

Roosevelt

Name: Roosevelt High School	Enrollment: 1,709
Address: 1410 NE 66th Street	Nickname: Rough Riders
Configuration: 9-12	Colors: Green and gold
Newspaper: <i>Roosevelt News</i>	Annual: <i>Strenuous Life</i>



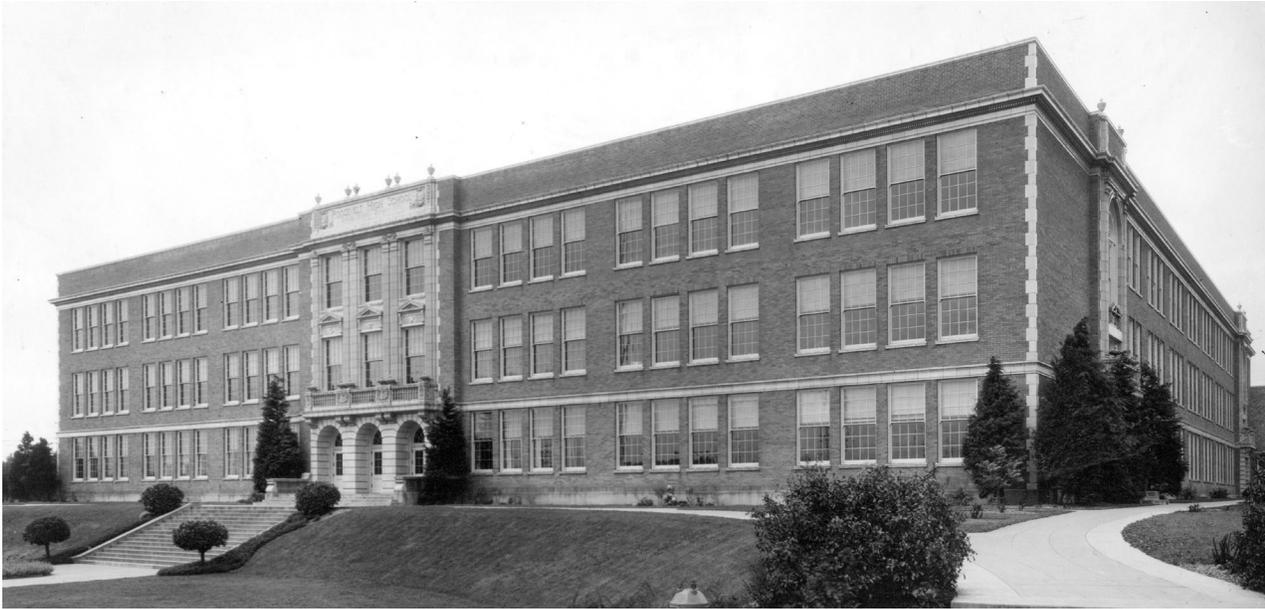
Roosevelt, 2013 SPSA 017-137

In 1917, Lincoln High School was ten years old and already overcrowded, as the northeast section of the city was continuing to grow. That year, the Seattle School District purchased property a little more than a mile north of the University of Washington for a new high school. During the planning stages, it was referred to as Northeast High School, but in 1920 the board voted to name the school after President Theodore Roosevelt.

When plans for the new school were unveiled, the public called them “extravagant” and questioned whether Seattle needed a school at the outer limits of the district. In particular, critics objected to the cost of the 1,500-seat auditorium and stage, at the time one of the largest on the West Coast, and the dual gymnasiums for boys and girls. The district defended its plans by pointing to the city’s steadily increasing high school enrollment, the benefits of the modern auditorium to the whole community, and state requirements for physical education. World War I delayed the launch of construction until 1921.

In September 1922, Roosevelt High School, dubbed the “million-dollar school,” opened to nearly 1,300 students and 47 teachers, led by Principal V. K. Froula. A dedication ceremony took place on October 27, Theodore Roosevelt’s birthday. The school is designed in the Twentieth Century Georgian style and the first of three high schools designed by Floyd Naramore (see Cleveland and Garfield). Roosevelt is the most simply styled building of the three and resembles Hamilton, which was built in the same period.

The school honored its namesake by adopting the nickname Rough Riders in reference to the volunteer cavalry led by Roosevelt during the Spanish-American War in 1898. Black walnut trees from Roosevelt’s Oyster



Roosevelt, ca. 1940 SPSA 017-5

Bay Estate in New York were planted on the front lawn. A mosaic seal donated by the Class of 1932 displays the school's motto, "What I am to be I am now becoming." Above the front entrance are two stone owls symbolizing knowledge and wisdom.

Many student activities got their start during the first decade, including opera, play revues, concerts, and the award-winning newspaper, *The News*. The annual, named *Strenuous Life* in reference to the hardships faced by Roosevelt during his lifetime, launched publication in 1923.

The Associated Students of Roosevelt began under the direction of Froula and consisted of a student government with broad legislative, executive, and judicial powers. During the early years of the athletic program, the Teddies distinguished themselves by winning the University of Washington's "All Sports Trophy" several times.

By 1927, enrollment had reached nearly 2,000 in a building designed for 1,450 students. A new north wing, designed to accommodate 450 more students, opened in September 1928 with 13 rooms, including specialized laboratories and classrooms. Enrollment continued to grow, and by 1938 Roosevelt had 2,500 students. That year saw the death of popular principal Froula, and in his memory a pipe organ was purchased and installed in the auditorium.

In 1939, the goal of the new principal, H. N. Gridley, was to provide students with optimal preparation for the career or college education that they would pursue after graduation. Dan Evans, who was State House Minority Leader, a three-term Washington State Governor, and served as a U.S. Senator from 1983-89, was in Roosevelt's class of 1943. His unsuccessful bid for junior class president was the only race he lost in a lifetime of politics.

In 1951, Reed Fulton succeeded Gridley as principal and instituted a three-year study, which showed Roosevelt students performing well above national academic averages, many ranked in the 95th percentile. The challenge presented by the Soviet Union's 1957 launching of Sputnik stimulated the expansion of honors classes in all subjects.

In 1957, with enrollment at 2,700 students, seven portables were added to the grounds. A new gymnasium (Building B) opened in 1960 to the west of the main building. It was designed in the New Formalism style and had little relationship to the original structure. Further remodeling in the mid-1960s facilitated such innovations as team teaching, independent study, and flexible scheduling. At this time, the school received a new library, music rooms, and home economics laboratories. An annex (Building C) was constructed in 1965 where the portables had been and housed a cafeteria, as well as classrooms for industrial arts and art. This building is stylistically related to the gymnasium (Building B).

In September 1971 Roosevelt became a four-year high school. Because enrollment exceeded building capacity, 9th graders were housed at John Marshall Junior High, six blocks to the west. This building was then known as Roosevelt M (for Marshall) and continued to operate as a 9th grade center through June 1975. In September 1975, all classes were held in the main Roosevelt buildings once more, except two special education classes, which remained at Marshall.

Highlights of the 1970s included regional awards for debate teams and two musical groups, the Swing Choir and the Chamber Orchestra.

Like Garfield High School, Roosevelt is also renowned for its music programs with alumni who went on to international music fame. In 1992, Roosevelt graduate Anthony Ray (Class of 1981), better known as Sir Mix-a-Lot, became the first Washington artist since 1959 to top the *Billboard* Hot 100 for “Baby Got Back.” Pearl Jam lead guitarist Mike McCready is a 1984 grad who played cover songs with his first band, Shadow, during free periods at Roosevelt. Guns N’ Roses bassist Duff McKagan, part of the class of 1982, dropped out of Roosevelt as a sophomore, but after earning his GED returned for an honorary degree in 2012 and spoke at the Roosevelt commencement.

In 1983, Waldo King (the “Swing King”) retired after 14 years in the music department. Through his efforts, jazz became an accepted part of Seattle public school curriculum. The orchestra won the sweepstakes at the 1987 Northwest Orchestra Festival. The band has made the finals of the Essentially Ellington jazz festival competition 21 times since 1999 and has won the competition four times. Music continues to bring acclaim to Roosevelt. In 2017, the jazz band won first place at the Reno Jazz Festival, while combos took third and fourth place.

Academic acclaim has also come Roosevelt’s way. A 1985 newspaper article reported that of the 65 Roosevelt students taking the National Latin Examination, two-thirds received awards for superior scores.

Roosevelt’s theatre program is one of the most comprehensive high school programs on the West Coast. The students who participate in the program receive outstanding training in acting, directing, dance, and technical theatre while partnering with prestigious guest teachers and local theatres such as Seattle Children’s and “Book It” Theatre. Each year drama students produce an elaborate Broadway-style musical as well as a Drama Fest and winter production. In 1996, the theatre program was voted one of the 10 best in the nation. More recently, Roosevelt Theatre has taken home several awards from the Washington State Thespian Festival, including “Best of Fest” awards for *Everybody* and *Passage* in 2021 and *Spring Awakening* in 2018, and was awarded Double Superiors at the State Festival for *The Wolves* in 2019, *Our Town* in 2018, and *Games Afoot* in 2016.

In sports, Roosevelt’s boys’ teams have won five state championships: soccer in 2017 and basketball in 1946, 1973, and 1982. The latter two teams were coached by Ben Snowden, who started in 1967 and retired from coaching basketball in 1995 with a 337-265 career record. He also taught physical education and coached boys’ and girls’ cross country and track, including sprinter Debbie Adams from the class of 1977, considered one of the best in state history. More than 150 people packed Snowden’s retirement ceremony in June 1999, including James Edwards, a starter on the 1973 team who went on to win three NBA championships in a 19-year professional career.

Details:

Name: **Roosevelt High School**

Location: 1410 NE 66th Street

Building: 57-room brick

Architect: Floyd A. Naramore

Site: 9.5 acres

1920: Named on August 20

1922: Opened in September

1928: Addition (Naramore)

1960: Addition (Ralph E. Decker)

1961: Site expanded to 9.5 acres

1965: Addition (Decker)

2002: Designated a City of Seattle landmark

2004: School closed for construction; Students relocated to Lincoln as interim site

2006: School reopened; historic renovation and addition (Bassetti Architects; BEX II)

2009: Froula Organ rebuilt and installed in Performing Arts Center

“You don’t realize how much you touch kids’ lives until they tell you,” Snowden told *The Seattle Times* in 1999. “Often, it’s just the little things that touch someone’s life. To them it’s a big thing, but to you it’s just something (a small kindness) that should be done.” The Roosevelt court was renamed Ben Snowden Court on November 29, 2001, in a ceremony that included a green vs. gold alumni game. Also in 2002, the district renamed the Art Wiper Field in honor of the longtime football and baseball coach, who also served as a teacher, department chairman, counselor, and athletics/event coordinator in his 30 years at Roosevelt.

Roosevelt won the 2004 girls’ basketball title under coach Bill Resler, who taught his teams to “go completely wild and have total fun without regard for what the rest of the world thinks.” That team’s nail-biting run for Roosevelt’s only girls’ state championship was chronicled in the nationally acclaimed documentary *The Heart of the Game*, which movie critic Roger Ebert called “an Oscar level piece of work.” Resler, who coached the Rough Riders from 1998 to 2006, also wrote a book about his teams that included star point guard Darnellia Russell and BCI All-American Lindsey Wilson.

In 2000, Roosevelt was the second largest high school in the district, since enrollment had increased 25 percent over the previous five years. A new humanities-language arts program for 9th graders began in fall 1998. The addition of the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing program led to the use of two new portables on the west side of the building.

In 2002, the Seattle Landmarks Preservation Board protected the exterior of Roosevelt’s 1922 building and the 1928 addition, as well as interior features of the 1922 building including the main lobby, murals by noted Northwest landscape artist Paul Morgan Gustin, hallway clocks, auditorium, and the former boys’ and girls’ gyms. The 1968 annex building and connecting pedestrian skybridge were protected along with the playfield and other areas.

In 2004, Roosevelt closed for a construction project. The project included demolition of the gymnasium, cafeteria, and shop. A historic renovation of the 1922 and 1928 buildings included restoring the exterior, entry, and assembly hall. An addition was built on the north side of the main building to house a new gym, cafeteria, and performing arts center. The students were relocated to Lincoln as their interim site until Roosevelt reopened in 2006.

When students returned to Roosevelt in 2006, they returned to some amazing changes. The historic auditorium was repurposed for the library and many of the space’s features were preserved including the terrazzo floors, the corridor clocks, the large seal on the floor, woodwork and railings, and historic stairwells. The new addition was situated on the property to allow for the construction of a full football/soccer synthetic turf field with a four-lane track on the grounds, without increasing the size of the property. The triple gym can accommodate seating

for 1,200 attendees when the basketball team competes or 12 basketball hoops for team practices. New locker rooms, a new yoga studio, and a weight room were all added to the gym basement.

A performing arts center with 700 padded seats was part of the design and construction of the new addition. It features an orchestra pit and a large scene shop. The old metal ends from the previous auditorium seat rows were used to build the new PAC balcony railings.

The fate of the Froula pipe organ was not immediately determined



Roosevelt, 1963 SPSA 017-1

during the renovation. Originally, budget had not been set aside for restoration since there was no contemporary academic program that required an organ. Since it was such a rare musical instrument, enthusiasts formed “The Friends of the Froula Memorial Organ.” The group raised \$79,000 and volunteered 5,100 hours toward its restoration. Once the organ was restored, it was installed in the RHS Theater. It was re-dedicated at a student concert in 2009.

In 2012, a new science classroom was added, and in 2017 levy funding was provided to replace the athletic field turf and install infrastructure for energy-efficient field lights, which began use in 2020.

After the 2020 murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Roosevelt basketball teammates Tony Allison and Joe Hunter Jr., both in their late 60s, organized a virtual Zoom meeting for about a dozen former classmates. The conversations led to the creation of the Roosevelt Alumni for Racial Equity (RARE) group, which by May 2021 had raised \$230,000 to fund, in perpetuity, \$5,000 scholarships to help Roosevelt students of color afford college or post-graduate training.

The RARE non-profit group also produced the film *Roosevelt High School: Beyond Black & White*, which premiered on January 31, 2022. The film is a documentary about race and education based on experiences of Roosevelt students yesterday and today.

Scott Brown, the legendary Roosevelt director of bands, retired in 2022 after 38 years with the school. Jazz great Wynton Marsalis called him a “man of style, intellect and fire” and said Brown’s bands “were always excellent and a reflection of his absolute dedication to American culture.” Another former student, Master Sgt. Harry Ong, was selected for “the President’s Own” United States Marine Band in 2003 and is still performing at presidential inaugurations.

Recently, Sound Transit constructed light rail under the Roosevelt neighborhood. The Roosevelt station opened in October 2021 across 12th Avenue from Roosevelt High School.

Other famous alumni include Nikki Sixx from Motley Crue; actor Richard Karn, who played Al Borland on *Home Improvement*; actress Rose McGowan; UW/NFL Quarterback Hugh Millen; actress Solea Pfeiffer; first Black woman law professor at UW Lea Vaughan; and Mary Gates, mother of Bill Gates.



Roosevelt, 2013 SPSA 017-136