

**HISTORY: CARKEEK PARK**

The "original" (1918-1926) Carkeek Park was on Pontiac Bay on Lake Washington; Pontiac Station on the railroad from Fremont along the shore and on to the coal mines 40 miles away - or the end of a road the little U.W.

It was the gift of Mr. and Mrs. Morgan J. Carkeek, prominent builder and contractor in Seattle, Oregon and Victoria, BC. He was born in England, migrating to California in 1866 to invest in mining operations, transferring his interests to Port Townsend in 1870. Came to Seattle in 1875 as a building contractor, investing in Puget Sound Stone Yards and Builders Masonry. Built many of the major pioneer stone buildings: Pioneer Square area, Fort Lawton barracks, etc. Organized the first street railway in Seattle and developed a large farm on Duwamish River.

The 23.2 acre park on Pontiac Bay was an overnight camp facility for each playground (funded by donations): bunkhouse/dining hall and the camp bell calling the campers to meals, etc., was the "Great Seattle Fire Bell" that replaced the one sounding alarms and was itself destroyed in the Great Fire of 1889. (The bell is now at the Museum in McCurdy

Park). In 1926 the Federal government condemned all of "Sand Point" as the site for a Naval Air Station. As donor of the park property, Mr. Carkeek offered to give his \$25,000 - sale price towards the purchase of another park site. "North End" groups petitioned City Council for the acquisition of Piper's Canyon (A.W. Piper had homesteaded in the southwest portion of the ravine (X on map) - he was a candy manufacturer; some of his family became active in city government.) The Park Board was vigorously opposed to this site as not needed or wanted, in terms of location and improvements that would be required; also the money represented was desperately needed to improve existing parks and playgrounds. But City Council proceeded and condemned Piper's Canyon for \$100,000 plus Mr. Carkeek's \$25,000, and then authorized the purchase of Matthews Beach, which so infuriated 3 Park Board members that, led by A. S. Kerry, they mounted a vigorous protest through press and community clubs and went on to attempt to split the Park Department from City government by creating a "Metropolitan Park District" capable of levying its own taxes: they proposed an amendment to the state legislature for a "District". But Seattle voters defeated a new tax and Gov. Hartley vetoed the proposal (he was not sympathetic to "recreation", golf specifically!). (Matthews Beach was purchased but not until 1951.)

The Department decided that the best camp site was on fresh water rather than in the "new" Carkeek" Park, so the "camp" was barged across Lake Washington to the recently acquired (1922) O. O. Denny Park. The Carkeeks envisioned a historical museum to be built here and so provided in the deed; it became a reality in 1950 through the efforts of their daughter in McCurdy Park (on request of Park Department).

A dusty county road existed, winding its way along the ravine, past the Piper homestead, across the railroad tracks to a sawmill on the beach that was replaced in the 1920's with The Whiz Co. fish trap (until 1932). It remained a county road until annexation of the district in 1953; as such, was a continual problem in securing repairs and dust control by the county engineer. Immediate use of the new park was requested by Boy Scouts but denied for lack of sanitation facilities.

On August 24, 1929 the jubilant community, led by Greenwood-Phinney Commercial Club, staged a huge dedication program to formally open Carkeek Park and honor its donor. It was staged at the entrance (which had been the cleared site of "some shacks"). Everything was hauled in for the affair; 25 picnic tables, a stove, tank trucks with drinking water, a platform for a 20-piece band, five playfield instructors plus 2 camels for the children to ride, and portable toilets. Even transportation was provided.

The first improvement was the development of vegetable gardens for Zoo animals. Pasturage was rented, the renter to provide fencing; two years later this type of permit was stopped, due to the risk involved in the increasing use of the park. But this usage occasioned another permit; a concession contract in 1931 and the demand for improvements was met with work projects: "unemployed" in 1931; CCC-WPA 1933-36 with assistance by the National Park Service, resulting in the construction of trails and a stove shelter (#2). The Civilian Conservation Corps had constructed camp buildings at the park entrance for training and work removed in 1938, except one, retained for a resident caretaker commissioned as a Sheriff's Deputy. The park had become the scene of "rowdy orgies" and the Sheriff's cars were reluctant to traverse the rough road into the Park. In 1942 the U.S. Army reactivated the camp site briefly as an encampment.

Upon protests of the Department, the Greenwood Sewer District won a condemnation award to establish a sewage treatment plant in the park in 1949; taken over by Metro in 1954. Access to and construction of feeder sewer lines into and through the park plus subsequent washouts by pipe breaks have changed the park from a "wilderness" area into an "urbanized" park.

In 1953 funds from the 1948 bond fund were authorized to develop the loop road and pave it, construct the caretaker's residence and service building at the entrance, picnic area and stove shelter (#1) and a footbridge over the railroad. A large horseriding academy/concession was planned to produce revenue and reduce rowdiness but a tight city budget (in spite of donations from riding clubs and individuals) forced postponement. The Carkeek Garden Club donated rhododendrons for the new entrance.

On June 30, 1955, the Department formally dedicated the park - this time only a band concert hauled in. An archery field course was established in the Y-shaped ravine northwest of the entrance, plus a target range at the entrance. The field course was suspended in 1963 as a safety measure; cost of fencing was prohibitive. In 1959 the Model Motors area was permitted with permanent improvements by the "Sky-Raiders" in 1963. In 1953 F. R. McAbee, Inc. donated property on N.W. 100th Place as "an entrance to the park". But the city could not fulfill its obligation to buy the intervening ravine until Forward Thrust in 1972, during which time McAbee tried to get a release of the "donation".

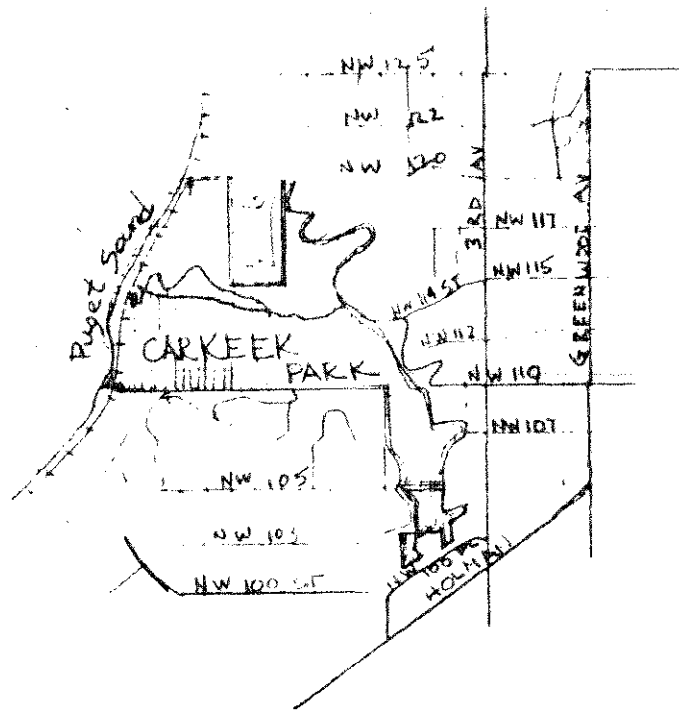
#### ECOLOGY: CARKEEK PARK

As the Vashon Ice Sheet (50,000 years ago) melted and receded forming Lake Russell in the latest Pleistocene time, Piper's Creek (and adjacent drainage systems) developed in the outwash plain: it was sluggish and vegetation thrived as evidenced by peat bogs and the relatively low relief topography. As a "youthful" stream Piper's Creek cut a v-shaped valley draining the marshy uplands, cutting the Vashon glacial till and the underlying pre-Vashon (Salmon Springs claystone and mudstone) complex. As the post-Pleistocene sea level rose (from Ice Age melt-off) the tendency of the creek to cut was somewhat abated and a small delta formed where the creek entered Puget Sound. The delta undoubtedly increased when cedar logging operations provided abundant eroded material to the stream in the early part of the century. (A sawmill built on the beach remained until the 1920's to be replaced with a fish trap until 1932). The size of the delta increased and the creek bed matured (began to cut laterally in the constantly changing channel in a flattened valley floor) with the construction of the railway roadbed and its damming effect. This process advanced into "old age" and "urbanization" for the creek with the construction of the sanitary sewage/drainage system and treatment plant (1949) and the resultant "feeder" sewers (and washouts by breaks). The receding Ice Age left an irregular terrain with closed depressions partially filled with sand, silt and peat; recently (geologically) with transported earth and debris in the development of urban life. Current measurements of creek water reveal a normal humic acidity plus normal rainwater carbonic acid together with hydrocarbons from streets and parking areas and unused fertilizers from homesites. Aquatic biology: brown and green benthic algae, snails, insects and brook trout (stream has not been stocked by Game Department for many years). Plant life includes maple, alder, W.R. Cedar, Western Hemlock, ash, willow, madrona, cascara, Douglas fir, pine, spruce, sedges, cattails, and other flora common to the Pacific Northwest; it is predominantly a maple-alder successional stage. Of particular note are the huge Lady Ferns along the ravine between 105th and 110th.

(From Wilsey & Ham, Inc.)







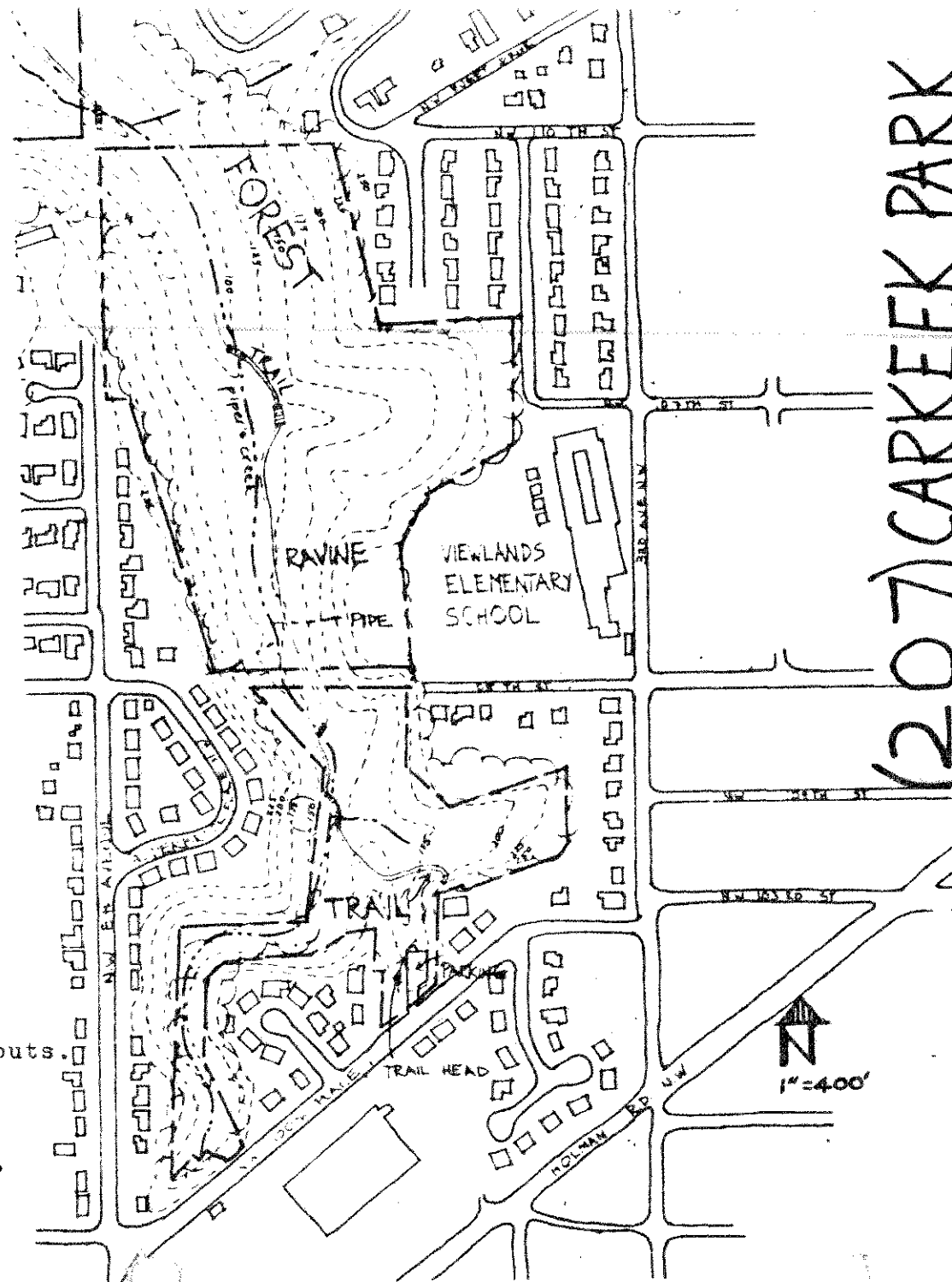
**CARKEEK PARK** 950 N.W. Carkeek Park Road

**Acreeage:** 216.5 includes 23.4 acres tidelands

**Development:** from 1928 to present, CCC, WPA, Boy Scouts, various contractors; establishing trail, picnic areas, roads, etc.  
 1949; Sewerage Plant established by condemnation, presently operated by Metro.  
 1976; acquisition S.W. area, development of lower picnic area, Pipers Creek Trail; R. Haag Assoc. designers, trail work done by Viking District Boy Scouts.  
 \$212,000 F.T.

**Purchase:** 1928/\$110,000 (\$25,000 from M.J. Carkeek) replacement for original "Carkeek" park - Sand Point, which was condemned by the U.S. Navy in 1926.

**Elements:** forest, ravine, meadows, trails, picnic areas, beach, archery range



(207) CARKEEK PARK  
 Map # 2/2

