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 79/08

Name and Address of Property: John B. Allen School
6532 Phinney Avenue NW

Legal Description: Beginning at the northwest of Phinney Avenue Addition as recorded in Vol. 20 of Plats, page 85, records of King County, Washington. Thence North 0°02'37" E 316 feet more or less to the north line of the SW ¼ of the SW ¼ of the SW ¼ of Section 6, Township 25N Range 4 East W. M.; thence east along the north line of said subdivision to the west margin of Dayton Avenue; thence South 0°01'36" E along the margin of Dayton Avenue to the north margin of the alley according to the plat of Phinney Avenue Addition; thence North 89°51'41" W349.52 feet to the point of beginning.

Legal Description of portion of Air Raid Siren site:
That portion of the right of way of Phinney Ave N, situate in the Southwest1/4 of Section 6, Township 25 North, Range 6 East W.M., King County, Washington, described as follows:

Commencing at a found ¼"brass pin in a 4" pyramidal concrete monument inside a monument case at the intersection of the centerline of Phinney Ave N with the south margin of N 67th St.; thence S 88° 19'52" E along said south margin a distance of 40.00 feet to the east margin of Phinney Ave N; thence S 1°17'40" W along said east margin a distance of 34.00 feet to the Point of Beginning; thence N 88° 19' 52" W a distance of 12.00 feet; thence S 1° 17' 40" W a distance of 20.00 feet; thence S 88° 19'52" E a distance of 12.00 feet to the east margin of Phinney Ave N; thence N 1° 17' 40" E a distance of 20.00 feet to the Point of Beginning

Containing 240 square feet, more or less.

At the public meeting held on February 6, 2008, the City of Seattle's Landmarks Preservation Board voted to approve designation of the John B. Allen School at 6532 Phinney Avenue NW as a Seattle Landmark based upon satisfaction of the following standards for designation of SMC 25.12.350:

*D. It embodies the distinctive visible characteristics of an architectural style, period, or of a method of construction*

*F. Because of its prominence of spatial location, contrast of siting, age, or scale, it is an easily identifiable visual feature of the neighborhood or the city and contributes to the distinctive quality or identity of such neighborhood or city.*

## DESCRIPTION

### Site Description

Bounded by Phinney Avenue North on the west, Dayton Avenue North on the east, North Sixty-Seventh Street on the north, and single and multifamily residential buildings on the south, the site slopes steeply from the west to east, approximately 40 feet. The resulting connected terraces between the two buildings, which once contained portable school buildings and were used for outdoor physical activity areas, now form level parking lots and play areas which are used by the Phinney Neighborhood Association for community activities and functions.

The site measures 316 feet by 460 feet, and is bisected in a north-south direction by a steeply sloping planted area. To the west of the slope are a paved parking lot and a small children's play area. Further west, the parking lot is bounded by a tall concrete retaining wall, adjacent to the sidewalk along Phinney Avenue. To the east of the upper parking lot, two sets of concrete steps connect to another lower paved parking lot, a larger children's play area, and an area used for a weekly summer farmers' market. In the center of the site, there is a play area with equipment integrated into the sloping hillside.

The south side of the wooden building was once the main entry to the first school building, with a large open area and special garden plantings. When Phinney Avenue was widened and residential structures were built to the south, the axial approach to the building changed significantly, although the doors still served as the building's main entry. Later, in 1987 a wooden walkway and stairs were added to the north side, creating a double-sided, less-direct entry sequence to the building. In the late 1980s, the courtyard at the original entry was landscaped with small trees and perennials. A set of concrete stairs connect this small courtyard to the lower terrace at the west of the brick building.

The lower terrace bisects the site approximately in the center in the north-south direction From there, the site continues to slop steeply to the east, bonded by a level concrete sidewalk on the east side of the Brick Building at Dayton Avenue North. The steep site slope provides for entry to the Brick Building at the 2nd Floor on the west side and at the Ground Floor on the east. At either end of the Brick Building concrete stairs connect the level terrace to the sidewalk below.

A concrete sidewalk borders the site on the north side; single family residences border the site along the east edge of the south property line. An intermittent chain link fence surrounds the building on three sides and serves to delineate the property edges rather than restrict access to or from the site.

A significant feature of the site is the 1950s-era air-raid siren tower located at the northwest corner of the site. The 45' tall steel structure is one of many installed in Seattle in 1952 to warn citizens of incoming Soviet missiles or atomic bombs. During World War II, Seattle installed 63 air raid sirens, most small enough to attach to telephone poles. Placed in storage after the war, all working sirens reappeared in the early 1950s when tensions mounted with the Soviet Union. The City added 21 more, including several enormous sirens mounted on steel towers, after Seattle Mayor William Devin promised "the best air-raid warning system of any city of our size in America."

The Seattle City Engineering Department received permission from the Seattle School Board on March 13, 1953 to install a motor-driven air raid siren on the northeast corner of the upper play field of the John B. Allen School. They had determined this location to be the most satisfactory site with two legs of the tower supporting the siren outside the cyclone fence on city right of way and two on the inside of the fence on School District property.

Phinney's "Big Bertha" was installed on April 22, 1953. Chrysler built the five- horsepower, 5,542-pound siren, and the Seattle Department of Engineering placed it atop four steel legs set into concrete footings at the 12' x 12' base. With her gas-powered engine, Big Bertha could top 130 decibels and be heard over a mile and a half away. Wednesday noon siren tests were conducted until the early 1970s: three minutes of an extremely loud, pulsating, undulating tone, followed by a blast of sound lasting one minute, two minutes of silence, a second one-minute blast, two more minutes of silence, and finally a one-minute blast to mean "all clear." During the tests, students at the John B. Allen Elementary School were required to curl up under their desks and hold a heavy book over their heads.

During the spring of 2002, the Phinney Neighborhood Association made a plea for volunteers to resolve the future of the siren tower. A committee formed and determined that the neighborhood overwhelmingly favored restoring the siren tower to its original appearance. That plan was finally realized in October, 2006, when the City of Seattle repaired and repainted it in one of the color combinations the federal government traditionally used for Cold War siren towers: forest green legs, topped by a bright yellow "Big Bertha." Today, the siren remains silent. A small park was established at the base of the tower in 2002.

The site presently contains four small utilitarian structures – one at the upper parking area, one at the south side of the site near the original entry to the 1904 Building, and two at the lower area near the Brick Building, one of which is a demonstration "green-roof" project. In 2005, six large water tanks were installed beneath the north entry stair of the Wooded Building as another demonstration project for the capture and reuse use of rain water from the building's roof.

## BUILDING DESCRIPTIONS

### The 1904 Wooden Building

The wood-framed building component of the Allen School was constructed in 1904 on the southwest corner of the site, in a prominent location. It was constructed as a model school, and was one of several model schools designed in the Colonial Revival style, by school district architect James Stephen. It was Stephen's first of this style for the school district – he designed two others, Coe (1907) and Stevens (1906), which were larger and more detailed.

### Building Exterior

The wooden building is rectangular in plan, 66' x 89', three and one-half stories tall above existing grade. It has a hipped roof with hipped wall dormers on the east and west facades, and a projecting, hipped center block at the south entry. The exposed basement walls are of painted common brick, with a molded wood water table above. The upper portion of the building is sheathed in painted horizontal lap siding, with a four-inch exposure. The cornice line, at the ceiling of the second floor on all elevations, is accented by a wide, painted wood board, which serves to accept the deep, ornamentally sawn rafter tails that support both the main hipped roof and the dormers above. Composition shingles have been installed in place of the original wood shingles. The main roof is capped with a large hipped roof cupola which originally served as a part of the building's ventilation system.

The wooden building is constructed of wood framing, with 3 foot x 3 foot stepped concrete footings and concrete foundation walls. The interior columns are symmetrically spaced between 12 feet and 10 feet - 7 inches in the north-south direction, and between 10 feet – 2 inches and 14 feet in the east-west direction. The central stair is supported on internal 8 inch wide concrete bearing walls at the center of the building. The exterior basement walls are noted on the original drawings as 17 inches thick, and are clad on the exterior with painted common brick, laid in a running bond. Above the painted brick, the exterior walls are wood frame. The first floor is framed by 15 inch (42#) I-beams which are supported on exposed 6-3/4 inch diameter steel columns. Wood joists, 3 x 16's at 16 inches on center, span between them. I-beams. The second floor is framed with 3 x 16's at 16 inches on center.

The hipped roof is framed using mill construction. It is comprised of four large trusses, made up of a unique combination of straight and diagonal 2 x 6's, 2 x 8's, 2 x 10's, and 6 x 6's, tied at four locations with bolted 3/4 inch diameter steel rods. The large dormers and the front entry porch are of standard wood framing.

The building's original design had three primary elevations – south, east, and west. On the east and west, dictated by the symmetrical classroom layout on the first and second floors, the fenestration on the east and west elevations is symmetrically organized and identical. These were comprised of a regular pattern of tall, narrow (4 feet x 11 feet), double-hung, 4:4 wood sash at each classroom, A-B-A, in a tripartite arrangement. The tripartite windows at the first and second floors are flanked by single, double-hung windows and capped with a tripartite dormer window. Over each grouping is a molded cornice trim. This arrangement serves to increase the vertical appearance of these two facades. At the basement on the west, the windows are smaller, (4 feet x 7 feet), 4:4 wood sashes with sandstone sills, recessed slightly into the brick wall surface.

At the original main hipped roof south entry, slightly shorter 4:4 wood sashes are centered on the stair that forms the central vertical circulation spine of the building. These windows also have a cornice molding, and are separated by a painted wood panel at the floor line. The central windows are flanked by smaller 4:4, double-hung windows.

A projecting entry block is accented by a centrally-located pedimented porch, with paired rectangular posts at the outside corners. A vertical slat balustrade spans between the paired posts. The gable end of the porch pediment is sheathed with painted board and batten siding, and the porch itself has exposed rafter tails on the east and west sides. Inside the porch are two pairs of glazed and paneled entry doors with transoms above. These doors lead to the main stair landing – one-half flight up to the first floor and one-half flight down to the basement. On either side of the porch, concrete steps lead directly down to the basement, which is accessed through a single glazed and paneled painted wood door.

The north elevation, originally the secondary façade, has many fewer windows than the other three, although symmetrically arranged. The fenestration consists of paired 4:4, double-hung windows at the first and second floors, flanked by single, narrow 4:4 wood sash on the east side and a similar single wood sash on the west. The western sash of the central pairs at the first and second floor has been converted to glazed and paneled wood doors to serve as entries to and fire exits from the building. A painted wood frame stair was added to the building circa 1960, and an entry landing/bridge was added in 1987. The bridge now serves as a primary entry to the building from the northwest parking area below and Phinney Avenue to the west.

**Building Interior**

The plan of the wooden building is simple: two floors of four classrooms each organized around a large central hall, with a basement comprised of two more classrooms and service spaces, for a total of ten original classrooms. A large imposing wooden stairwell at the south entry side of the building serves to connect the three floors. The stairwell, which is 14'-8" wide, is comprised of a dark varnished fir balustrade with turned balusters, heavy shaped top rail, and seven-sided newel posts topped with a rounded, acorn- shaped cap. The stair treads, well worn in the center from over one hundred years of daily use, and connecting landings, are wood, painted in a dark, glossy brown. The stairwell walls are lined with varnished 1-1/2" tongue and groove wainscoting to 6'-6" above the stained stringers. Above the wood is painted plaster. At the south side, a large double-height tri-part window floods the stair with natural light.

The central hallways on the first and second floors are similar in their symmetry and finish materials. The main halls are 14 feet tall floor-to-ceiling, and are the same width as the central stair. They are comprised of stained 2-1/2 inch wide tongue and groove fir flooring, and varnished 1-1/2 inch tongue and groove wainscoting extending up to 5 feet – 6 inches above the finish floor. The wainscoting outside the classrooms is sprinkled with the remnants of child-height coat hooks and small metal name tag holders. In many locations, the hooks and name holders remain above the wooden benches. Secondary side-aisle spaces are created by three full height 10-1/2 inch square fir columns, spaced at 9 feet - 9-1/2 inches along the long side of each central hallway. The columns, which support three wide flat

arches, are detailed on each side with fluting that extends up to approximately 9 feet above the finish floor.

The side aisles outside the eight main level classrooms were originally enclosed on the hallway side with metal screens that spanned between the large columns. At the far end was a small single sink. The purpose of the divided hallway is unclear, but may have served to as coat and boot storage, or to segregate the boys and girls at each grade level, or been provided for separate entry into and exit from each classroom.[1]

Each of the eight classrooms on the first and second floors were originally 33' long by 27' wide. Each was identical, with a 4 foot high blackboard on each end of the room. Below each blackboard, beside and below the windows, and on the wall opposite the windows, the walls were covered in burlap wainscoting. This has been removed, and is presently painted plaster. Each classroom was entered through one of three stained wood doors directly off of the central hallway. The classroom doors were typically comprised of three raised panels, with an upper glazed lite. The majority of these doors remain.

**Changes to the Building**

Since its construction, there have been very few changes to the 1904 structure when occupied as a school building. These included fire alarm and electrical alterations, and some exterior paving modifications. When the PNA was contracted to manage the building in 1981, a few additional changes were planned to improve the building's use as a community center. In 1987, the southwest first floor classroom and entry corridor were remodeled for use as staff offices and reception area, and an original principal's office was converted to the current entry vestibule. On the second floor, the demising wall between the two west classrooms was removed to create a larger space. Wall mirrors and foot rails were added to the end walls, but sections of the original black boards remain. The original windows remain unchanged.

The 1904, "Blue Building" was repainted in 2001 - 2003, with approval from the Department of Neighborhoods, through which funding for lead paint abatement and repainting was received. The current color scheme of blue for the body of the main building, with cream trim, yellow window sash, and dark green doors and lower trim was chosen to continue to communicate the history of the building within the community. The building has always been painted a blue color, and although the current main body "blue" does not have a historic reference, it was determined that retention of blue was important to retain the building's identity within the community and for building users. The current blue and new accent colors were accepted as tasteful and attractive, and provided an updated visual appearance for the historic structure.

**The 1918 Brick Building**

The brick building component of the Allen School was completed in 1918. It was one of six similar schools designed by architect Edgar Blair. While it was not a model school like the wooden building, it represented contemporary thought in school planning, consisting of eight classrooms, an auditorium, and a home economics room.

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[1] A drawing for the Madrona School (designed by Stephen in 1904, now demolished) shows a similar arrangement and partition wall designed of pipe rails and expanded metal infill. It is entitled "cloak room".

**Building Exterior**

The primary structure of the "fire-proof" brick building is reinforced concrete foundation walls (21-1/2 inches wide) with internal 6 feet x 6 feet concrete footings and concrete posts, ranging from 12 inches x 12 inches, up to 18 inches x 18 inches. The floors and stairs are also reinforced concrete, ranging from 4 inches to 9-1/2 inches thick, with reinforced concrete beams. The structural grid is approximately 11 feet 2 inches on center in the north-south direction, and asymmetrical in the east-west direction, based on the interior plan layout. On the interior, the partition walls are 4 inch or 6 inches hollow clay masonry. Like the 1904 building, the roof framing of the brick building is also a unique mill construction, comprised of 8 x 8 diagonals, 8 x 10 purlins, and 6 x 10 rafters. The trusses are tied with 3/4 inch diameter steel rods. The exterior walls above the concrete foundations are brick masonry infill.

The building was entered from the west side, proximate to the wooden building, at the first floor, or from the east side, from Dayton Avenue North, at the basement level. In contrast to the wooden building, the brick building is a concrete structure, faced with pressed red brick set in a running bond with headers placed at every seventh course. (Drawings indicate the pressed brick was shade #82 from the Denny Renton Clay and Coal Company.) The brick masonry facades are typically detailed with decorative brick bonding patterns, projecting horizontal courses, and projecting pilasters.

The building's long rectangular form is topped with a simple hipped roof. The 8:12 hipped roof and 3 foot - 6 inch overhanging eaves are supported on large decorative wood brackets. On the west and east elevations, one bracket is located above each of the window openings and brick pilasters. On the north and south, the brackets are either paired or equally spaced above the broad expanse of brick masonry. Originally capped with a terra cotta tile, the roof is presently sheathed with slate. The decorative galvanized iron gutter covering has been replaced with painted sheet metal fascia and gutters.

On the east side, the building's basement level exhibits a rusticated base, comprised of a projecting string course at every eighth course. Above the base, at the first floor line, a soldier course encircles the entire perimeter of the building, creating a strong horizontal line. The frieze, just below the eave line, is comprised of a double row of molded brick, specified to be laid in Flemish bond, further accentuating the building's horizontal lines. The building's entries and the vertical structural piers between the window bays are accentuated on the exterior by brick pilasters that are comprised of decorative brick capitals and bases.

On the east elevation, at the first and second floors, the windows along the corridor portion are typically single, narrow six-light wooden, hinged sashes with a two-light transoms above. On the west elevation on the second floor, classroom side, the windows are paired, center hinged, six-light wood casements with four-light transoms above. On the first floor, the windows are similar to the corridor side, with narrow, single six-light sashes and transoms above. The north and south elevations have no windows.

Due to the steeply sloping site, the west elevation presents of two stories above grade, the first and second floors. Matching the plan, the elevation is defiantly symmetrical, with a main entry into the central stairwell in the center of the facade and secondary entrances on each end. Above the pair of entry doors, a large transom window, comprised of two pairs of casement windows topped with a pair of four-lite transoms, and matching pair of transom

windows above, floods the stair landings with natural light, from the second floor to the basement. All three entries on this facade are covered with small, asphalt-shingled shed hoods with decorative brackets to protect the door openings. The central entry is flanked by wide brick masonry pilasters, each with narrow paired windows and transoms that serve to light offices at each floor. Centered between the central and the side entries is a similar wide brick pilaster with narrow paired 2:2 windows with matching width transom each floor. These windows light the girls' and boys' restrooms at each floor.

Between each wide brick pilaster is a tripartite arrangement of paired and transomed hinged sash windows, separated by thin brick piers. This fenestration serves to light the four classrooms on each floor. The pilasters and piers extend from grade up to the decorative brick eave line.

The east elevation has a centered entrance accentuated by flanking brick pilasters and a decorative semi-circular arched top blind transom, or tympanum, with a raised concrete panel above. The arched opening is accented by brick rowlocks at the top and concrete quoining at the sides, which extends up from the concrete base. Brick columns, located between each vertical pair of narrow pivot windows, extend from the top of the rusticated brick base to the double row of molded brick just below the eave line. Interestingly, this vertical emphasis on this façade, combined with the strong horizontal composition of the building as a whole, serves to strengthen the composition.

The single-story brick block on the north end of the main building is the former fan room. It has a flat roof with a concrete coping, and a brick solider course 2 feet – 6 inches below the coping. On the east façade, the blocked up opening, which formerly was a large air intake, is flanked by two wood 4:4 double-hung windows. An 8 foot wide concrete stair separates the boiler building from the main brick building. On the south end is a similarly sized brick block boiler room. It also has flat roof with concrete coping and a brick soldier course 3 feet below the coping. The original tripartite wood 4:4 window opening has been replaced with different sized openings. Further to the south an 8' wide stair climbs from the street to the lower play area.

**Building Interior**

The plan of this American Renaissance style building is a simple long rectangle, 39 feet 3 inches wide by 316 feet long. On the first and second floors, two classrooms, approximately 35 feet – 6 inches by 19 feet – 8 inches, are symmetrically located on either side of a central stair core. The plan is split longitudinally, with four classrooms along one side of the building and a long, straight 11 foot wide corridor on the opposite side. On each floor, two classrooms are symmetrically located on either side of a central stair core that extends from the first floor, up to the second floor, and down to the basement. The second floor contains the original "book room" and the "emergency room" either side of the central stair. On the first floor, a 'teachers' room" and principal's office flanked the center stair. At the basement level, there is one large playroom and an auditorium/lunchroom. At the south end of the building is an attached brick masonry single-story block which contains the boiler room and a short masonry chimney. (It was originally over 62 feet tall.) At the north end, a single-story, unattached block contains the fan room.

Interior finishes of the classrooms consist of the original materials of painted plaster over the hollow clay masonry partition walls, with a "cement wainscot" up to 30 inches above the

stained wood floor, a 3 foot – 6 inch tall linear blackboard above that, and a picture rail mounted at approximately 4 feet above that. On the wall opposite the linear blackboard, the classrooms contained a unique "hidden" varnished wood storage unit with push-up blackboard door panels, flanked by a glazed bookcase unit. The ceiling heights are approximately 13 feet tall. In most classrooms the ceilings are covered in suspended acoustical tile, with recessed 2 foot by 4 foot fluorescent light fixtures.

The corridors on each floor are also comprised of painted durable cement wainscot wall finish, with a stained trim rail that circles the entire space at the height of the door heads. The trim line serves to accentuate the long, horizontal design of the circulation space. Above the trim, the wall finish is painted plaster. The doors, and door and window trim are varnished wood throughout. The ceilings retain the original suspended glass globe "schoolhouse" light fixtures, with acoustical tiles glued to the underside of the concrete ceiling material. The floors are highly polished "plastic" according to the original 1916 drawings. (It appears to be linoleum with a high gloss wax finish.) The students toilets, both boys' and girls', contain original marble toilet stalls, stained doors, painted concrete floors, and many original plumbing fixtures. The walls are painted plaster and cement.

The three sets of stairs connecting the three levels of the building are painted concrete, with some contrasting trim bands. The stair side rails are also constructed of concrete, with painted steel handrails. In a few classrooms, and at the Ground Floor Auditorium, the original wood floors have been replaced with new.

### Changes to the Building

Since its original construction, the 1918 Building has remained virtually unchanged, with a few exceptions. In 1936, the Auditorium in the Ground Floor was remodeled to enlarge the stage. When the building was originally constructed, it did not contain a lunchroom or kitchen, even though it was originally designed to contain both, separated by a partition. Instead it was decided to provide a Home Economics Classroom. (The children ate in one of the portables located on the upper portion of the site.) In 1957, the Home Economics area was converted to an Auditorium/Lunchroom , and a kitchen was added to the north east corner. Management of the building by the PNA has resulted in few changes, as the large classrooms work well for meeting spaces and community activities. Teacher offices are leased to individuals.

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### Site History

The John B. Allen School, located in Seattle's Phinney Ridge neighborhood, is surrounded by a variety of building types ranging from small, low-scale commercial buildings and early twentieth-century bungalows, to later two-story and three-story apartment buildings. The subject property is comprised of two buildings – the wooden one completed in 1904, and the brick one completed in 1918 – situated on opposite corners of the essentially square site.

The Seattle School District purchased the unplotted three-acre site in 1902 to build a new school for the growing neighborhood for $1,850. Prior to that time, several children were being taught in the private living room of house on Green Lake Way. The new school, named Park School for its proximity to Woodland Park, was a grouping of three portable

buildings that housed 99 students, in grades 1 -7. In 1904, a fourth portable was added to the site and enrollment increased to 181, and an 8th grade was added. Even the new portable did not relieve the pressures of the growing student population, and the school board proposed and approved that a new eight room school building be built on the site.

The new permanent building was named for John Beard Allen, Washington's first US Senator. J.B. Allen, a lawyer, from Indiana by way of Walla Walla, was instrumental in the construction of the Naval Ship yard in Bremerton, the development of Fort Lawton,, and the building of the Lake Washington Ship Canal.

The new school was constructed in a style that was intended to allow for expansion as student enrollment increased. When Phinney Avenue was widened in 1911, it reduced the area of the site to the west and placed physical restrictions on the expansion opportunities for the building, and resulted in the wood structure appearing substantially lower than street level. This changed the physical approach to the building.[2] And in 1917, rather than adding to the existing building as demand for classroom space grew, the district chose to construct the "modern" brick building on the lower eastern portion of the site, along Dayton Avenue, and to blend the two buildings by using the large expanse of site in between as play areas with connecting stairways. The classrooms in the two buildings were also numbered consecutively -- 1 – 8 in the first building, and 9 – 16 in the second – to further unify the two structures.

Enrollment peaked in 1932-33 to 758, and in late 1940 parents petitioned the district to provide a double portable as a gymnasium. In the early 1940s, the 7th and 8th graders were moved to their nearest junior high schools, and by 1944, the older structure was noted as having "outlived its usefulness." Over time, the school's emphasis shifted to the newer brick building, and closed the older building to regular elementary classes. In 1972, an alternative school, the Allen Free School was opened in a portable on the site, and offered a variety of learning approaches. The program, for 4th and 5th graders, was supervised by the Allen principal, and parents could choose either traditional or alternative learning curriculums. Within three years, classes were later increased to include K through 5th grade, with an enrollment of 108 students, and the program moved into the older building.

In 1977, the Allen Free School became the Allen-Orca Alternative School for grades K through 5, and by 1980 had a waiting list of 70. Unfortunately, declining traditional student enrollment, decreasing federal funding, and determination that the building would be unsafe in a seismic event, the school district closed the Allen School in early 1981, and it was subsequently leased as a community facility by the Phinney Neighborhood Association.

**Phinney-Greenwood Neighborhood Development**

**Guy Phinney and Woodland Park**

Seattle's Phinney Ridge owes its name to Guy Carleton Phinney (1852-93), a Scottish entrepreneur from Nova Scotia. He arrived in Seattle in 1881, and within ten years had

[2] Meetings with the City in 1910 included discussions of moving the school building to accommodate the street widening and future additions. This did not occur.

amassed a small fortune and became the owner of a large estate[3], now known as Woodland Park.[4] In early 1889, Phinney purchased 342 acres of timberland for $10,000 in what is now known as Phinney Ridge, a property which extended from the top of the ridge eastward, to the southwest corner of Green Lake.[5] He kept more than half of the land for the development of his private estate, which he called Woodland Park -- the rest would be developed as real state.[6] In Woodland Park, he laid out formal, English-style gardens and built the Woodland Hotel. The park amenities included picnic grounds, a conservatory, a dance pavilion, two ball fields, a velodrome, a hunting lodge, and a church. As an added attraction, he brought together a small menagerie of animals.[7]

In order to attract visitors and potential land buyers, Phinney quickly took steps to create a railway link to Woodland Park. In 1889, Phinney, Daniel Jones, and Benjamin F. Day incorporated the Woodland Park Electric Railway, and laid the tracks from Fremont, running north along Fifth Street (later renamed Fremont Avenue), ending at the entrance to Woodland Park. By 1890, Phinney had two streetcars running, and 175 lots of his "Woodland Park Addition" platted and ready for prospective buyers. His was the first streetcar system to bring people to the area.[8]

Guy Phinney died in 1893. His widow Nellie (Wright) Phinney was unable to keep their large estate, due primarily to the stock market crash earlier in the year. In 1899, she offered a deal to the City of Seattle. Despite protests from citizens that the $100,000 price was too high for land so far from the city center, the Seattle City Council bought the parkland. The city paid Nellie Phinney $5,000 in cash and assumed a $95,000 mortgage.[9]

Woodland Park was incorporated into a system of linking parks, boulevards, and playgrounds designed by John C. Olmsted, of the Olmsted Brothers landscape architecture firm, hired by the city in 1903. The design was ambitious for a young city, a twenty-mile-long system of winding roadway connecting Seward Park to Lake Washington Boulevard – and continuing on Lake Washington Boulevard thru Washington Park and on to Ravenna Park, Colman Park, Green Lake Park, and Woodland Park. Due to cost and prior development, the entire system of boulevards was not completed at Queen Anne, Ballard, Interbay, Magnolia, and Fort Lawton, so the continuity of the system ends today at Woodland Park.

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3 Dorpat, 68.

4 During Phinney's relatively brief lifetime, he was involved in several businesses including a sawmill, real estate, insurance, banking, and streetcars. Before his move to Seattle's north end, Phinney was an early developer of what is now known as Columbia City. Phinney also was primary developer of the Butler Block, a five-story building located at Second and James in Seattle's Pioneer Square.

5 Sheridan, "Summary for 5201 Green Lake Way / Parcel ID 0725049002 / Inv. # DPR077", <http://web1seattle.gov/dpd/historicalsite>

6 Fiset, Louis. "Seattle Neighborhoods: Green Lake – Thumbnail History", March 14, 2000.

7 Sherwood, Dorpat, 68.

8 Greg Lange, "Woodland Park Railway begins running in 1890," HistoryLink.org, May 16, 2001.

9 Walt Crowley, "City of Seattle purchases Woodland Park on December 28, 1899" <http://www.historylink.org>.

In 1903, Olmsted recommended "hardy wild animals" for Woodland Park Zoo. Lake Washington Cable Railway Company ran a small zoo as an attraction at Leschi. It had been successful in drawing visitors, but was no longer needed by 1903, and so the animals were donated to the Woodland Park Zoo. In April 1904, the zoo opened for visitors.[10] By 1910, the Olmstead firm completed more detailed plans, with sixty-five drawings for Woodland Park. It was completed four years later. Olmsted also called for the lowering of Green Lake by four feet to create more parkland surrounding the lake. In 1911, the city went even further and drained the lake by seven feet. The resulting marshy area at the Green Lake's south end was filled, making room for more athletic fields.[11]

Later, in 1932, despite public opposition, the state constructed a new six-lane highway – now known as Highway 99 or Aurora Avenue – effectively bisecting the park.

**Land Speculators and the Streetcar Lines**

The Homestead Act of 1862 brought the first homesteaders and speculators to the area. To retain the land, a homesteader had to "prove up," which meant living on the land, building a home, making improvements, and farming it for five years. Many speculators got around this requirement through a provision in the act that allowed for only a six-month residency and "trivial improvements" at a cost of $1.25 an acre, payable to the U.S. government. Speculators also took advantage of loopholes in the act that allowed them to claim land without having to pay or to homestead it.[12]

According to local historian Louis Fiset, "From 1868 to 1873, twenty-one individuals filed claims to the four sections (four square miles) of Township 25 North containing Green Lake."[13] Most likely, the majority of these individuals were speculators, especially in areas less conducive to farming. Records show that in 1879, James Freed purchased eighty acres from the federal government. In 1880, Benjamin Freed (relationship unclear) purchased 160 acres of adjoining land that would later be named Phinney Ridge. James owned the southern portion starting at Sixty-Fifth Street and ending at Seventieth Street, between Eighth Avenue Northwest and Greenwood Avenue North. Benjamin's portion started at Seventieth Street and ended at Seventy-Fifth Street, between Fifteenth Avenue Northwest and Greenwood Avenue North. The Freeds' land had already been clear-cut at the time of purchase. This is in contrast to the better preserved 179 acres of woodlands that Guy Phinney purchased from speculator Charles Waters in 1889. By 1903, the eastern slope of Phinney Ridge had been

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[10] Crowley, Walt, "The Woodland Park Zoo — A Snapshot History," 8 July 1999, *HistoryLink.org*, Seattle: History Ink, 2006 <http://www.historylink.org>.

[11] Sheridan, "Summary for 5201 Green Lake Way / Parcel ID 0725049002 / Inv # DPR077, <http://web1seattle.gov/dpd/historicalsite>

[12] "Teaching With Documents: The Homestead Act of 1862," *The National Archives*, College Park, MD, <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/homestead-act/>.

[13] Fiset, Louis, "Erhart Seifried, known as Green Lake John, files a homestead claim on Green Lake (Seattle) on October 13, 1869," 7 July 1999, *HistoryLink.org*, Seattle: History Ink, 2006 <http://www.historylink.org>.

logged off.[14] Another early speculator, William Knight, purchased 159 acres from the government in 1872. This land later became part of the Greenwood business district.[15]

A better known developer of the Greenwood area was early pioneer David T. Denny (1832-1903), who in 1891 platted 160 acres of boggy land as "Woodland Cemetery." The subdivision began at North Eighty-Fifth Street and Greenwood Avenue North and, until 1954, was outside the city limits. In 1907, the land was sold to former state governor Henry McBride, and the graves were moved to the Crown Hill Cemetery at Northwest Eighty-Seventh and Twelfth Avenue Northwest. McBride platted a one-eighth section for residential lots. The Washington Territory had set aside forty acres of land west of Third Avenue North for a school. The Seattle school district, which found the boggy land unsuitable for the new Greenwood Elementary School, sold the land and opted to purchase eighteen lots of the former cemetery from McBride. The school was built in 1909 on higher ground at Third Avenue Northwest on Northwest Eightieth Street.[16]

The developers' success in selling their residential lots depended on a transportation system that could bring commuters to and from the commercial centers. Lots near streetcar lines were developed and sold more quickly than those in more remote areas. During the boom that followed the Klondike Gold Rush in 1897, downtown housing became scarcer, which lead to improving the streetcar lines. Soon, Seattle's streetcar suburbs began to fill up with new residents.

Phinney Ridge developed more slowly than the Green Lake neighborhood. In 1903, Green Lake had 8,000 residents compared with only 2,000 residents on the eastern slope of Phinney Ridge.[17] However, residential development stepped up as streetcar service to the area improved.

By the 1910s, automobiles came into wider use, and the importance of paved roads took precedence over streetcar service. Greenwood Avenue was one of the first long streets to be paved.[18] By the 1920s, most residential streets on Phinney Ridge were paved.
It is understandable that the streetcar-line improvements directly influenced the residential platting of the Phinney-Greenwood neighborhood. From the time of Phinney's first streetcars from 1890 to 1899, others included the extension of the Greenlake Line in 1902, the sightseeing tours of Woodland Park 1903, and the extension of the Phinney Avenue Line to North Fiftieth Street. Later the Interurban from Ballard reaches Northwest Eighty-Fifth Street and Greenwood Avenue North.

Between 1907 and 1912, extensions of the Phinney Avenue line extended to the city limits at Eighty-Fifth Street and Greenwood Ave North, and the Seattle-Everett Interurban service continues from Ballard through the Phinney-Greenwood neighborhood and north to Everett.

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[14] Louis Fiset, "Seattle Neighborhoods: Phinney Ridge – Thumbnail History," 29 August 2001, *HistoryLink.org*, Seattle: History Ink, 2006 <http://www.historylink.org>.

[15] Greg Lange, "William Knight becomes first purchaser of the site of Seattle's future Greenwood business district on June 28, 1872," 2001 March 28, *HistoryLink.org*, Seattle: History Ink, 2006 <http://www.historylink.org>.

[16] Louis Fiset, "Seattle Neighborhoods: Greenwood – Thumbnail History," 21 July 2001, *HistoryLink.org*, Seattle: History Ink, 2006 <http://www.historylink.org>.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Sheridan, 26.

These improvements encouraged residential development on the west side of Phinney Ridge and into east Ballard. The trolley lines continued until 1939, when the Seattle-Everett Interurban service ended, and 1941 when the two remaining Seattle streetcar lines – the Phinney Line and the Eighth Avenue Northwest Line – retired in April.

**Houses and Schools**

As the population steadily expanded and streetcar lines improved, affordable housing became widely available in the suburban neighborhoods of Phinney Ridge and Greenwood. Pattern books, plan books, and periodicals such as Bungalow Magazine offered simple designs to builders, who would often duplicate the plan with little alteration.[19] Box Houses, Tudors, and Colonials were built, but the most popular style was the Bungalow. By the 1930s, the urban fabric and character of the neighborhood was set.

The Great Depression slowed development in the area, as it did in the rest of the country. This was followed by a housing crunch, brought on by a huge influx of defense workers during World War II. Due to limited building materials, the housing boom came after the war and was concentrated in newer neighborhoods of Seattle, such as Phinney and Greenwood. Infill occurred from the 1950s onward, with a few newer houses and some remodels.

As with the streetcar expansion, schools were being built in rapid succession in a northward direction. Allen (1904), Greenwood (1909), and West Woodland (1910) elementary schools attracted families who wished to settle in the area. The only north-end schools previously available were B.F. Day Elementary (1892) in Fremont, Ross Elementary (demolished ca. 1909) in Fremont, and Green Lake Elementary (1901-02). A brick addition to the Allen School (1918) became necessary as the population grew.

**Commerce**

As the streetcar system expanded north, businesses grew up near the terminuses, creating a linear development of the Phinney-Greenwood business district. By the 1940s, Greenwood Avenue could boast of a "Miracle Mile," with businesses lining both sides of the arterial. There was a post office, supermarkets, bakeries, movie theaters, electrical appliance shops, cleaners, shoe repair shops, taverns, dress shops, restaurants, auto-repair shops, butcher shops, real estate offices, hardware stores, druggists, sports shops, photography studios, doctors, dentists, barbers, beauty salons, and variety stores. Built in 1928, the Greenwood-Phinney Library outgrew its space at North Seventieth Street, and in 1954 moved to its new building at North Eighty-Sixth Street and Greenwood Avenue North, where it was again rebuilt in 2005.

Built in 1908, Fire Station No. 21, at Seventy-Third Street, was replaced in 1950.

Greenwood-Phinney was a great place for youth. A skating rink, located near North Eighty-Fifth Street and Greenwood, operated in the 1930s and 1940s.[20] Further south was the Woodland Amusement Park, located across the street from the zoo at North Fifty-Fifth Street

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[19] Dennis A. Andersen and Katheryn Hill Krafft, "Pattern Books, Plan Books, Periodicals," *Shaping Seattle Architecture*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 64.

[20] David Wilma, "Greenwood Branch, The Seattle Public Library," 2002 October 8, *HistoryLink.org*, Seattle: History Ink, 2006 <http://www.historylink.org>.

and Phinney. The park had a carousel, Ferris wheel, dance pavilion, games, and concessions and operated from 1919-34. Another amusement park, Woodland Rides, operated inside the zoo from the 1950s to the 1970s.[21]

Woodland Park provided picnicking, strolling, and exploring opportunities for families. The zoo was free of charge until 1977, when it began charging $1.00 admission. Throughout the 1950s, drivers could take a scenic drive through the zoo from Fremont Avenue North to Fifty-Ninth Street. Swimming, fishing, and boating were found at nearby Green Lake. In 1943, Greenwood saw the opening of the first Boys and Girls Club of America in Seattle, founded during the war to address unattended youth of the area who were restless and getting into trouble.[22]

## SEATTLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

### School District Building Programs

Seattle's earliest school sessions were conducted in single-classroom buildings and were financially supported by the pioneer families whose children attended. In 1854, Catherine P. Blaine, the city's first schoolteacher, held the first classes at Bachelor's Hall (a boarding house for single men). Around 1861, the first administrative board for the public school system was formed and public school classes moved into the new Territorial University Building. Public funding was established to pay teacher salaries. Despite this effort, tuition-free classes were not offered in the city until 1866.

In 1869, the Washington Territorial Legislature granted Seattle a city charter, and residents voted for a tax levy to fund the city's first free public school building.[23] In 1870, the Central School (located on Third Avenue between Madison and Spring Streets) opened with 120 students.[24] The city passed other tax levies to construct a handful of one-room and two-room schoolhouses around the city.

The first Territorial Board of Education was established in 1877. In 1881, the legislature granted provisions for the appointment 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 towards the development of a modern school system.[25]

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21 Don Sherwood, "Woodland Park Zoo - History," *Interpretive Essays of the Histories of Seattle's Parks & Playgrounds,* 1974-1984, Seattle: Seattle Parks & Recreation, 2006 <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/history/WoodlandPk.pdf>.

22 James R. Warren, *The War Years: A Chronicle of Washington State in World War II,* Seattle & London: History Ink in association with University of Washington Press, 2000. "Our History," Boys and Girls Clubs of King County Website, 2006, <http://www.positiveplace.org/about.htm>.

23 Marr and Thompson, p. x.

24 Erigero, p. 1.

25 Robinson, p.33 .

In 1882, the Seattle School Board began planning for a new central schoolhouse.[26] After another successful tax levy, a six-room schoolhouse, known as the Second Central School, opened in 1883. The following year, the twelve-room Denny School opened.

Enrollment in the school district expanded from 1,500 students in 1885 to 6,647 in 1893. From 1890 to 1900, sixteen additional public schools opened.[27] In 1866, the district held its first high school commencement, marking the end of the pioneer school system.

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."[28] As Seattle evolved into a metropolitan city, attitudes changed toward education and public architecture, which was reflected in the evolution of Seattle's school architecture.

From 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 the recently annexed areas north of the city.[29]

By 1901, the district supported nearly 9,000 students in daily attendance. The district hired Frank B. Cooper as superintendent that year, serving for twenty-one years. Aided by a supportive and progressive school board, Cooper guided the development of the district into a major urban school system. This included developing numerous specialized programs such as kindergartens, parental schools, adult evening schools, and classes for special-needs students.[30]

During this time, the school board adopted a plan to meet the need for schools in growing suburban residential neighborhoods by developing a series of "model" schools of standard wood framing. The Allen School wooden building is one of these structures. These schools were designed with the capacity to accommodate standard additions in the future. In 1903, the district hired architect James Stephen to design these early elementary school buildings.

From 1910-21, Seattle's population continued to explode, with the student population nearing 39,000 in 1919. In the early part of the decade, model schools were constructed in brick, from designs by Edgar Blair, who replaced Stephen as the official school architect. The Allen School brick building was not one of these structures, although the plan followed a specific single-loaded corridor/classroom layout, and were generally executed with simple exterior brick and concrete details.

In 1919, a bond issue assured continued growth and expansion of school facilities through the next decade. This included construction of two high schools, three elementary schools, and additions to Broadway and Lincoln High Schools and 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 (later of NBBJ Architects), who replaced Blair as District architect in 1919 and guided school architecture until 1932.

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[26] Robinson, p. 16-17.
[27] Marr and Thompson, p. x.
[28] Robinson, p. 34.
[29] Erigero, p. 6.
[30] Robinson, p. 99.

After World War I, increasing costs of providing educational programs to a growing population strained the district. Between 1922 and 1933, school attendance increased from 42,441 to 57,551 students. The District conducted a comprehensive building survey for planning future building programs in order to meet the growing student population.

Three bond issues were passed between 1923 and 1929 that supported several important building programs, including the construction of the district's first intermediate school in 1926. The district decided to move towards the organization of three school levels in order to accommodate increased enrollment without building additional small elementary schools. More significantly, it was consistent with a national trend towards the idea of intermediate schools, or junior high schools as they came to be called officially.[31]

From 1922-31, the district built six elementary schools and three junior high schools, with specialized facilities for science, art, physical education, industrial arts, and home economics. Additionally, Cleveland High School – which also supported a junior-high student program – was built, and additions to three other high schools were constructed. In 1931, the district's building program shifted from new construction towards the consolidation and rehabilitation of existing structures. No new buildings were constructed during the 1930s.

From 1932-38, enrollment in adult education classes experienced a sharp increase. Due to the high rate of unemployment, many adults were seeking vocational training for new skills. General enrollment declined slightly in the 1930s. Because of population shifts towards the suburban areas, many urban schools had too many personnel for decreased class sizes. Declining revenues and older facilities further strained the school system. Sixteen older schools were closed, and students were consolidated into nearby schools.

By the end of the decade, concerns about old school buildings that had not been maintained and the large number of temporary structures prompted the district to request a tax levy vote for a new building program. Although the Allen School's wooden building was used as an illustration of this concern, it did not get listed for demolition under the subsequent building program.

Around this time, the district changed its approach to building design and opted to hire architects on a fee basis (rather than employing a district architect) to carry out individual building programs. From 1940-41, the district retained the firm of Naramore and Brady to carry out building programs. The programs called for the construction of one school and additions and improvements to more than ten others. The program scheduled Seattle's oldest wood-frame schools for demolition replaced some with new buildings. However, the Allen School building once more escaped demolition.

During World War II, all new schools were built as temporary structures to conserve materials for the war effort. As mentioned previously, Seattle experienced a massive influx of defense workers to supply labor for Boeing and Puget Sound shipyards. Existing school facilities required expansion for the children of these workers, especially in federal housing project areas. The district used numerous temporary "portable" units, including at the Allen School site, and built temporary additions for other schools.

At the close of the war in 1945, the district conducted a study of population trends and future building needs. The resulting proposal included modernization of all existing schools,

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[31] Marr and Thompson

adding classrooms, multiuse rooms for lunch/assembly; covered and hard-surfaced play areas and play-courts, expanded gymnasiums, and improved lighting, heating, plumbing, and acoustics.[32]

From 1945 until a brief period in the early 1960s, school enrollment increased from 50,000 to nearly double that amount. This was due in part to the Baby Boom of the postwar years and the rapid suburbanization of Seattle's north end, including the annexation of part of the Shoreline School District. From 1945-65, the district built seventeen elementary schools and ten junior high schools. Additionally, it built four new high schools, two in the newly annexed north end. Seattle voters approved six bond issues between 1946 and 1958 to fund these projects.

Each new building was designed by an architectural team hired for that project. The school board provided clear guidelines to the architects about functional requirements for educational spaces. The central control of design and use of materials, which had characterized the era of salaried district architects, was no longer part of the process. However, most buildings of the post-war era were very similar in style and focused on rational planning and functionalism. Public school architects in Seattle and throughout the country adopted this design approach.

During this era, the idea of transportable schools developed, based on the 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, designed by GWB. Stoddard, Briarcliffe, Genesee Hill, and Arbor Heights were the first of their kind in the nation.

After 1965 and thru the 1970s, the district suffered from declining enrollment and revenue. Racial desegregation and educational reform became the focus. 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. Alternative schools and special education programs were added and housed in unused spaces or redundant facilities, such as the Allen-Orca Alternative School (also known as the Allen Free School) program that began in 1974.

In the 1980s, following a 50-percent decline in enrollment, the School Board adopted a comprehensive school-closure plan. Two high schools, seven junior high schools, and twenty elementary schools, including the Allen School, were slated for closure. 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. Even more schools have since been listed as Seattle City Landmarks.

Many school buildings closed as part of the program were sold or put under long-term lease. The Allen School shut its doors in 1981. Some have been remodeled for new uses such as condominiums or shopping facilities. Some have been leased to neighborhood associations.

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[32] Robinson, p. 192-193.°

The Allen School became the permanent home to the Phinney Neighborhood Association in 1981.

## PHINNEY NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

### Brief History

Many Seattle residents think of the Phinney Neighborhood Association (PNA) as the heart of their community. In 1978-1979, the Phinney area residents received a block grant of $200,000 to develop a number of social services for their neighborhood, rather than physical improvements that other communities were focused on. To show their commitment to the proposed on-going social projects, the PNA formalized their organization, and became incorporated in March 1980 as a non-profit organization designed "to maintain the unique character of the Phinney neighborhoods and to assist its residents in enhancing the quality of their lives." Residents voted to use a portion of the initial $200,000 toward development of a community center, and the remainder was used for such programs as storm window installation, home sharing for seniors, pre-school co-op, senior transportation van, greenhouse construction, tree bank, recycling and food buying co-op.
In August 1981, the PNA contracted with the Seattle School District to manage the large blue elementary school building as a community center. The school had been forced to close due to declining enrollment in June of that year. They hired a community center director in September, and in October the Allen School officially became the Phinney Neighborhood Center. A lease agreement between the PNA and the School District was reached in 1983. Since that time, the PNA has maintained the property and continued to develop a wide variety of social, cultural, and educational programs for all ages and interests. Current programs include: licensed and insured before and after school childcare programs; a tool lending library and residential improvement advice; over 80 regularly scheduled educational classes per month; monthly arts program and gallery shows; two soup kitchens; computer technology programs; neighbor assistance programs; concert, class, dance and meeting partnerships; community newspaper; community outreach events; and senior services and events.

Unlike other community centers in the city, the Phinney Neighborhood Center is not run by the Seattle parks Department, Funding for the non-profit association comes from facilities maintenance, program and membership fees and fundraising events. Current membership is over 4,000 people, with an estimate of over 200,000 annual program participants.

## ARCHITECTURAL STYLES

### Colonial Revival

This style is, as the name suggest, a revival of the country's early colonial architecture, revitalizing the restraint and order it represented, and interpreting its classical roots in new forms and materials. Popularized in the early 1900s, the style is characterized by symmetrical facades, moderately pitched hipped or gabled roofs, moderate to large overhangs with decorative eave brackets, doors with transoms and sidelights, Palladian or tri-part windows, horizontal lap siding, and trim based on the classical elements such as denticulated moldings, columns of various order and pedimented gable entries. In Seattle,

most of the nineteen wood –frame schools constructed following the model plan of 1902 were designed with many of the ubiquitous colonial revival elements.

**American Renaissance**

This style of building was generally constructed between the mid 1880s and the mid-to-late 1920s. It was a conscious effort to create a uniquely American national style, and was a reaction against earlier picturesque styles of the mid-nineteenth century. Like the earlier Colonial Revival style, architects looked to classical or renaissance precedents that were intended to evoke civic dignity and strong cultural ideals. Many of the architects practicing in the U.S. in the mid-nineteenth century were fashionably trained at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. There they were educated in classical composition and principles. The style, complete with temple forms, symmetrical facades, classical orders entablatures, and belt courses was applied to government and civic buildings, banks, hotels, and commercial buildings. In Seattle, Edgar Blair introduced this ordered style to many school district buildings.

Fiscal restraints imposed by the school board led many of Blair's designs to use ornamental colored brick and bonding patterns instead of the preferred terra cotta embellishment and enriched trim details. His designs typically retained a tri-partitite horizontal division of base, center, and cornice, symmetrical fenestration patterns, engaged pilasters, and provided slight embellishments at the buildings' main entries.

**EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY SCHOOL DESIGN THEORY**

Following the Great Fire of 1889, there was a discussion in Seattle about fireproof building materials. E.S. Ingraham, Seattle's first school superintendent, took credit for the decision to switch to brick construction for buildings close to the city center:

> Up to this time it was thought that a brick building would prove too damp for Seattle's climate. The directors had about decided to replace the burned Central by another wooden structure. The writer tried to prevent this, if possible. He secured a pressed brick and covered its surface with white paper and wrote thereon these words: "Let the new Central School be built of brick." He took the brick to our principal citizens and secured sufficient signatures to cover the entire surface. This he threw at the Board of Directors. It is needless to say, that decided the question.
>
> *E.S. Ingraham, "Beginnings of a Great System," Seattle Grade Club Magazine, Vol. IV, No. 1, p. 11.*[33]

A recession in the 1890s slowed the development of new schools, but the Klondike Gold Rush of 1897 helped Seattle prosper.[34] However, a financial shortfall forced the use of lumber instead of masonry when the district made a decision in 1901 to build a series of standard wooden structures with identical floor plans, called model schools. These schools were needed to help meet the needs of a growing school-aged population, which between 1900 and 1910 had grown from approximately 8,000 to more than 25,000 students.[35]

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[33] Erigero, p.4.
[34] Erigero, p. 8.
[35] Ibid.

The Green Lake Improvement Club pressed for a new school in their neighborhood. In 1904, Allen School replaced the portable buildings previously known as Park School. In 1918, a brick building was added on the Allen site.[36]

Together, the two Allen School buildings uniquely reflect changing ideas about school design. Most notably, the architectural style of the two buildings, built only thirteen years apart, shifted from Colonial Revival to American Renaissance.

The 1904 wooden building follows a plan of stacked classrooms clustered around a central hall, whereas the 1918 brick building follows a linear plan. The wooden building was one of the first model schools, conceived of by the school board as a simple way to handle construction necessary to meet the demands of increasing student enrollment.

In moving away from the cramped one-room schoolhouse to the model school, and then from the model school to the linear design, school officials were responding to the most important concern of schools – the health of the child. The Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) scrapbooks from the 1930s list it as the first "cardinal objective for the education of Seven Point Lives." [37]

In a six-volume set of Public School Methods (1918), it is clear that classroom air quality was to play an important role in the development of new school buildings. The effects of bad air were plain:

> 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. [38]

Teachers were instructed, among other things, 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, the two Allen School buildings saved teachers from taking such drastic measures.

The Allen School also reflects notions about differences between boys and girls and the aims of physical education and play. The plans of the wooden building show that in the basement there were separate play areas for boys and girls, connected to the only lavatories in the building. In the Methods Company's plan for school sites, the authors provide for two playgrounds, "one for the boys and one for the girls…Boys like to engage in rougher games

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[36] Ibid.

[37] Pamphlet in the 1930-31 John B. Allen PTA scrapbook

[38] The Methods Company. Public School Methods: New Edition. Chicago: Hanson-Bellows Publishing Company, 1918

than girls and both boys and girls play with greater freedom when on separate playgrounds."[39]

## HISTORIC CONTEXT

The school buildings of the John B. Allen site are a unique complex and form one of five elementary school ensembles dating from the early period of development, 1902 – 1920, of the Seattle School District system. Their uniqueness also derives from the relationship of the buildings architects, James Stephen and Edgar Blair.

Between 1900 and 1908, eighteen wood-frame model school buildings were built in the district. Eleven of those were designed by James Stephen, who developed the model plan for the expanding school district during his tenure as district architect. These include:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Green Lake | 1902 | Sunnyside and N. 65th | demolished 1986 |
| Interbay | 1902 | 16th W and Barrett | demolished 1948 |
| John B. Allen | 1904 | Phinney and N. 66th | Phinney Neighborhood Assoc. |
| Interlake | 1904 | Wallingford and N. 45th | now Wallingford Center |
| Madrona | 1904 | 33rd and E. Spring | demolished 1960 |
| John B. Hay | 1905 | 4th and Newton | elementary school |
| Seward | 1906 | Franklin and Roanoke | elementary school |
| Bagley | 1906 | Woodland Park and N. 78th | demolished 1940 |
| Latona | 1906 | 5th NE and N. 42nd | district offices |
| Stevens | 1906 | 18th N and E. Galer | elementary school |
| Coe | 1907 | 7th W and Wheeler | burned 2001; reconstructed |

A twelfth, Van Asselt (1909) at Beacon Avenue and Othello Street was designed by Edgar Blair, while apprenticing with James Stephen. It was the last of wood-framed model schools following the design of Stephen to be constructed, and is now vacant.

The architectural firm of Saunders and Lawton designed two other model schools, following Stephens design: Horace Mann, 1902, 24th and E. Cherry; and Beacon Hill, 1904 W. 61st and Lander. Bebb and Mendel designed the 1902 University Heights School (at 14th NE and E. 52nd.) These remain in the district. Three others, Warren (at Warren and Republican), Longfellow (at 20th and E. Thomas) and Ross (at W. 43rd and 3rd NW) have been demolished.

Of the seven remaining wood-framed model school buildings designed by Stephen or Blair, only the Interlake School (now the Wallingford Center) is exemplary of the same bracketed Colonial Revival style as the Allen School. Stevens School, also Colonial Revival, exhibits a monumental central entry portico supported on pairs of fluted Ionic columns. (Coe School, before it burned in 2001, was almost identical.) Hay and Latona are virtual "twins"

[39] Methods, p. 168.

constructed in the Queen Anne style, unique with their twin octagonal entry towers and arched entry portico. The 1905 Seward School building and the 1909 Van Asselt building are designed in the Tudor Revival style.

In 1918, a new "fireproof" brick structure was constructed on the Allen site, one of four similar structures designed by then school district architect, Edgar Blair. This new building was referred to as a "border" school, as it was constructed along the lot line of the existing school site. This approach was typically taken when classroom expansion would require substantial additions to an existing wood-frame model school already on the grounds. These buildings were not termed "model" schools but followed a prescribed plan and were typically two-story structures, with raised basements and classrooms that ran along one side of the structure, and wide corridors for ample natural light.

Blair chose the American Renaissance style for his five border schools, which were built at Allen, Seward, Madrona, and Latona in 1917, and Lowell (at E. Mercer and Federal E.) in 1919.[40] These four buildings are virtually identical in their size, rectangular form, and brick detailing. (The 1917 Madrona building was extensively remodeled in the 1990s.) The 1917 Seward and Latona buildings were accented with terra cotta entry portals with decorated columns and stylized quoins. (The 1917 Latona School was demolished in 1999.) The 1917 Allen Building and the 1919 Lowell Building are detailed with decorative brick bonding patterns and string courses.

The Cooper School was also designed by Edgar Blair in 1917 as "border" school next to the earlier Youngstown School (now demolished). This building, now a City of Seattle Landmark, displays the same rectangular form, with hipped roof, centralized entry, and limited brick detailing, but with double-loaded corridors and corner stairwells. It has been expanded with several additions, and was adapted to artist's lofts and studios in 2006. It is now known as the Youngstown Cultural Arts Center.

The 1904 Allen Building is one of only ten remaining from the wood-frame model school period of the early 1900s. It has been well maintained, and its interior and exterior remain virtually unchanged with the exception of minor alterations. It remains one of the best representatives of its type in the city. The 1918 Allen Building is also in very good condition, is also virtually unaltered, and is representative of its type. It retains its unusual molded and gauged exterior brickwork. Only two buildings of this period remain adjacent to their earlier counterparts.

The John B. Allen property contains two buildings that remain virtually unchanged since their original construction, representing two different architectural periods of school design and changing educational philosophy. Firstly, the buildings show the shift from the simple, easily constructed wood-frame structure to a new technique of masonry and concrete "fire-proof construction" adopted only thirteen years later as a safer construction type. Secondly, the two buildings reflect the general change in the choice of architectural style for new school buildings, from the Colonial Revival style of the 1904 building to the simplified interpretation of the American Renaissance style of the 1918 building. Thirdly, the pair of buildings clearly contrasts the first model plan of stacked classrooms surrounding a central core to the later preferred linear model arrangement of classrooms allowing for more efficient use of space, easier circulation, and increased access to natural light and ventilation.

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[40] Erigero, p. 23.

Lastly, the differing plans clearly show the shift from the general classroom education philosophy to the incorporation of specialty educational functions and assembly spaces, which could provide multi-use facilities to the wider community.

## THE ARCHITECTS

### James Stephen (1858-1938)

James Stephen was born in Ontario, Canada, on March 28, 1858. His father was a skilled cabinetmaker, and James was also trained in his early years as a cabinet and organ maker. Stephen received his architectural training through a correspondence course and began his practice in Hyde Park, Illinois, around 1885. He moved briefly to Pasadena, California, before arriving in Seattle in June 1889. This was immediately after a major fire destroyed the business core of the pioneer town. (Ochsner, Krafft, 1994)

In 1894, Stephen joined Timotheus Josenhans in a short-lasting partnership. The firm designed buildings on the Washington Agricultural College campus (now Washington State University).

As economic conditions declined in the late 1890s, Stephen fell back on his cabinetmaker's skills, working for the Moran Shipyards in Seattle and Alaska. Seattle School District No.1 hired him in 1899 to prepare plans and specifications for several schools, which was adopted as the "Model School Plan" for later district elementary schools. Stephen became a school district employee in 1901, and continued in this capacity as the Official School Architect until late 1910. During this period, Stephen was responsible for the design of over fifty schools. (Ochsner, Krafft, 1994)

As Kate Krafft noted in her biographical sketch of Stephen, his model provided the basis for a flexible and economical approach to school construction. The wooden construction system and standard floor plan facilitated a phased construction process in which an eight-, twelve-, or twenty-room school could be constructed and later expanded. While standard floor plans and interior finish materials were used, the exterior elevations and details of these schools varied greatly and exhibited wood detailing indicative of Stephen's background as a carpenter and cabinetmaker.

Extant schools in Seattle that follow the model plan, or variations on it, include the Allen School wooden building (1904, now the Phinney Neighborhood Center), Interlake (1904, now the Wallingford Center), Summit (1905, now the Northwest School), John Hay (1905), Seward (1905, now TOPS @ Seward), Stevens (1906), and Latona (1906, altered, now the John Stanford International School). (Ochsner, Krafft, 1994)

In 1908, Stephen prepared a report on modern school design, construction, and equipment. This report directly led to the creation and adoption of the second model plan that incorporated fireproof materials including concrete, masonry, and terra cotta. These new school plans also incorporated modern lavatory equipment. They were often executed in late Gothic or Jacobean style, then popular.

Extant schools that followed the new model were: Emerson (1908-09), Colman (1909; now vacant), and Greenwood (1909). As district architect, Stephen also designed the original portions of two of Seattle's oldest extant high schools: Lincoln (1906-7) and Queen Anne (1908-09, now condominiums). (Ochsner, Krafft, 1994)

Stephen continued in private practice during his tenure as school district architect. He designed numerous residential, ecclesiastical, and commercial buildings, including the original portion of the downtown Seattle YMCA. He also designed schools in Redmond, Renton, Auburn, Olympia, Everett, Kirkland, and Bremerton. In 1908, he went into partnership with his son Frederick as Stephen & Stephen. This partnership produced designs for numerous school buildings in cities throughout Washington State, including Wenatchee, Cashmere, Richmond Beach, Vancouver, Ellensburg, Kirkland, Cle Elum, Chehalis, Fall City, and Port Townsend. William G. Brust, a former classmate of Frederick's, joined the partnership in 1917. (Ochsner, Krafft, 1994)

Stephen retired from practice in 1928 and passed away in 1938, leaving a legacy of stylish school buildings constructed in more than fifty school districts around the state. (Ochsner, Krafft, 1994)

**Edgar Blair (1874-1924)**

When Stephen resigned in 1909, the school district appointed his assistant, Edgar Blair, as district architect. Blair had been working under Stephen since 1906, when he arrived in Seattle from Washington D.C.

Blair was born in Des Moines, Iowa, and had worked in the Des Moines offices of Clinton Norse while attending school at Des Moines College and Iowa State University. In 1897, he moved to New York to continue his education at Columbia University. He worked as a draftsman for several large New York City firms, among them the prestigious McKim, Mead, and White architectural partnership.

He later moved to Baltimore, gaining additional training in the firm of Baldwin and Pennington. In 1902, he joined the Washington D.C. firm of Mayre and Wright, where he designed the Atlanta Terminal Station and the Richmond, Virginia, prison. In 1904, he opened his own practice and later formed a brief partnership with Barn von Leistner of Munich before leaving for the west coast.

When James Stephen resigned as district architect in 1909, Blair was appointed in his place, as he had been working under Stephen as his assistant since his arrival in Seattle in 1906. The first Seattle school building to carry Blair's name as designer was the last wood frame model school, Van Asselt (1909). The drawings for the three Jacobean brick model schools, built in 1910 – Gatewood, John Muir (originally York, demolished 1989), and West Woodland (demolished 1990), which replaced a portable called Ross Annex – were all designed by Blair. Clearly based on the designs developed by Stephen the previous year, they differed principally from the earlier schools in the organization of the fenestration on the front elevation. The nine-room model school plan was retained and used through 1917, with some exceptions.

Unfortunately for Blair, and probably for Seattle as well, the great economic boom, were executed with a minimal amount of ornamental details. Seattle's industrial growth during World War I reached its peak in 1917-18, bringing an influx of workers and their families and a spate of school construction in 1917, including the Allen School brick building. However, this boomlet was tempered by the need for war materials, and Blair's designs for the buildings constructed during these years were largely stripped of amenities and ornamentation.

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**The features of the Landmark to be preserved include:**

The exteriors of the 1904 building and the 1918 building; the interior staircases, corridors and classrooms of the 1904 building; the interior corridors and classrooms of the 1918 building; the air raid siren structure; and the site excluding the sheds and play structures.

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