

Rainier



Jackson Street, ca. 1885 SPSA 088-3

The Jackson Street School was built by a realty firm (Eshelman, Lewellyn & Company) to stimulate growth in the Rainier Heights neighborhood. The one-room schoolhouse was located on Market Street (today's 23rd Avenue) near Jackson and King streets. The firm leased it to the Seattle School District. It was named the Jackson Street School because it was in the Jackson Street Addition, not because it was on Jackson Street. Owing to its location on Market Street, it was often referred to as the Market Street School. The school opened in 1885 with 20 students, but its enrollment grew to 192 by 1889.

In order to hold all the students, a number of annexes were established in other leased buildings. From 1885 to 1890, the school district also paid rent to Dr. DeVoe and D. S. Kelly for use of their buildings. A house owned by W. B. Burgess on the east side of Market, between Jackson and King, was rented. By September 1888, the district also employed a room over Morford's Store.

The Seattle School Board was confronted in 1889 with the need for more buildings throughout the district and called an election to approve \$150,000 for new construction. The levy passed and a permanent building for

Rainier Heights was initiated. In January 1891, a new Market Street School opened across the street, to the south of the old school, with 422 pupils in grades 1-8. Shortly before opening, it was renamed the Rainier School. The wood frame building, considered magnificent in its day, had a tall cupola, attractive arched windows, and a wide porch with four pillars. It contained eight classrooms and had a full basement with a sandstone foundation.

In the same month the new school opened, an annex opened with one class for each of grades 1-4. This annex, known as Olympic School, was needed until 1908. Even with the annex, more classrooms soon were needed. Just three months after the new Rainier opened, the school board decided to build a four-room addition to the building.

One tragic incident in the history of Rainier School stands out. During a school event on the night of June 22, 1894, the flimsy costumes worn by some children suddenly caught fire when a lamp was overturned. A young teacher, Amanda Hildebrant, grabbed the flaming lamp and carried it outdoors. She was fatally burned but no one else was hurt.

In 1900, the original porch was removed, and an addition was built on the north side of the school. Enrollment soared to a high of 1,086 in 1902-03, making Rainier the largest grade school in the city. A kindergarten was added in 1914.

By the early 1920s, Rainier School was an old, outdated structure. Another addition was made in 1930, yielding a 20-classroom building. However, the 1930 addition did not make up for its limitations. There were still no manual training or home economics facilities. Students alternated between Colman and Washington in the afternoons for those lessons. Rainier became a K-6 school in 1938 when 7th and 8th graders transferred to Washington School.

At that time, news that Rainier would close was met by a protest from over 900 parents who spoke out against longer walks and dangerous street crossings should their children be sent to other schools. The school district maintained that Rainier could not be effectively maintained as an elementary school because of a district-wide drop in enrollment. When Rainier School closed in 1940, students were transferred to Colman, Leschi, and Mann.

As part of the effort to train workers for World War II production, the district operated an aircraft assembly program at Rainier in 1942. Classes in sheet metal and subassembly work were held in three shifts almost around the clock. Graduates went on to jobs at Boeing. In 1943, the school became the Building Trades unit of Edison Technical School. It was closed in 1957, because it had become a fire hazard, and was demolished to make room for a new building with six woodworking shops.

Around this time, the school board had adopted the name Samuel Gompers High School for a new high school in southeast Seattle (see Rainier Beach). Gompers was a noted pioneer in the labor union movement. Negative public reaction was followed by a letter from the Seattle Central Labor Council asking that the name

Details:

Name: **Jackson Street School**
 Location: 23rd Avenue S & King Street
 Building: 8-room wood
 Architect: Saunders & Houghton
 Site: n.a.

1891: Opened in January; renamed Rainier
 1892: 4-room addition
 1900: Addition (John Parkinson)
 1903: Renamed Lincoln on March 7; name returned to Rainier on September 1
 1911: Site expanded to 2.07 acres
 1930: Addition (n.a.)
 1940: Closed as elementary school in June
 1943: Reopened as unit of Edison Technical School
 1957: Closed; demolished
 1959: New building; Renamed Branch of Edison Technical School
 1966: Became Gompers Branch of Seattle Community College
 1967: Transferred from district to State of Washington
 Present: Site of Seattle Central College Wood Technology Center



Rainier, ca. 1900 SPSA 088-2

Gompers be given to a new trades school instead. Thus, the new facility at the Rainier School site was called the Gompers Branch of Edison Technical School. Five portables were installed on the Gompers grounds by 1959. Gompers subsequently became part of Seattle Central Community College in 1966. In 2012, the facility and adjoining modular structures were demolished and a new 70,000-square-foot building opened as the Seattle Central Wood Technology Center, serving as a satellite campus with programs in carpentry, boatbuilding, cabinetmaking, and laminates.