

## Cooper

Name: Pathfinder K-8 School at Cooper	Enrollment: 493
Address: 1901 SW Genesee Street	Nickname: none
Configuration: K-8	Colors: Blue and yellow



Cooper, 2000 ©Mary Randlett SPSA 216-118

Settlement of the area west of Pigeon Point along an Elliott Bay cove in West Seattle began in 1885 with the establishment of a sawmill. Early settlers called the cleared area Humphrey Settlement. In 1905, the Pacific Steel Company moved its mill to that area from Lake City. The location then became known as Youngstown after the hometown of William Pigott, the head of the mill. The mill company erected small houses for the new workers and a one-room country school. Youngstown School stood on the tide flats and was reached by walking over pilings. On opening day, Miss Martha Anderson was the lone teacher who greeted 70 pupils. Quickly, a second room was added, and another teacher was hired.

On June 29, 1907, West Seattle residents voted to become part of Seattle. The vote came too late to make an impact the following school year, due to a recent state law that stipulated that school annexations could take place only at the end of the school year (June 30). There was not enough time to count the ballots. During the year before Youngstown officially became part of the Seattle School District, Seattle school officials convinced West Seattle residents to vote on a bond issue that would boost local indebtedness to Seattle's level and provide funds for new schools. As a result of the successful March 21, 1908, school levy vote, Youngstown School moved to a larger five-room frame building on a site purchased for the school in time for the following school year. The handbell used to call students to the old building was preserved and used in the new school.

## Details:

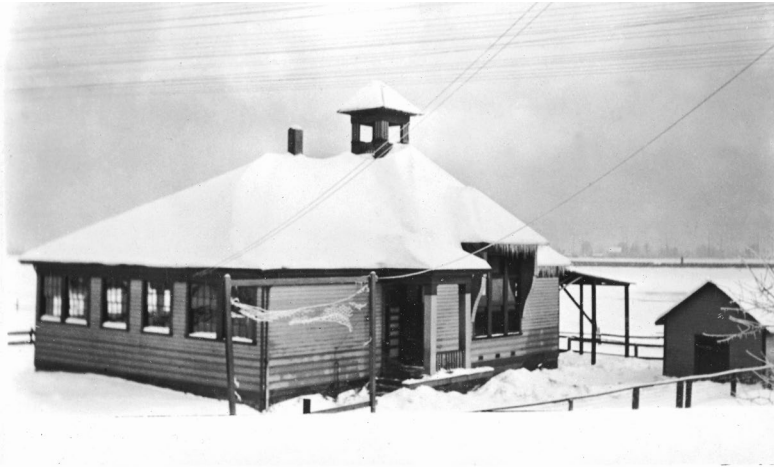
Name: **Riverside School**

Location: Detroit Avenue &  
W Juneau Street

Building: 2-room wood

Architect: n.a.

Site: 0.29 acres



Riverside, MOHAI 12.564

1888: Opened by Riverside School District

1908: Annexed into Seattle School District

1908-09: Annex to West Seattle

1909-11: Annex to South Seattle

1911-26: Annex to Youngstown

1926: Closed in June

n.a.: Rented as a residence

n.a.: Sold to renter; still a residence in 1950

By 1973: Used as a storage building

The community grew as more men were employed at the steel mill. Fisher Flour Mill, shipbuilding facilities, foundries, and other businesses soon joined the steel mill, and it was apparent that a larger school was needed. The design of the new brick building represented state-of-the-art school planning with a combined lunchroom-auditorium and home economics department. Prior to the building's completion, World War I broke out and hundreds more people moved

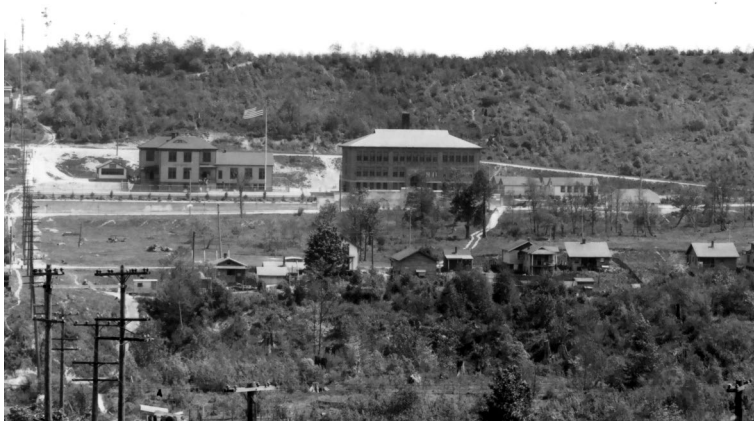
into the community. By the time the building opened in 1917 on the south side of the 1908 school, it was overcrowded, and the old frame building was used along with a number of portables. Once again, the original bell was moved to the new schoolhouse.

From 1911 to 1926, tiny Riverside School at Detroit Avenue between W Juneau and W Marginal Way served as an annex to Youngstown. The school was opened by the Riverside School District in 1888. After being annexed into Seattle School District in 1908, it was used exclusively as an annex until its closure in 1926. Today it is one of the few remaining nineteenth century schoolhouses in Seattle.

Throughout the 1920s, Youngstown's student population continued to grow. Following the passage of a 1929 bond issue, the building was expanded with an addition blended into the 1917 structure. The new addition included six classrooms, two libraries, a gymnasium, and an auditorium-lunchroom. Rooms devoted to art, music, and shop reflected a new organization of the curriculum. Classes were held in the older building and portables during September as construction stretched on longer than anticipated. The school's addition was completed in November 1929.

In 1939, when new names were considered, school representatives initially proposed the name Catharine E. Blaine, but according to the *West Seattle Herald*, that proposal was withdrawn a week later, explaining that "the name Catharine Blaine might give the impression that it was a girls' school." The school was renamed the Frank B. Cooper School in 1939 to honor the superintendent of the Seattle School District from 1901 to 1922. Some community members favored the name change, feeling it was one way of ridding the neighborhood of its blue-collar image, while others regretted the loss of their community's name.

During World War II, another influx of workers brought overcrowded conditions to the school. A wood-frame structure, containing three classrooms, was added in 1944, paid for by the federal government. Hired as a 2nd grade teacher at Cooper in 1947, Thelma Dewitty became one of the first two Black women teachers in the district.



Youngstown, ca. 1917 SPSA 080-1

In 1952, the 7th and 8th grades were transferred from Cooper to one of two junior high schools in West Seattle: Denny or Madison. The loss of these grades, changes in post-war housing patterns and construction, and declining enrollment after the war suggested there would be plenty of room at the school. This assumption proved to be incorrect as enrollment figures climbed, requiring the addition of two portable classrooms in 1958. In 1964, four special education classes were added. Enrollment peaked in the 1960s at about 780 students. By spring 1973, it had dropped to around 400. In 1975, a bilingual and newcomer program was added for students in grades K-6.

By 1983, Cooper again had a serious overcrowding problem with classrooms and offices being shared. Some 528 children were crammed into the aging structure. Parents met with district officials and expressed their preference for relocation to Boren, located just over a mile to the south, which had closed as a junior high school in 1981. The proposal was rejected by the board in April 1984. That spring, the bilingual/newcomer program was moved to Lafayette and Gatewood. Finally, considered seismically unsound, the school was closed in 1989, boarded up, and used mainly for storage. Students and staff were sent to Boren as a temporary home while awaiting a new school. It would take another decade to get one.

After being mostly empty for 16 years, the old 1917 building was given a new life. Purchased by the Delridge Neighborhood Development Association in 2002, the school was transformed into the Youngstown Cultural Arts Center and opened in 2006. Youngstown Cultural Arts Center is an inclusive contemporary multi-arts hub in the Delridge neighborhood that incubates the arts, artists, and organizations from the community. The school building was renovated to include a theatre, a dance studio, a nature consortium, and housing for artists. It was designated a City of Seattle Landmark in 2002 and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on March 26,

## Details:

Name: **Youngstown School**  
 Location: Delridge Way & W Genesee  
 Building: 5-room wood  
 Architect: n.a.  
 Site: n.a.

1908: New school opened  
 1908: Annexed into Seattle School District  
 1917: Closed; Continued use as part of school  
 1929: Building and portables demolished

## Details:

Name: **Youngstown School**  
 Location: 4408 Delridge Way SW  
 Building: 8-room brick  
 Architect: Edgar Blair  
 Site: 0.92 acres

1917: Opened  
 1920: Site expanded to 2.24 acres  
 1929: Addition (Floyd A. Naramore)  
 1939: Renamed Frank B. Cooper School on February 15  
 1944: Addition (n.a.) opened in March  
 1989: Closed in June; Students relocated to Boren  
 2002: Sold to Delridge Neighborhood Development Association  
 2002: Designated a City of Seattle landmark  
 2003: Added to the National Register of Historic Places  
 2006: Youngstown Cultural Arts Center opened

## Details:

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Name: **Frank B. Cooper  
Elementary School**

Location: 1901 SW Genesee

Building: 23-room, masonry and metal

Architect: Tsang Partnership

Site: 14 acres

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1999: Opened in September (Tsang Partnership; BEX I); Cooper program relocated from Boren

2009: School closed in June; Pathfinder K-8 program moved to Cooper in September

2003. The district maintained an interagency program in space at the Youngstown Cultural Arts Center per the purchase and sale agreement for a number of years.

In 1996, about seven years after the old Cooper school closed to students, the district partnered with the city to purchase a new site atop Pigeon Hill, a few blocks to the east of the original Cooper School. The land had been the Alaska Communication Command Site, before it was purchased in 1958 by the University of Washington and became part of the university's West Seattle Research Laboratory. The lab was primarily used by the Electrical Engineering Department. The district purchased 14 acres on the northeast corner of the property, while the city purchased and developed the rest of the 40 acres into extensive parkland adjacent to the school.

Planning for the new building on Pigeon Hill began in 1996 and construction was completed in September 1999. The project involved demolishing the existing structures, including three radio transmission tuning shacks and a detached garage, and entombing an underground bomb-proof bunker. The underground shelter was reportedly used as a laboratory in which cobalt and high-voltage transformers were used.

Encompassing about 71,000 square feet and designed by the Tsang Partnership architectural firm, the new school had second-story bay windows, pitched roofs, and garden spaces to take advantage of the park-like setting, which included a wetland. The building was designed for 535 students. Classroom wings radiate out from a



Cooper, ca. 1940 SPSA 216-1





Cooper, 1960 SPSA 216-3

centralized library on the second floor and administrative offices on the first floor. Included were a computer lab, an art-and-science room, childcare facility, gymnasium, multipurpose room, and covered outdoor play area.

In April 2005, the future of Cooper became uncertain when the district proposed closing 10 schools because of budget shortfalls and declining enrollment. In 2006, the school board considered combining the Pathfinder program, located at Genesee Hill, with the Cooper program to create an expanded vision of an alternative school inclusive of both programs at the Cooper School site. After extreme opposition, including violent episodes at a school board meeting, the board cancelled those plans on October 18, 2006. Ultimately, it was decided that Pathfinder would move to the newer Cooper school building, and existing Cooper students could elect to stay or transfer to another elementary school.

Pathfinder began as Alternative Elementary #4 in 1992 at Roxhill. A year later, it moved to Boren, before moving to Genesee Hill in 1994 (see Genesee Hill). It became known as Pathfinder in 1996. Pathfinder expanded and became K-8 when it moved to the Cooper site. The change occurred in the fall of 2009 and the school became known as Pathfinder K-8 @ Cooper.

One focus of Pathfinder K-8 is learning outside of classrooms. Classes in environmental studies and Native American history and culture are part of its varied curriculum. In the 2021-22 school year, Pathfinder partnered with 11 outside organizations to further its programs in academics, behavioral and emotional learning, expanded learning, health and wellness, and racial/cultural identity.