

Arbor Heights

Name:	Arbor Heights Elementary School	Enrollment:	429
Address:	3701 SW 104th Street	Nickname:	Junior Seahawks
Configuration:	K-5	Colors:	Royal blue and white



Arbor Heights, ca. 1949 SPSA 203-1

In the early 20th century, the area south of Fauntleroy in West Seattle was sparsely populated, at first it was called Green Acres but later the name was changed to Arbor Heights, perhaps in an effort to promote the sale of property. The one-mile square neighborhood is bounded by SW 98th Street on the north and 30th Avenue SW on the east. Early residents founded their own church (Arbor Heights Church) and community club (Arbor Heights Community Club).

In March 1938, the Arbor Heights Improvement Club announced that it was seeking a school for children in the first four grades because neighborhood youngsters were walking as far as a mile down a steep hill to Fauntleroy School. Several years passed before their dream became a reality. The club managed to buy some property in 1940 with the intention of using it for a playground. When a formal request for a school building was made in March 1947, the King County School Board replied that no suitable land was available. The community club responded by selling them the playground property.

Anticipating the annexation of this neighborhood into the City of Seattle, the Seattle School District began construction of a school on the county-owned property in 1948. The building would consist of four classrooms with a connecting hallway. Its design allowed for adding or detaching classrooms from the central corridor in response to fluctuations in enrollment. Two other schools of this expandable type, Genesee Hill and Briarcliff, opened the same year.

During the 1948-49 school year before the new building opened, four Arbor Heights classes with 126 children grades K-3 were located at Fauntleroy. In April, an earthquake caused the closure of Lafayette. In order to accommodate the Lafayette children at Fauntleroy, the Arbor Heights children were moved into their new building, which was not yet completed. The grounds had not been surfaced, and mud was inches deep. Blackboards did not arrive until June. The location of a

Name:	Arbor Heights School
Location:	3701 SW 104th Street
Building:	4-room expandable, wood frame and reinforced cement
Architect:	George W. Stoddard
Site:	5.0 acres

1948:	Named on December 17
1949:	Opened as annex to Fauntleroy on April 25
1950:	Addition (Stoddard)
1953:	Addition (Stoddard); became independent school
1954:	Site expanded to 5.65 acres
1958:	Addition (Stoddard)



Arbor Heights, 1960 SPSA 203-3

city school within the county caused some jurisdictional confusion concerning transportation and other issues.

That fall an annex was needed to hold the overflow of younger children. From October 1949 to June 1950, a room was rented in the Arbor Heights Improvement Club (42nd Avenue SW and SW 100th Street) for a class of 23 children in the 1st and 2nd grades. The teacher at Arbor Heights Annex felt lost without a bell to call her students and requested help from her principal. He passed along the request to the district, which sent the 64-year-old bell from the old Denny School. The children decided it sounded like a church bell.

To resolve the overcrowding, four classrooms were added in 1950. A third phase in the construction in 1953 provided an auditorium-lunchroom, gymnasium, covered playcourt, administrative offices, and a teachers' room. When these new facilities opened that September, enrollment had reached nearly 500, and the school housed grades K–6.

By 1954, when the Arbor Heights community became part of Seattle, the school was again overcrowded, forcing the 5th and 6th grade classes to operate in double shifts. The city annexed nearby Roxbury Heights on January 1, 1956. As a result, between 225 and 250 elementary school pupils transferred to Arbor Heights and Roxhill from the Highline School District. Nine portables were installed at Arbor Heights to accommodate these children. In 1958, an addition of 12 classrooms completed the final phase of the school's expansion and allowed enrollment to top 800 in the early 1960s.

In 1978–79, Arbor Heights became a K, 4–6 building and was paired with Van Asselt (K–3). The following year Gatewood (K, 4–6) joined the pair to form a triad aimed at promoting desegregation. This arrangement lasted until 1985–86 when Arbor Heights and Van Asselt returned to their pairing, with all kindergarten classes housed at Arbor Heights.

The PTSA began an innovative program to raise funds for the school in 1992. Local businesses were asked to purchase “stock” in the school to support enrichment activities. Arbor Heights now has a “partnership” with the Bon Marché. Pen pal exchanges with Bon employees encourage writing skills and promote positive relationships with caring

adults. The Bon has also helped finance expansion of the school's computer network. The school currently features three multiage classrooms as well as traditional grade levels.

Arbor Heights is a close-knit community, and this is reflected in the school staff. Most of those working at the school were born and raised in the area. Of the 60 staff members, 80 percent live within a three-mile radius of the building. The school also shares a connection with the Fauntleroy community just to the north. The Fauntleroy YMCA operates a before-and-after school daycare at the school.