## **Eckstein**

Name: Nathan Eckstein Middle School

Address: 3003 NE 75th St

Configuration: 6–8

Newspaper: Rolling Eckstone

Enrollment: 1,234 Nickname: Eagles

Colors: Blue and white Annual: unnamed



Eckstein, 2000 @Mary Randlett SPSA 104-6

Until the late 1930s, the northeastern area, which developed into the neighborhoods of View Ridge, Wedgwood, and Hawthorne Hills, was characterized by scattered farms and forested land. When the city's population began spreading to the suburbs, this area became a prime location for new homes, parks, and schools. With an eye to the future, the Seattle School Board in 1927 purchased five acres of property at NE 75th Street and 32nd Avenue NE from homesteader John Bloomquist. As late as 1944, the property was leased as horse pasture.

Finally, in 1948, the site was expanded in preparation for construction, which began in March 1949. In selecting a name for the school, it seemed appropriate to honor Nathan Eckstein, civic leader and long-time supporter of public education in Seattle. Nathan Eckstein immigrated with his parents from Germany. The family, along with Bailey Gatzert's, was among Seattle's earliest Jewish residents. Eckstein began working in a grocery store at the age of 14 when Klondike fever struck the city. He worked his way up to become president of Schwabacher's, a large grocery business, and eventually was named a trustee of the Seattle Chamber of Commerce. Eckstein also served on the school board for seven years beginning in 1914 and, in 1926,was named Seattle's "most useful citizen."

Nathan Eckstein Junior High School, designed in the International style, opened in September 1950 to 790 students. Nathan Eckstein's daughter, Joanna, was an honored guest when the school was dedicated on November 1, 1950.

Eckstein Junior High was equipped with modern features, that dis-

Name: Nathan Eckstein Junior

High School

Location: 3015 (N)E 75th Street

Building: 38-room brick Architect: William Mallis Site: 14.1 acres

1950: Opened on September 6

1968: Addition (n.a.)

1971: Renamed Nathan Eckstein

Middle School

1981: 1950 building designated

City of Seattle landmark

on June 17

tinguished it from older junior highs built in the late 1920s. Most striking was its curved, two-story facade with large windows and walls of glass bricks. The building contained a double gymnasium, spacious library, cafeteria, a large auditorium, and a "little theater."

Subsequent modifications in the physical plant responded to changes in enrollment. Between 1950 and 1960, enrollment increased from 790 to 1,990, its peak. Some specialized rooms, such as the "little theater," and stock room were converted for classroom use. The play-field sacrificed space to portables, which totaled 20 by 1960.

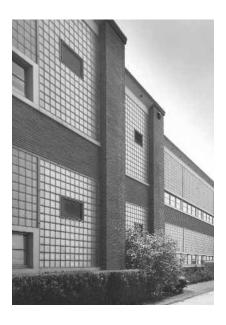
During this decade of growth, several pilot curriculum programs were developed at Eckstein in cooperation with the University of Washington's College of Education. Classes in mathematics, language arts, and social studies provided students with opportunities to learn at their own level. Foreign languages taught at this time were French, Spanish, German, and Latin (later replaced by Russian). Because of its extensive language program, Eckstein became the first junior high school in the district to have a completely equipped language lab, installed in 1960.

In March 1965, Eckstein received national publicity when an article on the school was published in an *Atlantic Monthly* series on outstanding American public schools. In 1968 a "modulux unit" was installed at Eckstein, adding six classrooms.

In September 1971, Eckstein became a middle school along with Hamilton, Wilson, and Meany-Madrona housing grades 6–8. As part of a district-wide desegregation plan, groups of students from the Meany-Madrona area were bused to Eckstein (60 students came from Leschi



Eckstein, 1965 SPSA 104-3



Eckstein, 1960 SPSA 104-5

and 143 from Madrona), and children from the Eckstein attendance area were transported to Meany-Madrona.

The 1971 change to middle school status was accompanied by a new mascot for Eckstein, the Roadrunner, and a new name for the school newspaper, the *Eckstein Eye* replacing the *N.E. News*. Since the mid-1970s, American Sign Language has been taught periodically, and Eckstein is now the district school for deaf and hard-of-hearing middle school students.

Today Eckstein carries on its tradition of excellence with high enrollment in honors classes. One of the district's most popular schools, its entering 6th grade classes have exceeded the stated capacity of the building. Currently ten portables are used as classrooms. Languages taught include Japanese, Spanish, and French. An exchange program has been established with a school in Japan. Nearly half of the students participate in the school's music program. The string orchestra took first place at the Northwest Orchestra Festival, and, in 1998, the jazz band placed second at the Lionel Hampton Jazz Festival, in competition with high school students.