



**Walkers embark on a Capitol Hill route** during an Emerald City Wanderers event. Most participants walked as couples or in small groups.

## The Emerald City Wanderers explore paths designed for fun, exercise and friendship — and you can join in anytime

**A** SUNNY BUT COOL recent Saturday morning was a perfect day for a walk. Which was a good thing for the more than 125 people who turned up at St. Mark's Cathedral on Capitol Hill to take one for an Emerald City Wanderers event.

Most of these folks don't need an excuse to go walking, but being part of a group gives them another one.

Mike Nagan, this club's president, tells me it's "one of very, very many walking clubs around the city, the state, the country and the world" under the umbrella of Volkssport, a long-established international community of folks who make a point of walking.

The Emerald City club ([emeraldcity-wanderers.org](http://emeraldcity-wanderers.org)) is known for its holiday

# WALKING THE WALK

walks, usually held the Saturday before or after a major holiday. The Halloween event is popular with families, Nagan says. (And yes: You might get a prize if you dress up.) About 200 clubs across the country are part of the American Volkssport Association, which calls itself "America's walking club."

Volkssporting started in Germany to encourage involvement in noncompetitive sports. The term "Volkssport" literally means "people's sports," and the walks were called Volkswanderung — yep: folks simply wandering.

It's not about walking fast or even very far; most walks are 5 or 10 kilometers (3.1 or 6.2 miles). Club members map out walks with points of interest — maybe a nice view, a historic site or an excellent deli — along the way. They've mapped 21 in Seattle alone and more than 170 statewide. "They're laid out by people who want you to have a good time, a good walk," Nagan says.

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**Walkers during the Emerald City Wanderers event on Capitol Hill** had a longer and a shorter route to choose from; organizers handed out printed maps to keep everyone on track.



by Clay Eals

# 'Important conversations' fuel 130-year Woman's Century Club

**F**OR WHOM IS the 19th century known? Answers abound, but a half-dozen progressive women from Seattle claimed it as their own during the century's final decade.

Because of educational, occupational, social and political strides, especially the right to vote, this local group adopted the phrase "the Woman's Century," forming a club with that name in 1891. The designation

also took off nationally throughout the 1890s.

To no surprise, the appellation was appropriated commercially. The Singer Manufacturing Co. placed full-page ads headed "The Woman's Century" in turn-of-the-century editions of McClure's Magazine. The ads touted Singer sewing machines and typewriters for providing "increased time and opportunity for women's rest and recreation or for other occupations from which they had

been debarred."

In Seattle, club founders were more high-minded. An early organizational history states that amid "the sordid atmosphere of a rapidly developing western city," they felt the need to gather "for intellectual culture, original research and the solution of the altruistic problems of the day."

Leading them was Carrie Chapman Catt, who soon took on coast-to-coast fame, succeeding Susan B. Anthony as president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association and, when ratification of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution was nigh in 1920, founding the League of Women Voters.

Such influence flourished in the club's early decades. In 1926, members helped elect Seattle's first woman mayor, Bertha Landes, a former club president. In 1933, they hosted a reception for famed aviator Amelia Earhart.

The club's talks and teas held an additional purpose: to raise money for a permanent headquarters and theater on Capitol Hill. A three-story brick edifice, with "Woman's Century Club" etched above its entrance, took shape



**Debra Alderman,**  
Woman's  
Century Club  
vice president.



**Walkers check in** with longtime walking-club member Dorman Batson (far left) before they start their walk on Capitol Hill.

## Ⓔ GATHER

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You can find walks on club websites; events throughout the Pacific Northwest are also listed in a print newsletter, Northwest Pathfinder, you can order via the Evergreen State Walking Club website. At the Capitol Hill event, I chatted with Dorman Batson, who was stamping International Federation of Volkssport books for those who wanted to track this walk. (Getting the book stamped costs \$3, but there's no fee to join the walks themselves.)

Batson helped found a couple of Seattle-area walking clubs when he started in 1983. He has done walks in all 50 states, seven Canadian provinces and in Mexico, and he has taken folks on walking-themed trips. He has attended 19 of the 22 American Volkssport Association national conventions. "It's been a fantastic adventure," he says.

You don't have to be a member of a walking club to join an

organized walk or to try a club's mapped-out walks on your own. But club members say that joining, which often involves volunteering, adds a more social element.

Jane Clark's first club walk was a New Year's event she found via a newspaper listing five years ago. She went because it sounded like a fun, healthy thing to do. Once she found out how many clubs and walks there were, and met nice people doing it, "I thought, 'This is it. This is my thing,'" she says. "I made a whole bunch of new friends, and we go walking all the time."

Along with members of other clubs around the area, Clark helped put together a series of walks departing from light-rail stations around Seattle. Part of the idea was to give people an impetus to explore neighborhoods new to them. "Walkers are always looking for something new," she says. 

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**A temporary sign** points the way during the Capitol Hill event.