifting one out of everyday care and ennobling the spirit with intimations of the divine." (Rogers, 339) Exposure to naturalistic and natural landscapes provided a "natural antidote to the nervous exhaustion produced by the intensity of commerce and industry" in large American cities. (Fein in Kelly et al., 100) The Olmsteds shared a conviction that passive recreation and the revivifying contemplation of artfully designed landscape scenery are the fundamental purposes of parks. (Levee, in Birnbaum and Karson, 282-284)

The Olmsteds further "divided the park's landscape into two kinds of space: 'neighborly' and 'gregarious,' the former being for small groups consisting of families and friends who came to the park to picnic and enjoy scenery, while the latter was designed to serve the parade of strangers who congregated in the manner of Parisians on boulevards to enjoy the spectacle of one another." (Rogers, 342)

The Olmsteds' general attitude towards buildings and sculpture was to make them subordinate to the whole park design, not to emphasize them. Likewise display and specimen plantings were not used to the detriment of the impression of the whole, but rather "preferring plants arranged for their overall artistic effect to those presented as individual scientific specimens" (Barlow, 339). The general design characteristics of Olmsted parks have been enumerated in various ways but usually include:

- a distinctive balance of turf, wood and water with a careful arrangement of these elements (meadows become outdoor rooms, vistas often focused by the edges of wooded areas which frame views across open turf or water);
- vistas that focus attention and draw users through spaces;
- sequential experiences encountered while moving toward focus of the vista (curving circumferential pathways);
- separation of pedestrian and vehicular routes;
- artistically composed plantings;
- integration of architecture into the landscape (pergolas covered with vines and buildings sited at edges of open spaces); and
- subsidiary formal elements within a naturalistic landscape. (Kelly et al., 25-50)

Although both aesthetic and practical concerns underlay the Olmsteds' landscape design, park system design was undertaken with a comprehensive, methodical, and structured approach. John C. Olmsted wrote in his 1903 Portland park system report about the different types of parks. In describing a comprehensive system of parks, he stated that "units of a park system generally recognized are city squares, playgrounds, small or neighborhood parks, large or suburban parks, scenic reservations, boulevards and parkways." He indicated that playgrounds can be independent parks or (as demonstrated in Volunteer Park) included in other types of parks, "in such a way as to avoid undue injury to the main purposes of the park."

The Olmsteds worked with a variety of collaborators – architects, engineers, horticulturalists and other specialists - both as partners and as collaborating consultants. By the 1880s the Olmsted's practice had expanded from the design of single parks and estates to park systems, campuses,

exposition grounds, and planned developments. The Olmsted firm developed park system plans for Boston, Chicago, Buffalo, Louisville and other cities. The Olmsteds were not alone in developing landscape architecture as a business and profession, but Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. was the first and the most articulate, accomplished, and influential practitioner of the new discipline during the nearly four decades of his design career.

John Charles Olmsted (1852-1920), nephew and stepson of Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., was trained in the technical skills needed for landscape design and apprenticed with his adoptive father. John joined the firm as a draftsman in 1876 and soon assumed additional responsibilities. He became a partner in 1884 and was a crucial member of the planning and design staff, managing the office as well as carrying a diverse workload. John was deeply involved in planning and designing parks in Boston and was later the lead planner for the Essex County, New Jersey park system plan. (Wilson, 151) He took increasing responsibility for managing the growing office and was both the mainstay and director of the office by the time it was established in Brookline, Massachusetts, in 1881. (Roper, 391) From 1884 through 1889, when another partner entered the practice, the firm was called F. L. and J. C. Olmsted.

John's role in the firm's work became crucial when Frederick, Sr. began to suffer memory loss and dementia in the early 1890s. (Roper, 458) Following FLO's retirement in 1895 and the death of partner Charles Eliot in 1897, John and his brother Frederick, Jr., renamed the firm Olmsted Brothers in 1898. The brothers were among the twelve founding members of the American Society of Landscape Architects in January, 1899, and John became its first president. Some landscape historians consider John to have been most experienced and capable landscape architect in the country at the time. (Newton, 386)

John remained senior partner until his death in 1920. He was intimately familiar with and shared his father's design philosophy and methods. However, John was also practical and responsive to public interest and changing trends favoring active recreation and playgrounds, as is evident in the Seattle system plan and some individual park designs.

The Olmsted Brothers firm carried on a wide range of design work throughout the United States. Major projects included park systems for Portland (OR), Spokane (WA), Dayton (OH), Essex County (NJ); additional work on the park systems of Boston, Chicago, Louisville; exposition grounds design in Portland, Seattle, San Diego and elsewhere; and campus designs, in addition to numerous estates, subdivisions and other smaller projects. During the two decades after 1900, the firm also designed more than 100 private projects in the Pacific Northwest (Johnson, 41-49) and several hundred elsewhere. Local projects included subdivision plans for the Highlands and the Uplands near Seward Park, and the grounds of several estates and residences.

The turn of the last century was also a period of intense interest in progressive government and public utilities – not just parks, but also bicycle paths, automobile roadways, water and electric service, libraries and expanded school systems. In architecture and planning the progressive impulse was expressed in park and boulevard systems and in the City Beautiful movement, which proposed an orderly, geometric reorganization of urban space for the betterment of the citizenry. (Wilson, Ch. 1) The municipal ownership movement was also a reaction to perceived monopolistic, predatory, and/or incompetent practices of local and national corporations such as

Boston-based Stone and Webster, which consolidated power generation and streetcar transportation in Seattle and charged high rates for indifferent service (Berner, 38-47).

Public water and power systems were created through purchase and/or development throughout the country, first on the East Coast and later in the Pacific Northwest, when private systems proved inadequate or were found to be the source of typhoid, cholera or other water-borne epidemics. Tacoma purchased a deficient private system in 1893 and began building its Green River system in 1910. Portland, Oregon developed a public system from 1892-95 in response to growing needs. San Francisco's private systems failed in the 1906 earthquake, but the city was unable to complete a public system until 1934.

As residents of a newly prosperous and growing metropolis, prominent citizens of Seattle looked to national trends and designers to enhance civic prestige and to provide better facilities for the needs of a growing population. The city's population swelled from fewer than 4,000 in 1880 to more than 42,000 in 1890, then to over 80,000 by 1900, despite the dampening effects of the nationwide Great Panic of 1893 and loss of financing from East Coast banks. The arrival of the transcontinental Great Northern Railroad in 1893, and the discovery of gold in the Yukon in 1897, gave Seattle a proprietary role in supplying and transporting people and materials to the Yukon gold fields in addition to its advantage in trading with Asian countries. These two factors created a sudden influx of wealth and newcomers. The two decades following 1900 saw the largest population increase in the city's history – more than 150,000 from 1900 to 1910 (to total 237,194) and another 78,000 by 1920. (United States Census)

Although much of this growth was due to in-migration following the Klondike Gold Rush, the city also grew by incorporating adjoining communities. In 1907 annexations to the north and south - Ballard, Ravenna, West Seattle, Columbia, Southeast Seattle and others - nearly doubled the area of the city to 67 square miles, extending its boundaries north to North 85$^{th}$ Street and south roughly to South Roxbury Street. Prosperity and technological change also brought the first automobiles to Seattle in 1901; by 1907 there were roughly 300 cars and increasing demand for boulevards and parkways. (Burrows)

Park System

Before 1900 Seattle possessed three parks, two of them donated, comprising less than 60 acres (Denny, Kinnear and City parks). Several private amusement parks were open to the public for a fee, including Woodland, Madrona, Ravenna, Leschi, Luna, and other parks, many of which were later acquired by the city. City park acquisitions at the turn of the century were often controversial because the sites were at the periphery or outside the city, Woodland Park in particular.

Park development and management was the responsibility of the Board of Park Commissioners, established in 1887, three years after the donation of Denny Park to the city. A parks fund was established as part of adopting the city's first home rule charter in 1890. A trained park superintendent, Edward O. Schwagerl (1842-1910), was hired in 1892 to develop a citywide park system plan. Schwagerl was the City's second Park Superintendent (1893-1895) and had participated in designing exposition grounds in Paris, Cleveland, St. Louis, and Philadelphia

prior to coming to Seattle. Schwagerl's plan proposed parks in the four corners of the city with a broad boulevard circling the city and connecting Woodland and Ravenna parks with the new university campus, but the Great Panic of 1893 severely limited park budgets and prompted Schwagerl to leave his position in 1896. The Public Works Department also contributed to thinking about a citywide park and open space system. In response to the bicycle craze of the mid-1890s and the poor condition of local roads, in 1895 George Cotterill (1865-1958), Assistant City Engineer (and later Mayor), planned a city-wide bikeway system and organized volunteers to build 25 miles of trails by 1900. These paths provided some of the routes for the future boulevard system. (Berner, 101)

By the turn of the century and the rush of prosperity and growth prompted by the Klondike Gold Rush, park proponents and city boosters wished to beautify Seattle and better compete with other growing cities in the region. Growing interest produced a full-page article entitled "'Let Us Make a Beautiful City of Seattle,' Say the Park Commissioners," in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* on September 21, 1902. The article encouraged the city to develop a citywide park system and to acquire more park lands, and it listed civic leaders who supported adding taxes to develop a park system and hiring an expert to develop a plan.

Initial contact with the Olmsted Brothers was a March 21, 1902 letter to Percy Jones, Olmsted's assistant, from J. D. Blackwell, Engineer of the Seattle Electric Company, on behalf of the company and the Superintendent of Seattle Parks. Blackwell inquired about engaging the Olmsted Brothers "to design a scheme of general improvements for the parks" which included 500 acres of parkland, 440 acres owned by the City and 60 acres by the company. The Olmsted Brothers responded and began a series of communications about employment. In December 1902 the Park Board wrote to the Olmsted Brothers to request a visit. (Blackwell to Jones, March 21, 1902)

By 1902, the City had received donations or purchased 500 acres of park land (Denny, Volunteer, Washington and Kinnear parks) and expectations for a system had been raised. Schwagerl designed Kinnear and Denny (now demolished) parks and improved part of Volunteer Park (then City Park) with paths, lawns and planting in the early to mid-1890s. (Don Sherwood Parks History Files (Sherwood); Wilson, 147-148; Rash in Ochsner, 54) Additional impetus for park planning came from competition with Portland, Oregon's park and exposition planning for the 1905 Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition, planning for the University of Washington campus, and the desires of nearly a dozen neighborhood improvement groups in the city. The *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* discussed park and boulevard projects in a series of articles at the beginning of February 1902. (Wilson, 149-150)

John C. Olmsted first visited Seattle at the end of April, 1903, accompanied by Percy Jones. The pair reconnoitered intensively in Seattle for over a month after having visited Portland first to advise the city on its park system. In Seattle, Olmsted and Jones visited potential park sites and met with the Board of Park Commissioners, other city officials and city staff including City Engineer R.H. Thomson and Assistant City Engineer George Cotterill, as well as prominent businessmen, property owners and land developers. Olmsted's report was sent to the Park Board on July 2 and accepted by the City Council in October 1903. The initial bond proposal in 1906 was limited to $500,000. The Bailey Peninsula (now Seward Park), the southern portion of Lake

Washington Boulevard, and several other proposed boulevards, parks, and playgrounds were not included in the initial bond, although many were later funded by subsequent bond issues over the next six years.

Based on many lengthy site visits, site analysis and observations by John C. Olmsted and his associates during multiple trips to Seattle between 1903 and 1910, the Olmsted firm provided the first feasible park and boulevard system for the city, recommended land purchases and acquisitions to implement the system, and designed and supervised construction of many of the elements of the system. (*Figure 12 – Seattle Park and Boulevard System Plan, 1903*)

In 1904 city voters approved a change in governance that made the Board of Park Commissioners independent of the Department of Public Works and the City Council.

In 1908 the Park Board requested that the Olmsted Brothers firm prepare a supplemental park plan for the newly annexed parts of the city. Twenty-four additional parks were recommended, along with eleven parkways and boulevards. Voters also passed a $1 million parks bond issue to be devoted largely to land acquisition. In 1910 a bond issue for $2,000,000 was approved for land acquisition. A parks bond issue for an additional $500,000 was approved in 1912 and voters approved the Olmsted firm's supplemental park plan. (Board of Park Commissioners Annual Reports, 1910-1912) (*Figure 13 – Seattle Park and Boulevard System Plan, 1908*)

In 1928 the Olmsted Brothers provided an updated system map as the City was again interested in expanding its park system. Today's Seattle Parks and Recreation Department system map differs little in overall substance from that proposed in the 1903/1908 Olmsted plans, except that the city has grown north from 85$^{th}$ to 145$^{th}$ streets and has additional parks there, and more parks have been added throughout the city as density increased. Although some of the Olmsted recommendations have not been realized, others continue to be implemented more than 100 years later. As of 2004 almost 40 percent of the city's park system and facilities had been originally recommended in the 1903 plan. (Makers, 14)

Another influence on Seattle's system and many individual parks, the playground movement, shaped the politics of parks in Seattle at the turn of the century. The Seattle Playground Association (founded in 1908), many of the neighborhood improvement clubs, and some newspapers advocated creation of playgrounds, playfields and other facilities for active play on the theory that children's participation in supervised active recreation would produce a healthier and more moral, disciplined society. (Wilson, 160)

While the Olmsted firm had designed playgrounds and playfields in park systems elsewhere (in Boston and other cities) and would do so in Seattle, John C. Olmsted felt that the city's most significant challenge was to acquire large parcels of land while they were still available and relatively affordable. He repeatedly cautioned against giving in to popular pressure to develop parks before first acquiring land for the overall park system while acquisition was economically feasible. He included eight new playground sites in the 1903 plan, and proposed 21 additional playfields and parks with recreation sites in the 1908 supplemental report. The Park Board of Commissioners requested playground recommendations in 1910, to which Olmsted responded that the school system was much better suited to provide such facilities if they were small and

adjacent to schools. He argued for acquiring hillsides, shorelines and larger acreage when possible to accommodate growing population needs. Olmsted also argued for improving playgrounds with landscape treatment in order to help them function like landscape parks, and recommended fourteen play and active recreation sites, of which the City eventually provided eleven. *(Figures 11 and 12 – Park System Plans)*

Water System

Like most new settlements of the period, during its first decades Seattle relied on individual wells and later multiple privately controlled sources and distribution systems for its water supply. Lake Union, Lake Washington and Licton Springs were among the sources for the competing Spring Hill and Union water companies. The failure of water supplies for fighting the Great Fire of June 6, 1889 and occasional outbreaks of water-borne diseases prompted voter approval of public acquisition, combination, and expansion of the private companies in 1890 and 1891. The need for a larger and safer water supply had been apparent for many years, and had been proposed by Mayor Robert Moran in late 1888 and approved by public vote in 1889. Legal issues prevented financing a system until 1895, when state laws were modified.

Reginald H. Thomson (1856-1949), City Engineer from 1883 to 1886 and 1892 to 1911, planned a gravity-fed system to bring water from the Cedar River and maneuvered successfully for another public vote to fund construction. On December 10, 1895 a ballot measure for $1.2 million was passed to finance and build the system, despite the opposition of many prominent local businessmen. In 1896 and 1897 city crews surveyed a 30-mile right-of-way from a dam and headworks on the Cedar River at Landsburg, and designed a wood-stave pipeline, siphons and receiving and distribution reservoirs in Seattle. (Lamb, 112-17) Bids for construction of the Landsburg headworks and the pipeline were let in 1899 and work began almost immediately.

The system was designed to move water by gravity from middle elevations in the Cascade foothills to hilltop storage facilities in the city. Water could then be further distributed by gravity to users via an expanded system of pipelines in street rights-of-way. Two reservoirs were planned on Capitol Hill, in Lincoln (now Cal Anderson) Park, the “low service reservoir,” and Volunteer Park, the “high service reservoir.” A large standpipe was designed for the top of Queen Anne Hill. The reservoirs, connecting pipes and a pump station were included in the second part of the construction contract; all were completed by the end of December 1900. The Volunteer Park Reservoir was first filled on January 10, 1901. Low water pressure in the ridgetop area of Capitol Hill required construction of a standpipe in the park (the Water Tower), begun in 1906. The initial Olmsted plans for the park had recommended an observation tower to see above the trees. (Olmsted Brothers to Board of Park Commissioners, July 13, 1903, p. 69) When the Parks and Public Works boards could not agree on a location, the Olmsted firm was queried and Olmsted recommended the current location on axis with the 14th Avenue East entrance and the Concourse. (J.C. Olmsted to C. J. Smith, December 11, 1905)

As with many types of utilitarian buildings and structures constructed throughout the nation during the nineteenth century, historic revival styles were applied to functional elements of urban water systems, including reservoirs and gatehouses. In the early 19th century, Greek Revival buildings housed functional public works such as the Philadelphia Waterworks of 1825, while

later designers drew upon more eclectic or rusticated styles, as with the Gate House and the Water Tower in Volunteer Park.

John C. Olmsted mentions in a letter to his wife that it may have been Charles Willard Saunders (1858-1935), a prominent local architect who had designed Denny Hall at the University of Washington in 1893-1894 and numerous other civic structures and served on the Board of Park Commissioners as Secretary and then President (1902-1904), who designed the Water Tower in Volunteer Park. Saunders worked in a variety of eclectic styles and on a wide range of projects, including the original shelter house in Historic Lincoln Park (now Cal Anderson Park) and the Forestry Building at the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition. (John C. Olmsted to Sophie Olmsted, June 5, 1909)

Other cities in the Pacific Northwest faced similar water supply issues and pursued similar solutions. Portland, Oregon's public water system is similar to Seattle's in its overall concept and architectural treatment of buildings and structures. Portland's first receiving reservoirs and gate houses were built in 1894 in Mt. Tabor and Washington parks and share the Renaissance Revival/Classical architectural treatment of facilities in Volunteer and Lincoln parks. The Olmsted Brothers firm also planned Portland's park system at the same time as Seattle's and recommended its first professional park superintendent during that period, Emmanuel Mische. Mische also designed several Portland parks in the Olmsted' style, including Laurelhurst City Park. Mt. Tabor Park was constructed in 1909, when much of the construction of Volunteer Park occurred. (Mount Tabor Centennial Celebration Committee, Kathy Tucker, Mount Tabor Neighborhood Association, Portland Water Bureau)

The City Engineering Department proposed building a second reservoir in the park in 1918. The Park Board approved the action and plans were developed over the next couple years, although the Board reversed its decision later in the year. (Board of Park Commissioners to Mayor Ole Hanson, January 14, 1919) Meanwhile, a group of neighbors' opposition to the project grew and they took the City to court. The case was decided against the City and the second reservoir was never built. (Ferry et al. v. City of Seattle)

Later phases of water system expansion included second and third parallel supply pipelines (1909 and 1920), replacement of wood-stave sections of pipe with steel and concrete pipe (1924), construction of additional reservoirs and standpipes in the city (Green Lake and Maple Leaf in 1910, Beacon Hill North and South in 1911), and expansion of the distribution network. Additional pipeline capacity was added later, and several more reservoirs were constructed in surrounding suburbs during the late 1940s. A second natural supply, the Tolt watershed, became available when the Tolt Reservoir and connecting pipeline began providing water to the city in 1964. Seattle's system now provides water to many suburban communities as well.

Capitol Hill Neighborhood Context

The neighborhood surrounding Volunteer Park was a forested backdrop to the waterfront of Elliott Bay when Seattle was founded. Demand for wood for the town's mill prompted logging of much of the surrounding hillsides and ridgetops by the 1880s, including what was then called Broadway Hill. The area containing the park was annexed to Seattle in 1883. The

neighborhood's current name, Capitol Hill, results from the promotional efforts of its largest developer, James A. Moore, to move the state capital from Olympia. Moore purchased 160 acres to the east and south of the park in July of 1900, platted the land and began grading and paving streets and installing utilities while heavily promoting land sales. Of the fifty-two large houses bordering or facing the park, more than half were built between 1904 and 1911, while Volunteer Park was being planned and constructed, and more than four-fifths were built before 1920. (King County Assessor Records)

The 40 acres, which would first be named Washelli Cemetery (1885), then Lake View Park (1887), then City Park (1887), and later renamed Volunteer Park (1901), were purchased for general municipal use in 1876 and dedicated to park use in 1887. Fifteenth Avenue East, bounding the park to the east, was paved and became a trolley route in 1901, providing easy access from downtown to both the residential area and the partly developed park. Fourteenth Avenue East, approaching the park from the south, is a Parks-owned boulevard and was originally constructed with tree-planted islands along its center. The residential neighborhood surrounding the park was platted and began to be built out at the turn of the century: (Guy) Phinney's Addition (1882) to the west, (Jacob) Furth's Addition (1908) and James Moore's Capitol Hill Divisions 1 and 3 (1902) to the south, and Moore's Capitol Hill Divisions 2 and 4 (1901 and 1902) to the east. Lake View Cemetery (just north of Volunteer Park) predates the park, having been established in 1872.

It was apparent to all, especially John C. Olmsted, that the growing population and the prosperity of the neighborhood required a design that would match its aspirations and would support, if not enhance, property values. The neighborhood context influenced park design in subtle and overt ways, in both its style and internal organization. For example, Fourteenth Avenue originally extended as an informal ridgetop wagon road through the park parcel and provided the primary route to the cemetery, which annoyed wealthy new residents and interfered with park use. Siting a conservatory at the north end of the route through the park eliminated the problem.

## Role and Significance within the Seattle Park System

Volunteer Park is unique within the Seattle park system because it is a fundamentally urban park, unlike other parks in the system. While it is not nearly as large or as heavily used as Central Park in New York or Prospect Park in Brooklyn (both designed by Olmsted, Sr. and Vaux in the 1850s and 60s), like the New York parks, Volunteer Park was intended to serve the recreational needs of a growing urban population near the center of the city. Volunteer Park was intended to be a pleasing, central gathering place rather than a wild, natural park (such as Schmitz, Ravenna or Seward parks, all three of which have much larger native forests and more topographic variety). As a more urban and finished park, its design is significantly more formal than that of the forested parks, and its central Concourse, with a large pergola and music terrace (replaced by the Art Museum) was designed to encourage promenades and gatherings.

The 1903 park system report described the character appropriate for a park in this location and place in the park system:

> "There being no rugged topography in this park, and as it will be surrounded by a highly finished style of city development, it will be best to adopt a neat and smooth style of landscape gardening throughout, thus harmonizing the park with its surroundings and making it contrast with the outlying parks, and those having rugged topography, in which a wild style and greater respect for the preservation of the natural forest undergrowth would be appropriate and most desirable…. For the same reason the crowded, wild undergrowth should be gradually replaced by suitable exotic shrubbery." (1903 Board of Park Commissioners Annual Report, 78)

"Smooth" in this context is most likely intended in a 19th century visual aesthetic sense, meaning beautiful (in reference to paintings of pastoral scenes). It is the opposite of rough, which meant picturesque, with strong contrasts, variety, and drama. (Rettig, in Kelly, 85)

Seattle's setting and situation at the turn of the 20th century were notably different from most of the cities for which the Olmsted firm planned park systems – highly varied topography and waterfront lands, an hour-glass shape with the commercial core at a narrow point, magnificent surrounding wild lands and scenery, and a rapidly expanding urbanized area. Thus a large central park wasn't feasible financially or geographically, nor was it, in John C. Olmsted's opinion, really necessary for at least a generation, due to the abundance of surrounding scenery. (Wilson, 167) The many opportunities for hilltop parks with vistas, shoreline parks with water access, public interest in neighborhood playgrounds and play fields, and limited budget for acquisitions led Olmsted to propose a system of hilltop and waterfront parks linked by parkways and boulevards along waterways and across slopes, along with well-distributed neighborhood parks.

The nearly square plan and slightly rolling ridgeline topography of Volunteer Park are roughly similar to Woodland and Jefferson parks, and Green Lake Park is roughly square in plan. All are farther from the city center. Like Volunteer Park, Woodland Park contains decorative site furnishings such as special light standards and benches, Green Lake Park is largely devoted to promenading, and Washington Park and Green Lake Park both contain significant ornamental plantings. Jefferson Park occupies a flat ridge top. These other parks include specialized functions: Woodland Park incorporates a zoological garden (now Woodland Park Zoo), Green Lake Park surrounds and is named for its lake, Washington Park contains an extensive botanical collection Washington Park Arboretum), and Jefferson Park includes a golf course.

In contrast, Volunteer Park is a finely-finished general-purpose park, with plant collections in the Conservatory, a museum that was introduced two and a half decades after park construction, and a reservoir that preceded the park's design. None of these features dominate the park. The Reservoir is integral to the design of the park, providing a western vista and reflection of the sky and surrounding trees. The park offers passive recreation on the broad lawns and minor opportunities for active recreation in the children's play area and the tennis courts. Volunteer Park is the best regional example of a non-specialized, urban and "central" park.

Throughout the park system, Olmsted strove to incorporate the views of distant mountains and water, enhancing visitors' perceived sense of space and scenery. Volunteer Park exemplifies this practice. The view axis that extends across the Reservoir brings the Olympic Mountains into the park. As the May 3, 2003 declaration by the National Association for Olmsted parks states, the Seattle park system "represents, nationally, the first attempt to "borrow" landscape scenery on a

grand and monumental scale." The same use of distant scenery was used later in other Olmsted-planned park systems, including the California State Park System. (National Association for Olmsted Parks)

Landscape historians have noted that the Olmsted firm designed parks at three distinct scales, each with notably different characteristics – small parks, with recreational facilities in formalized natural settings; medium-size parks of 500 acres or more, in which scenery is dominant but other functions are included; and reservations for cities larger than one-half million population, occupying thousands of acres, which are more remote and wild. (McClintock in Kelly, 133) Volunteer Park is thus unusual among parks designed by the Olmsted Brothers in that it is small in acreage but medium-sized in character and function. It is also located in a hilltop setting close to the city center, incorporates some neighborhood-oriented elements (such as a wading pool and playground), but also possesses a formalized design, and contains an artificial water feature. Other park systems designed by the Olmsted firms, such as those in Essex County, Louisville, and Chicago, include much larger, central parks on low-lying lakes or rivers bordering dense city centers. As noted earlier, such a large central park was considered infeasible and unnecessary in Seattle because land costs on the water or in flat areas near the city center were very high and because the city had several miles of waterfront, mountain views, and other scenic and recreational amenities close at hand.

**C. History of Volunteer Park**

In 1876, the City of Seattle purchased 40 acres of undeveloped and largely cut-over ridge top land for $2000 from lumberman James Colman, to be used for unspecified municipal purposes. The 40-acre purchase from Colman briefly became Washelli Cemetery in 1885, when burials were removed from land donated to the city in 1884 by David Denny (now Denny Park). Two years later the burials were relocated to the adjoining Masonic (now Lakeview) cemetery and the area was dedicated for park use at the urging of Leigh Hunt, publisher of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, and others. The new recreation site was initially called Lake View Park but was soon renamed City Park, in 1887, to avoid confusion with adjoining Lake View Cemetery. The park was given its current name in 1901 in commemoration of veterans of the Spanish-American War. (Dorpat) A small boulder and plaque, now northeast of the Water Tower, commemorate the war.

Initially the park underwent little improvement or recreational use. Six acres near the northern border were cleared for use as a plant nursery and greenhouse in 1893, when E. O. Schwagerl became superintendent, although the Board of Park Commissioners voted to sell the property while the nursery was being created. The sale failed to receive City Council approval. In addition to the nursery, Schwagerl oversaw limited improvement of public facilities in the park, installing some paths, lawns and planting beds by the mid-1890s. (Sherwood Parks History, Board of Parks Commissioners Annual Reports, 1890-1895; Wilson, 147-148; Rash, in Ochsner, 54)

According to the Park Board's Annual Report of 1904, by that year nearly one fourth of the park had been developed "with walks, by-paths, lawns and beds of flowers." Commenting on the landscape of Kinnear Park, Olmsted felt that Schwagerl's landscape work was uniform and trite, masking the individual character of different parks: "… his walks are very crooked often and his

banks steep and high and his planting very mixed but pretty much the same for every place." (John C. Olmsted to Sophie Olmsted, May 4, 1903)

In 1903 three acres were added to the southwest corner of the park, as mitigation for loss of the area covered by the reservoir, according to R. H. Thomson in his memoir. The half-block strip totaling 2.75 acres along the west side of the park was added in 1902-1903, and the included portion of 11th Avenue was incorporated into the park, though not formally vacated until 1911. John C. Olmsted strongly urged the City to purchase the remainder of the blocks along Federal Avenue; the recommendation remained unfulfilled due to high land costs. (Board of Park Commissioners to Olmsted Brothers, October 11, 1904)

Water System and Reservoir

Surveying and construction for the Cedar Water Supply System began in 1897 and grading for the high service reservoir in Volunteer Park was completed in 1899, requiring both excavation and fill to create a basin at the southwest edge of the ridge. The architectural features of the Reservoir and Gate House were designed by City Engineer Reginald H. Thomson and his staff, and duplicate those of the reservoir built in Lincoln (now Cal Anderson) Park at the same time, now mostly replaced. (Boyle-Wagoner Architects) Concrete work was underway in January 1900 and construction was completed by the end of 1900, including laying supply and distribution pipelines and installing control equipment. Operations began in early 1901. Grading was accomplished using horse-drawn scrapers (fresnos) and by hand. Concrete for the project was hand-mixed on site using at least some aggregate mined from the adjacent cemetery property (SMA Photo #7293, dated 1899) and laid in squares on the steep slope using a moveable stepped ramp and small tracked cars. (SMA Photo #7324) Construction was funded with a $1.2 million bond issue in 1895 and was undertaken as part of the second contract for the Cedar River water supply system. (McWilliams, 64-66)

The initial single wood-stave and riveted-steel pipeline soon became insufficient to supply the city and was supplemented with a second, similar pipeline in 1909 and a third in 1922. Expansion of the reservoir system to other locations occurred at these times as well, as the population of the city nearly tripled between 1900 and 1920. (Lamb, 118-121; McWilliams, 72-75) Subsequent expansion of the system was not visible above ground in the park once construction was completed.

The parapet wall surrounding the reservoir was originally topped by a decorative cast-iron fence with vertical pickets, which was removed sometime before late 1937. The current tall chain link fence outside the walkway was first installed between 1932 and 1935. (SMA Photo #50575) Windows in the Gatehouse were filled sometime after late 1937, judging by archival photographs. The original entrance was partially filled to decrease its size. The original semicircular arched multi-light windows were filled with concrete block some time after late 1937, and the original doors replaced with flat, unornamented steel doors for security. (King County Assessor Property Record Card, September 16, 1937)

The 1903 park system report recommended installing an observation tower, "high enough to obtain the view" and "large enough to accommodate considerable numbers" so that as the

surrounding neighborhood development began to block views from the park, people could continue to enjoy views in all directions. This coincided neatly with the need for a standpipe to provide better water pressure for the surrounding ridgetop neighborhood. The Water Tower, completed in 1908, was incorporated into the 1909 General Plan.

The Water Tower was built by the Public Works Department, headed by R.H. Thomson. The Tower's exterior, with irregular clinker brick walls, Classical finished-stone doorways, and arched brick window openings, was eclectic but echoed rusticated elements of the Craftsman–influenced architectural style coming into vogue at the time. In a June 1909 letter to his wife Sophie, John C. Olmsted wrote, "I took a few photographs…at Volunteer Park. There is a fine view from the water tower but it is ill designed to enable people to enjoy the view. It amazes me how illogical some architects are. It may have been my friend Saunders – If so I am ashamed of this attempt." (*Photos 31, 32, and 33)*

Following the recent completion of a new covered reservoir at Cal Anderson Park in 2005, the Volunteer Park reservoir now stands as the only intact, visible, and uncovered water body remaining from the original Cedar River water supply system. As such it is the most extensive visible remnant of R.H. Thomson's water system legacy in the city. The Reservoir, Gate House, and Water Tower remain both functioning water supply facilities and important design elements of the park.

Park Design and Construction

The Olmsted Brothers proposed extensive improvements to Volunteer Park in the 1903 park system report and in the 1904 general plan of the park. Although only partly developed prior to 1903, the park functioned both as a passive recreational amenity and as a park system horticultural facility. The site was partially landscaped and, in addition to the Reservoir, contained greenhouses along the east edge, propagation and growing fields, a resident keeper's house and other miscellaneous small buildings in the center. On a visit in 1903, John C. Olmsted noted larches and native Douglas Firs in his reconnaissance notes.

Olmsted's 1903 park system report emphasized the park's elevated location and striking vistas, suggesting that land should be acquired to the curb on the west side in order to avoid loss of views and that an observation tower should be built in the park. (1903 Report, 76-78) Foreshadowing the firm's later park design, the report states that "the aim should be to secure at least one large unbroken lawn…and as such a nearly level lawn would be more useful for lawn tennis, tether ball, and other lawn games suitable in such a park," the walks should "afford views over the broadest possible lawns, with foregrounds of trees and shrubbery, which purpose would in general be best accomplished by having curving walks near the borders of the park…," "there should be at least low shrubbery along the borders of the park next the streets." The Park Board hired Olmsted Brothers to complete a general plan for Volunteer Park at a cost of $20 per acre plus expenses. (Board of Park Commissioners to Olmsted Brothers, March 24, 1904)

John C. Olmsted wrote in a letter describing the park's design, "the principal natural feature to be the hilltop or ridge extending from the north end of Fourteenth Avenue to about the middle of the north boundary of the park and the principal artificial feature to be the sheet of water formed by

the city reservoir." He continued, "It seems to us that a good plan for the development and utilization of the park for public recreation should be based upon the idea of making the most of these two features. We have consequently devised a sort of elongated concourse occupying the crest of the ridge. At a point where this concourse crosses the long axis of the reservoir, we have suggested a formal treatment consisting of a stone-walled terrace overlooking the reservoir and the views beyond it, with a formal garden." (John C. Olmsted to Charles W. Saunders, October 31, 1904)

The general plan completed in 1904 proposed park elements and organization that differ very little from the park's layout today, with the exception of the Water Tower and Art Museum. The Water Tower would be built in 1906, with its location determined by Olmsted, in keeping with the park's plan. Detailed design and construction drawings were contracted in 1908 and 1909. Surviving park plans date from 1904 (general plan) and 1909-10 (final general plan and construction drawings*). (Figures 14 and 15 –Volunteer Park General Plans 1904 and 1909)*

Detailed design and initial construction of the park were undertaken at the same time as construction for the 1909 Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition (A-Y-P), which was held on the University of Washington campus. The A-Y-P Exposition grounds were also designed by John C. Olmsted. Several of the 1909 plans for Volunteer Park were drawn and signed by John C. Olmsted, demonstrating his deep involvement in the final design. Others were drawn by Percy Jones, Olmsted's assistant during the 1903 planning visit, and James Frederick Dawson, who became an associate partner in the firm in 1904, and, in the mid-1930s, designed Washington Park Arboretum with the assistance of local landscape architects.

Dawson was the son of Jackson T. Dawson, a prominent plantsman at the Arnold Arboretum in Cambridge, MA. James F. Dawson was an excellent planting designer and construction manager. He was responsible for drafting some of the plans and then overseeing much of the construction of Volunteer Park during and following the construction of the A-Y-P, which he also managed for the Olmsted firm. Dawson had first come to Seattle in late 1904 to report on the progress of the new park superintendent, J. W. Thompson, and examine work on several parks, including Volunteer Park. By 1914, John C. Olmsted had turned over all of his western work to Dawson, including the firm's planning and design for the 1915 Panama-California Exposition in San Diego. Olmsted did not return to Seattle after 1911 because of poor health. (Hockaday, 36, 129)

Design work for Volunteer Park was unlike some other Seattle park projects, for which the Olmsted Brothers completed planning and schematic designs to guide local designers. Local architects and engineers were often hired to complete design development and working drawings in accord with Olmsted general plans and concepts, such as the Primate House at the Woodland Park Zoo, demolished in 2003.

Archival photos show grading of the Concourse and the Carriage Drive south of the reservoir and in the southeast corner of the park completed by early June 1909, and the pergola completed during 1910 (demolished for construction of the Art Museum in 1931). Other initial construction included the Keeper's Lodge, completed in 1909 to house the park's caretaker and his family, replacing an older cottage built near the center of the park in 1893. In both the 1904 and 1909 general plans, the Lodge and maintenance-related functions were located along the north

boundary, replacing older unattractive buildings in the center of the park and moving functional activities to a screened peripheral area.

Limited facilities for active recreation were also located on the northern edge of the park, with a second play area located on the western border, and are notably subsidiary to the predominantly passive areas intended for viewing, strolling, contemplation and spontaneous play. *(Photos 51 and 52)*

The lily ponds' interior plantings and surrounding borders have changed during the park's history but otherwise remain intact. The Olmsted Brothers' design, as depicted in an early photographic postcard, was for two simple circular basins with no planted borders. Underwater screens were added to the formal lily ponds not long after construction in order to protect children and dogs who might fall into the water, as recommended by Dawson in 1911. (Hockaday, 47) According to the Sherwood Park History Papers, a hedge was added at a later time. A low hedge was also incorporated as part of the 2003 restoration. *(Photos 53, 54, and 55)*

The statue of William H. Seward, Andrew Johnson's Secretary of State who negotiated the purchase of the Alaska territory, was moved to the park in 1910, after the close of the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition, when prominent citizens and downtown boosters couldn't agree on a location in Pioneer Square (Stein). The Olmsted Brothers' plans had provided an open circle in which the statue fit well. The Seward statue was but the first of many monuments and pieces of public art put in the park. As Seattle's most formally and elaborately designed park, it has accumulated more memorials and art works than any other city park. This reflects the park's age and importance to the city as a community gathering place and a focus of civic activities. Nevertheless, from an early date, there was concern that the park avoid becoming cluttered with monuments. Jacob Umlauff, the head gardener from 1910 until 1941, was adamantly opposed to what he called "monument clutter." (Sherwood) *(Photo 56)*

The Conservatory was installed in 1912, much earlier than anticipated in planning for development of the park. The building was designed and prefabricated by the New York firm Hutchings & Company and installed by Park Department staff for a total cost of $20,000. In 1919 Anna Clise donated her extensive orchid collection for viewing in the Conservatory. Clise was one of the founders of Children's Hospital and wife of prominent banker and developer James Clise. In subsequent years several other prominent local orchid fanciers donated their collections. *(Photo 57)*

In keeping with the Olmsted Brothers' understanding of the aesthetic and psychological functions of landscape parks, facilities for active recreation were not a significant part of the original Volunteer Park design, except for a shelter house, children's lawn, play equipment, sand courts, and a wading pool along the northeast border. In response to neighborhood requests and growing general interest in recreation, a small playground was added in the 1909 plan (and later abandoned due to neighbors' noise worries) along the southern end of the west border, and in 1912 a clay-surfaced double tennis court was added in the northwest corner. Another double court was built in 1915. The clay surfaces required constant attention and generated many complaints. Maintenance costs became prohibitive. The courts were paved with concrete and tall woven wire fences installed in 1932; they have since been upgraded with a rubberized surface.

Interest in more highbrow passive activities prompted small changes as well: a tall wooden band shell, designed by prominent local architect Carl Gould, was built in 1915 in the current stage location to provide a better listening experience for musical performances. Eventually damaged by weathering and poor maintenance, the band shell was demolished in 1948 and replaced by the current building in 1971.

Grading for the park required flattening and broadening the ridgetop to accommodate the Concourse and, where the Museum now stands, a large Pergola and adjoining semi-circular Concert Grove flanked by pavilions and restrooms. *(Figure 16 – Grading Plan 1909)* Since the reservoir was built prior to the Olmsted Brothers' 1903 general plan, the topography around the reservoir was fixed and required accommodation. The most extensive grading occurred between the Concourse and the Reservoir, creating formal terraces between steep, planted slopes. The Concert Grove served as the seating area for musical performances which took place under the center pavilion of the pergola. A steep 2:1 slope running along the back side of the terrace dropped to meet the lower grades of the east- sloping lawns.

The Olmsted landscape design called for extensive planting to frame and emphasize the major view axis looking southwest, over the reservoir to Elliott Bay, Puget Sound, and the Olympic Mountains. Interior views were created with groupings of evergreen trees, spreading lawns, and dramatic groupings of shrubs into beds as interior focal points, all within tree and shrub plantings at the periphery of the park. The primary lawns were surrounded with woodland and under-planted with sweeps of flowering shrubs and smaller trees. *(Figure 17 – 1909 Planting Plan*) Layered vegetation – canopy trees, understory and ground plane –were designed and planted; over time the middle layer has almost disappeared. Only leggy rhododendrons under the canopy of trees remain from the original mid story. *(Photos 58 and 59)*

Eighteen of the tree species currently found in the park were included in the original 1909 Olmsted plant list. Native trees, especially *Thuja plicata* (Western Red cedar), *Acer macrophyllum* (Big Leaf Maple) and *Pseudotsuga menziesii* (Douglas Fir) were used because they were mature and relatively fast growing, while the introduced nursery stock was smaller and slower. Nearly a hundred Western White pines (*Pinus monticola*) were specified in the 1909 planting plan. Western and Eastern White Pine (*Pinus strobus*) were used around the four sides of the park for protection and screening of the neighborhood. Some of the native trees were intended to be removed as the introduced trees matured. An additional 18 species, included on Olmsted lists for other Seattle parks, are found as mature specimens in Volunteer Park today. Shrubs found throughout the park in mature sizes are mostly different from the original plantings.

In 1910 a proposal for building a large Neo-Classical state art museum in the park was finally rejected by the Park Board after the Municipal Plans Commission found it inappropriate and John C. Olmsted vigorously protested it, much as Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. had opposed construction of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and other intrusions proposed for Central Park. In a letter to the Park Board, Olmsted noted that,

> Volunteer Park is obviously a landscape park – not an ornamental public square nor primarily a public playground. The conclusion is evident that the proposed art museum is

> not suggested as a means for the public to enjoy the landscape of the park… Owing to its size and style of architecture, the art museum is in no way to be subordinate to the park landscape, but on the contrary the museum would completely dominate a large part if not the whole of the park… destroying much of the landscape value of this park. (Olmsted Brothers to J.T. Heffernan, October 11, 1910)

In the early 1930s, Dr. Richard Fuller (1876-1970), head of the Seattle Art Institute, and his mother Margaret, offered to build an art museum for the city on the condition that it be located in Volunteer Park. This time the Board accepted the proposal unconditionally. Designed by Bebb & Gould, with Carl F. Gould (1873-1939) as the principal designer, the Seattle Art Museum was the first museum in the nation designed in the Art Moderne style and won many awards. It is considered the best example of Carl F. Gould's later work. (Ochsner, 176-177) Gould was a prominent Harvard and École des Beaux Arts-trained Seattle architect who had earlier established the University of Washington's School of Architecture and designed many buildings on campus and in the region. (Booth et al., 153-161)

The forecourt, or plaza, in front of the Museum was designed by local landscape architect Noble Hoggson, Jr., in a spare style compatible with the Art Moderne style of Gould's building. The restrained planting design emphasized evergreens, both broad-leaved shrubs and coniferous trees, and avoided beds of colorful annuals and perennials. (SMA, Photo #10588) Although the entry garden/terrace area has been reworked, it retains its initial spatial composition, overall grading and form.

Hoggson, Jr. (1899-1970) was the son of Noble Hoggson, Sr. of Hoggson Brothers Architects, a large firm in New York that designed and constructed buildings on the East Coast and in the Midwest. Hoggson, Jr. came to Seattle in 1930 and practiced here between 1932 and 1970. He graduated from the Harvard landscape architecture program in 1927 while Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. was teaching there, and worked with James F. Dawson of the Olmsted Brothers firm on the design of the Washington Park Arboretum. Hoggson also worked for the National Park Service at Mount Lassen and Mount Rainier National Parks during the 1930s, and in the 1960s worked on the Maurice Dunn house grounds, the Bloedel Reserve, and several properties in The Highlands. (Ochsner, 345; Michelson) *(Photo 60)*

While designing the Museum, Gould was also commissioned by a committee of Judge Thomas Burke's friends to design a memorial for their esteemed colleague. The stone plinth and granite bench, wall, and memorial statue were designed in cooperation with sculptor Herman A. MacNeil (1896-1947) and erected in 1930 at a cost of $50,000. (Sherwood) A bronze plaque and relief of Burke commemorate his long service and significance to the area. MacNeil was a European-trained and nationally prominent New York sculptor, whose realistic figurative work was commissioned for numerous public places, including the Supreme Court building, Washington Square in New York, and elsewhere.

The L.B. Youngs memorial plaque, by sculptor V. T Goumas, installed to the right of the north entry of the Water Tower, was dedicated in 1930. (Sherwood) Luther B. Youngs (1858-1923) was the city's Water Superintendent between 1895 and 1923, the period during which the Cedar

Water Supply System was designed, built and expanded, and the period of the city's greatest population growth.

Despite the effects of the Depression, Superintendent and Park Board annual reports continued to note the popularity of theatrical and musical events, Easter services, and flower shows during the 1930s much as during the 1920s.

Later phases of the expansion of the Cedar Water Supply system came to Volunteer Park underground, in trenches or tunnels, during the three decades following initial reservoir construction. The hand-mixed concrete used in the Reservoir and Gate House took a toll in frequent maintenance. Repairs were made to the Gate House in 1922, and the entire pool was relined in 1925-26. (SMA Photos 1935-37, 2436-38, 2442-46, 2461-66)

Changes to the Reservoir during the 1930s included installation of a chain link fence at the edge of the concrete perimeter walk in 1935, loss of the original cast-iron fence atop the Reservoir parapet sometime after 1937.

Volunteer Park originally contained 30 twelve-foot cast iron light standards supporting single, glass globe luminaires. The standards were spaced 160 feet on center along the Concourse. (Roland Cotterill to Olmsted Brothers, August 6, 1910) It also had many wooden benches typical of the period.

Lighting elsewhere in the park has changed somewhat since construction, primarily in the Museum forecourt area, around the Water Tower and Reservoir, and along the path between the Concourse and Band Stage. An archival photo shows cobra head luminaire in front of the Museum during the late 1960s. (SMA Photo #30502) Thirty-one of the globe light standards stand along the Concourse and the section of the Carriage Drive from 15th Avenue East to the Conservatory. Four have been installed in the Museum forecourt (probably in the mid-1970s) while some around the Water Tower and south entry have been removed, including two centered on the Museum/Reservoir axis (probably during construction of the Museum).

The solitary five-globed cast iron street lamp near the 14th Avenue East and East Prospect Street entrance was donated by the city of Victoria, British Columbia in 1956. It is one of Victoria's signature hanging-basket light standards that have surrounded the Provincial Parliament Building since 1937. (Sherwood)

Paths in the park were initially surfaced with gravel or cinders, while the roadways were paved with macadam. As the Museum became more heavily used, the Director complained about damage to the floors from grit tracked in by visitors. Proposals to surface paths with concrete were denied due to materials shortages in 1942, but in 1948 the Park Board contracted with Harris Asphalt Company for a $2000 paving project. (Sherwood, Board of Park Commissioners minutes, 1948) The post-war period also brought expansion and utility upgrades for the Museum, in 1947, 1953, 1955 and 1968. (Sherwood)

In 1952 the monument to Seattle's Spanish-American War volunteers, a stone with a plaque attached, was installed at the urging of local writer and veteran, J. Willis Sayre. The memorial was created by sculptor Cassius Beardsley. (Sherwood)

A large but invisible improvement to the water system occurred in 1957-1958, when an underground pump station was built in the lawn at the intersection of East Prospect Street and 12th Avenue East. The new pumps increased water pressure in the distribution lines from the reservoir. Chlorination equipment was installed inside the Gate House at the same time.

Changing water quality standards and requirements pose an ongoing dilemma that to date has had little visible effect on the Reservoir and Park. State regulations for public water supplies changed in 1972, requiring covered or better-secured storage facilities. The Reservoir's location in Volunteer Park precluded a wide fenced buffer zone around the open pool, and construction of a covered storage facility would be a costly, major alteration of the park. The Water Department supported the proposed changes, while the Park Board, the neighborhood association and park supporters throughout the city opposed altering the Reservoir. Posting guards at the Reservoir and increasing other forms of surveillance were accepted as a compromise and have been sufficient.

Modernist Japanese-American sculptor Isamu Noguchi's *Black Sun*, a multi-ton carved torus of black Brazilian granite, was installed in 1969 at the western edge of the plaza area above the Reservoir, on a dark granite base designed by local architect Fred Bassetti. A small bronze plaque on the granite base notes that the sculpture was "Commissioned with funds from the National Foundation for the Arts and Humanities and the Seattle Foundation, administered by the Seattle Arts Commission."

Noguchi (1904-1988) began his career as a portrait sculptor but soon became an abstract modernist with a strong interest in organic forms. With the support of a Guggenheim fellowship, Noguchi studied sculpture with Brancusi in Paris in the late 1920s before returning to New York briefly and travelling to study in China and Japan in the early 1930s. (Brenson, Farr, "Chronology," The Noguchi Museum website ) After World War II, he established a studio in Japan, melding Japanese influences with European modernism. In addition to individual sculptures, Noguchi designed sculptural gardens, ballet sets, lamps and furniture, and may be best known for his sculpture gardens, such as the one at the Beineke Libray at Yale University.

*Black Sun* is one of two Noguchi installations in Seattle; the other is *Landscape of Time*, a 1975 grouping of five worked basalt columns at the Jackson Federal Building plaza. Seattle's *Black Sun* is a larger version of an earlier work (1960-63) of dark granite, approximately three feet in diameter. The earlier *Black Sun* is part of Nelson Rockefeller's 20th century sculpture collection at Kykuit, the Rockefeller estate near Tarrytown, New York. ("Kykuit Exterior," Historic Hudson Valley website).

Seattle's *Black Sun* marked a significant shift in Noguchi's mode of work, his collaboration with Masatoshi Izumi, a stone carver from Mure, Japan. "In the last phase of his career, Noguchi went from a studio practice to working in Mure with traditional stone carvers," says Bonnie Rychlak,

curator at New York's Noguchi Museum and the artist's former assistant. "It was a huge shift in his work, and *Black Sun* is what started it." (Rychlak, quoted in Hall)

Well-known Seattle landscape architect Richard Haag (b. 1923) was hired in 1970 to develop a park renovation plan, which was discussed in depth with the Board and in public meetings. Issues addressed by the plan included circulation, parking, views, tree and shrub over-maturity and decline, and screening along 15th Avenue East. The elements of the renovation plan were implemented in phases from 1971 through the mid-1970s and included building a new bandstand/stage, removing a path, and re-grading the lawn to the east of the stage to create a subtle amphitheater-like bowl for seating in 1971; removal of a path and planting katsura trees around the oval “Little Folks Lawn;” reconstruction of the wading pool (slightly east of its original location) and a new children’s playground east of the pool in 1973; closure and pavement removal at the East Highland Drive and 11th Avenue East park entrances in 1972; various lighting, irrigation and drainage improvements, extension of the Museum plaza sandstone paving across the Concourse, and installation of bollards to the west of the roadway. (Haag; Neiford; Board of Park Commissioner Meeting Minutes, 1970-74)

Renovation plans for the park were revisited by Parks Department landscape architects Shane DeWald and Joe Neiford in 1988. DeWald and Neiford considered over-mature vegetation, safety, and other issues. Neiford also designed renovations to the Museum forecourt plantings, consulting Hoggson's plans, which were installed in 1990 and later altered incrementally by maintenance staff. The Portico Group developed a new plan for Haag's children’s playground in 1989-1990, which was constructed in 1991. In 1992 Neiford studied the display beds between the Museum and reservoir, recommending renewal and replanting. (Neiford)

Lily pond restoration in 2003, funded by donations through Seattle Parks Foundation, included repairs to leaking ponds and plumbing, and replanting border vegetation and water plants.

In response to repeated warnings that the park’s trees, shrubs and other vegetation required thoughtful management and renewal, a Vegetation Management Plan was completed for the park in 2005. The Plan, still in draft form, addresses a wide range of planting-related issues, including an analysis of the Olmsted planting design, changes over time to plantings, renewal of critical tree and shrub plantings, substitutions for original plants that are inappropriate or no longer available, and management and action priority recommendations.

**D. Changes Since 1975**

Few substantive changes to Volunteer Park have occurred since 1975, the date that the park was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. In general, the park, including the Reservoir and Gate House, retains an overall integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Volunteer Park is remarkably well-preserved.

The most notable alterations since 1975 include a series of changes to the Art Museum forecourt plantings (1990), redesign of the children's play area and replacement of the play equipment (1991), and construction of a new greenhouse in the maintenance area (1991). More subtle, but also significant, are alterations to vegetation.

The composition of the tree and shrub understory plantings has also changed periodically over time. These changes are primarily due to three causes: natural plant death and replacement; shrub pruning and maintenance techniques that are not consistent with the original Olmsted design intent; and shrub thinning at the request of the Seattle Police Department for improved security and visibility. The Olmsted Brothers favored a layered approach, with a thick understory of shrubs below towering native trees and lower-growing ornamental trees. For a detailed analysis of the planting changes and proposals to renovate or restore the plantings, please refer to the park Vegetation Management Plan.

Small-scale elements of the park have also been altered inconsistently over time. Park furnishings are mixed and do not follow the Olmsted style recommendations for historic parks adopted in 2003 with the encouragement of the Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks, but the intent is that new and replacement benches will be in a consistent historic style.

In addition to these broad changes, a few more minor non-contributing alterations are listed below, most of which have occurred since 1975:

Non-Contributing Changes to the Park:

- Replacement of the large greenhouse in the maintenance area
- Loss of lawn area and some planting beds
- Inconsistent replacement of original park furnishings, including benches, lights, trash cans, etc.
- Modern surfacing on the tennis courts
- Installation of an overflow pipe at the base of the Water Tower mound
- Closing of the Carriage Drive and entrances to general traffic
- Modern children's play area

Non-Contributing Changes to the Reservoir:

- Addition of the Reservoir guardhouse
- Replacement of the Gate House doors and filling of the windows (date unknown; may be pre-1975)
- Addition of the underwater intake/outflow or aerating equipment at the western side of the reservoir. The system was changed from small domed vertical inlet/outlet structures to a long, horizontal one with inlet/aerator/structures in the pool (date unknown; may be pre-1975)

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Survey Map showing Volunteer Park, 1902-3, Job #2690, Plan 8, Sheet 12-27, Print 2
Volunteer Park, February 19, 1909, Job #2695, Plan 13. Print 1

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Volunteer Park - Grading Plan for SW Corner, January 13, 1909, Job #2695, Plan 12
Volunteer Park - Preliminary Plan, September 15, 1904, Job #2695, Plan 6
Volunteer Park - Revised Plan for Concourse and Crest Drive, February 21, 1909, Job #2695, Plan 38
Volunteer Park - Profile of North Concourse Drives to Accompany Plans 20 and 21, March 9, 1909, Job #2695, Plan 22, Sheets 2 and 2-1
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Volunteer Park - Revised Grading Plan for Western Portion, March 9, 1909, Revised March 26, 1909, Job #2695, Plan 21
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Volunteer Park - Revised Grading Plan for Western Portion, March 27, 1909, Job #2695, Plan 21, filed as #25
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Note: Library of Congress materials are also available at the Seattle Public Library and the Seattle Municipal Archives.

# IV. Appendices

# Appendix A: Illustrations

# Current Plans, Aerials, Diagrams

**Figure 1 – Vicinity map**

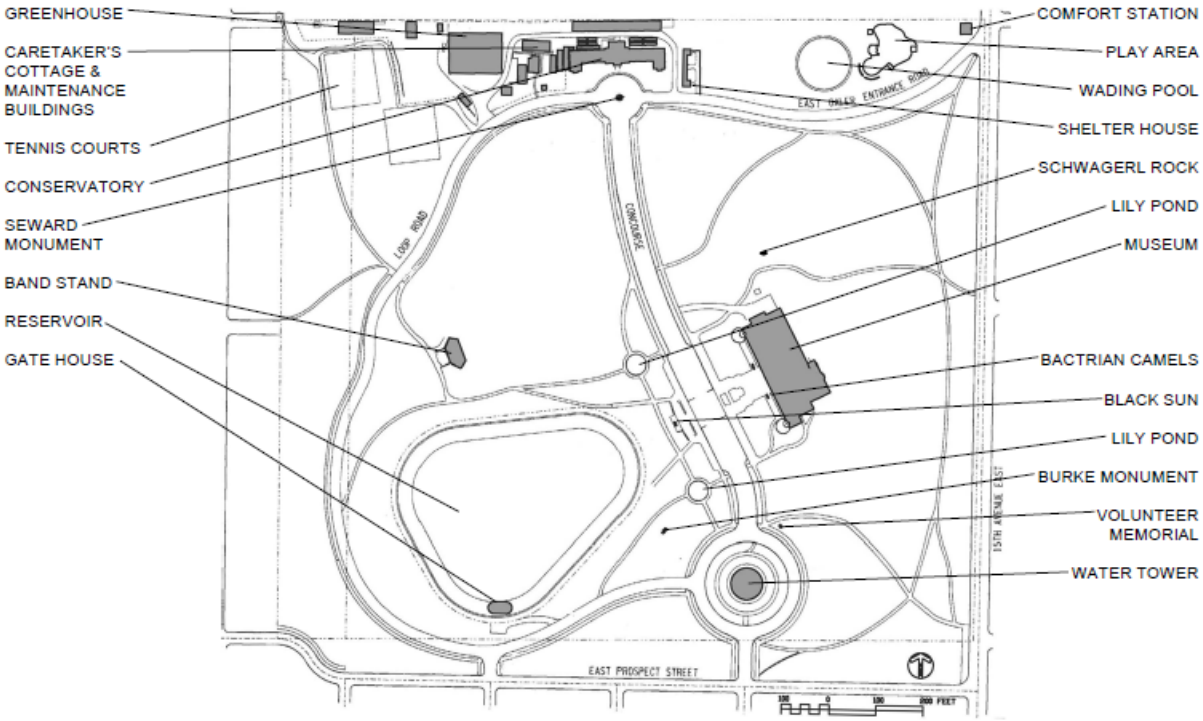


**Figure 2 – Current park plan**

**Figure 3 – Current aerial photo (2007)**

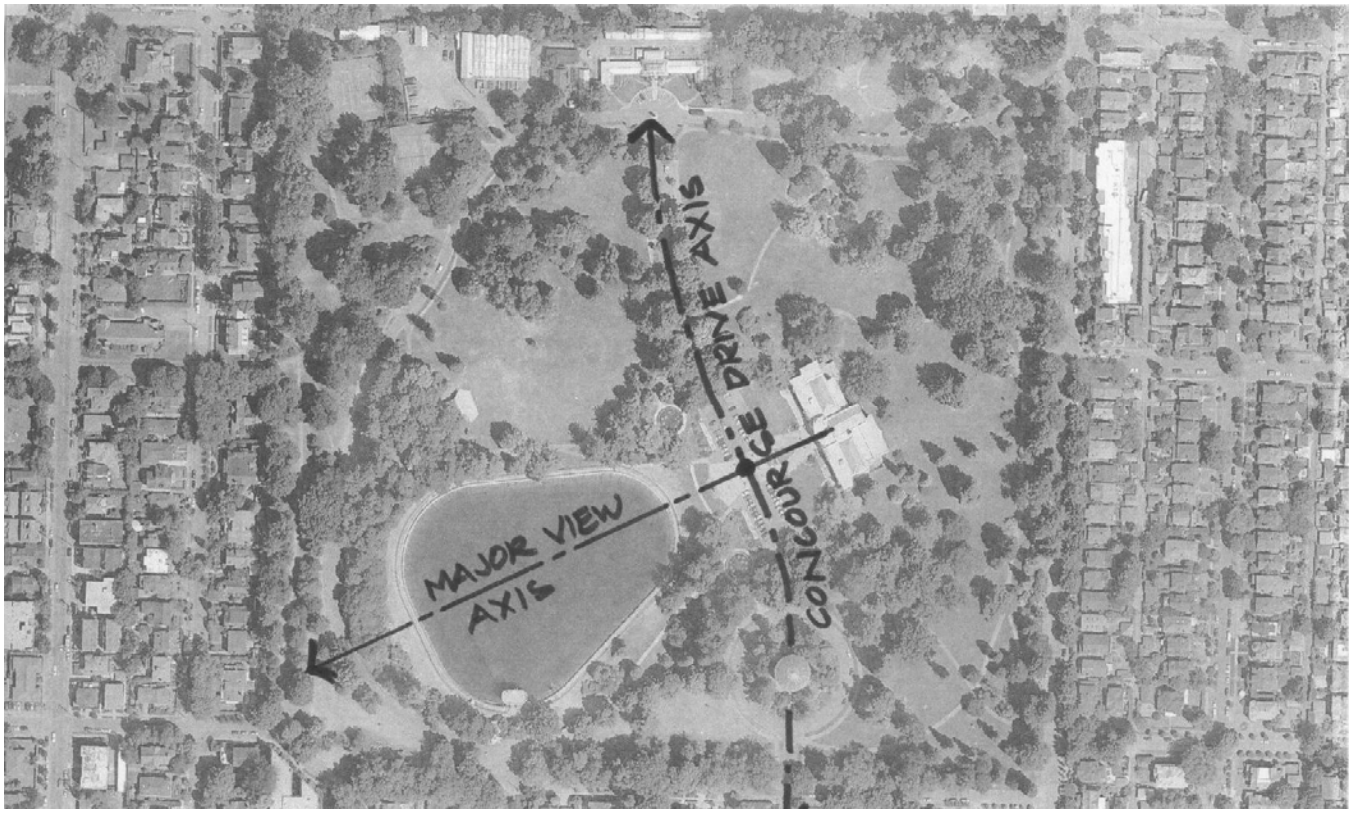


**Figure 4 – Park Axes**

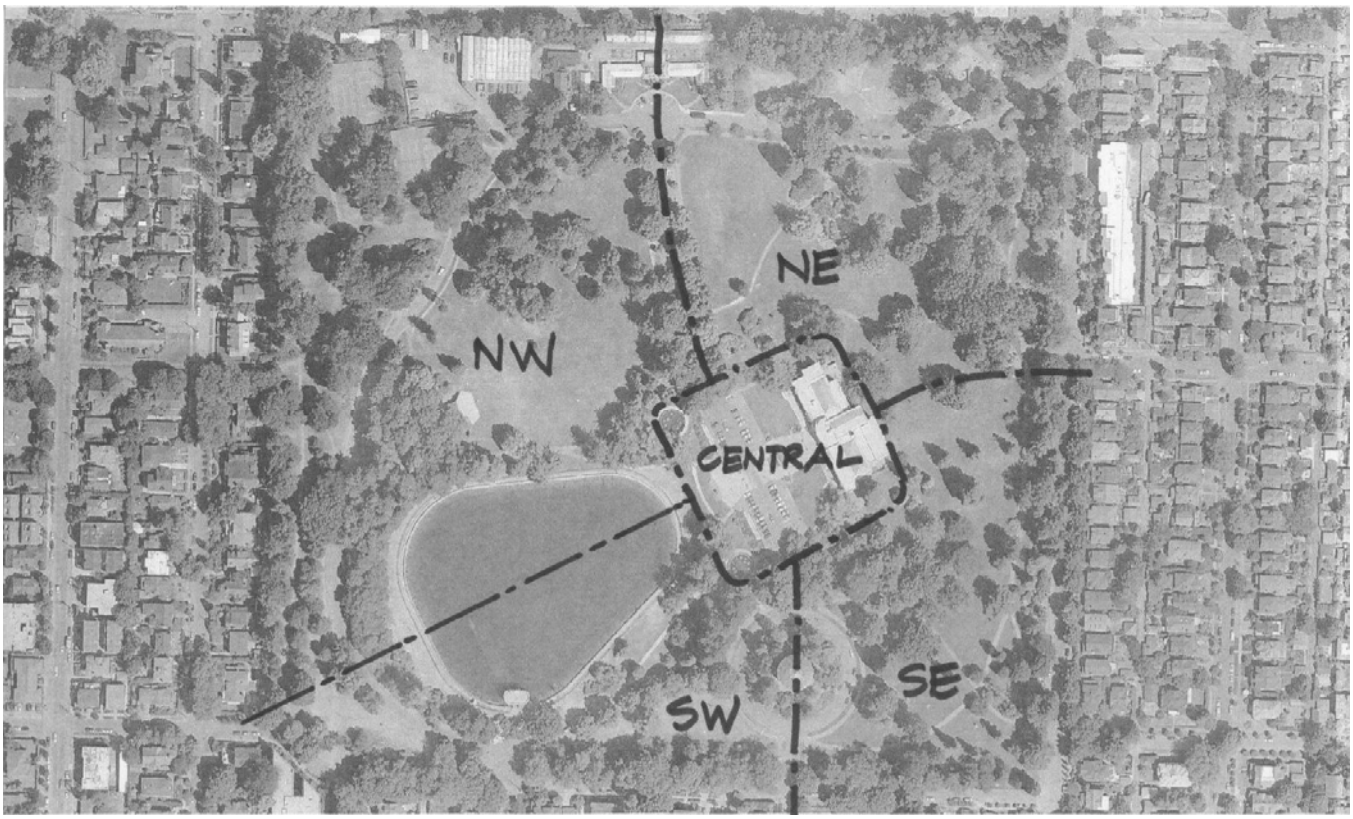


**Figure 5 – Spatial Organization**

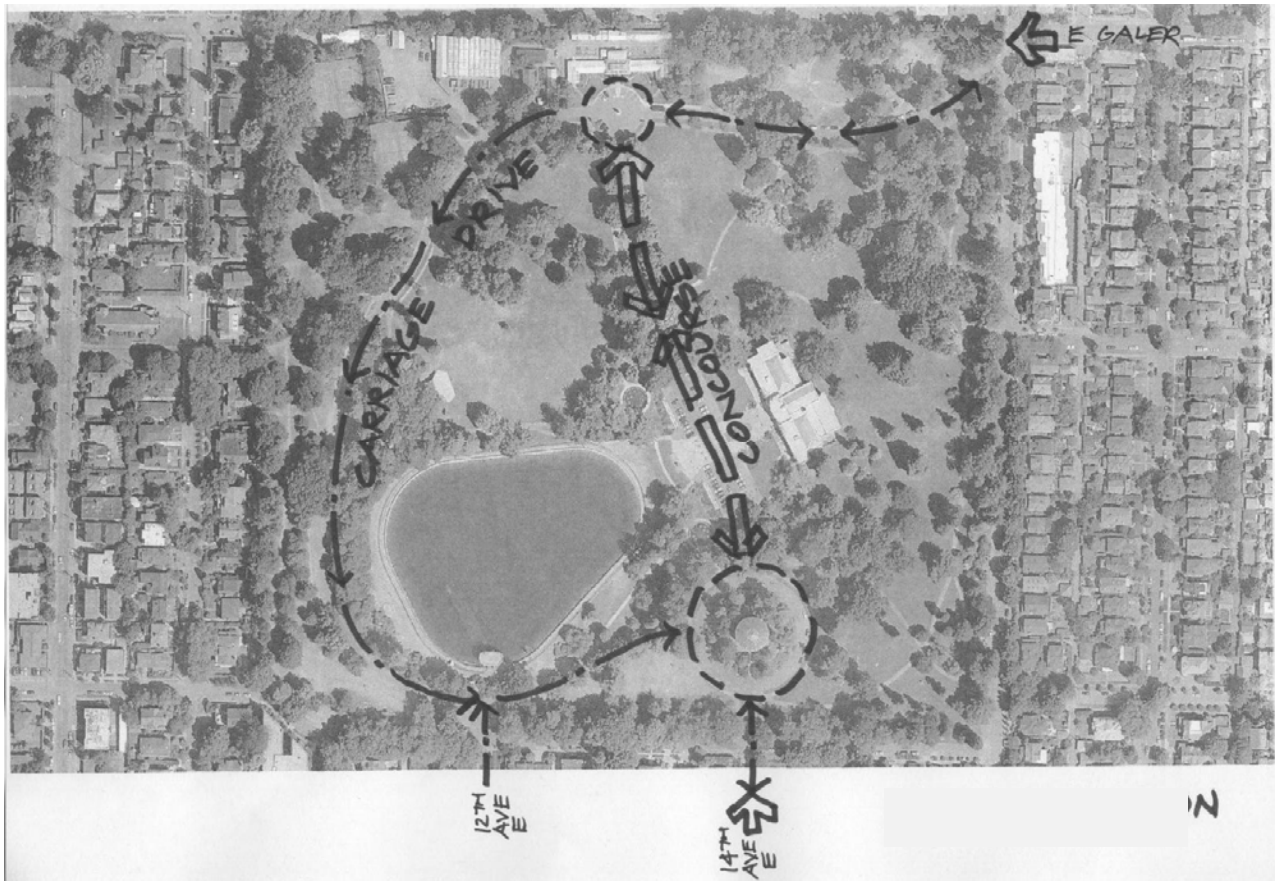

**Figure 6 – Circulation**

**Figure 7 – Topography**

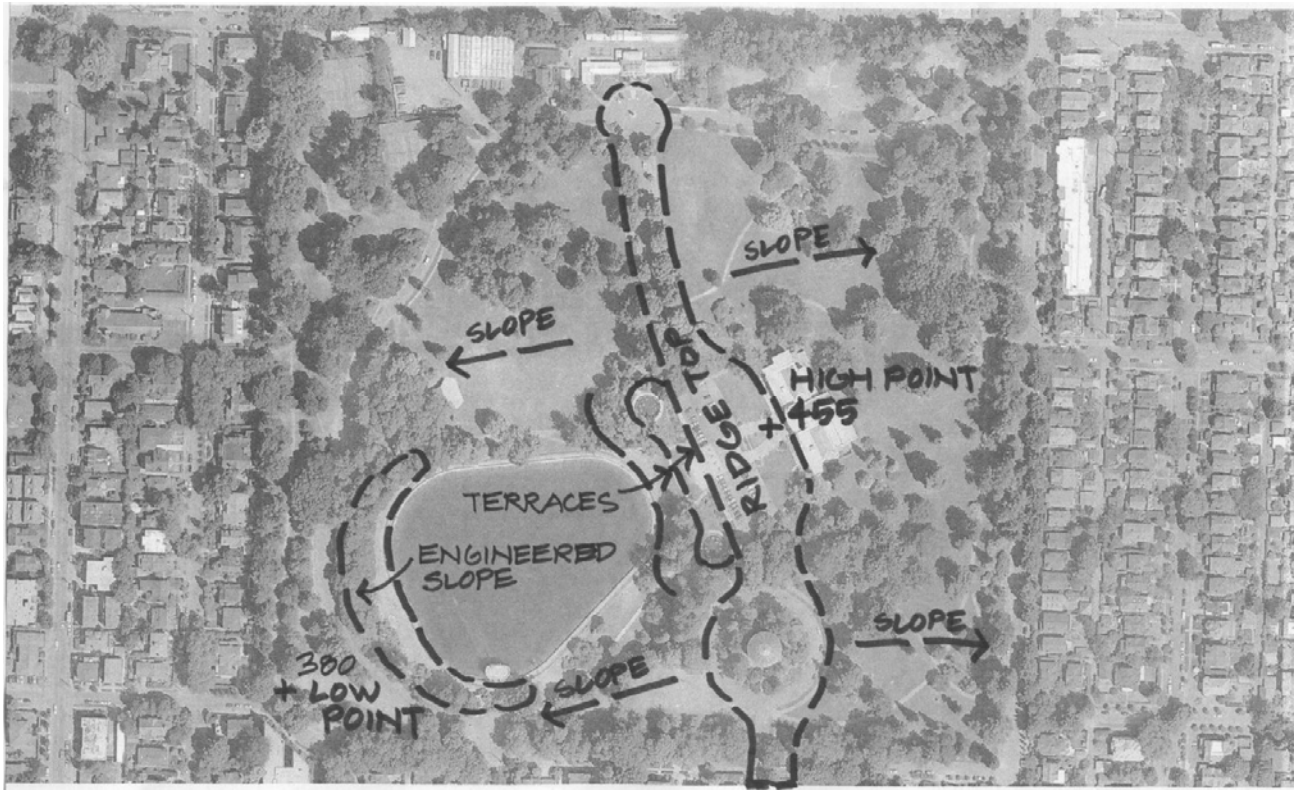


**Figure 8 – Topography and Grading**

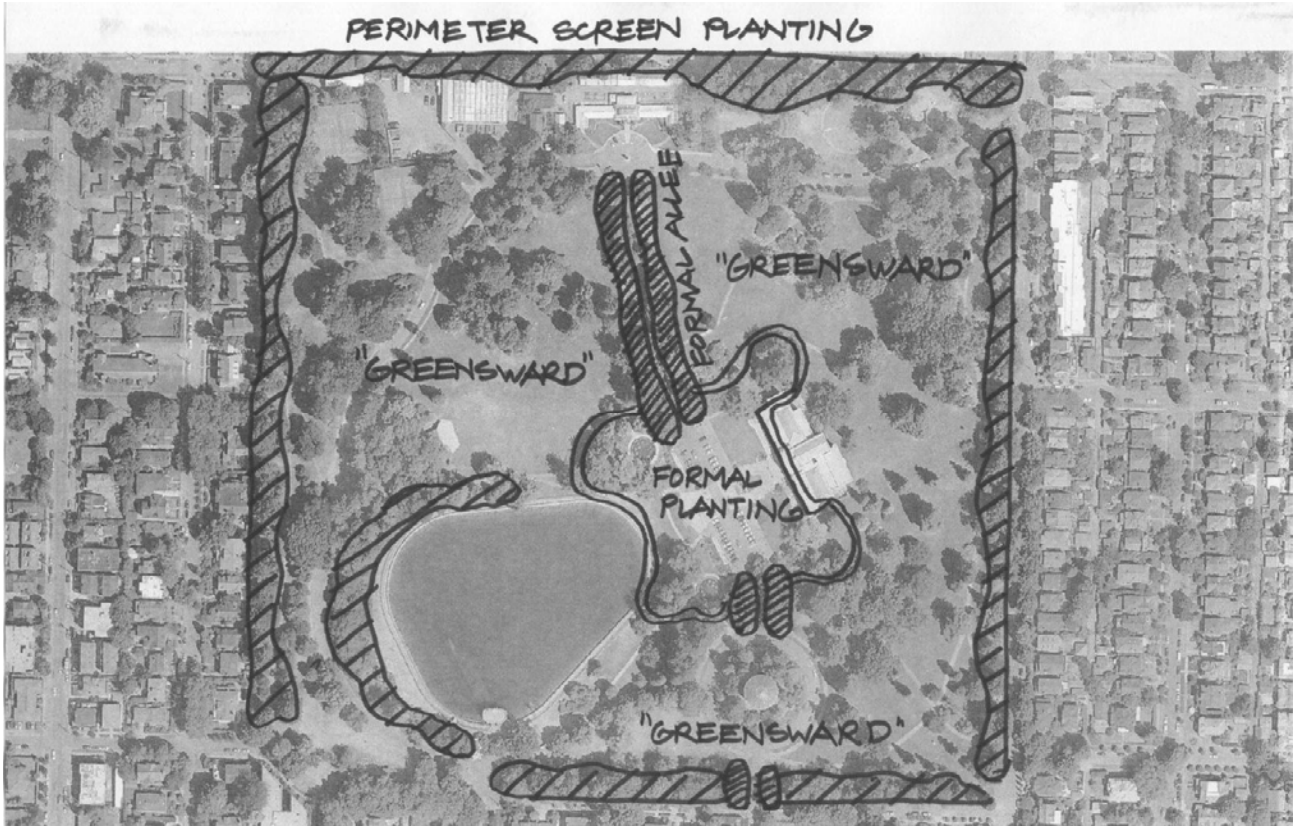


**Figure 9 – Vegetation**

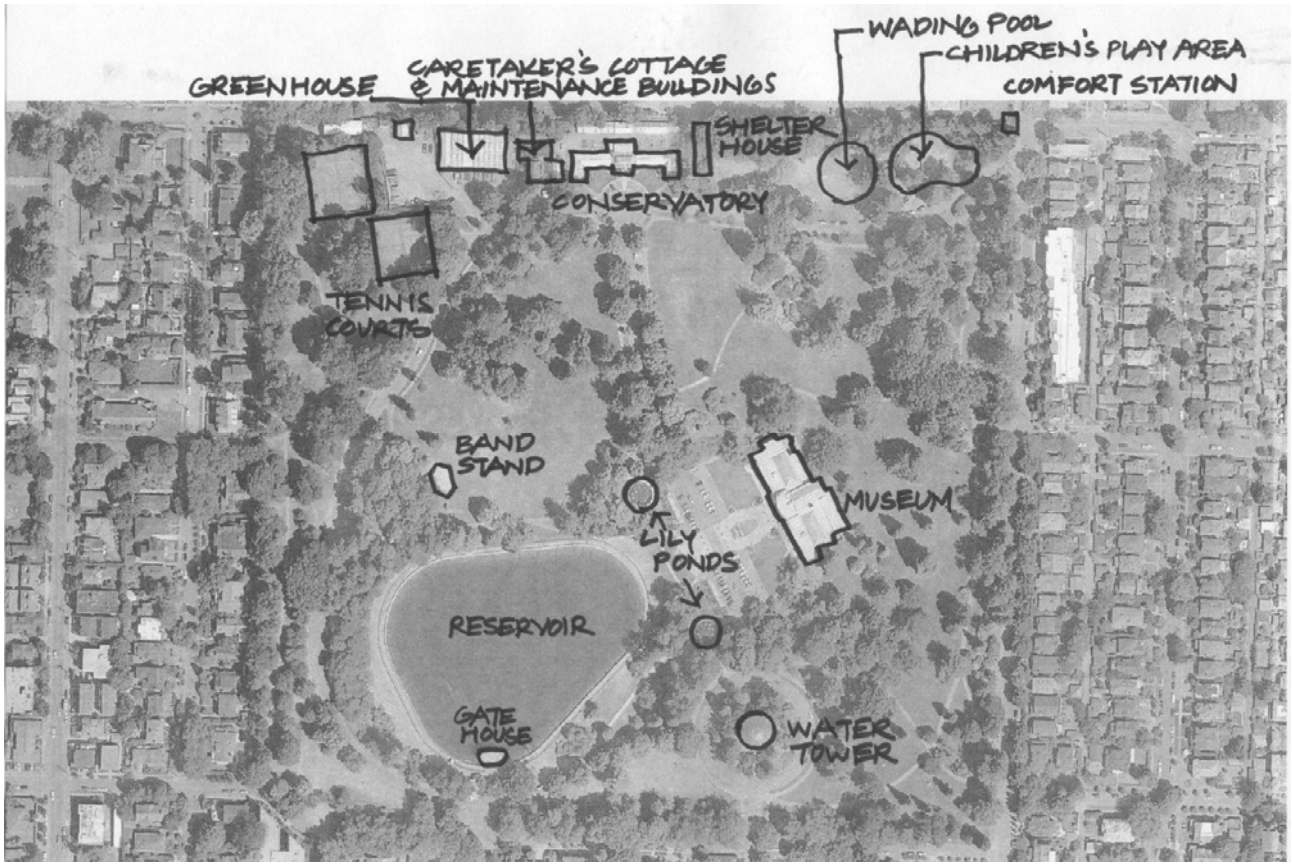


**Figure 10 – Buildings, Structures, and Water Features**

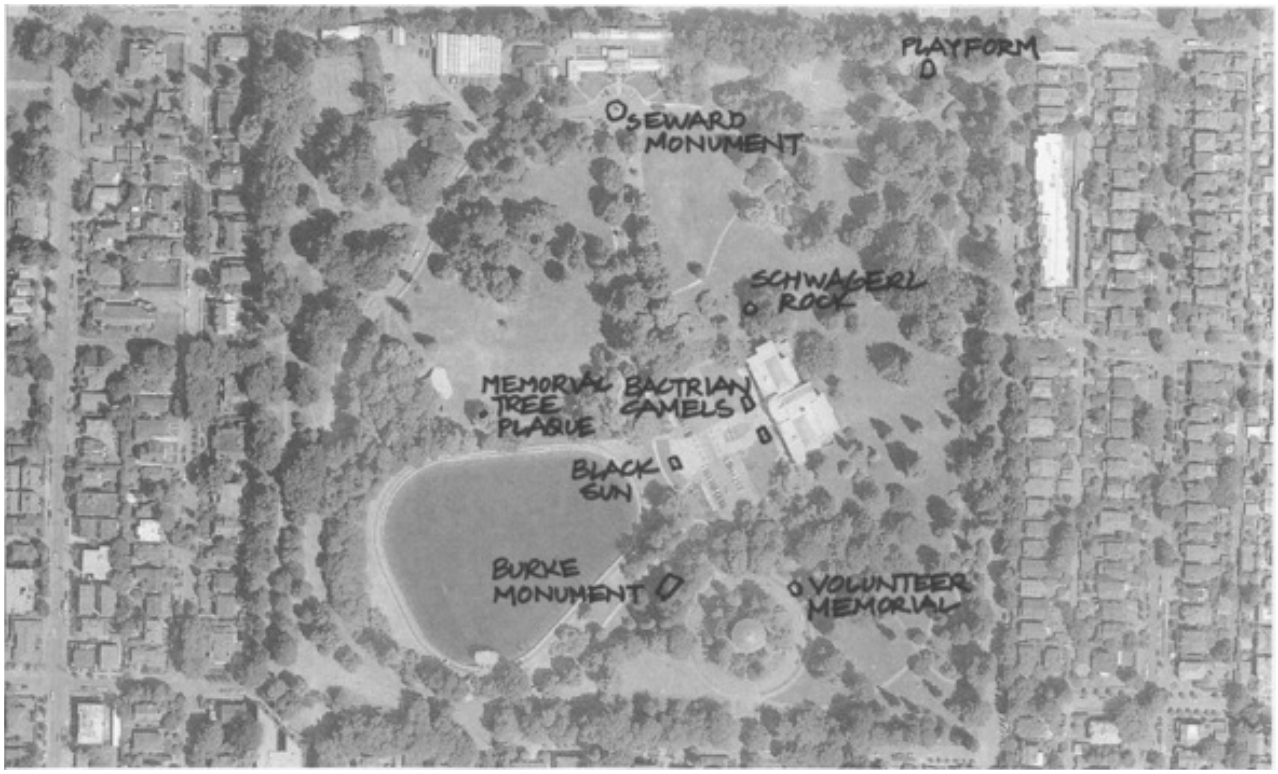


**Figure 11 – Small-Scale Elements**

## Historic Plans

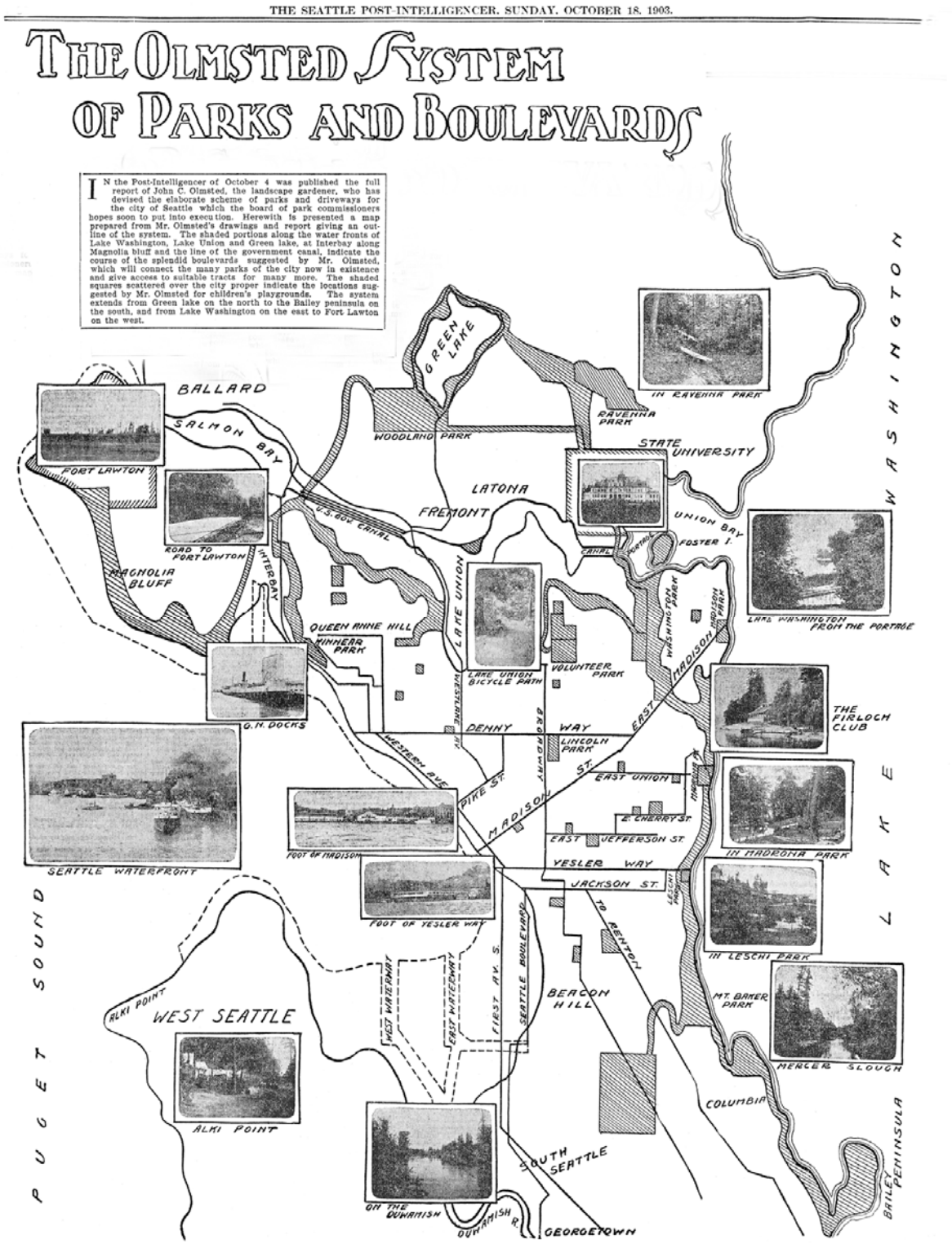


**Figure 12 – Seattle Park and Boulevard System Plan, 1903**

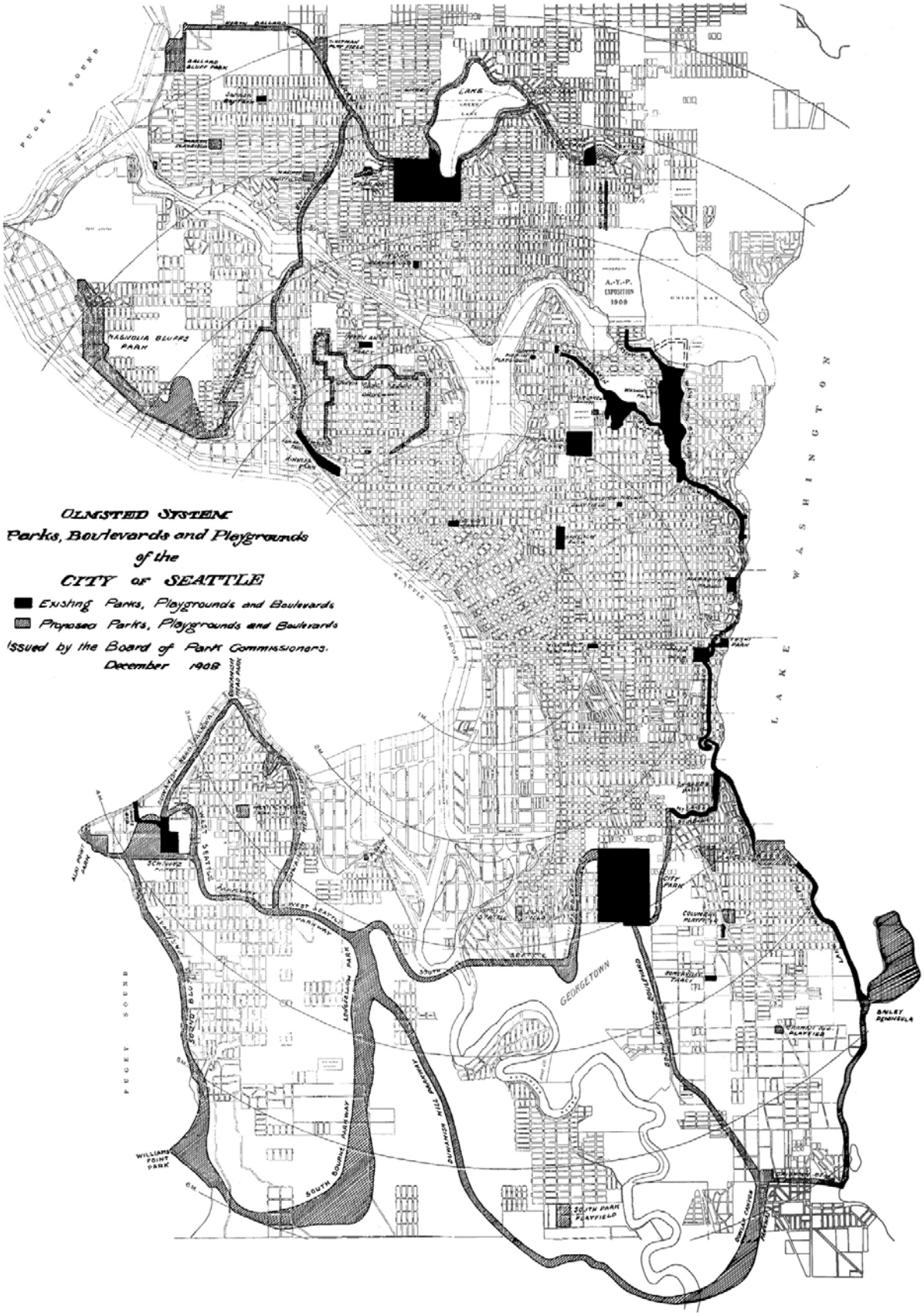


**Figure 13 – Seattle Park and Boulevard System Plan, 1908**

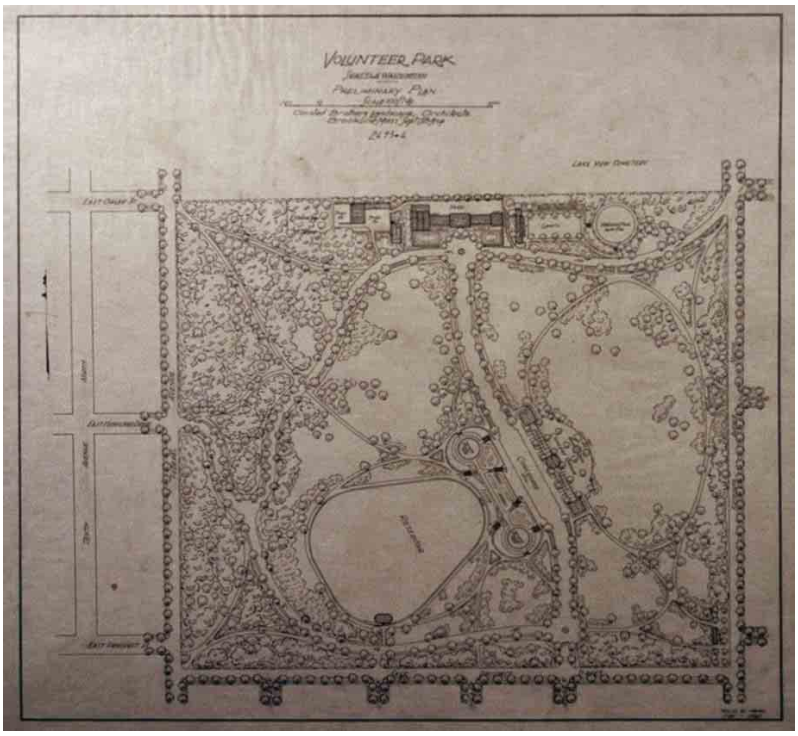


**Figure 14 – Volunteer Park Preliminary Plan, September 15, 1904**
Courtesy of the National Park Service Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, Job #2695 Plan #6

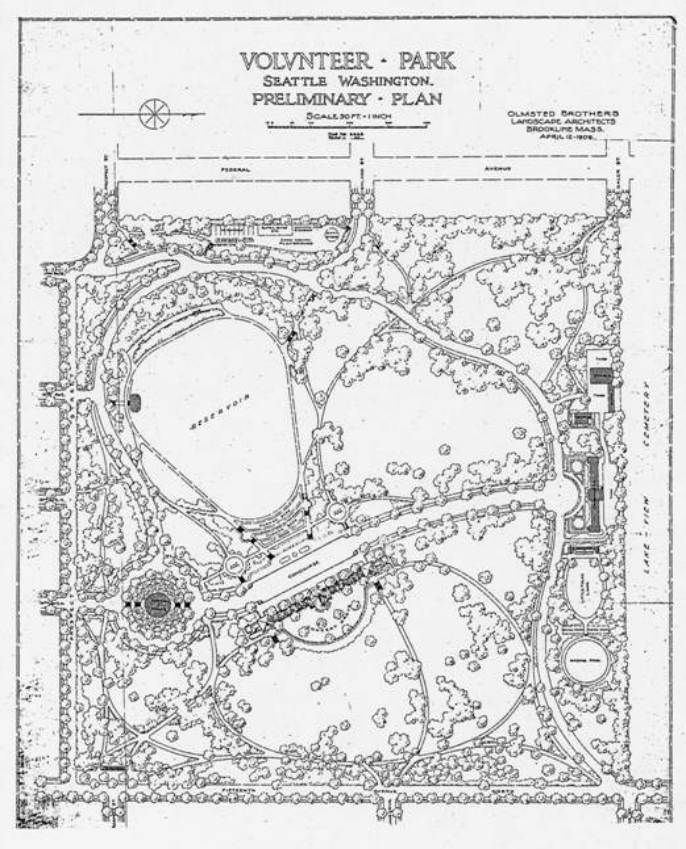


**Figure 15 – Volunteer Park Preliminary Plan, April 12, 1909**
Courtesy of Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks, Job #2695 Plan #35

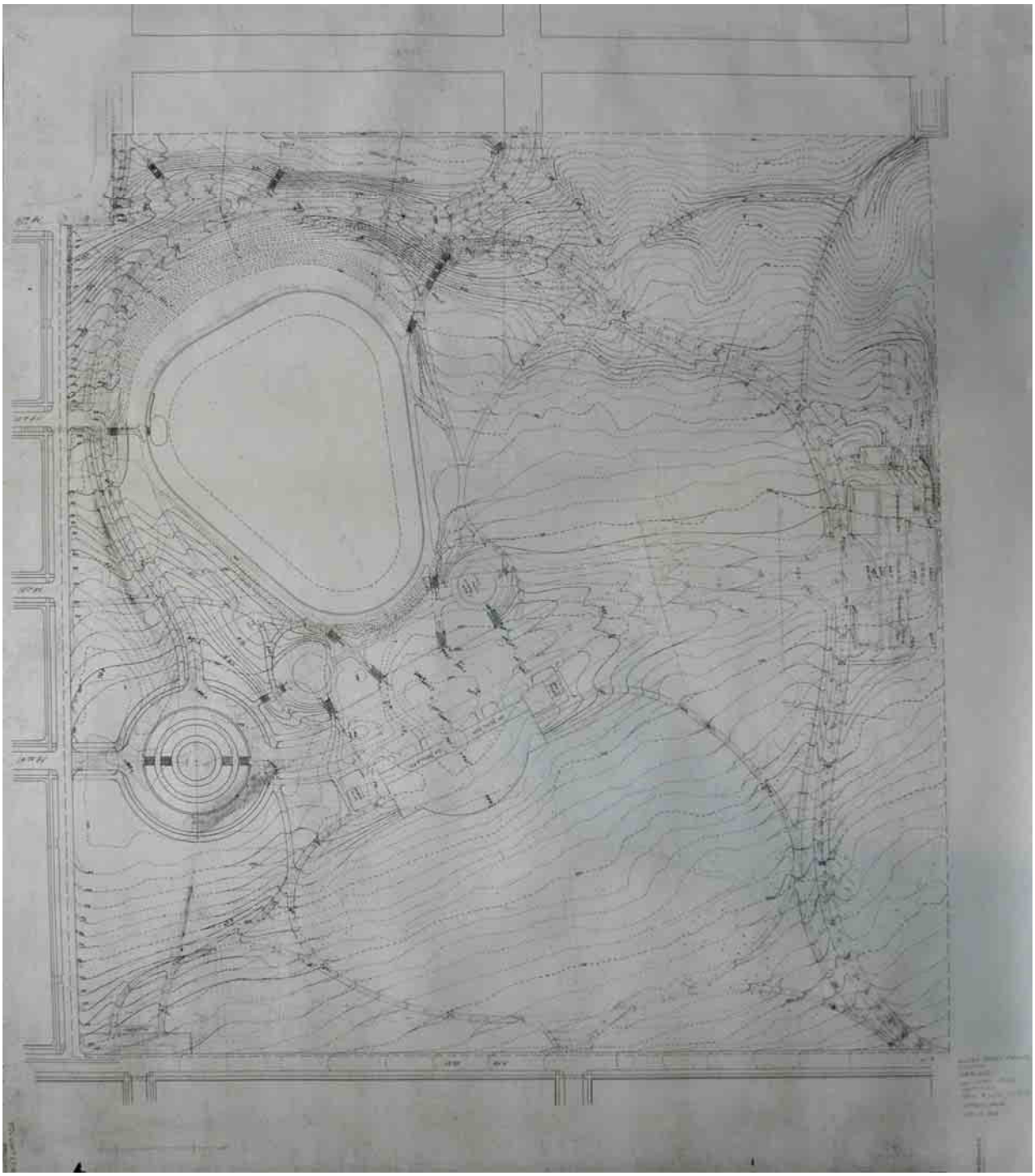

**Figure 16 – Volunteer Park Grading Plan, February 19, 1909**
Courtesy of the National Park Service Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, Job #2695, Plan #13, pt. 1

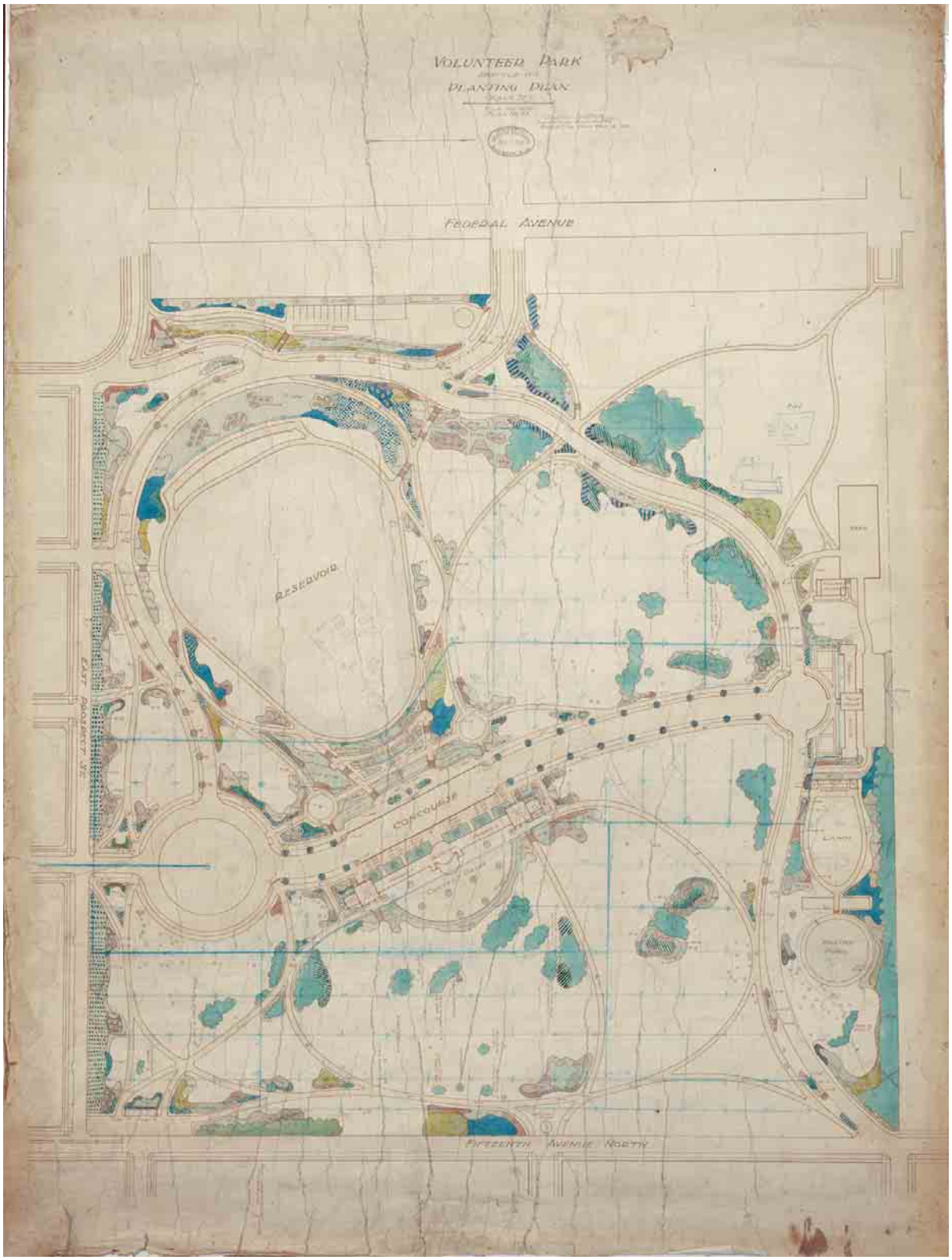


**Figure 17 – Planting Plan, Job # 2695, Plan #43, February 16, 1910**
**Courtesy Seattle Parks and Recreation**

# Current Photographs

**Photo 1 - North Concourse Vegetation, February 2009**

**Photo 2 – Southwest Quadrant Vegetation, January 2007**

**Photo 3 – Southeast Quadrant Vegetation, February 2009**

**Photo 4 – Northeast Quadrant, January 2007**

**Photo 5 – Northwest Quadrant Vegetation, September 2007**

**Photo 6 – Reservoir, May 2001, Photo courtesy Seattle Municipal Archives, Item No. 114469**

**Photo 7 – Gate House, south side, January 2007**

**Photo 8 – Gate House, southeast corner, January 2007**

**Photo 9 – Gate House, north side, October 2010**

**Photo 10 – Gate House, northeast side, February 2009**

**Photo 11 – Water Tower, south side, September 2006**

**Photo 12 – Water Tower, northwest side, February 2009**

**Photo 13 – Water Tower, east side, October 2010**

**Photo 14 – Water Tower, west side, October 2010**

**Photo 15 – Lily Pond, September 2009**

**Photo 16 – Shelter House, east side, January 2007**

**Photo 17 – Wading Pool, September 2007**

**Photo 18 - Children's Playground, February 2009**

**Photo 19 – Comfort Station, south and west sides, February 2008**

**Photo 20 – Comfort Station, south and east sides, February 2009**

**Photo 21 – Comfort Station, north side, October 2010**

**Photo 22 – Keeper's Lodge, south side, September 2006**

**Photo 23 – Maintenance Facilities, south side, September 2007**

**Photo 24 – Tennis Courts, September 2007**

**Photo 25 – Conservatory, south side, September 2009**

**Photo 26 – Seattle Asian Art Museum and Forecourt/Entry Garden, west side, September 2006**

**Photo 27 – Museum Forecourt/Entry Garden, west side, January 2007**

**Photo 28 – Museum, east side, January 2007**

**Photo 29 – Museum, north side, October 2010**

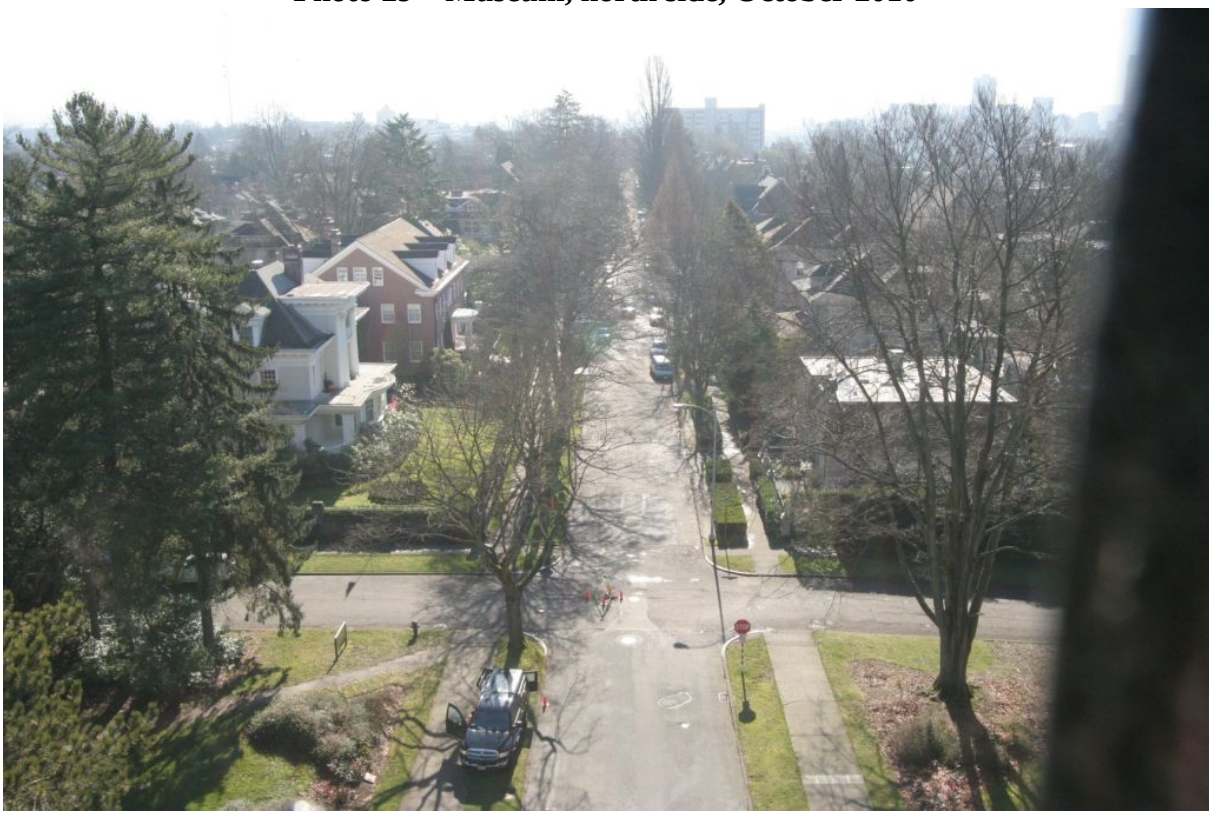

**Photo 30 – Neighborhood south of park, from Water Tower, January 2007**

**Photo 31 – Neighborhood at southwest corner of park, October 2010**

**Photo 32 – East Prospect Street and 12th Avenue East park entrance, October 2010**

**Photo 33 – Northeast entry, looking east, October 2010**

**Photo 34 – Band Stand/Stage, north side, February 2009**

**Photo 35 – Seward Monument, September 2006**

**Photo 36 – L.B. Youngs Medallion, September 2006**

**Photo 37 – Burke Monument, September September 2006**

**Photo 38 – Memorial Tree Plaque, September 2006**

**Photo 39 – Volunteer Memorial, September 2006**

**Photo 40 – "Playform" Play Sculpture, August 2008, Photo Courtesy of David Vaughn**

**Photo 41 – *Black Sun*, September 2006**

**Photo 42 – View east from *Black Sun*, February 2009**

**Photo 43 – West side of *Black Sun*, October 2010**

**Photo 44 – Schwagerl Rock, September 2007**

**Photo 45 – Bactrian Camels at SAAM, September 2007**

**Photo 46 – Globe Light Fixture, north of *Black Sun*, October 2010**

**Photo 47 – Multi-globed light fixture, southeast of Water Tower, October 2010**

## Historic Photographs and Postcards

**Photo 48 - Volunteer Park reservoir looking west, ca. 1931,**
**Photo by Asahel Curtis, Courtesy University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, SEA0963**

**Photo 49 - Volunteer Park, looking east toward Lake Washington, Seattle, ca. 1909**
**Photo by Asahel Curtis, Courtesy University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, CUR573**

**Photo 50 - Capitol Hill residence district looking south along 14th Avenue East, Seattle, 1912**
**Photo by Asahel Curtis, Courtesy University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, CUR933**

**Photo 51 – Volunteer Park wading pool, 1913,**
**Courtesy University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, SEA0965**

**Photo 52 – Children's wading pool and playground in Volunteer Park, undated**
**Photo by Nowell and Rognon, Courtesy University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, SEA2099**

**Photo 53 - Lily pond and Observation tower at Volunteer Park, undated**
**Courtesy University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, SEA2096**

**Photo 54 – Volunteer Park looking north showing conservatory in the distance, undated**
**Courtesy University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, SEA2095**

**Photo 55 – Volunteer Park from the observation tower looking north, undated**
**Courtesy University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, SEA2449**
**Note: Postcard artist added flowers to the plants on the slopes.**

**Photo 56 – William Henry Seward monument at Volunteer Park, ca. 1913**
**Photo by Frank H. Nowell, Courtesy University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, SEA1945**

**Photo 57 – Conservatory in Volunteer Park, 1914**
**Courtesy University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, SEA2089**

**Photo 58 – Rhododendrons and lawn, Volunteer Park, Seattle, ca. 1931**
**Photo by Asahel Curtis, Courtesy University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, CUR1578**

**Photo 59 – Volunteer Park with conservatory in the distance, 1931**
**Photo by Asahel Curtis, Courtesy University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, SEA0864**

**Photo 60 - Art Museum at Volunteer Park, 1932**
**Courtesy University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, SEA2098**

**Appendix B: Olmsted Plant Lists**

Olmsted Tree Taxa:
http://www.seattle.gov/parks/horticulture/VMP/VolunteerPark/AppxDOlmsted.pdf

1909 Olmsted Plan Understory Plants and Vines (V Park)
http://www.seattle.gov/parks/horticulture/VMP/VolunteerPark/AppxD1909.pdf

Volunteer Park Olmsted Trees Suitable for Future Use
http://www.seattle.gov/parks/horticulture/VMP/VolunteerPark/AppxEOlmstedTrees.pdf

Volunteer Park Alternative Taxa for Problem Olmsted Trees
http://www.seattle.gov/parks/horticulture/VMP/VolunteerPark/AppxEAlternativeTaxa.pdf

Volunteer Park Recommended Trees for Future Planting
http://www.seattle.gov/parks/horticulture/VMP/VolunteerPark/AppxEfuture.pdf

Understory Plants for Volunteer Park
http://www.seattle.gov/parks/horticulture/VMP/VolunteerPark/AppxEUnderstory.pdf

## Appendix C: Volunteer Park Timeline

The following timeline of events affecting Volunteer Park has been compiled chiefly from primary sources: Olmsted Brothers correspondence to and from the Seattle Board of Park Commissioners, Park Board and Park Superintendent annual reports, Public Works and Water Department correspondence, and dated park photographs and plans.

1851

- November 13: Denny Party lands at Alki Point; first Euro-American settlement of Seattle

1856

- Federal land grant (including future park site) awarded to Selim Woodworth for military service in the Mexican-American War

1867

- December 2: City of Seattle incorporated under territorial law

1870

- City population is 1,107

1876

- City acquires future site of Volunteer Park, 40 acres of land at the crest of Capitol Hill from sawmill engineer James M. Colman, for "municipal purposes" for $2000. Colman had purchased it from the Selim Woodworth estate

1880

- City population is 3,533

1882

- Phinney's Addition platted along the along the western edge of the land purchased by the City from Colman

1884

- City Ordinance 571 accepts David Denny's donation of land to the city for a park (future Denny Park); burials on the property will need to be moved

1885

- City Ordinance 642 creates Washelli Cemetery on the site of the future Volunteer Park to receive disinterred burials from the Denny donation.

1887

- City creates Board of Park Commissioners
- November: City Ordinance 877 designates “Washelli Cemetery” for park use and changes its name to Lake View Park. Graves are moved north to Lake View Cemetery. Confusion between park and cemetery soon prompts renaming the park as City Park.

1889

- June 6: Most of Seattle's central commercial area burns to the ground
- Voters approve creating a public water system
- Nov. 12: Water system plan presented by Benezette Williams, nationally prominent consulting engineer, drawing water from Rock Creek (above Maple Valley on the Cedar River) and piping it to high (400’) and low (300’) reservoirs on Capitol Hill

1890

- City population is 42,800
- Supreme Court decision allows municipalities to issue bonds; $845,000 bond approved for City purchase of private Spring Hill and Union water companies

1891

- North Seattle (Magnolia, Wallingford, Green Lake, Brooklyn (now University District) annexed

1892

- E. O. Schwagerl appointed Park Superintendent (serves 1893-95)
- Park Board approves sale of City Park in order to acquire a larger parcel elsewhere, but no sale occurs
- City nursery in City Park expanded, general improvement of park, “development of lawn-meadows and the picturesque and effective grouping of that portion of forest growth which has been retained for the purpose…” (Park Board Annual Report, 1894)

1895

- E.O. Schwagerl presents a citywide plan for parks, not implemented; partial design for City Park, with more clearing and planting (total cleared 20.5 acres, partially cleared 9.5 acres, under cultivation 14.5 acres), but construction is minimal; nursery expanded in park; Schwagerl resigns at end of year
- George Cotterill, Assistant City Engineer, proposes bicycle trail plan for 10,000 bicycles in the city; 25 miles developed by volunteers by 1900
- Water system bonds approved; $1.25 million for Cedar River Water Supply System

1897

- City Engineer R.H. Thomson plans Cedar River water system based on earlier Williams proposal (source moved to Landsburg on Cedar River); surveying, land acquisition and construction begin: Landsburg diversion dam, 28.57-mile pipeline, reservoirs at Lincoln (now Cal Anderson) and City parks
- Park Board recommends that no bikeways go through City Park and that bicycles and dogs be banned from walkways there

1899

- Contract let for first phase of Cedar River Water System (diversion dam, pipeline, high and low service reservoirs)
- Grading for High Service Reservoir underway in park

1900

- City population is 80,671
- Gate House, reservoir and pipelines under construction; High Service Reservoir covers 4.1 acres; Landsburg diversion dam completed

1901

- January 10: first water delivered by Cedar River Water System Pipeline 1, capacity of 23.5 million gallons per day; Reservoir completed and filled
- May 21: City Ordinance 6907 changes park name to Volunteer Park in honor of local volunteers who fought in Spanish-American War
- October: City Ordinance 7312 authorizes the Public Works Department to acquire 3 additional acres in a tract south of original 40 acres, to protect Reservoir and mitigate loss of park land
- Capitol Hill Division 2 platted southeast of the park, along 15th Ave. E
- 15th Avenue East paved
- City Park trolley line opens along 15th Avenue East, with a stop at Volunteer Park

1902

- About one fourth of Volunteer Park now improved with walks, lawns, flowerbeds, swing sets and picnic tables, but the principal efforts during 1902 and 1903 are clearing, grading, and nursery propagating
- Volunteer Park Greenhouse is the only greenhouse in the park system in which trees, shrubs and bedding plants are propagated
- Capitol Hill Divisions 1 and 3 platted across East Prospect Street, south of the park, and Division 4 across 15th Avenue East, east of the park
- City cedes portion of 11th Avenue North (now East) along western edge of park. (Vacation formally approved by City Ordinance #26793, 3/20/1911)
- Ordinance 8889: east half of Phinney's Addition Blocks E and F added to west edge of park (2-3/4 acres) at cost of $15,500

1903

- April 30 through June 4: John C. Olmsted and Percy Jones visit Seattle to reconnoiter for developing a park and boulevard system plan
- July 2: Olmsted plan sent to Park Board; plan proposes development of Volunteer Park and Volunteer Park Parkway connecting Washington and Volunteer parks
- November 3: Park Board of Commissioners accepts Olmsted report, adopts recommendations for system (report cost: $2,302)
- Topographic survey of park conducted December 1902 – July 1903 (cost: $7,107)

1904

- City Charter change approved by voters; Board of Park Commissioners independent of direct supervision by the City Council
- John C. Olmsted recommends to Park Board adding the remaining strip of land along Federal Avenue west of Volunteer Park; also proposes an "elongated concourse" on the crest of the ridge, and other main elements of the park
- Olmsted Brothers firm prepares general plans for several individual parks, including Volunteer and Lincoln (now Cal Anderson) parks and for Washington Park Boulevard
- J. W. Thompson hired as Seattle Parks Superintendent at John C. Olmsted's suggestion; initially paid under Olmsted contract
- August 4: John C. Olmsted writes to Charles Saunders that James F. Dawson will give directions to J.W. Thompson regarding planting in Volunteer Park
- November 15: Charles Saunders cautions Olmsted Brothers that is it unlikely funds will be available to purchase the remaining half-block of property to the west on Federal Avenue to add to Volunteer Park
- Approximately one-fourth of the park is improved with lawns and flower beds, with improvements on the 15th Avenue East (east) side; park use is growing – improved area now felt to be too small
- Increased public demand for playgrounds and open squares in neighborhoods

1905

- South Seattle annexed
- Existing greenhouse in Volunteer Park to be sold, since it is in a poor location relative to new plan
- November 24: C.J. Smith, Park Board President, corresponds with Olmsted Brothers regarding the proposed standpipe location; the Park and Public Works boards proposed three locations, but requested input from Olmsted Brothers
- December 11: John C. Olmsted corresponds with C.J. Smith, Park Board President, saying the site for the standpipe should relate to the symmetry of the concourse and lie on the centerline of 14th Avenue about 200 feet from the center of Prospect Street, so that the concourse drive can encircle the mound at a distance from the park boundary. Park Board approves on December 21.

1906

- $500,000 park bond approved, primarily for acquisitions

- Construction of steel tank for standpipe begun on concrete foundation 16 feet above road level– ½" steel plates, 10 per section, with internal stiffening ($28,522; Moran Brothers Co.)
- John C. Olmsted visits; extended stay to plan Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition grounds (future University campus)

1907

- John C. Olmsted returns to finalize A-Y-P Exposition plan
- Ballard, Ravenna, West Seattle, Columbia City, SE Seattle, South Park and Rainier Beach annexed
- Capitol Hill Improvement Club recommends "improving the park to a finished state" and neighbors request a trolley waiting station on 15th Avenue East
- 'Masonry casing' construction for Water Tower begun (T. Ryan); problems with quality of materials and workmanship
- May 23: standpipe filled with water, begins operation

1908

- $1,000,000 park bond approved; 1906 bond nearly spent, much to do before A-Y-P Exposition in 1909
- Much work on park system completed – focus on Lincoln Park, playgrounds, Woodland Park
- Olmsted Brothers Associate Partner James F. Dawson primarily responsible for on-site design and construction of A-Y-P Exposition grounds on the new university campus
- Supplemental park plan report by Olmsted Brothers prepared; provides for more active recreational facilities - playfields
- Border planted along East Prospect Street and 15th Avenue East, sanitary toilets replace temporary ones; walks in south part of park changed to follow new Olmsted design
- June 21: Cedar River Water System Pipeline #2 put into service, increasing total capacity to 45 million gallons per day
- Nov. 8: Water Tower certified as complete (total cost with pump, etc.: $65,111); many visitors
- "There is more attention paid to formal landscaping in this park than in any other as from its general location and character it readily lends itself to such treatment" (1908 Annual Report from Parks Board to Mayor)
- Furth's Addition platted southwest of Volunteer Park

1909

- January 19: John C. Olmsted writes to J.M. Frink, new Park Board president, proposing a circuit drive around the reservoir and an 11th Avenue entrance drive, also discusses a playground west of the reservoir; approved by Board
- February 25: John C. Olmsted sends P.R. Jones detailed design comments on Volunteer Park plan

- Extensive expansion and construction of the park system for the A-Y-P Exposition
- March 12: Olmsted Brothers correspond with J.W. Thompson, Parks Superintendent, mentioning greenhouse plans from "Lord & Burnham"
- March 19: Olmsted Brothers correspond with J.W. Thompson proposing two clay tennis courts in the park rather than building a more costly greenhouse
- March 23: J.W. Thompson corresponds with Olmsted Brothers regarding need for fill dirt, intention to "macadamize" the Concourse drive from the stand pipe to the circle next to the cemetery, and need to resolve the Conservatory budget
- March 31: Park Superintendent J.W. Thompson corresponds with Olmsted Brothers regarding cost control for the pergola and greenhouse
- April: Second Olmsted park system report submitted, with general plan for parks and playfields in annexed areas; most of the Olmsted construction drawings for Volunteer Park are completed
- June 1-October 16: A-Y-P Exposition open
- June: Board approves most proposed improvements to the park; grading is underway, pool and ponds almost done at the end of the month, paving expected at end of July
- December 3 –John C. Olmsted's site visit notes remark that:
    - Drives, walks, and grading mostly finished
    - Play area along south side of western park border proposed as "older children's playground"
    - Objects to grading in progress at the "Little Folks Lawn"
    - Neighbors object to the southwest play area because of noise
    - Seward Monument to go into the circle at the greenhouse
- Volunteer Park is "considered by many to be the most attractive and park-like of all the city pleasure grounds" (Park Board Annual Report for 1909); Water Tower base beautified by series of terraces planted with flowers
- Dec. 15: Report from Superintendent to Board for 1909 – new drive through park, underground lighting, lily ponds, wading pool, keeper's lodge, barns all completed; work started on pergola and music pavilion; proposes $50,000 of improvements to park in 1910

1910

- City population is 237,194
- Laurelhurst and Georgetown annexed
- $2,000,000 park bond approved
- January 2: Seward statue dedication following move from A-Y-P grounds/ University of Washington campus
- January 4: Correspondence with Olmsted Brothers regarding bandstand site selection and required grading, whether or not to include a toilet below the shell in the basement, installation of the Seward monument, and whether to have both a bandstand "shell" plus a bandstand in the pergola; John C. Olmsted supports having both. Alder trees and "pretty" undergrowth of salal and ferns in NW

corner of park also mentioned, and that the bandstand is for the Symphony more than for brass bands

- February 15: Correspondence from Olmsted Brothers' James F. Dawson to Park Superintendent J.W. Thompson regarding planting plan which Thompson had requested be rushed; Dawson recommends that nursery orders be filled in the East and shipped to Seattle
- February 18: Olmsted Brothers typed plant list for Volunteer Park prepared
- April: Music shell proposed; J. F. Dawson of Olmsted Brothers. interviews Bebb & Mendel, but cost ($4,500) and required changes to park are too great
- August 8: Telegram from Olmsted Bros. received by Roland Cotterill, Parks Board Secretary, regarding the cost of 30 light posts spaced 160 feet apart and other light fixtures
- September 28: Correspondence from Roland Cotterill of Parks Board to John C. Olmsted requesting opinion Washington State Arts Association proposal to build a museum either on the Conservatory site or on the Park's west slope, north of the reservoir and lily ponds
- October 11: Report from Olmsted Brothers on museum site explaining that a large museum does not belong in a landscape park
- October 25: Supplemental Report from John C. Olmsted on Museum Site – explaining why Volunteer Park is different
- December 31: – Correspondence from Park Superintendent J.W. Thompson to Olmsted Brothers' James F. Dawson complaining that lily ponds may be dangerous for children and requesting directions on safety measures; Thompson opposes railings around the ponds
- Most formal improvements in park are completed (except Conservatory): grading; Pergola and Music Pavilion ($945, Sullivan and Horn); Shelter House ($2,400, A. S. Petersen), wading pool, and play area; Comfort Station; Keeper's House ($1,817, Willetts); macadam drives and Concourse curbs; lily ponds and concrete steps; cinder walks and some concrete walkways; greenhouse; barn and stable (not to exceed $2,000)
- $30,923 expended on park improvements in 1910; $18, 101 spent on land acquisition prior to 1910; park costs through 1910 total $109,533
- Volunteer Park is "considered as the down-town park of the system on account of being the closest park of any size to the hotel and business district. For this reason it was desired that it should present a metropolitan appearance and very extensive formal improvements have been made."

1911

- January 6: Letter from Olmsted Brothers' James F. Dawson to Superintendent Thompson recommending that the lily ponds be filled with soil and manure to within 12 inches of the surface for water lilies to grow in rather than using tubs, , then covered with wire netting below the surface to prevent children from sinking into the mud.
- January 9: J.D. Ross (City Light Superintendent)requests approval from Board for building a second reservoir in the park, to serve a generating plant on Lake Union;

Board approves; Ross later requests smaller area; no action by Board; no construction
- February-March: Neighbor complains to Board about tennis courts, other neighbors oppose removal
- Seattle Playground Association pressures the Parks Board to build more playgrounds and active recreation facilities
- Additional $3,402 spent on improvements in park during 1911

1912
- March: Olmsted Brothers. 1908 Supplemental Park Plan approved by voters; $500,000 park bond also approved, primarily for park development
- April 6: Olmsted Brothers' James F. Dawson site visit notes include complaints about Music Pavilion acoustics; Dawson concerned that a larger replacement bandstand should not be built, adds that wire netting has already caught two children who fell into lily ponds.
- May 17: Parks Board authorizes installing two tennis courts in northwest part of park
- June 12: Seattle Playground Association invites the Parks Board to send a representative to a meeting on reorganizing recreation services in the city; Board opposed
- Prefabricated Conservatory kit purchased from Hitchings & Company of New Jersey, erected by Parks staff, at total cost of $20,000 (estimate was $25,000)

1913
- Proposal to extend 12th Avenue East through the park defeated at City Council
- Total cost of improvements to park through 1912 is $134,641

1914-1915
- Northwest corner of park improved – clearing and grading, two additional tennis courts installed; idea to build second reservoir in park floated

1915
- Tall wooden bandstand designed by Carl Gould of Bebb & Gould built north of reservoir (at site of current bandstand/stage)
- Improvements to park total $4,086 in 1915

1916
- Sept. 29: Board resolution opposing second reservoir in park notes that Volunteer Park is the most scenic city park, has the highest realty value of any in the city, and is “to all intents and purposes the central park of the city”

1919
- Board hears request for Japanese tea garden in the park, referred to Superintendent, no subsequent action
- Donation of Clise orchid collection accepted by Board

1920

- City population is 315,312
- Cedar River Water System Pipeline 3 under construction from Swan Lake (now Lake Youngs) to Volunteer Park, increases supply capacity ($500,000, Grant Smith & Co.)
- John C. Olmsted dies
- Dec. 11: Proposal for second, larger reservoir in Volunteer Park (originally suggested as early as 1912) defeated in court case Ferry et al. vs. City of Seattle due to risk of slides and collapse; Superintendent J.W. Thompson thanks Sam Hill for opposition to reservoir in Dec. 14 letter
- J. W. Thompson retires as Park Superintendent

1920s/30s

- Flag displays, floral shows and music concerts in the park are popular

1922

- Superintendent's Report notes that macadam boulevards in parks are hard to maintain due to heavy auto traffic; Volunteer Park drives resurfaced and rolled; new orchid house, boiler room and repairs to Conservatory
- Cedar Water Supply Pipeline #3 installed; Reservoir Gate House repairs (SMA photo #1936)
- Park improvements total $5,663 for year

1924

- Cedar River Water Supply Pipeline 2 renovated - wood stave pipes replaced with steel
- Board discusses flag pole

1925-26

- Reservoir relining and repair (new concrete lining poured on top of old) (SMA photo #1937, 2436, 2463)
- Flag pole installed at west end of reservoir

1927

- Brick fireplace added to Keeper's Lodge
- Park Board Annual Report describes four clay tennis courts, collection of colorful rhododendrons and azaleas, lily ponds overlooking rose-covered terrace, collection of Japanese maples
- 70x200-foot growing house built for $16,000, 20x200-foot propagation house built for $6,000

1928

- Grounds around Gate House improved
- Burke Memorial site chosen (Park Board first recommends UW campus, but acquiesces to Burke committee choice)

1929

- Japanese government donates flowering cherries for planting in the park; planted in locations throughout

1930s

- Complaints from 15th Avenue neighbors about plant growth obscuring their view; Head Gardener Umlauf responds that shrubs were planted in 1912 to protect children from running out into streetcars and that the plants would look bad if pruned up

1930

- City population is 365,583
- March 27: Burke Monument dedicated, built at cost of $50,000

1931-32

- Park Department Ten Year Plan developed and adopted; serves as guide for later WPA-funded park projects
- Pergola demolished, Gould-designed Moderne style Art Museum constructed (Fuller family donation; value $250,000),
- Noble Hoggson-designed terrace/plaza landscape built
- August: clay tennis courts replaced with concrete-paved and fenced courts (C. L. Creelman and Standard Fence, $8,242 total)

1933

- Head gardener Jacob Umlauf complains to Parks Board about the design and character of Museum plaza plantings
- June 23: Seattle Art Museum opens; valued at $250,000

1934

- Jan. 10: Water Department requests construction of new fence around the reservoir to replace cast iron railing on reservoir parapet wall

1940

- City population is 368,302

1940-45

- Orchid House and Conservatory repaired and painted
- Problems with ashes and cinders from paths being tracked into the Museum – concrete path paving denied by War Production Board
- Wading pool leaking, repaired; people and animals falling into lily ponds
- Children's Hospital Donation Wishing Well installed north and west of Museum plaza

1946

- Water Tower (Observation Tower) reopened to public after end of WWII

1947

- Bebb & Gould-designed wooden bandstand demolished
- City Council discussion and public opposition to routing a road through the park
- Some paths paved with asphalt
- Art Museum improvements (also 1953, 1969, 1983, 1988, 2000, 2001 and 2005)

1949

- Retaining wall completed
- Various repairs to Museum
- Requests from neighbors for trimming trees to open views denied because interior views would be destroyed

1950

- City population is 467,591

1951

- More paths paved with asphalt

1952

- Plaque and stone memorial to volunteers in Spanish American War installed

1954-63

- Donations of four private orchid collections accepted for the Conservatory; Museum re-roofing, repairs and additions

1958

- Engineering Plan for park (primarily irrigation improvements) shows planting beds larger than in Olmsted Plan but smaller than current

1959

- Wishing well for donations to Children's Hospital dismantled

1960

- City population is 557,087

1962

- Water pumping station constructed underground in lawn north of East Prospect Street at 12th Avenue East to improve water pressure; chlorination equipment installed in the Gate House
- May 24: Board accepts Charles Smith sculpture/climbing structure honoring Dorothy Block, funded by Block Foundation

1965

- Contract for paving additional paths with asphalt awarded to Williams Asphalt Co.; curbs added to drives

1966

- Historic, five-globe cast iron lamp from Victoria, BC, installed south of Water Tower

1968

- Forward Thrust $65 million bond issue approved, provides funding for park system expansion

1969

- Isamu Noguchi *Black Sun* sculpture installed and dedicated at west side of Museum plaza, on granite base designed by architect Fred Bassetti; terrace and slopes toward reservoir re-graded and re-planted

1970

- City population is 530,831
- January 28: Correspondence from Seattle landscape architect Richard Haag to Olmsted Associates noting park renewal planning and requesting copies of original plans

1971

- Haag schematic master plan for park renewal presented to Parks Board with recommendations on many aspects of park – including controlling through traffic (opposed by Museum), eliminating mercury vapor lighting, rebuilding bandstand/stage area, changing children's play area; renewing vegetation
- Bandstand/stage rebuilt with restrooms and storage space; lawn area facing the stage re-graded to create an amphitheater

1972-76

- State Health Board standards changed to require covered municipal water storage, both Capitol Hill reservoirs proposed for lidding and other security measures, at estimated cost of $9 million for system; supported by Water Department but opposed by Capitol Hill neighborhood groups and Park Board

1972

- Through-traffic reduced by closing East Highland Drive and 11th Avenue East entries, paving removed but pedestrian use retained, carriage drive made one-way

1973

- Children's Play area move and reconstruction approved and contracted ($13,683)

- Wading pool rebuilt (Zylstra, $16,480)
- Playground equipment installed to east per Haag plan
- "Katsura oval" planted around Little Folks Lawn per Haag plan
- Dr. Richard Fuller retires from Museum

1974

- Lighting system renovation and expansion

1975

- Museum forecourt extended across Concourse per Haag design (sandstone, paving and bollards)
- ADA ramp to Museum entry terrace installed
- Volunteer Park listed in National Register

1980

- City population is 493,846

1988

- Parks Department landscape architects Shane DeWald and Joe Neiford prepare "Volunteer Park Site Evaluation and Draft Improvement Guidelines" (evaluation and plan for safety, maintenance, budget, plant succession); play area replacement/renovation and Art Museum entry paving and stair replacement proposed
- Conservatory renovations (also 1994, 1998, 200, 2002, 2006)
- Paving and drainage improvements to roadways (also 2000, 2008)
- Seattle Art Museum and forecourt designated as a city landmark

1989

- Museum forecourt/plaza renovation design by Joe Neiford
- Shelter House renovation by Makers Architects

1990

- City population is 516,259
- New overflow pipe for standpipe installed at curb level on west side
- New play area design completed by the Portico Group (Neighborhood Matching Fund project)
- Museum forecourt/plaza landscape renovation installed (Neiford design, based on Hoggson plans)

1991

- New children's playground built; replaces deteriorated Haag playground of 1973
- Shelter House landscaping renovation (Neiford design)
- Replacement of large production greenhouse in maintenance compound
- Seattle Art Museum main collection moved downtown, Museum closes for renovations

1992

- Neiford plan for display gardens completed –Museum plaza to reservoir, including lily ponds; only upper beds reconstructed

1993

- Seattle Asian Art Museum opens; interior renovations designed by Olson Sundberg Kundig Allen Architects
- Globe tops of historic cast-iron lights along Concourse and Carriage Drive entry at 15th Avenue East restored

1997

- Olmsted Interpretive Exhibit panels installed in Water Tower by Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks, with support of a $28,000 Neighborhood Matching Grant ($46,300 cash budget), two stone markers installed at the base of the stairs
- Water Tower reopened for public access

2000

- City population is 563,374
- Parks Department prepares plan for Concourse horse chestnut allée renovation and sidewalk and irrigation system repairs, sidewalk detailing replicated along the west side sidewalk
- Off-leash dog area begun in late 1990s closed due to tree and lawn damage

2002

- Conservatory designated as a city landmark
- Park designated as a City Heritage Tree Collection

2003

- Olmsted Centennial celebrated
- Lily pond restoration
- Historic Lincoln Park renamed Cal Anderson Park, reservoir replacement project underway

2004

- South entry gardens near 14th Ave replanted, using Olmsted planting plan for guidance, with funding from Seattle Parks Foundation

2005

- Cal Anderson Park reopens; after original reservoir is replaced with a covered one
- Volunteer Park Vegetation Management Plan prepared and circulated but adoption not finalized

2009

- Carriage Drive west of reservoir closed to general vehicular traffic

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Reviewed: _____Date _____
Historic Preservation Officer