

# SELF-GUIDED WALKING TOURS



## Introduction:

Ballard is a singular Seattle neighborhood with an unmistakable Scandinavian accent. A city in its own right between 1890 and 1907, Ballard built a handsome business district now preserved as a national and local historic district. The nearby Fishermen's Terminal, Hiram M. Chittenden Locks, Shilshole Marina, and Golden Gardens Park attract tens of thousands of visitors each year. Ballard is located along Salmon Bay in northwest Seattle, and easily reached from downtown via Elliott and 15th avenues or Aurora Avenue.

This tour begins by focusing on the Ballard business and historic districts, then expands to include nearby attractions.

*Note: This tour is intended for personal use only and was prepared by HistoryLink for the City of Seattle Office of Economic Development, Tourism Division. Copyright 2001, City of Seattle. All references to contemporary businesses in this tour date from June 2001. They are cited for orientation and information purposes only and do not imply recommendation or endorsement by the City of Seattle or by HistoryLink.*

To learn more about the Market's rich history, visit [www.historylink.org](http://www.historylink.org).

## History:

The first claim in the future city and neighborhood of Ballard was filed in 1852, the same year settlers arrived in Seattle itself. Development proceeded slowly until railroad entrepreneurs Thomas Burke and Daniel Gilman (remembered now with the Burke-Gilman Trail) assembled a large tract in 1888 for a new community.

Meanwhile, a ship's captain named William Rankin Ballard lost a bet with a business partner and found himself the owner of 160 acres of seemingly worthless logged-off land adjacent to the planned Gilman Park development. Burke and Gilman hired him to manage their project, and appreciative residents named their new city after Ballard when they incorporated in 1890.

The new town grew quickly thanks to electric streetcars linking it to Seattle and establishment of numerous lumber and

## Ballard Historical Walking Tour



shingle mills along Salmon Bay. Meanwhile, the influx of immigrants from famine and tensions in Scandinavia

provided a skilled work force for local mills and fishing fleets. The popularity of chewing tobacco among these new arrivals earned the neighborhood the nickname "Snoose Junction."

A new business district rose along Ballard Avenue NW and the town built a handsome City Hall in 1899. Legend has it that Ballard decreed a perfect balance between vice and virtue by limiting saloon licenses to the number of churches in the city, but the municipal



government had trouble delivering basic services such as potable water. Ballardites voted reluctantly in 1906 to annex to Seattle, but their neighborhood retained its distinctive culture.

The output of Ballard's mills made it the "Shingle Capital of the World," and the Port of Seattle built Fishermen's Terminal to house Ballard's fishing fleet on the south shore of Salmon Bay in 1913. Four years later, the opening of the Lake Washington Ship Canal and Government Locks (now named for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers district head Hiram Chittenden) created new economic opportunities for maritime commerce.

In recent years, "Old Ballard" has become a hub for a wide array of ethnic cafes from Cajun to Asian and lively music clubs. It remains a "city within a city" with its own pace and special flavor that reminds us of a gentler era in Seattle history.





# THE TOUR



**1. NW Market Street at Bergen Place:** This modern park was built to give Ballard a new civic focus and dedicated in 1975 by Norwegian King Olav V. The triangle's name honors Bergen, Norway, Seattle's second Sister

City.

The Ballard Building stands on the northwest corner of NW Market Street and 22nd Avenue NW. The neighborhood's largest office building was built in 1927 as the second "Aerie" of the Seattle-based Fraternal Order of Eagles (the first is downtown's landmark Eagles Building, now home of ACT Theater, at 7th and Union). It was designed by William R. Grant and later remodeled to house restaurants, retail stores, and other businesses.

The nearby Majestic Bay Theater opened in 1915 and was remodeled in 2000 by philanthropist Ken Alhadeff. Another landmark, the town's original Carnegie Library, is a few doors east on Market Avenue NW. Designed by Henderson Ryan and opened in 1905, the building was succeeded by a new Ballard Library in the early 1960s and now houses private offices.

Former Fire Station 18 is nearby at 5427 Russell Avenue NW and dates from 1911. Now listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the sturdy brick building was designed with Dutch gables by the early partnership of Charles Bebb and Louis Mendel.

**2. Ballard Avenue NW at NW Market Street:** Ballard Avenue NW is now protected as a local and national historic district, which was dedicated on April 11, 1976, by King Carl XVI Gustav of Sweden. The main street of "Old Ballard" was gradually abandoned as the neighborhood's

business district relocated to NW Market Street. Thus, Ballard's Avenue's newest structures are found at its intersection with Market. This is anchored on the west by the present home of an Indian restaurant, originally built in 1923, and on the east by an older two-story building from 1903, now home of an Italian restaurant. If nothing else, these dueling eateries demonstrate that there's more than lutefisk to eat in Ballard.

Note that Ballard Avenue NW runs southeast from NW Market Street. We will refer to its opposite sides as east and



west (closest to the water) as we proceed down the avenue. The vaguely Art Deco home of the Ballard Family Center was built in 1920, adjacent to the older former Princess Hotel at 5443-5447 Ballard NW, which dates from 1903. The incongruous Mission Style facades of the Ballard Smoke Shop and Vik Apartments a few doors east reflect the fad for California architecture which spread north in the mid-1920s. Across the street, Marley's Snowboards and The Grape Wine Shop & Bistro occupy a 1906 commercial building. A little further stands a vacant 1908 building that was the original home of Ballard's Eagle's Lodge and the printing plant for the Ballard Tribune.

The nearby Burk's Cafe, a Cajun restaurant, occupies a converted 1890s house a few steps east. The south side of the block ends at a handsome two-story brick structure built in 1901. Once a J.C. Penney's department store, its main tenant now is The Paint Patch crafts shop.



**3. At 22nd Avenue NW:** The Ballard City Hall once stood in the triangular Marvin's Garden park (named for deceased town character Marvin Sjoberg) at 22nd Avenue NW. The original brick structure and bell tower were destabilized by the 1965 earthquake and demolished two years later. Its original bell survives in a new tower erected in 1976 as a U.S. Bicentennial Project. Noway's King Carl XVI Gustav and Seattle Mayor Wes Uhlman rang this

bell on April 11, 1976, to officially dedicate the Ballard Historic District.

The nearby Sunset Hotel occupied the Jones Building, built in 1901 and site of Ballard's original post office. The building was severely damaged by fire in 2000 but its owners hope to restore it. Olsen Furniture and the adjacent Habitude Day Spa occupy a pair of buildings dating from 1895 and 1896. Opposite them on southwest corner, the Guitar Emporium now fills the original 1901 home of the A. W. Preston Drug Store.



**4. 5300 Block of Ballard Avenue NW:** The frame house just east of the Guitar Emporium looks like its been there forever, but actually it's only been around a decade or so. Its southern neighbors were all built between 1900 and 1909. They house a number of interesting retailers and studios including Chameleon Design and Sutter's Home & Hearth. Ballard Bookcase Co. occupies the district's only example of Richardsonian architecture, the G. B. Sandborn building of 1901.



Of course, no seaport would be complete without a tattoo parlor, and neither is Ballard thanks

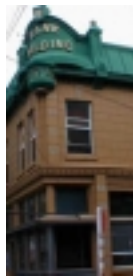
to Anchor Tattoo. The east side of Ballard Avenue begins with newer 1920s-era buildings and then "ages" into the early 1900s, but with its own assortment of modern stores such as Bark Natural Pet Care and Lucca European Home & Garden shop.:

**5. At NW Vernon Place:** The 5300 block terminates in a facing pair of bank buildings. Indeed the ornate crest of the taller structure on east northeast corner, now the Starlight Hotel, is emblazoned with the words "Bank Building," and it was built in 1902 for Ballard's home-grown Scandinavian American Bank. Across Ballard Avenue, the sculpted cornucopia on the neo-classical pediment has advocated "Thrift" since 1914, although the original Ballard Savings & Loan Association passed on years ago.

A short walk west on Vernon to NW Shilshole will lead you to a sturdy brick



house that was actually built in 1913 as the administrative office of the Stimson Mill which once took up much of the Salmon Bay waterfront. The building was designed by Spokane-based architect Kirtland Cutter, who was responsible for such Seattle landmarks as the Rainier Club and Stimson-Green Mansion.



**6. 5200 Block of Ballard Avenue NW:** The southeast corner is dominated the Olympic Athletic Club, which occupies the original 1910 home of the Ballard Elks. The balance of the block is filled by the Junction Building, built in 1890 and



later modified. It now houses artists' live-in studios and galleries such as Sev Shoon.

On the southwest corner stands a

commercial building dating from 1900. Next to this is the venerable Hattie's Hat restaurant and cocktail lounge, long popular with locals. Its southern neighbor, Ballard Hardware, was built in 1890. A few doors south is the Tractor, a popular music club, which occupies a 1902 building that has housed many taverns over its long life.

**7. 5100 Block of Ballard Avenue NW:** The ornate facade of the 1893 Cors & Wegener Building frames the southeast corner of the intersection at 20th Avenue NW. South of it stands the 1911 home of the Lock & Keel Tavern and then the 1902 home of Conor Byrne's Irish Pub, a major Seattle venue for Irish music. Famed Seattle chef Kathy Casey operates a new cooking school in the 1900 vintage building at the corner of NW Ione Place.

The southwest corner of Ballard NW and 22nd NW is anchored by a sturdy commercial building dating from 1897 and now occupied by architects. Note the distinctive casts of leaping salmon over the entrance of the Chevron supply center a few doors south.

The Historic District ends with a flourish at the intersection NW Dock

Place. The northeast corner is filled by the classically-ornamented 1905 apartment and retail building that currently houses Bad Albert's tavern. The northwest corner is taken by the former North Star Bar & Hotel Building, also dating from 1905 and now home of Dock Street Brokers. The building's original name and a vintage advertisement for Elgin watches fill its north side.

This is the end of our Ballard walking tour, but we want to call your attention to additional neighborhood attractions. Reaching most of these will require a car or transit.

**8. Hiram M. Chittenden Locks:** A half-mile drive or walk west on Ballard Avenue NW and Seaview Avenue NW will lead you to the entrance to the Hiram M. Chittenden Locks. A pair of locks raise and lower boats some 20 feet between Salmon Bay and the higher level of the Ship Canal and Lake Union. The project plan, conceived by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers district commander Hiram M. Chittenden, also lowered Lake Washington by nine feet to complete the passage between salt and fresh waters.

The idea for such a canal was first proposed in 1854, but federal funds were not approved until 1910. Work began the



following year and the locks were officially dedicated on July 4, 1917, and the entire waterway was declared complete in 1934. The original grounds and buildings were designed by Bebb and Gould. Beginning in 1931, Carl English cultivated the botanical gardens which now bear his name. The facility also includes a small museum and interpretive center, and a busy fish ladder on the south side of the canal near Commodore Way.

**9. Shilshole Marina:** Continuing west on Seaview NW, you will pass several

popular seafood restaurants such as Ray's and Anthony's Home Port before reaching Shilshole Marina. The embankment features a statue of Leif Erickson, installed in 1962. The Port of Seattle built the present pleasure boat moorage and center in 1963. The breakwater teems with marine life, including giant Pacific Octopus and sea lions, and attracts many scuba divers.

**10. Golden Gardens:** Seaview NW terminates at Golden Gardens Park. This popular beach was originally developed by Olive and Harry Treat and served by a private streetcar line from Ballard. The City of Seattle took ownership of the park in 1922.

**11. Nordic Heritage Museum:** The Nordic Heritage Museum contains displays and resources chronicling the history of Seattle's large Scandinavian communities. It is located in the former Webster School at 3014 NW 67th Street in North Ballard. Call 206-789-5707 or visit [www.nordicmuseum.com](http://www.nordicmuseum.com) for more information.

**12. Fishermen's Terminal:** A short drive south across the Ballard Bridge and west on W Emerson Street brings you to Fishermen's Terminal, home base for much of the North Pacific and Puget Sound fishing fleet. The original center was built by the Port of Seattle in 1913 as Ballard docks were being closed for construction of the Lake Washington Ship Canal. The facility expanded in 1946 and was completely refurbished in 1988 with addition of a new terminal center, apron, and piers serving more than 700 vessels. Most piers are open to the public but please respect that this is a working dock.



The dramatic bronze pylon was sculpted and cast by Ron Petty and dedicated in 1988 to honor the more than 500 men and women lost in the North Pacific commercial fishery since 1900. A public service in their memory is held on the first Sunday of every May.