

# **NEIGHBORHOODS SOUTHEAST SEATTLE COMMUNITY HISTORY PROJECT**

Reference Document:

Place Names in Southeast Seattle

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## **SOUTHEAST SEATTLE HISTORY PROJECT**

### **SOUTHEAST SEATTLE PLACE NAMES**

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Andrews Bay: Body of water between Seward Park peninsula and mainland. Dates back to 19th century; origins unknown.

Atlantic City: Named in 1905 by C.D. Hillman, who platted the Rainier Beach area. Hillman was a notorious real estate developer whose aggressive promotions frequently crossed the line into outright fraud. Buyers of property in his Atlantic City development were promised a park along the lake, but Hillman sold that land off as well. The park was eventually created, after years of legal battling. Atlantic City Park was renamed Beer Sheva Park in 1977 after Seattle's sister city in Israel, but the boat ramp there retains the Atlantic City name.

Bailey Peninsula: Peninsula where Seward Park is located. Named for businessman and Parks Commissioner William Bailey, who bought the peninsula in April of 1889 and sold it to the City in 1908 so it could become Seward Park. Originally called squabaqst ("Noses") by the local Duwamish people. The isthmus connecting the peninsula to the shoreline was called tSugalapsub ("High on the Neck").

Beacon Hill, Beacon Hill School, Beacon Avenue: Named by W. Harwood Young after a neighborhood in Boston, his hometown. This ridge has also been called Holgate & Hanford Hill, after settlers John Holgate and Edward Hanford (who are commemorated today by Hanford and Holgate Streets).

Brighton, Brighton Beach: Named after British seaside resort town by hopeful local boosters who had emigrated from England. Called XaXa7oolcH ("Taboo Container") by the local Duwamish, who believed a malevolent spirit resided here.

Grover Cleveland High School: The school began as Georgetown High School, but when a new building was built at the current location in 1926, it was renamed in honor of President Grover Cleveland.

Columbia City: Named by developer J.K. Edmiston who platted the area in 1890, after the popular song "Columbia, Gem of the Ocean." Original street names honored famous explorers (Henry) Hudson, Ferdinand (Magellan), and (Christopher) Columbus (Columbus is now Edmonds St.)

Dead Horse Canyon: Also known as Lakeridge Park; Taylor Creek runs through it down to site of old Taylor Mill. Either named to commemorate the death of a horse who fell into the canyon while hauling logs, or the death of a horse that roamed the canyon when the area was still mostly farms. The mouth of the creek as originally called tSeeptSeep ("Ducklings") by the local Duwamish people.

Dearborn Park: Dearborn Park School opened in 1971, and was named after the Park it adjoins. The origins of the Park's name are unclear, but may relate to H.H. Dearborn and his brother, the realty promoters for whom Dearborn Street is named.

Dunlap: Joseph and Catherine Dunlap arrived in the Rainier Beach area in 1869. Legend has it that they got to the crest of Beacon Hill and sent their son George to climb a tree and get a view of the valley below. He spotted the area west of Pritchard Island, and the family settled there. Dunlap School is named for the family. Henderson Street is named for Catherine Dunlap, whose maiden name was Henderson. Pearl Street honors several women named Pearl in the Dunlap family.

Emerson School: Originally called Rainier Beach School, renamed to honor Ralph Waldo Emerson in 1909.

Franklin: Franklin High School is named for Benjamin Franklin. When the school was built, community residents wanted it to be named Mount Baker High School to promote the Olmstead-designed, exclusive neighborhood they were building. But students at the school (an offshoot of the original Broadway High, housed at Washington in its first year) chose the name Franklin. The school's team, the Quakers, reflects a common misconception about Benjamin Franklin, who was not a member of the Religious Society of Friends.

Garlic Gulch: Commonly used to refer to the Italian community, which historically centered around Rainier Ave & Atlantic Street in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Sometimes refers to whole Rainier Valley.

Genesee: According to Parks historian Don Sherwood, "The name Genesee first appeared in 1904 on a plat filed by W. C. Squire of the Union Trust Company; an area just west of the playfield. Genesee is a Seneca Indian word - 'geneseo' meaning 'beautiful valley.'"

Graham Hill: Graham Hill School began as an annex to Brighton, and was called East Brighton School when it opened in portables. In 1960 the name was changed to Graham Hill in honor of Walter Graham, an early settler in the area. (Seward Park's Bailey Peninsula had once been partially owned by Graham.)

Hawthorne School: Named after novelist Nathaniel Hawthorne. Bella Perry, an early principal, planted hawthorn trees around the grounds to honor the name.

Hillman City: This neighborhood grew up around the streetcar station at Orcas Street and Rainier Ave, and was annexed to Seattle as part of Southeast Seattle in January 1907. While C. D. Hillman officially filed the plats, and local street names reflect his family (Kenny was his wife's maiden name, for instance), it was his brother Homer Hillman who actually lived here. None of C.D.'s trademark real estate scams appear to have been attempted in Hillman City itself.

Hitt's Hill: Named for the Hitt family and their world-famous fireworks factory, which operated on the hill southwest of Columbia City starting in 1905. Production moved to China at some point, but the company headquarters operated on Hitt's Hill until it closed up shop in the 1970s. The company was started by T. G. Hitt, a British chemist, and operated by his son Ray after he died.

Holly Park - NewHolly: Originally built as temporary wartime housing in 1942, Holly Park consisted of single-storey duplexes and quads arranged around curving streets that broke up the surrounding grid. The development became public housing in 1954. It was demolished in 1999 and rebuilt as NewHolly, a mixed-income, Light-Rail-station-oriented development that was completed in 2005. Note: Rainier Vista also followed the same pattern.

Hutchinson: Fred Hutchinson grew up in Rainier Beach and became famous first as a star pitcher for the Seattle Rainiers, then as a baseball manager. When he died of cancer in 1964, his brother Bill founded a cancer research center in his honor.

Kimball School: Opened as Beacon Hill Annex in 1960, the school was renamed to honor Captain George W. Kimball, who headed the Junior Safety Patrol in Seattle from 1928 to 1961.

Kubota Garden: Named for Fujitaro Kubota, who began the garden in the 1920s as his landscaping business grew. Kubota developed a unique Japanese American gardening style that adapts the aesthetics of Japanese gardening to a denser planting style using native American plants. After the family returned from their internment at Camp Minidoka during WWII, they continued to expand the garden, building a mountain trail with a pumped stream running down it. Since becoming a landmark in

1981 and a City Park in 1987, the garden has grown even more, with the addition of the senior-accessible Tom Kubota Stroll Garden, named for Fujitaro's son, who helped build and maintain the garden.

Aki Kurose School: Sharples school was changed to Aki Kurose in 1999 to honor Aki Kurose, a beloved teacher and peace activist. (See also Sharples.)

Mapes Creek: Located in Rainier Beach; origins unknown.

Maple, Mapel: Maple School is named after the Mapel family, early settlers who arrived in the Duwamish Valley in 1951.

Martha Washington: The Park is named after the residential school that was once located at the site. Built in 1921, the school served girls who were wards of King County Juvenile Court until 1965; after that the building housed a series of alternative programs before being torn down in 1989.

Mercer Middle School: Named for Asa Mercer, Seattle pioneer and first president (and sole teacher) at Washington Territorial University (now UW).

Mount Baker: This elegant neighborhood was laid out by the Olmstead brothers, with building requirements that mandated large, expensive homes. The name refers to the view: Mt. Baker on the northern horizon.

John Muir School: See York.

Noji Gardens: The Noji family owned a nursery on Orcas Street before they were interned during the Second World War. They were able to return to their land and business after the war (local legend has it that their neighbors kept an eye on their property for them, but this is difficult to confirm.) In 2000 the land was redeveloped by HomeSight as an innovative affordable housing development made up of high-quality manufactured homes.

Orca: Students at the Allen Free School (started in Fremont) began studying the Orca whales of Puget Sound in the 1970s. They performed an "Orca Dance" at Seattle's Coliseum in 1975 to an audience of 10,000 that included Jacques Cousteau, who personally thanked each of them for the dance; shortly after this, students voted to change the name of the school to Orca. The school moved from Fremont to Columbia City in 1989.

Othello Street: Originally called Matthiesen Place because the Matthiesen home was located on Lake Washington at the end of it, this street was renamed Othello by a Shakespeare-loving developer. It is now the name of a Light Rail Station near New Holly (see Holly Park).

Palmer's Crossing, Palmer House: The Palmers were early settlers in the Rainier Beach/Brighton area.

Pritchard Island: Called TluTLatSas ("Small Island") by the local Duwamish people, this island was originally separated from the shore by a marshy area that was passable by canoe for most of the year. It was owned by A. B. Youngs in the 1880s and '90s and was called "Youngs' Island" then. In 1900 Alfred Pritchard bought it; he and his brother Frank platted it and several members of the Pritchard family lived there. When Lake Washington was lowered by the Montlake Cut in 1917, the island became a gentle bump on the shoreline, with a wetland area that is now being restored. The Pritchard family rose to political prominence when Joel Pritchard, son of the original settlers, was elected to the Washington State Legislature, where he served from 1958 to 1967. He also served as Lieutenant Governor from 1989 to 1997.

Rainier Avenue, Rainier Beach, Rainier Valley: All named for the view of Mount Rainier to the south. Mount Rainier was named by explorer George Vancouver after an old navy friend of his, Rear Admiral Peter Rainier.

Rainier Vista: Originally built as temporary wartime housing in 1942, Rainier Vista consisted of single-storey duplexes and quads arranged around curving streets that broke up the surrounding grid. The development became public housing in 1954. It was demolished in 2003 and rebuilt as a mixed-income, Light-Rail-station-oriented development.

Taylor's Mill, Taylor's Creek, Tamill: Sanford Taylor's mill moved from Leschi to the site south of Rainier Beach in 1901 and operated there into the 1930s. The hundred or so employees and their families formed a little community centered around the company store. The U.S. Post Office dubbed the area "Tamill."

Stan Sayres Pits: Built for Seafair hydroplane races in 1957, named after Stan Sayres, the hydroplane racing champion who brought hydro racing to Seattle.

Seward Park: Named for William H. Seward, the U.S. Secretary of State responsible for the purchase of Alaska.

Sharples: Casper W. Sharples Junior High opened in 1952, named after a prominent Seattle physician who ran Children's Hospital for many years, and served on the Seattle School Board as well. In 1999 the building was renamed for Aki Kurose (See Aki Kurose.)

Southeast Seattle: This was the name of the streetcar station at Genesee Street. It was also the name of the town that incorporated in July of 1906 for the express purpose of being annexed to the City of Seattle. At first Southeast Seattle included the communities around York, Genesee, and Hillman City stations. They annexed Brighton later in the year so that their combined population would be enough to merit a City Councilman of their own when they were annexed in January 1907. Columbia City did not join in this effort, choosing to annex separately in May of 1907.

Uplands: The Uplands was conceived as an upscale housing development in the 1920s, with underground powerlines and gracefully curving streets; a set of grand stone gateways marks the entrance to it at the corner of Orcas Street and Seward Park Avenue. The area wasn't fully developed until after WWII, however, when it became a popular neighborhood for Boeing employees and orthodox Jews relocating from the Central Area. The hill overlooking it was once called "Chink Hill;" some say Chinese peasants lived there in the 19<sup>th</sup> century while they built nearly rail lines; others say the name came from the Chinese pheasants that could be found on its undeveloped slopes. (Either way, the name reflects the unfortunate racial attitudes of the period.) During WWII an anti-aircraft gun was placed on top of the hill, with an Army encampment below it.

Van Asselt School: Named for Henry Van Asselt, who settled in the Duwamish River Valley in 1851.

Wetmore Slough: Called stSaKatSeed ("Cooking Fish on a Stick") by the local Duwamish people. Later called Wetmore Slough after Birdsey Wetmore, an early settler in the area.

Whitworth: The original Hillman City School moved several times between 1880 and 1907, when the district acquired the land at 46<sup>th</sup> and Dawson to build a new school. George F. Whitworth, an early president of Washington Territorial University (now UW) died that year; the new school was renamed to honor him.

Wing Luke School: Opened in portables in 1962 as the Van Asselt Annex, the school was renamed in 1969 in honor of Wing Luke, Seattle's first Asian-American City Councilman.

York: British immigrants settled this area between Mount Baker and Columbia City. Walden Street was called York, the streetcar station at the intersection of York and Rainier was called York Station; York Grocery and York Pharmacy were located there as well. The local school began as Wetmore School, but was called York School from 1903 until 1921, when principal Jessie Lockwood renamed it after Sierra Club founder John Muir, hoping that students would develop a love of nature and a sense of stewardship.