

Emerson

Name: Emerson Elementary School	Enrollment: 370
Address: 9709 60th Avenue S	Nickname: Eagles
Configuration: K-5	Colors: Blue and white



Emerson, 2022 ©Arthur Ross SPSA 221-58

The Rainier Beach School in Columbia School District No. 18 opened with two classrooms in the Rainier Valley in 1903. After becoming a Seattle Public School in 1907, it held grades 1-4 during the 1907-08 school year. The 1907 annexations to Seattle, including Ballard and a total of six schools, proved to be the most significant single addition to the district at the time, since it brought in almost 6,000 students.

The following school year, two additional classrooms were added to accommodate grades 1-7. The area's 8th graders were sent to Brighton. However, the structure was so full that the board authorized the "renting of a portable church building at Rainier Beach ... should an additional room become necessary."

That same school year, the older wooden building was moved west, and a new brick building was erected on the original site, while school continued in the older classrooms. The new structure represented the Jacobean style and was nearly identical to Greenwood, also constructed the same year. These two schools were the last two schools designed by the district's first architect, James Stephen, who established the 'new type' brick model school, the modern standard for school construction, with wider corridors and larger classrooms. These schools were designed to allow for expansion, so at Emerson, an exterior end wall was finished in common, rather than face-brick. With the new building, 8th graders were added to the student body. The school was renamed to honor Ralph Waldo Emerson, the nineteenth century American poet, essayist, and philosopher.

Details:

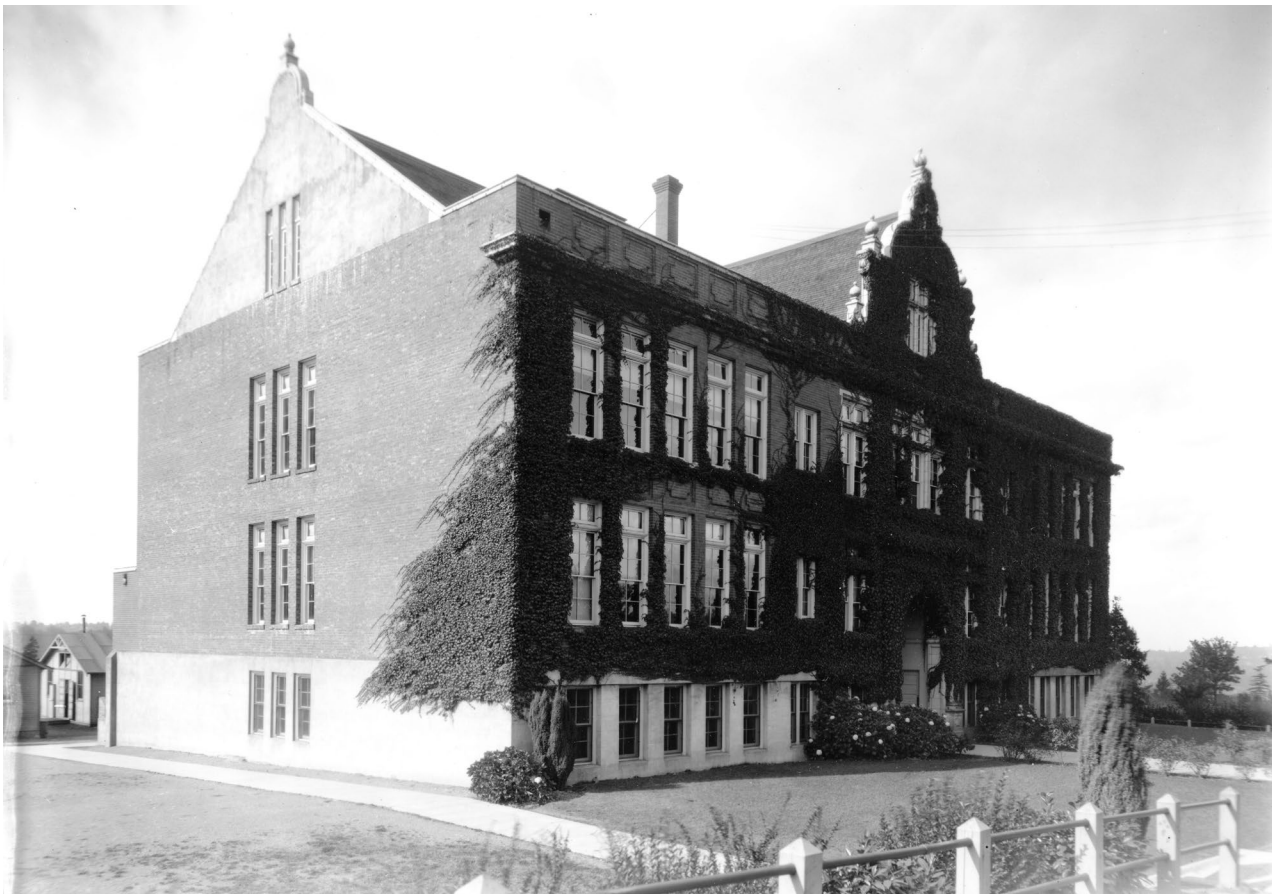
Name: **Rainier Beach School**
Location: Pilgrim & 60th Avenue S
Building: 2-room wood
Architect: n.a
Site: 1.6 acres

1903: Opened by Columbia School District
1907: Annexed into Seattle School District
1907-08: Operated as annex to Brighton
1908: Addition (2 room)
1908-09: Operated as annex to Dunlap
1909: Moved to side of site
1910: Used for kindergarten by parents
1925-30: Used as K, 3 annex
1930: Closed; demolished

When Charles Gray became principal in 1911-12, he instituted a commonwealth student government. It consisted of a council, with a president and vice president, and a student court. The president had a cabinet, and law-enforcement agents, consisting of a chief marshal and two assistant marshals. The constitution embodied provisions for referendum, initiative, and recall. Members of the council observed the Seattle City Council meetings.

Parents established a kindergarten at Emerson's old building in 1910. It was integrated into the public school in 1914. In the late 1920s, not only was the annex in use for classes, but there were also five portables on the grounds. Overcrowding led to the addition of a new wing of 10 classrooms on the south side of the building in 1930. Designed by Floyd Naramore, the additions were reasonably sympathetic to the original building design to provide building continuity. Enrollment declined, however, during the 1930s, and there were many empty rooms at Emerson before World War II. By 1947, enrollment rose to 539.

The 8th grade left in 1949 to attend George Washington Junior High. In 1952, the 7th grade moved to Sharples. In 1957, enrollment exceeded 900. The building was remodeled in 1969, and a



Emerson, ca. 1920 SPSA 221-1



Emerson, 1963 SPSA 221-4

team-teaching center was established in the 1930 addition. As part of the remodel, changes were made to the entry dormers and gabled roof ends of the original building in order to update the seismic capabilities of the school. The curvilinear nature of the original roofline was replaced with straight edges and the terra cotta pommels and ornate parapets were removed. These modifications were in response to the April 29, 1965, 6.7 magnitude earthquake that shook the region.

In the early 1970s, Emerson moved into individualized instruction with reading as its first priority. The most ambitious endeavor was a diversified, individually prescribed language-arts program. In 1973-74, the 5th and 6th grade were moved to the new South Shore Middle School, leaving Emerson as a K-4 school. In 1978-79, it shifted to a K-5 configuration. During 1982-89, it operated as a K-6 school. It returned to K-5 by 1993-94. Victor Dickinson retired in June 1975 after serving as Emerson's principal for 30 years.

A 5.53-acre playfield, named Hutchinson Park after baseball great Fred Hutchinson, who attended Emerson, is located to the west of the school. Because the school is on a hill and due to its height compared to smaller buildings surrounding it, Emerson is a prominent landmark in the neighborhood. The building exterior, including the roof, and the entire site were designated a City of Seattle Landmark on July 1, 1998.

Details:

Name: **Emerson School**
 Location: 9709 60th Avenue S
 Building: 9-room brick
 Architect: James Stephen
 Site: 1.84 acres

1909: Named on April 7; opened as neighborhood school
 1930: Addition (Floyd A. Naramore)
 1969: Remodeled
 1998: Exteriors designated city landmark
 2000: Renovation and new building began (DLR Group, BEX I); Students relocated to South Shore as interim site
 2001: Reopened in September
 2007: Rainier View students merged with Emerson

Beginning in summer 2000, a major renovation project was launched at Emerson. The historic 1909 building was reconstructed and modernized, while the 1930 addition was demolished and replaced with a new two-story classroom wing on the south side and a one-story multipurpose room and gym (all designed by DLR Group) to the west. The front entrance of the 1930 addition with a window and the terra cotta detail was preserved to create a unique architectural feature in front of the school. The new school encompasses 71,182 square feet, providing space for 535 students. Emerson's students were relocated to South Shore during the construction phase. Emerson reopened to fanfare in September 2001.

In May 2006 a citizen's panel recommended that Emerson be closed because of poor academic performance and to help reduce the district's budget deficit. A month later, the district proposed the idea of a merger with Rainier View at Emerson, and in 2007-08, Rainier View was folded into Emerson. Six of Rainier View's 19 certified teachers went to Emerson, along with about 170 of the 229 students.

Emerson remains one of the district's most diverse schools. According to its website in 2022, "The school has around 45% of students who qualify for English Language Learner (ELL) services and about 20% of our students who qualify for Special Education services. The demographics of our school represent the wonderful diversity in the Rainier Beach area, about 45% of students are Black, 20% are Hispanic, 15% Asian, 10% are multi-racial, with the remaining percentage reflecting our Pacific Islander and White students."



Emerson, 2022 ©Arthur Ross SPSA 221-59