

Martha Washington



Martha Washington, ca. 1925 SPSA 392-1

When the Parental School opened on Mercer Island in 1905, it housed 30 boys and six girls (see Burbank). It didn't take long to realize the challenges of mixing boys and girls at a residential school and soon after the school became exclusively boys.

In 1911, after visiting the boys' parental school, a committee told the Seattle School Board of "the needs of the city for a similar institution for girls." On March 14, 1914, the school board accepted a gift of land and a large building in the Ravenna neighborhood donated by the Girls' Home and Training Society. The Parental Home for Girls opened the following month with 14 girls, ages 10-16.

The Ravenna location was viewed as temporary. During summer 1914, the board planned "to acquire a new location for the Boys' Parental School where facilities for agricultural instruction will be greater, and to use the present boys' quarters for the girls."

In 1919, the school board purchased land in the Brighton neighborhood as a new site for the girls' school. At various times, the land had been owned by three of Seattle's pioneer schoolteachers. Edward A. Clark was Seattle's third schoolteacher, operating a school at Terminus. Upon arriving in Seattle in April 1852, Clark claimed a quarter-section of land on the western shore of Lake Washington. He sold the land to David Graham, who, after arriving in April 1857, became Seattle's fifth teacher, serving in the Latimer Building. Graham traded the property to his brother Walter (see Graham Hill), who settled there before selling to Asa Mercer (Seattle's ninth teacher,

Details:

Name: **Parental Home for Girls**

Location: 3404 (N)E 68th Street

Building: Wood

Site: 1.23 acres

1914:	Opened on April 1
1918:	Renamed Girls' Parental School
1921:	Closed
1922:	Leased to Ruth School
1933:	Leased to Medina Baby Home
1945:	Site sold in September

Details:

Name: **Girls' Parental School**

Location: 6612 57th Avenue S

Building: 2-story brick

Architect: Floyd A. Naramore

Site: 9.87 acres

1921: Opened
1928: Residential annex added on site (n.a.)
1930: Addition (n.a.)
1931: Name changed to Martha Washington School for Girls
1957: Closed as Seattle Public School; site leased to state
1965: Closed as a residential school
1968-69: Alternative program site
1970-71: Alternative school site
1972: Sold to City of Seattle
1983: Used by the Cornerstone Montessori Academy
1989: Buildings demolished
Present: Site of Martha Washington Park

who instructed at the University Building). In 1889, Judge Everett Smith (see Brighton Beach) purchased the property. It was Smith who sold the land to the district.

A two-story, Georgian-style brick building was erected on the Brighton site. The students moved into the new building in June 1921. The Ravenna site was then leased to the Ruth School for Girls.

The district assumed responsibility for providing academic instruction at this Protestant institution after it opened in 1922. The girls at Ruth were wards of the Juvenile Court of King County who either exceeded the 16-year-old age limit of the Girls' Parental School or were "misfits in the public schools." The district regularly assigned one teacher to Ruth who offered instruction in elementary and high school subjects to girls aged 13 to 21. In 1933, Ruth School moved to Lake Burien, where the district continued to provide school services until 1955, when it was annexed into the Highline School District.

In 1925-26, 38 girls attended the Girls' Parental School. They ranged in age from 10 to 16. "In all things, the effort is to maintain at the school a home atmosphere. Many of the girls have never known what this means, and they frequently develop remarkably under its influence ... In addition to regular schoolwork, the girls learn to do all the work of a home — cooking, serving, canning, sewing, mending, darning, laundry work, housekeeping, and gardening. Industrial work occupies about three hours per day for each girl."

In 1928 a dormitory was added, and in 1930, a four-classroom structure with a gymnasium was added. These structures were done in the same style and materials as the main building. The grounds included 500 feet of shoreline along Lake Washington; outdoor fireplaces built by the students; a large, paved area for sports; and space for gardens. The residence halls accommodated up to 90 girls. One of the classrooms in the addition was specially equipped for home economics. In 1931, the school was renamed in honor of the nation's first first-lady, Martha Washington.

The school was classified as a protective institution with an emphasis on academic and vocational education adjusted to the needs of each individual. Usually a minimum commitment of one year was required. Attendance figures for 1931 to 1965 ranged from 35 to 83, with the number of teachers ranging between one and 10. Vocational training at the school included childcare, working in the laundry, and assisting in the kitchen, where meals were prepared for about 100 people three times a day. Parents and relatives were allowed to visit every other Sunday from 2-4 p.m.

In September 1954, the board considered closing the school unless it received additional funding from the state. By that time, about one-third of the girls enrolled at the school came from outside the district, and the state reimbursed at a rate of \$60 per person per month for room, board, supervision, and education.

On July 1, 1957, the Seattle School District relinquished operation of Martha Washington to the State of Washington. The state agreed to pay \$50,000 annual rental for both Burbank and Martha Washington schools and to reimburse the district for supplying teachers. The school continued to function as a residential school until 1965.

Project Interchange, the district's oldest alternative program, was housed at Martha Washington during 1968-69. The combined academic-work program was designed to meet the educational needs of high school and junior high school students who might otherwise drop out of school. Responding to complaints from neighbors,

Project Interchange moved to a commercial building (3704 S Ferdinand) less than two blocks from Columbia School before it moved to Georgetown. According to Margie Walker, program head, “When we began our school, we had a budget of \$1,500, a room in Martha Washington, three teachers and 20 parent volunteers.” Alternative School #1 used the building during the 1970-71 academic year, before the program relocated to the Maple School.

In 1972, the City of Seattle purchased the site and the following year, transferred it to the parks department. The building remained empty for many years. After more than a decade of discussions about what to do with the building, including converting it to a convention center, ongoing vandalism and neighborhood worries about increased traffic led the city council to vote for demolishing the historic buildings and creating a park on the site.

The buildings were demolished in 1989. The distinctive archway and trees planted in the 1920s are the only remnants of the beautiful school that remain in the park.