

Genesee Hill

Name: Genesee Hill Elementary School	Enrollment: 594
Address: 5013 SW Dakota Street	Nickname: Red Foxes
Configuration: K-5	Colors: none



Genesee Hill, ca. 1949 SPSA 227-4

In 1928, the Seattle School District purchased a site for what was to be called Dover School, but instead became the Genesee Hill School in the Dover Addition of West Seattle. When the construction of the planned Dover School did not take place over the next 15 years, the district considered selling the property. This decision may have been reversed thanks to the actions of area parents, who as early as January 1945 expressed the need for a new school because of overcrowding at Jefferson, Lafayette, and Alki. Their complaints led to a meeting in November 1947 where the board agreed to construct a semi-permanent, expandable, and transportable building based on a design used in two other district schools (see Arbor Heights and Briarcliff). The school was slated to open with four rooms because future needs were not certain.

Work began in June 1948 and was delayed on a number of occasions by the scarcity of building materials. Each room was constructed separately and linked by walled concrete hallways. Two special features were the use of Roman bricks and large, corner windows.

Beginning in September 1948, the 165 students in grades K-3 assigned to the new Genesee Hill School, named after the street it fronted, attended half-day classes at Jefferson School. Genesee Hill was finally ready to open at the beginning of the second semester of the 1948-49 school year.

A survey taken in spring 1949 showed that at least two more classrooms would be needed the following year. The need for additional space became even more desperate when an earthquake damaged the Lafayette School in April 1949. A 10-room addition was completed at Genesee Hill just three days after opening day of the 1949-50 school year. Lafayette pupils in grades 1-4, along with their principal, came to Genesee Hill for one year. Property to the east along 50th Avenue SW was added for a playground. In September 1950, Genesee Hill was expanded to grades K-6 and had an enrollment of 479. A second addition in 1953-54 included administrative offices, a teachers' room, a lunchroom/auditorium and kitchen, and gymnasium.

Peak enrollment came in 1958-59 with 726 students. In September 1964, enrollment fell below 500 for the first time since 1950. In the early 1970s, several portables were used in addition to the main building, although a boundary revision had sent 150 children to the new Schmitz Park School. In 1971, a double portable was

Details:

Name: **Genesee Hill School**
Location: 5012 SW Genesee Street
Building: 4-room expandable wood frame and reinforced concrete
Architect: George W. Stoddard

- 1949: Opened January 31 as annex to Jefferson School; addition (G.W. Stoddard & Associates); site expanded to 6.47 acres; annex to Lafayette from September to June 1950
- 1950: Became independent school on September 6
- 1953-54: Addition (G.W. Stoddard & Associates)
- 1989: Closed June 20
- 1989-90: Temporary relocation site for Gatewood students
- 1994-96: Home of Alternative Elementary #4 (AE#4)
- 1996: AE#4 renamed Pathfinder Elementary
- 2009: Pathfinder program relocated to Cooper
- 2009-13: Community gardens and storage
- 2014: School closed and demolished



Genesee Hill, 1960 SPSA 227-2

added for use as a learning resource center. Five more portables were added in 1973 to house 60 students taking part in the school's new learning-language disability classes.

At some point before 1989, the students selected Dino as the nickname of the school mascot. A mural depicting different types of dinosaurs adorned the hallway wall.

In January 1988, the school board had to choose between Genesee Hill and Schmitz Park for closure. Genesee Hill was selected because of its small size, poor condition, and high cost of operation. That year enrollment stood at 223 students in grades K-3. The next year, with closure looming, enrollment dropped to 131 students. After it closed in June 1989, Genesee Hill's boundaries were subsumed by Schmitz Park. During the 1989-90 school year, Gatewood students were temporarily housed at Genesee Hill while their school was being renovated.

In September 1994, Alternative Elementary No. 4 moved to Genesee Hill from Boren as its enrollment was projected to increase from 70 to more than 200. At that time, a program called Huchoosedah was introduced within Alternative Elementary No. 4 and other schools across the district. Huchoosedah is the Lushootseed word for "passing on cultural knowledge." Native American students were recruited for the curriculum, and their numbers increased from 10 to 45.

Alternative Elementary No. 4 was renamed Pathfinder School in 1996 and became an alternative school with a Native American focus. The school practiced an expeditionary learning approach in which classes embarked on learning expeditions focused on an interdisciplinary theme or topic for six or more weeks. The 11 multigrade classes were organized into three halls: Earth, Wind, and Sky. Each class was a "clan" named for an animal. Thus a student could be in the Coyote Clan, rather than the 4th or 5th grade.

In April 2005, Seattle Public Schools unveiled a plan that called for the closure of 10 schools and the conversion or expansion of 14 others to address a growing budget gap and declining enrollment in the district. Pathfinder at Genesee Hill was one of the schools recommended for closure, though the plan called for the Pathfinder program to continue at another site. Two years later it was determined that Pathfinder K-8 would move to the Cooper Elementary School site (see Cooper). This plan



Genesee Hill, 2016 ©Joe Wolfe SPSA 227-505

Details:

Name: **Genesee Hill Elementary School**
 Location: 5013 SW Dakota Street
 Building: 91,000 square feet
 Architect: BLRB Architects

2016: New school opened (BEX IV); Genesee Hill became attendance area school for Schmitz Park students

was implemented in fall 2009. Meanwhile, the fate of the Genesee Hill building was undetermined until 2012, when the district proposed building a new replacement school on the site and moving Schmitz Park students into the building. This plan entailed the closure of Schmitz Park Elementary.

After Seattle voters approved the BEX IV levy in 2013, final plans were made to demolish Genesee Hill and replace it with a state-of-the-art building of approximately 91,000 square feet accommodating up to 650 students. The new school featured a three-story classroom wing composed of grade-level classrooms with shared learning spaces between the classrooms to serve large or small groups. Flexible space was included for art, science, music, special education, and childcare. The playfield was moved to the upper portion of the two-level property, and a south-facing courtyard provided outdoor classroom space and was designed to also serve as a sensory garden for students with special needs.

Before the Schmitz Park elementary program moved to the Genesee Hill site, the community participated in a school-naming process in spring 2015. More than 350 people responded to the survey, and in March 2016 the district announced that the school would be known as Genesee Hill Elementary School. When the 2015-16 school year ended, the Schmitz Park community packed up their school and moved to Genesee Hill, where a celebration was held on June 3, 2016. The new school, serving grades K-5, opened in fall 2016.



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