Game Today! At Alki Point Ball Grounds

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(Note to the Reader: Alki or Alki Point designates a neighborhood of Seattle, Washington facing Elliott Bay and Puget Sound located on the northwest corner of the Duwamish Peninsula (<u>location map – Appendix A</u>). A feature of Alki is Alki Point, the western most land projection of the Alki area into Puget Sound. Unless the context indicates otherwise Alki and Alki Point are used interchangeably to designate the same neighborhood.)

Abstract

Alki hosted, in 1891 at Alki Point, a two game match play baseball season. This would mark the beginning of the emergence of Alki from an agricultural backwater to a unique urban community in the Seattle region based upon recreation and leisure time activities. Increasing incomes, available leisure time and a reappraisal of the value of leisure time activities resulting from urbanization and industrialization enabled this transition. The legacy of this transition provides Alki its unique residential character which persists to this day.

Game Today

The Alki neighborhood's present day residential-recreational character can be traced to when Alki first hosted match play baseball. Baseball in its early years, before the advent of leagues, league schedules and paid professional players, was characterized by 'match game' play.¹ A ball club would issue a challenge to all others. If the challenge was accepted a 'match game', much like a tennis match between friends, would then be scheduled for a designated time and place. A match game would be as much a social event as a sporting contest. Often the designated place was referred to as a 'grounds'. It would only be later that the word or phrase stadium, ballpark or ballfield would come into common use.

Batting Practice

Seattle's first noted match play baseball game took place May 5, 1877.² A group of Seattle players accepted the Newcastle baseball club challenge. The visitors hailed from the coal mining district southeast of Lake Washington. Though the Seattle club, in a one-sided contest, was triumphant, the local press failed to report the game's final score. Fifteen years after the fact, the same newspaper enlightened its readers;

"At the end of the sixth inning they (the Newcastle club) had not seen second base, while ... (Seattle) had piled up thirty-five runs. The visitors knew they had enough and refused to play any longer." ³

This early Seattle team would become known as the Alkis. Though the Seattle club derived its moniker from Alki Point the game was not played there. The game was played on the grounds of the Territorial University of Washington, then located at what is known today as downtown Seattle's Metropolitan Tract or Rainier Square and immediate environs.⁴

Batter Up!

At Alki Point on Sunday May 31, 1891 the Seattle Telegraphers entertained the Tacoma Telegraphers. The Seattle club was victorious, 19–5. The game was called in the top of the ninth inning "because the supply of balls gave out, no less than three being lost." The

Seattle and Tacoma Telegraphers Team Line Ups - May 31, 1891

Seattle.	Tacoma.
Coombs, p.	Briggs, p.
Heury, c.	Hamilton, 1. 1.
Adams, 1b.	Wesler, 1b.
Baxter, 2b.	Bell, r. f.
Booth, ss.	Murphy, c. f.
Hanson 3b.	Cromwell, c.
Goodfellow, l. f.	Morris, 3b.
Forehand, c. f.	Middleton, 2b.
O'Brien, r. f.	H. Briggs, ss.

From: Seattle Post-Intelligencer, Seattle, Washington Territory, June 1, 1891, Page 3. Accessed at: www.Chroniclingamerica.loc.gov 9/30/2017

Seattle and Tacoma team line-ups are shown to the left. No box score (a summary of hitting, pitching and fielding statistics by player and batting order) is known to exist. In keeping with amateur play customs of the time "... after the game the players, with a party of friends, adjourned to the picnic grounds, where refreshments were served by Mrs. V. Hall and Miss Hanson." From the game reporter we also learn that, in recognition of Alki Point's remoteness inaccessibility, except by boat, that

the ".... party returned home on the steam launch Halys, which had been chartered for the occasion."⁵

The full names of the players and their backgrounds are unknown. However, organization of baseball clubs around an occupational group or employer was common. One of the founding members of the earlier 1877 Seattle Alki baseball club was George D. Snow. At the founding of the Alkis' club he was manager of the local Western Union telegraph office.⁶ When the two Telegrapher clubs competed at Alki, in 1891, Snow was superintendent of Seattle's Fire Alarm Telegraph System.⁷ Presumably, given Snow's shared baseball and telegraph background, he played a role in sponsoring the Seattle Telegraphers baseball club and the May 31st contest.

The name Hanson, appearing in the Seattle line-up and as hostess for the after-game party is intriguing. When the Telegraphers clubs held their contest, the Alki Point estate was owned by a partnership of Knud Olson and Hans and Anna Hanson. Until the late 1890's the Olson and Hanson families were Alki's only residents. Use of Alki Point for a

baseball ground would have required the concurrence of Olson and the Hansons.⁸ The Hansons' son, Edmund (also known as Edward or E. C.), age 35 at game time, was a well-known bon vivant and man of chance. He would have been a prime candidate for participation in club-oriented sportsmanship activities, particularly if it involved regulated beverages and unregulated wagering. It is possible that he played third base for the Seattle Telegraphers and aided in securing permission to play at Alki Point. His younger and unmarried sister at game time, Daisy, age 21, may well have been the Miss Hanson who served as after-game party hostess.⁹

Hit Sign, Win Suit. 10

Within a month, Alki Point hosted its second known match play ball game. The competitors were teams from the dry goods and clothing merchants of *Gross Brothers* of Tacoma and *Toklas, Singerman and Company*, operators of a clothing store located in Seattle's Pioneer Square.¹¹ The clubs held their contest on June 28, 1891 with the *Gross Brothers* prevailing 25-7. Team line-ups and game statistics other than the final score are unknown. Local press reports suggest the lopsided score was due to the *Gross Brothers* team being "largely composed of professionals".¹² The veracity of such a claim needs to be questioned, for just two weeks before, the *Gross Brothers* fell, at Tacoma, to the *Toklas* ballclub 37-7.¹³

An unknown photographer recorded the game as shown below:

Alki Point Match Play Ball Game - June 28, 1891



From: Washington State Historical Society, Tacoma, WA. Catalog ID Number 2013.0.221 Photographer unknown.

Alki Point Match Play Ball Game – June 28, 1891

In the photograph above, according to notations written on the reverse, Jacobs is at bat. It is unknown for what team Jacobs played.

Shown are seven players in the field. Out of view to the left are the third baseman and left fielder. The pitcher is in full windup indicating that, at this stage, the two teams had rejected prohibitions upon the pitcher's delivery requiring underhanded pitching.

The batter is making use of a "round" bat. The distance between pitcher and batter is unknown but is probably 50 to 55 feet given that today's distance of 60.5 feet did not come into use until 1893 by the "major league" National League. The National League, also prohibited use of flat surface bats in 1893.

The catcher was not in a crouch at the time the pitcher was delivering his pitch indicating a different style of play than seen today. But the catcher is wearing a face mask (note the darkened area extending along the side of the catcher's head near the ear).

In the center right of the photograph one can see between the two rail fences the Alki Point post lantern and stake light. This light, as an aid to navigation, was maintained by the Hanson-Olson families, on behalf of predecessors of today's United States Coast Guard. The lantern and stake light was replaced in 1913 by the Alki Lighthouse. In the lower left corner is a survey marker indicating the initial point (or point from which all others are measured) of the 1891 Plat of Alki Point (land subdivision map) used to subdivide the property jointly owned by the Hanson and Olson families.

Like the earlier Telegraphers' contest, upon game conclusion, ".... at the picnic grounds an elaborate luncheon was served" but unlike the earlier contest. "later in the afternoon the picnickers came into the city (presumably on the barge and boat they arrived on) and made an inspection of Toklas. Singerman and Company's magnificent establishment...". Thus, early in the history of Alki Point baseball we have recognition of the perceived commercial advantages of baseball sponsorship. Such sponsorship, however, did not result in a lasting record of the players' batting, fielding and pitching statistics or identification of the accused "professionals".14

In Seattle, the Toklas, Singerman and Company store was managed by one of its owners Ferdinand Toklas. 15 Toklas, like the Gross Brothers operating the Tacoma store, was formerly of San Francisco. When taking over management of the Seattle store, Toklas brought his family from San including Francisco his teenage daughter Alice B. Toklas. Alice would

study music at the University of Washington. In ensuing years, she would become Gertrude Stein's life partner, join Gertrude as a member of Paris' avant-garde redefining art, culture, society and political boundaries and write a best-selling cookbook. Did Alice Toklas attend the ballgame her father sponsored that Sunday morning? Probably not. In her autobiography she notes that she returned to San Francisco "during her vacation" (presumably at the school year's conclusion). Sadly, for Alki Point's potential claim to fame, Alice was likely in San Francisco at the merchants' game time.

The clothing merchants' game appears to have brought to a conclusion the 1891 match play season. No record of further match play at Alki has been found. But baseball play did continue. In the season of 1892, nearly a year to the day after the Telegraphers' game, the steamer 'Perhaps' brought to the Alki Point shores the Weewyck Chautauqua social circle to pass the afternoon with "lawn tennis and baseball till time for dinner". A week later the Seattle Plymouth Congregational Church Sunday School traveled to Alki

Point, on the steamer 'Myrtle', where, "the afternoon was spent in baseball, two games being played, and tennis. When these sports were over lunch was much enjoyed." ¹⁷

Extra Innings

Alki Point's recreational reputation was being established. In the same summer of 1892, efforts were made to establish an Alki Point race track, just west and south of what would later become the Alki Lighthouse. What sort of racing was never stated but given the era it would most likely have been horse racing. Track advocates noted that the location was grand and that "a full and sweeping view of the Sound is obtained; one can see the city of Seattle, and looking the other way, almost to Tacoma, while in the west tower the Olympics and in the east the Cascades, with Mount Rainer standing high above all other peaks." To overcome Alki Point's land based entry barriers, promoters suggested, "a driveway could be built from West Seattle around the beach to the point, which would soon become as popular a driving boulevard...". The race track was never realized but the suggested driveway was constructed in 1907 along with extension of the Seattle street car system from the Duwamish Head (the most northern point of the Duwamish Peninsula; see Appendix A map) along Alki Avenue.

The Alki Point estate ownership was divided between its two partners beginning in late 1891. In turn, the Hansons elected to distribute their holdings among their five children beginning in 1893 while Olson and his children held onto their land holding as a single entity. The land ownership division resulted in a checkerboard ownership pattern, first between the Hanson and Olson families and then among the Hanson children. Given the diversity of ownership, no single land holding existed to permit the establishment of a ball park or race track grounds. Ironically, Edward Hanson was given, by his parents, the land that formed the bulk of the 1891 match play ball grounds. It was later to become the Alki Lighthouse site.

The checkerboard land ownership pattern, however, did not preclude Alki's continued recreational land use and development. Original Alki settlers, in the early 1850's, envisioned a great city on the Alki shores. But that vision failed and for the next 40 years Alki remained a rural agricultural backwater across Elliott Bay from Seattle. Recreational development became Alki's new beginning. With the growth of Alki's Seattle neighbor, the increasing leisure time of Seattle's residents and a change in the perception of the value and worth of recreational activities Alki's future as a recreational mecca was assured.

Water-borne excursions to Alki were promoted as early as 1882.²¹ By 1898 camping had become an Alki attraction with its "beautiful groves and the lovely beach being (its)...great attractions and hundreds are in daily bathing."²² Within a few short years, Alki could boast of three resort hotels and inns; the South Alki and Stockade Hotels and Rose Lodge all catering to excursions, camping, vacationing and dining. An early example of promotion

of Alki excursions was the July 4th celebration of 1904. The owner of the Seattle-Alki ferry, A. B. C. Denniston took on celebration sponsorship. No doubt Denniston concluded that such sponsorship would enhance ferry patronage. The celebration featured "baseball and all kinds of athletic games", fireworks show, and "a newly constructed band stand where music was to be furnished all day". Following the celebration, Denniston promised to arrange for the playing of music at the new band stand two or three nights a week.²³ July 4th and other celebratory events continue at contemporary Alki.

Alki featured an indoor swimming pool, opening in 1905, on the north shore adjacent to the original baseball grounds. There would be two other successor pools, with the last closing in 1953. Just beyond Alki, at Duwamish Head, the private amusement park, Luna Park, was opened in 1907.²⁴ Though short-lived, Luna Park introduced thousands to the Alki area; particularly the beach to Luna Park's west. The Seattle Auto and Driving Club celebrated recreational use of the motorcar before the motorcar's ascent as America's commuting vehicle of choice with its purchase, in 1907, of the Fir Lodge on mid 61st Avenue Southwest. The repurposed Fir Lodge was used by the Driving Club as its clubhouse and driving excursion terminus. Many years after the demise of the Driving Club, in 1950, the Fir Lodge structure would be converted into the Alki Homestead Restaurant.

Public recreational investments were undertaken. The year 1910 saw the Alki beach and adjacent land lots acquired between 58th and 65th Avenues Southwest, and set aside as a public shoreline and beach. Later years would see public beach ownership extended east beyond 58th Avenue Southwest. The park informally known today as Whale Tail, but first known as the Alki Playground, was acquired from Olson family interests in 1909, through public condemnation. Interestingly, the Whale Tale property was first developed as a park ballfield.²⁵ Alki's expansive nature preserve, Schmitz Park, was founded through a donation accepted in 1908.²⁶

By 1916 a merry-go-round was located at 61st Avenue Southwest at Alki Avenue. By the same year a dance hall and bathing pavilion was located on Alki Avenue at 60th Avenue Southwest.²⁷ An amusement park located on 63rd Avenue between today's Admiral Way and Beach Drive was proposed in the mid 1920's but land use regulations prevented its construction. The amusement park opponents' alternative of an Alki memorial park to commemorate Seattle's founding and its pioneers was then forgotten.²⁸

Wait 'Til Next Year

Baseball play never completely disappeared from the Alki scene. The baseball match games were played at a time when the national pastime was transitioning from an era of amateur gentlemen's club sportsmanship to a game of vicarious spectatorship of professional players. As part of that transition the Puget Sound Amateur Base Ball League was formed in 1891.²⁹ For the next season, the four team league featured the *West Seattle Ewings* playing on grounds on the highlands above Alki Point near today's West Seattle High School.³⁰ The team name was most probably taken from Thomas Ewing, President of the West Seattle Land and Improvement Company. The West Seattle Land and Improvement Company was West Seattle's prime real estate promoter and owner of the West Seattle Ferry, Cable Car and Electric Light Companies.

At Alki, children and young men³¹ inherited the baseball mantle. Into the 1910's the ball grounds used by the early match play clubs was used for ball play by children and teens in the manner before baseball became a game of gentlemen clubs.³² In following years, ball grounds continued to be provided at Whale Tail Park (a/k/a Alki Playground) and, starting in 1957, Bar-S Little League Field. The Bar-S ballfield was carved out of the site of the proposed 1892 horse racing tract. In keeping with Alki's early tradition of baseball sponsorship, the construction of the Bar-S ballfield was made possible by a donation from the Seattle Packing Company. The ballfield was named for the Company's product brand name.³³

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Alki Elementary School Baseball Team – June, 1926

From: Southwest Seattle Historical Society, Accession 2006.00. This photograph was most likely taken on the grounds of the Alki Elementary School with the school building in the background. The adjacent Alki Playground probably served as the team's home field. Team members are unknown.

The Hot Stove League

The 1891 match play baseball games marked Alki Point's new beginning and transition from agricultural backwater to a thriving urban community. The nation's urbanization and industrialization processes, at work in the Seattle region, resulted in two significant changes having long term influence over Alki's development. The first was that Alki Point was drawn into the Seattle growth web. Because of topography Alki had been nearly inaccessible except by water until the early 1890's when the first road (Bonaire Avenue Southwest³⁴) was constructed from Alki to the North Admiral district. Seattle's growth would both demand and improve Alki access. Alki Point would grow from a handful of residents in the late 1890's to 712 in 1910 and 2,018 in 1940.³⁵

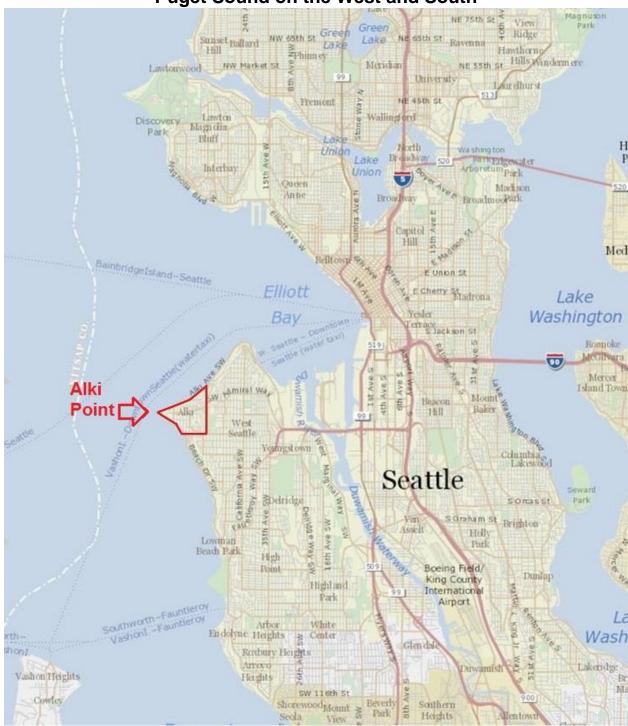
The second and greater urbanization and industrialization influence was the creation of a new mass market consumer product – recreation. With decreases in the length of the work week, increasing income, a perception that play and outdoor activities are a necessary part of a healthy life and community, and reappraisal of the value and worth of leisure time activities, the demand for passive and active recreational activities exploded.³⁶ Baseball, as a participant and spectator sport, shared in this new consumer product. As a team sport, baseball also benefited from the 'adjacency' created by urbanization. The ability to form and schedule a variety of baseball clubs to compete with one another was made significantly easier by having an urban place of a large number of persons that communicated with one another relatively quickly. Industrialization made possible mass-produced sporting goods and equipment. Improved communication technologies enabled distribution and adoption of uniform game rules and wagering odds and data supporting ubiquitous sport gambling enterprises. These same technologies facilitated dissemination of game play innovations and news to fans (or "cranks" as they were often then known) of their favorite teams and players.³⁷

Alki with its unique scenic, outdoor and beach attributes was in a position to host not only baseball play but a full array of leisure time and recreational opportunities as Seattle grew and developed. As the Hanson and Olson families' land fell into developers' hands, recreational opportunities came to be increasing shared by Alki residents and visitors alike as they were first shared in the 1891 match play season. This legacy continues to this day.

Appendix A

Alki Location Within The City of Seattle, Elliott Bay on the North,

Puget Sound on the West and South



From: King County, WA iMap, Seattle, WA accessed: http://www.kingcounty.gov/services/gis/Maps/imap.aspx on June 22,2017. Annotation by author.

- ¹ For an overview of the origins of baseball and early baseball history see: John Thorn, "Baseball in the Garden of Eden", Simon and Shuster, New York, NY, 2011, and David Q. Voigt, "American Baseball - From Gentleman's Sport to the Commissioner System", University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, OK, 1966.
- ² "Base Ball", Daily Intelligencer (Seattle, WA) May 7, 1877, p. 2.
- ³ "Old Time Baseball Early Days of the National Game on Puget Sound", Seattle Post-Intelligencer, (Seattle, WA) June 13, 1892, p.3.
- ⁴ "Base Ball", Daily Intelligencer (Seattle, WA) May 7, 1877, p. 2, and
- "Old Time Baseball Early Days of the National Game on Puget Sound", Seattle Post-Intelligencer, (Seattle, WA) June 13, 1892, p.3. The Metropolitan Tract is in downtown Seattle at about 3rd and 6th Avenues and Seneca and Union Streets. The Metropolitan Tract was the original site of the University of Washington and is held in trust for the benefit of the University.
- ⁵ "Telegraphers Play Ball", Seattle Post-Intelligencer (Seattle, WA) June 1, 1891, p. 3.
- ⁶ Scott Cline, "To Foster Honorable Pastimes: Baseball As A Civic Endeavor in 1880s Seattle". *The Pacific* Northwest Quarterly, Vol. 87, No. 4 (Fall, 1996), p. 171.
- ⁷ Seattle City Directory 1891, Polk's Seattle Directory Company, Seattle, WA, p.749.
- 8 Knud Olson and Hans Martin Hanson were brothers-in-law. Olson's wife, Martha (Anna's sister), had died nearly twenty-five years before the 1891 baseball season.
- 9 Robert E. Bowman, "Hansen / Gundvaldsen Genealogy," Vol. 59, No. 1 (Autumn/Winter 2009-2010), p. 18 and author's interview.
- ¹⁰ Taken from Abe Stark Clothing's right field fence advertisement that ran 1931-1957 at Ebbett's Field, Brooklyn, New York.
- ¹¹ Tacoma City Directory 1891, (Tacoma, WA: R. L. Polk & Co. Publishers, 1891), p. 324. and Seattle City Directory 1891 and 1892, (Seattle, WA: R. R. Polk & Co. Publishers, 1891 and 1892), p. 792 and 780.
- ¹² "Dry Goods Clerks Play Ball", Seattle Post-Intelligencer (Seattle, WA) June 29, 1891, p. 3.
- ¹³ "Gross Bros.' Nine Defeated", Seattle Post-Intelligencer (Seattle, WA) June 15, 1891, p. 3. In the intervening two weeks between the Gross Bros. and Toklas contests, the Toklas, Singerman and Company clerks prevailed over the South Seattle Brickyard team, 16 to 10. The location of the game is unknown. See: Seattle Post-Intelligencer, June 23, 1891, p. 3.
- ¹⁴ Ibid, p. 3.
- ¹⁵ Seattle City Directory 1891 and 1892. R. L. Polk Company. p. 792 and 780.
- ¹⁶ Alice B. Toklas, What Is Remembered, (New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), p. 10.
- ¹⁷ "Picnic for Sunday School Scholars", Seattle Post-Intelligencer (Seattle, WA) June 5, 1892, p. 12.
- ¹⁸ "Natural Race Track Site. Proposal to Utilize the Level Beach Around Alki Point", Seattle Post-Intelligencer (Seattle, WA) August 15, 1892, page 3.
- ¹⁹ They first named their Alki settlement New York.
- ²⁰ John R. Betts, "Organized Sports and Industrial America" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1951) and John R. Betts. America's Sporting Heritage, 1850-1950. (Reading, MA, Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1974). ²¹ Seattle Daily Post-Intelligencer (Seattle, WA), April 13, 1882, p.4.
- ²² "Alki Point", Seattle Daily Times (Seattle, WA, August 13, 1898, p.7
- ²³ "Alki Point to Celebrate", Seattle Star (Seattle, WA), June 21, 1904 Night Edition, page 8, "Alki Point's Celebration", Seattle Star (Seattle, WA) June 29, 1904 Night Edition, page 8 and "Dix (Steamer)" at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dix_(steamboat) accessed December 5, 2017. That July 4th, the Steamer Dix and the Steamer Florence K plied the waters between Alki and Seattle. Just over two years later the Dix sank during a cross sound voyage taking some 50 persons to their death.
- ²⁴ Seattle Daily Times (Seattle, WA), June 28, 1907, p. 2.
- ²⁵ Sherwood Park History Files, Alki Play Ground and Alki Beach Park, Seattle Municipal Archives, Seattle, WA http://clerk.seattle.gov/~F archives/sherwood/sherwood.htm November 14, accessed 11/14/2017.
- ²⁶ Sherwood Park History Files, Alki Play Ground and Alki Beach Park, Seattle Municipal Archives, Seattle, WA http://clerk.seattle.gov/~F archives/sherwood/sherwood.htm November 14, accessed 11/14/2017.
- ²⁷ Digital Sanborn Maps, Environmental Data Resources, Inc, 1916-1917 Map # 301 and 302 accessed through Seattle Public Library and ProQuest LLC.
- ²⁸ "A Statement of Reasons Why A 'White City' Should Not Be Permitted At Alki Point". Clarence Bagley Papers, University of Washington Library Special Collection, Seattle, WA accession 036-001, Box 17.
- ²⁹ "Amateur Baseball", Seattle Post-Intelligencer (Seattle, WA), January 19, 1891, p. 3.

- ³⁰ "Opening the Season", Seattle Post-Intelligencer (Seattle, WA), April 11, 1892, p. 3. The Seattle Maroons provided the West Seattle Ewings' competition that day. The Ewings took the contest 7-4.
- ³¹ It was not unheard of for women to compete on the baseball diamond. At Vassar College, in 1866, female students formed baseball clubs. At other colleges, clubs of female players were soon formed, but female baseball participation was soon discontinued upon protest of "disapproving mothers". In the years to follow, female participation in the game met discouragement, overt hostility and belittlement. Women were bypassed in baseball's evolution from a child's game to a global commercial enterprise. See: David Q. Voigt, *American Baseball*, p. 211, Geoffrey C. Ward and Ken Burns, *Baseball an Illustrated History* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994) p. 18-19, and John Thorn, *Baseball in the Garden of Eden*, p. 190-191.
- ³² David N. Lillevand, "South Alki Spring Hill Villa, Manuscript and Recollections, Part II", undated, Southwest Seattle Historical Society Collection, Seattle, WA.
- ³³ Sherwood Park History, Bar-S Playground, Seattle Municipal Archives.
- ³⁴ Bonaire Avenue Southwest remains today as a single lane, poorly graded and poorly drained road without curbs, gutters and sidewalks. It is now paved.
- ³⁵ Author's count from enumeration sheets, by address, within the geographic limits of the Alki area (55th Avenue SW on the east, Spokane Street SW on the south and Puget Sound and Elliott Bay on the north and west) from the 1910 and 1940 United States Decennial Census of Population and Housing.
- ³⁶ Betts, "Organized Sports in Industrial America" and Betts, America's Sporting Heritage, 1850-1950, 1974.