

# Edison

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In 1920, the Seattle School District purchased 0.6 acre across E Olive Street from Broadway High School to allow for expansion of the site. The Broadway High School Annex was opened in 1921 to house vocational or technical education classes (i.e., auto mechanics, machine shop, sheet metal, electricity, woodworking, and printing) that had been in the main high school building. The newly vacated space in the main building was then used for classes previously held in seven portables located across Broadway in Lincoln Playfield.

Nine years later the annex building was expanded by adding a third floor and became the chief building for the new Thomas A. Edison Vocational School. The school was officially named on May 9, 1930, after the famous inventor whose life exemplified the practical applications of learning. The vocational school opened with an enrollment of 75. During the Depression, many of the students were high school graduates hoping to better their chances for employment with training in automobile mechanics (in Broadway High School's old auto shop), electrical trades, and many other fields.

The district leased a building at 1826 Broadway for welding classes in March 1938. By May 1942, the Edison Welding Shop was at 1828 1/2 Broadway as well as 1516 12th Avenue. The latter site was used through the end of World War II.

Through the years, classes at Edison were added and discontinued in response to economic and social needs. Prior to World War II, a training program for aircraft workers was launched. By 1941, it was a full-fledged war production program. The Edison building was remodeled and doubled in size in 1942, with 16 new rooms housing home service and culinary trades departments. Edison Technical provided a broad range of practical training in full and part-time classes, both day and evening.

In March 1943, the district announced, "Servicemen who come home broken in body will find a rehabilitation program waiting for them at Edison Vocational School. . . . The school will have facilities for hundreds of them to come and build themselves mentally and physically for a useful life." In October 1945, it was said that everyone from teenaged bobby-soxers, to veterans to gray-haired grandmothers jammed night classes, boosting enrollment at Broadway-Edison Evening School to a new high of 3,000, with many looking to complete their high school education.

During its many years of operation, Edison utilized several buildings throughout the city to accommodate its varied programs. Some programs were housed in schools that had been vacated while others were in donated space. Broadway High School was closed in June 1946. "The first formal step in coordinating the programs of Edison Technical school and former Broadway High was taken . . . when the school board created Broadway-Edison Technical School." The old high school building was renamed the South Building. The Edison Building was renamed the North Building and housed the Offices for the Vocational Education Division. Edison also occupied the Aircraft Branch (see Holgate), the Building Trades Unit (at the old Rainier School), the Holgate Branch (formerly Duwamish Bend/Holgate School), the Boat-



Edison, ca. 1950 SPSA 500-25

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Name: **Broadway High School Annex**

Location: 811 E Olive

Building: 2-story brick

Architect: n.a.

Site: 0.55 acres

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1921: Opened in September  
 1930: Third floor added; opened in September as Edison Building of Thomas A. Edison Vocational School  
 1942: Addition (n.a.)  
 1946: Renamed *North Building of Broadway-Edison Technical School*; site expanded to 1.23 acres  
 1949: Addition (n.a.); name shortened to *Edison Technical School*  
 1966: Part of Seattle Community College  
 1967: Transferred to state on July 1

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shop (see Edison Boat Shop), and the second Central school (used for other vocational classes).

Tuition in 1946 was two dollars per quarter. In 1947, an “English for Foreigners” class aided immigrants from Greece, China, and Norway.

In 1949, the building on East Olive was expanded by 15 rooms to include the remainder of the entire block facing Harvard Avenue. With a new street address at 1711 Harvard, Edison had an enrollment of 1,550 in full-time day courses and about 7,000 in evening classes. Its newly expanded facility included a two-ward “hospital” that allowed students to train as practical nurses. Another improvement was the upgrading of radio and electronics laboratories where students learned to construct television sets. Other study areas included tailoring, dry cleaning, and advertising art.

The Edison Technical School received national recognition as one of the top training centers in the nation for its flexible and comprehensive vocational program. Channel 9 TV started at Edison by 1955. Television students built a studio in a vacant building on 15th Avenue NE.

By 1963–64, daytime enrollment exceeded 2,000 students. In 1966, Edison became part of Seattle Community College. The following year its administration was transferred, along with most of the branch sites, to the State of Washington. The Edison Building still stands today, integrated into the Seattle Central Community College structure, which replaced the old Broadway High School building.