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Naval Air Station Seattle at Sand Point



This is a photo of the 3 planes that landed at Sand Point Airfield in 1924 after completing the 1st Around the World Flight in 175 days.



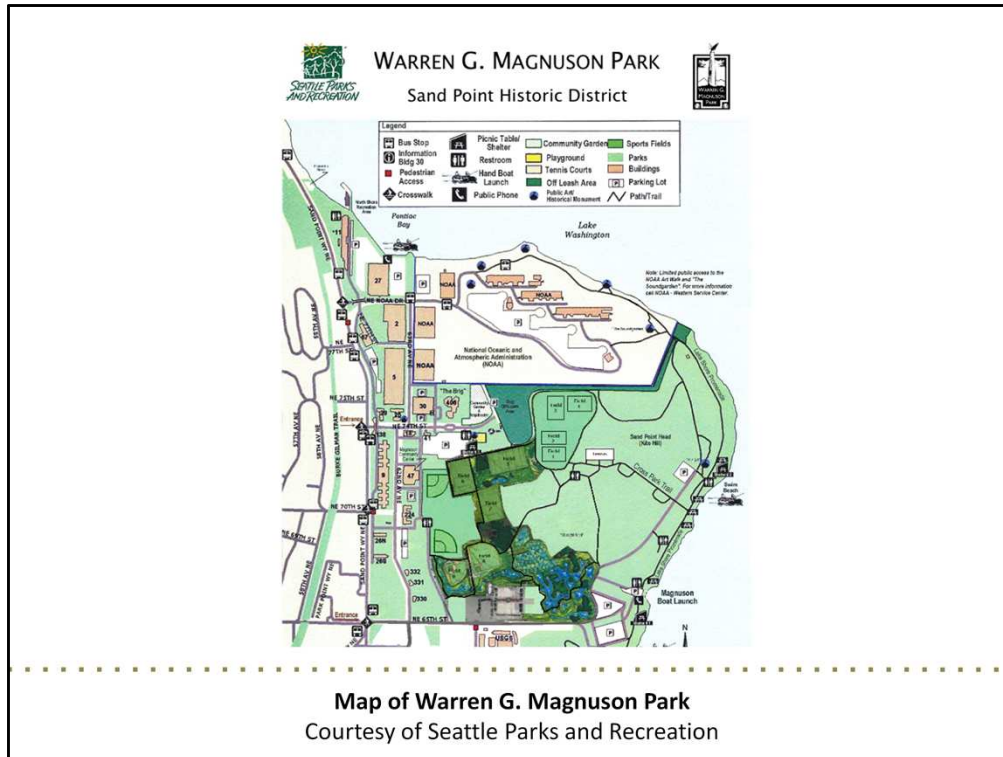
Introduction

2 My name is Lynn Ferguson and I would like to share with you some of the fascinating history of this S peninsula located in NE Seattle on Lake Washington just 5 miles north of downtown called Sand Point (2 words)

Raise your hand if you have lived in Seattle for 5 years. Keep it up if you have lived here for 10, 15, 20, etc....

This may be history you knowperhaps were even a part of. Working at the Navy base or living in the neighborhood. If so I hope we can share stories after the talk.

I have lived several blocks from Sand Point for about 45 years, watched it change and worked to preserve its history as it is developed into a great urban park. It was a wonderful gift to the people of Seattle from the Navy a return for the land given by the county and City to them many years ago when we needed an airfield more than a park. Back to the Future: It was 2 parks (County and City) then an airfield, and now a park again.



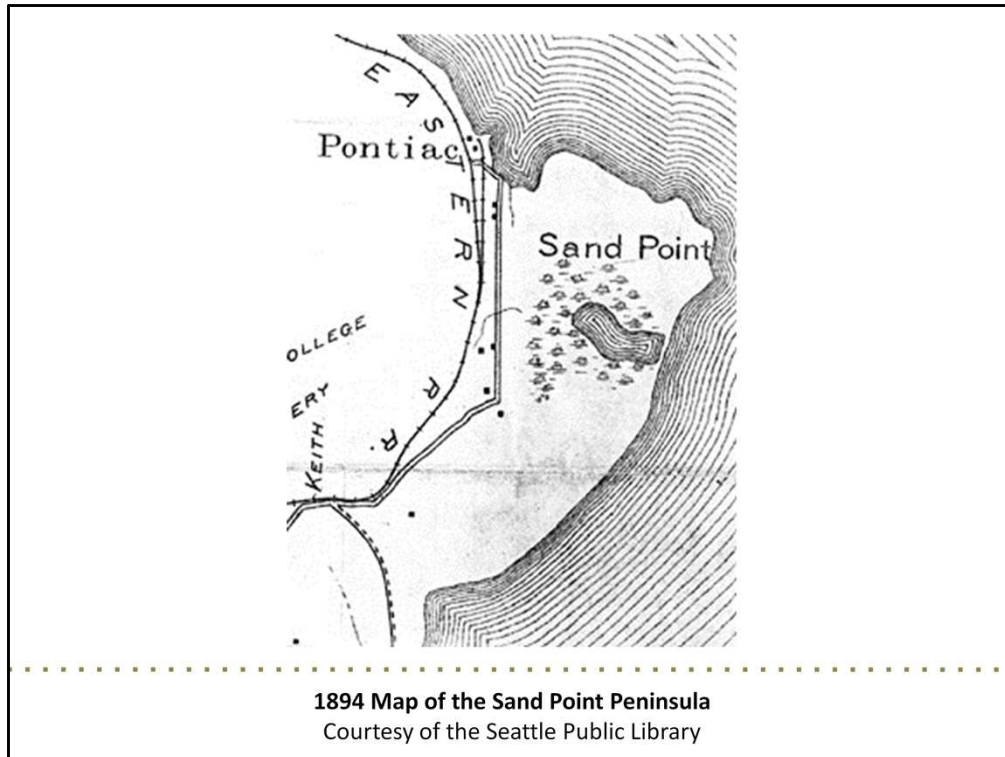
Today Sand Point is home to USGS Fisheries research facility on the south, the headquarters of NOAA on the north, and Warren G. Magnuson Park, the second largest park in the city in the middle with Seattle's newest and 1st new historic district in more than 20 years, Sand Point Naval Air Station Landmark District comprising about 90 acres of the 250 acre park.

Today more than 200 low income units are within the historic district and about 130 units of Workforce housing (teachers, nurses,) will be added soon. The McKinney Act requires surplus lands be used first by federal agencies, then provide low income housing, and park purposes.

Soccer, baseball and rugby fields have been built as well as a large tennis complex and a wonderful new wetlands has attracted almost 200 species of birds including Eagles, hawks, owls, and beaver and Pacific Chorus frogs have returned.

UW owns 5 buildings and has a Pediatric Dental Clinic in conjunction with Children's Hospital. Artists have studios and a private school leases a historic building. This has not happened without controversy as different groups lobbied for their interests.

It is truly becoming a great urban park but what of its history?



When the 1st settlers arrived in the mid-1800's, Sand Point was an old growth cedar and Doug fir forest in a wetland with a shallow 30 acre lake connected to Lake. Washington. Two streams ran down from the hills above. One fed into the lake that was a spawning ground for cutthroat trout and steelhead and the other emptied into Pontiac Bay to the north. When the locks were built and Lake Washington lowered, the connection was broken.

THE EARLY YEARS



UW Special Collections SHS2228 Canoe on Lake Union

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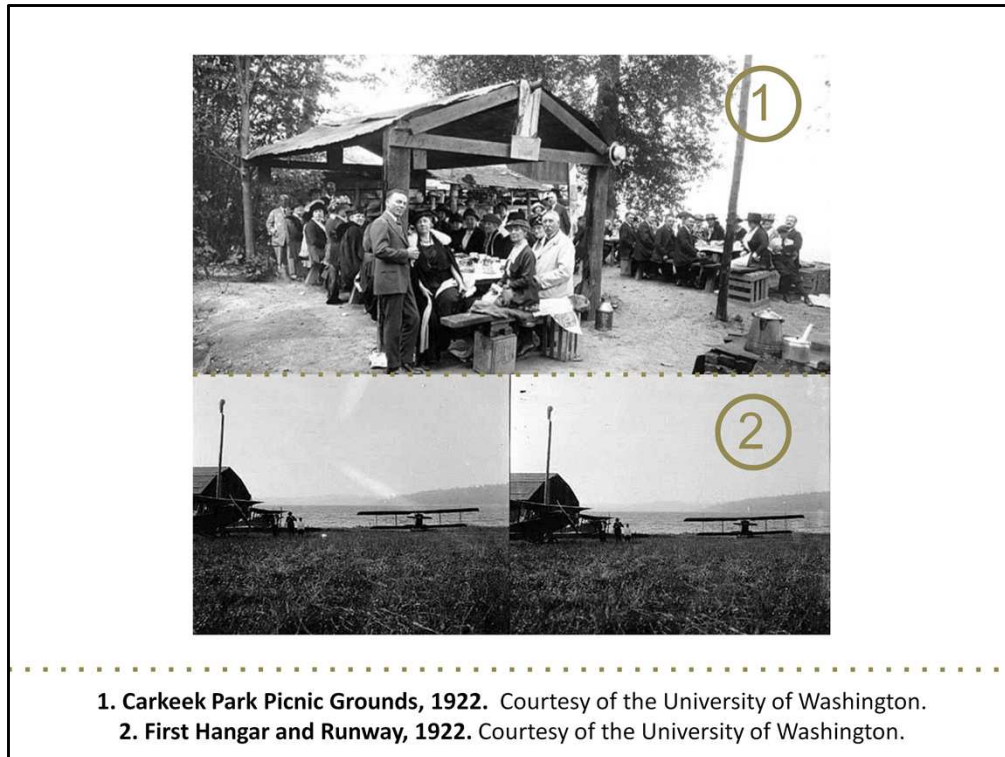
For about 12,000 years native people hunted and fished at Sand Point forested wetlands and lake

They were called the People of the Lake and were part of the Duwamish Tribe. Their name for the Pontiac Bay area was Where the Cedar Bark Grows. Apparently the native American's had lodges just south of Sand Point, in upscale Windermere at Wolf Bay and just hunted and fished at Sand Point.



Early logging train from Dennis Thompson's Railroad book.

A railroad ran along the lake on what is now the Burke Gilman trail. Early settlers of the land at Sand Point in census records were listed first as loggers, then farmers. Sawmills moved north up the lake and were located first in Laurelhurst then north Matthew's Beach. The County owned the land around the lake and Mr. Carkeek, land near the town of Pontiac north of the city line.



The top picture shows Mr. Carkeek and his wife at the 25 acre park he gave to the city in 1918 at Sand Point so the people of Seattle could have a “ quiet resting spot amid the hustle and bustle of City life.” This became the first overnight camping site for Seattle’s children from 1918 to 1922 paid 25 cents and brought a bedroll. There was a goat cart, swimming and Seattle’s historic fire bell was on a tower.

The bottom picture shows the competing interest, Sand Point’s use as an airfield. Aviation interests won out and Sand Point became Seattle’s 1st municipal airport in 1920. Seattle Park’s condemned Mr. Carkeek’s park and moved it to the current location in NW Seattle. The Army and Navy air forces were lobbying congress for the site. (The air force did not exist until after WWII.) At this time it was not clear if planes were going to land on water or land and proximity to both and a protected inland site was important.

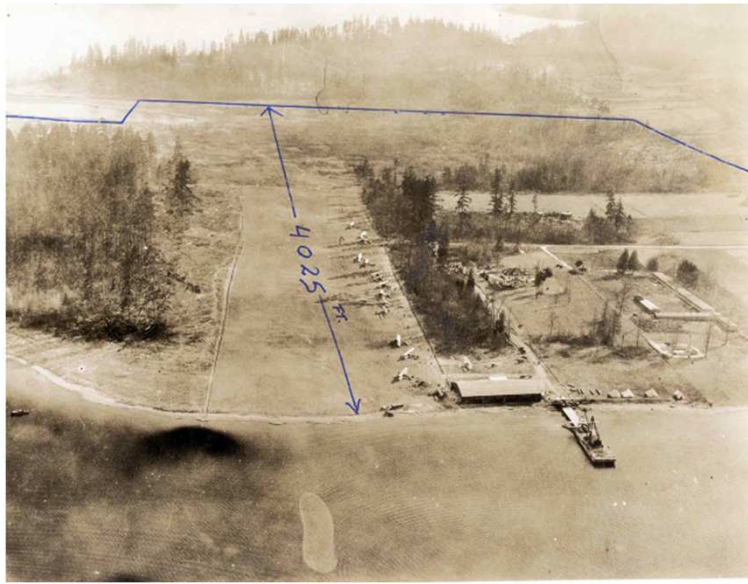


Eddie Hubbard and William Boeing arrive on Lake Union in 1919 with 1st bag of international mail. [History Link](#)

Wm. Boeing saw the commercial and military potential of the planes he loved. The city was embarrassed when Army pilots had to land on Jefferson Golf course while on a liberty bond tour in 1917. Note pontoons.

Wm. Boeing was president of the Aero Club of Washington, loved airplanes and flying and saw their potential use as military and commercial. He saw the military potential in WWI for airplanes and the commercial uses especially early airmail deliveries. He wanted Seattle and his company to be part of this new industry.

Seattle was embarrassed when a group of Army pilots on a Liberty Bond trip in 1917 had to land on Jefferson Golf Course because we had no airport. Boeing also needed a place to assemble and fly his airplanes. He and others in the Aero Club and Chamber of Commerce members lobbied the County to begin buying land for an airport at Sand Point. They also needed congressional approval and the Navy pushed ahead while the county bought land for an airfield. A young representative, Warren G. Magnuson pushed for funding for the base near Seattle. Boeing crated and barged his early planes from the Duwamish plant to Sand Point for assembly and testing. However the Navy did not take over Sand Point until 192700 acres. Then Boeing Field was established. Rumor has it that Boeing threatened to move to California if the county did not come up with another municipal airfield.

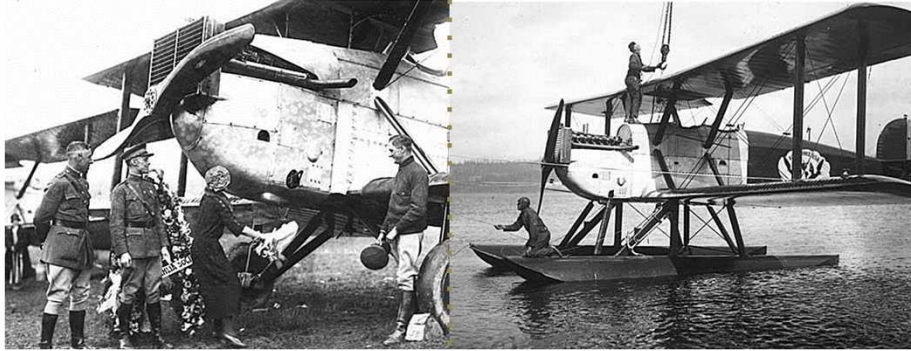


Early 1920's Aerial View of Sand Point Airfield
Courtesy of Seattle Parks and Recreation

This is an early photo of the Sand Point peninsula with the first runway and Hangar 1. The view is from the north looking south. In the upper left hand corner you can see the small lake on site and the hill behind it that was gradually dug out on both sides to fill the lake. The original runway was hand carved 3 by 3 inch granite blocks. The wetland hills were flattened and drainage tiles put in paid for by Civic booster and head of Seattle's newspaper family the Blethans to drain the wetlands when grass fields proved too muddy much of the year. Note the lift on the pier used to get pontoon planes out of and into the water.

“Round-the-World” Flight

March 27, 1924




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1. Christening of the Airplane “Chicago”, 1924. Courtesy of MOHAI.

2. Fitting Planes with Pontoons, 1924. Courtesy of MOHAI.

To raise interest in airplane flight and gain glory for America and show its leadership in aerospace, the US government planned to be the first country to circumnavigate the globe. The 5 planes were especially designed for the flight and were built by Douglas Aircraft Company in California. Seattle was chosen as the departure spot because it was decided after a year of planning that the safest flight would be headed west across the Pacific and that meant beginning with a pontoon leg. Boeing made the pontoons and fitted with planes when they arrived here. 4 planes, each with an Army pilot and mechanic took off from Sand Point in hopes that one would make it all the way around the world. They had no radios or parachutes and had open cockpits. One immediately crashed into a mountain in Alaska. One sunk off Newfoundland and was replaced with the spare plane in Boston but 3 planes arrived at Sand Point on September 28, 1924 to a cheering crowd of more than 50,000 Seattleites.

Flight Facts:

- Leave Seattle: April 6, 1924
- Return Seattle: Sept. 28, 1924
- Distance Flown: 26,345 miles
- Elapsed Time: 175 Days
- Flying Time: 363 hours, 7 min.
- Average Speed: 72.5 mph
- Longest Hop: 830 miles, Iceland to Greenland
- Scheduled Stops: 69

1. "Round-the-World" Flight Route Map. *First Flight Around the World* by Carroll V. Glines.

2. Landing of the "Chicago", "Boston 2", and "New Orleans". Courtesy of MOHAI.

This trip was followed in papers around the world. They were met by princes and world leaders. Spare parts were stashed around the world and gasoline. The British and Italians were trying to be the first at the same time but only with one plane and both failed. This was 3 years before Lucky Lindberg crossed the Atlantic.

Charles Lindberg

And the "Spirit of St. Louis"



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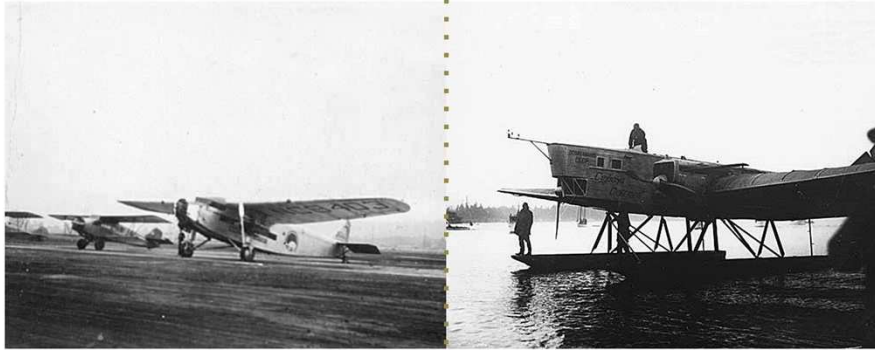
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1. Charles Lindberg and the "Spirit of St. Louis", 1927. Courtesy of the University of Washington.
2. Charles Lindberg and Mayor Bertha Landes, 1927. Courtesy of MOHAI.

Charles Lindberg also visited Seattle and landed at Sand Point Airfield three years later after he made his famous solo flight across the Atlantic. This is him with our 1st and only woman mayor, Bertha Landes, in 1927. There was a ticker tape parade for him and he gave a talk in Husky stadium and Volunteer park for school children who were let out for the day to hear him. He flew over Seattle dropping leaflets to promote airmail. Can you imagine that happening today?

“Land of the Soviets”

Tupolev ANT-4



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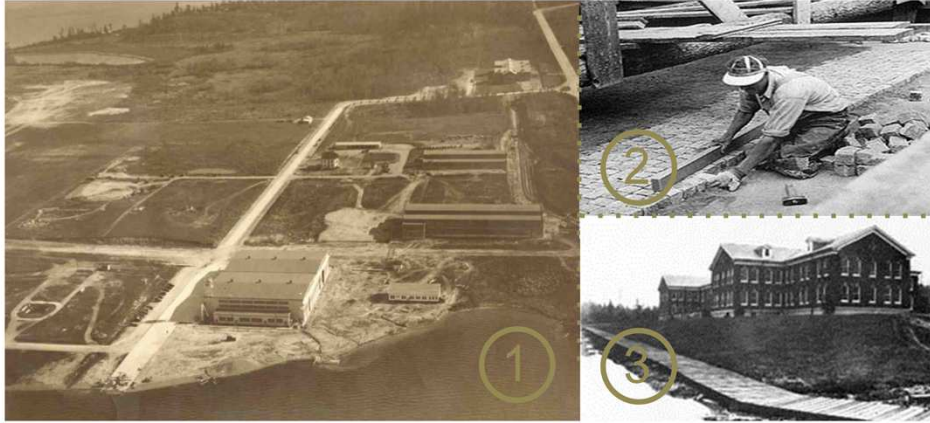
1. Planes on the Tarmac, 1929. Courtesy of the University of Washington.

2. The “Land of the Soviets” Landing at Sand Point, 1929. Courtesy of MOHAI.

Sand Point became a Naval Air Station in 1927, one of the first five in the United States and the 1st on the West Coast. It was close to Seattle, Bremmerton Naval Shipyards and the UW where many pilots trained in the ROTC on Curtis JN trainers. NAS Seattle was the headquarters for the 13th Naval District that included the NW and Alaska.

The fixed wing plane on the left shows how rapidly aviation technology was advancing from the earlier biplane era. A huge Russian plane, The Land of the Soviets, a giant Tupolev landed at Sand Point in 1919 on a goodwill tour around the world. It tipped the scales at 17,050 pounds and had a wingspan of 93 feet. Its 2 engines each cranked out 600 horsepower so it was capable of speeds up to 125mph. Rumor has it that Boeing engineers came at night to check out the new technology as the plane was repaired in a Sand Point hangar. However there are no company records of this in the Boeing archives.

Naval Air Station Seattle



1. **Aerial View, 1930.** Courtesy of the Seattle Parks and Recreation.
2. **Constructing the Runway, 1930.** Courtesy of the US Navy.
3. **Building 9, the Barracks, 1930.** Courtesy of historylink.org.

Meanwhile in the 1930's the base was growing rapidly. This was the great depression and men rode the railroad out to Sand Point to help develop the airfield and its buildings. It was a huge public works project using WPA, Federal Emergency Relief Administration and CCC personnel and funds. Construction and development costs climbed to 1.3 million. On the last day of 1935 there were 17 buildings on the station. Marine Corps reserves also used the base although the Army had moved to Ft. Lewis. By 1938 there were 34 Buildings. The Navy numbered buildings as they were built. Hangar 1 is gone but Hangar 2 exists today as one of the few remaining hangars of this pre-WWII era. The last building was building 406, The Brig built in 1986, long after its need was gone and too young to qualify for the 50 year age needed for National listing.

NAS Seattle had grown to have bachelor and officer quarters housing, supply office, seaplane parking, and extensions to seaplane and land plane parking areas.

The lake was completely filled in and landing strips extended. The main runway was now 400 feet wide and 3,700 feet long.

All this preparation was fortuitous considering what happened next.



Pearl Harbor December 7, 1941 USS West Virginia
Courtesy of United States Navy

Pearl Harbor was attacked on December 7, 1941. Raise your hand if you remember where you were then that happened.

The communication first came into the radio operator on the base. He told the base Captain (CO) and then called Seattle radio stations. The base was on complete blackout. All windows were painted black and a machine gunner was placed on every roof. You can still see that black paint in the clearstory on hangar 2. All personnel were ordered back to base. It was a Sunday morning and folks we interviewed reported highway 99 full of men walking, some north to Sand Point and some south to Ft. Lewis.

As head of the 13th Naval District, NAS Seattle was now at the center of the fight for the Pacific Islands and the protection of the west coast and Alaska.



The base was a busy place during the war repairing planes and equipment, training men and women as they now had 322 enlisted WAVES and 36 officers and a military hospital to receive wounded from the Pacific theatre. There were more than 150 shops on the base covering everything from propellers to painting; torpedoes to be prepared in the Torpedo Shop for planes and ships, patrol bombers to be overhauled and flying boats (PBV's) for maintenance and overhaul. Pilots trained on escape techniques in the Dilbert Dunker in the pool behind the auditorium. These pictures show the diversity the Navy was just beginning to introduce into the ranks. Carriers bound for the Bremerton Navy Yard for maintenance and repair would fly their planes to NAS Seattle.



Bonds. Raised funds for war effort. Jackson Street jazz scene on weekends. Courtesy of History Link

In a conscious effort to add minority members to the Navy, a band was recruited from the Chicago area. These musicians, called the Jive Bombers played downtown to raise funds for the war by selling War Bonds. On weekends they played in jazz clubs in the Jackson Street neighborhood and became the core of Seattle's early jazz scene.



US Navy Scouting 4 engine patrol plane 1939, XPB2Y-1
Courtesy University of Washington Special Collections

PBY's were called "Flying Boats." They were one of the most widely used seaplanes in WWII.



PBYs on tarmac at NAS courtesy UW Special Collections

PBY's were used as a patrol bomber, in anti-submarine warfare and as a search and rescue boat since they could land on water. Here they are pictured pulled out on the tarmac at Sand Point.

remembering the FIRST HANGERS and RAMI



Planes on tarmac 1957 courtesy of US Navy

Tarmac



Torpedo Planes of Air Group 10 Sand Point 1944
Courtesy National Archives

Small submarines came through the locks into Lake Washington. These planes trained with dummy torpedo drops. The story goes that they were to practice hitting a sub off Sand Point and one managed to hit and knock off the periscope. They also buzzed ferries in the Sound. This group, Air Group 10, was stationed at Sand Point later. Later they hit and destroyed 37 Japanese ships in Truk Lagoon in the Central Pacific Ocean. Today this area is one of the premier dive spots in the world because of the sunken wrecks.

Conversion to Warren G. Magnuson Park and the Sand Point Historic District



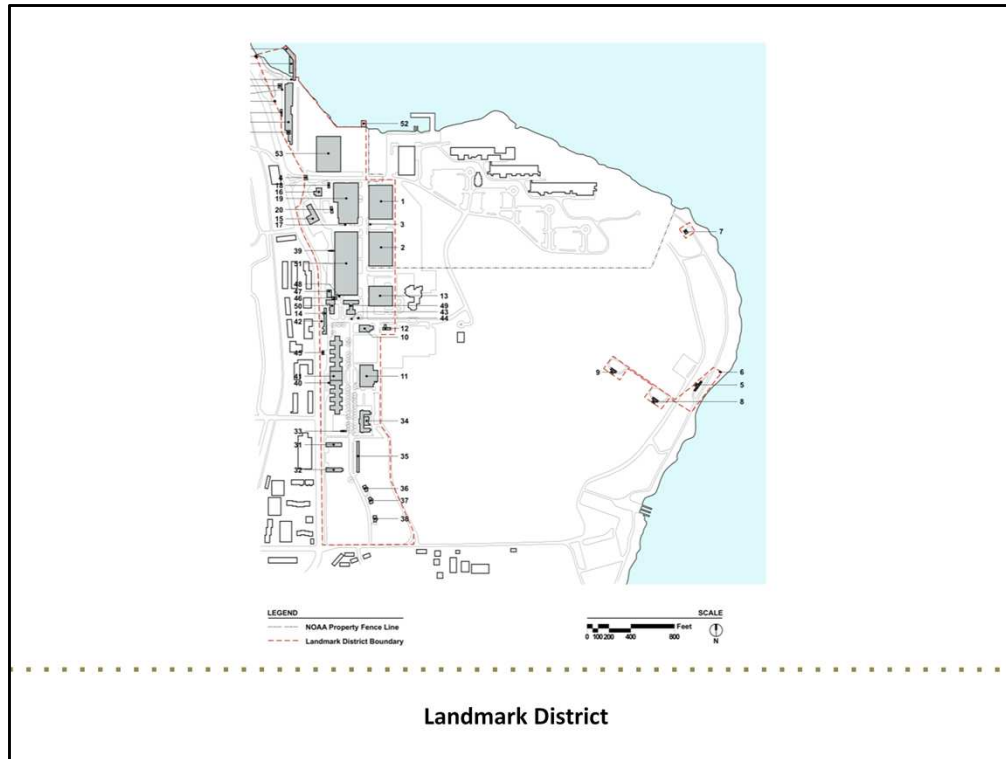
1. Construction of NOAA, 1982. Courtesy of Seattle Parks and Recreation.

2. Warren G. Magnuson Park Aerial, 2000. Courtesy of Seattle Parks and Recreation.

In the early 1970's the Navy declared part of the base surplus. This was the landing fields and shoreline area. The base was used through the Korean War for military repair and training but plane technology had changed so much the runways were now too short for the jets to land safely. The neighborhood had grown up around the base as the city expanded north and live ammunition had not been allowed on planes here for some time. These operations moved to the Navy Base on Whidbey Island. Naval Station. Senator Warren G. Magnuson and Councilmember Jeanette Williams led the effort to have the base returned to the citizens of Seattle and the park is named in his honor.



Runways were removed and ball fields and wetlands restored. In a way it is good the wetlands were cut and filled to make an airfield. Other wetlands in the city were used as dumps, Genesee and Montlake. This makes wetland restoration much more problematic..

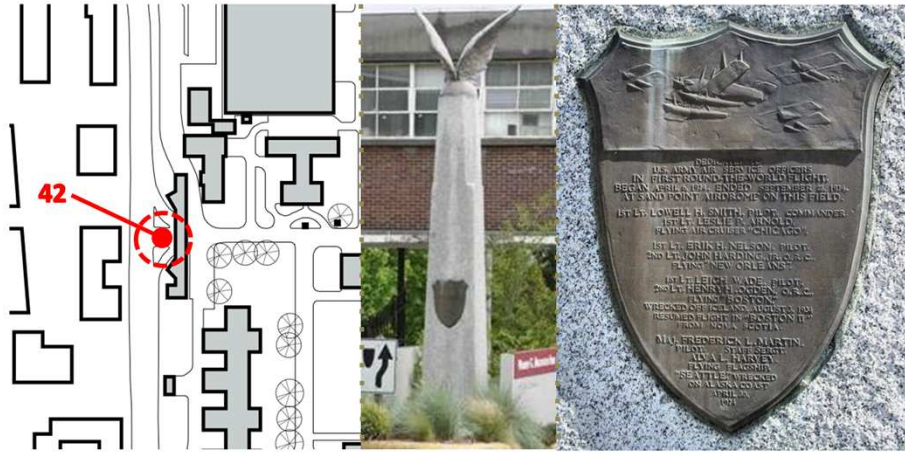


The base ceased operations in 1995 and all the buildings were turned over to the City of Seattle and the University of Washington.

The federal government allows for tax credits to help restore significant historic structures so the city reassessed the buildings for National Listing as a historic district. Our group continued this process of protection by bringing the district under City of Seattle historic preservation protection. This insures a public process when significant changes are proposed to the buildings or landscape within the district. The 90 acre district is unusual because it has 2 parts, a larger west area and a smaller east area near the water when ammunition bunkers stored supplies away from the base and included the officers beach area and wading pool. This was added to help visitors recall what had happened here in the past.

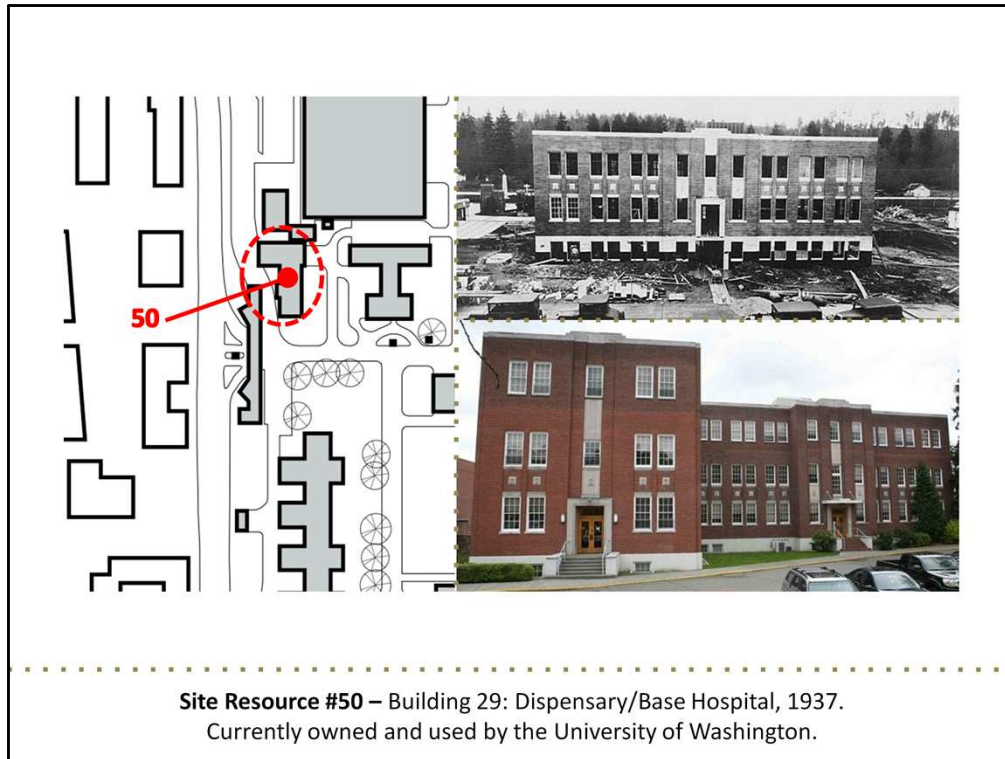
Sadly many visitors to the park today have no knowledge of this history.

Landmark District “Walking” Tour



Site Resource #42 – “Round-the-World” Flight Monument.

Now that you have heard a brief history of the Sand Point peninsula let's take a walking tour of what is there today to see. Drive North up Sand Point Way past Children's Hospital and turn right at the main entrance to the former base. Out in front is the monument erected in 1924 to commemorate that amazing first Round the World Flight. Drive under the gatehouse and past the guard station and look left.

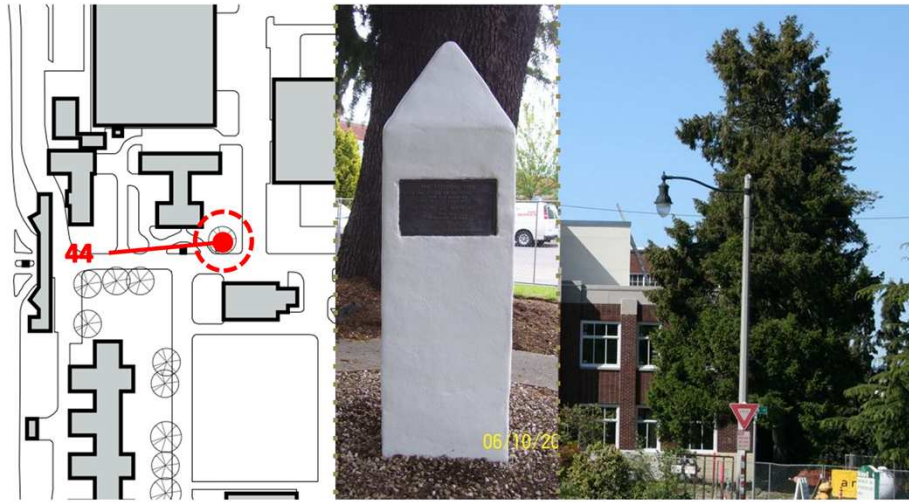


Site Resource #50 – Building 29: Dispensary/Base Hospital, 1937.
Currently owned and used by the University of Washington.

Here is the old base hospital. Notice the 3rd story was added later and the brick is a slightly different color. The staff and serpent medical symbol is above each ground floor window. Many wounded veterans and their families have been served here over the years. Physical exams were given here when you joined up. A recruiting office was in the gatehouse with an outdoor entry since for many years the base was closed to the public.

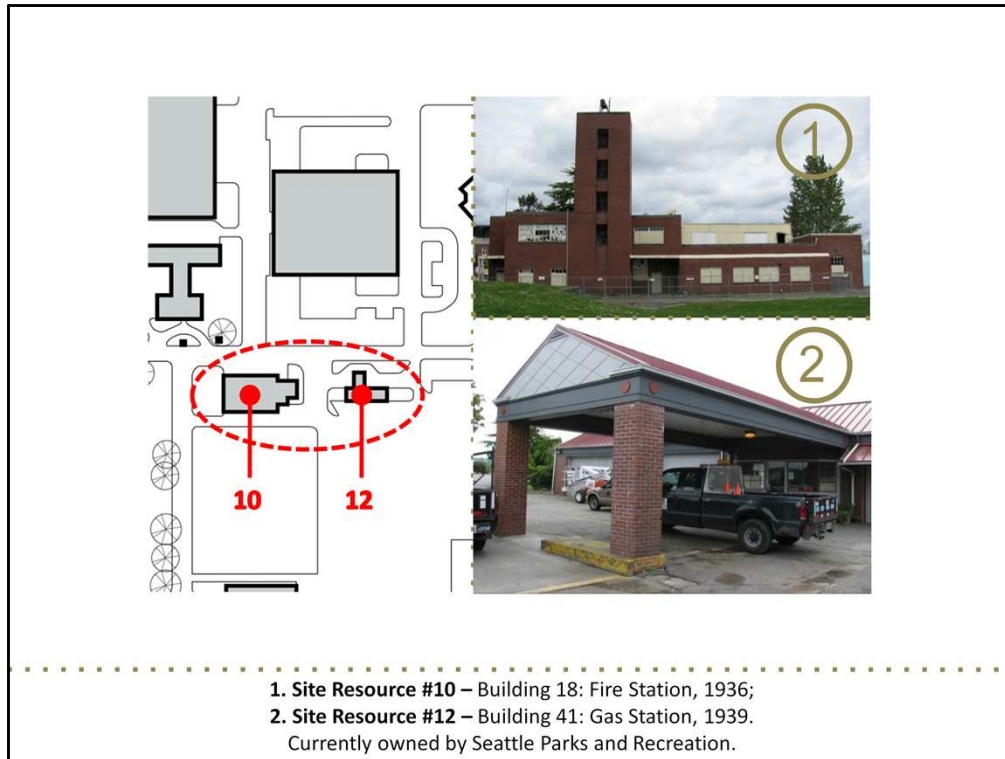


This the former Admiral's office when he was on base and the communications hub downstairs. The Admiral did not live on the base but had a house in Madrona. The flagpole is out in front and is still lowered on federal holidays. It currently houses a dental clinic for children and is beautifully restored inside.

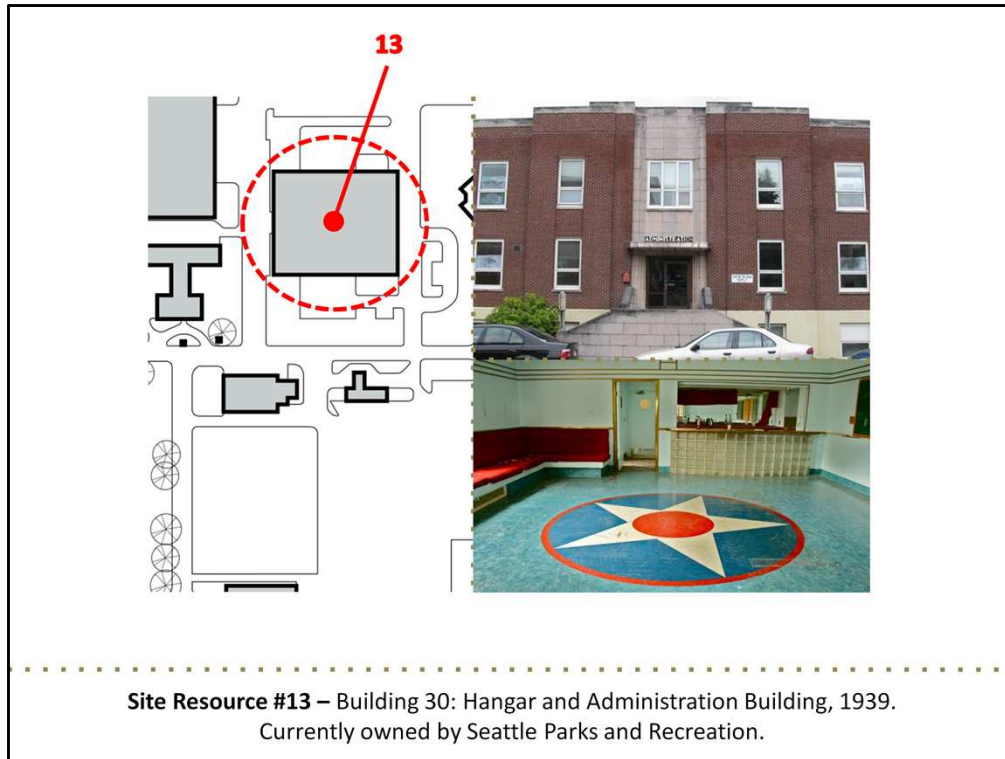


Site Resource #44 – Vietnam Memorial and Freedom Tree, 1972.

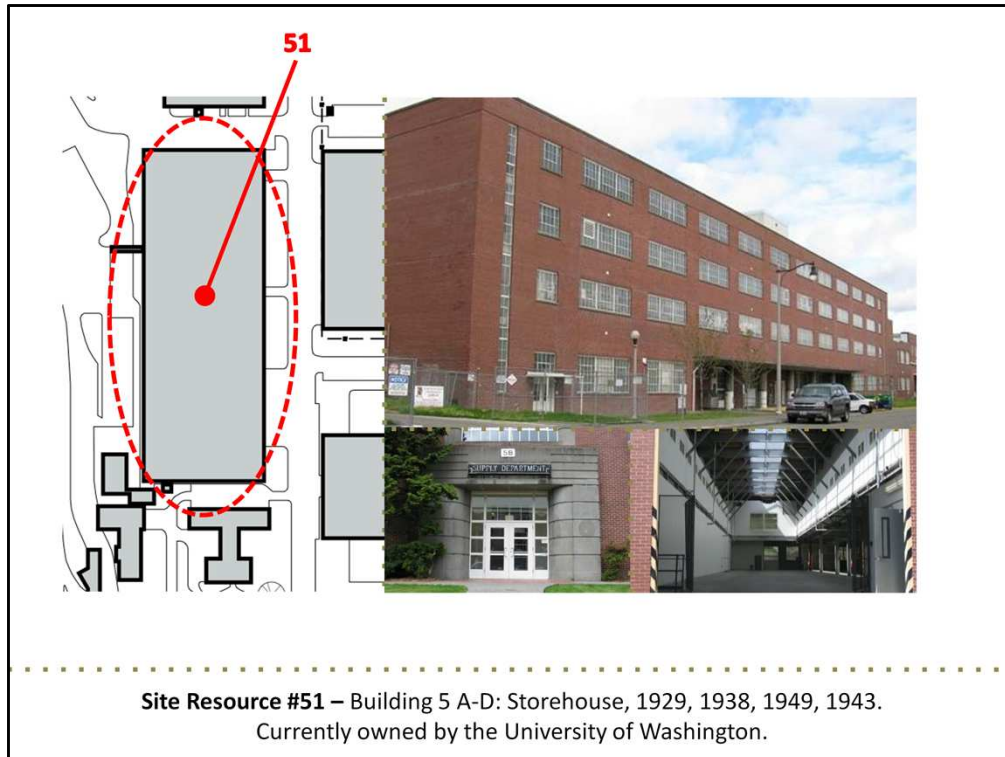
This small memorial was elected before the end of the Vietnam War to remember those Washington service men and woman still missing in action. It is at the base of the Freedom Tree, planted many years ago to honor our veterans.



Right across the street on what we call Main Street are the old fire station manned and ready when the base was in use and needed on several occasions when planes flipped on the runway or their brakes failed. The gas station pumped fuel for the planes. For many years the neighborhood heard taps and other duty calls played from atop the old hose drying tower. Parks is looking for a tenant for the firehouse.



This is Building 30, the administrative officer's CO's offices. It has been beautifully restored into artist studios and this area, an old Ready Room complete with bar, fireplace and beautiful parquet floor. The symbol on the floor is the pre-WWII air services insignia. The red circle was removed during WWII for fear it would be confused with the Japanese rising sun symbol on their planes. Notice the beautiful Art Deco lines and glass bricks. The fireplace is one of only two in the country in CO's offices.

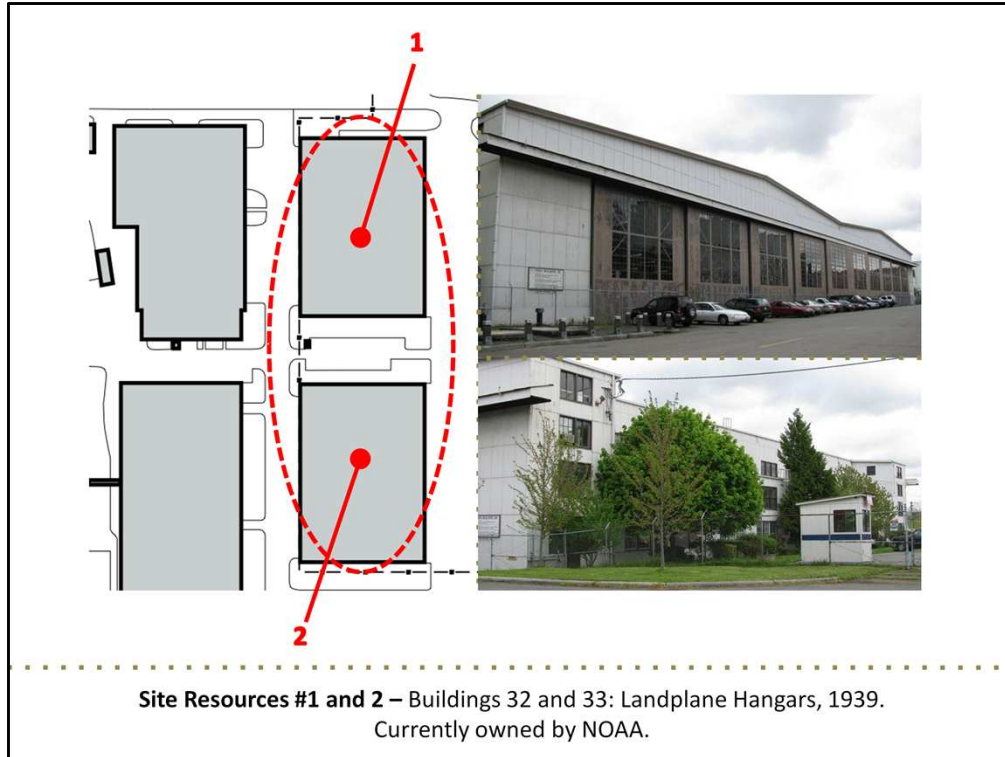


Building 5 is a large supply building built in four stages and currently restored and used by UW for design build classes and storage, including we think some of the Burke's Native American canoe collection. On the back side of this building is a depot for a spur to the train track, now the Burke Gilman trail used for walking and biking.

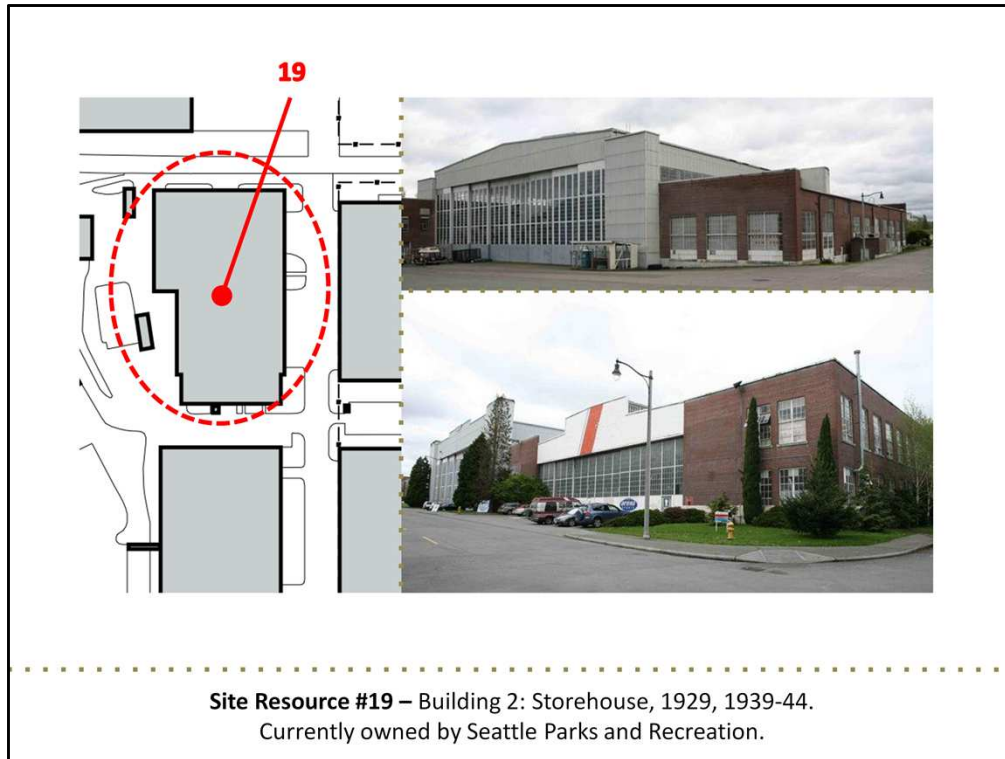


Operational Area – Style: Vernacular, Utilitarian.

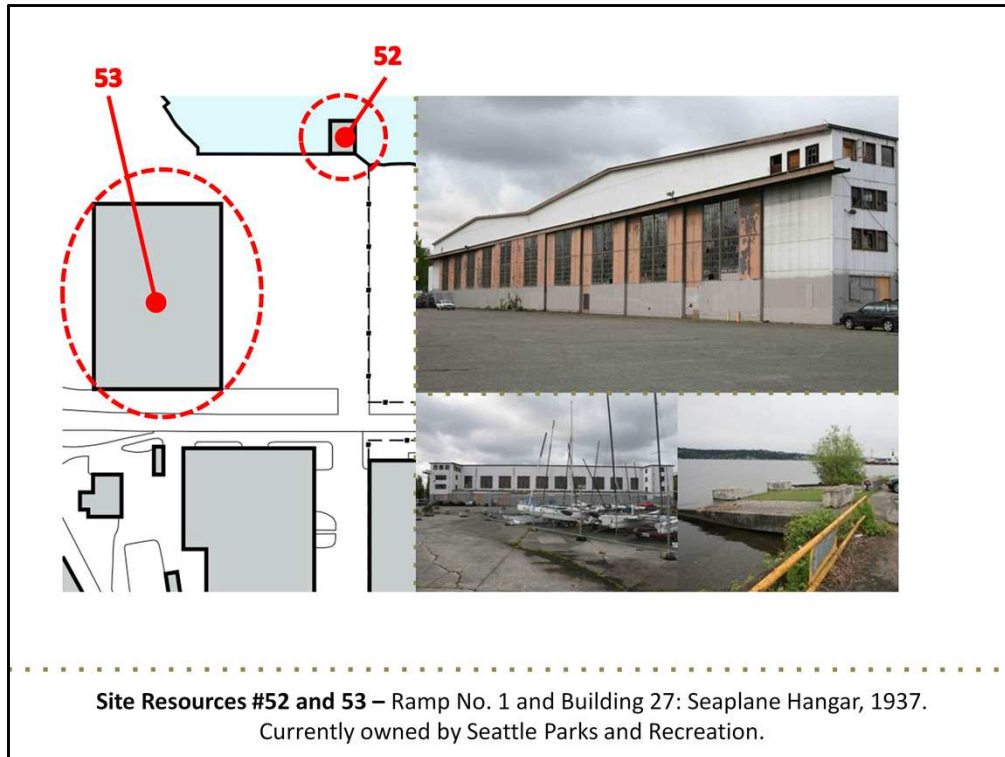
Across from this large supply building are two hangars now owned by NOAA but part of the historic district since both sides of the street are included in designations and the view to Lake Washington will be preserved as are other lake view corridors within the district.



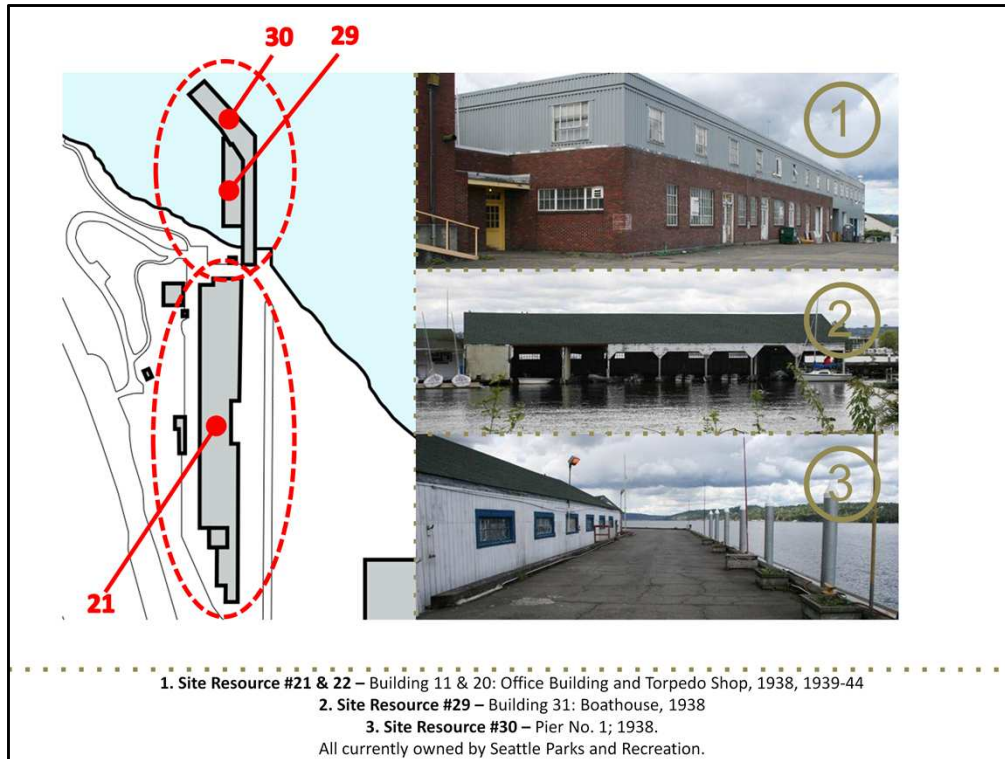
The back of NOAA hangars, face toward old runway.



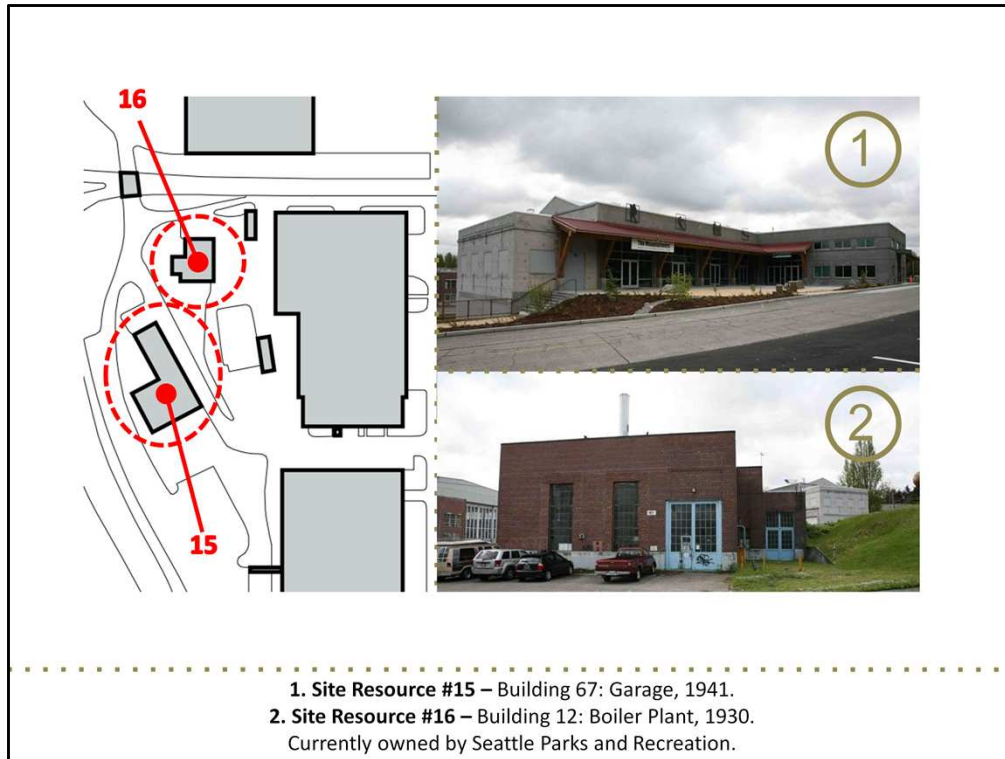
This is building 2 the oldest existing building on the base and with a beautiful Art Deco Chevron on the front. Currently unoccupied we hope someday to have a visitor and interpretative center in part of this building telling this history. On the far side is a “dope” storage building that housed the liquid plastic used to waterproof the cloth wings. Note the Coast Guard stripe on the front of the smaller hangar.



Hangar 27 is the seaplane hangar and has been restored by Arena Sports for indoor soccer and a gym. The dock and boathouse are used by Sail Sand Point non motorized sailboats.



The Waldorf High School currently occupies part of this building that was the Public Works building and the Torpedo Shop during Navy days.

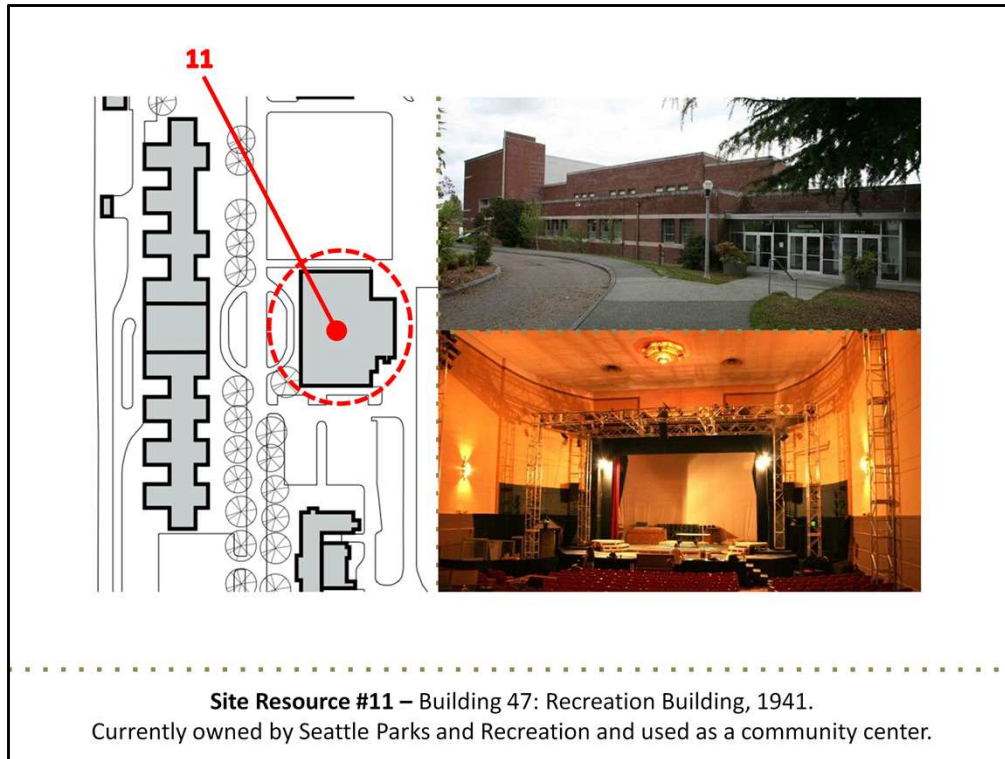


This is the old Motor Pool that is now the new Mountaineers Building on the top and the steam plant on the bottom that heated the whole base and was sandbagged for protection during WWII.

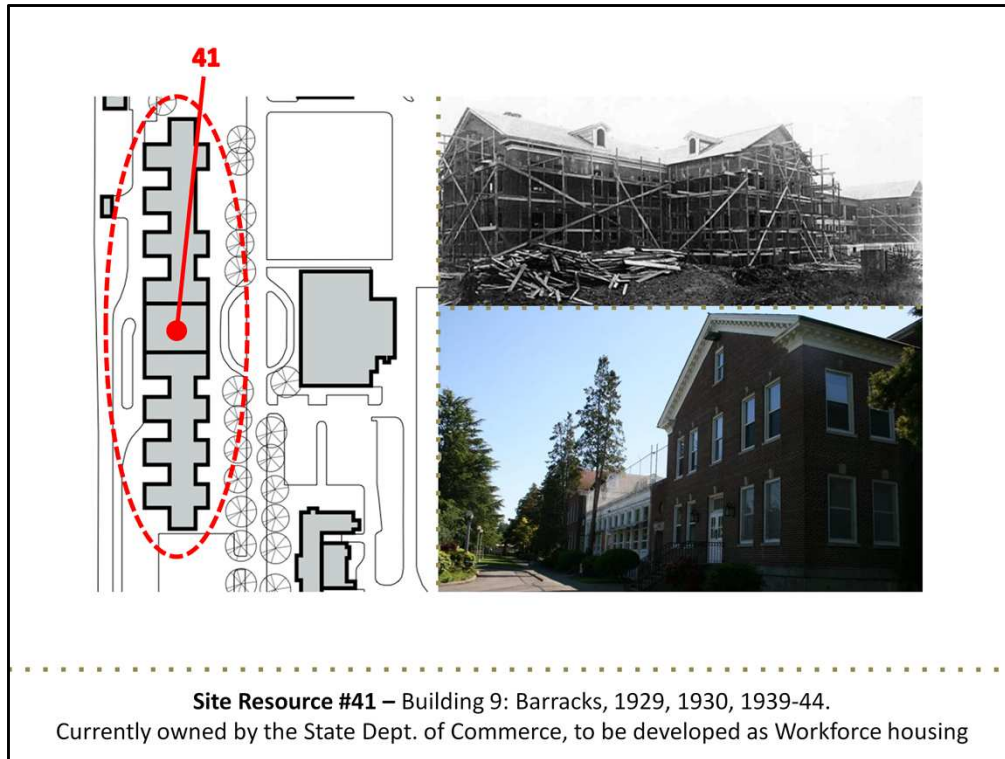


Recreational/Housing Area – Style:

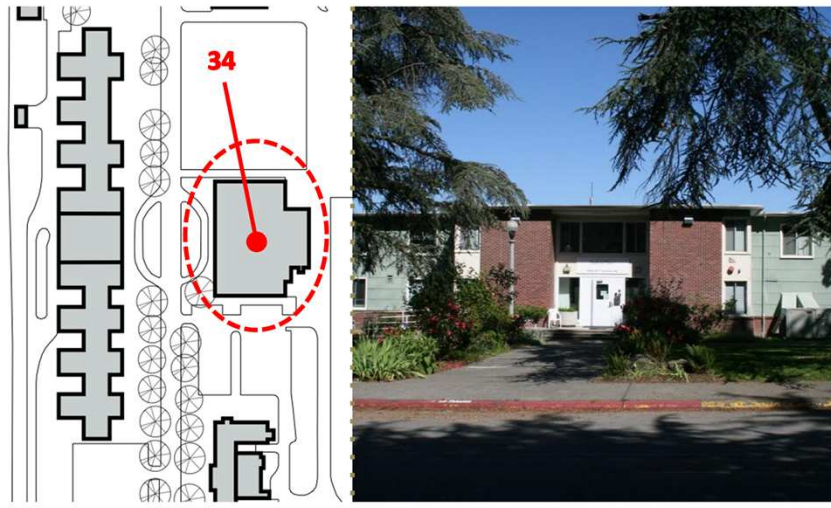
This is a beautiful shot of “Officers Row” and the Deodar Cedars. The curbs are hand rounded.



This Art Deco building houses the recreation center for the base including handball courts, basketball courts and a swimming pool used for pilot training on a Dilbert Dunder and no longer in use. The auditorium was used primarily for meetings and movie viewing. Now a theatre company leases it. The Seattle Parks run community center manages the basketball courts and common areas.

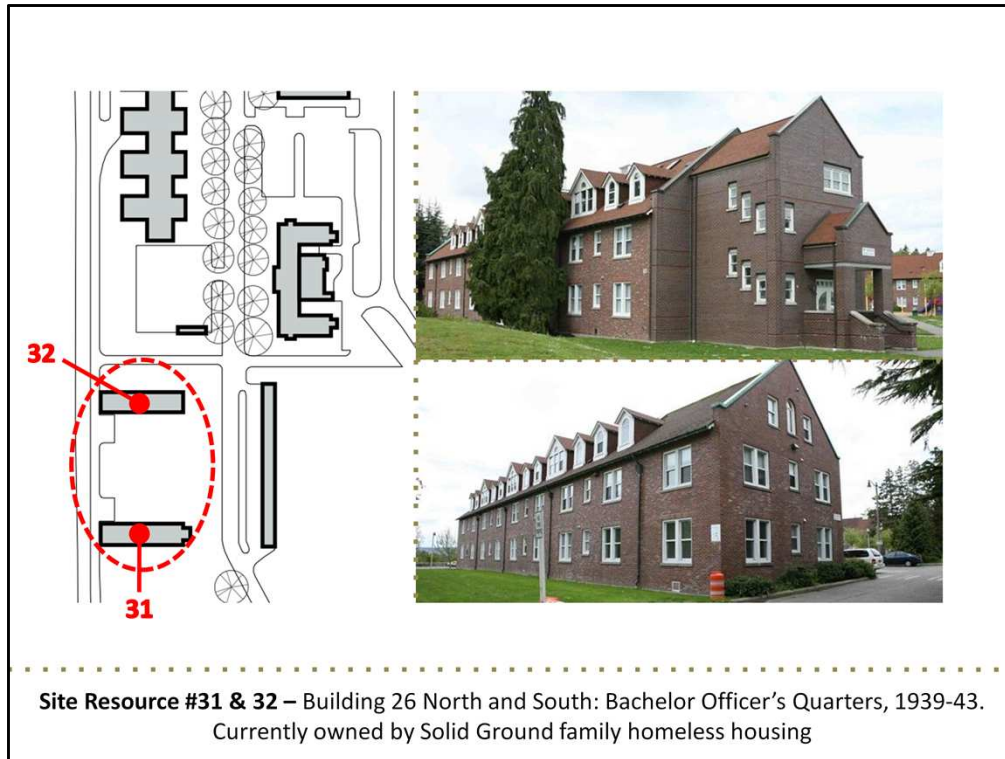


Building 9 is soon to be developed by the Department of Commerce into Workforce housing to serve lower income working people and veterans. It was built in 3 sections it was enlisted men's housing and had a military court on the north end, a chapel on the south, and the mess hall in the middle. The plan is to turn the mess hall into a clinic for park residents and others. The building is an example of Colonial Revival architecture.

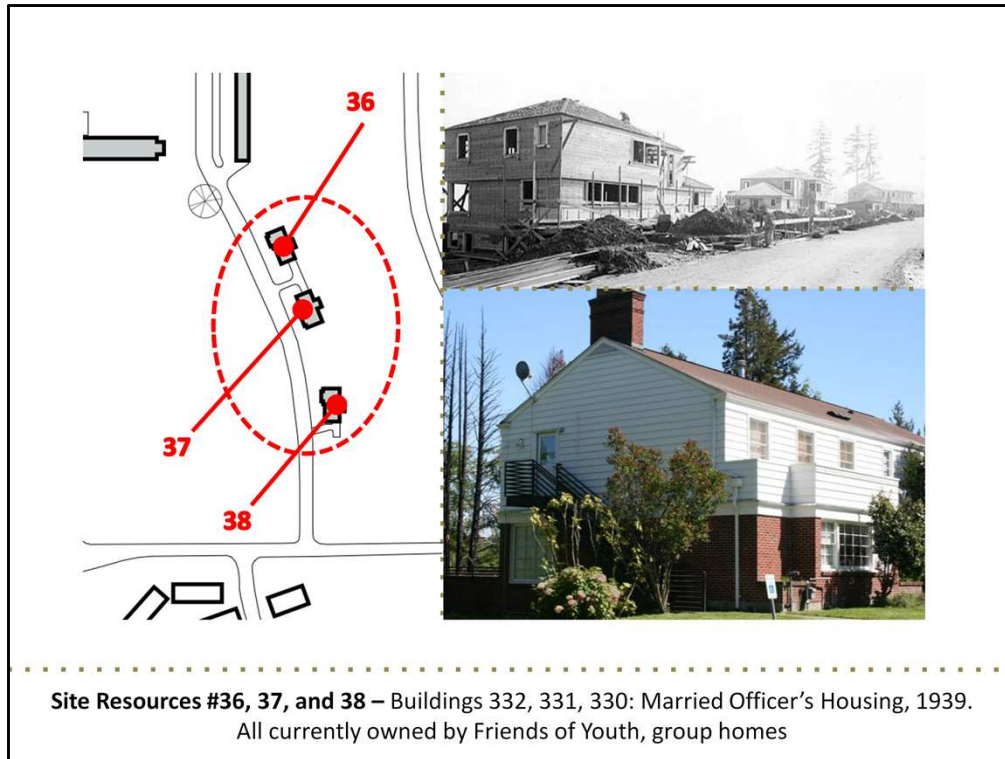


Site Resource #34 – Building 224: Junior Officer's Quarters, 1944.
Currently operated by Solid Ground, low income singles

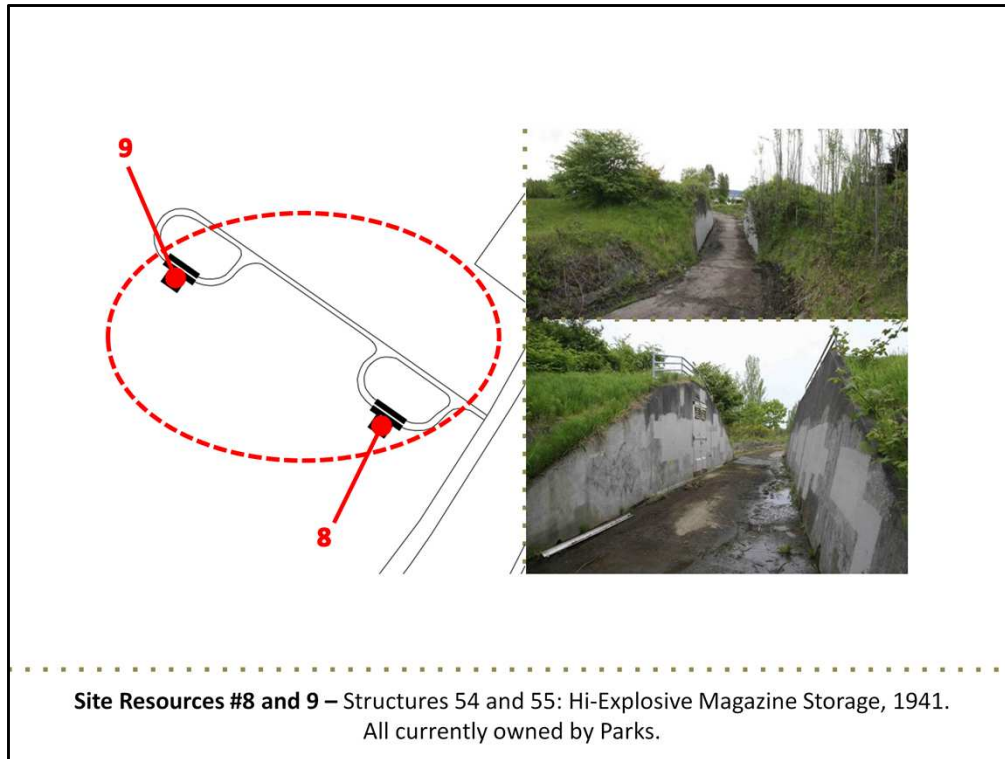
Across the street from Building 9 is more housing remodeled today to serve single low income adults. It is called Santos Place.



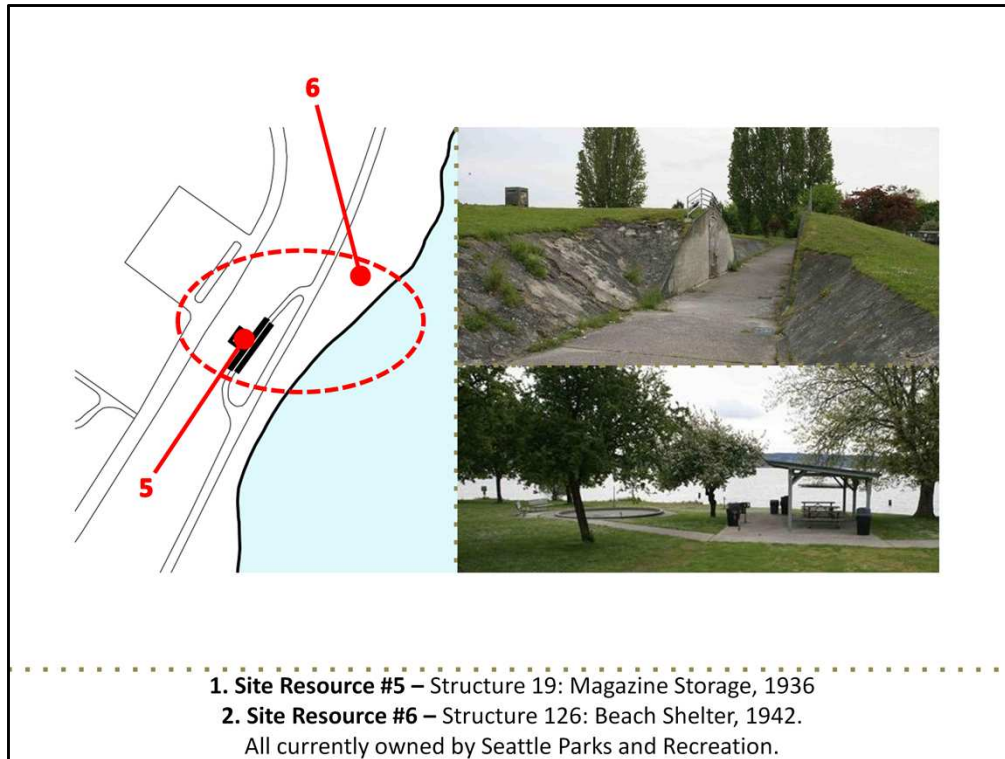
These buildings are housing for formerly homeless families. In Navy days they were the BOQ, Bachelor Officers Quarters. The Officer’s Club that was located in the middle was gutted by an early morning fire on May 11, 1990 and totally destroyed. Only fond memories remain of the graceful old building site of thousands of receptions, parties and celebrations for Navy families, groups and associations throughout the Puget Sound area.



The final 3 buildings within the historic district are former married officer housing. They are now used as group homes for youngsters. One of the houses has young single mothers with infants under two years of age. They are managed by Friends of Youth and Youthcare.



We now turn left to travel down toward Lake Washington. We cross an area of ball fields and wetlands that during Navy times was completely paved for runways. Near the water and away from the housing, munitions were stored in bunkers. A Blast mound was just across just in case of an explosion. An Ordinance Man we interviewed said smelling was an important part of his daily rounds to check for leaks.



. This shows another type of underground ammunition storage and below the officers picnic beach and wading pool. There was an enlisted man's beach farther to the south. To get here families had to take a boat from the dock area in the Northshore around the shoreline and landing strips to the beach.

Criteria “A”



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1. “Round-the-World” Flight, April – September 1924
2. Landing of Charles Lindberg and the “Spirit of St. Louis”, 1927.

To become a historic district listed at the state and national level, buildings must be over 50 years of age and not changed much on the exterior. The City only requires a building be 25 years old. The site must also meet one of six criteria. Sand Point met four of the six: Criteria A, it was the site of an important event in the history of the nation or City. In this case the Round the World Flight and Charles Lindberg’s visit were important events in early aviation history.

Criteria “C”



The aerial view of the Air Station, 1953.

Criteria C, the site was important in political , economic or military history. As the headquarters for the 13th Naval Division, Sand Point played a critical part in the Pacific theater in WWII and trained over 15,000 aviators.

Criteria “D”



1. Art Deco Signage on Building 30.
2. Interior of the Building 2 Hangar.

Criteria D, it was the site of significant architectural buildings both examples of Art Deco and early and rare examples of pre WWII hangars.

Criteria “F”



View Corridor Leading to Building 25.

And finally criteria F, it is an important and recognizable part of the community fabric. The only 2 it did not fill were buildings designed by a famous architect and home of a famous person.

Documenting these buildings and this history is a long, involved process. We began the nomination in 2010 and will finally get the legislation through the City Council this fall we hope. Design guidelines and controls and incentives are important steps in protecting the past for the future.

It has been officially known by many names throughout its history, but despite the names at the main gate, the peninsula jutting into the waters of Lake Washington has always been familiarly known as Sand Point. Long before it became a naval air station, Sand Point residents of the area flocked to the popular swimming beach on its south shore.

Official names began with the first lease of the property from King County for air station use. During the station's three-quarters of a century history, it has been designated:

Dec. 30, 1922	Naval Air Reserve Station, Seattle (also known as Army Air Service Seattle, with joint service use until 1926)
Nov. 22, 1928	Naval Air Station, Seattle
Oct. 1, 1931	Naval Air Reserve Station, Seattle
July 1, 1937	Naval Air Station, Seattle
July 1, 1970	Naval Support Activity, Seattle
April 1, 1982	Naval Station, Seattle
Oct. 10, 1986	Naval Station, Puget Sound

NAS SAND POINT HAS BEEN KNOWN AS ...

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. I hope now you know a bit more about the rich history of the Sand Point peninsula in NE Seattle. You will note in the many names the base was called, it was never called Sand Point by the Navy although it was always informally called Sand Point even during the war. The story told is that the Navy was concerned that mail would get mixed up with its base in Sandpoint (one word) Idaho and Navy men have assured me that was probably true. With WWII now over for seventy years, many classified documents are now being available to the public. I am sure we will be learning more about the "Secrets of Sand Point" and appreciating its place in history.

Today there is not one sign in the park telling about this history other than the plaque declaring NAS Seattle a nationally listed historic district. We hope to raise funds to get at least a sign over the gate this year reminding visitors of this important military and aviation history.

Although our city is young, its history spans the history of aviation and our Navy played a critical part in the war in the Pacific. Thank you for your attention.

Do you have questions or comments? I hope if you worked or served at Sand Point that you will sign up for our Remembering Sand Point Oral History project.