

# Boren

Name: **Louisa Boren**  
Address: 5950 Delridge Way SW  
Current Use: Interim site

Louisa Boren, perhaps more than any other Seattle founder, symbolizes the pioneer ideals of courage, selflessness, and ingenuity. A teacher in Illinois, at the age of 24 she headed west by wagon train with her mother and stepfather. After arriving at the point they named Alki in 1851, she made the Puget Sound country her home until her death on August 31, 1916.

Boren married fellow pioneer David Denny and raised a family in the fledgling settlement. Throughout her life, Louisa Boren Denny showed an unusual interest in studying the “unfeminine” subjects of chemistry, philosophy, botany, and astronomy. She is remembered for her kindness to neighbors and her sympathy for newly-arrived Chinese workers. She also worked hard for the cause of women’s suffrage in Washington Territory.

The site of Louisa Boren Junior High School is not far from where the Denny party landed. In the early 1960s, the West Seattle community needed a junior high school because of overcrowding at local elementary and high schools. In September 1963, Boren opened its doors to over 800 students in grades 6–9. Constructed at a cost of over \$2,000,000, the school had 40 teaching stations. A special guest at the dedication of the new school was Victor Denny, grandson of Louisa Boren, who presented a portrait of his grandmother. The portrait is now in the Seattle School District Archives.

In the winter of 1964 or 1965, the first principal, Robert Nelson,



Boren, ca. 1963 SPSA 119-20

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Name: **Louisa Boren Junior High School**  
Location: 5950 Delridge Way SW  
Building: Stucco  
Architect: Naramore, Bain, Brady & Johanson  
Site: 15.05 acres

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1962: Named on November 28  
1963: Opened in September  
1978: Became *Louisa Boren Middle School*  
1981: Closed in June  
1981–89: Special programs site  
1987–: Temporary site

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was refereeing a Boren Bobcats basketball game in the school gym. At half-time, someone rushed up to tell him there was a dead bobcat on his office floor. Nelson responded that he would have to handle it after the game was over. Returning to his office, he indeed found a dead bobcat in a cardboard box. The animal had been hit by a car and was brought in by someone who thought the school might want it. After spending the weekend in the Home Economics freezer, the bobcat was stuffed and placed on display in a trophy case.

In 1978, the school became Louisa Boren Middle School with grades 6–8. A bilingual teaching staff taught English as a Second Language, and many students enrolled in bilingual classes.

A decline in enrollment to 550 and shrinking financial resources forced the district to close Boren in June 1981 and assign students to Madison and Denny. In September Boren became the home of Indian Heritage School, an alternative middle and high school that teaches basic curriculum with an emphasis on Indian cultures. Also located at Boren were a bilingual program for students over 18 and a high school reentry program. The building has housed a number of Seattle School District departments, including Transportation, Compensatory Education, Archives, and a satellite kitchen.

In September 1987, students from High Point moved to Boren for one year while their new school was being constructed. About 300 elementary students shared the building with the Indian Heritage School, which occupied the north wing. In October 1988, the school board approved a request by the United Indians of All Tribes to use part of Boren for a private, all-Indian kindergarten.

Cooper was the next school in need of temporary quarters and they moved into Boren in September 1989. At this time, the Indian Heritage School was moved to a leased building at 315 22nd Avenue S and subsequently to Wilson. For one school year (1993–94), Alternative Education IV made its home at Boren and then moved to Genesee Hill.



Boren, 1965 SPSA 119-63

The Cooper children moved to their new building in fall 1999.

Students from West Seattle High School will move to Boren in September 2000, while their school is being renovated. Soon Boren will have been used longer for special programs and as a temporary site than it was as a junior high and middle school. West Seattle students are scheduled to return to the newly renovated West Seattle High School in September 2002.