

# Gatzert

Name:	<b>Bailey Gatzert Elementary School</b>	Enrollment:	430
Address:	1301 E Yesler Way	Nickname:	Teddy Bears
Configuration:	K-5	Color:	Red



Gatzert, 2000 ©Mary Randlett SPSA 226-18

South School opened to handle overcrowded conditions in the early years of the Seattle Public Schools. For a short time, Seattle's only public school was Central I. By December 1871, that school was overcrowded, so space was rented in the Fischer Building for an annex (see Central I). The following September, two new schools opened to hold primary students, while senior and intermediate students went to Central. Primary students north of Cherry went to North School, while those south of Cherry Street went to South School.

When it was built, South School stood alone "on the edge of virgin forest." It became overcrowded after a fire destroyed Central School in April 1888. This led to the opening of the two-room Weller Street School, large enough to warrant its own janitor, in a chapel on Weller Street.

A new, substantial South School was the first of eight schools constructed in 1889-90. In reaction to the Central School fire, the district deemed the new school should be brick, not wood. The new Romanesque-style South School opened on Weller Street, with students transferring from the Weller Street School and the first South, which closed except for occasional use as a temporary location.

In summer 1896, Ellen Creelman began teaching kindergarten in space provided by the district in the old South School on Main Street. A

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Name: **South School**  
Location: 517 Main Street  
Building: 1-story, 2-room wood  
Architect: Boone & Meeker  
Site: 0.33 acres

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1873: Opened  
1889: Closed; renamed *Main Street School*  
1896: Space for kindergarten provided  
1897–1902: Reopened as *Kindergarten School*  
1902: Addition (n.a.); reopened as *Main Street School*  
1902–09: Operated as annex to South School  
1903: Renamed *Mann* on March 7; returned to Main Street on September 1  
1909–21: Temporary relocation site  
1909–10: Operated as annex to Colman  
1910–16: Operated as annex to Beacon Hill  
1921: Closed  
1922: Building demolished  
1921–24: Site used by Seattle Parks Department  
1924: Property sold on June 25

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Name: **South School**  
Location: 12th Avenue S and Weller Street  
Building: 2-story brick  
Architect: William E. Boone  
Site: 2.38 acres

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1889: Opened  
1909: Main building closed on February 23; demolished

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tireless proponent for public kindergartens, Miss Creelman lobbied for public funding, which was granted the following year. This was the beginning of kindergartens in the Seattle School District. The kindergarten operated in the Main Street building until 1902 when it moved into a new annex constructed on the same site. At the same time, the main building was enlarged to once again hold elementary classes.

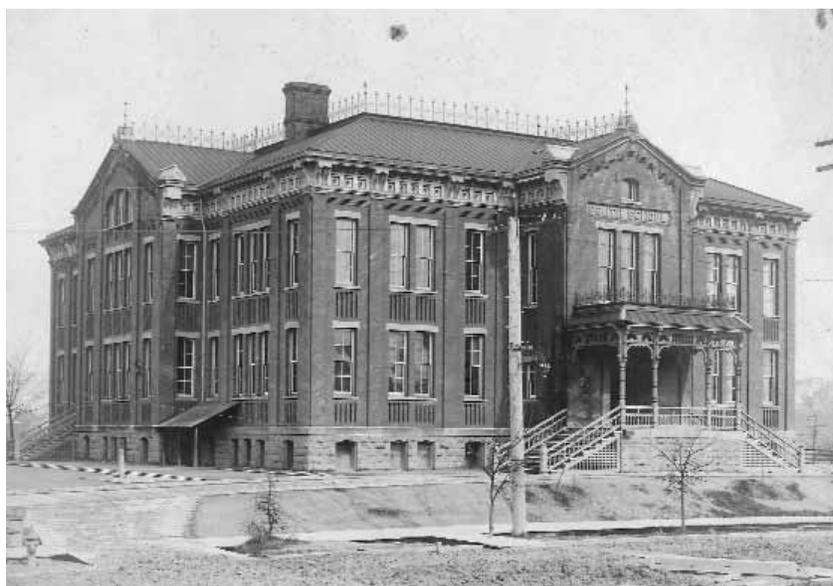
By the 1906–07 school year, both South School and the Main Street School were full. Older buildings were used on the Weller Street site and called the South Annex. A mere 20 years after it opened, the newer South School stood in the way of progress. During the Jackson Street Regrade project, earth from Jackson Street south, including many blocks of Beacon Hill, was sluiced down to help fill the tideflats, thereby creating sites for extensive industrial plants.

South School was torn down in the middle of the 1908–09 school year. For the balance of the year, double class sessions were held in the South Annex and portables. The old buildings that served as the annex were sold in July 1909. Some of the students in grades 1–5 from the newer South were assigned to the Main Street School, which was, in fact, the old South School. The majority of South students transferred to the new Colman School, which opened in January 1910.

The Main Street School was home to 10 classrooms in 1920 when plans were drawn up for a new school building some distance away. On December 21, 1921, Principal Ada Mahon led a damp march of her pupils and teachers up Jackson Street to the new building that was called Bailey Gatzert School. It was located on the same site as the second South School and named for a Seattle pioneer, businessman, councilman, and mayor.

Enrollment had increased so much by 1929 that it was necessary to add a new wing that included a gymnasium and library.

During the 1920s and 1930s, the students who attended Gatzert were primarily from two neighborhoods, Chinatown and Niponmachi (Japan Town). Just before World War II, the Yesler Terrace Housing Project began contributing to the ethnic diversity of the school. The



South School, ca. 1900 SPSA 083-3



Main Street School, 1921 MOHAI 83.10.2408.1

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Name: **Main Street Annex**  
 Location: 307 6th Avenue  
 Building: Wood  
 Architect: n.a.

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1902: Opened as annex to South; occupied by Main Street Kindergarten  
 1921: Closed in December  
 1922: Used by Japanese Congregational Church  
 1924: Property sold on June 25  
 1950: Site of Golden Pheasant Café  
 1977: Designated Seattle landmark  
 Present: Site of a dental office

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Name: **Bailey Gatzert School**  
 Location: 615 12th Avenue S  
 Building: Masonry and wood frame  
 Architect: Floyd A. Naramore  
 Site: 2.38 acres

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1921: Opened in December  
 1929: Addition (n.a.)  
 1953: Site expanded to 3.47 acres  
 1984: Closed in June  
 1987: Demolished  
 n.a.: Sold  
 Present: Site of Seattle Indian Center

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school lost about 45 percent of its student body when Japanese Americans were interned during World War II.

Miss Mahon served as principal of the new school until her retirement in 1945. Well-respected, she “was ‘Irish tough’ and proud, teaching her ‘children’ to have the same tenacity and pride about being Asian, Native American or black.” Parents honored her with a trip to Japan as a retirement gift.

Nine portable classrooms were added between 1945 and 1950. In the late 1940s, the mix of the student population included 10 percent Chinese American, 20 percent African American, 5 percent Filipino American, 27 percent Japanese American, and 35 percent white, with 3 percent Native American. During the 1940s, reunions for graduates of the 1889 South schoolhouse were held at Gatzert, which occupied the site of their old school.

In 1947, all 900 Gatzert pupils learned about birds from a 73-year-old collection donated to the school by Rev. Herbert Frederick Burgess, former pastor of Fauntleroy Congregational Church, who began the collection while a student at Oberlin College. Burgess gave the collection to the nephew of a Gatzert kindergarten teacher. The nephew added to the 150 specimens he received. Because of a lack of display space, the stuffed birds “were mounted over the children’s steel lockers in a hallway.”

In 1945, Gatzert became the first school in the district to have an English as a Second Language program. In 1953, land across Weller Street was acquired for a playground. Tony Allasina served as principal from 1945 to 1973. He too was well respected by the Asian-American community. Like his predecessor, he was given a trip to Japan as a retirement gift from the parents.

Under the 1978 desegregation plan, Gatzert was linked with Day and Whittier and operated as a K–2 school. Gatzert was closed in 1984 when the district ruled the old building vulnerable to earthquake damage. Beginning in September 1984, Gatzert K–2 classes met in a wing of Washington Middle School. The Denise Louie Early Childhood Education Center, a private program that had operated at Gatzert since



Gatzert, 1960 SPSA 226-8

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Name: **Bailey Gatzert  
Elementary School**  
Location: 1301 E Yesler Way  
Building: 20-room masonry veneered  
Architect: Burr, Lawrence & Rising  
Site: 6.7 acres

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1988: Opened in September

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1978, continued to use the old building until 1987 when the structure was demolished. Alternative School #1 also was housed there for the 1982–84 school years, after which it moved to Pinehurst.

The new Gatzert School stands on a different site. It took approximately \$4 million to displace six businesses, 40–50 residents, two churches, and a fraternal club on the six-acre site. To offset the cost, the old site was sold for approximately \$1.2 million and now is home to the Seattle Indian Center and Indian housing. Gatzert was the district's first new school in over 15 years and boasts many energy-efficient features.

Gatzert operates a running club in association with the Yesler Terrace Community Center and also has a Kids Cooking Team where students learn culinary skills from chefs.