

Thurgood Marshall

Name: Thurgood Marshall Elementary School	Enrollment: 461
Address: 2401 S Irving Street	Nickname: Bullpups
Configuration: K-5	Colors: Purple and white



Colman, 1909 MOHAI 83.10.8539

The school that is now Thurgood Marshall originated at the turn of the century when immigrants coming to Seattle settled in the Rainier Valley. From 1891, an electric railway linked the Rainier Valley community to downtown. With the demolition of South School in the Jackson Street Regrade project in 1909, the Seattle School Board authorized purchase of a tract of land to the east at Atlantic Street and 24th Avenue S for a new school.

The new “fireproof” school followed the nine-room “model school” design of the time but was T-shaped with the addition of an eight-room wing at one end and nearly identical to John Adams School. Done in the Jacobean style, the new Rainier Valley school was named for James M. Colman, a Seattle engineer who helped develop the waterfront and completed the railroad that carried coal from Newcastle and Renton. Colman was a native of Scotland who came to Seattle in 1869.

Colman School opened to 519 pupils in grades 1-7 in its first year. By 1913-14, the school enrolled 626 students in K-8. The second principal, Anna B. Kane, served the school from 1912 until 1940, one of the longest terms of any principal in the district. Special classes for the handicapped were added in 1925. In 1934-35, enrollment dipped under 400. In September 1939, when it became a K-6 school, enrollment dropped again to 230.

In 1940, an addition was made to the Colman building, attaching an auditorium-gymnasium to the southeast corner. This allowed for the closing of Rainier School, whose 200 pupils came to Colman. Property to the east of

Details:

Name: **Colman School**
Location: 1515 24th Avenue S
Building: 17-room, 3-story brick
Architect: James Stephen
Site: 2.2 acres

1909: Named on April 17
1910: Opened on January 24
1918: Renamed J. M. Colman School on January 29
1940: Addition (Naramore & Brady)
1944-48: Site expanded to 6.2 acres
1979: Closed as elementary school in June
1979-85: Alternative school site
1985-93: Occupied by community activists
1993-2003: Vacant and for sale
2003: Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle purchased Colman building
2008: Northwest African American Museum opened

Colman was purchased in 1944, 1945, and 1948 to expand the play area, and the city vacated 24th Avenue S, allowing a direct connection between the school and its new play space.

During World War II, the Stadium Federal Housing Project was constructed in the Colman neighborhood. Five temporary classrooms were added in summer 1943 when the school's population rose to 550. In the late 1960s, the state highway department began purchasing homes in the immediate neighborhood of the school as a right-of-way for the new interstate highway, I-90. Houses to the north were demolished and the school became isolated from its surroundings. During this period, voluntary desegregation was launched, and Colman, with a predominantly African American student body, bused over 250 students to schools in the northern part of the city. From 1968 to 1973, a federal grant brought Teachers Corps interns to assist in the classrooms for half-days.

In 1978-79, Colman became part of a triad with Green Lake and Ravenna. Colman served the K-2 students and emphasized the DISTAR method of teaching in a successful effort to improve academic test scores. DISTAR stands for "Direct Instruction Strategies for Teaching Arithmetic and Reading." The program, which has been available at other schools in the district, is designed to provide students with a firm foundation in basic academic skills, such as reading, mathematics, and language.

Because of impending highway construction, the future of Colman became increasingly uncertain. Colman closed as an elementary school



Colman, ca. 1960 SPSA 212-43

in June 1979. Under the terms of a 1972 agreement, the state highway commission was to provide the Seattle School District with land and funding for a new school at a new location, but a new school was not constructed immediately.

From 1979-1985, Summit K-12 alternative school program was relocated to the Colman building from Horace Mann School. In 1984-85, Summit K-12 had 387 students (205 in elementary level, 82 in middle school, and 100 in high school). Highway construction eventually led to Summit's move to Jane Addams in September 1985.

In late November 1985, African American community activists Earl Debnam, Michael Greenwood, Charlie James, and Omari Tahir Garrett occupied the closed and vacant Colman building with visions of turning it into the African American Heritage Museum and Cultural Center. The occupation lasted eight years.

In 1993, a not-for-profit organization called the African American Heritage Museum and Cultural Center was formed. Mayor Norm Rice's office established a Board of Directors. In 2003, with leadership from the Center's Board of Directors, the Urban League of Seattle purchased the property from Seattle Public Schools to shepherd the project. Three years later, the museum formed its own nonprofit organization and gained independence from the Urban League, though it rents the space in the building from the Urban League. Following the

Details:

Name: **J. M. Colman
Elementary School**
Location: 2401 S Irving Street
Building: Steel frame with brick
vener exterior
Architect: Mahlum & Nordfors
Site: 7.4 acres

1990: Colman program opened;
Students relocated to
Seward as interim site
1991: School opened in September;
African American Academy
program co-located at school
1992: African American Academy
program relocated to Sharples;
Colman program remained
1996: Renamed Thurgood
Marshall Elementary
2007: APP program located
at Marshall
2014: Seismic improvements



Colman, ca. 1940 SPSA 212-45



Thurgood Marshall, 2000 ©Mary Randlett SPSA 212-50

appointment of Dr. Carver Gayton as inaugural Executive Director and Barbara Earl Thomas as Deputy Director, the museum opened in 2008. The museum is on the ground floor and 36 affordable apartments were built on the second and third stories, all designed by local Black-owned architecture firm Donald King Architects (DKA).

Meanwhile, when Colman School closed, the district initially transferred the Colman students to other area schools. In 1989, the Colman program reopened as a neighborhood school and assigned students were relocated to Seward as an interim location while they awaited the opening of a new Colman school building.

A formal agreement with the state for funding a new school came in 1987, allowing the district to proceed with the design and planning process. Construction began in September 1990 on a two-story building with a detached single-story childcare facility. The site is situated adjacent to the lid that covers the I-90 tunnel, occupying a narrow strip of property along the residential neighborhood.

The new Colman school, opened in 1991, contains 16 regular classrooms, two kindergartens, two resource rooms, one art/science room, and five classrooms for special education students. The first year, African American Academy was co-located at Colman, before it was relocated to Sharples in 1992 (see Kurose). The playground has both a paved area and an adjacent grass field located on top of the I-90 lid.

In 1996, the school was renamed Thurgood Marshall Elementary in honor of the nation's first African American Supreme Court justice, who fought successfully for desegregation of public schools. Several awards have been bestowed on the new school, including Redbook magazine's "Overall Excellence" and the National Alliance of Black School Educators recognition for commitment to quality education.

In 2007, the south-end location for the Accelerated Progress Program for elementary schools was collocated at Thurgood Marshall with the general education elementary school program.

In 2021, Thurgood Marshall became the first group to join a pilot study for an Advanced Learning New Service Delivery through a Schoolwide Enrichment model. Enrichment clusters were implemented to provide experiences for students to pursue their interests and give them opportunities to develop their talents. Enrichment clusters were designed for authentic learning which included applying relevant knowledge, thinking skills, and interpersonal skills to the creation of a product or service. Reinforcing educational and racial equity, this model ensures that all students have access to the same thing.