



Capitol Hill

ELEGANCE IN THE DETAILS

This exploration of the north end of Capitol Hill passes by stately homes, a grand park, and a lesser-known cemetery.

DISTANCE

2.8 miles

START/END

15th Avenue E and E Garfield Street

NOTES

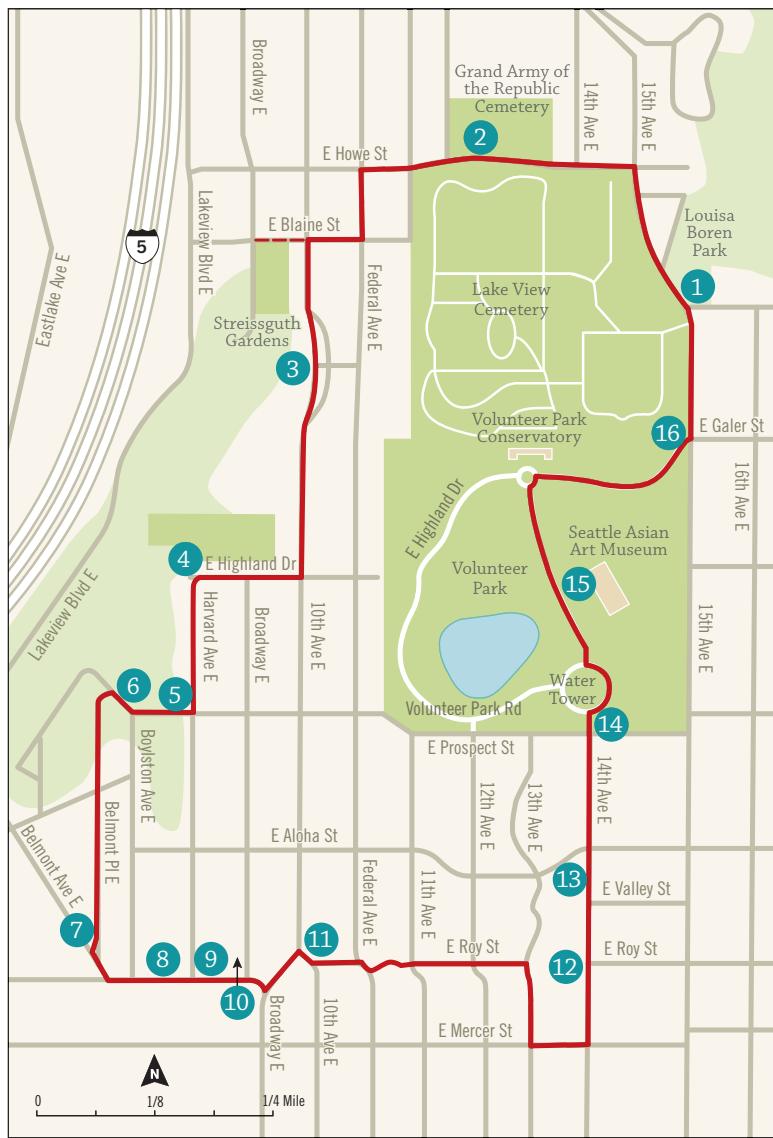
Volunteer Park has several public restrooms. The walk includes one very short side trip.

Between 1890 and 1900, Seattle evolved from a town to a city. In this decade, it experienced its first great boom with the Klondike Gold Rush, started to develop trade routes to Asia, and became the leading general manufacturing center in the Pacific Northwest. In addition, the population nearly doubled to about 81,000 residents. With the new economy came new money and people of means who needed homes to live in.

Housing had boomed across the city in response to the growth, but one large piece of land remained undeveloped: 160 acres of a “large and slightly natural park” that was on the northeast section of what was then called Broadway Hill. According to the *Seattle Times*, it was the “only piece of platable land of any magnitude remaining” in the city. Until 1890, the property had been owned by the estate of Selim Woodworth, a veteran of the Mexican-American War, who never saw his property. The acreage came into Woodworth’s possession through a bounty land warrant, which granted soldiers the right to obtain free land in the public domain. On July 10, 1900, James A. Moore paid \$225,000 for the Woodworth tract, which stretched from Roy to Galer Streets and from 15th to 23rd Avenues.

◀ Volunteer Park Conservatory

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Moore began selling his “strictly first class” property for “men of means” on October 25, 1901. In the year since he had bought Woodworth’s land, Moore had graded and paved the streets with concrete and asphalt, laid water mains and sewers, and poured concrete sidewalks. He had also named the area Capitol Hill. Why he did so is one of Seattle’s niggling conundrums. The name could have originated with a neighborhood bearing the same name in Denver, where Moore’s wife had lived, or perhaps Moore had hoped to site the state capitol building on his hill. Historian Jacqueline B. Williams, however, notes in *The Hill with a Future: Seattle’s Capitol Hill 1900–1946* that there was little chance of the latter happening. She thinks Moore’s name was merely a shrewd idea on his part to promote his development. If so, the plan worked: he sold at least 125 lots to 64 people in the first month of sales. Most lots cost \$1,000.

Start at Louisa Boren Park.

❶ With its great views out to Lake Washington, Union Bay, and the Cascade Mountains, Louisa Boren Park is a hidden little treasure on Capitol Hill. It is also home to several historic trees, English oaks that grow along the drop-off on the eastern edge of the park, across the path from Lee Kelly’s large, unnamed sculpture. Seattle Parks Department historian Don Sherwood wrote that the trees were originally planted at Denny Park and were moved here in 1930 when Denny Park was lowered during the final regrade of Denny Hill. No other trees that grew at Denny before the regrade are known to exist.

This small park honors one of Seattle’s earliest citizens. Born in Illinois in 1827, Louisa Boren arrived here on November 13, 1851, as part of the Denny Party, the group of settlers who are considered the founders of Seattle. She was single at the time but soon married David Denny in the first settler wedding in the city. Because she had carried sweetbriar rose seeds from her home, she was known as the Sweetbriar Bride. Louisa’s other claim to fame is that she was the last survivor of the Denny Party (she died in August 1916).

Walk north one block on 15th Avenue E, and turn left, or west, on E Howe Street. Continue west until you come to the Grand Army of the Republic Cemetery on the north side of the road.

❷ The Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) was a fraternal organization set up to aid Union veterans of the Civil War. In 1896, five local GAR posts

united to acquire land from Huldah and David Kaufman and establish a cemetery for the veterans and their wives. There are 526 graves—mostly of Union soldiers including three black soldiers (which was unusual for its era); GAR accepted any soldier's remains as long as they were of a Civil War veteran. A couple of Confederate veterans are also buried here. The vast majority of the interred soldiers died in or near Seattle. The Seattle Parks Department now manages the cemetery with the help of a neighborhood group. To get a feel for the layout of the tombstones, walk to the obelisk, which was placed by the Woman's Relief Corps.

Walk west on E Howe Street to Federal Avenue E, and turn left, or south. Walk one block to E Blaine Street, and turn right, or west. Walk to 10th Avenue E, and cross to the west side of the street. For a short but energetic side trip to a little urban oasis, walk west on Blaine and descend 70 steps to the Streissguth Gardens (after 35 steps, you will see a dirt path leading into the garden, but the main part of the park lies lower). Started by the Streissguth family, this garden is now owned by the city. To continue on the main route, walk south on 10th to the Office of the Bishop of the Episcopal Church of Western Washington.

- ③ This grand building was originally the home of John and Eliza Leary. Leary arrived in Seattle in 1869 and soon became involved in numerous development projects including coal mines in Renton, a water supply company in Seattle, and ownership of the *Seattle Post* (which eventually became the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*). He was also Seattle's mayor from 1884 to 1885 as a member of the Business Men's Ticket party. He married Eliza Ferry, daughter of Washington state's first governor, Elisha Ferry, in 1891.

In 1903, Leary hired Alfred Bodley to design a house for him and his wife. Unfortunately, he died before the house was finished. Eliza, who was well known for hosting many events at the house, lived there until her death in 1935. The lovely sandstone used in the construction of the house came from Tenino, Washington, one of three areas that supplied most of the local stone used in building projects across the region. It is a 50-million-year-old sandstone, deposited when what we now think of as the I-5 corridor was oceanfront property and the Olympic Mountains did not exist.

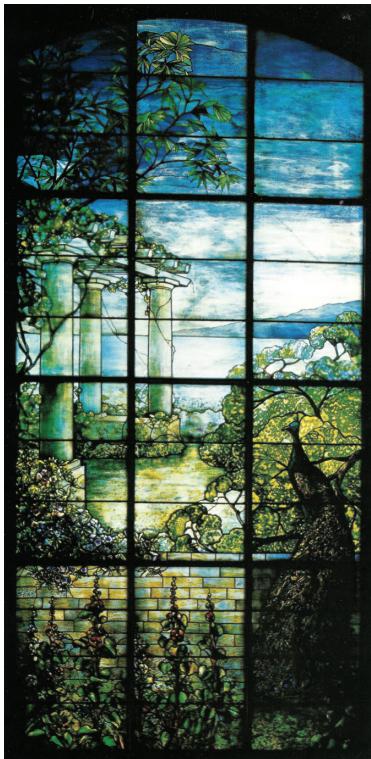
During World War II, the American Red Cross acquired the Leary house and used it as its headquarters with training rooms, dormitories for evacuees, and a home-nursing department. After the war, the house passed to

the Episcopal Diocese of Olympia. Curiously, the bishop decided to remove a couple of the house's most famous features, two glass windows (16 by 8 feet and 8 by 8 feet) designed by Louis Comfort Tiffany. The bishop donated them to the Burke Museum, noting that they made the house's great hall look too much like a funeral parlor. The Burke still owns them and plans to have them on display in their new museum.

Next door to the south is the former home of Eliza's brother, Pierre, which includes several carved wooden owls. Historically, this area was known as "owl hollow" because owls nested in the surrounding trees. When you pass the gates, look for the two modern sculptures of owls.

One additional detail of note: 10th Avenue curves slightly around the former Leary property. Historically, 10th did not go north past this point and instead ended at a cul-de-sac that led into Leary's driveway. The modern road is not straight because Leary and other nearby land owners didn't want the road to cross their land. An article in the *Seattle Daily Bulletin* reported that Leary's group eventually sided with city engineers but on the condition that "unsightly poles, billboards, and other nuisances and street cars are to be kept off" the new road.

Continue south on 10th, turn right on E Highland Drive, and walk on the north side of the street to just past Broadway E. On your right is the former Sam Hill mansion.



Peacock with hollyhocks and morning glories,
Tiffany Studios, 1903

- ❸ Samuel Hill was a lawyer and railroad executive who worked primarily for and with his father-in-law, James J. Hill. The younger Hill moved to Seattle in 1901 and soon became involved in a variety of investments. He is probably best known for building his Maryhill Mansion and Stonehenge Memorial (in southern Washington on the Columbia River, 10 miles south of Goldendale). Hill began work on his Capitol Hill home in 1908. According to a *Seattle Times* article, he built it in part to host Crown Prince Albert Leopold of Belgium, whom Hill had invited to Seattle for the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition. Unfortunately for Hill, politics kept Leopold from visiting Seattle.

Made of concrete, the walls are 10 feet thick at the base and reinforced with massive steel rails. On top of the house was a rooftop garden where guests could eat dinner in a park-like setting. Other novel features included a telephone in each room, a gas-powered heating plant, and a single switch in the master bedroom that could turn on all the lights in the house. Note the small sundial on the southeastern corner of the house (above a gate). The quote on the dial is from Rowland Hazard, a woolen manufacturer and friend of Hill's from Rhode Island, who had a sundial on his house.

Follow Highland Drive as it curves left, and walk south on Harvard Avenue E to E Prospect Street.

- ❹ Horace Chapin Henry, a wealthy railroad builder, originally owned the 1.6-acre hedge-lined property that encompasses the northwest corner of the intersection. The estate included a large mansion, stables, and private art gallery, all of which were demolished and eventually replaced in the 1950s with a more modern house. The Henry Gallery on the University of Washington campus started with Henry's donation of his art collection. After his death, Henry's sons donated the house and property to the city for a library on Capitol Hill in honor of their mother, Susan J. Henry. The library board had neither the money to renovate the mansion for a library nor to pay the 90 dollars a month necessary for upkeep of the grounds. In 1953, the board sold the property to pay for the site of the present Capitol Hill Branch of the library, which was initially known as the Susan J. Henry Branch.

Turn right, or west, on E Prospect Street, and walk one block to Boylston Avenue E.

- ❺ You are now in the heart of the federally and city designated Harvard-Belmont Historic District, an area bounded roughly by E Highland Drive, Belmont Avenue E, E Roy Street, and Broadway E. Starting in the 1890s, the

area became a premier location for wealthy Seattleites to build large homes, often in an English country-manor style. Architectural historian Larry Kreisman says the Old World-style was popular for “substantial, sophisticated homes of the well-to-do, [which gave] the nouveau riche the appearance of long-held ties to the land and the city.” Many of these estates covered four, six, or more lots. Although nearly all of the original families have moved away, more than 50 homes in the district have architectural and/or historical significance.

To get a good feel for the houses in the district, turn right and follow Prospect around to Belmont Place E. Most of the houses are historic. Walk south on Belmont Place to its intersection with Belmont Avenue E.

7 To your right, on the corner where the Belmonts intersect, is a large and unusual tree. It is a Garry oak (also known as Oregon white oak), Washington’s lone native oak. In 1840 the great botanist David Douglas named the species *Quercus garryana* after Nicholas Garry, a deputy governor for the Hudson’s Bay Company. As noted in a sidebar in the Rainier Beach walk (Walk 15), Garry oaks are rare this far north and why this one exists here is unknown, though it was about half its present height in 1928 when the adjacent Oak Manor apartments were built.

Turn left on Belmont Avenue, walk to the intersection, and follow E Roy Street east as it ascends to Boylston Avenue E.

CURBOLOGY

If you take the time to look down at curbs in Seattle, you will be rewarded with a nerdy but novel little story. In early Seattle, 33-million-year-old granite, which came from Index, Washington, was a popular material for curbs because of its hardness and the ease with which it could be cut into square pieces. In the early 1900s a new style of curb began to appear and replace granite curbs. The new curbs were built of concrete with a steel protective rail known as “curb armor,” and they were cheaper than stone. Like the granite curbs, the steel rail curbs were eventually replaced—when rubber tires replaced the steel rims of carriage wheels—and are now much less common in Seattle, though they still occur on many corners. Today granite curbs are rare, though the original curbs can also be spotted on corners.

❸ In 1914 Nellie Cornish started the Cornish College of Arts, where she taught piano to children in a single room. When she outgrew that space (at the corner of Broadway and Pine Street), she moved her school to this location in 1921, where she had the present building designed to her specifications. The new school building's appearance was described in the *Town Crier* as having "both the restraint and freedom of Venetian, the Spanish, the Levant, and even of Tibet." At the top of the building are names of famous artists: Anna Pavlova, Russian ballerina; John Millington Synge, Irish playwright and poet; Wilhelm Richard Wagner, German composer; William Morris, British designer; James Abbott McNeill Whistler, American painter. Miss Aunt Nellie, as she was known to people at the school, hoped such luminaries would inspire her students. The bas-relief panels near the building's cornice were modeled on students at the school. Today this building, known as Kerry Hall, houses the Cornish College dance and music department, and the school's main campus is near Westlake Avenue and Denny Way.

Continue east on Roy Street. On the east side of Harvard Avenue E is the Daughters of the American Revolution house.

❹ Seattle's DAR chapter was founded in 1895 and met in members' homes until its membership grew too large. Eliza Ferry Leary guided the development and building of the new bigger space, which was built in 1925 and is a copy of George Washington's home, Mount Vernon. Across the street on the southwest corner of Roy and Harvard Avenue is a small public space consisting of benches and terra-cotta elements. On one of the benches is a large tile bearing an architectural drawing by John Graham, a well-known local architect. The tile also includes a quote from Italo Calvino.

On the southeast corner is the former home of the Woman's Century Club, founded in 1891. Started by 10 women, who "felt its need in the sordid atmosphere of a rapidly developing western city," the club's purpose was "for intellectual culture, original research and the solution of the altruistic problems of the day." By 1925, membership had reached 350 women and the club organized to build the present building. The club still meets regularly though not in this building, which housed the Harvard Exit movie theater for many decades.

Walk east on Roy Street until the end of the block.

⑩ The handsome two-story building on your left is named for its architect Arthur Loveless, who built it in 1931. Described as a “little bit of England” in Seattle, the building centers on a private courtyard surrounded by housing and studio and sales spaces that Loveless hoped would be utilized by local artists. Note the cinder blocks, which were used because they were less expensive than cut stone.

Continue east, cross to the far side of Broadway, turn left, or north, and follow the road as it curves slightly east. At the corner, turn right, walk east on Roy Street between two brick apartment buildings, and halt at the end of the block.

⑪ Frederick Anhalt is responsible for the apartments on either side of Roy. In the late 1920s, he developed, designed, and built bungalows, commercial buildings, and apartments across Seattle. Anhalt is probably best known for his elegant Capitol Hill apartments with their French Norman inspired elements, such as turrets, arches, and exposed exterior beams, and house-like feel created by the addition of a fireplace, usually front and back doors, and often a courtyard garden.

Walk east as Roy Street turns to a path that serpentes between Lowell School and its playfields and continues as Roy Street again. Stay on Roy to 13th Avenue E, and turn right, or south. You will soon pass by the Maryland Apartments, a city-designated landmark built in 1910. Continue south to E Mercer Street, and turn left, or east. Turn left, or north, on 14th Avenue E, and walk one block to E Roy Street.

⑫ You are about to enter what has long been known as “Millionaire’s Row,” where you will find some of Seattle’s finest early-20th-century homes. Built of wood, granite, sandstone, and brick, they display a wide range of styles, though all carry an air of distinction. On the west side of the intersection is a rare sign of early Seattle—a granite hitching post complete with steel ring. During the late 1800s and into the early 1900s, when horses were the main means of travel around the city, hitching posts, such as this one and one just up the block, would have been common and needed.

According to historian Fred Brown, people put up posts because the city had laws against animals running at large, and if an animal strayed, city-hired herders would round up loose livestock, mostly horses and cows, and take them to the cattle pound. In addition, to address concerns about startled horses injuring pedestrians or themselves, the Humane Society



Postcard of the view north on 14th Avenue E, circa 1910

pushed for laws that required teamsters to carry weights that they could attach to horses to keep them from running wild. The other option was to tie the horses to hitching posts.

One block north on the east side of 14th is another remnant of the city's early equestrian history. On the southeast corner of E Valley Street close to the road is a low granite block, or stepping stone. People getting out of horse-drawn carriages would have stepped onto the block and then down to the ground. This block was owned by Elbridge Amos Stuart, who started the Carnation Evaporated Milk Company. He also owned the house behind the stepping stone.

[Continue north on 14th Avenue E one block to E Aloha Street.](#)

- ❸ The brick mansion (built in 1903) on the southwest corner was the home of Capitol Hill's developer James A. Moore. He also built the Moore Theater in downtown and had a role in regrading the south side of Denny Hill, where he owned the legendary Washington Hotel.

[Walk north on 14th Avenue E to Volunteer Park.](#)

- ❹ Like many who achieve success late in life, Volunteer Park began rather humbly as 40 acres purchased by the city for a cemetery in 1876. It was

JOHN CHARLES OLNSTED

John Charles Olmsted of Boston's Olmsted Brothers landscape architecture firm arrived in Seattle on April 30, 1903, to design a grand park system. He was arguably the most experienced landscape architect in the country, having begun his career in 1875 when he apprenticed with his stepfather Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., codesigner of New York's Central Park. Throughout May, the younger Olmsted and his assistant, Percy Jones, traveled across Seattle, surveyed the land, and met with civic leaders. The City Council approved Olmsted's plans in October.

The Olmsted proposal featured a 20-mile-long parkway that ran from Bailey Peninsula (Seward Park) to Fort Lawton (Discovery Park). From Bailey, it snaked along the lake, turned inland to Washington Park, and cut across Montlake to the University of Washington. The roadway continued to Ravenna Park and out to Green Lake, up through Woodland Park, and then up, over, and down Queen Anne Hill, with its final extension along the Magnolia bluffs to Fort Lawton. Additional spurs went from Washington Park through Interlaken Park to Volunteer; up Mount Baker Boulevard from Lake Washington; and on Cheasty Boulevard, on the east side of Beacon Hill. Although Olmsted's complete parkway was never implemented, Seattle's citizens passed bonds for park construction and acquisition totaling 3.5 million dollars (the equivalent of about \$224 million in 2015) in the eight years following the original proposal.

named Washelli, a Makah word meaning "west wind." In 1887, the City Council decided that the land would better serve as space for the living. It had all the graves removed and the former cemetery was renamed Lake View Park. That name didn't last either; it became City Park and finally Volunteer, in 1901, the same year the reservoir was built.

Eight years later, park designer John Charles Olmsted wrote that as Volunteer "will be surrounded by a highly finished style of city development, it will be best to adopt a neat and smooth style of gardening throughout." The implementation of Olmsted's plans finally led to the park becoming one of the city's most popular public spaces.

In front of you is the brick water tower (built in 1906), or stand pipe, whose internal tank holds 883,000 gallons. Inside the tower, winding around the tank, are 106 steps up to an observation area with views of the

city—best in winter when leaves don't block the scenery—and an excellent display about the city's park system (open to the public). As with the other stand pipes around Seattle (for example, on Queen Anne Hill and in West Seattle and Magnolia), it was built on a high point, a necessity because gravity is the main force feeding water from the city's reservoirs into surrounding homes.

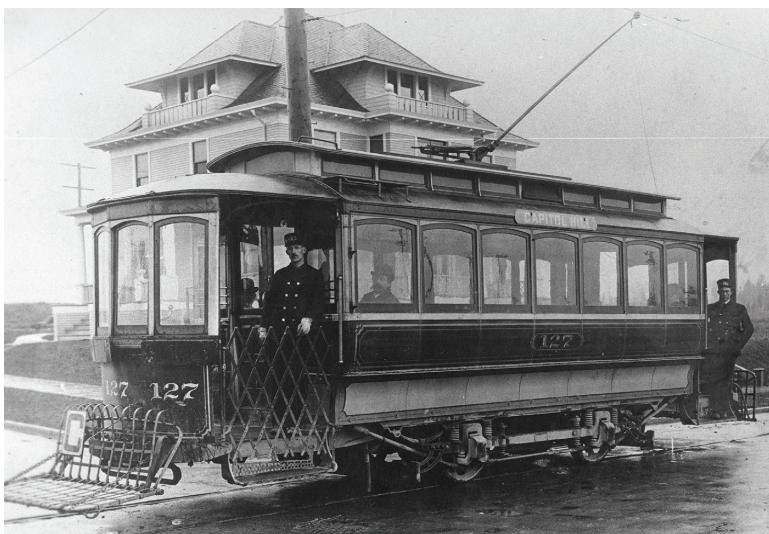
Follow the main road, which splits around the water tower, as it leads north into the park.

15 On the right is the original Seattle Art Museum, which opened in 1933 with money provided by Margaret MacTavish Fuller and her son Richard, who directed the museum for 40 years. It now houses the Seattle Asian Art Museum. Architectural historians consider it a very progressive design for its time because it broke away from the traditional neoclassical style that then prevailed in the design of most American museums. The building's sandstone came from the Wilkeson quarry near Mount Rainier. It is another of the three principal suppliers of sandstone in western Washington. Chuckanut, near Bellingham, is the third.

North of the museum is the Volunteer Park Conservatory, which opened in 1912. The city purchased it as a kit from Hitchings & Company in New York and assembled the metal frame with its 3,426 glass panes on site. The design is based on London's Crystal Palace. Housed in the conservatory is an enticing collection of cacti, orchids, bromeliads, and palms that is ever-changing and always delightful. In recent years, restoration has focused on returning the building to its historic appearance.

From the conservatory, turn right, or east, to go out of the park and down to 15th Avenue E. Turn left, or north, on 15th and look across the street at the bus stop on the west side.

16 Note the concrete blocks of the retaining wall. Each block has one or two holes. In the former streetcar system that ran down 15th, the trolley's steel rails sat atop and were attached to the slabs. The Capitol Hill line opened in November 1901. As was true of other early Seattle trolley routes, a big impetus for this route's construction was to promote the sale of adjacent real estate. Within a few years, other lines opened on the hill. Not coincidentally, most of the modern bus routes that traverse Capitol Hill, including those that run along Summit, Broadway, 15th, 19th, and 24th, follow



Capitol Hill street trolley, 15th Avenue E and E Aloha Street, 1903

the historic trolley routes. By 1941, all of the streetcars on Capitol Hill and throughout the city had been replaced by buses.

Lake View Cemetery across the street to the west is one of the oldest in the city and one of the most diverse with its graves of city settlers such as Arthur Denny, Henry Yesler, and Doc Maynard; Chief Seattle's daughter Kikisebloo (aka Princess Angeline); Bruce Lee and his son Brandon; a horse named Buck; and Madam Damnable, who ran an early brothel and earned her name for her proclivity for profanity.

[Continue one block north to Louisa Boren Park, where you began this walk.](#)

With its elegant houses, well-manicured park, and stately cemeteries, the north end of Capitol Hill continues to exude an air of distinction that would please James Moore. However, like most parts of the city, the hill has changed, becoming more diverse economically and culturally, which has certainly helped it to retain its popularity. But certain fundamental aspects have not changed since Moore's time. People still desire well-built homes, proximity to downtown, and access to public transportation. As they say, the more things change, the more they stay the same.

