

I Remember When.....

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Distant Past Shapes Today's Madrona

Walking, bicycling or driving through Madrona is a pleasant if challenging experience thanks to our neighborhood's steep hillsides and ravines. During the age of glaciers—the Pleistocene Epoch—a last big icy push came from the Vashon Glacier, which covered our region up to a depth of 3,000 feet. Old Vashon, like a plow, carved Lake Tapps, Lake Sammamish, Puget Sound, Hood Canal, and our own Lake Washington. About 14,000 years ago, Vashon slowly receded, leaving behind sparkling lakes, huge boulders, and thick layers of soil, mud, vegetation, and gravel. Beneath our wind-blown, fertile mantle of madrona trees, sword ferns, and morning glory, Madrona's stratification once belonged to Canada, Idaho, and Montana. We are indeed perched upon debris that came a great distance—and stayed.

Our other major seismic heritage is a next-door neighbor called the Seattle Fault. This underground fissure, which runs more-or-less east and west under Leschi, is squeezed by subterranean pressure. Forests at the bottom of Lake Washington, pre-historic landslides, and a litany of wonderful Indian myths attest to the power of the “earth quake zone” we call home. Quakes in our region can cause tsunamis, or tidal waves. Evidence of these roiling waters can be found in lower Puget Sound, at Restoration Point on the southern tip of Bainbridge Island, and in our own neighborhood history. For example, in the early 1900s, Indians told of an island that suddenly disappeared of today's Madrona.

But don't let these startling geographic facts prevent you from enjoying Madrona. The lush soil we inherited from our northern neighbors nurtures wondrous stems, buds and flowers. Our Great Lake attracts a wide variety of animal life and creates a climate that is almost perfect. For a fascinating discussion of plate tectonics, seismic activity and the “Ring of Fire” in which Madrona resides, read *Krakatoa: The Day the World Exploded* by Simon Winchester. To learn more about recent human history in Madrona, seek out my latest book, *The Last Electric Trolley*.