

Gatzert

Name: Bailey Gatzert Elementary School	Enrollment: 313
Address: 1301 E Yesler Way	Nickname: Teddy Bears
Configuration: K-5	Colors: Red



South School, ca. 1900 SPSA 083-3

For a short time, Seattle’s only public school was Central I. By December 1871, the school was overcrowded, and space was rented in the Fisher Building for an annex (see Central I). In September 1873, two new schools opened to hold primary students, while senior and intermediate students went to Central. Primary students north of Cherry Street went to North School (see North), while those south of Cherry went to the South School, located at Sixth Avenue S and Main Street. When it was built, South School stood alone “on the edge of virgin forest.”

The South School became overcrowded after a fire destroyed Central School in April 1888 and students were forced to relocate. This led to the opening of the two-room Weller Street School, large enough to warrant its own janitor, in a chapel on Weller Street.

To handle crowding, a new, substantially larger school was built at 12th Avenue South and Weller Street. It was the first of eight schools constructed in 1889-90 and the district determined that the new school should be constructed of brick, not wood. This determination was a direct reaction to the Central School fire. The new Romanesque-style school was also named the South School and was comprised of students from the Weller Street School and the original South School. Subsequently, the original South School was renamed the Main Street School and was closed except for occasional use as a temporary location.

In summer 1896, Ellen Creelman began teaching kindergarten in space provided by the district in the Main Street School. A tireless proponent for public kindergartens, Creelman lobbied for public funding, which was granted the following year. This was the beginning of kindergartens in the Seattle School District. The kindergar-

Details:

Name: **South School**
Location: 517 Main Street
Building: 1-story, 2-room wood
Architect: Boone & Meeker
Site: 0.33 acres

1872: Opened
1889: Closed; renamed Main Street School
1896-1902: Site of kindergarten classes
1902: Addition (n.a.); Main Street School reopened as an elementary school
1902-09: Operated as annex to South School
1903: Renamed Mann on March 7; returned to Main Street on September 1
1921: Closed
1921-24: Site used by Seattle Parks Department
1922: Building demolished
1924: Property sold on June 25

Details:

Name: **South School**
Location: 12th Avenue S and Weller Street
Building: 2-story brick
Architect: William E. Boone
Site: 2.38 acres

1889: Opened
1909: Main building closed on February 23; demolished as part of Jackson regrade

ten operated in the Main Street building until 1902, when it moved into a new annex constructed on the same site. At the same time, the main building was enlarged to once again hold elementary classes.

By the 1906-07 school year, both South School and Main Street School were full. Older buildings were used on the Weller Street site and called the South Annex. A mere 20 years after it opened, the newer South School stood in the way of progress. During the Jackson Street Regrade project, earth from Jackson Street, including many blocks of Beacon Hill, was sluiced down to help fill the tide flats, creating sites for extensive industrial plants.

South School was torn down in the middle of the 1908-09 school year. For the remainder of the year, double class sessions were held in the South Annex and portables. The old buildings that served as the annex were sold in July 1909. Some of the students in grades 1-5 from the South School were assigned to the Main Street School. The majority of South students transferred to the new Colman School, opened in January 1910.

The Main Street School was home to 10 classrooms in 1920 when plans were drawn up for a new school building some distance away. On December 21, 1921, Principal Ada Mahon led a procession of her pupils and teachers up Jackson Street on a rainy day to the new building called Bailey Gatzert School. It was located on the same site as the second South School and named for a Seattle pioneer, businessman, councilman, and mayor.

Enrollment had increased so much by 1929, it was necessary to add a new wing that included a gymnasium and library.



Main Street School, 1921 MOHAI 83.10.2408.1

During the 1920s and 1930s, students who attended Gatzert were primarily from two neighborhoods: Chinatown and Niponmachi (Japan Town). Just before World War II, the Yesler Terrace Housing Project began contributing to the ethnic diversity of the school. The school lost about 45 percent of its student body when Japanese Americans were removed and incarcerated during World War II.

Miss Mahon served as principal of the new school until her retirement in 1945. Well-respected, she “was ‘Irish tough’ and proud, teaching her ‘children’ to have the same tenacity and pride about being Asian, Native American or [B]lack.” Parents honored her with a trip to Japan as a retirement gift.

Nine portable classrooms were added between 1945 and 1950. In the late 1940s, the mix of the student population included 10 percent Chinese American, 20 percent African American, 5 percent Filipino American, 27 percent Japanese American, 35 percent white, and 3 percent Native American. During the 1940s, reunions for graduates of the South School built in 1889 were held at Gatzert, which occupied the site of their old school.

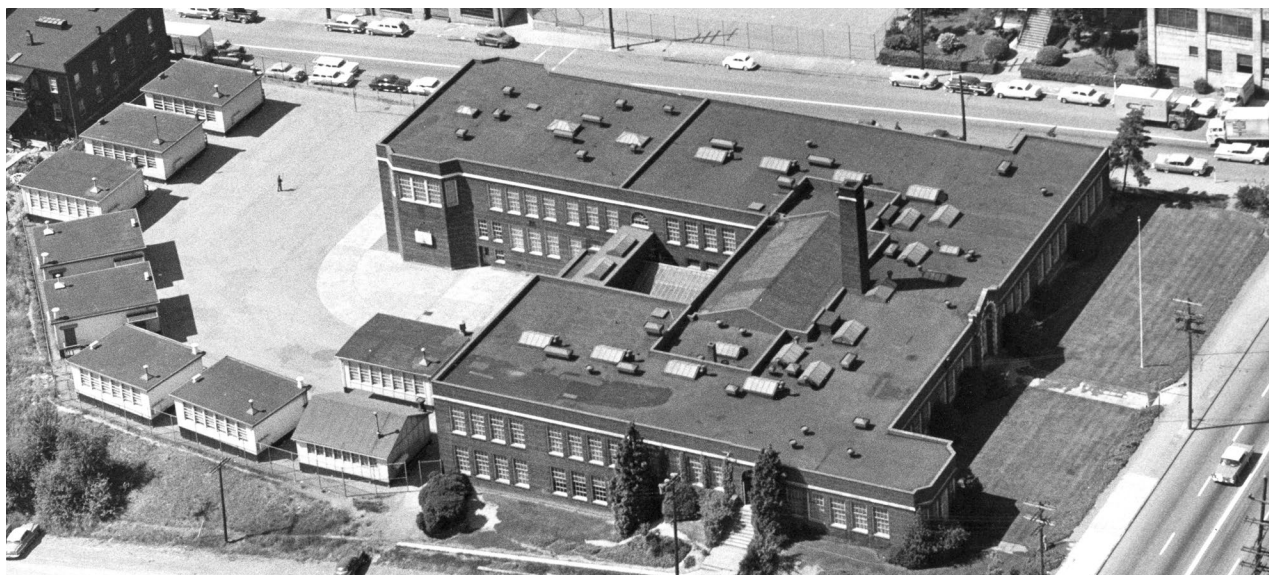
In 1947, all 900 Gatzert pupils learned about birds from a 73-year-old collection donated to the school by Rev. Herbert Frederick Burgess, former pastor of Fauntleroy Congregational Church, who began the collection while a student at Oberlin College. Burgess gave the collection to the nephew of a Gatzert kindergarten teacher. The nephew added to the 150 specimens he received. Due to a lack of display space, the stuffed birds “were mounted over the children’s steel lockers in a hallway.”

In 1945, Gatzert became the first school in the district to have an English as a Second Language program. In 1953, land across Weller Street was acquired for a playground. Tony Allasina served as principal from 1945 to 1973. He too was well respected by the Asian American community. Like his predecessor, he was given a trip to Japan as a retirement gift from school parents.

Details:

Name: **Main Street Annex**
 Location: 307 6th Avenue
 Building: Wood
 Architect: n.a.

1902: Opened as annex to South; occupied by Main Street Kindergarten
 1921: Closed in December
 1922: Used by Japanese Congregational Church
 1924: Property sold on June 25
 1950: Site of Golden Pheasant Café
 1977: Designated Seattle landmark
 Present: Site of Sixth Avenue Dentistry



Gatzert, 1960 SPSA 226-8

Details:

Name: **Bailey Gatzert School**

Location: 615 12th Avenue St

Building: Masonry and wood frame

Architect: Floyd A. Naramore

Site: 2.38 acres

1921: Opened in December

1929: Addition (n.a.)

1953: Site expanded to 3.47 acres

1982-84: Alternative School #1
co-located with Gatzert

1984: Closed in June; Students
relocated to Washington
as interim site; AS#1
relocated to Pinehurst

1987: Demolished

n.a.: Sold

Present: Site of Seattle Indian Center

Details:

Name: **Bailey Gatzert
Elementary School**

Location: 1301 E Yesler Way

Building: 20-room masonry veneered

Architect: Burr, Lawrence & Rising

Site: 6.7 acres

1988: Opened in September

2015: Classroom modified for
Early Learning Program and
upgrades to adjacent play area

In 1970, Gatzert remained a K-6 school under the Central Area Educational Plan, also known as the 4-4-4 plan, because of existing programs, even though other schools in the Central Area changed to a K-4 configuration (see Stevens).

Under the 1978 desegregation plan, Gatzert was linked with Day and Whittier and operated as a K-2 school. Gatzert was closed in 1984 when the district ruled the old building vulnerable to earthquake damage. Beginning in September 1984, Gatzert K-2 classes met in a wing of Washington Middle School. The Denise Louie Early Childhood Education Center, a private program that had operated at Gatzert since 1978, continued to use the old building until 1987, when the structure was demolished. Relocated from Maple, Alternative School #1 also was housed there for the 1982-84 school years, before it moved to Pinehurst.

The new Gatzert School, completed in 1988, stands on a different site. It took approximately \$4 million to displace and demolish six businesses, 40-50 residents, two churches, and a fraternal club on the six-acre site. To offset the cost, the old site was sold for approximately \$1.2 million and now is home to the Seattle Indian Center, a human services organization that includes the Sea' Sha Inn and Tillie's Safe House for short-term and emergency housing. Gatzert was one of three new schools in the district in over 15 years and boasted many advanced energy-efficient features for the time. Enrollment hit a peak in 1999 with 430 students, and Gatzert operated a running club in association with the Yesler Terrace Community Center and a Kids Cooking team program where students learned culinary skills from chefs.

Before the Seattle First Hill Streetcar opened in 2016, SPS worked with the Seattle Department of Transportation on the alignment of the Yesler section of the streetcar that borders the school on three sides. Safety of the students was the priority. It was anticipated that many students and parents would use the streetcar to get to the school, since the stop is located next to the school, on the east side.



Gatzert, 2000 ©Mary Randlett SPSA 226-18