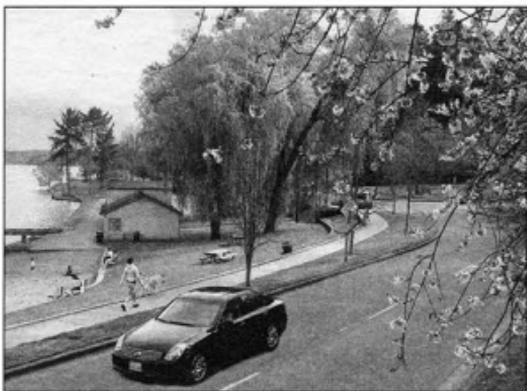




COURTESY OF MUSEUM OF HISTORY & INDUSTRY



PAUL DORPAT

THEN: A caravan of motorcars featuring the Seattle Press Club in at least one pennant proceeds north past Mount Baker on a new Lake Washington Boulevard. The lakeshore was considerably changed in 1916 when the lake was lowered for the opening of the Lake Washington Ship Canal.

NOW: Cars still make the scenic loop along the lake.

A Driving Force

ILL CONFESS: I don't know the models of these motorcars, the names of their passengers or even the occasion that prompted such a long caravan to snake along Lake Washington Boulevard through the Mount Baker curves and into Colman Park.

I do, however, speculate. The year may be 1909, when this part of the boulevard was new. If so, then the motorcade is probably headed for the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition, which opened that spring on the University of Washington campus. Pieces of the boulevard were rushed to completion so processions like this one could cover the distance from Wetmore Slough (Genesee Park) to the expo in style.

More likely the date is 1911. The negative number suggests it, although numbers from the Webster and Stevens Studio, which took the photo, are often misleading. However, two archival prints of this and a second, similar scene are marked "Seattle Press Club tour" and "autos on boulevard, Mt. Baker Park, 1911."

This part of the boulevard was most like

the parkway the Olmsted Brothers envisioned when they planned the city's parks and boulevards in the early 20th century. Their highest ambitions were to purchase the entire west side of the lake up to the ridge between Colman and Leschi parks and carry the boulevard to a scenic "crestline." Instead, the parkway was developed into a string of parks that often meanders with the boulevard.

When the lake was lowered 9 feet in 1916, the concrete and riprap seawalls were exposed. Here at Mount Baker the seawall was kept, and a new, landscaped slope drops from it to the shoreline. The historical photo was recorded from the Dose Terrace steps. Anyone who can identify those motorcars, the riders or their reasons please contact me at paul@dorpat.com. 

Paul Dorpat specializes in historical photography and has published several books on early Seattle.

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