

## Coe

Name: Frantz Coe Elementary School	Enrollment: 498
Address: 2424 7th Avenue W	Nickname: Cougars
Configuration: K-5	Colors: Black and white



Coe, 2022 ©Arthur Ross SPSA 211-346

In 1902, the Seattle School Board purchased a site at Seventh Avenue W and W McGraw Street on Queen Anne Hill. At the time, there were no roads from downtown Seattle to this remote area. The mail was delivered by horse and two-wheel cart along what became 6th Avenue W to a central point at 8th Avenue W and W McGraw Street where residents collected it by walking over rough trails. In 1905, a narrow-gauge railway and cable car carried passengers and goods up Queen Anne Hill to a turnstile located near the school district property.

Although relatively few people lived on Queen Anne Hill in the early 1900s, the two local schools, Queen Anne (later West Queen Anne) and Mercer, had reached their capacity. The board opened East Queen Anne Annex on Fourth Avenue N in 1904 (see Hay). Two years later, the Queen Anne Annex, consisting of two portables, was opened on the Seventh Ave W and McGraw property with 66 pupils in grades 1-3. Work began that same year on a permanent school at the site. The new building was designed in the Colonial Revival style and was almost identical to Stevens. It was named for Dr. Frantz H. Coe, a prominent and respected physician who served on the Seattle School Board for three years beginning in 1901.

The school grounds and building grew with the neighborhood. In 1914, a north wing opened with eight rooms, an auditorium, and a gym. A portable was added in 1920 for manual training. Kindergarten was added in 1931-32. The 8th grade classes moved to Queen Anne Junior-Senior High School in September 1949, and the 7th grade classes followed in September 1955. Enrollment peaked at Coe in 1953-54, with 690 students.

## Details:

Name: **Frantz Coe School**  
Location: 2433 6th Avenue W  
Building: 8-room wood  
Architect: James Stephen  
Site: 1.1 acres

- 1907: Named on July 20; opened in September  
1912-13: Site expanded to 1.87 acres  
1914: Addition (Edgar Blair)  
1920: Site expanded to 2.2 acres  
1967: Site expanded to 2.8 acres  
1972: Addition of two buildings (Cuykendall and Iles)  
1999: 1907 building and 1914 addition landmarked  
2000: Closed in June for construction; Students relocated to Magnolia as interim site  
2001: Fire destroyed buildings; Construction restarted

In fall 1959, Seattle kindergartens were eliminated due to the failure of a levy. Queen Anne parents recruited Inga Ewbank, then in her late 40s, to organize and teach a private kindergarten. The following year she began teaching kindergarten at Coe and remained there until she retired in 1973.

The district purchased about a half-acre of adjacent property in 1967, allowing for further expansion. In 1972, two additional buildings were constructed. A gymnasium was built to the west of the 1907 structure. The other building, positioned at the northwest corner of the site, had an open-space learning resource center, which included open teaching areas for kindergarten and 1st grade.

Several options for Coe were considered under the district's capital-improvement plan, ranging from renovating the old buildings to demolition and replacement with a new structure. The community favored preserving and expanding the 1907 building and the 1914 addition, which were landmarked in 1999, while demolishing the 1972 structures. The \$14.7 million renovation and expansion project would add more classrooms, a gym, and a library. The building's exterior design was retained along with the interior woodwork and main staircase.

Construction began in the summer of 2000 and students were housed at Magnolia during the school year. On January 21, 2001,



Coe, ca. 1920 SPSA 211-1

just after midnight, the 1907 and 1914 structures caught fire and were destroyed. There were no fire alarms or fire-suppression systems in operation because the project was still under construction. In fact, at the time of the blaze, construction was about 65 percent complete. The fire was so intense that it smoldered for several days and new flames occasionally burst through the rubble. No one was hurt in the fire or while fighting it.

The 1907 building was hit the hardest; its hardwood floors and interior archways were completely gone. In the 1914 building, a few walls were left standing. Two additions that were part of the new construction fared better. The one housing a library, classrooms, and a computer lab was damaged but left standing. Another addition, which was to hold a lunchroom, auditorium, gym, and covered play area, was unharmed. A large old cedar tree on the Seventh Avenue side of the building survived.

Damage was estimated at \$15 million. The federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms teamed up with the Seattle Fire Department to investigate, but the cause of the fire was never determined.

The replacement school was rebuilt in a way that evoked Coe's historic past, with a gabled portico and three-story columns flanking the main entrance. The new construction increased the cost of the project to \$25.5 million although insurance from the fire covered about \$9 million. The district decided to retain Mahlum Architects, who had won the bid to build the earlier school, since they were familiar with the project and had a team of professionals already assigned. Seattle mayor Paul Schell pledged to expedite the permit process.

On January 6, 2003, nearly two years to the day of the fire, Coe students and teachers who had been temporarily housed at Magnolia Elementary since 1999 lined up parade-like to make a grand entrance to tour the new building. The official opening was held February 1, 2003. Some of the new features in the 75,214-square-foot building included a three-story atrium that leads to a skylight as well as numerous areas for small-group activities

## Details:

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Name: **Frantz Coe Elementary School**  
 Location: 2424 7th Avenue W  
 Building: Multi-story steel & wood, masonry veneer  
 Architect: Mahlum Architects  
 Site: 2.8 acres

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2003: Coe School opened on January 6 (BEX I)  
 2022: Addition (Mahlum Architects; Distressed Schools Grant)



Coe, ca. 1940 SPSA 211-2

and tutoring. The design project was one of three schools nationwide to receive the Architectural Excellence in Education award as well as a Recognized Value Award from the Design Share Awards for Innovative Schools.

In 2018, portables were installed to help relieve overcrowding. A three-story classroom addition that added six classrooms, two learning commons, and storage areas, was completed in January 2022. This project was funded by the State of Washington Distressed Schools Grant.



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