

MAGNOLIA, 5000 YEARS AGO
By Dale Forbus Hogle
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“Today’s peaceful appearance and seemingly unchanged shape of the sand spit we call [Magnolia’s] West Point was not always so. Steep bluffs and narrow fjord like passages left by melting Ice Age glaciers afforded no beaches. Condors soared overhead. Sea and land were wracked by furious winds, earthquakes, landslides, and tidal waves. The sea rose and fell. Then, about 5,000 years ago, the sea level stabilized and a beach was formed.^{1, 2}The beach offered shellfish in abundance...

“...Over 4,000 years ago, humans began to inhabit this idyllic location below the cliffs....Over 4,000 years ago, humans began to inhabit this idyllic location below the cliffs...

“The Discovery”

“Move forward in time to the present. Over the intervening four millennia, West Point has experienced great change, from the shape of the ancient sand spit to its habitation. This story will carry you through those changes. To begin, we will go back to February of 1992, and the discovery of the historical legacy of West Point.

When Brian Atwater, a geologist with the US Geological Survey, visited the construction site of the secondary wastewater treatment facility at the Municipality of Metropolitan Seattle (Metro) West Point Treatment Plant in February 1992, he never envisioned that he would discover an archaeological treasure trove. Atwater was looking for evidence in the earth’s strata of an earthquake and tsunami known to have occurred 1,100 years ago...

“...But, unexpectedly, far below the ground’s surface, on the wall of a deeply scooped out trench destined to carry the enormous main sewage outfall pipeline, he saw telltale evidence of past human habitation—the purple color of mussel shell burned by fire. Immediately, the Metro project took on a new direction...

Samples were taken from a test pit and examined for preliminary analysis and assessment. Radiocarbon dating revealed the cultural material investigators uncovered to be at least 3,000 years old. The age, condition, and importance of the artifacts made the site eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places and brought into play a wide range of state and federal laws that protect historical resources. As an ancient site of Native pre-Euro-American human habitation, the involvement of the Puget Sound area’s tribes—Suquamish, Muckleshoot, and Tulalip—was imperative. In March of 1992, working with tribal and governmental agencies, Metro brought in Lynn Larson and Dennis Lewarch of Larson Anthropological/Archaeological Services (LAAS), who led a 20-person team to direct studies of the site.”

Excerpt: Magnolia: Making More Memories; “Prologue: West Point Dig: A Legacy”; Dale Forbus Hogle, author; Magnolia Historical Society, publisher; 2007; p 13-14; citations, p. 332. For information on ordering the book go to www.magnoliahistoricalsociety.org. Or call: 206.284-5480.