

West Woodland

Name: West Woodland Elementary School	Enrollment: 473
Address: 5601 4th Avenue NW	Nickname: Wildcats
Configuration: K-5	Colors: Blue and orange



West Woodland, ca. 1940 SPSA 281-6

A small wood-framed portable school opened in 1905 on leased land near the base of the west side of Phinney Ridge at (N)W 58th Street and 3rd Avenue NW. Ross Annex housed the overflow of students from Ross School (see Ross) and served grades 1-2 exclusively.

E. James Brower, a settler on the west side of Phinney Ridge, notified the Seattle School Board that older children in his neighborhood were attending five different schools. To get to Ross School, children had to walk on a trail, complete with planks across muddy spots, through the woods north of (then) W 45th Street. Others had to go west on an elevated plank walkway over a wetland to reach Irving School in Ballard. Some walked up the hill to Allen School, while the rest went to Day or Whittier.

In response, the district purchased land from Brower for a new permanent school in summer 1908. The Ross Annex portable was moved onto the new site at 4th Avenue NW and (N)W 56th Street and reopened in September 1908. The newly built school, opened in January 1910, took its name from the community, which derived from a shortening of “west of Woodland Park.” West Woodland School’s Jacobean-style architecture resembled other schools built at the same time, especially Muir and Gatewood. Some of the bricks came from the old Lawton School following its demolition.

Most of the teachers reached the school by the Phinney streetcar. They walked along a sandy path, which, in season, was bordered by lupine and roses, and came down the hill through the woods. Upon opening, the school

Details:

Name:	Ross Annex
Location:	(N)W 58th Street and 3rd Avenue NW
Building:	Portable
1905:	School opened, grades 1 and 2
1908:	Portable moved to school’s new site (4th Avenue NW and (N)W 56th)
1910:	Students moved into new school

Details:

Name: **West Woodland School**
Location: 5634 5th Avenue NW
Building: 3-story, 9-room brick
Architect: Edgar Blair
Site: 2.14 acres

1910: Opened; named on January 10
1912: Site expanded
1913: Addition (Blair)
1925: Addition (Floyd A. Naramore)
1972: Remodeled
1989: Closed in June; site expanded to 3.8 acres
1990: Demolished in April

was crowded with classes of over 40 pupils. Some students were asked to transfer back to their former schools.

The site was enlarged in 1912 with the purchase of six lots. The following year, an addition was added to the north side of the 1910 building with eight more classrooms, a meeting room, and a manual training room. Community growth continued and soon portables were added.

In 1925, the portables were removed since the original plan for the school was completed adding seven more classrooms, a kindergarten room, two play courts, and a lunchroom-meeting room on the south side. West Woodland was the largest elementary school in the city in 1929-30, with 1,024 students.

The 8th grade students were transferred to Hamilton or Monroe in September 1941. During World War II, a “semi-permanent” nursery school building was erected on the southeast corner of the grounds to accommodate preschool children whose mothers were

working in war industries. This structure later served as a kindergarten room, then a daycare center.

The 7th graders left in 1949-50 to attend junior high schools, bringing the enrollment down to 930. The reduced enrollment did not last long, however, as West Woodland’s school population climbed to 1,172 in 1958-59. Enrollment peaked at 1,202 in the mid-1960s, making West Woodland one of the district’s largest elementary schools. By then, the small playground was completely covered with portables. In 1972, two basement rooms were converted into a learning resource center and the auditorium was remodeled to include gymnasium facilities.

West Woodland was not included in the desegregation plan, which paired elementary schools, and therefore it remained K-6 during the 1970s and 1980s.

By fall 1986, parents were raising concerns about the size and safety of the old structure. The school board considered three options for a new facility: “squeezing” a new building onto the small site, expanding the site, or trying to acquire Gilman Playfield from the Seattle Parks Department. In the end, the district decided to enlarge the site. In 1989 and 1990, nine parcels of land were purchased to the west of the original site for the playground area and a street was vacated. A new replacement building was planned, and the old 1910 building was demolished.

During construction of the new school in 1989-91, classes were held at Monroe, which closed in 1981. The new school building that opened in 1991 was smaller than the original school, but the playground was larger.

Throughout the 1990s, Principal Dan Hailey focused his efforts on books and reading at the new West Woodland School. Activities included an intra-school reading contest, a daylong read-in, book binding and cover design, a young author’s workshop, and student



West Woodland, 1960 SPSA 281-5

interviews with authors and other professionals in the publishing industry. The reading contest included a bookworm, with titles and authors inscribed on each segment winding around hallway walls. To support these programs, Hailey directed additional funding toward acquiring additional up-to-date books, driving an increase in annual book circulation from 22,000 in 1995 to 30,000 in 1998, despite reduced enrollment at West Woodland during this time. Reduced enrollment and additional funding for elementary schools also allowed West Woodland to keep 1st grade classes small at 19 to 20 students during this time.

In the early 2000s, West Woodland shifted its focus to science through partnerships with Woodland Park Zoo and Seattle Center as well as art through an integrated multi-arts class. Class sizes remained relatively low with a maximum of 23 for all grades as enrollment decreased to a low of 308 by 2002.

By 2007, West Woodland was among the first schools to receive the School of Distinction award from the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. The award honors schools whose students have made the most progress over the preceding six years in reading and writing on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) test. Enrollment had significantly increased by this time to 380 students and continued to rise into the 2010s, reaching a high of 565 students in 2017.

Growth at West Woodland prompted the district to direct funding from the 2017 Distressed School Grant and BEX V levy to renovate the existing building and construct an addition. The district hired McGranahan Architects to design the \$13 million renovation and addition. The school reopened in the fall of 2021 with an additional 28,000 square feet providing 12 new classrooms as well as an expanded gymnasium, commons, and associated support and infrastructure spaces. West Woodland students were housed at John Marshall during construction.

Details:

Name:	West Woodland Elementary School
Location:	5601 4th Avenue NW
Building:	20-room structural steel frame with brick veneer
Architect:	Olson Sundberg Architects
Site:	3.8 acres

1991:	Opened
2007:	Seismic Improvements
2020:	School closed for construction; students relocated to Marshall as interim site
2021:	School reopened; Remodel and addition (McGranahan Architects; Distressed School Grant, K-3 Class Size Reduction Grant & BEX V)



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