

Columbia



Columbia City, ca. 1900 MOHAI 3121

Columbia City began as an independent mill town in the Rainier Valley. Columbia City School started out in Columbia School District No. 18, which was organized in 1876. A large bell tower stood above the main entrance of the two-story building.

When southeast Seattle became part of the City of Seattle in 1907, Columbia City School was annexed into the Seattle School District with 514 students enrolled in grades 1-8. At the same time, two smaller schools from Columbia School District, Hillman at 39th Avenue S and Main Street, and Southeast Seattle at Rainier Avenue and Genesee Street, operated as annexes to Columbia City for a brief time. Hillman closed in 1908. Southeast Seattle closed in 1909. The Southeast Seattle site was condemned by the Seattle Housing Authority in 1943.

Over the next few years, Columbia City's enrollment declined to about 300 students. The name of the school was shortened to Columbia School in 1910 after the original Columbia in the Seattle School District was renamed Lowell.

A new Columbia School was built on the same site in the early 1920s. It was a unique single-story building in the Mission Revival style with stucco exterior. After the old school building was demolished, a new playground was built on the site.

Details:

Name: **Columbia City School**
 Location: 3540 S Ferdinand Street
 Building: 8-room wood
 Architect: n.a
 Site: n.a.

Opened by Columbia School District

1907: Annexed into Seattle School District

1910: Renamed Columbia School

1922: Closed and demolished

In 1942-43, enrollment jumped because of an influx of wartime workers living in the Rainier Vista Housing Project. The following year, 8th graders were moved to an 8th grade center at Franklin High School. At the same time, two programs at Columbia were discontinued and their space was repurposed. The home economics area was turned into classrooms plus art and science laboratories, and the industrial arts area was remodeled to provide an extended physical education program. In fall 1944, the Rainier Vista School was opened as an annex to further relieve overcrowding (see Columbia Annex). The 7th grade was removed from Columbia in 1952.

In 1957, the 300-pound bell from the first school was restored and placed on display in the second building. Enrollment peaked in 1957-58 at 849 students in the regular program and 33 students in special education. In 1960-61, there were more than 800 students at Columbia and nine portables in use. Dearborn Park School opened in fall 1971, with half of its inaugural student body coming from Columbia. By 1973-74, enrollment was down to 375, with 10 portables in use including space for three special education classes.

The 1978 desegregation plan paired Columbia with Olympic View and established a K, 4-6 grade configuration at Columbia. At the same time, a science/technology magnet program was added.

In September 1989, the Orca K-5 alternative program moved to Columbia from Day and remained there until 2007. The Orca program specialized in visual and performing arts and individualized learning. A high level of parent participation is one of its hallmarks. The Orca community launched a fundraising drive to support an extensive garden program and build out a greenhouse and community garden. The program was unique in that each class regularly spent time in the garden for hands-on environmental learning. The historic bell was given to the Rainier Valley Historical Society.



Columbia, 1963 SPSA 213-5

After ORCA moved out of Columbia and into Whitworth in 2007, Columbia was used as an interim site for The New School program located at South Shore, while that site was under construction. When the new South Shore school building opened in 2009 and the students moved back in from Columbia, The New School was renamed South Shore K-8. In April 2010, South Shore students returned to Columbia when their new school building was unexpectedly closed for the remainder of the school year when an odor was detected, possibly coming from the new carpeting. After safety concerns were vetted and the issue resolved, South Shore opened again to students in fall 2010. Columbia was leased to the Torah Day School from September 2010 to June 2013.

In 2013, Columbia became home to one of the Interagency High Schools that make up the Interagency Academy, a network of small high schools spread out across Seattle designed for students who need different supports than what comprehensive schools offer. This alternative program partners with community-based organizations and agencies to provide unique learning environments with targeted interventions. Interagency students at Columbia have flexible schedules and can participate in small classes, either in-person or online, as they work toward earning a high school diploma or GED.

Details:

Name:	Columbia School
Location:	3528 S Ferdinand Street
Building:	16-room stucco
Architect:	Floyd A. Naramore
Site:	2.0 acres
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1922:	Opened
1923:	Site expanded to 3.22 acres
1989:	Closed as regular school in June; Orca K-5 alternative school transferred from Day
2004:	Entire Columbia district added to National Register of Historic Places
2007-09:	Orca moved to Whitworth; The New School program relocated to Columbia as an interim site during South Shore construction
2009:	The New School program renamed South Shore K-8
2010:	In April, South Shore closed; students relocated to Columbia as interim site until fall
2010-13:	Leased to Torah Day School
2011:	Seismic updates
2013:	Columbia became home to an Interagency High School