

Broadway

Name: **Seattle High School**
 Location: 1625 Broadway Avenue
 Building: 70-room stone
 Architect: Boone & Corner
 Site: 2.12 acres

1902: Opened in September
 1906: Renamed *Washington High School* on March 12
 1908: Renamed *Broadway High School* on October 7
 1911: Addition (Edgar Blair)
 1946: Closed as high school on June 14; opened in September as part of Broadway-Edison Technical School
 1948: Renamed "South Building" of Edison Technical School
 1966: Became part of Seattle Community College
 1967: Transferred to State of Washington on August 23
 1974: Demolished except 1911 auditorium
 Present: Site of Seattle Central Community College

The first Broadway school opened in fall 1890 for elementary grades in a rented room on Capitol Hill. Because it was on Depot Street (now Denny Way) near Broadway, it was more often referred to as the Depot Street School, and sometimes as the Broadway Street School. The annual enrollment was only 40–45 pupils. The school closed in spring 1893 just prior to the opening of Pacific School about 10 blocks to the south. Five years later, in 1898, the Seattle School District returned to the vicinity of the original Broadway School and purchased property just to the south, along Broadway Street.

Deeper roots of Broadway High School can be traced back to Seattle's first high school classes held in 1876–77 at the Territorial University. In 1883, the high school was formally organized in Central II. After a fire destroyed the second Central School in 1888, high school classes were again held in rented buildings. Beginning the following school year, the high school occupied the third floor of the new Central School.

With the city's population growing rapidly at the turn of the century, the school board proposed erecting a new building on the Broadway Street site to be used exclusively for the high school. The construction costs, which came to \$250,000, caused consternation among some citizens who could not foresee the need for such a large building. At a time when the high school population of the Seattle School District was little more than 800, the new school was designed to hold between 1,400 and 1,500 students. The architecture of the new school was suitably grandiose for the city's growing stature, modeled after the Petit Palais in France.

In order to relieve overcrowding at nearby elementary schools and to justify the size of the structure, the new building did not operate exclusively as a high school in its first two years. When it opened in 1902, it also housed a separate 8th grade center, the Union Grammar School, which operated with its own principal. That year Union Grammar School housed all the 8th graders from Cascade, Central, Columbia, Pacific, and 20th Avenue. The next year it was scaled back to 154 students who were 8th graders from Columbia and Pacific. And the following year, there were a sufficient number of high school students to fill the building so Union Grammar School was closed.

In the early years of the high school, students participated in a mandolin club, a girls basketball team, several debate teams, and a football team that competed unsuccessfully against the University of Washington. Because the Seattle High School colors were black and orange, the sports teams were naturally called the Tigers. The 1907 baseball team was more successful and managed to beat the Huskies and send nine players to the major leagues.

By 1904, Seattle's population had nearly doubled, and Seattle High School's enrollment had increased to 1,700. To ease overcrowding, annexes were set up in other school buildings. In 1905, the High School Annex was opened in the new Summit School. During the next two years, the expanded annex operated at the new Franklin School, which in 1908 became Franklin High School.

Even with the annex and the opening of Lincoln High School in fall 1907, there were still over 1,700 students at the Broadway site. In 1911,



Seattle High School, ca. 1905 MOHAI 88.33.164

an addition housing shops, auditorium, and gymnasiums was made to the Broadway structure on Harvard Avenue. Portables were set up to the east in Lincoln Playfield (the present Broadway Playfield) in 1913.

The opening of other high schools meant the name of the school had to change. History repeated itself when the school board changed Seattle High School to Washington High School. In 1903, the board, attempting to rename a number of schools after individuals on the American Hall of Fame list, had briefly changed the second Central School (which contained the high school) to Washington School. Again, the use of Washington was short-lived. The name Washington High School was too often confused with that of the university, so in 1908 the board voted to adopt the name Broadway High School. This name was already associated with the school because it was often referred to as “the big school down on Broadway” and its students were known as “the Broadway bunch.”

Broadway earned a number of distinctions through the years. Both its school paper, *Whims*, and its yearbook, *Sealth*, won many national awards. In 1920, Broadway High School took a pioneering step when it organized a Student Council, allowing students to participate in the administration of the school and its policies. The council met regularly with the faculty and controlled a fund for student activities.

An interesting experiment in segregating the sexes started at

Broadway in 1913–14 and continued for at least four years. Separate classes were established with girls being taught by women and boys taught by men. “The varying capacities and range of interests of the different sexes of high school age are such as to justify a difference in the method of treatment, and to a certain extent in the requirements of the curriculum.” The experiment proved so successful in the opinion of the school board that they considered building a separate high school for girls. The onset of World War I seems to have put an end to the plan.

Enrollment at Broadway increased on January 2, 1920 when the school board opened the Part-Time School there. This provided a minimum of four hours a week education to hundreds of high school aged boys and girls 18 years old or younger who had dropped out of school to work. Classes for mentally handicapped pupils in the upper grades began in 1920–21.

In 1921–22, the total enrollment was at 2,230 and the Broadway High School Annex was built across East Olive (see Edison). The number of students continued to increase and in 1936–37 totaled 2,368.

In 1942, Broadway High School had by far the most Japanese-American students of any high school in the city, with those students comprising 25 percent of the student body. During the previous four years, both valedictorians and salutatorians had been Japanese-American. The removal of these students to internment camps had a serious impact on the school. In June 1943, ten diplomas were issued to Japanese-American students who had been to the Minidoka Relocation Center in Colorado.

In June 1944, the district considered moving Broadway High School to a new location with room for expansion. By this time, the neighborhood around the school had become a business district and enrollment had dropped as families chose to settle in other sections of the city. Furthermore, the building was referred to as “the worst fire



Broadway, ca. 1940 SPSA 009-84

trap in the district.” In 1944–45, only 1,216 students were enrolled at Broadway. In June 1946, the last class graduated, and the remaining students were transferred to Garfield, Roosevelt, and Lincoln.

When World War II ended, large numbers of veterans returned home and needed to complete their education. Broadway High School became the veterans school, its mature students looking more like college students than high schoolers. In September 1946, the building opened as part of Broadway-Edison Technical School. This school combined three programs—the vocational school (started in 1921), evening school (started in 1924), and the new veterans’ school—as well as the General Education Division. The Vocational Education Division was housed nearby in the former Broadway High School Annex.

In 1966, the old Broadway High School building became the center for the district’s new Seattle Community College, that evolved out of Edison Technical School. The following year the administration of the college, as well as the building and property, were transferred to the state as part of the new community college system. Although the original 1902 building has been demolished, the 1911 addition auditorium survives as the Broadway Performance Hall.

The former site of Broadway High School is once again used by some district students. Over 200 students in grades 9–12 attend Middle College High School at the community college. Its goal is to retrieve, retain, and promote at-risk youth by providing a quality high school completion program.