

# Alki

Name: Alki Elementary School	Enrollment: 324
Address: 3010 59th Avenue SW	Nickname: Seagulls
Configuration: K-5	Colors: Blue and white
Motto: "As Alki seagulls soar, we shall succeed."	



Alki, Includes 1912 Building, 1960 SPSA 202-8

David Denny, Lee Terry, Captain Robert Fay, and John Low first arrived at the mouth of the Duwamish River on September 25, 1851. Three days later, Low and Terry staked claims along Alki Beach, a short distance from where Alki Elementary School stands today. Denny and Terry stayed there while Low went back to Portland and returned with 20 hopeful settlers, including 12 children, in the schooner *Exact*. They landed on November 13, 1851, in the pouring rain and were highly discouraged to find that the Low cabin was still unfinished, yet optimistically named their settlement "New York-Alki." "Alki" means "by and by" in Chinook Wawa, a trading language based on a combination of the Chinook native language and English that was spoken by Native Americans and early northern European immigrants. The Duwamish Tribe's name for this area is *Swaquamox* (sbaqWábaqs in Lushootseed).

Although Alki, as this location came to be called, did not become the center of a new metropolis, the area has been continually inhabited since before the arrival of the Denny Party. In 1868, the Olsen family moved to Alki Point and the next year the Hansen family came. These Norwegian families stayed in the area for several generations.

Children who grew up at Alki first attended the West Seattle School (see Lafayette). From 1904 to 1909, those students rode a school wagon or walked on trails through the woods to reach their school. From 1909 to

## Details:

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Name: **Alki School**  
Location: Northwest corner Carroll Street & Chilberg Avenue  
Building: 2-room wood  
Architect: n.a  
Site: 0.25 acres

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1909: Opened  
1909-10: Operated as annex to West Seattle  
1911-13: Operated as annex to Gatewood  
1913: Closed; demolished  
1951: Property leased to Seattle Parks Department  
ca. 1987: Traded to Seattle Housing Authority for property at High Point

1912, younger children went to a double portable on Carroll Street and Chilberg Avenue, the first Alki School. Children ate lunch in an open shed in back of the school. When the weather was nice, classes were held on the long flight of stairs behind the school at the end of Carroll, or in the madrona tree grove at the top of the stairs.

A larger site for a permanent school was purchased by the Seattle School District at Alki Point. This land was part of the original Olsen-Hansen properties. The new school opened in 1913 with approximately 175 students in grades 1-8. Only five rooms were used at first, and the school shared a principal with Gatewood until 1915. Of note in the schoolhouse was a gun rack. Boys carried rifles on their way to and from school through the woods for protection from wild animals. By 1918, Alki's enrollment had more than doubled.

In 1935, Marion Ivan Kelez, a young Seattle artist, carved a large piece of white Alaskan cedar into a five-paneled bas-relief mural, which was installed at Alki Elementary. This mural was one of two unique Public Works Art Project murals created during the early days of the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration New Deal that were gifted to the district. West Seattle High School is home to the second mural

(see West Seattle High School). The Alki mural was removed in 2004 while the lobby was being painted, but it was never returned. In 2006, Eleanor Toews, the district archivist, acquired funding to relocate and install the mural at the John Stanford Center for Educational Excellence, where it can be seen today. A Smithsonian-trained wood conservator inspected the mural in 2005 and provided recommendations to restore the piece. However, the mural



Alki, ca. 1967 SPSA 202-1

has not been restored due to the cost and effort involved. The mural is unique not only its provenance and material, but in the depiction of the founding of Seattle pioneer story to include women, children, and a Native fisherman at a time when depictions of Native Americans were usually negative.

In 1953-54, an auditorium/lunchroom, a gymnasium, and six new classrooms were added. The gym was larger than average, because it and an adjacent playfield were shared with the Seattle Parks Department. At the dedication ceremonies, held December 2, 1954, the PTA presented a play about the first settlers called "I Remember Alki." The school reached its peak enrollment in 1958 with 620 pupils in grades K-6.

In April 1965, an earthquake seriously damaged the three-story 1913 section of the building, but no one was injured. The jolt came before school opened and pupils were still on the playground outside. The damage necessitated busing of the students to seven other West Seattle schools for the remainder of the school year while the 1954 additions were repaired and made ready for use. During the next two years, while construction was ongoing, eight classes met in portables placed on the nearby parks department field.

A replacement addition, containing eight classrooms, a multipurpose room, and a learning resource center, was completed in April 1968. Its design allowed for continuous progress learning, with a large room on the second floor accommodating six normal-size classes and folding wall sections to divide the space. Learning areas of varying sizes created more flexibility and were used mainly for 4th through 6th graders. In 1981-82, the school became a K-5 facility.

In 1987, Alki's test results were at an all-time low and the Seattle Post-Intelligencer listed it as one of 20 city schools needing drastic improvements. The following year, Pat Sander took over as principal and began working with staff and parents on overhauling the school's techniques, curriculum, and approach to education. The reading block was stretched from one hour to the entire morning. The next year the test results rose 12 percent. Stanford University's innovative Accelerated Schools program, which attempts to accelerate the learning progress for each individual student, was instituted. As a result, in 1992, Alki was selected as one of seven successful North American schools for a documentary film by the Agency for Instructional Technology.

In 1989, the district exchanged the original Alki school property (.25 acres) for one acre at High Point Elementary (see West Seattle Elementary) with the Seattle Housing Authority.

In 1996-97, with the help of artist Tip Toland, each student in the school created a tile based on a theme of folk tales and myths about the sea. The tiles were assembled into 10 framed displays as a permanent art exhibit in the school hallways. Students take many field trips to nearby Alki Beach at low tide. The adjacent Alki Community Center and the large gymnasium utilized by the school provide space for before- and after-school activities.

Alki Elementary began showing its age in the 2000s, and in 2005, Seattle Public Schools unveiled a plan that called for the closure of 10 schools in the district, including Alki. That plan was met with strong public resistance and Alki was removed from the list. In 2009 the building underwent substantial improvements, the roof was replaced, new windows and flooring were installed, and mechanical systems were upgraded.

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Name:	<b>Alki School</b>
Location:	3010 59th Avenue SW
Building:	10-room brick
Architect:	Edgar Blair
Site:	1.4 acres

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1913:	Opened in March
1954:	Additions (Theo Damm)
1965:	Closed by earthquake in April; 1913 structure demolished in August
1968:	Replacement addition and earthquake repairs completed in April (Theo Damm)
1991:	Seismic updates
2023:	School closed for construction; Students relocated to Schmitz Park as interim site

A decade later, in 2019, Seattle voters approved the BEX V capital levy, and money was earmarked to raze and replace Alki. Plans called for the removal of most of the existing school, followed by construction of a multi-story, 75,000-square-foot replacement school designed by Mahlum Architects with permanent space for up to 500 students in grades PreK to 5. The existing gymnasium will be modernized as part of the project. The project's budget was set at \$66.9 million. Alki students will move to Schmitz Park as their interim location during the construction.



Alki, 1958 SPSA 202-10