

# Oak Lake



Oak Lake, 1893 SPSA 260-16

## Details:

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Name: **Oak Lake School**  
Location: (Aurora Avenue) at 100th Street  
Building: 1-room wood  
Architect: n.a  
Site: n.a

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1886: Opened in September by Oak Lake School District  
1894: Addition (n.a.)  
1902: Became annex to new building  
1916: Used for Mothers Club meetings  
1918: Building sold

The history of Oak Lake School dates to the 1885 formation of Oak Lake School District No. 51. David T. Denny donated an acre of thickly wooded land north of Seattle, and a one-room school was built on the western edge of the site with volunteer labor. The school served the entire district that encompassed the large area between the Snohomish County line to the north, Lake Washington to the east, 85th Street to the south, and Puget Sound to the west.

The original one-room schoolhouse, only 12 feet by 16 feet, opened in September 1886 with 10 pupils. The school was named for a small nearby lake, located just south of Washelli Cemetery, near N 107th and Midvale N, where a grove of large oak trees grew. In 1894, a wing was added to the west side of the school to accommodate an increasing number of children.

Boys delighted in throwing rocks into the well that provided the school's water. After a few years the well caved in and children, taking turns in pairs, had to fetch water from the Rose Farm, a quarter mile to the north. Many trees surrounded the school, and older boys were paid to cut firewood for the school's wood stove.

The only road in the area was an east-west route for wagons, near N 100th. Children walked to school through the woods and across fence lines. Older boys carried shotguns to protect younger students from cougars. To reduce



"Oak Lake, ca. 1914 SPSA 260-21 1886 building (front center), 1902 building (right), 1914 building (top), portable (left)"

## Details:

Name: **Oak Lake School**  
 Location: (Aurora Avenue) at 100th Street  
 Building: 4-room wood  
 Architect: n.a.

1902: Opened by Oak Lake School District  
 1909: Addition (n.a.)  
 1914: Demolished

the dangers of traveling to and from school, in 1903 East School was erected at 5th NE and (N)E 95th Street to serve children in grades 1-4 living east of Meridian (see Olympic View).

Access to Oak Lake School improved in 1901 when the R. F. Morrow Road opened. This north-south route later became Aurora Avenue. Then, in 1902, the original school was moved to the north for use as an annex for a new main building.

As enrollment continued to climb, portables were added in 1909 and 1911. By 1911, the population in the area had grown considerably, and two roads and an interurban railway track cut across the school's attendance area. Horses were saddled up behind the boiler room for the ride home in the afternoon. In order to reduce risks crossing roads and rail lines, a one-room school was built at 105th and Greenwood for the 1st and 2nd grades (see Viewlands).

A new Oak Lake School opened in 1914 on the same site as the two earlier buildings. The grand new building was modeled after the University Building in downtown Seattle, complete with four columns. At the building's dedication, 200 students wrote their names and placed the list along with other documents and a newspaper of the day into the cornerstone. Each child then marched past the cornerstone and dropped in a penny. The 1902 building was destroyed, and the original one-room schoolhouse was subsequently used for Mothers Club meetings. The Mothers Club attempted to save it as a landmark, but the Oak Lake School Board sold the building in 1918.

In 1927, an addition of six classrooms for primary grades, an office, and an auditorium were constructed. The addition was called the North Building, and the older wing became the South Building. The portables were sold or moved to Broadview. As enrollment continued to grow, further additions were made in 1935 and 1940.

In 1938, Oak Lake housed 538 students from kindergarten through 8th grade, 19 teachers, and a building with 24 rooms. In addition to basic education, instruction was offered in manual training, domestic science, art, music, drama, and band. A physical education department was launched in 1941. In 1943, the 7th and 8th graders left to attend junior high school.

In 1944, Shoreline School District No. 412 was formed from Oak Lake and several other districts. Oak Lake School became part of the Seattle School District in 1954 when the surrounding area was annexed into the city of Seattle. During the years 1959-70, when Howard Wagner was principal, an innovative Outdoor Education Experience for 6th graders was established. The students spent three days at Cornet Bay in Deception Pass State Park. This program was then adopted at Olympic Hills in 1972-73.

In 1967, the Oak Lake area's population was highly mobile, and as much as one-third of Oak Lake's student body turned over in one school year. The school shifted from a K-6 to a K-5 configuration in September 1971 when middle schools were established in the area.

## Details:

Name: **Oak Lake School**  
Location: 10040 Aurora Avenue N  
Building: 14-room, 2-story wood frame with brick veneer  
Architect: V. W. Voorhees  
Site: 7.74 acres

1914: Opened by Oak Lake School District  
1927: Addition constructed, called North Building (n.a.)  
1935: Addition (n.a.)  
1940: Addition (n.a.)  
1944: Formed part of new Shoreline School District  
1954: Annexed into Seattle School District on July 1  
1982: Closed in June  
1985: Site leased; building demolished  
Present: Site of Oak Tree Village



Oak Lake, 1955 SPSA 260-3

As part of the Seattle School District's desegregation plan, Oak Lake became K-3 in 1978. Grades 4-6 were bused to Columbia School. In 1981-82, enrollment was only 271. On rainy days, the building leaked in so many places that it took 14 buckets to catch the drips.

When Oak Lake closed in June 1982 due to declining enrollment and a deteriorating structure, it was four years short of its centennial. Students, staff, and alumni requested permission to open the cornerstone at the closing ceremony. The crumbling newspaper from 1914 and signature pages were removed and placed in the school district archives (see Accession A1982-05). The pennies had mysteriously disappeared.

The following year Oak Lake students living west of Aurora were transferred to Viewlands. Those living to the south and east went to Olympic View, and a small number to the north went to Northgate. Many of the approximately 100 children who went to Viewlands had to take a bus for the first time.

A few years after closing, the site was leased for 50 years with five 10-year extensions. On June 26, 1985, the buildings were demolished, and the site was developed into Oak Tree Village, a shopping center.



Oak Lake, 1958 SPSA 260-14