

Philadelphia Head

Philadelphia Head is the heart of St. Johns. All roads lead to Philadelphia Head. This place can be aptly described by its outstanding features. When the saint James John endowed education with his United States donation claim, he laid out a street one hundred feet wide, from the shore of the Willamette, easterly to the center of the village, and named it Broadway. Broadway was changed to Philadelphia street, but its broad features still bear witness to the broad soul of the generous Oregon pioneer. The easterly two blocks of this broad street are level and paved with Bitulithic and the cement sidewalks are twenty feet wide. Before annexation of St. Johns to Portland, in recent years, C. E. Andrew was St. Johns' city engineer, and he wisely surveyed an easy grade from Philadelphia Head to the city dock on the Willamette, and planned a bridge over Crawford street to allow the factories along the river to have a level street behind their places. This afforded great dumping ground in the broad street for St. Johns basement excavations, and the dumping still goes merrily on; and one can stand on Philadelphia Head and look westerly down this easy grade to the dock and view billows of earth dumps. Some time these hollows will get filled and the saint James John's broad plans will be a reality.

From Philadelphia Head Burlington street branches off westerly toward the St. Johns ferry, and creates a flat-iron block; on the west base of this flat-iron block stands the city hall, now Portland's police headquarters and fire station for the district of St. Johns, and on the point of this flat-iron block is the elevated cement band stand, and between is a plat of grass and flowers, which are the pride of the officers. Then a little further east near the center of Philadelphia Head, the jetting fountain patters rain in the bountiful water bowl, where horse, dog, cat and pigeon can get a drink. This fountain is both a joy to the pilgrim and a water hole of the jungle. Plenty of room in Philadelphia Head and the local business folk encourage ears to park there under the watchful eyes of the nearby police station.

When St. Johns high school dismisses, youth pours forth in volume and marches up these broad sidewalks with all the buoyancy and hope which is theirs, and they are really large, healthy, good looking boys and girls. St. Johns affords that stock-lumbering and mechanics, you know, is selective of that type. Then after 5 o'clock, when the river side mills change shifts, masses of men march into Philadelphia Head and take the waiting street car trains for their homes anywhere in Portland, where they chance to live.

At times when Portland city officials feel like giving the people a social time they place the brass band in the stand on the point of this flat-iron block and call out the people to dance on this broad level place. At times soldier squads are drilled here. Whenever there is a public demonstration, the people come to Philadelphia Head from all directions; it is the logical and convenient meeting center, and can be aptly described to strangers.

From Philadelphia Head St. Johns' heart beats throughout the city, and we are fortunate in having such a natural, well marked, roomy and convenient place in which to meet.—Charles C. Woodhouse, Jr.

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