

Day

Name:	B.F. Day Elementary School	Enrollment:	300
Address:	3921 Linden Avenue N	Nickname:	The Family School
Configuration:	K-5	Colors:	Aqua and tangerine



Day, 2000 ©Mary Randlett SPSA 218-46

Today B. F. Day has the distinction of being the oldest continually-operating school in the Seattle School District. Before the permanent building was constructed, children in the Fremont area went to school in temporary sites established by Fremont School District No. 66.

The community of Fremont was named after the town of Fremont, Nebraska. The first Fremont School was opened in March 1889 by the Fremont School Board. Two classes were held at a house on 36th Avenue N and Whitman Street, reportedly owned by the Steele family or a Mrs. Gale. The site was last used in June 1889.

The following year the school moved in order to expand. A store in the Nichols Building at 36th Avenue N and Aurora Avenue N provided space for three classrooms. This school opened in December 1889 when Fremont resident Benjamin Franklin Day paid for the first three months rent. Classes ended there on May 2, 1891.

In June 1891, when Fremont was annexed into the City of Seattle, lumber mills and other industries lined the northwestern shores of Lake Union. Both railroad and steamer traffic converged at Fremont's doorstep. In order to accommodate the number of children in both Fremont and Edgewater, Seattle School District rented the Good Templars Hall at 35th Avenue and Albion Place as a temporary site. Classes were held there from September 1891 to May 1892.



Day annex at former grocery store, with Day School in inset, 1899. SPSA 218-1

Name: **Day School**
 Location: 3921 Linden Avenue N
 Building: 8-room brick
 Architect: John Parkinson
 Site: 3.87 acres

1891: Named on July 18
 1892: Opened on May 2; called *B. F. Day School*
 1901: Addition (James Stephen)
 1907: Site expanded to 5.1 acres
 1916: Addition (Edgar Blair)
 1981: 1982 and 1916 exteriors designated city landmark on April 8
 1989–91: Closed for renovation
 1991: Reopened with addition (B.J.S.S. Group)

An end to this shuffling of school children from one site to another came in 1891 when Day and his wife Francis R. Day donated a large section of land to the Seattle School District, contingent on the new building costing at least \$25,000. The Days owned a 160-acre farm on the hill above the developing community. The school board hired architect John Parkinson to design Fremont’s new school. The main entrance of the two-story brick structure with Colonial Revival styling, faced south. As a token of appreciation, the school board named the new school Day School, “after the donors.” The name was later shifted to B. F. Day School to avoid confusion that “Day” specified when class sessions were held.

The school opened when the principal, Professor Storey, marched the children over from their temporary locations. At the time, only four rooms on the first floor were finished. That first year, 185 children attended in grades 1–6. At the dedication ceremony, speakers spoke of the “wonderful growth of this suburb” and the responsibility of taxpayers to support education. Fremont residents could feel even confident in the future because a new wooden trestle now linked their community with Queen Anne and the rest of the city.

When enrollment at the new school exceeded capacity in 1899, two annexes were established. First graders met downstairs at 3803



Day, ca. 1901 SPSA 218-25

Aurora Avenue. Sixth graders attended classes in a building that had been the Cheadle's grocery.

Meanwhile, architect James Stephen, following plans developed by John Parkinson, designed an eight-room addition for the north side of the school, yielding an H-shaped structure. The new main entrances were located on the east and west.

The school again filled to capacity as enrollment reached 800 students by 1914–15. The next year additional north and south wings were added to the building. Each wing contained four classrooms, and a large assembly room was also added. The resulting 24-classroom building was the largest grade school facility in Seattle. The already spacious grounds were expanded when the Seattle Parks Department acquired a playfield to the north of the building, and the school district purchased a playfield to the south.

For the next 20 years, Day's enrollment was consistently high, close to 1,000 students. Pre-vocational classes were added for boys. During World War II, boys at Day took Home Economics to train them for helping at home as many mothers were working in wartime industries.

The Orca alternative program moved to Day from Allen in September 1981. Orca's program integrates different ages and emphasizes performing arts, fine arts, and environmental education. From 1978 to 1986, the regular program served K, 3–5 as part of a triad with Gatzert and McDonald. Orca's alternative program was K–5.

In 1986, the school board decided to renovate the historic structure rather than tear it down. During the construction period, 1989–1991, B.F. Day students went to school at John Hay, while the Orca program moved to and remained at Columbia. Restoration work on the 99-year-old building cost \$5 million and involved reinforcement of structural elements and new classroom equipment. The old gymnasi-



Day, 1960 SPSA 218-38

um in the south basement was converted into a daycare center. A new replacement gym was built along with a learning resource center. The playground area was greatly improved and modernized. When the school's librarian, who also served as the school's archivist, retired in 1994, a time capsule was placed in the attic.

Carole Williams, who served as principal from 1985 to 1998, was named Washington State Principal of the Year in 1994. Under her leadership, special programs in music and African studies were initiated. Also at this time, the school launched a program for homeless children in partnership with the Atlantic Street Center, which aids families with basic needs. In addition, a "School to Work" program brings students together with local Fremont area businesses to learn more about the working world.