

PARK WAS OFFICIALLY NAMED DENNY PARK IN 1887  
IN HONOR OF THE DONORS.

12.31.86 RBW

SEATTLE'S FIRST PARK  
1884, FORMERLY A  
CEMETERY, GRAVESITES  
WERE RELOCATED TO WASHelli  
CEMETERY ON CAPITOL HILL.

PARK WAS REGRADED IN 1930  
AS PART OF THE DENNY HILL PROJECT.

## DENNY PARK

SHEET 1 OF 1

(No RARE PLANTS)

⊙ *Paulonia Imperialis*:  
(Emperor Tree)

\* *Sequoia Gigantea*:  
Washington Bicentennial  
Memorial Tree: 1732-1932  
(plaque)

A good collection of introduced plants from the East + other  
Continents for the purpose of best display: walk layout typical of  
1930's: design by L. Glenn Hall Landsc. Arch. (from Cambridge, Ma)

Journalists refer to Park as "the poor man's Rainier Club."

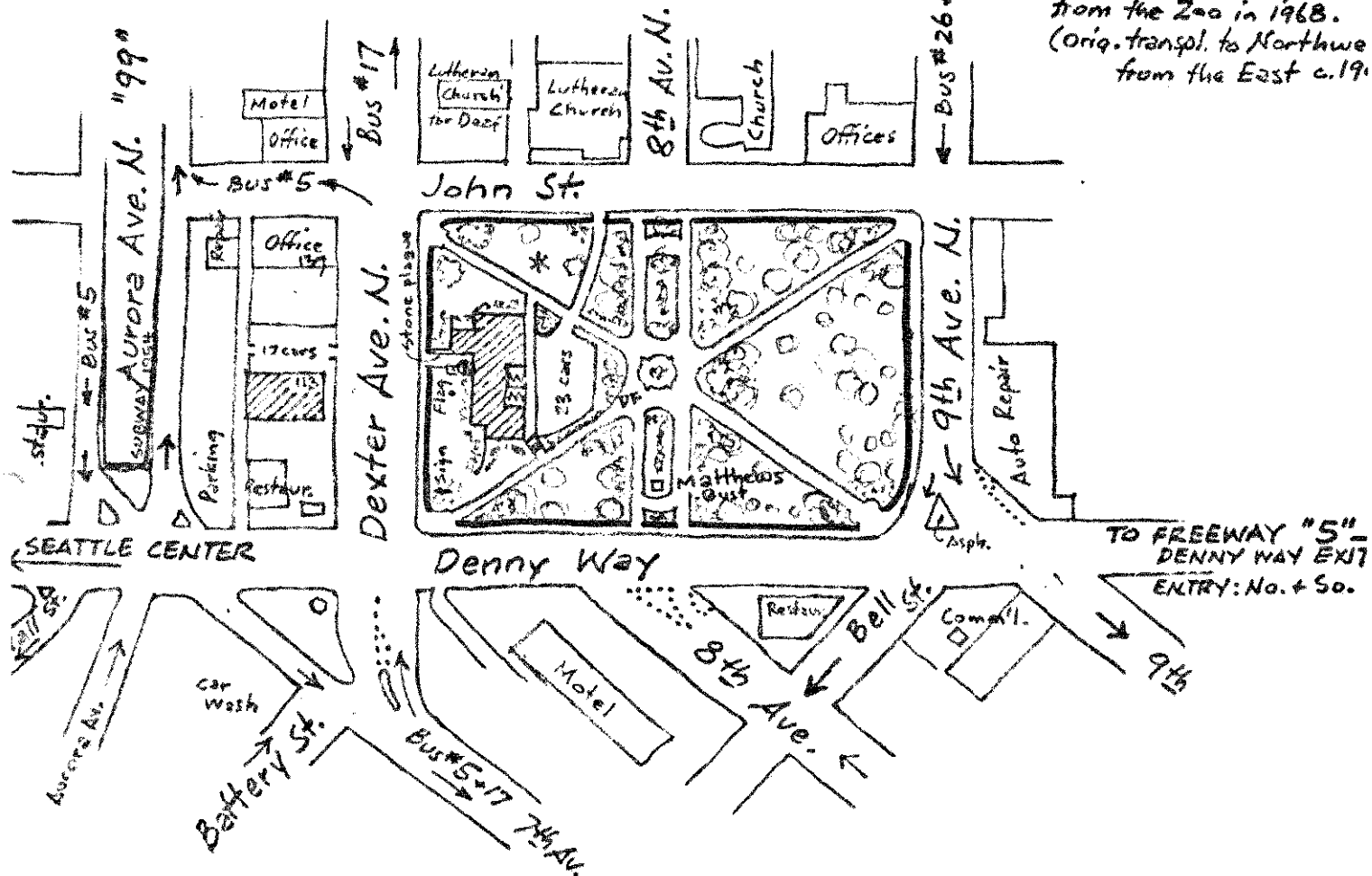
40' Flag Staff purch. 1957.

3 trees planted in memory of  
Pres. Herbert Hoover - 3/19/33

Bronze bust of Dr. Mark A. Matthew  
by Alonzo Lewis 1941.



After several attempts,  
Eastern Grey Squirrels were  
successfully transplanted  
from the Zoo in 1968.  
(Orig. transpl. to Northwe  
from the East c. 19)



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES  
DEPT. OF PARKS AND RECREATION

309

113 DEXTER AV. N.  
Monthly Lease since 11/15/75  
0.3 Acre

100 DEXTER AV. N.  
Constr. 1948: \$181,333 = 48 BF + St. Fur  
Board Rm. = 55 seats

5.9 Acres  
Gift: 1884 from David T. Denny  
(re: stone plaque)  
"... converted (from Seattle Cemetery),  
dedicated + set apart as a public park.

"DEXTER ANNEX"

DENNY PARK

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## HISTORY: DENNY PARK

The first public park within the city limits of Seattle was DENNY PARK. Other parks or playgrounds existed but were privately developed at the ends of cable car lines, beer gardens, or in nearby towns that later were annexed to the City.

The park was named about 1887 for DAVID THOMAS DENNY, who was building the first log cabin on Alki Point when the pioneer party landed there in November 1851. However, when Denny, Bell and Boren took the first soundings of Elliott Bay, using a clothesline and horseshoes, the results caused them to move the site of their new city. Born in Indiana (1832-1902), Denny came to Puget Sound at age 19 and worked as a lumberjack; developed Collins Farm in the fertile Duwamish Valley; platted 7 subdivisions; invested in the Lake Union Sawmill, and cable and electric car lines (one to Ravenna Park), became a stockholder in numerous banks, executive of mining and water companies, served as City Treasurer, Probate Judge, County Commissioner, City Councilman, Town Trustee and Director of the School District for 12 years. Married Louisa Boren.

Several of Seattle's park and recreation areas were also favorite sites of the Puget Sound Indians and some of these were developed by the early day realtors as private parks with trolley lines to them "all the way from town". (Refer: Seattle's Early Parks)

In 1864 D. T. and Louisa Denny gave a portion of their Donation Land Claim to the town for purposes of a cemetery; in 1873 the Common Council Ordinance No. 36 created the position of Sexton to keep records of and maintain "Seattle Cemetery". Even though the original incorporation of the town in 1869 extended from Atlantic Street to Howell Street (one block south of Denny's Claim), the Cemetery was far from town - Pioneer Square was the center - and reached only by wagon roads. In 1883 the City annexed this area, north to McGraw Street. Nearby Bwll Town on the waterfront (Bell Street) was growing rapidly and being known as "North Seattle". The Cemetery was no longer "way out in the wilderness".

Evidently the Dennys did not subscribe to the traditional concept of cemeteries and parks occupying the same ground, for in 1883 they drew up a new deed rededicating most of the Cemetery property to become a public park with the gravesites to be removed at City expense. Most of the 221 bodies were reinterred in private cemeteries; the others in a City-owned tract named Washelli Cemetery, to be moved again when this tract became a park in 1887, now named Volunteer; 29 of the bodies were unidentified Chinese who Wa Chong moved to Lakeview Cemetery; 32 listed as Unknown and it is said that a few forgotten Indian graves remained until the 1930 regrade. The record of these dead, together with the original handwritten reports and copy of the First Park Ordinance; was filed with the City Clerk. In the confusion to try and save City records during the Great Fire of 1889, many were lost and it was thought that this book was also burned. In 1910 Judge Hanford found it in a court vault. He gave it to the Park Accountant who placed it in the Department safe. It was soon forgotten and ~~many years~~ later was found again when the safe was cleaned and sold in 1974!

Ordinance 571, approved by the Common Council of the City and Mayor H. G. Struve on July 10, 1884 "converted, dedicated and set apart as a Public Park" and established three Commissioners to be selected - one by Council, one by persons owning burial lots and one by the other two. Council selected D. T. Denny. Upon completion of the removal of gravesites, the Council Committee recommended fencing around the new park to protect trees and shrubbery against damage by stock running at large.

In 1884 the park was way out in the woods, reached only by a wagon road from Seattle and was the town cemetery. It was on Denny Hill, so named because it was within the Donation Land Claim of David T. Denny. Denny Way was platted along the southern line of his Claim. When the City was incorporated in 1869, Howell Street (one block south of Denny's Claim) was the northern limit. In 1883, the City annexed this area north to McGraw Street/Galer Street. In 1894 plans were prepared for improvement of the park: walks, lawn and planting areas, tool sheds along the north side, fountain and pavilions (with restrooms); for the woods was being replaced with homes.

over

By 1903 the park was in the midst of the residential area, so the park was replanted in a formal design plus grading and planting caused by the improvement of John Street and Eighth Avenue; a shelter and tool house (first of its kind in Seattle and designed through architectural competition - J. H. Shaak) for \$1,000, and the installation of "Young's Automatic" (wooden) swings, teeters, sand court and playfield. The nearby Denny Grade School (1884-1928) made good use of the play area.

Seattle's hills contribute not only to the charm of the City but also to its problems, so that the major work of R. H. Thomson, City Engineer from 1884 to 1928, was of regrading the downtown area, cutting or filling to make streets more accessible. But Denny Hill became the "Impossible Hill"; the sides were so steep that places like the Washington Hotel could be reached only by its own cable car up to the front door. So the Denny Regrade began about 5th and Pine Street and proceeded northward. By 1910 it was threatening Denny Park; the pioneers demanded that the park remain as an early day landmark. Regrading was also an expensive project, so some recommended selling the property or converting it to use for an armory, health center or municipal buildings, but it had been deeded "for park purposes". A park on a mound some 60' high on the east side presented problems, so the steam shovels and tram cars continued to feed the conveyor belts that filled the barges that dumped into Elliott Bay and by 1930 the park was a flat, bare slope on which was placed the cupola from the recent Denny School "as an historic relic of pioneer Seattle that survived the Great Fire". (It became unsafe and was removed in 1936.) (The school cupola did not contain a bell; the famed DENNY BELL was brought around the Horn and placed in the Denny Hall cupola in 1862 in its down town location (University Street) and moved to its present location in U.W. in 1890.)

A new formal landscape plan was prepared by the Department (L. Glenn Hall) and new planting placed; a new comfort station built (site is now parking area). The Department had gained enough stature and staff - and the new position of Park Superintendent, to build its own Administration Building, and cease moving about in rented offices. Despite objections of the Denny family, it was built in Denny Park in 1948. Designed by Young and Richardson, Architects, the building won the AIA Grand Honor Award. The lower floor was not needed for Department personnel and because file storage required only a small portion of the space (a deliberate fire had destroyed the Department's files prior to 1908, except for a few reports that happened to be elsewhere), in 1951 the north end of the lower floor was leased to State Parks and Recreation Commission until they were consolidated with the State Department of Game. The Washington Society of Crippled Children then rented the space until recreation staff was expanded under W. H. Shumard in 1964. The advent of Forward Thrust in 1968 resulted in additional staff increases which overcrowded the building and space was arranged in the new (1962) Municipal Building.

JOHN STREET was named for two Johns: the father of Arthur and David Denny, and the son of David. DEXTER AVENUE named for pioneer banker Dexter Horton whose coffee barrel bank founded Seattle-First National Bank; a New York farm boy, wagon train pioneer, logging camp cook and Yesler millhand. DR. MARK A. MATTHEWS: bronze bust by Alonzo Lewis, 1941, gift of his daughter, Mrs. A. S. Kerry; a Presbyterian minister famed for his "Forces of Decency" which effected a limited reform of city government in 1906; his Sunday School "was a potent remedy for juvenile delinquency in Bell Town district."

5/22/74