

The SWONA Walking Park

In 2008, members of SWONA created four little destinations to serve as an incentive for people to wend their way through our neighborhood. The idea is to walk from one spot to the other, taking different routes, discovering new aspects as you walk – a hexagonal window, a spray of lilies, a shady alley. Start anywhere and aim for one of the spots – the Rainier View Bench on a sunny day; the Poetry Post on a boring day – and then make your way to other spots. Each time you walk a different route, you create your very own “Walking Park.”

The map shows the location of each “Walking Park” spot and other diversions you might encounter on walks in the neighborhood and beyond. Puck’s Path and Chicken Run offer vehicle-free walks. In addition to taking 9th or 4th to commercial areas, you can depart south through the Decatur Pathway, west through Puck’s Path and the Back Door, or north via the Secret Steps.



Welcome Spot (1)

We turned a dangerous corner into a safe and inviting garden.

Poetry Post (2)

A whimsical piece of art at the opening of Decatur Pathway.



Caton Garden (3)

A strawberry-tree bordered refuge.

Rainier View (4)

A vantage point for Rainier on clear days.



Little Libraries

Visit one of these to brows the selection of books – for grown ups and children. Take a book, bring a book. Stay to chat.



Brenner Dynasty (5)

JJ Brenner came to Olympia in the late 1800s and started an oyster business. He hired Squaxin and Japanese women to harvest in Mud Bay. When pollution destroyed the tiny Olympia oyster, Brenner shifted to Pacific oysters. The oysters were barged at low tide for processing in a building now remodeled as Bayview Market. JJ’s first modest home at 1015 - 4th is one of the oldest on the West-side. Later, as successful oystermen, Brenner and his son Earl built neighboring houses on Sherman Street, overlooking the scene below whence they derived their wealth.



Black Walnut at ABC House (7)

The Alex Berkman Collective (aka ABC house) was part of the Black Walnut Collective, named after the huge tree behind the house. Socially conscious young people opposed to the Vietnam War and other imperialist adventures bought homes in West Olympia and formed them as trusts that endure to this day. The Food Conspiracy (which became Oly Food Co-op), Hard Rain Printing and Revolting Women were early efforts born of collective energy here.



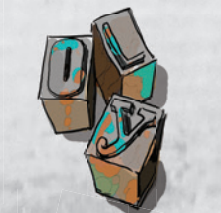
Old St. Pete's (8)

Most native Olympians were born in this building, a hospital until 1970. Doctors commissioned the mid-century modern Med Arts Building across the way in 1962.



Hospital Hill (9)

Still the preferred spot for sledding on snowy days when the City blocks off the hillside and strategically posted look-outs scan for cars as their pals careen down 5th Avenue.



Dohm house and Sherwood Press (10)

Edward Dohm, a surveyor for the state, built the Dutch Revival house in 1922 for his wife Estelle. At that time the waters of the Capitol estuary came all the way to the bottom of the bluff where the children swam and canoed. Later, Edward and his daughter Jocelyn built the Sherwood Press where Jocelyn operated a letter press from 1940 to 2003 when she mentored a young assistant who became her successor. [www.thesherwoodpress.wordpress.com]



Nixon Resigns BBQ (11)

Only a ghostly echo remains of the Aug. 9, 1974 BBQ that brought SW neighbors together to celebrate the end of a corrupt presidency.



West Central Park (14)

First there was the Rowland Lumber building. Then the city demolished the building and a small park materialized overnight -- only to be demolished by the City. Then the City approved a plan for a 7-11 convenience store – only to have the approval demolished in a 2-year fight led by organized residents of the neighborhood. This made possible the purchase of the property for a Community Park brimming over with flowers, fruits, unique gardens, offering a farmers market, art and music fairs, summertime movies and more. This park is imagined and created by the community and it shows. Take note of the pervious surface the Park Board chose for all driveways and parking areas. {Volunteer for the Board or to help? www.aparkforum.org}



Strawberry Fields (15)

The westside once was dotted with strawberry fields and the 1920s house behind the hedge was among them. During WWII soldiers from Ft. Lewis camped on the property.



Fantasy Lane (18)

Peek into this normal city lot made magical by overhanging trees, trailing vines and fragrant roses – a place where fairies might dwell.



Judge Walter and Othilia Carroll Beals (19)

Walter and Othilia both practiced law and served as judges in Washington state. Walter went to Germany in 1946 to preside at the Nuremburg Trials. Othilia was in the Women’s Suffrage Movement in New Orleans before she came to Washington. The couple lived at Westhillsyde until their deaths, his in 1960 and hers in 1970 at age 94.



Bean Dynasty (20)

Earl Bean who started Olympia Supply Company in 1906 lived in the unique house at the right angle turn of 9th Avenue. Bean descendants ran the store for the next 111 years. Earl’s son Ben - known for flamboyant parties – later lived on 11th Ct. Earl’s grandsons resided at 1705 - 8th where they started the Decatur Raiders (reincarnated in 2010 to fight against opening Decatur St. to Highway 101) and generally lived the perfect boys’ life – camping out in wilds now paved over for Capitol Mall.



Secret Stairs (path)

Down Sherman to Harrison or West Bay Drive. Walk back via the Garfield Nature Trail (West Bay to Rogers).



Chicken Run (path)

This alley has been home to generations of chickens, an annual group yard sale, commingling neighbors. It’s known for being hospitable to kids learning to ride bikes.



Decatur Pathway Park (path)

This dedicated bike-pedestrian path takes you from the neighborhood to Courthouse Hill, SPSCC and beyond. SWONA members put in landscaping and got lighting installed. Each year SWONA members serve doughnuts early in the morning on Bike-to-Work Day. To help with maintenance email swona2007@yahoo.com



Puck's Path (path)

Look closely to enter this pedestrian access from Fern through the park to Decatur. Puck is the name of the SWONA possum – out and about despite the traffic!



A Back Door (path)

Walk or bike down Fern St all the way to 16th to discover an opening to the Auto Mall that can lead you to a bakery, coffee shops and the Barnes & Noble shop area.

Be sure to walk the alleys, smell the flowers, remark the presence of unusual architectural features. For detail on historic SW houses go to <https://olympiahistory.org/interactive-map-where-are-we/>



Access through office park to:

- SFSCC
- Courthouse
- Point's south and east

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 Welcome Spot | 11 Nixon Resigns BBQ | 22 Decatur Woods Park |
| 2 Poetry Post | 12 Double Doug Fir | 23 Wild Blackberry Patch |
| 3 Caton Garden | 13 Ballot Box | 24 Percival Utility Bridge |
| 4 Rainier View | 14 West Central Park | 25 Homeless Forest |
| 5 Brenner Homes | 15 Strawberry Fields | 26 Superswale |
| 6 Bat Flight at Dusk | 16 Wishing Tree | |
| 7 Black Walnut at ABC House | 17 Lucky Spot | |
| 8 Old St. Pete's | 18 Fantasy Lane | |
| 9 Hospital Hill | 19 Judge Walter Beals Home | |
| 10 Dohm Home & Sherwood Press | 20 Earl Bean Home | |
| | 21 December Light Show | |

WALKER'S GUIDE

ICONS

- ALLEY/PATH
- #47 BUS STOP
- CAPITOL VIEW
- CHURCH
- LITTLE LIBRARY