

November 6, 2009

Ms. Kellee Jones, Project Manager  
Seattle Parks and Recreation  
800 Maynard Avenue S, RDA Bldg, Ste #300  
Seattle, WA 98134

Dear Ms. Jones:

For the past several months, the history committee of the Friends of 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW Park have been researching the history of the Seventh Elect Church in Israel, the group that owned the property. The original purpose of our research was to try to find documentation that would either prove or disprove the stories circulating in the neighborhood about the origin of the two buildings on the property.

Although we didn't find anything conclusive, we did discover information that was not included in the Historical and Cultural Resources Report that was written for Parks in April 2008. We believe that this information enhances the report and would be important for anyone interested in Ballard's and our park's history, now or in the future.

Beyond that, we noticed that some of the source materials used for the report contained misleading or erroneous information. We have used other sources, including government records, to clarify and correct that information to the best of our ability.

There is much about the church and its founder that we were not able to discover, given the constraints of time and resources. Although the Seventh Elect Church in itself may not be considered historically significant, it originated in this country's millennial movements of the nineteenth century, from which such groups as the Mormons and Seventh-day Adventists also came.

As neighbors and park supporters, we would encourage the City to preserve this interesting episode in Ballard's history. We hope that the enclosed document, when added to the Parks report, will help accomplish that goal.

Sincerely,

## **Seventh Elect Church in Israel**

### **Suggested Additions/Corrections to Historic and Cultural Resources Report April 2008**

Note: The church was incorporated as Seventh Elect Church in Israel (not Spiritual Israel), and is listed by that name in records in King County and the Office of the Secretary of State.

#### **2. Property Data**

Date of Construction: DPD (Department of Planning and Development) permits indicate that the earliest application for a permit for this property was 1919 (for the church); the application for a permit to build the house was made in 1923.

Original Contractor: DPD permits list Daniel Salwt as the contractor.

#### **3.2 Neighborhood Character**

Ballard was incorporated in 1890; it was annexed to Seattle in 1907 (not incorporated in 1907, as stated here).

#### **4.1 Historic Neighborhood Context**

Second paragraph: In addition to the Sanborn maps, the Kroll real estate atlases show no buildings on the property in 1920, and two in 1924.

The main legal challenges for control of church property were by former members of the church, not Salwt's two sons, Clayton and Arnell Sult, as suggested in the report. The sons were named initially in the suit because Salwt had died without a will; as his legal heirs, they had an interest in the estate. According to one contemporary account, Arnell Sult stated that "he does not intend retiring as an heir" (*The Seattle Star*, June 18, 1929, p.1).

#### **4.2 Historical Architectural Context**

Maude Wold, one of the last members to live at the church, wrote a history of this sect, which is in the possession of the Ballard Historical Society.\* In it she states that Daniel Salwt was given a downtown hotel by "an acquaintance" and that he and his "ministers" tore the building down, then rebuilt it on the property from the lumber they salvaged, sometime between 1917 and 1922. It does not appear, therefore, that the building was an investment or business owned by a member of the church, as suggested by the report. Note that none of the property was actually owned by the church, during Salwt's lifetime, as implied here and elsewhere in the report. According to Mrs. Wold's account, "All the property was donated to Salwt [not the church] by freewill offering."

Mrs. Wold also refers to the origin of the house (7036 9th Avenue NW). She states that sometime after 1917 Salwt and his followers first began meeting at a house located at NW 65th and 3rd NW. She says that the owner gave Salwt the house, which he then moved onto the property after the church was completed.

We were not able to confirm through documents that either of the buildings was moved to the property, but see discussion of dates of construction below. The archivist for the City of Seattle said that the city would have required a permit to move a building but did not keep those records.

---

\* Mrs. Wold's knowledge of the church's early history, according to her daughter, Alta Lee Daue, is based on "word of mouth from members who were still alive (now deceased) from Salwt's time."

#### Evidence for Dates of Construction:

The property record cards of 1937, acquired from the Puget Sound Regional Archives, give the date of construction for the house as 1918 and for the church as 1910 (followed by a question mark).

The Department of Planning and Development has permits on file for these buildings. The original permit, dated 2/18/1919, is for the church and is missing. Salwt filed for a renewal of the permit on 3/17/1921. The inspector signed off on the building in 1923. Salwt then filed for a permit for the house (7036 9th Ave NW) on 8/7/1923; the inspector signed off on it on 2/21/1924. In both cases, Daniel Salwt is listed as the contractor; there is no architect listed. (There is an indistinct mark on the church permit that may either be a ditto or question mark on the architect line.)

As noted in this report, the Sanborn insurance map shows no buildings on the property in 1917. The Kroll atlas shows no buildings on the property in 1920; it shows two in 1924. This seems to agree with the dates on the Department of Planning and Development permits and with Maude Wold's history. The date of 1910 on the 1937 church property card would seem to confirm that the church was already in existence and was either moved to, or reassembled on, the property in the early 1920s. The 1918 date for the house seems to support Mrs. Wold's statement that it was already in existence when the church was finished in 1922-23. (Although the permit for the house seems to indicate new construction, it may be that Salwt had originally intended to construct a house but was then given the existing house and moved it onto the property in 1923.)

#### 4.3 Building Owner

First paragraph:

There are inaccuracies and conflicting facts in many of the newspaper articles written about Daniel Sult/Salwt and his church.

It is not clear when Sult left the Midwest. The report states that he "abandoned a wife and three children," but records indicate that this is incorrect. The federal census for 1900 lists Sult as living with his wife, Mary Amanda, in Bowling Green, Ohio, along with a son, age 13, and a daughter, age 9; his two older sons, Clayton and Arnell, who were in their twenties, are not listed and were presumably living on their own.

In addition, Salwt's followers stated that he "studied" with the House of David, which was founded in the years 1902–1903 (*The Seattle Star*, June 13, 1929, p. 1). According to a Sult family genealogy, the youngest son died in 1904, at the age of 18. If Sult left for the House of David around then, that would have left one child at home, which seems to agree with his "autobiography,"\* in which he apparently said he kissed "a small daughter" goodbye—although she would have been 13 or 14 at the time (*The Seattle Star*, June 18, 1929, p. 16).

It's not clear under what circumstances Sult left his family. His occupation on the 1900 federal census is listed as "evangelist," so it's possible that he was already in the habit of leaving home to travel as a preacher. It is also possible that before going to the House of David in Michigan, he entrusted his wife and daughter to the care of one of his grown sons. It's not known how long he "studied" at the House of David (if in fact he did) or where he went after leaving. Mary Amanda Clements Sult died in 1908, the same year Salwt said he had a vision telling him to go to Seattle ("Holy Ballard," p. 21); about two years later, he showed up in Seattle.

The Museum of the House of David searched their archives and found no mention of Sult. Ron Taylor of Mary's City of David, which was formed when the original House of David split in 1930, could find

---

\* We were not able to find the two books (or pamphlets) that Salwt wrote about himself (*Book of Salwt* and *The Childhood Days of Salwt*), which the Seattle Public Library had in its collection at one time. From the references made to these books by *The Seattle Star* in 1929, however, it seems that Salwt created an entire mythology about himself, one that was intended to support his claim to be the Seventh Prophet but could hardly be relied on for factual information.

no record of Sult, either; he did say, however, that "there were many that came and went from the colony already by 1905–06."

Salwt's appearance/residence in Seattle: Salwt first turns up in Polk's Seattle City Directory in 1911, living as a boarder at 7056 9th Avenue NW (two houses north of the park property). From 1915 to 1923 (with one or two gaps in the directory), Salwt was living at 840 (later designated 818) West 70th Street.

Note: The report lists this address incorrectly as "818 West NW 70th"; E-W streets at that time were labeled "West," not "NW."

The greatest inconsistency seems to be in estimates of church membership. William and Harold Wold, two of the last remaining members who lived on-site and were interviewed by Dennis Liu in 1993, said they joined as teenagers but did not live at the church at that time. The Wolds apparently told the reporter that church membership peaked at 400 shortly before Salwt's death in 1929—not in 1917, as stated in the report ("Holy Ballard," p. 22). It's not clear how the Wolds arrived at this number. (Maude Wold's handwritten history gives the same estimate.)

It could be that some estimates include only those members living communally on the property, while the Wolds' includes believers living out in the community (perhaps even out of state). The Wolds' daughter, Alta Lee Dauel, confirmed that there were members who lived off-site and that they were required to follow the strict rules of the sect, except for surrendering all property: "Financial arrangements were different because they had to maintain themselves independently."

Other estimates of membership: The Washington Supreme Court decision dated April 4, 1932, states that Salwt "made little or no progress during the first eight or ten years, but in 1921 he had gathered together eight members and sufficient funds to build a church....From 1921 to...the date of Salwt's death, the number of his followers varied somewhat, but on the average the church had a membership of twenty-five persons." An article in *The Seattle Star* dated June 13, 1929, states that "only about 80 gather at church services." A *Seattle Times* article dated December 17, 1980, states that at the time of his death Salwt had attracted "about 50 followers to a communal church and residence." The U.S. census has 19 people living at 7028 9<sup>th</sup> Ave. NW in 1930.

Top of p.8:

The spelling of Salwt's son's name is Clayton (not Claiton).

Salwt's remains were most likely shipped back to Logansport, Indiana (his birthplace), not to Illinois, as stated in *The Seattle Times* article cited in the report—an error repeated from an earlier *Times* article (June 17, 1929, p. 3). In addition, according to a Sult family website, Salwt is buried not in Logansport but in Koontz Lake, Indiana, where his mother is buried. (This account would agree with a statement in the same 1929 *Times* article that Salwt had expressed a wish to one of his sons that he be buried—if he should die—next to his mother.)

Next paragraph: The first sentence reads as if the belief about cutting hair/instant death was a church doctrine. It was in fact one of the "fantastic stories" told by "some" of the disillusioned former members after Salwt's death ("Holy Ballard," p. 24); even if the story is true, one probably can't infer that it was a tenet of the religion. The statements about Salwt's exclusive access to milk, butter, etc. and the colony eating discarded vegetables and day-old bread are probably from the same source. These stories are most likely from the testimony of former church members ("hostile" witnesses) in King County Superior Court. (*The Seattle Daily Times*, July 22, 1931, p. 2)

Second-to-last paragraph on p.8:

The report states that "*the group* continued to acquire residential property," but all the property mentioned in this paragraph was in fact given to Salwt and held in his name; new members signed a contract, surrendering their property to Salwt, not the church. The buildings on the park property were also given to him. It's an important distinction because Salwt, who believed himself immortal, had made no provision for the disposition of the property. After his death, the members of the colony appealed to Salwt's attorney, H. E. Foster, to help them secure the property (worth about \$200,000), arguing that Salwt had held it in trust for the church (*The Seattle Star*, June 18, 1929, p. 1). Former members sued for the return of their property, but King County Superior Court (1931) and the Washington Supreme Court (1932) ruled in favor of the church. (Note: The reference to property in Los Angeles may be an error; *The Seattle Daily Times* stated that there was property in *Port Angeles* (June 17, 1929, p. 1).

In the middle of the same paragraph, the reference to using "the money" from court settlements should probably read "assets," since the judgments included everything that was surrendered to Salwt. The contract that members signed defined "possessions" as "mortgages, bonds, lands, houses, and lots, moneys and other securities that have any value." (*Seventh Elect Church v. First Seattle etc. Bk. 479 Apr. 1932*)

First paragraph, p. 9:

The name of the business manager is Gerald, not George. It's not clear from the report, but in 1974, after the death of Arthur Myhrvold, who had been president and treasurer of the church since 1929, Rogers apparently began taking advantage of the two remaining elderly officers of the church, Arne Skogseth and Ambrose Schwader. He diverted the church's assets—worth at least \$2 million—for his own use.

#### **4.4 Site and Building Occupancy History**

The church appears in Polk's directory before 1923 (the date cited in the report). Salwt was listed as "Rev." as early as 1913. In 1921, although the church is not listed separately, the listing for Salwt says "pastor Seventh Church of Israel." In 1922, the year the church was incorporated, there is a listing both in the main part of the directory and in the index for "Seventh Church of Israel 7028 9th Av NW."

Although Polk's directory lists Salwt's residence in 1920 as 7028 9th Ave NW (as cited in the report), the 1920 federal census has him living at 840 W 70th; the following year, he is listed in Polk's at 818 W 70th (the same house as the 840 address). Salwt first appears in the directory in 1911, not 1912.

The report says construction of the church began in 1917, but the original permit for the church building is dated February 18, 1919; the permit renewal is dated March 17, 1921 (see discussion under 4.2, Historical Architectural Context). In addition, the Supreme Court decision of 1932 states that "in 1921 (Salwt) had gathered together eight members and sufficient funds to build a church."

#### **4.6 Building Contractor**

The permits for the church and the house both list Daniel Salwt as the contractor.

## Sources

The following is a list of sources referenced in this document:

### Government

City of Seattle, Department of Planning and Development, Microfilm Library. Permits # 200409, #200417, #209322, #219709, and #225916.

Office of the City Clerk, Seattle Municipal Archives.

Office of the Secretary of State, Division of Archives and Record Management, Puget Sound Regional Branch. 1937 property cards for 7028, 7036 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW, Parcel #0461005265.

U.S. Census Bureau. Census records for 1900, 1910, 1920, and 1930. <http://www.ancestry.com> (accessed through Seattle Public Library).

### Newspaper Articles (by publication, then chronologically)

#### *The Seattle Star*

Connell, John H. "Mourners Wait Sect Chief to Rise From Dead." June 12, 1929, 1, 7.

"Cultists Agree to Give Up Dead Leader's Body." June 13, 1929, 1, 5.

"Cult Gives Up Salwt's Body." June 14, 1929, 1.

Hannum, Leland. "What Manner of Man Was This?---Dan Salwt." June 14, 1929, 1, 13.

--- "Salwt, a Rasputin Who Remained With Lowly." June 15, 1929, 1, 7.

--- "'God Minds Me,' Stated Ballard Cult Patriarch." June 17, 1929, 8.

Connell, John H. "Salwt's Church Totters; Deliverer Greatly Needed." June 18, 1929, 1.

Hannum, Leland. "Vision Led Dan Salwt to Follow Dusty Trail." June 18, 1929, 16.

#### *The Seattle (Daily) Times*

"\$200,000 Left by Dan Salwt, Dead 'Prophet.'" June 17, 1929, 1, 3.

"Salwt Cultists Tell Court They Were Fed Scraps." July 22, 1931, 2.

Jones, Marjorie. "Tiny sect sues to recover fortune." December 17, 1980, A1.

#### *Seattle Weekly*

Liu, Dennis. "Holy Ballard." July 7, 1993, 19-25.

### Other

E-mail communications from Brian Ziebart (House of David Museum), March 20, 2009; Chris Siriano (Director, House of David Museum), March 26, 2009; Ron Taylor (Mary's City of David), May 21, 22, 2009; Alta Lee Dauel, August 20, 2009.

*Kroll's Atlas of Seattle*. Seattle, WA:Kroll Map Company, Inc., 1920, 1924.

Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington. *Seventh Elect Church v. First Seattle Etc. Bk.*, 167 Wash., 473-481. <http://srch.mrsc.org:8080/wacourts/template.htm?view=mainresults>.

*Polk's Seattle City Directory*, 1910-1924, R.L. Polk & Co.

Proquest, LLC . Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867-1970. Seattle 1905-1950 vol.5, 1917, Sheet 531. <http://sanborn.umi.com> (accessed through Seattle Public Library).

Sult, Robert. "Sult Family Tree." <http://sult-family.com/>

Wold, Maude. "Seventh Elect Church in Spiritual Israel/Daniel Salwt Messenger and Founder." Handwritten manuscript in collection of Ballard Historical Society.