

Franklin

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| Name: Franklin High School | Enrollment: 1,240 |
| Address: 3013 S Mt Baker Boulevard | Nickname: Quakers |
| Configuration: 9-12 | Colors: Green and black |
| Newspaper: <i>Tolo</i> | Annual: <i>Tolo</i> |



Franklin, 1917 SPSA 013-41

When Seattle High School opened at Broadway and Pine streets in 1902, it was assumed to be large enough to meet the city's needs for many years. By 1905, the city's only high school was so crowded that overflow classes were held in the newly built Summit. The following year, Franklin School (see Washington) opened. In addition to housing students in grades 1-8, it housed 9th and 10th graders from Seattle High School in a program called the High School Annex.

From 1909-12, the original Franklin school operated solely as Franklin High School, opening with 478 students and 19 teachers. Joseph A. Reed served as principal until 1932. School spirit took off quickly with sports, drama, and boys' and girls' clubs. In October 1909, the first issue of a monthly newspaper, *Tolo*, was published. The name derives from the Chinook word for "to win."

In 1910, the school board designated property in the developing neighborhood of Mount Baker as the permanent location of the new high school. The site was on the crest of a hill overlooking Rainier Valley. The streets in the surrounding residential community curved and house lots followed the natural topography of the area, with vistas of Lake Washington to the east. Both Mt. Baker Park and Rainier Valley street- car lines served the community. Two additional lots to the west of the site were purchased to prevent other buildings from obstructing the view over the valley. The city vacated a street in front of the building, and it was terraced and planted with grass and shrubs.

The new high school was the first of three high schools designed by Edgar Blair. He intended to make this school “as complete and modern as possible,” and he accomplished this goal. It opened in September 1912 with 42 classrooms, two gymnasiums, a lunchroom on the third floor so cooking odors would not distract the students, and a detached manual training room to reduce noise and vibration from machinery. It also featured a model apartment for use by home economics classes. Designed as a grand structure in a Neoclassical style reminiscent of a Renaissance palace, some considered it the most beautiful school in the Northwest. Notably, a model of the school with photographs was later displayed at the 1933 Chicago World’s Fair.

Community residents wanted the new building to be named Mount Baker High School. The opinion of teachers and students prevailed, and the name Franklin High School was maintained and engraved in the white marble above the classic Ionic columns.

Activities popular during the first three decades of the school’s history included chorus, which began in 1913 and later performed operettas with the school orchestra, a drama club, and publications. The annual began in 1914.

Royal Brougham, who began his career as a sportswriter for the school paper and became one of the longest tenured employees of a U.S. newspaper, suggested the Quakers as the school nickname

Details:

Name: **Franklin High School**
 Location: 3013 S Mt Baker Boulevard
 Building: 42-room reinforced concrete
 Architect: Edgar Blair
 Site: 2.2 acres

1911: Named on June 16
 1912: Opened in September
 1916: 4.13-acre playfield added
 1925: Site expanded to 10.6 acres; addition (Floyd A. Naramore)
 1942: Site expanded to 12.7 acres
 1958: Addition (John W. Maloney)
 1986: Designated as a City of Seattle landmark
 1988-90: Closed for renovation
 ca. 1989: Demolition of 1958 addition
 1990: Renovated school reopened (Bassetti Norton Metler Rekevics)
 2017: Seismic updates; Replacement of athletic field turf



Franklin, 2000 ©Mary Randlett SPSA 013-146

in 1920. As time passed, the green and black Quakers were a force to be reckoned with on the sports scene. Early traditions developed and persisted, such as White Clothes Day when all students dressed in white, the Ben Franklin Assembly celebrating the birthday of the school's namesake, and an annual kite-flying contest.

Enrollment increased dramatically and by 1920 the building had exceeded its capacity, housing 1,450 students. With the opening of Garfield High School in 1923, crowded conditions eased, but not for long. In 1925, the district acquired property to the east and a new wing was constructed, adding



Franklin, 1963 SPSA 013-11

a large band room, two art rooms, domestic science, and mechanical drawing rooms, and 10 other classrooms. At this time, the library moved into a larger area, and its old space became a typing room. A large portable, located to the north of the new wing and called Study B, served various purposes from 1925 to 1955.

During World War II, the U.S. Army used the school's facilities for training an anti-aircraft division. Meanwhile, Franklin boys participated in commando training. After the war, a bronze plaque and a memorial tree were placed on the grounds to commemorate the 99 Franklin students who lost their lives in the war.

From 1948 until 1952, 8th graders from various overcrowded schools attended Franklin, but this practice ended with the opening of Sharples Junior High School in 1952.

In 1955, Franklin became the first school in the state to receive the Bellamy Flag Award, in recognition of the "democratic philosophy and outstanding achievements of the school." Principal Walt Reseburg, who started as a teacher and coach in Franklin's inaugural year, retired in 1958.

With Franklin's enrollment nearing 2,000 in 1958, the district authorized a major remodeling project. A west wing was built in front of the elegant facade, obscuring the arched windows. This wing contained girls' physical education facilities, music rooms, and a large study hall. A new detached boys' gymnasium was built on the southeast corner of the playfield across the street. A large wood shop was constructed to the north of the east wing. A decade later, in 1967, a report recommended that the study hall be converted into an improved instructional materials center.

During the 1960s, Franklin felt the impact of social changes taking place throughout the city, particularly in the central and southeastern districts. Population shifts and racial tensions affected the school, and in spring 1968 growing pressures erupted in confrontation. There was a march on the principal's office and a sit-in. The protesters demanded reform at the high school. Specifically, they wanted an end to discriminatory discipline practices, more diverse authors in the library, and Black history classes. The following fall staff turnover was heavy, and a new principal and vice-principal were appointed.

By 1972, Franklin's student body was very ethnically diverse, with 30 percent African Americans, 30 percent Asian Americans, and 40 percent white. The staff had become more representative of the many cultural groups that comprised the Franklin community. Curricular offerings included multiethnic programs and special classes for the foreign-born.



Franklin, 2000 ©Mary Randlett SPSA 013-147

Kenneth Gorelick, who sold more than 75 million records as Kenny G, made Franklin's golf team as a freshman, but was cut from the jazz band. He became team captain, earned first chair in the band his sophomore year, and had his first Seattle newspaper mentions for outstanding achievement in music. He graduated in the top 2 percent of Franklin's class of 1974.

Fall 1981 saw a bulging enrollment of 1,850 students following the closure of Queen Anne High School, as Franklin became the high school destination for students from McClure and Blaine.

In 1982, an engineering study warned that the aging Franklin building was vulnerable to earthquake damage. Faced with rising repair costs, the school board voted in September 1986 to demolish the 75-year-old structure. Protests arose from students, alumni, and neighborhood residents. One student said she feared it would be replaced by a "faceless contemporary complex." Seattle's Landmarks Preservation Board designated Franklin as an official landmark and denied the district's request to tear it down. Earlier estimates for the costs of renovation had been far above the amount budgeted in the capital improvement program. Adjustments were made by the architects.

The resulting project, which began in 1988, removed the 1958 addition and turned the space directly behind the grand windows into a student commons. An addition was located in the middle of the U-shaped plan, and a new wall on the east side encompassed a new auditorium and classrooms. In September 1990, Franklin's students returned from their interim site at Sharples to find that, once again, their school was a contender for "the most beautiful in the Northwest." It was the first historic renovation of a Seattle high school.

A set of five artworks, created by local artists and illustrating the school's history, was dedicated in January 1991. One creation, entitled *A Stitch in Time* by Jim Pridgeon, consisted of old band instruments, team uniforms, and other objects from the past placed in the attic cupola. This art could be viewed through a twin periscope in the commons. Unfortunately, the periscopes were damaged in the 2001 Nisqually earthquake and the art was dismantled during construction. Efforts have been made to restore the work.

The Quaker logo of a pilgrim, which had made its appearance around 1958, has been the source of some controversy over the years. A shotgun, which occasionally appeared in the logo, was removed in accordance with

the district's anti-violence policy in the early 1990s. As some people noted, a Quaker would not carry a gun; others pointed out that Ben Franklin wasn't a Quaker. In spring 1997, students and staff voted to change the nickname from Quakers to Earthquakes. Some alumni expressed their disappointment with the name change, so the Quaker moniker remained as a reference to earthquakes.

Franklin continued its tradition with an arts-oriented curriculum. A four-year humanities course integrates language arts and social studies. Franklin's mock trial team, the brainchild of teacher and judge Rick Nagel, won the state mock trial championship seven times. Nagel, who began the Law and Society class in 1969, retired in 2000 after his team came home with the national title. Also noteworthy are Franklin's studio art facilities, award-winning jazz lab, and excellent drama productions. The Quaker marching band performed in Dublin for St. Patrick's Day in 2000, following an alumni fundraising program that also yielded new uniforms.

The library was upgraded in 2005. Between 2011 and 2015, the school's terra cotta exterior was cleaned and repaired. Repairs were needed to address issues that lingered from the 1990 budget-constrained historic renovations.

In the 2000s, Franklin's boys' basketball team won three state titles. It was the first since back-to-back titles in 1993-94 and 1994-95 led by future NCAA and NBA champion Jason Terry. The Quakers earned state titles in boys' cross country in 1967-68 and boys' basketball in 1954.

The 2022 graduating class was the first to hold a prom since Seattle schools shifted to remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. Proms are typically funded through fundraising rather than district funds and students appealed to the Seattle School Board during the December 15, 2021, meeting—joined by students from Chief Sealth International and Lincoln high schools—and were assured by interim Superintendent Brent Jones, a Franklin graduate, that it would happen. District administrators helped students connect with Seattle Center staff, who agreed to waive fees on event spaces—schools could select from one of three venues. For the senior class, which had one normal high school year before the pandemic forced unprecedented remote learning, its senior prom planning marked a return to the traditional school activities as maskless in-person learning also returned that March. The Franklin prom was held May 21 at Seattle Center, complete with pre-dance COVID tests for students.

Additional famous alumni include basketball player and coach Aaron Brooks, U.S. Amateur Golf champion Bill Wright, former Washington State Governor Gary Locke, baseball player Fred Hutchinson, Olympian John White, inventor Alfred Moen, author Ron Chew, former councilmember and School Board Director Cheryl Chow, and economist and policymaker Eleanor Hadley.