

## Central I



Central I, ca. 1870 SPSA 094-1

In 1867, the district moved classes from the University Building, where they had been held on and off since 1861 (see University), to the original County Building on 3rd Avenue between James and Jefferson (site of today's Prefontaine Fountain). Erected in 1860 on property owned by Henry Yesler, this was the first county building. Yesler assumed ownership of the building in payment for back rent and rented it to the school district. Eliza Anna Fearer, the third female teacher hired by the district, taught at least one of the terms there in 1867.

Classes were transferred to Yesler's Pavilion (later called Yesler's Hall) when the County Building closed as a school site around 1868. Located on the southeast corner of Front Street (now 1st Avenue) and Cherry Street, it was built in 1866 for visiting entertainment, dances, celebrations, and public meetings. The hall served as a schoolhouse for one year with Sarah Jane Gallagher, one of the first Mercer Girls (see Thomas Mercer), teaching at least one of the terms. From 1867-1882, the hall was the site of large school board meetings and, in the early 1870s, school musical performances for the entire town. The building was destroyed by the Great Seattle Fire in 1889.

From Yesler's Hall, classes moved to a temporary building erected by the school board on 3rd Avenue between James and Yesler, for use from 1869 to 1870 while a permanent building was being readied. The temporary site was called Bacon's Hall after Carrie Bacon, the first teacher there. She was followed by Elma Preston.

In 1870, the original Central School, the first schoolhouse erected by the Seattle School District, opened on 3rd Avenue between Madison and Spring streets. Although the school had two classrooms for 120 pupils, only one teacher, Lizzie Ordway—another Mercer Girl and the second female teacher hired by the district—greeted an overflow of pupils on opening day. A second teacher, Mrs. C. M. Sanderson, was quickly hired.

At the end of the 1871 school year, 294 pupils attended Central. The school board rented the Fisher Building on the northwest corner of 3rd and Union for an additional classroom in December 1871. The teacher was Caroline Parsons, the future wife of Seattle banker Dexter Horton. The Fisher site was abandoned at the end of the academic year because of the planned opening of North and South schools (see North and Gatzert).

In 1881, a third classroom was created in the Central attic. The original Central School closed in 1883 when the larger Sixth Street or Eastern School was opened (see Central II). The lot and building were then sold. The old schoolhouse was moved to Front Street (now 1st Avenue) and Virginia, where it became the Central Boarding House, or Central Rooms.

## Details:

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Name: **Central School**

Location: East side of 3rd Avenue  
between Madison & Spring

Building: 2-room, 2-story wood

Architect: n.a.

Site: n.a.

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1870: Opened on August 4

1883: Closed on May 7; sold on June 6; building moved to Front Street (1st Avenue) & Virginia

1911: Former schoolhouse demolished

1914-34: District administrative offices leased at site in the Central Building (810-812 3rd Avenue)