

# Graham Hill

Name: Graham Hill Elementary School	Enrollment: 298
Address: 5149 S Graham Street	Nickname: Whale School
Configuration: K-5	Colors: Blue



Graham Hill, 2000 ©Mary Randlett SPSA 220-32

## Details:

Name: **Brighton School**  
 Location: 51st Avenue S & Graham Street  
 Building: 1-room wood  
 Architect: James Stephen  
 Site: 0.9 acres

1901: Opened by Columbia School District  
 1905: Closed  
 1907: Annexed into Seattle School District  
 1907-08: Operated as Brighton Beach, annex to Brighton  
 ca. 1916-22: Operated as Brighton Annex  
 1943: Building sold and removed  
 1944-45: Leased to Seattle Parks Department  
 ca. 1949: 1901 building destroyed by fire  
 1957: Lease canceled and property returned; site expanded

The area where Graham Hill School is located was named after Walter Graham. Graham came from New York to Seattle in 1853 and at the age of 27 took up a claim along the shores of Lake Washington. His property included the uplands near Seward Park, which was called Graham's Peninsula. In 1856, Graham built a home on the hillside and planted an apple orchard. He married Eliza Mercer, daughter of Thomas Mercer. Walter's brother, David Graham, arrived in 1857 and became Seattle's fifth schoolteacher. He married his former pupil and Eliza's sister, Suzanna Mercer.

In 1865, Graham sold a portion of his land to Judge Everett Smith, who then donated one acre for a school. The first school near the top of Graham Hill was called Brighton School, opened in 1901. There was just a path up to the school from Rainier Avenue. The one-room schoolhouse held grades 1-3, while grades 4-5 were housed nearby in the Brighton Church. Brighton School was an attractive building with a columnar front porch and a well-lit classroom.

Brighton School was closed in 1905 when a new school with the same name on Holly Street opened (see King, Jr.). The older building later became known as Brighton Beach or "Little Brighton" in 1907-08 when it operated as an annex to the larger school. It also served to ease overcrowding during World War I. The old schoolhouse was removed

from the site in 1943 and the Seattle Parks Department acquired a 99-year lease for a playfield where the schoolhouse formerly stood.

As the population in the neighborhood grew, a school was needed at the site and the playfield lease was canceled. In September 1957, five portable buildings opened on the site for K-2 students. East Brighton, as it was called, operated once more as an annex to Brighton. In each successive year, another grade was added until the school became K-6 in fall 1961.

By June 1960, the school was large enough to have its own principal. The name Graham Hill School was chosen by the community to commemorate Walter Graham and his farm. Plans began for construction of a new building on the property adjacent to the portables, now no longer adequate for the increasing enrollment.

The new brick building was completed at the end of the 1960-61 school year. The new school contained a library, administration and health unit, auditorium/lunchroom, gymnasium, play court, and service facilities. Located on a hillside, the building offered breathtaking views of Mt. Rainier. The school featured two stories, each opening directly onto the grounds: the upper floor onto the street level and the lower floor onto the upper playground level.

Under the district's desegregation plan, Graham Hill (K, 1-3) was paired with Northgate (K, 4-6) from 1978-88. Thereafter Graham Hill became K-5.

In 1991, the first district-sponsored Montessori program for pre-schoolers and grades K-5 was opened at Graham Hill.

In 2004, a three-story addition was built to house community spaces and provide enough capacity to remove all onsite portables and a Winnebago. The motorhome shell had been used as a temporary office and program space. The resulting 17,500-square-foot addition includes a new library, computer room, childcare area, music room, four classrooms, offices, and support space. The existing building was modernized with new flooring, windows, and blinds, as well as modifications to the administration area. In 2005, after receiving a grant to improve the playground, Graham Hill added new play structures, landscaping, and an art installation.

## Details:

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Name: **East Brighton School**  
 Location: 51st Avenue S & Graham Street  
 Building: Portables  
 Site: 4.4 acres

1957: Opened in September as annex to Brighton

1960: Became independent school; renamed Graham Hill School on June 1

## Details:

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Name: **Graham Hill Elementary School**  
 Location: 5149 S Graham Street  
 Building: 14-room, 2-story brick  
 Architect: Theo Damm  
 Site: 4.5 acres

1961: Opened

2003: Seismic upgrades

2004: Addition and modernization (Kubota, Kato and Chin, Inc.; BEX II)