

BACKGROUND

Point Defiance Park has been a Puget Sound landmark since 1888 when U.S. President Grover Cleveland signed a bill granting Tacoma the right to use 640 acres of undeveloped federal military reservation as a city park. In 1890, developers completed a streetcar line to Point Defiance and cleared sections of the Park near the Pearl Street entrance for gardens and picnic areas. The Park, while owned by the City of Tacoma, has been operated and cared for by Metro Parks Tacoma since the Park District was formed in 1907.

Point Defiance Park is unique among urban parks on the north Pacific coast because its 560-acre forest includes about 500 acres of old-growth contained by a massive sea cliff and beach system. This rare urban forest is an enormously valuable asset to the citizens of Tacoma and to the region: both for the ecosystem it provides and for the unique recreational and educational opportunities it affords Park visitors. Over the years gardens, zoological facilities and a living history museum have been added to provide an eclectic experience that appeal to local and regional audiences.

Point Defiance Park's centennial year – 2005 – provided Metro Parks Tacoma an occasion to review and update the original Park Master Plan, created by Hare & Hare in 1911. Additionally, redevelopment of the former Asarco smelter site located just east of Point Defiance Park, presented an opportunity to fulfill a longstanding community desire to link Point Defiance with the Ruston Way waterfront and enhance Park experiences.

In 2007, Metro Parks Tacoma conducted a public study of the Point Defiance area and the Board adopted an updated Preferred Concept Plan, which recognized areas of underdevelopment in the Park. That same year, a Revenue Task Force explored alternative revenue generating ideas and the development of these emerged as a priority. As a result of these conversations and extensive community planning work, Metro Parks Tacoma created a Master Development Plan for the underdeveloped southeast portion of the Park in 2010.

In 2011, the City of Tacoma and Point Ruston executed an agreement to finish the Waterwalk Promenade extension of Ruston Way through Point Ruston. The same year, Metro Parks Tacoma contracted for design work to extend the promenade to Point Defiance Park.

Destination Point Defiance is a comprehensive planning initiative to undertake park-wide activity and capital projects that ensure consistency in design, scheduling, community outreach and efficiency. Capital project planning includes developing and completing a half-mile section of the promenade from Ruston Way to Point Defiance, restoring the Marina basin, creating a new waterfront park on the peninsula, enhancing experiences and services in the 28-acre underdeveloped southeast portion of the Park and updating both Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium and Fort Nisqually Living History Museum. Additional planning efforts support stewardship, restoration, access, programs, academics, parks and recreation and retail.

Just as Point Defiance Park draws many different visitors for many different reasons, Destination Point Defiance affects many different stakeholders, in different ways and for different reasons. The ability of Metro Parks Tacoma to cooperatively operate and promote Point Defiance Park to these audiences over time will affect the success of Destination Point Defiance and the positioning of the Park and its attractions, activities and facilities now and for the future.



Courtesy Jean Insel Robeson

First Park Superintendent, Ebenezer R. Roberts

HISTORICAL CONTEXT / CULTURE AND HERITAGE

In 1888 President Grover Cleveland signs a bill granting Tacoma the right to use the 640 acres of Point Defiance for park purposes.

1. Rustic bridge is constructed to provide access to the forested area of the park.



Courtesy Tacoma Public Library

3. Commissioners authorize construction of the Point Defiance Greenhouse for propagation and exhibition.



5. Federal Government formally deeds Point Defiance Park to the City.



Courtesy Tacoma Public Library

7. The Nereides Baths, Tacoma's first indoor swimming pool, opens with Puget Sound salt water heated to 80 degrees and rental bathing suits.

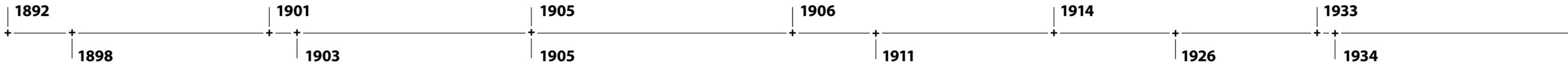


9. The Pagoda opens as a streetcar station.



Courtesy Tacoma Public Library

11. Funland opens at the entrance to the Park.



2. Commissioners authorize construction of the lodge for park superintendent Ebenezer Roberts and his family.



4. Octagonal Pavilion built on the waterfront providing boat rentals, refreshment stands and a restaurant.



6. Commissioners authorize funding to "fit up a proper place in Point Defiance Park for birds and animals." The Point Defiance Zoo is born.



8. Hare & Hare Master Plan is completed.



10. 2nd Boathouse Pavilion is completed.



12. With the efforts of the CCC and WPA, Fort Nisqually opens following relocation and restoration.

ABOUT POINT DEFIANCE PARK

13.
The WPA constructs a new boathouse to replace the octagonal pavilion.



1940

15.
The Aquarium relocates from the waterfront and the zoo becomes the Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium.



1963

17.
Fire destroys the boathouse pavilion.



1984

19.
The boathouse is rebuilt along with a new octagonal restaurant that is reflective of the original 1903 boathouse.



1988

21.
The Tacoma Public School District's Science and Math Institute is established within the Park.



COURTESY TACOMA SCHOOL DISTRICT

2009

23.
Remediation of the peninsula begins with plans for a pedestrian link to Point Ruston and future development of the Triangle.



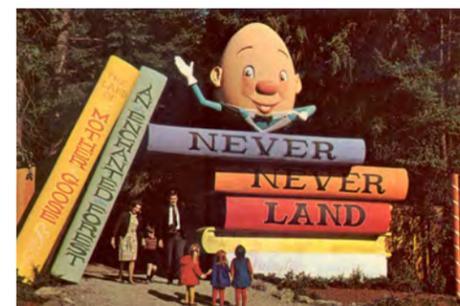
2012



Courtesy Russ Carmack

14.
Previously referred to as the picnic beach or the sand spit, Owen Beach is officially named in honor of the longest serving Metro Parks employee, Floyd Owen.

1959



1964

16.
Never Never Land and Camp 6 Logging Museum open.



1986

18.
The first Taste of Tacoma is held at Point Defiance Park.



2003

20.
Fort Nisqually's 1855 Factor's House – a National Historic Landmark – is restored.



2011

22.
The American Planning Association names Point Defiance Park one of the Great Places in America.



Courtesy Aaron Locke, BCRA

24.
After restoration following an arson fire, the Pagoda is named to the National Register of Historic Places.

2014