

Stevens

Name: Stevens Elementary School	Enrollment: 193
Address: 1242 18th Avenue E	Nickname:
Configuration: K-5	Colors:



Stevens, 2000 ©Mary Randlett SPSA 272-18

Details:

Name: **Isaac I. Stevens School**

Location: 1242 18th Avenue E

Building: 8-room, 2-story woods

Architect: James Stephen

Site: 1.4 acres

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- 1906: Named on March 12; opened in September
 - 1922: Site expanded to 2.42 acres
 - 1928: Addition (Floyd A. Naramore)
 - 1981: Exteriors designated city landmark on April 8
 - 1982: TOPS K-5 program introduced at Stevens; co-located with Stevens Elementary School
 - 1991: TOPS program relocated to Seward
 - 1999: School closed for construction; Student relocated to McDonald as interim site
 - 2001: School reopened; Remodel and addition (Arai Jackson; BEX I)

In the early 1900s, people were attracted to the north end of Capitol Hill and Volunteer Park, which was named for the volunteers who fought in the Spanish-American War of 1898. In 1904, the school board purchased a site for a future North Capitol Hill School. Two years later, the school was constructed and named for Isaac Ingalls Stevens, the first Territorial Governor of Washington.

Stevens grew up on a small farm in Massachusetts and graduated from West Point in 1839 as the first in his class. In 1853, he was appointed governor of the newly created Washington Territory. At the same time, he directed an exploration party for the Pacific Railway across largely uncharted country between St. Paul and Puget Sound. In 1854 and 1855, he made treaties with the Native Americans of the territory, acquiring title to 100,000 square miles of land and paving the way for European-American settlers. Unfortunately, these ambitious treaties resulted in the Puget Sound War (1855-1858).

Stevens School opened in fall 1906 for students from north Capitol Hill and Interlaken, which included Montlake. Its rectangular, eight-room, two-story frame “model-school” building with clapboard siding, colonial porticos, and gable roof adhered to the Colonial Revival style and was almost identical to Coe.



Stevens, ca. 1940 SPSA 272-3

Shortly thereafter, people of the neighborhood formed an organization called “The Patrons and Friends of Stevens School,” the predecessor of the current PTA. In 1911, this group expressed interest in establishing a “fresh air” school, a practice based on the open-air movement that was popular at the time. As a result, a portable was moved to Stevens from Lincoln for an open-air room (see Queen Anne Elementary). The Friends of Stevens group held no night meetings because there was no lighting system at the school.

As more people moved into the area in the 1920s, the site was expanded to allow for an addition. The building was expanded in 1928 with a small, single-story addition containing an auditorium-lunchroom, three classrooms, and an office suite. A single-story extension on the east side of the basement level added play courts.

Kindergarten classes began at Stevens in September 1936. Because the school was built without areas for a shop or home economics, its 7th and 8th graders began attending those classes one hour a day at Longfellow in 1938. In September 1941, those two grades were transferred from Stevens to the newly renamed Edmond S. Meany School to the south.

Enrollment increased slowly but steadily to over 500 in the late 1950s, and several portables were added. In 1959-60, a new kindergarten room was constructed in the basement. In 1966, the first Stevens School reunion was held. Several hundred people assembled for the 60th anniversary celebration to enjoy a spaghetti dinner and meet with old friends.

Stevens became a K-4 school in 1970 when schools in the Central Area were reorganized under the Central Area Education Plan, also known as the 4-4-4 plan. The plan called for quality multi-racial education and adopted a school organization that grouped together kindergarten through 4th grade students, 5th through 8th grade students, and 9th through 12th grade students. A series of satellite schools for 3- and 4-year-olds was also outlined in the plan, as well as an Early Childhood Education Center, which placed heavy emphasis on parent involvement. The purpose of the K-4 primary school was to expand and refine existing programs and to develop non-graded school concepts.

Under this plan, most 5th and 6th graders from Stevens went to Madrona Middle School, while 3rd and 4th graders were bused to Stevens from Harrison (see Martin Luther King/Harrison) which became a K-2 Early Childhood Education Center.



Stevens, 1960 SPSA 272-2

In 1978, under the “Seattle Plan,” the district’s student assignment plan designed to desegregate schools, Stevens became a multi-opportunity school, which meant the school offered more than one learning setting to students. The open program option at Stevens utilized cooperative planning by staff with a parent program committee, and parent participation was essential. In 1979, the open program at Stevens became known as the Garfield Area Open [Alternative] Program (GAOP). This program was renamed TOPS in 1982. During its first year, The Option Program at Stevens (TOPS) had about 125 K-5 students, and the regular program at Stevens had 175 students.

TOPS encouraged student responsibility and leadership skills. Key objectives focused on child-motivated learning experiences, understanding the urban environment, and a multicultural perspective. For example, TOPS 3rd-5th graders spent time investigating the Seattle environment. From a makeshift classroom in the Great Western Building, they rated downtown buildings, offering opinions ranging from the availability of restroom facilities to the cheerfulness of occupants. Findings were presented to Seattle Mayor Charles Royer.

In 1990-91, TOPS was restructured to include a middle school program (expanded to a K-8), and that program continued to use portables on the site connected to each other by a boardwalk. The program added 6th grade students the first year. TOPS moved to Seward in 1991 and expanded to include 7th grade students. Eighth grade students were added the following year.

In 1981, the City of Seattle Landmarks Preservation Board designated Stevens as a historic landmark. According to the Landmark report, Stevens was unique in that, unlike Coe, it retained the integrity of its original form. Stevens had 11 portables in 1983-84, some of which were 30 years old. These portables housed 40 percent of the students.

In 1991, residents in the neighborhood raised nearly \$27,000 including grants to repaint the landmark building. In 1996, the landmarks board approved a school district plan to strengthen and modernize the original 1906 Stevens building and to demolish and replace the 1928 additions that were built on the north and east side of the 1906 building. The plan was designed by Arai Jackson Architects and included the construction of an eight-room addition on the north side of the 1906 building as well as the construction of three additional buildings on the site. The largest of the three new buildings (12,900 square feet) was constructed on the east property line and contained a gymnasium and cafeteria. Overall, the size of the school increased by approximately 16,500 square feet.

While renovating the 1906 building, structural deficiencies were discovered, which required further evaluation and remediation and added to the cost of the project. However, the renovated school and new addition opened as planned in September 2001. Stevens students were housed at McDonald as an interim site during the renovation.

A towering red cedar, which grew close to the school, had to be removed during renovation. Its trunk was carved into a Northwest Coast-style totem pole by Tlingit carver Myron Barnes and his apprentice, Tony Rath, with some assistance from Stevens students. The pole features a bear cub, mother bear, and a human figure with an eagle at the top. It now stands inside the new building. After reaching a peak enrollment of 406 in 2013, enrollment gradually declined, reaching a low of 193 in 2020.

Stevens has a Green Team comprised of a rotation of student volunteers from 1st grade through 5th grade. Team captains help sort compost, recycling, and waste after lunch. The Green Team was instrumental in obtaining a Washington State Department of Commerce grant to install a solar array on the roof of the school in 2021.