

Montlake

Name: Montlake Elementary School	Enrollment: 233
Address: 2409 22nd Avenue E	Nickname:
Configuration: K-5	Colors:



Portage, ca. 1915 SPSA 255-87

Details:

Name: **Portage School**
 Location: 22nd Avenue N & E
 McGraw Street
 Building: Portable
 Site: 1.65 acres

1914: Opened
 1923: Renamed Montlake School
 on September 21
 1923-24: Operated as annex to Stevens
 1924: Closed

The original Montlake neighborhood, a small strip of land between Lake Union and Lake Washington, was known as Portage because Duwamish Indians carried their canoes over it to get from one lake to the other. In 1883, Chinese workers contracted by David Denny and other businessmen dug a canal at Portage to float logs from Lake Washington to the mills on Lake Union.

In Seattle's early days, the region between the two lakes was known as Interlaken. It was covered with large stands of timber, and houses were clustered in small groups along Portage on Shelby Street, McGraw Street, Boyer Avenue, and to the east of 24th Avenue. Children from the area had to hike up the north side of Capitol Hill, through brush and woods, to attend Stevens School, which opened in September 1906.

During the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition in 1909, a small dock was erected at Madison Park so visitors could take steamers to the exposition grounds on the University of Washington campus. The creation of a streetcar line and further growth in the Interlaken area soon followed.

Interlaken parents appealed to the board for a new school based on safety concerns. A site was purchased in 1914, and a portable school was set up. Portage School started out with 25 pupils in grades 1-3. As the area grew, the number of portables at the school increased.

The name was changed to Montlake School, selected because of the view of the Olympic and Cascade mountains on either side and the proximity to the two lakes. In 1923-24, 135 students attended in grades 1-7. A

permanent building, built on the same site and opened in 1924, was constructed so that additional units could be added on the north (with an auditorium) and south ends.

In 1935-36, enrollment reached 487 students. Kindergarten was added the following year. In early 1937, Montlake parents petitioned the school board for an addition to the building, pointing out that 35 percent of the 470 pupils were forced to attend classes in 10-year-old portables with inadequate lighting and heating. The addition was never built.

In September 1941, Montlake became a K-6 school. 7th and 8th graders were transferred to an intermediate center at Meany, reducing the Montlake student body to 278. Enrollment climbed again to 439 in 1956-57. Hot lunches, available in the late 1960s, were prepared at Roosevelt High School and brought to Montlake, where they were reheated and served.

In September 1970, the school went to a K-4 configuration with an ungraded curriculum. At the same time, the student body increased when Madrona became half of the Meany-Madrona Middle School, housing 5th and 6th graders only. At this time, Montlake parents, community members, and students painted the interior of their school building in bright colors with graphic designs. By 1978, Montlake changed to a K-5 configuration.

In 1983-84, Montlake had the highest proportion of African American students at any elementary school in the district, comprising 45 percent of the 230 students. About 70 percent of the student body was bused into the predominantly white, middle-income neighborhood. That year was La Vaun Bent's first as principal, and she began to make an impact by placing all certificated staff in classrooms each morning to focus on reading. This reduced the size of the student groups from 30 to 20, allowing for more individualized attention. She eliminated special programs for at-risk children and special education children, instead grouping children by ability. As a result, test results went up significantly and there were fewer disciplinary problems.

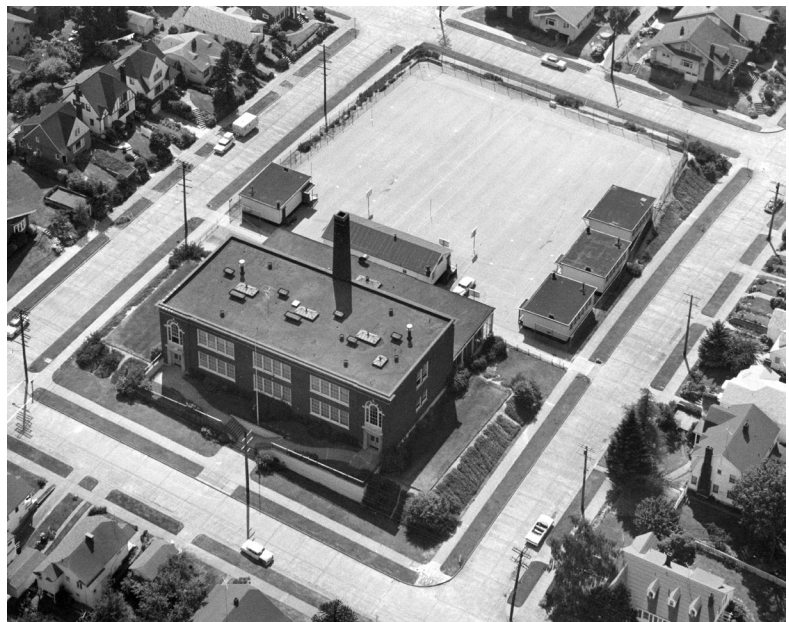
This innovative approach, which reduced class size and provided a challenging and enriching program for all children, is now referred to as the Montlake Model. All students were grouped in multi-age classrooms with team teachers. For its leadership in educational reform, Montlake was awarded the Schools for the 21st Century project.

During the 1991-92 school year, the Safeco Corporation made a gift of \$10,000 to Montlake students, requesting

Details:

Name: **Montlake School**
 Location: 2409 22nd Avenue E
 Building: 9-room brick
 Architect: Floyd A. Naramore
 Site: 1.65 acres

1924: Opened
 2006: Exterior renovations
 2011: Library upgrades and portables added
 2013: Designated landmark status
 2020: New playground equipment, rubber safety tiles, perimeter tiles installed (Weisman Design Group)
 2023: School closed for construction; Students relocated to John Marshall as interim location
 [2025]: Modernization and addition (DLR Group; BEX V)



Montlake, 1960 SPSA 255-98

that half be used for school equipment or programs and half donated to worthy causes. The students studied a number of charities and then voted for their favorites. The selected organizations were the Progressive Animal Welfare Society, The Nature Conservancy, Seattle Food Committee, and Childhaven. A greenhouse and garden constructed with the assistance of parent volunteers was part of a comprehensive environmental studies program.

For the past century, nearly all the school's original architectural elements have remained intact except for the removal of the original cast-stone cornices from the east and west sides as part of a 1979 seismic improvement project. With only 1.8 acres, the school occupies one of the smallest parcels in the district, and its steep slope along its northwest edge offers additional challenges. This small lot size, coupled with low enrollment and the age of the building, put the school on the short list for closure in 2006. After months of research and discussion about its outstanding academic record, Montlake was removed from the list.

In 2011, the school library was upgraded with new shelving, video projector, and check-out desk. Two years later, the building designed by Floyd A. Naramore was awarded landmark status by the City of Seattle. The original wood entry doors, built-in wardrobes and storage areas, chalkboards, wood trim, and wood floors were designated features of the school.

Montlake was scheduled for extensive renovation and an addition of approximately 65,000 square feet of space that started in summer 2023. The enhancements are to provide space for up to 500 students in grades K-5. Part of the upgrades will include a seismic retrofit to the unreinforced masonry walls and replacement of existing mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems. The new school will be ready for students in the fall of 2025. During construction, students relocated to John Marshall.



Montlake, 1971 SPSA 255-2