

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received MAR 23 1984

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic "Seattle, Chief of the Suquamish Statue"

and/or common Chief Seattle Statue, Tilikum Place

2. Location

street & number Intersection of 5th Ave., Denny Way, and Cedar St. — not for publication

city, town Seattle — vicinity of

state Washington code 053 county King code 033

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<u>n/a</u> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<u>n/a</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name City of Seattle, Parks and Recreation Department

street & number Municipal Building

city, town Seattle — vicinity of state Washington 98104

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. City of Seattle, Engineering Dept./Parks & Rec. Dept.

street & number Municipal Building

city, town Seattle — vicinity of state Washington 98104

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Washington State Inventory of Cultural Resources has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1980 federal state county local

depository for survey records Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation

city, town 111 West 21st Avenue, Olympia state Washington 98504

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

"Seattle, Chief of the Suquamish" is a large bronze statue that memorializes Puget Sound's most famous Native American. Designed by James A. Wehn in 1907, this life-size statue of Chief Seattle is placed upon a granite pedestal and forms the centerpiece of Tilikum Place, a triangular park located at the intersection of Fifth Avenue, Denny Way, and Cedar Street. Approximately 460 square feet in its original form, the park has been increased significantly by the addition of the partially abandoned right-of-way of Cedar Street. After the Denny Regrade of 1905, this plot was set aside as a memorial site named Tilikum Place. This project was sponsored by the Tilikums of Elttaes, a local business association and forerunner of the Seattle Seafair Pirates.

The cast bronze figure of Chief Seattle stands on a polished granite plinth which rests on a pedestal of rock-faced granite. His right arm is raised in greeting, a pose reportedly remembered as characteristic of the Chief. His height of six feet was based upon Daniel Bagley's memory. He recalled, "I stand about 5'8" and I know the Chief was inches above me." The Chief's costume is a four point Hudson's Bay blanket, his habitual attire.

In addition to the statue itself, pedestal ornaments were designed and cast by the sculptor. These include two bronze bear heads, one on either short side of the granite base, that served as fountain spouts. A triangular plaque above the south-facing bear head is inscribed with the name Tilikum Place and stylized letters that identify Tilikums of Elttaes, the sponsors. On the east side of the pedestal, a bronze plaque depicts in low-relief the sighting of Captain Vancouver's ship by the Indian Kitsap in 1792. On the west side of the pedestal, another bronze plaque is inscribed: "Seattle, Chief of the Suquamish, a firm friend of the whites, for whom the city of Seattle was named by its founders."

Two dolphins (symbolic of water and therefore appropriate to Seattle's maritime environment) frame a sea shell with the date 1908. The date is a reminder that the statue was commissioned in 1907 and intended to be a feature of the 1909 Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition. The plaques and the bear heads were cast in Seattle and completed on schedule in 1908. However, because of problems casting the statue, the final dedication of Tilikum Place did not occur until November 1912. The statue and granite base were originally surrounded by a low walled circular pool of rough hewn granite.

A contract for rehabilitation of the site and the fountain pool was awarded to the firm of landscape architects Jones and Jones in 1975. They were hired to enlarge the triangular site, design new lighting, surface paving, street furniture, and plantings. The site was rededicated on December 8, 1975. By closing Cedar Street to traffic and paving it and the triangular site of the original park with unit pavers, Tilikum Place became less an island surrounded by traffic and more a vest pocket park protected by small-scale early twentieth century retail and apartment buildings--several of which have recently been restored and repainted. The borders of the park are planted with 11 sycamores. The site also features ornamental metal tree grates, unit pavers, and single globe lighting standards designed to be utilized in future Denny Regrade parks and open spaces. Along the Cedar Street side of the park are four narrow wooden slat benches. Sixteen cylindrical concrete bollards define the trafficked perimeters of the triangle.

The fountain pool has been enlarged from its original design, its three-tiered circular granite steps were designed to allow for more interaction between people and the statue. The granite is smooth on its top surface and rough finished on its sides. Two 12 ton granite boulders were shaped by Seattle sculptor Richard Beyer to fit into the rim of the pool. The artist also chiseled petroglyphs on the surfaces of these boulders. Surrounding the granite pool is a circle of square granite pavers enclosed by an ornamental metal ring. Due to the recent alterations to the pool and Tilikum Place, only the statue of Chief Seattle and its embellished base are considered to be historically significant.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1908 - 1912 **Builder/Architect** James A. Wehn, Sculptor
Gorham & Company of New York, Foundry

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

"Seattle, Chief of the Suquamish," was commissioned, conceived, and cast during the period 1907-1912 by sculptor James A. Wehn (1883-1973). The statue is an excellent example of the tradition of realism prevalent in nineteenth and early twentieth century American art. As the focal points of city squares and parks, statues like that of Chief Seattle commemorated citizens of local, regional, or national importance, and historic events worthy of recognition. These memorials were responsible for fostering civic pride in the history and the achievements of a locality. Although northeast and southeast American cities have a plethora of such works commemorating presidents, generals, founding pioneers, and important civic, social, and cultural leaders, Seattle has remarkably few such examples: McGraw Place at Westlake, a statue of George Washington on the University of Washington campus, a World War I "doughboy" at Seattle Center, and several other lesser works. Recent public art work commissioned in the city is generally of the abstract expressionist variety. As a consequence, the strong, dignified, welcoming figure of Chief Seattle, set on its pedestal and surrounded by open space, provides an unusual cultural experience for the pedestrian in the Denny Regrade area of Seattle's downtown, an important visual reminder of the city's Native American heritage.

Apart from its artistic value, the Chief Seattle statue and its surrounding site are distinctive as the second public work of art in the city--the first one was a totem pole erected in 1899 in Pioneer Square. Considering the founding settlers' attitudes about the development of downtown, their lack of planning for public open space or street amenities in their rush toward economic gain, it is remarkable that the statue, the fountain, or the open space was approved by the city at all. However, the city passed an ordinance in 1907 for a sculpture as part of its street improvements in the newly regraded area of downtown, foreseeing its value in light of the approaching Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition. Furthermore, this was the first of a number of well-known civic works by local sculptor James Wehn.

James Wehn was born in Indianapolis and brought to Seattle by his parents in 1889. His father operated an iron and brass foundry and the son modelled architectural ornaments for the foundry during the early part of the century. Wehn also apprenticed to a sculptor in Indianapolis for five years (1900-1905). With training in drawing, painting, and modelling, as well as in the methods of casting, Wehn was able to specialize in historical work, such as portrait plaques, historic markers, and commemorative medals, many of which are in a collection at the Washington State Historical Society in Tacoma. Wehn established the sculpture department at the University of Washington in 1919 and taught there for many years. He designed the official seal of the city of Seattle in 1936.

Wehn's meticulous research and numerous studies of Puget Sound Indians in preparation for the Chief Seattle statue, his best known work, also provided the basis for the portrait head of Chief Seattle used in three subsequent city fountains: those in Pioneer Square and in Renton (1910), and the Broderick fountain at Seattle University (1958). His profile medallion of Chief Seattle, adopted as the official city seal, was enlarged in bronze and installed over the doors of the Public Safety Building at its opening in 1950.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Monuments and Memorials (A-L) #174, Scrapbook, Seattle Public Library.
Art in Public Places: Five Urban Walking Tours. The Fifth Itinerary: Seattle Center from Tilikum Place to the Playhouse. Prepared by Gervais Reed and Jo Nilsson. Seattle Public Library, 1977.
Seattle Municipal Reference Library: Don Sherwood Parks archives.

10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Seattle South

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	0	5	4	9	1	3	0	5	2	7	3	9	0	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D

Zone			Easting				Northing							

E

Zone			Easting				Northing							

F

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H

Zone			Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification The statue is located within a park known as Tilikum Place; the park is bounded on the north by Denny Way, on the east by Fifth Avenue, and on the south by that portion of Cedar Street between Tilikum Place and Lot 5, Block O, Bell's Fifth Addition.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	n/a	code	county	code

state	n/a	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Lawrence Kreisman, Urban Conservation Specialist

organization Office of Urban Conservation date December 15, 1983

street & number 400 Yesler Building telephone (206) 625-4501

city or town Seattle state Washington 98104

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Jacob E. Thor

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date March 15, 1984

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the
National Register

date 4/19/84

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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The original dedication of the statue on Founder's Day, November 13, 1912, came about after a great number of changes and the near abandonment of the project by the artist. In 1907, the city budgeted monies for street improvements in the newly regraded area, including funds for a sculpture to mark the historic site. A committee composed of local businessmen was appointed, including city engineer R.H. Thomson, and Clarence Bagley, then secretary of the Board of Public Works. The original proposal for a sculptural fountain including a horse trough was made by the architectural firm of Kerr and Rogers. Their concept was a classical figure of Mercury bringing riches from the Orient. The committee's indecision led Rogers to recommend they discuss the project with sculptor James Wehn, then 24. After conferring with Bagley, whose focus was local history, Wehn abandoned the Mercury concept and instead proposed a full length portrait of Chief Noah Sealth, known to white settlers as Chief Seattle, after whom the city had been named.

This idea was enthusiastically accepted by the committee and Wehn started modelling the form. Despite his insistence that an experienced East Coast foundry cast the statue, the committee awarded the contract to a local firm in 1908; the results were unacceptable to the artist. Concerned for his reputation, Wehn asked the committee to change foundries; when they refused, he destroyed his plaster cast. As Wehn related it,

"I went to the foundry. I told them there was to be no statue; that as far as I knew they were through and possibly I was too. The foundry was built about five feet above tide water. With the help of a borrowed wheelbarrow, I proceeded to dump my plaster cast into the tide water. Later that afternoon, I went to Dr. Chrichton's office to tell him what had happened. Shaking his head as he shook my hand, he said, 'Maybe it is for the best.' I proposed that I would model a new statue; but I was to have a free hand."

Ordinance No. 16774 had originally allocated monies for the statue. On March 28, 1910, a second ordinance, No. 23705, was approved "to appropriate money to complete the construction of the fountain and statue at Fifth No., Denny Way, and Cedar Street."

During 1911, Wehn travelled to Indian villages, studying Indian physical characteristics; he worked from different live models and finally completed a clay figure from which a plaster cast was made in 1912. In the spring of that year, the finished plaster was shipped to the Gorham and Company foundry in New York for casting in bronze. In October 1912, the statue arrived in Seattle and was placed on its granite pedestal. On Founder's Day, November 13, 1912, the statue was unveiled by Myrtle Loughery, Chief Seattle's great-great granddaughter, in an impressive civic ceremony.

At the insistence of the pioneers on the design committee, the original design for the statue included a full size canoe. However, after the first casting proved inadequate, Wehn eliminated the canoe, maintaining it was "not artistic." According to his own recollections of the commission, the task would have been too complicated, especially since the single figure had to be cast in New York City and was several years behind schedule at the time.

The site on which the statue and fountain are located commemorates the ties of friendship between the white settlers and the Northwest Indian culture that greeted them when they arrived in the 1850's. Placed near the point where the boundaries of the original donation claims of Carson Boren, William Bell, and Arthur Denny met, the triangular intersection was named Tilikum Place, a Chinook word interpreted variously as

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"tribe, people, relations, and friend." It also denotes greeting or welcome. Coincidentally, the site is at the edge of the area that was for many generations known as Potlatch Meadows, scene of Indian feasts and games. Potlatch Meadows is now the site of Seattle Center. Also, Cedar Street honors the coniferous tree so important to Chief Seattle's people; they carved its wood into dug-out canoes, split its boards for their houses, and wove baskets and clothing from its bark and fibers.

By the 1960's, the statue and surrounding site were badly in need of care; the bear heads no longer spouted water, the pool was filled with plants, and the statue had accumulated years of grime. The statue was removed and cleaned prior to the Seattle World's Fair in 1962. In 1975, landscape architects Jones and Jones redesigned Tilikum Place and the pool surrounding the statue was completely altered.

This rehabilitation of Tilikum Place has a significance of its own in terms of contemporary development. It represented the initial public undertaking of the implementation of the Denny Regrade Master Plan. The plan sought to encourage utilization of this under-developed portion of downtown for in-city living. The city encouraged a mix of housing and business and sought to develop public amenities, such as parks and playgrounds, in order to attract people to the regrade. The Tilikum Place project was seen as a prototype. The materials, paving, lighting fixtures, and park furniture used for this project were to be repeated in future public and private projects in the Regrade to give consistency and harmony to the streetscape.

The statue itself commemorates a remarkable Native American whose honorable treatment of white settlers and the respect with which his tribesmen held him permitted the pioneers to settle and develop the Seattle area in peace. Sealth was born on Blake Island ca. 1783 of parents of the Suquamish and Duwamish tribes. He witnessed Captain Vancouver's exploration of Puget Sound when still a boy. Sealth developed exceptional abilities as an organizer and orator, for which he was chosen Chief of the Suquamish. Even though he was not noted as a warrior, his persuasive eloquence won for him the leadership of the Allied Tribes of Puget Sound Region.

Chief Sealth's people had maintained for some time a longhouse at Suquamish, on Agate Passage west of Seattle. By about 1820, the major band of the Duwamish people moved to Suquamish, leaving its ancestral village at Alki Point. Sealth headed the council of chiefs which, at Mukilteo in 1855, ceded to the United States, represented by Governor Isaac Stevens, all of what is now King, Snohomish, Skagit, Whatcom, Island, and San Juan Counties, and part of Kitsap County. In spite of frictions and misunderstandings, the Chief maintained friendly relationships with the founders of the settlement of Seattle until his death at Suquamish in 1866.

Of Sealth's oratory, it has been said that "deep-toned, sonorous and eloquent sentences rolled from his lips like the ceaseless thunders of cataracts flowing from exhaustless fountains." As translated (and likely enhanced) by Dr. Henry Smith, his address to Governor Stevens upon the latter's appointment as Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the territory, is notable for its beauty of thought and expression. His philosophy is also one of acceptance and benevolence.

"Why should I mourn at the untimely fate of my people? Tribe follows tribe, and national follows nation, like the waves of the sea. It is the order of nature and regret is useless. Your time of decay may be distant--but it will surely come. We may be brothers after all. Let the White Man be just and deal kindly with my people, for the dead are not powerless. Dead--I say? There is no death. Only a change of worlds."

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Chief Sealth induced Dr. David Maynard to leave Olympia and settle along the shore of Elliott Bay in March 1852. Through Maynard, he became friendly with Denny, Terry, Bell, and the other white settlers. Had it not been for Maynard's persuasion, the city might have borne the original Indian name--Zechalalitch--or the first name given to the pioneer village by settlers--Duwamps. Instead, Maynard convinced his friends to name the city Seattle, in honor of the well-respected, fair-minded Chief Sealth.