

PORTLAND'S FIRST PARKS

The Plaza Blocks and the South Park Blocks are both located in downtown Portland. Set aside for public use in 1852, they became our city's first parks. The Plaza Blocks provide both a thoroughfare and gathering place for the citizenry of Portland. The South Park Blocks, four blocks to the west, form a green corridor through the cultural heart of our city. Surrounded by the Portland Art Museum, the Oregon Historical Center, the new Portland Center for the Performing Arts, and Portland State University, the blocks form a lovely garden backdrop for Portland's lectures, concerts, and collections.

The Plaza Blocks

Lownsdale and Chapman, the two small courthouse squares together known as the Plaza Blocks, are located in downtown Portland, between Third and Fourth, and Salmon and Madison. The south square is named for Portland attorney, William Williams Chapman, who dedicated that portion of the Plaza within his land claim to the city in December, 1852. The north square is named for Kentuckian Daniel H. Lownsdale, who settled here in 1845 when Portland had fewer than 800 people.

The Plaza was a lively place where orators held forth, and citizens assembled. The Independence Day celebration of 1861 began with gun salutes and ended with fireworks in the Plaza, and, in 1886, torchlight demonstrations against Portland's Chinese population occurred here. The Plaza Blocks are still a busy gathering place, particularly at lunch-time, where celebrations and orations are likely to occur.

In the center of Lownsdale Square stands the Soldiers' Monument (1906), a tall granite pillar topped with a replica of an infantryman of the Second Oregon United States Volunteer Infantry. These soliders were part of the first large American fighting force ever sent overseas. At the base of this monument are two small cannons from Fort Sumter (misspelled on the plaque), brought here by Colonel Henry E. Dosch. Because the cannons were used by both the Union troops, and the Confederates, it was Dosch's idea that one should face north and the other south — as they do in Lownsdale Square.

In the center of the Plaza Blocks, southwest Main curves around a magnificent elk fountain designed by Roland E. Perry and H.G. Wright. The statue was built in 1900 when Portland was already a metropolis of 90,000 people. The bronze elk is mounted on a granite pedestal containing drinking troughs for horses and dogs. The Exalted Order of Elks refused to dedicate it because they considered the statue "a monstrosity of art." Others have tried to have it removed because they regarded it as an obstacle to traffic, but the elk statue remains on its original site, where real elk are said to have grazed. Since January of 1974, both the elk fountain and the Plaza Blocks have been city landmarks.

Today two lively buildings face each other across Chapman Square. The Justice Center on the east side was designed by Jack Cornwall of Zimmer, Gunsul, Frasca and was completed in the fall of 1983. The travertine sculptures flanking the Third Avenue entrance are the work of Walter Dussenberry. Michael Graves, architect, designed the Portland Building, built in 1980, on the west side of Chapman Square.

The South Park Blocks

Today there are six North Park Blocks and twelve South Park Blocks stretching north to south through the heart of downtown Portland. Daniel H. Lownsdale and William Williams Chapman are credited with donating part of their land claims in 1852 for this public space. Lownsdale and Chapman envisioned one long, uninterrupted "promenade park," instead of our two parks with buildings separating them.

After Lownsdale's death in 1862, his second wife's heirs contested the validity of his land transactions, and the donated land became privately owned. In 1973, one of the "lost" Lownsdale blocks was regained when the city constructed Hugh Donaldson O'Bryant Park (named for Portland's first mayor) just south of Stark Street on top of a parking garage.

By the 1880s, the South Park Blocks were lined with Italianate mansions owned by some of the city's leading families. In 1877 the first landscaping of the South Park Blocks occurred when the City Council authorized florist and landscape designer, Louis G. Pfunder, to plant 104 Lombardy poplars and elms. Over the years lovely flowers and shrubs have been added to the blocks, but there seems to be a consensus that the blocks should remain "a cathedral of trees with a simple floor of grass."

The South Park Blocks: A Walking Tour

Our walk through the South Park Blocks begins at the Simon Benson Memorial (1) at southwest Park and Salmon and proceeds south. The drinking fountain was planned by architect Albert E. Doyle while designing the Benson Hotel. Benson gave Portland twenty of these four-bowl fountains in 1912, and another twenty have been added recently.

Across the street is the twentieth century Georgian building (1910) that houses the Arlington Club (2). The building's architects, Whidden and Lewis, who also designed the Multnomah County Courthouse, were a well-known Portland partnership.

In the center of the block between Salmon and Main is a bronze statue depicting "Rebecca at the Well," part of a drinking fountain (1926) by sculptor Oliver Lawrence Barrett and architect Carl Linde. Called the Shemanski Fountain (3), its donor was Joseph Shemanski, a Polish immigrant who went from selling clocks door to door to being an extremely successful businessman.

At the corner of Park and Main, in the parking strip, is the Sylvester Farrell London Plane tree (4) planted in 1880, which is now a city landmark.

On the east side of the Park Blocks stands the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall (5). Opened in the fall of 1984 after extensive remodeling, the concert hall occupies what was originally the Portland Publix Theater (1927).

At the dedication of the heroic bronze statue of President Abraham Lincoln (6) in the fall of 1928, the next block was renamed Lincoln Square. The statue is one of four given to this city by Dr. Henry Waldo Coe, including the one of Theodore Roosevelt in the next block. George Fite Waters designed this unique likeness of Lincoln.

On the northeast corner of Park and Madison, stands the First Congregational Church (7), an imposing Venetian Gothic building which is listed on the National Register. Constructed between 1891 and 1895, the building was designed by Henry J. Hefty, a Swiss immigrant. Most of the beautiful stained glass windows on three sides of the church were executed by the Povey Brothers Art Glass Works. Stained glass windows by the Povey Brothers as well as other notable artists are prominent in many of the churches along the South Park Blocks.

From the Congregational Church walk west along Madison until you come to the Evan H. Roberts Memorial Sculpture Mall (8) between the art museum and the Masonic Temple. This recent addition to the Park Blocks was designed by Pietro Belluschi and was dedicated in September of 1970. At left as you enter the mall is Portland sculptor Lee Kelly's "Arlie" created in 1978.

In front of the Portland Art Museum stands an imposing bronze equestrian statue of President Theodore Roosevelt called "Rough Rider" (9). The statue is 18 feet tall and cost \$40,000 in 1922. When it was given to the city by Dr. Coe, a lifelong friend of the president, this block was renamed Roosevelt Square. The statue was sculpted by the famous western artist, Alexander Phimister Proctor (1860-1950), also a good friend of Roosevelt.

The Portland Art Museum (10) and Northwest College of Art are in adjoining buildings. The museum was originally designed by Pietro Belluschi (b. 1899) while with the firm of A.E. Doyle and Associates. Directly across from the Park Blocks stands the Oregon Historical Center (11). Across Jefferson Street, the large granite sculpture, "Peace Chant" (12) (1984) was executed by Steve Gillman (b. 1945). Gillman wished the work to express both his own advocacy for peace and that of the nearby churches. In May of 1985 the Portland City Council renamed this block "Peace Plaza."

On the southwest corner of Jefferson and Park stands the Gothic Revival St. James Lutheran Church (13) which is also listed on the National Register. Its present chapel replaces the original wooden sanctuary, only twenty by twenty feet large, that was erected in 1889 for the grand total of \$200. A new masonry chapel was built in 1891, and the present church in 1910.

Across the Park Blocks, its church and offices extending from Jefferson to Columbia, is the First Christian Church (14), undergoing, in 1985, its fifth transformation. Having built its original structure at this location in 1880, the First Christian Church has now been at the same location

for 105 years. Its present building was built in 1923 of tan and gold brick with glazed terra cotta sheathing and trim.

In the center of the block, between Clay and Market is located a new granite mosaic sculpture (15) by Oregon artist Paul Sutinen (b. 1949). In Sutinen's words:

"'In the Shadow of the Elm' (1984) approximates a shadow of a tree that ostensibly once existed within the grid of trees in the block. The 'stump' is in the approximate position of that tree and the 'shadow' derived from configurations of branches among existing elm trees. The work is a 'memorial,' and can also act as a spark to the imagination; the viewer walking over the artwork climbs a tree."

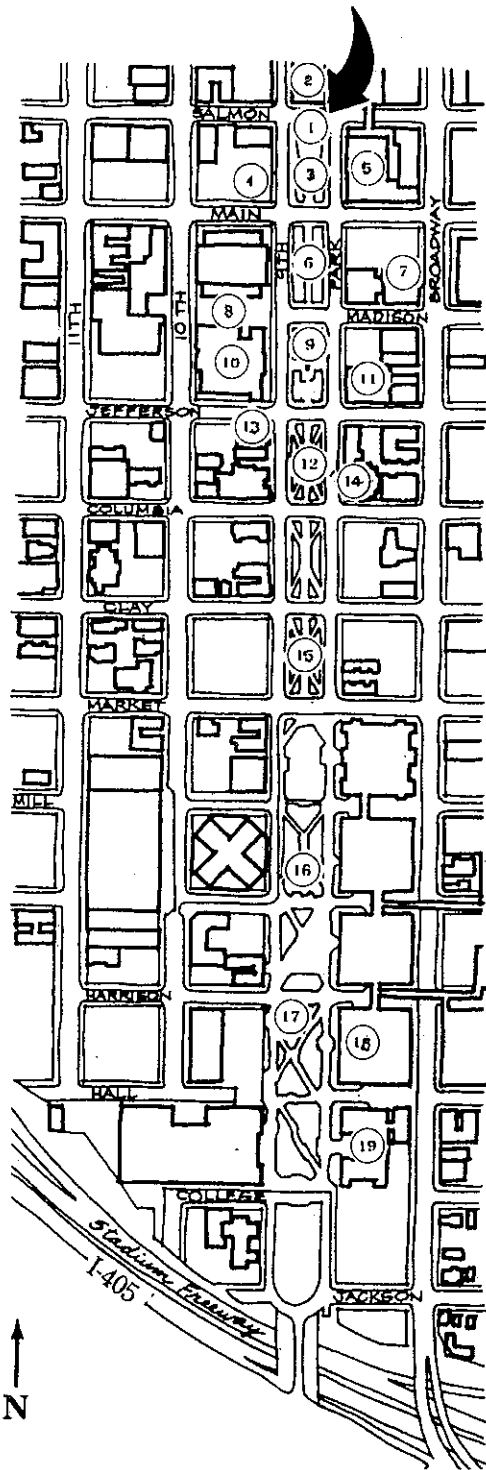
As you proceed south of Market you notice that the South Park Blocks have become a college campus. In 1970 the Portland Development Commission decided to create an outdoor living space for the university. Today everything from band concerts to outdoor graduation ceremonies are held in this pleasant space.

Continue south two blocks to Montgomery Street. Here on the south end of the block is a bronze statue and fountain, "Farewell to Orpheus" (16) by Frederic Littman (1907-1979).

Two blocks south of the Littman fountain you will find another work, in white Indiana limestone entitled "Holon" (17), by Oregon sculptor Don Wilson (b. 1934). Wilson was for a time an assistant to Frederic Littman, yet their styles are vastly different.

Yet another style can be seen in the beautiful bronze screens mounted on the west wall of Neuberger Hall. Here Oregon sculptor Tom Hardy (b. 1921) has created a panoramic view of our state: "Oregon Landscape," (18) depicted in eight welded and forged screens (1962).

Across the way on the southeast corner of Park and College, is the historic Shattuck Elementary School (19), named for Erasmus Darwin Shattuck (1824-1900), teacher, attorney, and judge. The school, built in 1915, is now part of Portland State University.



Key to Walking Tour of the South Park Blocks

1.	Simon Benson Memorial
2.	The Arlington Club
3.	Shemanski Fountain
4.	Sylvester Farrell London Plane Tree
5.	Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall
6.	Abraham Lincoln Statue
7.	First Congregational Church
8.	Evan H. Roberts Memorial Sculpture Mall
9.	Theodore Roosevelt "Rough Rider" Statue
10.	Portland Art Museum
11.	Oregon Historical Center
12.	"Peace Chant" Sculpture
13.	St. James Lutheran Church
14.	First Christian Church
15.	"In the Shadow of the Elm" Sculpture
16.	"Farewell to Orpheus" Statue and Fountain
17.	"Holon" Sculpture
18.	"Oregon Landscape" Sculpture
19.	Shattuck Elementary School

Walking Tour: The South Park Blocks