



The Cultural History of Totem Lake

Totem Lake has been used by many different people and gone through many changes over the years. It may have been first used by a Native American tribe as an elk or deer trap. The thick vegetation lured the animals to the shores of the lake. This was a technique used by several tribes in the area that helped them to gather food.

In the 1880's, as the Puget Sound area was settled, there was a boom in Kirkland and much of the land was being claimed and divided. Some landowners in the Totem Lake area were Oliva Johnson, John Snickers, the Hansons, I.I. Walker, Agnes Campell, the Goffs, and George Grant Wittenmyer, a former logger and City Clerk in Kirkland, after whom the lake was originally named.

The railroad passed just sound of the lake through an area then known as Firloch. The name originated from a small shingle mill on the southeast side of the lake. When the boom subsided, the mill was abandoned yet Firloch name remained for many years afterward. Some surrounding land uses at that time included a dairy located to the south of the lake and an orchard on top of the slope to the north. This orchard, which grew cherries and pears, was named Hardenbrook Farm.

Lake Wittenmyer, later called Lake Watsine and Mud Lake, eventually changed to "Totem Lake" in the spring of 1973 after the opening of the nearby shopping mall. The 17-acre wetland park is now owned by the King Conservation District and co-managed by the City of Kirkland.

