

Cascade

Name: **Cascade School**
 Location: Pontius and E Thomas Streets
 Building: 6-room, 2-story brick
 Architect: John Parkinson
 Site: 2.1 acres

1894: Opened on January 8
 1898: Addition (Saunders & Lawton)
 1903: Renamed *Franklin* on March 7; renamed *Cascade* on September 1
 1904: Addition (James Stephen)
 1920: 0.5 acre playfield added
 1947: Became an annex to Lowell
 1949: Closed by earthquake on April 13; abandoned as school on April 25
 1949–54: Used as the district's central supply warehouse
 1955: Building demolished
 1956: New Central Warehouse opened (1255 Harrison St.)
 1988: Traded to PEMCO in September
 Present: Evergreen Wholesale Florists

The tract of land on which Cascade School was built had belonged to the Pontius family, Seattle pioneers who operated a drugstore and owned real estate (see Lowell). The Cascade neighborhood at the south end of Lake Union was, in the 1890s, an area of working family homes and small farms. Streetcar lines connected to the center of the city, and a commuter boat ran across the lake to the new town of Fremont.

Cascade School was constructed in three stages. The original section, later the south wing, opened in 1894 with 200 pupils. Increasing numbers of children entered the school over the next four years, and ten new classrooms were added. In 1904, with an enrollment of 949 students, a north wing opened, giving the building a total of 24 rooms. However, classroom space was still inadequate, so portable classrooms were added.

Cascade students established a custom of planting a tree each year at Arbor Day in the parking strip surrounding the grounds. They dedicated each tree to a famous person or, during World War I, to a former pupil who died in the war. A giant sycamore stood near the school entrance.

At the urging of the school's PTA, in 1921, the district purchased land at the corner of Pontius Avenue and Harrison Street for a playfield to give students space for active physical activities. Around 1927, pre-vocational classes for girls, such as sewing, were added to the curriculum. This program shifted to Mercer in 1933.

Mr. Charles Fagan became the school's third principal in 1900. He led Cascade for 33 years with "a keen sense of humor and an understanding of children" until his death in 1932 at age 73. During the Depression years, school staff found themselves assisting students with new economic and social problems. In the 1930s, a Works Progress Administration (WPA) program ran a nursery school in a portable at Cascade for the children of working parents.



Cascade, 1911 MOHAI 83.10.6726



Cascade, ca. 1940 showing trees planted each Arbor Day SPSA 090-3

In fall 1938, a K–6 Sight-Saving School was transferred to Cascade from Central II. That year the local business community petitioned the school board for relocation of the school because the current location was “rapidly becoming a commercial and industrial district and detrimental to the health and morals of the pupils.” However, the board determined it would be too costly to move the school to another location. Portable classrooms and crowded conditions continued for several years, but gradually population shifts in the neighborhood caused enrollment to dwindle.

For the 1947–48 school year, 7th and 8th graders were transferred to junior high schools, leaving Cascade with only 222 students and eight teachers using only seven of the 24 classrooms. Because of the low enrollment, Cascade was no longer assigned a principal but rather was administered from Lowell.

Cascade was permanently closed as a school after the April 1949 earthquake severely damaged the structure during spring vacation. Cascade was the most severely damaged of all the Seattle Public Schools. The building was fractured in two places from the roof to the basement, and the roof buckled, leaving huge gaps in several places.

With the building declared unsafe for occupation and following an extra week’s vacation, Cascade students were relocated to other sites for the remainder of the school year. Grades 1–6 were bused to Lowell. Sight-saving classes moved to Warren Avenue, and kindergarten was held in the basement gymnasium of Immanuel Lutheran Church located a block away at 1215 Thomas Street. The closure ended Gertrude Chamberlin’s 35-year record for teaching kindergarten at Cascade School. The following year she transferred to Minor.

The old school building was used as a district warehouse for five years until it was torn down and a new warehouse, the first one built by the district since 1922, was constructed in its place. Designed by John Maloney, the warehouse was concrete with a corrugated concrete roof. The playfield eventually became a Seattle park (Cascade Playground at 333 Pontius Avenue N).

In 1988, the main portion of the property, along with the district’s facilities department building at 810 Dexter Avenue N, were exchanged for the old eight-acre Ford Plant at 4141 Fourth Avenue S. The owners of the Cascade School site, PEMCO Mutual Insurance Co., currently lease the warehouse to a wholesale florist.