

West Queen Anne



Queen Anne, ca. 1890 SPSA 280-20

Much of Queen Anne Hill was annexed into the City of Seattle in 1883 when the city limits were extended to McGraw Street. At that time, the nearest school was Denny School in Bell Town. In August 1889, the school board agreed to buy a site for a school on top of the hill. Rather than providing a permanent structure, however, the board asked the architect “to draw [an] elevation plan to confirm in architecture with Queen Ann[e] Town Buildings.” The following month, a modest temporary building was constructed at one-twentieth the price of the lot.

When Queen Anne School opened there were 20 pupils in the 1st and 2nd grades. A few days later, enrollment more than doubled and a partition was used to divide the building into two rooms so a 3rd grade class could be added.

In May 1890, Mercer School opened at the southern base of Queen Anne Hill, allowing the older children to transfer there from Denny. This permanent school was designed in part by the same architect as the Queen Anne School.

After passage of a much-needed bond issue, the board decided in early 1895 to proceed with a Queen Anne School. The architects originally designed an eight-room building, but when the lowest construction bid exceeded

Details:

Name: **Queen Anne School**
 Location: Between Gaylor (Galer) Street & Lee, White Street (6th Avenue W) & Anna Street (5th Avenue W)
 Building: 1-room board-and-batten
 Architect: Charles W. Saunders
 Site: 1.47 acres

1890: Opened on January 20 as annex to Mercer
 1895: Closed in June

Details:

Name: **Queen Anne School**

Location: 515 W Galer Street

Building: 3-story, 6-room brick
and concrete

Architect: Skillings & Corner

Site: 1.47 acres

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- 1896: Opened for fall term as independent school
- 1899: Addition (n.a.)
- 1902: Addition (James Stephen)
- 1903: Renamed Marshall on March 7; returned to Queen Anne on September 1
- 1908: Renamed West Queen Anne
- 1916: Site expanded to 1.76 acres; addition (Edgar Blair)
- 1975: Listed on National Register Historic Places on July 30
- 1977: Designated City of Seattle landmark on January 17
- 1981: School closed in June
- 1983: Building leased in February
- 1984: Converted into 49 condominiums
- Present: Site of West Queen Anne Condominiums (1401 5th Avenue W)



Queen Anne, 1905 SPSA 280-40

available funds, they were forced to reduce the number of classrooms to six, lower the roof, substitute cedar shingles for slate, and minimize the amount of stonework. Nonetheless, the building represented an enormous improvement over the one-room school and provided solid proof that the neighborhood was on its way up. That September the students were sent to Mercer School, while the permanent Romanesque-style building was being erected. The entrance of the new building faced south on Lee Street.

Two classrooms were added in 1899 and another four in 1902 in accordance with the original expandable design. While this construction was underway, portables were brought in on the south side of the grounds. There were so many children that some classes had to be split into morning and afternoon sessions for several weeks until the new rooms were ready.

From 1902-1905, enrollment jumped from 402 to 625. In September 1904, the East Queen Anne Annex opened as an adjunct to Mercer to house grades 1-2. The annex was used to relieve overcrowding prior to completing the permanent Hay building in 1905. The Queen Anne Annex opened in 1906 as an annex to Queen Anne for grades 1-3, developing into Coe School in 1907.

In 1908, the name of Queen Anne School was changed to avoid confusion with Queen Anne High School, then being constructed. The new name, West Queen Anne, was taken from an undeveloped site the district purchased in 1902 at 7th Avenue W and Smith Street in the West Queen Anne Addition.

Enrollment increased to 558 in 1913-14 and stair landings had to be used as study halls. Another addition was made in 1916, providing 10 more classrooms and an auditorium. At that time, the main entrance shifted to the north side on Galer Street. In 1918-19, enrollment hit an all-time high of 643.

Adelaide Lowry Pollock served as principal from 1901 to 1918, when she resigned to serve overseas in the Red Cross. She started teaching in Seattle in 1889 and had previously taught at Madison Street School. An outdoor enthusiast and ornithologist, Pollock stressed nature studies as part of the basic curriculum. For example, 3rd graders learned basket weaving, and 4th graders built birdhouses.



West Queen Anne, ca. 1915 SPSA 280-21

Kindergarten was added at West Queen Anne in 1931. In 1944, the school began an innovative program where subjects were integrated through daily workshops emphasizing the practical applications of learning. This program was in response to requests from boys who wanted to learn more about home economics because they had more responsibility at home with both parents working. Regarding home economics, the principal commented, “In arithmetic class, mistakes can be erased. In this class they have to be eaten.”

In 1952, 8th graders were transferred to Queen Anne Junior High School at the Queen Anne High School building. In 1955, West Queen Anne became a K-6 school as the 7th graders made the same move. The closure of the Warren Avenue School in 1959 brought a flood of students into West Queen Anne from as far south as Stewart Street. By 1970, however, some classrooms were empty. As enrollment continued to decline, the school district’s Basic Skills offices moved to West Queen Anne in 1973.

A 1974 report by district staff recommended the school be closed. While it was given a reprieve, a group of parents, teachers, and local residents worked to keep it open. Part of their effort was to nominate the building for historic status. In 1975, the structure became the first Seattle school placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Two years later it became a City of Seattle landmark.

In June 1978, the hexagonal chimney on the west side of the building was painstakingly reconstructed. To meet safety standards and yet abide by historical restrictions, it was taken down brick by brick, the core reinforced, and then rebuilt.

Under the district’s desegregation plan, in 1977 the school housed K-3 while grades 4-6 were bused out of the area to Brighton. That year the Follow Through Program, an extension of Head Start, moved to West Queen Anne



West Queen Anne, ca. 1940 SPSA 280-23

from Interlake and began busing in about 140 Central District K-3 children for classes. When the school closed in spring 1981, 112 students attended the regular program while 125 were enrolled in the Follow Through Program.

In 1983, Historic Seattle, a public development authority focused on historic preservation, was given a 99-year ground lease with an option to renew for another 99 years. The organization turned the site over to investors who converted the building into 49 condominiums in 1983-84. The words “West Queen Anne Public School” are still visible over the north doorway, the former main entrance. A new main entrance faces 5th Avenue W, with a circular drive and fountain above, and an underground parking garage below.