

Whitman

Name: Whitman Middle School	Enrollment: 663
Address: 9201 15th Avenue NW	Nickname: Wildcats
Configuration: 6-8	Colors: Blue and gold



Whitman, 1972 SPSA 115-44

With the prospect of the Olympic Golf Course being sold to a real estate developer in May 1950, the U.S. Army announced its interest in taking over part of the land for a Nike missile base. National defense concerns ran strong because of hostilities arising in Korea and the threat of atomic weapons. The following day the Seattle School Board announced it, too was interested in acquiring property there.

The Army eventually condemned part of the golf course and placed an anti-aircraft facility on the tract. Later, the Army sold land to the district with the agreement that 3.34 acres on the eastern parcel would be leased back to them. Local residents convinced the Seattle City Council to buy 10.3 acres for a playfield (Soundview Park), and the remainder of the golf course was developed into Olympic Manor.

The district's purchase consisted of an eastern parcel next to the park and a western parcel. In 1953, Northwest Elementary School (a.k.a. Crown Hill Annex) was established in portables on the eastern parcel at 15th Avenue NW and (N)W 92nd Street to handle the overflow of students at Crown Hill School (see Crown Hill). Students purchasing hot lunches ran over to Crown Hill at lunchtime.

A few years after the portable school closed, the site for the permanent elementary school was shifted to the western parcel (see North Beach). The eastern parcel was then developed for its intended use, as the site for a junior high school. The temporary name used during planning was Northwest Junior High School. On June 21, 1956, the parks department named the adjacent site "North Hills Playfield" and expressed its hope to the school board that "a name could be selected that would be applicable to both the playfield and ... junior high school." A list of possible names was submitted to seven elementary schools in the service area for the school. The name Marcus Whitman won, while David Douglas was the runner-up.



Whitman, 1959 SPSA 115-38

Marcus Whitman was a Protestant missionary who, with his wife Narcissa, arrived in Washington in 1836 and established a mission near Walla Walla. They were among those killed in 1847 in what became known as the Whitman Massacre or the Tragedy at Waiilatpu.

The school opened in 1959-60 with 1,400 students. The song “Salute to Whitman,” written by music teacher Robert Cathey, premiered at the dedication ceremony on November 19. In 1961-62, two years after its doors opened, Whitman enrollment stood at 1,513 and classrooms were full. Some classes were even held in the teachers’ workroom and the lunchroom. The overcrowding was resolved in 1963-64 with the opening of R. H. Thomson Junior High School.

In 1972, as declining enrollment numbers forced the district to close schools, the prospect of making Whitman Junior High a four-year high school was raised as Whitman’s enrollment was down to 950. This prompted a negative response from the Olympic Manor Community Club, and the school remained a junior high. The same year, Whitman was one of the schools that became involved in the career-education program, which introduced career-education material and the world of work to the regular classroom. This effort was considerably funded by the Rotary Service Foundation and involvement of the Seattle Downtown Rotary Club.

In 1981, Whitman became a middle school, housing grades 7-8. Following district-wide changes, 6th graders were added by fall 1989.

Beginning in 1996-97, a new track, soccer field, and baseball field were built west of the school using capital levy funds, while the PTA secured a community grant and funds to resurface the asphalt playground. In 2007, the existing natural turf field at Whitman Middle School was renovated to a league play regulation baseball field and synthetic soccer field with surrounding rubberized practice track. The athletic facilities received additional major upgrades in 2017 and 2020, when the track was renovated, new synthetic turf was installed on the field, and lighting was improved.

In 2001, Whitman joined a pilot curriculum program developed by the Seattle Chess Foundation in which students learned critical-thinking and problem-solving skills while learning how to play chess. Whitman also was home to an accomplished jazz band. Today Whitman offers students classes in video production, a series of art courses, STEM, music, and world language electives, with additional pathways for accelerated learners in math and language arts.

Details:

Name: **Marcus Whitman
Junior High School**

Location: 9201 15th Avenue NW

Building: Light-steel frame, reinforced
cement & brick

Architect: Mallis & DeHart

Site: 15 acres

1959: Named on May 20;
opened in September

1979: Second location for Records
and Archives Department,
occupied two classrooms

1981: Became Marcus Whitman
Middle School

1981: Records & Archives
relocated to Boren

2002: Arts & science updates

2009: Science room updates

2017: Athletic field updates

2020: Athletic field lighting;
Seismic updates