

Muir

Name: John Muir Elementary School	Enrollment: 359
Address: 3301 S Horton Street	Nickname: Lions
Configuration: K-5	Colors: Blue and gold



Muir, 2000 ©Mary Randlett SPSA 256-20

The small suburban community of York in Seattle's Rainier Valley was founded by settlers from England. Wetmore School in York was named for Birdsey Wetmore, an early settler in the area. Although the school is said to have opened in 1903, the board minutes from Columbia School District No. 18 show that an architect was asked that year to issue a request for proposals to construct a basement "under the School at York," so the school likely opened later than 1903. From 1907 to 1910, it housed grades 1-5.

A new school opened in 1910 and was named York School after the neighborhood. In September 1915, residents petitioned the Seattle School Board to rename the school John L. Wilson, but the board delayed making any change. In 1921, Principal Jessie Lockwood was asked to select a new name for the school. She chose to honor Scottish-born naturalist John Muir, who founded the Sierra Club in 1892 and was instrumental in establishing Yosemite National Park and the National Park Service. Part of her motivation for selecting Muir was the hope that students would develop a love of nature and a desire to conserve natural beauty.

By the 1920s, Muir, like many grammar schools in the district, was severely overcrowded, and nine portables were in use. In January

Details:

Name:	Wetmore School
Location:	33rd Avenue S and Horton Street
Building:	Two-room frame
Architect:	n.a.
Site:	n.a.

ca. 1903:	Opened by Columbia School District
1907:	Annexed into Seattle School District
1910:	Closed
1911-59:	Used as gymnasium for York School
by 1959:	Called York School; used for manual training
1973-89:	Used as gymnasium
1989:	Demolished



Muir, ca. 1924 SPSA 256-2

Details:

Name: **York School**
 Location: 3301 S Horton Street
 Building: 9-room brick
 Architect: Edgar Blair
 Site: 1.5 acres

1910: Named York School; opened as annex to Columbia
 1921: Renamed John Muir School on February 4
 1924: Site expanded to 2.7 acres; addition (Floyd A. Naramore)
 1936: Site expanded to 3.3 acres
 1971: Addition opened in November (Bridges/Burke)
 1989: 1910 structure demolished; 1924 addition demolished
 1991: Addition (Streeter/Dermanis & Associates)
 2015: Seismic upgrades
 2019: Geothermal wells

1922, Lockwood volunteered to inaugurate the first school safety patrol in Washington. The City of Seattle approved the plan and placed young policeman Capt. George Kimball in charge (see Kimball).

The addition of a north wing in 1924 provided nine new classrooms and an auditorium-lunchroom as well as two play courts. Under Lockwood (1910-1936) and her successor, Kenneth Selby (1936-40), numerous trees and shrubs were planted on the school grounds, including a number of redwoods. In June 1935, the John Muir School tract was dedicated in the Mather Memorial Parkway in Snoqualmie National Forest, en route to Chinook Pass. A brief district account of the naming of elementary schools published around 1939 claims, "Probably no group in the city holds the name of their school in higher esteem than do all connected with John Muir; the name, life and character of John Muir being honored and beloved, and a constant inspiration to pupils."

By 1969, there were 14 portables on the Muir playground. To reduce overcrowding, an annex for 5th and 6th graders was created in 1970 by moving the portables to a site at 1730 South Bradner Place. The Muir Annex operated for at least 10 years and then became Mt. Baker Central Youth Services.

Moving the portables created room for an addition at the south end of the building. The new wing included two open-configuration

teaching stations and a library.

In the early 1970s, the Urban Suburban Environmental Education program was developed with the Bellevue School District to carry on the tradition of naturalist John Muir and to capitalize on the rich cultural mixture of Muir Elementary's student body. Students in 5th and 6th grades participated in an outdoor-education program that culminated in a year-end four-day field trip to the Cispus Environmental Center near White Pass.

In 1980-81, the Zone 1 alternative program was located at Muir. Pupils in grades 1-3 learned and practiced basic skills (reading, writing, and mathematics) by producing films and publishing a monthly newspaper.

The original 1910 building and the 1924 addition were demolished in 1989 to make room for a new wing designed by Streefer/Dermanis and Associates, one of Seattle's leading African American architectural firms. The new building opened in 1991; during construction (1990-91), students were bused to Magnolia School. A new gymnasium was also built to replace the 1903 building.

The stained glass from the old entry, a 1938 memorial dedicated to Principal Lockwood, was incorporated into the west stair area of the new building. The 1924 terra cotta arched entry with the building's nameplate was preserved and set in a landscaped area in front of the new building on Horton Street. While preparing for the school's renovation, staff members found a Haida Indian canoe on a shelf in the library. A volunteer investigated the artifact and discovered it was a rare example of the work of master carver Charles Edenshaw. It was installed in the Seattle Art Museum's Native American galleries as part of a long-term loan agreement.

Muir Elementary underwent several building improvements during the first two decades of the 2000s. In 2003, the school's infrastructure around voice and data communications was enhanced, and an upgrade to fiber optics was completed in 2009. New play equipment, rain gardens, planting beds, and fence were installed in 2014. The following year, a new pre-K learning center, earthquake safety improvements, and a new roof were constructed.

In 2016, the first of two HVAC updates was undertaken. At that time, the building's 35 heat pumps were replaced with high-efficiency water-source units, the PVC condenser water piping was replaced with steel, the automatic temperature control system was updated, and occupancy sensors to reduce energy use were installed. The second half of the heating and cooling project kicked off in 2019 when geothermal wells were installed under the north parking lot and under the district's portion of the playground to the south, part of which is owned by Seattle Parks and Recreation.

In 2023, the design phase for a project was begun to construct a three-classroom preschool addition and to reconfigure an open space on the third floor to accommodate three more classrooms. A state grant supported one-third of this construction cost, and the remainder was funded by BTA V.



Muir, 1960 SPSA 256-18