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HistoryLink File #10542

Seattle Public Schools, 1862-2000: Latona School

This People's History of Latona School is taken from *Building for Learning: Seattle Public School Histories, 1862-2000* by Nile Thompson and Carolyn J. Marr. That book, published in 2002 by Seattle Public Schools, compiled profiles of all the public school buildings that had been used by the school district since its formation around 1862. The profiles from the book are being made available as People's Histories on HistoryLink.org courtesy of Seattle Public Schools. It should be noted that these essays are from 2000. Some of the buildings profiled are historic, some of recent vintage, and many no longer exist (new names and buildings not included in these profiles from 2000 have been added), but each plays or has played an important role in the education of Seattle's youth.

Latona School

In the 1880s, the north shores of Lake Union and Portage Bay were still covered with thick forest, which was beginning to provide a steady flow of logs to the first sawmills in the area. The small community of Latona, named for the Greek goddess of darkness, developed along the tracks of the Seattle, Lakeshore and Eastern Railroad that ran from the downtown waterfront to the north end of Lake Washington. Small steamers carried passengers across Lake Union to the settlements of Fremont and Latona and beyond.

As early as 1882, residents petitioned for a school in the Latona area. The earliest school was called the Lake Union School. It opened in a rented portion of the new First Christian Church the same year that the entire area north of Lake Union became part of the City of Seattle.

In 1891, the Seattle School District purchased six lots in Latona and a new Latona School was built. The building had a wooden tower with arches and a weather vane. It opened with over 100 children and four teachers. The district set the school's boundaries as "All that portion of the city east of Elmer Street [Wallingford Avenue] and north of the old city boundary."

As the student population grew to over 300 in 1900-01, the church site used earlier became an annex, as did the Kima Building, which was rented in December 1900. The Latona Church Annex comprised two classrooms for pupils in grades 3-4.

A new, larger Latona School opened in 1906. Built in the Queen Anne style, it was one of several wood frame "model schools" built in the 1903-06 period. Only a few of these schools survive as schools today (Hay, Stevens, and Coe).

In 1917, an American Renaissance-style brick building was placed on the north end, perpendicular to the wooden building. It contained large playrooms and an auditorium on the first floor and classrooms on the upper two floors. With this greatly enlarged space, enrollment jumped to over 600 students. The 1892 schoolhouse was still used as an annex for manual training and home economics and, later, drawing. In 1921, the district purchased lots south of the school to expand the playground area.

Midway through the school year in 1927, the 7th and 8th grades were transferred to the new Hamilton Intermediate School. Latona then went to a semi-departmental system in which grades 4-6 each had a homeroom and, through the day, moved to other classrooms for music, physical training, and art. With its reduced enrollment, the school had open classrooms and three adjustment classes were added in the extra space.

In the late 1950s, Interstate 5 was built just to the east of the school. According to school records, "the coming of the freeway forced dozens of families to move out to other areas, causing a marked drop in enrollment and the progressive loss of teaching units." With additional space opened up, another special education class was added in 1958 and still another in 1959.

In 1972, Latona's 6th graders were transferred to Hamilton Middle School. At the same time, some students from closed Interlake School came to Latona and the special education classes were shifted elsewhere.

On October 1, 1975, Alternative Elementary #3 began operation at Latona with 125 students and four teachers. The program featured multi-grade levels within each classroom. During the 1980s, Latona developed a unique program called Escuela Latona that emphasized Spanish language and Hispanic culture. The school also housed a newcomer center for students recently arrived from Southeast Asia.

A major project began in 1999 to renovate Latona's existing 1906 building, demolish the 1917 addition, and build a new three-story addition that would significantly increase the size of the school. Latona students were housed in the newly remodeled Lincoln High School during construction. Designed by Bassetti Architects, the addition was completed by summer 2000.

When the refurbished school opened in September 2000, it contained the John Stanford International School, Seattle's first language -immersion program. Spanish is used for half of the school day, beginning the first year with the kindergarten and 1st grades. All teachers and staff have received training in Spanish to facilitate communication in that language. Japanese may be added as an option for the second year.

The Stanford School is one of 600 in the nation offering such a program. The school was the dream of John Stanford, acclaimed Seattle schools' superintendent who succumbed to leukemia in 1998. The University of Washington has agreed to help in the new school's mission. In September 2000, students will be greeted by the 82-year-old tile nameplate of "Latona," which has been made into a freestanding entryway.

Details:

Name: Lake Union School
 Location: 2nd NE & (N)E 41st
 Building: 2-story wood church
 1890: Opened as a rented school site; annexed into Seattle School District
 1892: Closed
 1901: Church moved to new facility; purchased by district in August; reopened as Latona Church Annex
 ca. 1905: Closed
 1907: Leased to Presbyterian Mission
 1910: Site sold by the district by May
 ca. 1920: Used by Dutch Reform Church
 1932: Sold by Immanuel Reformed Church
 n.a.: Building moved or demolished

Name: Latona School
 Location: (N)E 42nd Street & 5th Avenue NE
 Building: 4-room wood
 Site: 1 acre
 1892: Opened
 1906: Closed as main building; opened as annex
 1924-32: Closed and demolished

Name: Latona School
 Location: 401 NE 42nd Street
 Building: 8-room wood
 Architect: James Stephen
 Site: 1 acre
 1906: Named on March 6; opened in September
 1917: 8-room brick addition (Edgar Blair) opened
 1921: Site expanded to 1.7 acres
 1959-89: Site expanded to 2.21 acres
 1981: 1906 exterior designated as part of city landmark in April
 1999: Closed for construction;
 1917 addition demolished

Latona School in 2000
 John Stanford International School @ Latona
 Enrollment: 384
 Address: 4057 5th Avenue NE
 Nickname: Lions
 Configuration: K-5
 Colors: Purple and white
 Note: This information for year 2000-01

Sources:

Nile Thompson and Carolyn J. Marr, *Building for Learning: Seattle Public School Histories, 1862-2000* (Seattle: Seattle Public Schools, 2002). By , September 08, 2013



Latona School, Seattle, ca. 1892

Courtesy Seattle Public Schools (Image No. 241-1)



Students, Latona School, Seattle, 1900

Courtesy Seattle Public Schools (Image No. 241-7)



Students, Latona School, Seattle, 1914

Courtesy Seattle Public Schools (Image No. 241-97)



Aerial view, Latona School, Seattle, 1960

Courtesy Seattle Public Schools (Image No. 241-4)



Latona School, Seattle, 2001

Photo by Mary Randlett, Courtesy Seattle Public Schools (Image No. 241-100)

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