



The City of Seattle LPB-129/83

Landmarks Preservation Board

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

REPORT ON DESIGNATION

Name and Location of Property: "Seattle, Chief of Suquamish"
Tilikum (Tillicum) Place @ intersection
of 5th Avenue, Denny Way, & Cedar Street

At a public hearing held on October 5, 1983, the City of Seattle's Landmark Preservation Board voted to approve designation of Chief Seattle Sculpture at Tilikum Place as a Seattle Landmark based upon satisfaction of the Landmarks Preservation Ordinance #106348.

Section 3.01 (2) It is associated in a significant way with the life of a person important in the history of the city, state or nation;

This statue commemorates the man for whom the City of Seattle was named. Had it not been for Dr. David Maynard's persuasive powers with his co-founders, the city might have borne the original Indian name--Zechalalitch--or the first name given to the pioneer village by settlers--Duwamps. Chief Sealth was born on Blake Island and lived in a great communal house with his tribe on Agate Pass. He died on June 7, 1866.

The Chief Seattle statue has the distinction of being the second public work of art in Seattle, the first one being the totem pole erected in 1899 in Pioneer Square. The site on which the statue and fountain are located commemorates the ties of friendship between the white settlers and the Northwest Indian culture that greeted them when they arrived in the 1850's. Placed near the point where the boundaries of the original donation claims of Carson Boren, William Bell, and Arthur Denny meet, the triangular intersection was named Tilikum Place, an Indian word interpreted as "tribe, people, relations, friend".

The sculptor, James Wehn (1883-1973) did meticulous research and numerous studies of Puget Sound Indians in preparation for the statue of Chief Seattle, his best known work, which also provided the basis for the portrait head of Sealth used in three subsequent fountains, those in

Pioneer Square and in Renton, and the Broderick fountain at Seattle University. His profile medallion of Chief Seattle was adopted as the City of Seattle's official seal; a bronze enlargement of the seal was installed above the door of the Public Safety Building at its opening in 1950.

Why should I mourn at the untimely fate of my people?
Tribe follows tribe, and nation follows nation, like the
waves of the sea. It is the order of nature and regret
is useless. Your time of decay may be distant--but it
will surely come. We may be brothers after all. Let
the White Man be just and deal kindly with my people,
for the dead are not powerless. Dead--I say? There
is no death. Only a change of worlds.

...Chief Sealth

Section 3.01 (6) Because of its prominence of spatial location contrasts of siting, age, or scale, it is an easily identifiable visual feature of its neighborhood or the city and contributes to the distinctive quality or identity of such neighborhood or the city;

In 1907 the City of Seattle budgeted monies for street improvements, including this sculpture, in the newly regraded area of the city. The site upon which the statue was located was selected particularly to commemorate the ties of friendship between the white settlers and the Northwest Indian culture that greeted them when they arrived in the 1850's. The bronze, life-size statue placed upon a granite pedestal, forms the centerpiece of Tilikum Place, a triangular park located at the intersection of Fifth Avenue, Denny Way, and Cedar Street. This location is near the point where boundaries of the original donation claims of Carson Boren, William Bell, and Arthur Denny meet. The statue and its surrounding park were refurbished and enhanced under the City of Seattle's Forward Thrust program and the site was rededicated on December 8, 1975. Due to the park's location at the intersection of two major arterials, Chief Seattle's sculpture remains an easily identifiable visual feature of its neighborhood and the city; the sculpture with its distinctive pose of welcome and association with the symbol of the City of Seattle contributes to the distinctive quality, and especially the identity of the city.

Features of the Landmark to be preserved include:

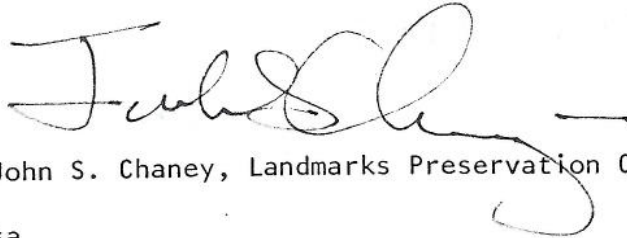
- the entire sculpture, base and fountain in their location at the site.

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Issued: October 7, 1983

Roberta Deering, Acting City Historic Preservation Officer

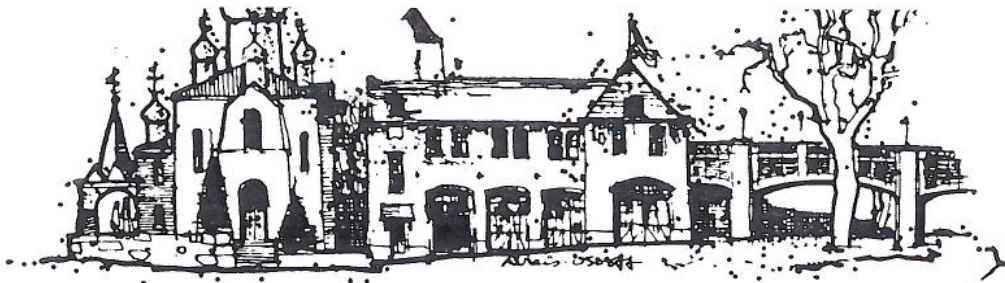
By:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John S. Chaney". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

John S. Chaney, Landmarks Preservation Coordinator

JSC:sa

cc: Walter R. Hundley



City of Seattle

LPB-115/83

Department of Community Development/Office of Urban Conservation

Landmark Nomination Form

Name "Seattle, Chief of Suquamish" Year Built 1912*
(Common, present or historic)

*Statue unveiled on November 13, 1912 (Founders Day.)

Street and Number Tilikum Place - or - Tillicum Place; at intersection
of Fifth Avenue, Denny Way, and Cedar Street.

Assessor's File No. _____

Legal Description Plat Name _____ Block _____ Lot _____

Present Owner City of Seattle Department Present Use Park/Memorial
of Parks and Recreation

Address Tilikum Place - or - Tillicum Place

Original Owner(s) Carson Boren, William Bell and Arthur Denny Original Use --

Sculptor: James Wehn Foundry: Gorham and Company,
Architect _____ Builder New York,

DESCRIPTION:

Seattle, Chief of Suquamish, pg. 1

"Seattle, Chief of the Suquamish" was commissioned, conceived, and cast during the period 1907-1912 by sculptor James A. Wehn (1883-1973). The bronze life-size statue placed upon a granite pedestal, forms the centerpiece of Tilikum Place, a triangular park located at the intersection of Fifth Avenue, Denny Way, and Cedar Street. This location is near the point where boundaries of the original donation claims of Carson Boren, William Bell, and Arthur Denny met. After the regrade of 1905, it was set aside as a historical site named Tilikum Place in honor of the Eltaes Tilikums, a local "booster" club.

The figure of Chief Sealth stands on a large rectangular pedestal of rough granite, his right arm raised in greeting - a pose reportedly remembered as characteristic by early settlers. The face was modelled after a photograph of Sealth. The chief's height, six feet, was based upon Daniel Bagley's memory. He recalled, "I stand about 5'8" and I know the Chief was inches above me." The Chief's costume is a four point Hudson's Bay blanket, his habitual attire.

The original design included a full size canoe, at the insistence of the pioneers on the design committee. However, after the first casting proved inadequate, Wehn eliminated the canoe, maintaining it was "not artistic."

On the north and south sides of the granite pedestal, two bronze bears' heads serve as fountain spouts. On the east side a plaque depicts the sighting of Captain Vancouver's vessel in 1792, an event witnessed by Sealth when a boy. On the west side, another bronze tablet is inscribed:

Seattle, Chief of Suquamish
A firm friend of the citizens
For him the city of Seattle
was named by its founders

In 1975, a \$91,000 contract for the refurbishing of Tilikum Place was awarded to the firm of Jones and Jones. This Forward Thrust project included the enlarging of the triangular site to include part of Cedar Street, new lighting, surface brick paving, and new street furniture. The site was rededicated on December 8, 1975.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Seattle, Chief of Suquamish, pg. 1

Apart from its artistic merit, the Chief Seattle statue has the distinction of being the second public work of art in Seattle, the first one being the totem pole erected in 1899 in Pioneer Square. Considering the founding settlers' attitude about the development of the downtown, their lack of planning for public open space or street amenities in their rush toward economic gain, it is remarkable that the statue or fountain was approved by the city. However, in 1907, the city passed an ordinance to the effect, as part of its street improvements in the newly regrading area of downtown. Furthermore, this was the first work to be commissioned from a local sculptor, James Wehn (1883-1973).

Wehn, born in Indianapolis, was brought to Seattle in 1889 by his parents. His father operated an iron and brass foundry and the son modelled architectural ornaments for the foundry during the early part of the century. He also apprenticed to a sculptor in Indianapolis for five years (1900-1905). With training in drawing, painting, and modelling, as well as in the methods of casting, Wehn was able to specialize in historical work, such as portrait plaques, historic markers, and commemorative medals, many of which are in a collection at the Washington State Historical Society Museum in Tacoma.

Wehn's meticulous research and numerous studies of Puget Sound Indians in preparation for the Chief Seattle statue, his best known work, also provided the basis for the portrait head of Sealth used in three subsequent city fountains, those in Pioneer Square and in Renton (1910) and the Broderick fountain at Seattle University (1958). His profile medallion of Chief Seattle was adopted as the City's official seal; a bronze enlargement of the seal was installed above the door of the Public Safety Building at its opening in 1950.

The original dedication of the statue in November, 1912 came about after a great number of changes and the near abandonment of the project by the artist. In 1907, the city budgeted monies for street improvements in the newly regraded area, including funds for a sculpture to mark the historic site. A committee was appointed composed of local businessmen, including the City engineer, R. H. Thompson, and Clarence Bagley, then secretary of the Board of Public Works. The original proposal for a sculptural fountain including a horse trough was made by the architectural firm of Kerr and Rogers. Their concept was a classical figure of Mercury bringing riches from the Orient. The committee's indecision led Rogers to recommend they discuss the project with 24 year old sculptor, James Wehn. After conferring with Bagley, whose focus was local history, Wehn abandoned the Mercury concept and instead proposed a full length portrait of Chief Noah Sealth after whom the city was named.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Seattle, Chief of Suquamish, pg. 2

This idea was enthusiastically accepted by the committee, and Wehn started modelling the form. Despite his insistence that an experienced East Coast foundry cast the statue, the committee awarded the contract to a local firm in 1908; the results were unacceptable to the artist. Concerned for his reputation, Wehn asked the committee to change foundries; when they refused, he destroyed his plaster cast. As he related it,

"I went to the foundry. I told them there was to be no statue; that as far as I knew they were through and possibly I was too. The foundry was built about five feet above tide water. With the help of a borrowed wheelbarrow, I proceeded to dump by plaster cast into the tide water. Later that afternoon, I went to Dr. Crichton's office to tell him what had happened. Shaking his head as he shook my hand, he said, "Maybe it is for the best." I proposed that I would model a new statue; but I was to have a free hand.

Ordinance #16774 had originally allocated monies for the statue. On March 28, 1910, a second ordinance, #23705, was approved "to appropriate money to complete the construction of the fountain and statue at Fifth No., Denny Way, and Cedar Street." During 1911, Wehn travelled to Indian villages, studying Indian physical characteristics, working from different models, and finally completed a clay figure from which a plaster cast was made in 1912. In the spring of that year, the finished plaster was shipped to the Gorham and Company foundry in New York for casting in bronze. In October, 1912, the statue arrived in Seattle and was placed on its granite pedestal. On Founders Day, November 13, 1912 the statue was unveiled by Myrtle Loughery, Noah Sealath's great-great granddaughter, in an impressive civic ceremony.

By the 1960's, the statue and surrounding place were badly in need of care; the bears' heads, which had originally spouted water into the trough, no longer operated; the pool was filled with plants. The statue had years of grime. Prior to the World's Fair, the statue was removed and cleaned. At that point, there was some debate about turning the statue to face the monorail. However, James Wehn objected strongly, since the original intent had been to direct the statue to look over Elliott Bay, the Chief's hand upraised as it was said to have been when he welcomed pioneers to the area in 1853. The statue was returned to its pedestal in that position. During the 1960's, the statue received a yearly bath by Sealath High School students.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Seattle, Chief of Suquamish, pg. 3

The site on which the statue and fountain are located commemorates the ties of friendship between the white settlers and the Northwest Indian culture that greeted them when they arrived in the 1850's. Placed near the point where the boundaries of the original donation claims of Carson Boren, William Bell, and Arthur Denny met, the triangular intersection was named Tilikum Place, an Indian word interpreted as "tribe, people, relations, and friend." In later years, the name was dropped in favor of "Cedar Street Triangle;" in 1975, after its refurbishing, the name "Tilikum Place" was reinstated.

The statue itself commemorates the man for whom the city was named. Had it not been for Dr. David Maynard's persuasive powers with his co-founders, the city might have borne the original Indian name - Zechalalitch - or the first name given to the pioneer village by settlers - Duwamps.

Chief Seattle was born on Blake Island and lived in a great communal house with his tribe on Agate Pass. He died on June 7, 1866.

Sealth's philosophy was one of acceptance and benevolence.

Why should I mourn at the untimely fate of my people?
Tribe follows tribe, and nation follows nation, like the waves of the sea. It is the order of nature and regret is useless. Your time of decay may be distant - but it will surely come. We may be brothers after all. Let the White Man be just and deal kindly with my people, for the dead are not powerless. Dead--I say? There is no death. Only a change of worlds.

Bibliography:

Seattle Public Library Scrapbook, Monuments and Memorials (A-L)#174
Art in Public Places: Five Urban Walking Tours. The Fifth
Itinerary: Seattle Center from Tilikum Place to the Playhouse.
Prepared by Gervais Reed and Jo Nilsson. Seattle Public Library, 1977.

Dedication of Chief Seattle Statue at Tilikum Place, November 1912.



DEDICATION OF
CHIEF SEATTLE STATUE
TILIKUM PLACE
1912

Photographs:



Submitted by: Larry Kreisman
 Address Office of Urban Conservation Phone 625-4501
 Date 26 August 1983

Reviewed *Robert D. Deming* Date *31 Aug. '83*
 Historic Preservation Officer