



Portland Building

PHOTO: ROMAN JOHNSTON

# PORTLAND'S BENSON BUBBLERS



*An Icon. A Legacy.*

## *The Benson Bubbler Legacy*

In 1912 **Simon Benson**, a local businessman and philanthropist, donated \$10,000 to the City of Portland to purchase and install 20 bronze drinking fountains, now known as **Benson Bubblers**.

Local folklore tells us that Simon Benson donated the 20 bronze drinking fountains as an effort to keep loggers out of the saloons at lunchtime. Others say that Benson was inspired after seeing a little girl crying at a 4th of July parade because she could not find a drink of water. Either way, the Benson Bubblers have become a historical and enduring legacy in Portland.

Portland's first Benson Bubbler was installed at SW 5th Avenue and Washington Street. Another one of the original Bubblers was installed in front of Benson's home, where it remains today, to commemorate his generous gift to the city.

The remaining 18 original Bubblers were installed by 1917. Currently, the Portland Water Bureau proudly maintains 52 of the four-bowl Benson Bubbler fountains throughout downtown Portland.



OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY



**Portland Water Bureau**  
1120 SW 5th Avenue, Room 600  
Portland, OR 97204-1926  
Phone: 503-823-7404  
Customer Service: 503-823-7770  
Website: portlandoregon.gov/water

*The City of Portland will make reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities. Please notify us no less than five (5) business days prior to the event by phone at 503-823-7404, by the City's TTY at 503-823-6868, or by the Oregon Relay Service at 1-800-735-2900.*

Printed on recycled paper  
05/2013

COVER PHOTO: OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY



## An Icon

In addition to the 52 four-bowl Benson Bubblers, Portland is home to 74 single-bowl variations, which often confuses people. Though the single-bowl fountains look like official Benson Bubblers, they are not. In fact, in the 1970s the Benson family asked that the four-bowl fountains be limited to certain downtown boundaries so as not to diminish the uniqueness of them.



PHOTO: ROMAN JOHNSTON

And while most Benson Bubblers are indeed located in Portland's thriving downtown area, there are a few notable exceptions. In 1965, the City of Portland presented a Bubbler to Portland's sister city, Sapporo, Japan.

Additionally, a Benson Bubbler is housed at the Maryhill Museum of Art located in the Columbia River Gorge. In 2012, a Bubbler was made a gift to the City of Pendleton, Oregon.

### Construction & Design

A.E. Doyle designed the four-bowl Benson Bubbler. Doyle is the noted architect of the Multnomah County Library, Multnomah Falls Lodge and Jeld-Wen Field.

Though the Bubblers are made of copper, years of weathering give them the eye-catching patina finish that makes them so beautiful. Patina is a thin layer of brown and greenish oxides that takes years to build up. Well-meaning citizens have "cleaned" off

the patina more than once over the years, but the Portland Water Bureau has always restored the patina finish, preferring it to the shiny copper.

Although most Bubblers were made in local foundries, two Bubblers were made by students at Benson High School. The first student-made Bubbler was installed in front of downtown Portland's Oregon Historical Society and the work is of the highest quality. Visitors can view it for themselves at 1200 SW Park Avenue.



Benson Bubbler in Portland's sister city of Sapporo, Japan

## Conservation Efforts

The Portland Water Bureau is committed to using water wisely, and has made significant changes in the design and operation of the Bubblers over the years to improve their water efficiency. For example, in 1995 the bureau narrowed the feed lines to the Bubblers. This cut water use almost in half!

In 2000, the bureau installed timers that shut fountains off during low-usage periods, generally in the late night and early morning hours.

In 2005, the Water Bureau installed small flow-restricting devices in the Bubblers to reduce the amount of water that each fountain uses. The devices do not affect the physical appearance of the fountains, but they do reduce the amount of water the fountains use by 40 percent. The Bubblers now use less than 1/10th of 1 percent of Portland's daily water demand, yet they still stand proud as a defining iconic element of our city's history.

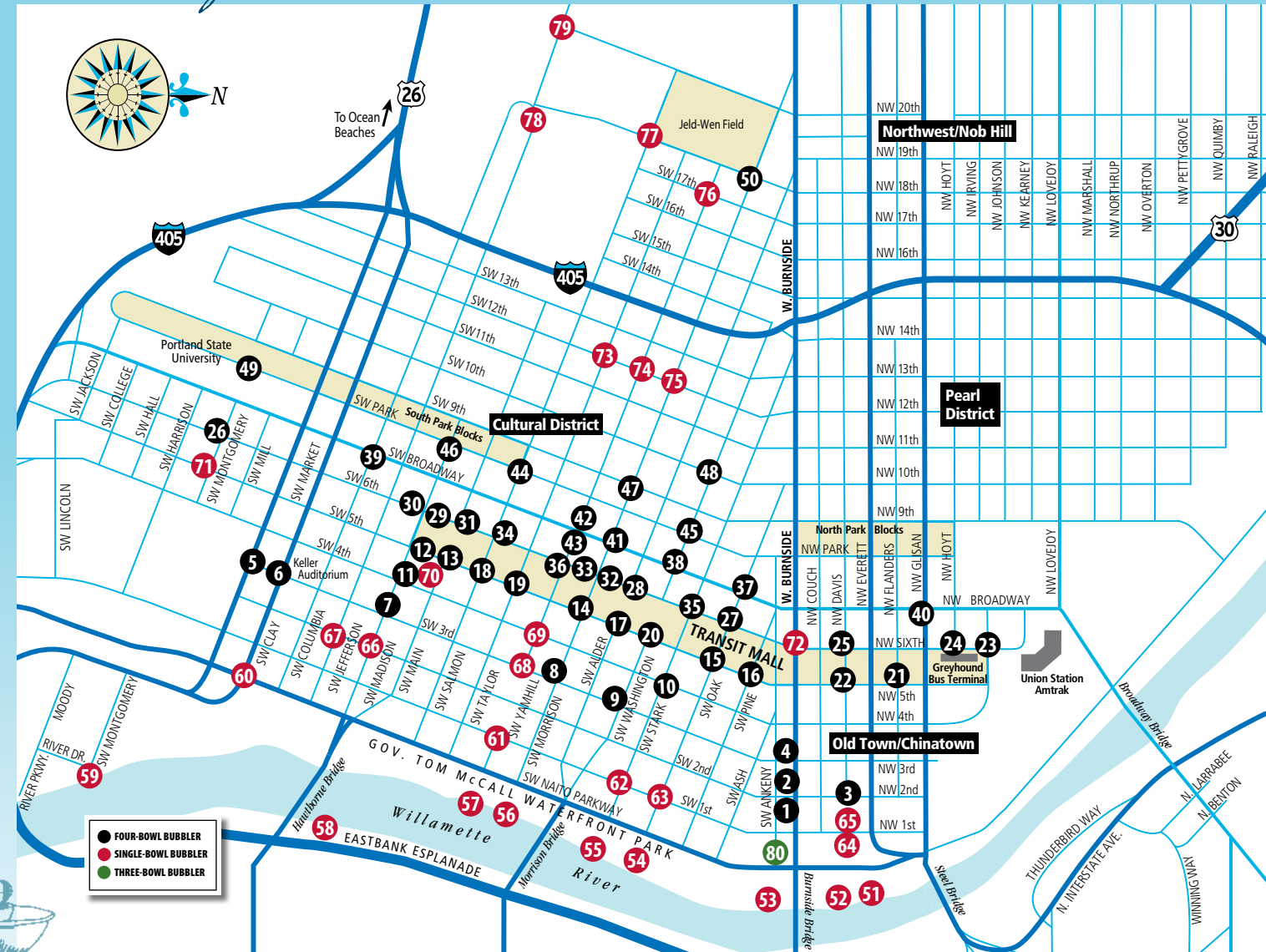


## Bubbler Facts

- ◆ In most locations, Bubblers normally flow from 5:30 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. daily.
- ◆ The fountains run year-round unless freezing or windy weather requires a temporary shutdown.
- ◆ The fountains are cleaned bi-weekly.



## Guide to the Downtown Benson Bubblers



### FOUR-BOWL BUBBLERS

- SW 1st & Burnside (East)
- SW 1st & Burnside (West)
- NW 2nd & Davis
- SW 3rd & Burnside
- SW 3rd & Market
- SW 3rd & Clay
- SW 3rd & Madison
- SW 3rd & Morrison
- SW 3rd & Washington
- SW 4th & Stark
- SW 4th & Madison
- SW 5th & Madison
- SW 5th & Main
- SW 5th & Morrison

### 15 SW 5th & Oak

- SW 5th & Pine
- SW 5th & Alder
- SW 5th & Salmon
- SW 5th & Taylor
- SW 5th & Washington
- NW 5th & Flanders
- NW 6th & Irving
- NW 6th & Hoyt
- NW 6th & Davis
- SW 6th & Montgomery
- SW 6th & Oak
- SW 6th & Alder
- SW 6th & Madison (North)

### 30 SW 6th & Madison (South)

- SW 6th & Main
- SW 6th & Morrison (North)
- SW 6th & Morrison (South)
- SW 6th & Salmon
- SW 6th & Stark
- SW 6th & Yamhill
- SW Broadway & Oak
- SW Broadway & Washington
- SW Broadway & Columbia
- NW Broadway & Glisan
- SW Broadway & Morrison
- SW Yamhill & Broadway (West)
- SW Yamhill & Broadway (East)
- SW Park & Salmon

### 45 SW Park & Washington

- SW Park & Madison
- SW 6th & Morrison
- SW 9th & Morrison
- SW 10th & Washington
- SW Park & Montgomery
- SW 18th & Morrison

### SINGLE-BOWL BUBBLERS

- NW Everett at seawall
- NW Davis at seawall
- SW Ankeny at seawall
- SW Oak & Naito Parkway
- SW Stark at seawall
- SW Morrison & seawall
- SW Yamhill & Naito Parkway

### 58 Eastbank Esplanade

- SW Riverplace & Montgomery
- SW Clay & Naito Parkway
- SW 1st & Yamhill
- SW 1st & Stark
- SW 1st & Oak
- SW 1st & Burnside (East)
- SW 1st & Burnside (West)
- SW 2nd & Madison
- SW 2nd & Jefferson
- SW 3rd & Yamhill
- SW 4th & Yamhill
- Chapman Square (SW 4th & Madison)
- SW 5th & Montgomery

### 72 NW 6th & Burnside

- SW 12th & Taylor
- SW 12th & Yamhill
- SW 12th & Morrison
- SW 17th & Yamhill
- SW 18th & Salmon
- SW 18th and Jefferson
- SW 20th & Jefferson

### THREE-BOWL BUBBLER

- SW Ankeny & Naito Parkway