

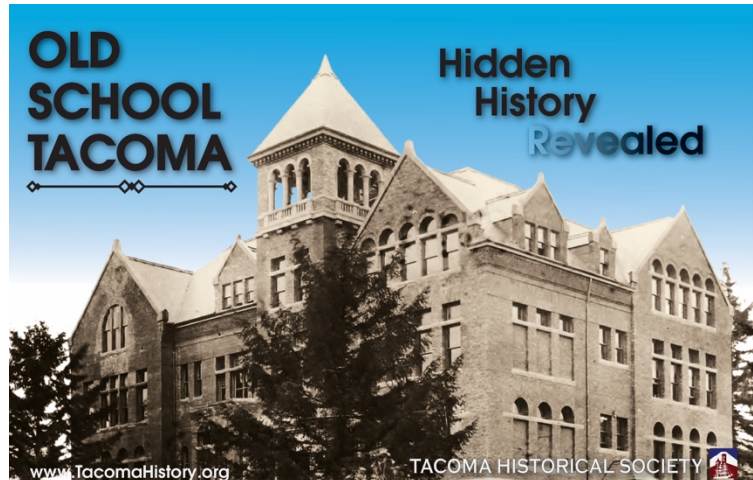


**MEDIA ADVISORY
For Immediate Release
August 2019**

Lowell Elementary School, built in 1892 at
1210 North Yakima Avenue.

Founded in 1869 as the First Ward School
(Old Town) and renamed in 1890 for
American author James Russell Lowell.

Demolished after damage in the 1949
earthquake.



Graphic designed by Chris Fiala Erlich and Michael Lafreniere;
Image from a colorized postcard circa 1908, courtesy of
Tacoma Public Library Postcard Collection, Magden-99.

WHAT: Tacoma Historical Society's newest exhibit, "Old School Tacoma: Hidden History Revealed"

WHEN: Free Public Exhibit Opening Reception: Thursday, September 12, 2019, 5 to 7 pm

WHERE: Tacoma Historical Society Museum, 919 Pacific Avenue in the historic Provident Building

DURATION: The exhibit will continue through February 29, 2020

HOURS: 11 am to 4 pm, Wednesday through Saturday

COST: Exhibit/museum admission is free, supported by a grant from the Bamford Family Foundation.

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Michael Lafreniere, director@tacomahistory.org

DESIGNER: Chris Fiala Erlich

CURATOR: Brendan Balaam

Sesquicentennial *Noun*, Ses 'qui 'cen ten ni 'al /,seskwəsen'tenēəl/
A one-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary.

Tacoma School District was created on September 13, 1869. Tacoma Historical Society is honoring that sesquicentennial in a free museum exhibit, "Old School Tacoma: Hidden History Revealed."

Since its beginning in a one-room cabin in Old Town in 1869, the history of Tacoma's schools has spanned 150 years. This exhibit digs into the hidden history of the past, revealing what may have been forgotten, or is beyond the lifespan of our collective memory.

- See what our schools looked like, how they began, and what important things happened within them.

- Learn how they were shaped by the communities they served and by changing ideas about what schools should do and how they should look.
- Realize the impact of city growth, major historical events, the social justice movement, and disasters — both natural and of our own making.

“We thought it was important that the exhibit be developed with student participation,” said Tacoma Historical Society’s curator, Brendan Balaam. “In the spring, University of Washington Tacoma student Leah Mallett compiled research on the Cushman Native American School and on Tacoma’s Japanese Language School. Another UWT student, Alyssa Urish, contributed a chapter from her graduate thesis on school desegregation in Tacoma. This summer we were fortunate to again participate in the University of Puget Sound’s intern program. UPS seniors Eli Whelan and Allyson Niitani researched and developed the exhibit’s main themes, visited school locations, and gathered photos and artifacts.”

“This truly has been a community effort,” said Tacoma Historical Society’s managing director, Michael Lafreniere. “We worked closely with Joey Grant, Public Records Manager for Tacoma Schools, who is currently evaluating the status of the school district’s archives.” Society volunteers will assist in the fabrication and installation of the exhibit.

Upcoming Events

Visit the Tacoma Historical Society website or follow Tacoma Historical Society on social media to stay informed about exhibit-themed events taking place over the next several months.

Did You Know?

- Tacoma’s early schools were identified by their geographic location – North, South, East, West, First Ward, and Central.
- In May of 1889, as additional schools were under construction, school superintendent Franklin B. Gault announced that Tacoma’s schools would be named after prominent American authors.
- Tacoma schools honored Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, John Greenleaf Whittier, William Cullen Bryant, and James Russell Lowell.
- Whitman School was *not* named for Walt Whitman, but in honor of pioneer missionaries Marcus and Narcissa Whitman.
- The name of Central School was retained as a landmark.
- Later schools recognized neighborhoods, presidents, and national and local leaders in education.
- Gault Middle School opened in 1926, remembering Superintendent Franklin B. Gault, who died in 1918.

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Tacoma Historical Society is a community-supported volunteer-driven 501(c)(3) charitable, nonprofit corporation, and is dedicated to the preservation, promotion and presentation of the history of the City of Tacoma and its people. Tacoma Historical Society works to forge connections between past and present generations, fostering an appreciation of the past and a sense of place within our community’s history.

www.TacomaHistory.org