



The City of Seattle

Landmarks Preservation Board

400 Yesler Building Seattle, Washington 98104 • (206)625-4501

LPB 337/88

REPORT ON DESIGNATION

Name and Address of Property: Gatewood School
4320 S.W. Myrtle Street

Legal Description: Lincoln Beach Tract 13, and west 80 feet of Tract 4

At the public hearing held on November 16, 1988, the City of Seattle's Landmarks Preservation Board voted to approve designation of the Gatewood School as a Seattle Landmark based upon satisfaction of the following criteria of Ordinance 106348:

Section 3.01(3): 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; and

Section 3.01(4): It embodies the distinctive visible characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or of a method of construction.

DESCRIPTION AND SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Gatewood Elementary School is located on a 4.2 acre tract near Lincoln Park in West Seattle. The site consists of 2 levels with the lower western portion devoted to a playfield area. The upper eastern portion features outstanding views of Puget Sound to the east.

Gatewood School consists of two sections. Designed by Edgar Blair, the original section oriented to S.W. Myrtle Street was constructed in 1910. The original wing includes detailed terra cotta ornament and was designed in a popular early 20th Century revival style derived from the distinctive features of English Jacobean Manor houses of the 17th Century. The 1922 wing, constructed of similar materials, is a sympathetic although economical and less ornamented addition. It was designed by Floyd Narramore.

The building is in the basic shape of a "T" on the site. Playcourts and the restrooms and boiler room are at the north side of the building. Both sections of the approximately 46,000 square foot building are wood frame and masonry in construction with reinforced concrete used extensively in the newer west wing. The main roof is a hipped form distinguished by four gabled wall dormers centered on each elevation. The south main entrance facade is embellished with a full modified doric entablature. This includes triglyph, metopes and gutte cast in terra cotta. The main portal is set inside a semi-round arch framed by the terra cotta pilasters on each side. A tripartite window above the entrance features a stepped pediment in which the letters GS are set in a cartouche with scroll. This motif is repeated with a letter "G" set in the upper portion of the south wall dormer. Terra cotta is also in place at the continuous banding above the third floor window heads, at window surrounds adjacent to the main entrance and at coping which accentuates the roofline and wall dormers. A group of terra cotta panels that provided an accent to the original roof line have been removed for earthquake safety.

Multiple-paned, double hung fir windows are grouped in sets of three on the south facade and two on the north wall in the 1910 wing. Spandrels include raised brick panels in the form of the cross. English bond brick is utilized on the south and north elevations, while common brick was utilized at the east and west ends of the structure in anticipation of future additions as was the case with the construction of the west wing.

The 1922 wing exhibits materials and features which visually unify the two sections. The southeast portal features a simple terra cotta entablature with cartouche. Fluted pilasters frame the doorway with pommels set above and beside a window. Multi-paned fir double-hung windows, which match windows in the original wing, are grouped in sets of five along the west elevation. Due to the design of a flat roof on the 1922 wing, a brick parapet was constructed around the entire roof which extends around the 1910 section. The only significant change made to the original building can be seen where the eaves and soffits of the 1910 building have been replaced by the extension of this parapet.

The building currently includes 21 classrooms and houses approximately 290 students. District maintenance records show that the building has been updated over the years although no major changes have been made. Although mature landscape materials currently obscure many distinctive features, the building appears to be a well maintained and intact example of early twentieth century Seattle school design.

Schools have historically formed an integral part of the cultural and economic development of the West Seattle community. This area of the city was an independent town until annexed by Seattle in 1907, complete with its own school district, 5 schools and a 3 member school board. Many neighborhood functions in those years centered around school activities. Equally important, the community could not grow without the attraction of good schools for prospective residents.

Although Alki Point is correctly known as the birthplace of Seattle, West Seattle grew slowly its first 50 years. Rapid growth of the downtown and harbor areas left this community overshadowed, a vacation place with beach cottages, a resort town, a few farms, and acres of timber. Slower to grow was the area now known as the Gatewood neighborhood. After the Yesler Logging Company cleared the land in the 1890's, this area was still inhabited by wildlife and a few farmers.

This began to change with the extension of the streetcar line to the Fauntleroy area in 1907. With transportation, settlers came into the area to form a community with homes and schools. Commuting on this line from the south toward the new Kenney Retirement Home, past the Gatewood site, and on to the Junction was now done with ease. The elevated trestle across the Elliot Bay tideflats helped bridge West Seattle with the city.

When the School District purchased the site on S.W. Myrtle Street for future construction of the school in 1909, the convenience of locating on this vital transportation link was not overlooked. During this period no roads existed in the neighborhood, so transportation to the building was a prime consideration in the site selection. Construction of the building in 1910 to house 268 students demonstrated the need for this facility.

In the early twentieth century, the real estate market began to boom in the area, fueled by developers such as Carlisle Gatewood, who came to Seattle in 1900. His idea was not just to make money as a developer and home builder, but to help create a new community. His commitment to the neighborhood that bears his name is illustrated by the fact he spent the rest of his life living and working in the area; Gatewood made his home until his death a few blocks east of the school on Gatewood Hill. Gatewood's influence on the economic development of the community and the school itself was significant. He platted large areas of Gatewood Hill to the east of the school including Gatewood Gardens and Gatewood Acre Tracts. According to the Seattle School's 1951 edition of the History of the Seattle Public Schools, he was also a financial backer of the streetcar line that served the school that bore his name. A portrait of Carlilse Gatewood hung for many years in the school office.

This building has served the community and city for 78 years. An addition in 1922 increased the capacity of the facility. Thousands of local residents have attended school in this building. Gatewood School is very likely the last vestige of its era in this West Seattle community. This school has functioned continuously as an important community center. With the demolition of Jefferson, the old Alki and Lafayette buildings, this community is left with little of its heritage intact. The proposed demise of Cooper (1908), E.C. Hughes (1913), and the closure of Fauntleroy (1908) leaves Gatewood as a sole survivor.

The features of the Landmark to be preserved, include:

the entire exterior of the building, including the roof; and the site, excluding the playfield.

Issued: November 18, 1988



Karen Gordon
City Historic Preservation Officer

KG:dlv

cc: Robert Weaver, Chair, LPB
Dennis McLerran, DCLU
Alan Oiye, DCLU
Ken Mar, DCLU
William Kendrick, SSD
H.L. Sommers, SSD
Doug Haner, SSD
John Richmond, SSD
Richard Hill
Karen and David Wissing

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