



The City of Seattle

## Landmarks Preservation Board

Mailing Address: PO Box 94649 Seattle WA 98124-4649  
Street Address: 700 5th Ave Suite 1700

### REPORT ON DESIGNATION

LPB 321/13

Name and Address of Property: Montlake School – 2409 22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue East

Legal Description: Lots 1-12, Block 22, Pike's 2nd Addition to Union City, Volume 1, Page 65A, records of King County, Washington.

At the public meeting held on June 5, 2013 the City of Seattle's Landmarks Preservation Board voted to approve designation of the Montlake School at 2409 22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue East as a Seattle Landmark based upon satisfaction of the following standard for designation of SMC 25.12.350:

- C. *It is associated in a significant way with a significant aspect of the cultural, political, or economic heritage of the community, City, state or nation.*
- D. *It embodies the distinctive visible characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or of a method of construction.*
- F. *Because of its prominence of spatial location, contrasts of siting, age, or scale, it is an easily identifiable visual feature of its neighborhood or the City and contributes to the distinctive quality or identity of such neighborhood or the City,*

### **DESCRIPTION**

#### **Urban Context**

The subject property is centrally located within the Montlake neighborhood, occupying the block bounded by East Calhoun Street on the north, 22nd Avenue East on the east, East McGraw Street on the south, and 20th Avenue East on the west. It is located one block west of a major arterial, 24th Avenue East, and approximately four blocks south of S.R. 520, which links Seattle and I-5 to Bellevue.

The school sits at the top of a small hill, surrounded by single-family residences, which date primarily from the 1920s. The Montlake Branch of the Seattle Public Library is one block east, on the corner of East McGraw Street and 24th Avenue East. The library is the north end

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of a small two-block commercial strip that runs along 24th Avenue East. Approximately two blocks northwest of the school is the Montlake Community Center and Montlake Playfield, and several blocks to the southwest is St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church.

## **The Site**

The full-block property, Block 22 of the Second Addition to Union City, is 200' (north-south) by 360' (east-west), for a total area of 72,000 square feet. The school building is located near the east end of the site, facing east onto 22nd Avenue East. The school is set approximately 6' above the sidewalk grade, and the eastern entrance terrace is reached by a double-return stair with wrought iron railings. A side yard setback, originally intended to accommodate future wings, is provided on the north and south, with a contemporary greenhouse and garden area situated in the south side yard. Behind the school (to the west) a 10'-wide concrete driveway runs north-south through the block. The balance of the property is a large, paved playfield, graded to slope down gently from southeast to northwest.

The rectangular school building has an overall footprint of 128'-8" wide (north-south) by 108'-6" deep (east-west). A separate cafeteria building, which dates from 1925, is located immediately behind the school, directly west across the concrete driveway. Also behind the school are six small portable classrooms, along the north edge of the property. A large play structure is installed in a slightly raised area filled with wood chips, located at the south edge of the site just west of the concrete drive. The balance of the paved playfield is open. The property is enclosed on the north, south, and west sides by chain link fencing.

The cafeteria building is a one-story, wood-frame, gable-roofed structure. It is a long and narrow rectangle, with a footprint of 20' (east-west) by 60' (north-south). The 1937 property record card noted a post and beam foundation and "rustic" exterior, which is clad with drop siding. The main entry is centrally located on the south end of the building, reached by two steps or a newer accessible ramp. There is little fenestration on the east and north sides, but along the south side are two groups of eight windows, providing ample light to the interior. The one-room building is finished on the interior with resilient flooring, wood trim, and painted plaster or plasterboard. Wood roof trusses are exposed and painted a cream color, and the ceiling surface above is finished with acoustical ceiling tile.

## **The Building**

The one- and two-story flat-roofed building has a concrete foundation and is primarily of reinforced concrete construction with brick veneer. The main, two-story portion is the front (east) 63'-6" of the building, which contains the classrooms, offices, restrooms, supply rooms, etc. The western 45' of the building is a single story and contains the boiler and fuel rooms in the middle, flanked by play areas on the north and south. A tall, square chimney stack rises from the central boiler room.

The main portion of the building is characterized by its symmetrical façade; red brick veneer cladding with cast stone details; and large, multi-light, double-hung wood windows. The primary east façade features a 17'-wide end bay at both the north and south. Each of these

contains a formal entry with decorative, 12'-6"-tall cast stone surround, and an approximately 15'-tall arched window above. This cast stone surround consists of fluted columns supporting a classical entablature. "MONTLAKE SCHOOL" is incised into the frieze band, bracketed with a floral medallion on each side, and with a projecting cornice above. Each entry consists of a pair of wood doors with six-light glazed upper portion, and a leaded glass transom.

The center 95'-wide expanse of the east façade contains groups of four ganged windows, with three groups at each story. Each window is six-over-six-light, double hung wood type, measuring 9'-6" tall, and each assembly of four windows measures more than 21' in width. The windows and frame elements are painted white to stand out against the darker field of the brick. The west façade of the two-story portion of the building is visible only at the second story, where there are four groups of four windows, consistent with the central portion of the east façade. Cast stone elements were produced by the Architectural Decorating Company of Seattle (*Seattle Daily Times*, May 18, 1924).

North and south façades are secondary, presenting a plain brick expanse with just one pair of windows located centrally at each story on the two façades. These windows provide daylight to the corridor ends at each floor.

The single-story portion on the west side of the school presents a varied appearance. The central portion, containing the boiler and fuel rooms, is concrete finished with cement plaster. There is a person door with a glazed transom at the north end of this central portion. The north and south play areas, located on either side of the central boiler and fuel room portion, have visible wood posts, and the north play area is roofed over but not walled in. The south play area is enclosed to create an interior gymnasium space. On the south side, flush wood siding is placed between the posts, while the west side is generously fenestrated with a series of nine-over-nine single- or double-hung wood windows. A double door is located at the south end of the west side. It is difficult to discern from early photographs whether or not the south play area, now enclosed, was originally constructed as an open air feature like the north play area, but this appears possible.

### **Interior Plan and Features**

The plan is arranged with a central 11'-wide, double-loaded corridor running north-south on each floor, and stairs at the northeast and southeast corners (aligned with the entries). On the first floor are two classrooms, the teachers' room, and the main office along the east side, and girls' restroom, janitor's room and fan room, "book room"/supply room, and boys' restroom along the west side. Seven classrooms are located at the second floor—three on the east side and four on the west. Each classroom contains a built-in wardrobe and is provided ample daylight by the large windows on the single perimeter elevation. Original skylights are provided above the second-floor corridor and still admit natural light.

Original interior finishes are largely intact and consist of polished concrete floors, wood base, and painted plaster walls in the corridors, with glazed, wood-paneled doors with wood casing and trim. Classrooms feature maple flooring, stained wood trim, and original built-in

wardrobes. The supply room on the first floor contains original built-in shelving and cabinetry. A 1937 King County Assessor’s property record card notes first floor height of 14’ and second floor height of 16’.

### **Changes to the Building**

Original elements are virtually intact, with the exception of the removal of the original cast stone cornice from the east and west sides, replaced with a cement plaster band. Photographic records indicate this modification occurred in the 1970s, likely part of the 1979 seismic improvements project. Photographs also indicate that the chimney cap was modified from the original, with the projecting cap removed. Drawings available from Seattle Public Schools Archives indicate the following changes:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Description</u>
1924	Original construction
1979	Seismic improvements
1985	Upgrade corridors, fire alarm
1987	Gas, oil burner conversion
1987	Fire alarm, egress lighting
2004	Fire alarm, ADA
2006	Reroof, exterior, mechanical upgrades
2008	Waterline replacement
2009	Interior upgrades—including demolition and removal of hazardous building materials (asbestos, lead-based paint, and mercury-containing light tubes) and removal of above-ground fuel tanks

## **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

### **School District Overview and Building Programs**

As in most western settlements, Seattle’s earliest school sessions were conducted in single-classroom buildings and were financially supported by the pioneer families whose children attended. During the mid- to late-19th century, students ranged in age from five to 25 years, with older students serving as teacher’s aides. A school building was often the center of its community, in some areas serving as a gathering place for public meetings, courts, fraternal organizations, and family social events.

In 1854, Seattle’s first classes were held at Bachelor’s Hall, a boarding house for single men, by schoolteacher Catharine P. Blaine. The city’s public school system was organized ca. 1861, with formation of the first administrative board and movement of classes into the new Territorial University Building. Public funding was established to pay teacher salaries, but despite this effort, tuition-free classes were not offered in the city until 1866. The Seattle School Board was organized the following year.

In 1869, the Washington Territorial Legislature granted Seattle a city charter, and residents approved a tax levy to fund construction of the city's first free public school building (Thompson & Marr, p. x). In 1870, the Central School opened on 3rd Avenue between Madison and Spring Streets with 120 students. (Erigero, p. 1). The city's residents passed other tax levies to construct a handful of one-room and two-room schoolhouses.

The first Territorial Board of Education was established in 1877, and by 1881 the legislature granted appointments of school superintendents in incorporated city districts. With the appointment of Edward S. Ingraham as Seattle's first school superintendent in 1882, the city experienced a progressive shift toward the development of a modern school system (Robinson, p. 33). The same year, the Seattle School Board began planning for a new central schoolhouse (Robinson, pp. 16-17). After another successful tax levy, the new six-room Second Central School was built, opening in 1883. The following year, the 12-room Denny School opened. Student enrollment in the District expanded more than four-fold, from 1,500 students in 1885 to nearly 6,650 in 1893.

In 1889-90, the District's third superintendent, Frank J. Barnard, oversaw the construction of eight schools. From 1891-93, during a general boom in the city's economy and population, the district built six more schools. Three of the schools built during this time were constructed to accommodate recently annexed areas north of the city (Erigero, p. 6). Between 1890 and 1900, 16 public schools opened (Thompson & Marr, p. x). Promotional pamphlets lauded the city's early public school buildings as representing the character of its citizens, noting their modern style and declaring them a "credit to the city" (Robinson, p. 34). As Seattle evolved into a metropolitan center, attitudes about education and public architecture changed. By 1901, the District supported daily attendance of nearly 9,000 students. That year, the District hired Superintendent Frank B. Cooper. Two years later, in 1903, the District hired architect James Stephen to design standardized elementary school buildings.

Superintendent Cooper, who served for 21 years, guided the development of the District into a major urban school system. Aided by a supportive and progressive School Board, he is credited with developing numerous specialized programs such as kindergartens, parental schools, adult evening schools, and classes for special-needs students (Robinson, p. 99). Cooper and the Board emphasized neighborhood elementary schools but also aimed to build comprehensive high schools of "distinctive architectural design." Broadway, Seattle's first high school building, opened in 1902 and was followed by Lincoln and Queen Anne later that decade. Franklin, Ballard, and West Seattle High Schools opened in the 1910s. (Thompson & Marr, p. xi.)

During Cooper's tenure, the School Board adopted plans for new schools in developing suburban residential neighborhoods, using a series of "model" schools designs with standard wood framing. These schools were designed to accommodate future standardized additions.

From 1910 to 1921, Seattle's population grew by approximately 33%, and student enrollment reached nearly 39,000 in 1919. Edgar Blair followed Stephen as the District's official architect, and the typical school constructed during his tenure in the 1910s was a linear plan.

The linear school was typically a two-story brick building featuring a single-loaded corridor/classroom layout.

In 1919, a bond issue assured continued growth and expansion of school facilities. New construction included two high schools, three elementary schools, and additions to Broadway and Lincoln High Schools as well as seven elementary schools. The Broadway Annex, built in 1921, supported a vocational program. Also in 1921, the District constructed a modern administration and facilities building designed by Floyd A. Naramore, who had replaced Blair as District architect in 1919 and guided school architecture until 1932.

After World War I, increasing costs of providing educational programs to a growing population strained the District. Between 1922 and 1933, school attendance increased more than 35%, from 42,441 to 57,551 students. The District conducted a comprehensive building survey to plan future building programs to meet the needs of a growing student population. From 1922 to 1932, the District built six elementary schools, two 1-8 or K-8, and four intermediate or junior high schools, with specialized facilities for science, art, physical education, industrial arts, and home economics. Additionally, Roosevelt, Garfield, and Cleveland High School—which also supported a junior-high student program—were built, and additions to three other high schools were made.

In 1926, the District's first intermediate school was constructed as part of a move toward the organization of three school levels in order to accommodate increased enrollment without building additional small elementary schools. More significantly, this reorganization of 7th to 9th grades was consistent with a national trend. Seattle's earliest junior high schools, as they came to be called, were constructed as a result.

During the early Depression era, the District shifted its building program from new construction toward the consolidation and rehabilitation of existing structures. No new buildings were constructed between 1932 and 1940. At a time of high unemployment, enrollment in adult education classes experienced a sharp increase, while general enrollment declined slightly. Declining revenues, excess personnel, and older facilities further strained the urban school system. Sixteen older schools were closed and their students were consolidated into nearby buildings. By the end of the decade, concerns were raised about old school buildings that had not been maintained. These and the large number of temporary structures prompted the District to request another levy for a new building program in 1939.

By this date, the District changed its approach to building design services, opting to hire private architectural firms to carry out individual building programs rather than employing a School District architect. From 1940 to 1941, the District retained the firm of Naramore and Brady (later NBBJ) to design one new school and additions and improvements to more than 10 others. The program called for demolition and replacement of the city's oldest wood-frame schools.

During World War II, all new schools were built as temporary structures to conserve building materials for the war effort. Seattle experienced a massive influx of defense workers and their families at this time. Existing school facilities required expansion for the children of

these workers, especially in federally-funded housing project areas. The District used numerous temporary “portable” units and built temporary additions.

At the close of the war in 1945, the District conducted a study of population trends and future building needs. The resulting proposal called for modernization of all existing schools, adding classrooms; multi-use rooms for lunch/assembly; covered and hard-surfaced play areas and play-courts; expanded gymnasiums; and improved lighting, heating, plumbing, and acoustics (Robinson, pp. 192-193).

School projects resulting from the District’s post-war planning were overseen by the visionary post-war Superintendent of Schools, Samuel E. Fleming, who directed the system from 1944 to 1946. Like Cooper in the early decades of the 20th century, Fleming advocated for adult and vocational education. He was instrumental in establishing the Broadway-Edison Technical in late 1946, after the closing of Broadway High School that same year. This new school focused on high school programs for returning war veterans. Broadway-Edison’s programs later evolved into the present-day Seattle Central Community College. (Seattle Public Schools Archives, “Early History of the Seattle Public Schools,” n.p.)

From 1945 until the early 1960s, school enrollment increased from 50,000 to almost 100,000 due to the post-war baby boom, rapid suburbanization, and annexation of the city’s north and northeast neighborhoods in 1945-53 and areas of West Seattle in the 1950s. Seattle voters approved six bond issues between 1946 and 1958, and from 1945 to 1965, the District built 17 new elementary schools, 10 junior high schools, and four high schools, two in the newly annexed north end. Each new building was designed by a specific architectural team, hired by the School Board and directed by its functional requirements for educational spaces. The central control of design and materials, which had characterized the era of salaried District architects and designs by architects Stevens, Blair, and Naramore, was no longer part of the process. The schools from this era thus exhibit a variety of sizes, forms, and materials, while following consistent principles of Modernism.

Public school architects in Seattle and throughout the country adopted Modernism as the preferred idiom during this period, focusing on rational planning and functionalism. The concept of transportable schools developed, based on a unit system of classrooms that could be lifted and relocated. The units were attached to a central fireproof corridor, which allowed for easy enlargement or reduction by expanding the corridor and adding or removing units. In 1949, three transportable schools opened, all designed by George W. Stoddard. Reportedly, Briarcliff, Genesee Hill, and Arbor Heights elementary schools were the first of their kind in the nation.

After 1965 and through the 1970s, the District suffered from declining enrollment and revenue. Racial desegregation and educational reform became the focus, and the open-plan school was adopted to meet the flexible needs of reformed teaching methods that focused on team-teaching, continuous progress, individualized instruction, and integrated activities. Architects, facility designers, and educators sought to create new opportunities for social learning by adding new, open plan classrooms and by remodeling existing buildings to create learning resource centers and spaces for team teaching. The concept of the middle school

emerged during this same period, shifting the 7th-9th grade junior highs to 5th-8th or 6th-8th grade middle schools, with 9th grade integrated back into high schools.

In the 1970s, the District faced increased management difficulties with greater dependence on tax levies to fund its basic school operations. Desegregation resulted in new busing programs in 1970, which were expanded to integrate over half the city's schools in 1977. Mandatory busing of about 12,000 of the District's students was initiated that year. Busing was reduced in 1989. Meanwhile, private school enrollment in the city grew. By 2008 the non-white student population in Seattle schools averaged 58%. (*Seattle Times*, June 1, 2008.)

Educational reform movements resulted in new federal initiatives, to which the School District responded with Head Start programs, Title I remedial services, and programs for student drop-outs. Alternative schools and special education programs were added, some housed in unused spaces or redundant facilities. In the 1980s, following a 50% decline in enrollment, the School Board adopted a comprehensive school-closure plan. Two high schools, seven junior high schools, and 20 elementary schools were slated for closure. The school closures occurred where there was the greatest loss in enrollment—in Seattle's older northern neighborhoods, on Queen Anne Hill and Magnolia, and in West Seattle (Thompson & Marr, pp. xii-xiv).

Debates over upgrading old buildings or building new ones spawned community interest in historic preservation. Collaboration between the District and preservation groups during this period resulted in restoration of numerous school buildings, including Franklin High School, Seward School, John Day School, and Coe School. However, many of the school buildings closed as part of the program were sold or put under long-term lease. Some have been remodeled for new uses such as condominiums or shopping facilities, while others have been leased to neighborhood associations.

### **Early 20th-Century School Design Theory**

School buildings in the 20th century reflect changing ideas about educational programs, pedagogy, school building design, and community needs. In Seattle and throughout the state, the earliest buildings were wood-framed structures of various styles. These schools were followed by those built from standardized designs by James Stephen, the District's official architect. The buildings tended to have square-shaped classrooms arranged off wide double-loaded corridors, each with an internal cloak room and ample daylight introduced by large window assemblies. These standard plans were followed by linear layouts in the post-World War I era, with classrooms organized off single-loaded corridors.

Model schools were conceived of by the School Board as a simple way to handle construction necessary to meet the demands of increasing student enrollment. Six schools, designed by architect Edgar Blair from 1909-19, represented contemporary thought in school planning and consisted of eight classrooms, an auditorium, and a home economics room. Some of these new buildings were "border" schools, constructed along the lot line of an existing school site to accommodate classroom expansion that would require substantial additions to the wood-frame model school already on the grounds.



In moving away from the cramped one-room schoolhouse to the model school and subsequently from the model school to the linear design, school officials were responding to the most important concern of schools—the health of the child. Attitudes about protection from fires and earthquakes and the need for adequate ventilation and daylight, clean air, and hygiene facilities have generally followed the public’s growing understanding of science.

Reflecting these concerns, the six-volume set of *Public School Methods* published in 1918 cited classroom air quality as an important element in the development of new school buildings. The effects of bad air were clear:

It has been stated by the New York Board of Health that forty percent of all deaths are occasioned directly or indirectly by bad air...Each pupil should have air space of not less than two hundred cubic feet—two hundred and twenty-five is better. (Later, this becomes an ‘interesting problem’ for arithmetic classes.) This quantity of air should remain in good condition for from five to eight minutes...Moreover, this air must be of the proper temperature and be introduced without drafts. As part of the teacher’s duties, it is recommended to “master the principles upon which your room is ventilated” and to “test the air frequently; step out where it is pure, draw in one or two breaths and return to your room; if it smells foul or overheated or is “stuffy,” it is time for you to act. (The Methods Company.)

Teachers were instructed by this publication to look for “fetid discharges from the ear,” to install ventilators, and to regulate the temperature by opening and closing the windows. With their high ceilings and large windows, early Seattle schools buildings may have saved teachers from taking such drastic measures. These early schools still reflected notions of control and hierarchical learning, and they reinforced gender differences with separate play areas for boys and girls, in keeping with the idea that male and female style of play was different and better to be kept separate.

### **Overview of the Montlake Neighborhood**

The following overview of the Montlake neighborhood is taken from Eugene Smith’s neighborhood history on the Montlake.net website.

Bounded on three sides by water—Lake Washington on the east, Lake Union on the west, and the Lake Washington Ship Canal to the north—Seattle’s Montlake community has throughout Northwest history been sought after. Initially, its easily traversable canoe portage between lakes and, therefore, access to nearby campsites made it popular with Native Americans who came in search of fish, wapato, and other delectables. Then, rapacious explorers and pioneers eyed its commercial potential, seeing it as a place that might become a city bustling with freight: logs and other timber-related enterprises; coal cars moving from eastern Lake Washington to Seattle’s Elliott Bay shipping facilities. Indeed, an enterprising but apparently not very competent young man named Harvey Pike called the portage area

Union City, in hopes that his early property acquisitions in 1861 would appreciate in value and make him rich.

Harvey left by 1880, not yet rich and probably more than a little disappointed that smarter, more influential men than he had their eyes on ways to exploit the unquestionable potential that Union City/Montlake offered—from abundant timber to very appealing residential sites to eventual busy thoroughfares that could move ships east-west and vehicles both east-west and north-south. This prospect was made all the more likely by the area's incorporation in 1891 by the City of Seattle.

The Alaska-Yukon Pacific Exposition—an extremely popular but intentionally short-lived event held in 1909 on the University of Washington campus, just north of Montlake—gave a boost to the area's prominence. Things began to heat up nearly everywhere in this enclave that still seemed remote from downtown Seattle but whose attractiveness was lost on no one who understood real estate. Two brothers, Calvin and William Hagan, with an office in Seattle's New York Building, seem to have come up with the name *Montlake*, though it then applied only to the Montlake Park Addition, the former Union City, a two block-wide section between the lakes now defined by East Shelby and East Hamlin streets. John Boyer, attorney and agent for the Interlaken Investment Company, who was opening the southern part of Montlake to settlement at the same time, preferred the name *Interlaken* but later acceded to *Montlake* as the more inclusive name.

House construction proceeded vigorously during the second and third decades (1910-30) of Montlake/Interlaken—most of them better homes. Restrictive covenants required by Boyer, for example, stated that homes constructed east of 24th Avenue must cost not less than \$3,000 and buildings west of 24th not less than \$5,000—prices substantially above those for typical Seattle houses at the time. Both Boyer and the Hagan brothers were well aware that other amenities were necessary to attract the right buyers. To that end, Boyer exerted considerable effort to create Interlaken Park, the broad swath of trees and streams set in hilly terrain that defines Montlake's southern border. He collaborated closely with the Seattle City Council and George Cotterill, an engineer who platted much of Seattle and was largely responsible for laying out and installing a 25-mile system of bicycle paths, part of which traversed Interlaken Park to what later became Washington Park Arboretum, Montlake's eastern boundary. (The Arboretum was developed primarily in the 1930s by workers hired by the Works Progress Administration, who also built the Montlake Community Fieldhouse). The Hagans, meanwhile, created East and West Montlake Parks, each taking advantage of lake views.

The U.S. Corps of Engineers completed the Lake Washington Ship Canal in 1917, joining Lakes Washington and Union and lowering the level of Lake Washington by about 9'. This impressive Montlake Cut replaced a more modest log-sluice canal dug after Harvey Pike abandoned his futile effort to join the lakes. (The former canal lay just south of the former Museum of History and Industry, approximately where State Route 520 now bisects Montlake, and emptied near the present Fisheries building.) That cut constituted a considerable barrier and traffic obstacle, however. Piers and abutments for a bridge were built in 1914, but a serious proposal for a Montlake Bridge came only in 1916, with completion in 1925. A two-lane bascule bridge with handsome gothic-style towers at each

end, it seemed splendid at the time and contributed to 24th Avenue becoming a major north-south arterial. (The Montlake Bridge is now a City of Seattle Landmark and listed in the National Register of Historic Places and the Washington Heritage Register.)

The 1920s also marked the establishment of the Seattle Yacht Club in its present location near West Montlake Park on Portage Bay and the beginnings of a business district, essentially a one-block area between East Lynn and East McGraw Streets on 24th Avenue East. John Boyer had envisioned businesses on Boyer Avenue, west of 24th, and indeed for a time businesses were there, now supplanted by homes and a mini-park. The main business section included grocery and hardware stores, a cafe, barber and beauty shops, a book-rental store, a dye works, and the Montlake Theater, in its latter years showing foreign films that attracted university students. (Another business area is next to State Route 520, providing groceries, gasoline, and car repair; before 520 construction, the area also included an apartment building, a pancake house, and a real estate office.) Throughout the century, the buildings have changed but little, though their occupants came and went frequently.

In the same year the Montlake Bridge opened for traffic, Montlake School appeared in a new manifestation—a two-story brick building that replaced wooden portables (called Portage School) at the same site on 22nd Avenue East. Following the school opening came the siting of the Montlake Laboratory of the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries (its initial name) on land claimed by the federal government as canal reserve—the site of the old log canal. A handsome building was dedicated in 1931 and has subsequently been home to significant fisheries research.

Other major enterprises that have graced Montlake during most of the latter half of the 20th century are the Museum of History and Industry, St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church (in a building designed by architect Paul Thiry), and Boyer Children's Clinic (formerly Dr. Wyckoff Spastic Pre-School and Clinic), in a building designed by Ibsen Nelson and the Fred Bassetti group.

Montlake's political clout had its origins in the Interlaken Improvement Club, a name that echoed names of many other community organizations in Seattle at the time. It evolved into the Montlake Community Club, which has for more than 50 years been doing battle with local, state, and university officials—and even the Seattle Seahawks football team—with the aim of preserving Montlake's best qualities. Perhaps the greatest loss in those battles was the construction in the 1960s of an enlarged S.R. 520 cut through Montlake where the log canal used to be. That four-lane behemoth—plus the Portage Bay ramp, the massive ramps in the Foster Island-Arboretum area, and the floating bridge—allows thousands of cars and trucks to rush through Montlake, generating noise, air pollution, and street congestion. Many Montlake residents have rued the day they lost that battle, but the Montlake Community Club—renewed often by fresh residents, who quickly appreciate Montlake's many charms—maintains its strong political presence, as Montlake itself exerts its powerful appeal on young, highly educated, and well-to-do professionals, who join with older, mostly less affluent residents, to make the community a multi-ethnic treasure.

## Montlake School History

There was no school in Interlaken in the early 20th century, and children from the area attended Stevens School, which opened on the north end of Capitol Hill in September 1906. This involved their traversing the hill, through brush and woods. Parents were concerned for the safety of their children, and appealed to the School Board for a new school within the emerging residential neighborhood. The School District purchased the subject site in 1914 for \$18,514, erecting a wood-frame portable school. Portage School, as it was called, initially housed 25 students in grades 1-3, with Martha Betz as the first teacher. (Nelson, n.p.) As the neighborhood grew and enrollment increased, more portables were added to the site. By 1915 there were four portables.

School Board meeting minutes from February 16, 1923 note a request from the Portage PTA for the name of the school to be changed to Montlake, for consideration “when a permanent building is to be erected” (vol. 19, p. 234). A month later, the meeting minutes record a request from the Portage School PTA for a permanent school building (vol. 19, p. 260). In June of 1923 they requested an additional portable to accommodate the student body (vol. 19, p. 350), and in August the meeting minutes note that an eight-room building for Portage School was estimated at \$120,000 (vol. 20, p. 28).

The School Board meeting minutes from September 21, 1923, indicate the official name change from Portage School to Montlake School, in honor of its location between two lakes and its view of both the Cascades and Olympics. (The name Montlake had been coined for the neighborhood by developers in the first decade of the 1900s, and now the school would follow suit.)

A communication from the principal of the Portage school was presented, suggesting a change of name for the school in accordance with an accompanying petition from the children of the school, which referred to a previous petition from parents making the same request. The suggested name of ‘Montlake’ having the endorsement of the Superintendent...the request was granted and the school officially renamed ‘Montlake. (vol. 20, p. 90)

By the 1923-24 school year, the student body numbered 135 in grades 1-7 (Thompson & Marr, p. 225). A sum of \$120,000 for a new building for Portage School was authorized with approval of a three-mill tax levy in 1923-24. (Also authorized by the levy were an addition to John Muir Elementary School, a new building for Dunlap Elementary School, an addition to West Seattle High School, and an Intermediate School Building.) (School Board Meeting Minutes, vol. 20, p. 105.) The Seattle School Board decided on this school upgrade largely in response to a parent group that helped to establish the Montlake community’s reputation for political savvy and insistency (Smith, n.p.).

At the October 5, 1923, School Board meeting, a committee recommended that the District’s architect, Floyd A. Naramore, be directed to prepare preliminary plans for a two-story building for Montlake School (vol. 20, p. 112). Just two weeks later, the meeting minutes note that Plan “A”—the central unit proposed for Montlake School—were approved and a

recommendation was made for the architect to report further with sketches and plans for a meeting room and retaining wall at the west end of the grounds (vol. 20, p. 124). The following week, Plan “E” included an assembly room at the north end of the school, and the committee recommended the architect be authorized to prepare final plans and specifications (vol. 20, p. 132).

In January 1924, the Board authorized the expenditure and call for bids for the new school building (vol. 20, p. 209). In order to stay within the appropriated budget, some changes were made to the plans, explained at the February 14, 1924, School Board meeting:

...[T]hese omissions include[d] the assembly room which could be added later, the substitution of terraces for a retaining wall, cast stone for terra cotta, and cement floors in the corridors in place of wood, with a total saving of \$24,287; ...[I]t is the plan of the Board to provide for a temporary assembly room by the omission of partitions between two of the class rooms so that they can be thrown together for assembly purposes until the assembly room can be added according to the original plan. (vol. 20, pp. 223-4)

The new Montlake School opened in September 1924, with a public dedication program on October 21. The school was described as “a two-story unit of what will be expanded into a twenty-one-room building” (*Seattle Daily Times*, October 22, 1924). Enrollment reached a peak of 487 students in 1935-36, and kindergarten was added the following year. The Montlake Community Club petitioned the City Council and the School Board regarding permanent additions to Montlake School, noting that “35% of 470 pupils are attending school in ten-year-old portable buildings with inadequate lighting and heating facilities.” Improper lunchroom, hallway, assembly room and lavatory facilities were also cited. (*Seattle Daily Times*, January 6, 1937.) However, the addition was never built.

When 7th and 8th graders were transferred to Edmond S. Meany School in September 1941, Montlake became a K-6 school with an enrollment of 278. The configuration of the grades changed again, to K-4 in September 1970 and to K-5 by 1978. In 1983-84, the student body of Montlake School was 45% African-American—the highest proportion of any elementary in the District. The school is located in a predominantly white, middle-income neighborhood, but approximately 70% of its students were bussed from other neighborhoods. The same year a new principal, La Vaun Bent, took an innovative approach to reduce class size and eliminate separate programs for “at-risk” and “special education” children, grouping students by ability and focusing on reading each morning. Subsequent test results rose markedly and there were fewer discipline problems. Bent’s approach became known as the “Montlake Model,” and the school was recognized as a leader in educational reform. (Thompson & Marr, pp. 225-6.)

Montlake School was identified in a 1975 urban inventory as a building significant to the city, “noteworthy for its prominent siting and community associations” (Nyberg and Steinbrueck).

## Original Architect, Floyd A. Naramore

Floyd A. Naramore (1879–1970) was the School District’s architect at the time of Montlake School’s design and construction. Naramore was born in Warren, Illinois, grew up in Mason City, Iowa, and studied engineering at the University of Wisconsin. He worked as a bridge draftsman for the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad from 1900-03, and in 1904-05 he worked on construction of the Chicago & Northwester Office Building in Chicago with architect George Fuller. Naramore received a B.S. in Architecture from MIT in 1907, working briefly as a draftsman for John McEwen & Company in Chicago before moving to Portland, Oregon. In Portland he took a position with Northwest Bridgeworks, where he became skilled at cost estimating. This benefitted him during his tenure as Architect and Superintendent of Properties for the Portland school system, a position he held from 1912-19, designing 16 schools.

The Seattle School Board, impressed with Naramore’s school design and ability to control costs, hired him in 1919 as architect for the Seattle School District. In this position, he designed the following schools (\* designated Seattle Landmark):

- Highland Park Elementary (1919-21, demolished)
- Martha Washington Girls Parental School (1920-21, demolished)
- Bailey Gatzert Elementary (1921, demolished)
- Addition to Greenwood Elementary (1921)
- John Hay Elementary (1921-22)
- Roosevelt High School\* (1921-22)
- Columbia Elementary (1922)
- James Garfield High School\* (1922-23)
- **Montlake Elementary** (1923-24)
- Dunlap Elementary\* (1923-24)
- Addition to West Seattle High School\* (1924)
- Addition to Ballard High School (1925, demolished)
- E.C. Hughes Elementary (1925-26)
- Bryant Elementary\* (1926)
- Magnolia Elementary (1926-27)
- Alexander Hamilton Jr. High (1926-27)
- John Marshall Jr. High (1926-27)
- Grover Cleveland High School\* (1926-27)
- Whittier Elementary (1927-28, demolished)
- Laurelhurst Elementary (1928-29)
- James Madison Jr. High\* (1928-29)
- Bagley Elementary (1928-30)
- Addition to Emerson Elementary (1930, addition demolished)
- James Monroe Jr. High (1930-31)
- Loyal Heights Elementary (1931-32)

In 1924, Naramore formed a partnership with Alvin Menke, designing schools in Ellensburg and Aberdeen, as well as consulting on school projects in Longview and Bellingham. In 1929

they dissolved the partnership, a result of the onset of the Depression and lack of funds for construction. After the completion of Loyal Heights Elementary, construction in the Seattle School District ceased, leading to Naramore's resignation in 1932. His knowledge of institutional design and construction helped him win commissions in the 1930s, including Bagley Hall (1935-36) at the University of Washington, designed with architects Grainger & Thomas and Bebb & Gould.

Naramore formed a partnership with Clifton Brady in 1938, to design temporary defense housing and schools in the Seattle area. He designed T.T. Minor Elementary (1940-41) in a Modern aesthetic, leaving behind the Georgian features that characterized his work as the District's official architect. In addition to his partnership with Brady, Naramore joined other combined practices from 1940 to 1943, forming joint ventures to carry out the large amount and scale of work commissioned by the federal government during World War II.

The partnership of Naramore, Bain, Brady & Johanson (now NBBJ) was established in 1943. Naramore, who was 64, was named senior partner and had broad responsibilities for firm management. A 1950 firm profile credits him as the partner responsible for school programming, design, and client contact (*Progressive Architecture*, September 1950). Naramore passed on his experience in school planning, supervising design work for McKinley Elementary in Olympia (1948-49, demolished) and other projects. Naramore oversaw a number of projects for the Wenatchee School District, including the Columbia School (1950), Lewis & Clark School (1951), and Lincoln School (1951). Other school projects included Roosevelt Elementary School (1949) in Olympia; Clyde Hill School (1952) and Ashwood School (1956), both in Bellevue; and Three Points Elementary (1961) in Medina. Notable NBBJ projects during Naramore's time at the firm included the UW Health Sciences Building (1949) and Veterans Administration Hospital (1952) in Seattle.

Naramore became a fellow of the AIA in 1935 and served as president of the Washington State Chapter from 1939 to 1940. He died in Seattle on October 29, 1970. Seattle Public Schools has held the annual Naramore Art Show, named in honor of Floyd Naramore, since 1985 to showcase work of "highest achieving arts students."

### **Naramore's Elementary Schools**

A typological review of the elementary schools designed by Naramore during his tenure as the District's architect (1919-32) indicates a clear consistency to them. The architect preferred to site each school building to provide an imposing presence, often using terraces and entrance stairs, and all sites were graded to create a level base.

The majority of these elementary schools, like Montlake, were designed with Georgian stylistic features and with symmetrically composed primary façades (and similar end wing façades, if present). The schools are characterized by simple, flat-roofed massing; brick masonry exteriors with cast stone or terra cotta trim; and large, operable wood windows with divided lights. Common stylistic details include quoining, decorative keystone details above windows, a projecting cornice, and entry surrounds often featuring columns or pilasters and entablature. Entries are emphasized by a slight projection in the façade and other detailing, such as a triangular pediment at the top of the entry bay. Montlake School is distinct in

having two equal end-bay entries on the primary façade, while each of the other elementary school buildings feature a central entry. Some of the schools, like Montlake, have windows grouped into large openings, providing an external reading of interior spaces and ample daylight to classrooms from a single wall source. Others, such as Dunlap and Hughes, have evenly-spaced, large single windows that reveal little of the internal plan. Most of the elementaries are two stories in height.

On the interior, these schools were organized with a central double-loaded corridor serving classroom and support spaces. This plan offered flexibility and easily allowed perpendicular wing additions, which would also have double-loaded corridors, if more space was needed.

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***The features of the Landmark to be preserved include:*** the site; the exteriors of the main building and covered play areas; and the following elements of the classroom interiors: original wood entry doors, built-in wardrobes, built-in storage, chalkboards, wood trim, and wood floors.

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