

Central II



District Administration Building and Central I, ca. 1940 SPSA 004-10

Details:

Name: **Sixth Street School (known as Eastern School)**

Location: 6th & Madison

Building: 2-room wood

Architect: n.a.

Site: 1.41 acres

1875: Temporary school opened

1877: Opened August 10

1883: Closed on May 17; building sold; moved to northwest corner of 8th Avenue & Marion; converted into apartment house

1950: Building demolished for parking lot

In 1875 the school district purchased a 1.4-acre site at 6th and Madison streets, just three blocks to the east of the first Central School (see Central I). There it placed a temporary building to relieve overcrowding in the city's only public school. This early annex was named Eastern School, in the tradition of using relative location as the basis for school names like Central, North, and South. It was also called Sixth Street School in reference to its location, a practice that led North to be called Pine Street and South to be called Main Street. The school opened in 1875 and operated for about two years until its replacement was constructed and opened on the same site.

At an April 1876 Seattle School Board meeting, Director Judge Orange Jacobs denounced the building of any more small schools. However, the new Sixth Street School built in 1877 was a modest structure, quickly constructed and inexpensive.

In 1883, when Seattle schools were bursting with students, a new and larger Sixth Street School opened. It was the first schoolhouse in Seattle with more than two classrooms. The elegant wooden building featured an imposing French mansard roof, clock tower, and tall central belfry. The 12-room building was large enough to replace old Central I, Sixth Street, and North schools. The principal, Edward S. Ingraham, supervised 10 teachers. Not long after it opened, the name was replaced by the older moniker, Central School.

A portion of the new school was used for high school classes. The first class graduated in 1886. Commencement for the 12 graduates, seven boys and five girls, was held at the Frye Opera House.

In April 1888, a faulty furnace caused an early morning fire that burned the school to the ground. Only the piano and a few books were rescued. The high school and 1st grade classes were moved to Denny School, while



Sixth Street, ca. 1880 SPSA 095-1

other grades moved to temporary sites at Brown's Pavilion and Turner's Hall.

Brown's Pavilion, on the northwest corner of 2nd Avenue and Spring Street, was originally built as a skating rink. The district rented all of Brown's Pavilion from Amos Brown on the day of the furnace fire for grades 2-7. In September the district outfitted the basement for four additional classrooms. The building was in turn destroyed in the Great Seattle Fire of 1889. Turner's Hall was an auditorium on the corner of 4th and Jefferson. It was used in spring 1888 for grades 2-4. It was renamed the Seattle Opera House in 1890.

When school resumed in October 1888, one room for two 2nd grade classes was rented at the National Guard Armory on the south side of 4th and Union. A 6th grade class was also located there. The high school was still located at Denny, while classes for grades 1-6 were at Brown's Pavilion. A second 6th grade class was at the Armory. Two 2nd grade classes were held at the old North School. Finally, two 8th grade classes were located at the Young Naturalist's Hall, a natural history museum between Union and University streets, and 3rd and 4th avenues.

The following year, a much larger fire hit Seattle, forcing the relocation of annexes of Central School. The Great Seattle Fire occurred on June 6, 1889, a little over a year after the fire that claimed Central School. Brown's Pavilion was destroyed; its classes were transferred to the First Baptist Church, located at the southeast corner of 4th and James. Because the Armory was needed for other post-blaze operations, its classes were transferred to the University Building. Classes continued at the Young Naturalist's Hall.

A new building, this time constructed with more than 2 million bricks rather than wood, opened at the Central II site in late 1889. During its second year of operation, 22 teachers instructed 862 pupils.

The new Central School housed Seattle High School on its third floor, while the elementary pupils were on the two lower floors. The high school's colors—orange and black—were chosen “because they were ‘pretty together’ and because the town's department stores carried plenty of ribbon in those colors.”

Even though Central became Seattle's largest school building, by 1890 it was overcrowded and the first of many annexes opened. Beginning in 1890, Freed's Hall, on the west side of 9th Avenue between Olive and Pine, also the home of Berachah Baptist Church, was used as an annex. Another site was at Newell's Mill Building.

Most of the low-priced spaces rented in 1892 were in vacant church buildings. All the temporary operations in churches were labeled “Annex” to underscore their relationship to Central School. The Guild Hall Annex was located in the Trinity Church at Cherry and 7th Avenue. Two classrooms for grades 1-2 operated there beginning in 1892. St. Francis Annex also opened in 1892 with nine

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Name: **Sixth Street School**

Location: 6th & Madison

Building: 12-room wood

Architect: Isaac A. Palmer.

Site: 1.41 acres

1883: Opened on May 17

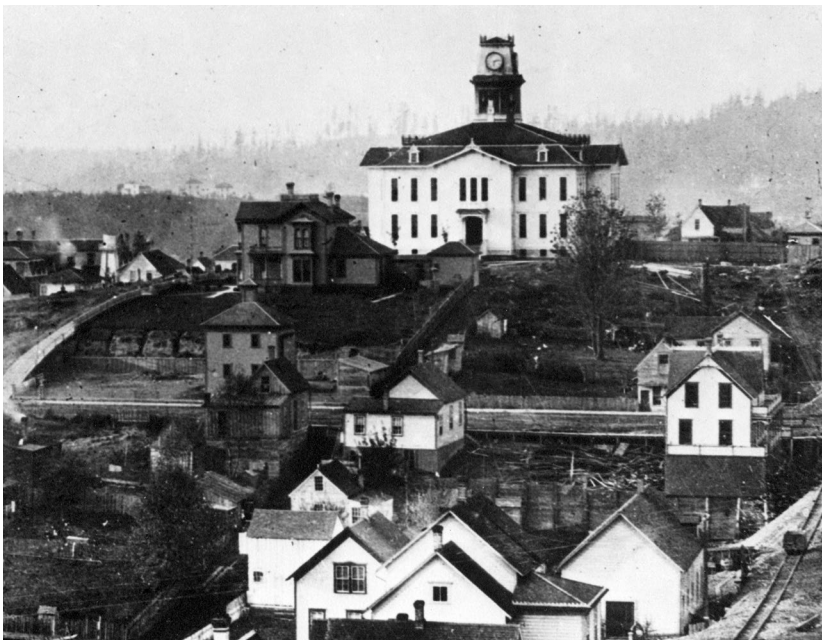
1884: Renamed Central

1888: Destroyed by fire in April

Details:

Name: **Central School**
Location: 7th & Madison
Building: 3-story brick
Architect: Boone & Meeker
Site: 1.41 acres

1889: Opened (post September)
1903: Renamed Washington on May 7; returned to Central on September 1
1920: 0.33-acre playfield added
1938: Closed as elementary school in June; leased
1939-49: Operated as Central Branch of Edison Technical School
1949: Building partially razed after earthquake damage
1953: Remainder of building demolished in August
1954-59: Site leased as a parking lot
1960: Site sold/condemned for freeway construction
Present: Site under Interstate 5



Sixth Street School, ca. 1883 SPSA 094-6

classrooms in two places. The main church building on the corner of 5th and Olive held grades 1-4, while St. Francis Hall on Spring Street between 5th and 6th avenues held grades 6-8.

The “Jewish Synagogue” was rented as an annex for classrooms beginning in November 1894. From September 1898 through June 1905, the Synagogue Annex operated with four to six classrooms for grades 1-4.

When university regents raised the rent on the University Building in 1899, the Seattle School Board decided to use other facilities. Even though St. Marks Annex was located in a rented building at 5th Avenue and Olive Street, the district laid a double floor there and wallpapered the classrooms. In 1901-02, it held five classes for grades 1 and 4-6. Brewer’s Hall, at 624 1st Avenue, opened with four classrooms in 1900.

In September 1901, two more church facilities were rented. The ME Church Annex housed one 2nd grade class in the Haven Methodist Episcopal Church at Howard Avenue N and John Street. However, it is unclear from the address (9th Avenue and Stewart Street) whether the German Church Annex was located in the First German Methodist Episcopal Church (Howard & Stewart) or the German Evangelical Lutheran Zion Church (Terry & Stewart). This annex held one class from each of the grades 1-4 during the 1901-02 school year. The district decided also to bring to St. Francis Hall all 8th graders from Denny-Fuhrman and Lake schools. They reasoned that paying for the additional transportation was more cost-effective than maintaining the necessary number of teachers at all sites.

The Night School opened at Central in January 1902, carrying on a Central tradition of offering night classes for adults. A private Night School had operated on the upper floor of Central I beginning in late 1876. The public-school version launched operations on October 26, 1891, and at one time had been held in the Seattle National Bank Building.

In order to cope with the many annex locations administered from Central School, the district decided to build a facility solely devoted to the high school, thus opening another floor at Central for elementary classes. In 1902, a separate

Seattle High School opened (see Broadway), and the staff and students, including the Night School operation, moved from downtown to Capitol Hill. With the consolidation of elementary classes in the Central building, all the annexes with the exception of the Synagogue Annex (namely Guild Hall, St. Francis, St. Marks, Brewer's Hall, German Church, and ME Church) were closed in spring 1902.

J. M. Widmer was named principal at Central in 1901 and held that position until 1931. During his tenure, the school housed between 476 and 880 pupils. Around 1910, a custodian named Albin Carlson and his assistant devised and installed at Central the first drinking fountain in a Seattle Public School.

On the southeast side of school grounds stood a one-story brick building (901 Marion), dating from 1889. It held the school district's administrative offices until 1914, when they were moved to the former site of Central I. That same year the district's Health Department, and

a Child Study Laboratory and Observation Class directed by Nellie Goodhue, both moved into the vacated space. By 1923, the Health Department was replaced by a Junior Red Cross Clinic. A night class in shipbuilding was held in the assembly hall of the main building during World War I.

Gradually, starting in the early 1920s, the number of children in the area declined. Despite a slight gain as more Asian Americans moved into the area north of Yesler Way, overall enrollment declined as office buildings and apartment houses replaced the homes north of Madison Street. Between 1935 and 1938, enrollment declined from more than 400 to only 300 students. In 1933, a storm damaged the school's north tower and it was removed.

Central School closed to elementary students in 1938 and was leased to the federal government for a youth center for carpentry classes, YMCA and YWCA activities, and Junior Chamber of Commerce under the National Youth Administration (NYA). The NYA also operated the Red Cross clinic providing medical and dental service to needy school children. Beginning in 1939 and for another 10 years, the school building housed vocational classes of the Central Branch of the Edison Technical School. An earthquake in 1949 weakened the old brick building. Two huge chunks of ornamental masonry crashed through the roof of a portable nursery building from which 50 youngsters had been sent out to play just moments earlier. That portable, constructed during World War II, continued to house the Central Nursery School until at least 1951.

The historic Central School was finally demolished in August 1953, and the bell was donated to the Seattle Historical Society, which became the Museum of History and Industry (MOHAI). The old administrative building, still the home of the Public Schools Guidance Department and the Junior Red Cross Clinic, was also torn down. The site was leased for 10 years as a parking lot to bring in revenue. In the early 1960s, a portion of the lanes of Interstate 5 were positioned on this property, which was home to four different school buildings for nearly 75 years.



Central II, ca. 1930 SPSA 004-4