

# Walk 1

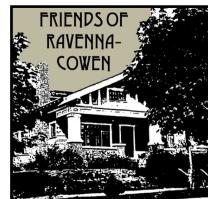
## Cowen Park and Cowen's University Park Plat

Sponsored by the Friends of Ravenna-Cowen



The Ravenna-Cowen North Historic District was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on September 13, 2018. The district is situated to the north and west of Cowen and Ravenna parks and bordered on the north by NE 65<sup>th</sup> Street, on the west by NE 12<sup>th</sup> Street and on the west by the Ravine just west of NE 23<sup>rd</sup> Street. It can easily be divided into three sections separated by NE 15<sup>th</sup> Street and NE 20<sup>th</sup> Street that lead to the Cowen Park and NE 20<sup>th</sup> Street bridges respectively.

This walking tour is through the western section comprising most of Cowen's University Park Plat. It is less than a mile of level walking and should take about 45 minutes.



Seattle Daily Times



1. Charles Cowen

## 1 Cowen Park.

Start the tour at the southern entrance to Cowen park at the terra cotta gate honoring Charles Cowen.

In 1891, City of Seattle annexed the Green Lake neighborhood, including what would become the Roosevelt District and the land around the University of Washington. That same year, David Denny's streetcar line was extended across the Latona Bridge to Ravenna Park, turning east and running along the southern edge of the park, thus making the region more accessible to the rest of the city. Like the Green Lake neighborhood to the northwest, the area became a bucolic tourist destination. The little town of Ravenna was annexed in 1907.

In 1906, Englishman Charles Cowen acquired several acres of land between 10th Avenue (later Roosevelt Way NE) and 15th Avenue, platting the area for residential use. He dedicated a large area for park use, located in the southeastern portion of the property at the upper end of the Ravenna Creek ravine and adjacent to the private Ravenna Park. *See figure 1.*

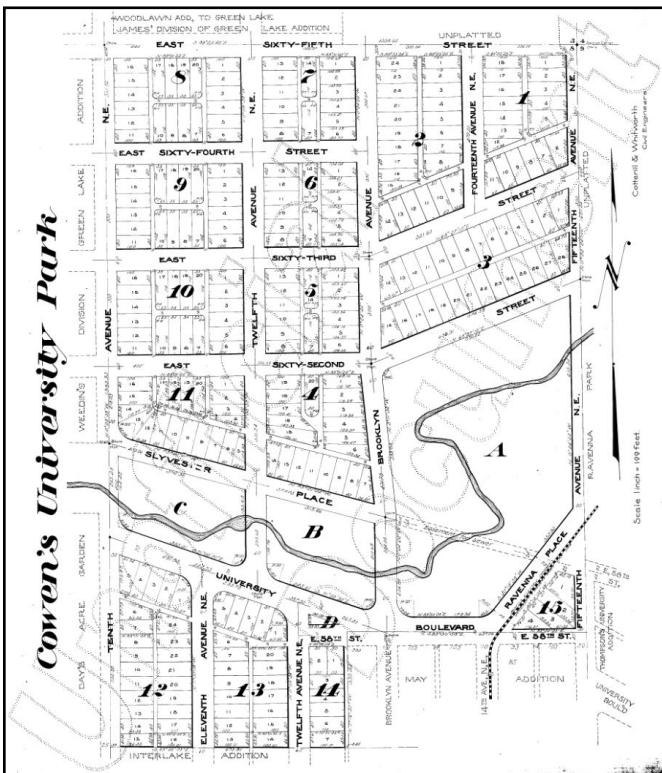
Early views of the park show a much more natural wooded landscape with Ravenna creek meandering down to the ravine. There was no playground or ball field. *See figure 2.*

In the mid-1960s, the Cowen Park ravine was largely filled using freeway construction spoils, creating level land for a ball field and playground.

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2. Cowen Park before 1911 viewing southwest from the Cowen Park Bridge. Note the stream winding down to the ravine, and the park shelter. Only the shelter's base remains. Most of the stream's flow was diverted into a sewer in 1911.



3. Cowen's University Plat. Note pre-1911 creek path.

and its wide, grassy median were constructed, also at the Olmstead's suggestion, on the northern side of the the now dry creek bed and the remainder of parcels B and C were converted to house lots increasing the size of the plat. See figures 3 & 4.

The existing Ravenna Creek is fed by springs. It is routed into an underground drainage system at the lower end of Ravenna Park, and reappears at the Union Bay Natural Area near the University's driving range where it eventually enters Lake Washington near the university's crew house.

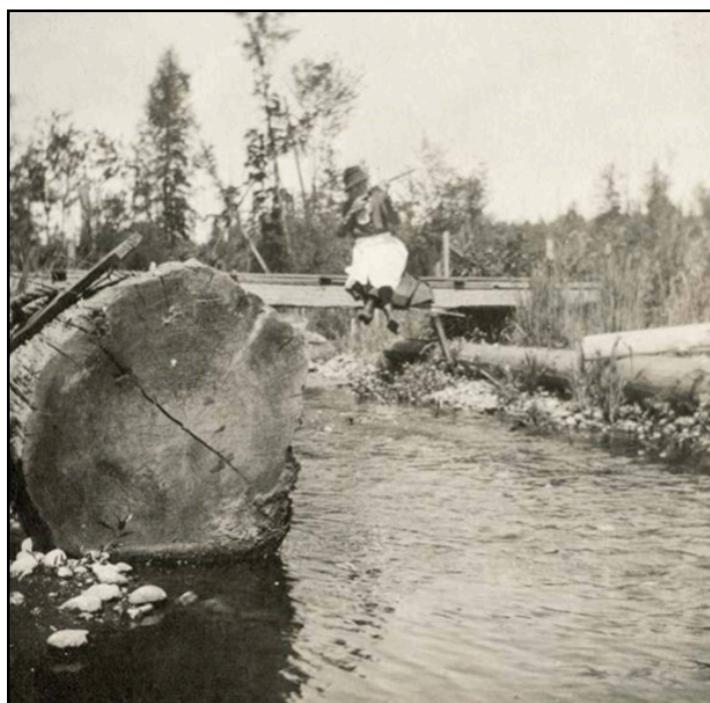
Turn right and walk north to NE 62nd Street noting the large Deodar Cedar on your left, along with other mature trees within the park and neighborhood.

**2** Cowen's University Park Plat. turn to your left and walk down the hill to Brooklyn Avenue NE. Note the brown street signs that identify Ravenna Boulevard and one of the entrances to the Ravenna-Cowen North National Historic District.

In 1909, the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition located on the University of Washington campus brought tens of thousands of visitors to the area, and some choose to remain. Developers enthusiastically filed new plats and built houses north of the University also responding to the growth of the university.

In 1911, at the suggestion of the Olmstead Brothers, a New York landscape architectural firm, Green Lake was lowered by 7 feet to create parkland. The lake outlet was diverted to a large sewer running along Ravenna Boulevard causing Ravenna Creek to dry up between Green Lake and Cowen Park. Ravenna Boulevard

City of Seattle Archives



4. Ravenna Creek prior to 1911.

**3 Gwinn House.** This is the first house of the tour, and is a wonderfully preserved example of a beautifully designed Craftsman bungalow.

Our web site has an interactive map that allows anyone the ability to click on any contributing house in the district and access the historic data that was collected for the National Register application as well as a short physical description.

The Gwinn House, 6103 Brooklyn Avenue NE, was constructed in 1917 for Gardner J. Gwinn

(1888-1959). He grew up in Nova Scotia, Canada, in a family of builders. He started his own construction company in Seattle in 1913, and quickly grew his company into a large operation, employing more than 150 workers in 1924. He published a series of plan books titled "Homes of Individuality." His success gave him the ability to purchase large tracts of land, including 44 lots in Cowen's University Park. Besides his own house he is known to have constructed houses at 6304 19th Avenue NE, 6103 Brooklyn Avenue NE, 6403 Brooklyn Avenue NE, 6322 22nd Avenue NE, and 2206 NE 63rd Street. *See figure 5.*

Gwinn also purchased lots in Ravenna's University Place plat to the east of Cowen's plat, the Ridgemont plat on Capitol Hill, and the Gwinn addition in Bothell.

After 1924, Gwinn began developing apartment buildings, constructing more than 50 before the Depression. Unfortunately, Gwinn left the house after his wife passed away in 1920.

Turn left onto Northeast 61st Street. This street originally was called Slyvester Place, named after Cowen's partner. On the parking strip adjacent to the Gwinn house is an old Mulberry tree, a rarity in Seattle.

Further west at 1212 NE 61st Street is a modest one-and-a-half story Craftsman bungalow designed by the well-known early 20th century Seattle

King County Assessor



6. Glover house.



5. Gwinn house, ca. 1937.

**4 Glover House.** Continue walking west. The house at 1206 NE 61st Street is a small brick Colonial Revival bungalow that was designed by Carl F. Gould, one of the finest architects practicing in Seattle in the early 20th century. Gould designed many buildings on the University of Washington Campus including the Suzzallo Library. The house was constructed for Arthur Glover, a mineralogist and assayer. *See figure 6.*

**5 Jacobson House.** The house at the southeastern corner of NE 61st and 12th Avenue NE was built in 1913 for Julius Jacobson, a manager for the Sears Roebuck Company. It was probably designed by Seattle architect Edward T. Osborn. The house is an exceptionally beautiful Craftsman bungalow that was featured in Jud Yoho's October 1915 *Bungalow Magazine* (<https://cdm16118.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16118coll22/id/2491/rec/33>) with a full set of drawings and specifications. By

1915, this house design was available as a Sears Roebuck kit house No. 264P244 for the remarkable price of \$1,163.00. The company later named the house "The Osborn." There is an almost identical house located in Seattle's Wallingford Neighborhood, and many more "Sears" houses scattered around the country. An interesting article about this house plan can be found at <https://oklahomahousesbymail.wordpress.com/2015/07/07/the-sears-osborn-and-oriental-peaks/>. See Figures 7 &8.

Rachel Shoemaker



7. Jacobson house, ca. 1937.



8. Sears Roebuck Ad in a 1919 Issue of the "Golden West" Magazine.

Turn to the right and head north on 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. Turn right again at the alley and head east. About halfway back to NE Brooklyn Avenue, you will pass on your left a very plain green garage. In the early 1970s this was the first workshop for Angel Rodriguez and Glenn Erickson, founders of the famous R&E Bicycles, now located at the northern end of University Way NE. Continue east and turn left onto NE Brooklyn Avenue.

As we walk north along Brooklyn Avenue NE, we see a couple of typical Craftsman bungalows (6115 and 6125) as well as a foursquare (6129) and a Dutch colonial (6133). The later has a recently added detached accessory dwelling unit (DADU) that matches the architectural style of the original house. Within the district we have at least nine styles of homes including American Foursquare, Craftsman, Eclectic Classical Revival, Prairie, Colonial Revival, Georgian revival, Tudor Revival, Minimal Traditional and Ranch, as well as a few Northwest Contemporaries.



9. Gleason house, ca. 1937.

**6 Gleason House.** This Arts and Crafts English house has a painted brick masonry first floor and a half-timber second floor. The house has a central recessed entry and the second floor has a pair of forward facing gables. The house retains a high degree of physical integrity. All windows are original, including second-floor double-hung windows with upper diamond divided lights. The house dates from 1913 and was constructed for Homer E. Gleason and family. Gleason was a successful owner of a lighting fixture store. *See Figure 9.*

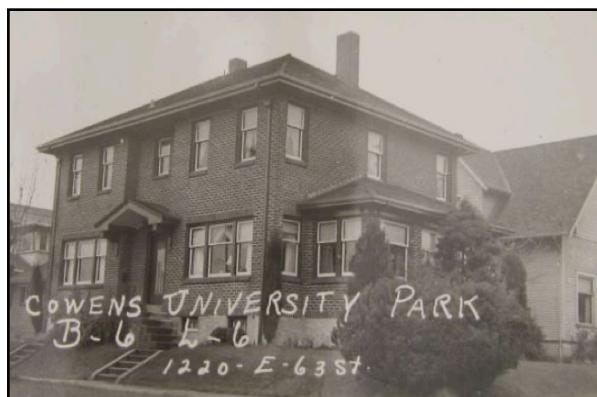
Continuing north on Brooklyn Avenue NE we pass a well-designed and cared for Craftsman house at 6215 Brooklyn Avenue NE.

Puget Sound Regional Archives

**7 Brooklyn Avenue NE and NE 63rd Street and the Thelberg House.** This intersection with its distinctive circular planting island featuring a horse chestnut tree highlights four fine houses.

On the northwestern corner (1220) is the district's only Georgian Revival house. The house was built in 1925 for Gus Thelberg, a cabinet maker and general contractor. The house also has the district's only swimming pool that replaced a modest two-story Craftsman house. *See Figure 10.*

Looking to the northwest behind the Thelberg house in the alley between Brooklyn Avenue NE and 12th Avenue NE you can see the top of an exceptionally large Western Red Cedar tree, a City of Seattle Heritage Tree.



10. Thelberg house, ca. 1937.



11. Locke house, ca. 1937.

**8 Locke House.** This remarkably well-preserved 1922 shingled Colonial Revival one-story bungalow was designed by Henry E. Hudson for Lydia Locke, the widow of Jay Locke, who had been the vice-president of the Bryant Lumber and Shingle Mill. Hudson designed many classic apartment buildings in Seattle's Regrade neighborhood and Capitol Hill neighborhoods. *See Figure 11.*

**9 Cole House.** Moving to the east, is a nice classic Craftsman bungalow with its massive square tapered columns constructed in 1917, probably for Thomas W. Cole and family. Cole was a railroad engineer. The exterior was recently restored to its original appearance. *See Figure 12.*



12. Cole house, ca. 1937.



13. Porter house, ca. 1937.

**10 Porter House.** At the northeastern corner is the Porter House (1304), constructed in 1912 for William and Jennie Porter. William Porter was a foreman at the Skinner and Eddy Shipyard. This beautifully preserved house was featured in the December 1917 issue of *Bungalow Magazine* (<https://cdm16118.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16118coll22/id/5300/rec/58>). The current owners have created a fanciful garden within the parking strips. *See Figure 13.*

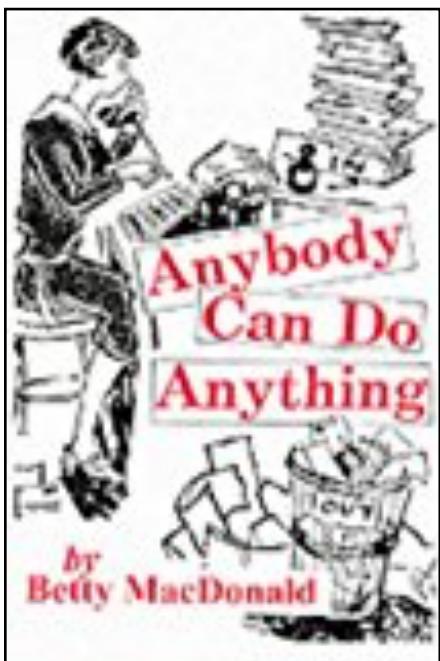
Turn right and head east on the northern side of NE 63rd Street. You will pass a number of fine contributing homes including the classic 1912 Craftsman bungalow at 1308; two nicely-detailed two-story 1907 Craftsman homes at 1312 and 1316, Colonial Revival bungalows at 1315 and 1325, the former Quense bungalow at 1322, one of many multi-generation homes in the district, the family owned the house for a hundred years; the 1909 Craftsman at 1402; the Dutch Colonial Revival side entry at 1410; and 1908 Foursquare at 1416.

# 1 1 Betty McDonald Lived Here

**Site.** Northwest author Betty McDonald (born Anne Elizabeth Campbell Bard; March 26, 1907 – February 7, 1958) lived with her mother and sister in a bungalow that was located along 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE and on house a little north of the alley between NE 63<sup>rd</sup> Street and NE 65<sup>th</sup> Street during the Great Depression of the 1930. Here she wrote her first book *Anyone Can Do Anything* that dealt with her family and their survival during the hard times of that period. She is most known for her book about life on the Olympic Peninsula and her adventures with MA and Pa Kettle in her book *The Egg and I*. Sadly, the house fell into disrepair and was demolished recently and the site redeveloped, only leaving the 1907 remodeled house at 6313-15 15th Avenue NE. See Figures 14-16.



14. Bard house, ca. 1937.



15. Cover of McDonald's book.

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16. Betty McDonald, 1945.

Turn right and walk south. At the intersection of 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE and NE 62<sup>nd</sup> Street we can see another one of the dozen National Historic District signs placed strategically around the neighborhood funded through a City of Seattle “Small Sparks Grant.” At the southwestern corner of the intersection at 1423 NE 63rd Street you can glimpse through the fence one of the districts few Minimal Traditional houses built on the few remaining lots after World War II.



16. First Bridge Spanning the Ravine, ca. 1915.



16. Second Bridge Spanning the Ravine with Upper Street Car Line, ca. 1924.

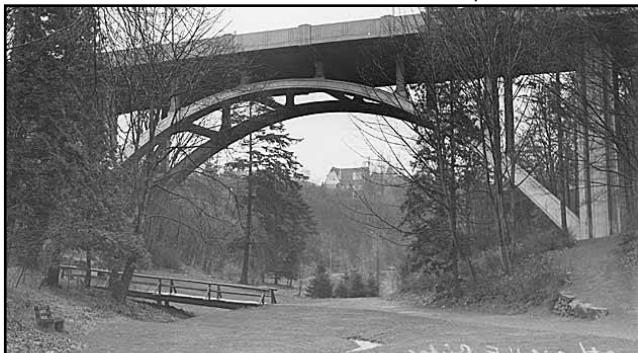
At southern end of the bridge walk along Cowen Place. On your left, just outside of the historic district but definitely adding to streetscape, are a pair of what were originally duplexes designed in Dutch Revival style by the architectural firm of Bewsemann & Durfee.

A little further is the 53-unit five story Collegiate Gothic Park Vista Apartments. It was constructed in 1928 from a design prepared by Swedish American architect John A. Creutzer (1874-1929). See Figure 17.

Cross Cowen Place to return to starting point.

**12 Cowen Park Bridge.** Walk south across the bridge and along NE Cowen Place. A footbridge was constructed across the Ravenna Creek ravine as early as 1915. A streetcar trestle was built across the ravine between Ravenna and Cowen parks in 1924. The former Denny streetcar line was extended northward along the 15th Avenue NE right-of-way, along the eastern side of the Roosevelt High School that had been completed between 1921 and 1922, spurring additional growth in the neighborhood. The streetcar line continued north to the city limits then at NE 85<sup>th</sup> Street.

The present Cowen Park Bridge is a reinforced concrete arch bridge. The bridge has a length of 358 feet. The bridge was built in 1936 under the authority of the Works Progress Administration. The bridge engineer was Clark Eldridge. The structure is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and it is a designated City of Seattle Landmark. The bridge has been praised for the 12 foot Art Deco light standards along its sides. See Figures 16-18.



16. Third and Current Bridge Spanning the Ravine, 1941.



17. Streetcar Tracks, Park Vista on the left.