



Water hoses helped carve this 1910 scene of the Denny Regrade. The view is south from Bell Street.

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Close Encounters on the Regrade

WRITTEN BY PAUL DORPAT

Only a core of historical images reveal a side of the past and also stir the imagination. They are the classics of local cityscape.

This week's photograph of Seattle qualifies. It looks more like a surreal painting in which the artist collaged a melodramatic sky and cutouts of tilting houses onto a lunar landscape. But the disorienting ter-

rain was not the home of aliens, but the work of steamshovels, water-hoses and engineers.

These are a few parts of Denny Hill that still stood when Asahel Curtis recorded this panorama early in 1910. The photograph was taken from the north side of Bell Street and a few feet east of the alley between Third and Fourth Avenues. The view is toward the south and across the

This adjusted view also shows the contemporary "spike" of dark glass one block away at Fourth Avenue and Blanchard Street. The original hill reached its highest point



This view from Second Avenue and Blanchard Street shows the tower of the old Denny School and Queen Anne Hill in the distance.

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line of Fourth Avenue which today runs from the lower left hand corner of the photograph to just left of the butte in the center distance.

Immediately beneath the scene's exact center is the spurting nozzle of one of those waterhoses that wore the hill away. These streams were only temporarily diverted from those spikes or buttes which were also called "spite mounds" and "monuments to the anti-regraders." The resisting butte in the immediate right foreground is just across Third Avenue. The building at the picture's far right, half hidden by the spike, is the still-standing Calhoun Apartments at Second Avenue and Virginia Street.

It would require a hook-and-ladder to photograph the "now" image from Curtis' original position. Instead I have taken it from the roof of the Adams Apartments at Third Avenue and Bell Street. This is less than half a block to the west, and from here one can see those Calhoun Apartments on the far right. Otherwise, they would be hidden by the Cornelius Hotel.

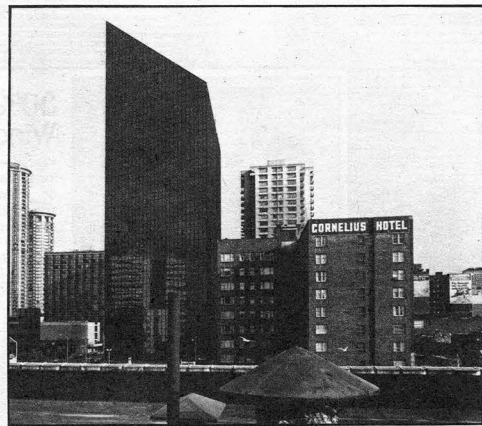
This adjusted view also shows the contemporary "spike" of dark glass one block away at Fourth Avenue and Blanchard Street. The original hill reached its highest point

there, or about 110 feet above the street today. The original Denny Hill would have reached to about the eighth story of the 24-story Fourth and Blanchard Building.

Our third image was taken from Second Avenue and Blanchard Street. From there we get a glimpse of the ridge from which Curtis took his photograph. It can be seen just above the roof of the apartment in the scene's center and just below the old Denny School, the building with the tower at Fifth Avenue and Battery Street. The then new Queen Anne High School is seen in the distance atop its Queen Anne perch. That hill was high enough to save it from the "forces of regrade."

This view from Second Avenue is dated June 27, 1910. There have been a few changes. Most evident, the house on the left of Curtis' image has been skidded down to the south side of the butte. In Curtis' photograph it's in the right foreground.

The billboard along Second Avenue reads "Diamond Tires, Users Know." Already in 1910 these "users" also knew that the automobile was turning the primary rationalization for leveling the hill, that it was too steep for horses to climb, into an example of antiquated horse sense.



The original Denny Hill would have reached to the eighth story of this contemporary spike, the Fourth and Blanchard Building.

Paul Dorpat