

GRANT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

*E. 1300 Ninth Avenue
Spokane, WA 99202
Opened: 1900
Namesake:
Ulysses S. Grant*



Decked out in their finest, Grant students pose for a class photo in 1925.

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According to the 1880 census, Spokane Falls was a village of 350 people. With the completion of the Northern Pacific Railroad to Spokane in June 1881, a period of rapid growth spurred the population to 36,848 by 1900. Grant School was opened in 1900 in the newly named city of Spokane.

School Named

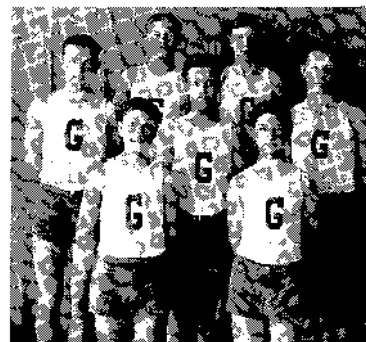
Schools were rapidly planned and constructed to meet educational needs, and as the population moved up the South Hill, so did the schools. In 1897, a site of 1.89 acres (82,140 sq. ft.), was purchased at South 916 Ivory Street for Grant School. The school was named for General Ulysses S. Grant, a popular Civil War Union leader, who later became president of the United States in the 1868 election. It is interesting to note that more than 600,000 southern black voters helped Grant win the presidency, and during his term Congress passed the Fifteenth Amendment to the U. S. Constitution, guaranteeing the right of blacks to vote. How appropriate this is, because today our school ethnic mix has a large percentage of black students. A very rare oil painting of General Grant is part of our school archives.

Through the years Grant grew with major additions in 1906, 1910, and 1951. Portables were added between 1910 and 1951. When Interstate 90 was under construction in the 1960s and early 1970s, the city vacated 10th Avenue from the school boundary to 11th Avenue and from Arthur Street east to Altamont Pharmacy and other business buildings along the Perry Street corridor. Approximately 40 houses south of Grant School in this area were purchased and replaced with additional park space, including tennis courts, baseball diamonds, and playground equipment.

Levy Failure

When the levy failed in 1972, the decision was made to close nine elementary schools. At that time the Edison elementary students living south of Playfair were moved to Grant. To accommodate these students, the seventh and eighth graders were transferred from Grant to Sacajawea and their former classrooms were redesigned as elementary classrooms, with the large central hallway upstairs carpeted and fitted for use as a central library, media center, workshop, and meeting area.

As many schools built at the turn of the century, Grant eventually became a difficult building to maintain economically. Grant was one of 13 schools to be rebuilt on or near its site with the old building being demolished.



Grant basketball team, 1920s. Back row: Eldon Soper, Frank Walden; center row: Jack Murray, Bob Miller, Allan Skindlow; front row: Gordon Chitter, Steve Evanoff.

Lesson in Science

As the 1970s drew to a close, work progressed on the new Grant School, at East 1300 Ninth Avenue on the site of a former swamp. This swamp had special geologic interest as it was a former small lake during prehistoric times. Liberty Park is also noted for its prehistoric treasures. Faculty and students kept close watch on the progress of the new building and the treasures it was producing. Classes busily

gathered fossils found around the construction site and added them to their science collections. The finds offered the opportunity for talks about "hands-on, archaeological digs." This was truly a rare occasion for any single student to enjoy, but in this instance a whole school was able to see science in action.

In October 1980, after weeks of packing and stacking boxes, several large moving vans moved items into our new building. Classes in the old building went on as usual. Finally, it was our turn. Students and teachers formed one long marching line, each carrying personal pencils and notebooks, exiting from the old to the new Grant building where classes were immediately resumed after the hour of movement. Teachers worked long into the evening that Friday night as well as on Saturday getting rooms organized and boxes unpacked.

Chalkdust and Moondust

The demise of the old Grant School building ended an era of sawdust, chalkdust, and moondust. Students in the past had worked with sawdust in the woodshops as seventh and eighth graders, created unknown amounts of chalkdust while they applied their knowledge on slates and old blackboards, and saw real moondust as television took them to the moon with astronauts, while they created their own moondust in dreams of a brighter future as solid citizens.

New memories have been made for the past nine years in the new building, but old memories linger. Events such as the Bicentennial Celebration of 1976, under the leadership of Principal David Lange, when the entire playground, park, and school were transformed into a pioneer village or the fantastic barbecue ribs and southern fried chicken

provided by Mrs. Parks and Mrs. Marsh and served to the faculty remain special memories.

Because we have such a varied ethnic population we have enjoyed special Native American celebrations, authentic to the last detail under the direction of Dave Browneagle, and thanks to Rosie Duris, who introduced the students to authentic African drums and other musical instruments following her return from Africa. Grant takes pride in its own famous African Drummers and Dancers performing group. Started in 1973, this group continues to perform throughout the Inland Empire in 1989.

Principals who have served the Grant School faithfully over the years include Emily Hard (the first full-time Grant principal), Art Ewy, Martha Dickman, Mr. Okert, David Lange, Robert Esty, and current principal William Reuter. Interesting news items of past years include the following: *Spokesman-Review*: February 1, 1908 — Grant will have 14 graduates from its grade school.

Spokane School Board Minutes: April 11, 1905 — "The Building and Grounds Committee recommended sending outdoor closets from Logan to Grant. Account of overflow of cesspool at Grant. The use of toilets in Grant to be discontinued for present."

Spokesman-Review: October 21, 1916 — reports that over 300 parents and visitors attended a drill and dance program given by students of Grant.

Ethnic Diversity

Grant School has a diverse ethnic student mix. Many ethnic groups became a part of Grant with the closure of the Edison School. Today Japanese, Vietnamese, Hmong, Polish, and Native Americans create a miniature "United Nations" at Grant

which is considered a "Rainbow School." Rainbow stands for "Reaching all individual needs bridging our world."

Innovative Programs

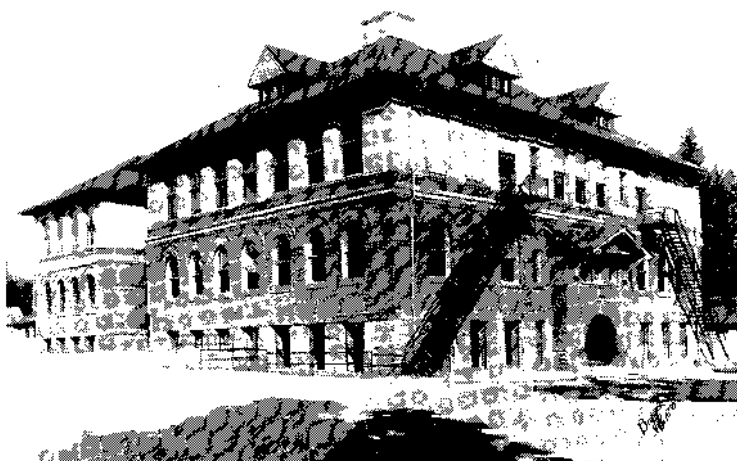
Principal William Reuter offers his philosophy: "Grant Elementary School is a unique school populated by a very diverse population. It has for many years been the school with the largest number of minority students, over 28 percent, in School District No. 81. To meet the needs of these students various innovative programs have been instituted. These include a continuous progress primary with an alternative to kindergarten retention called pre-first. Also, over the years, the Grant staff has been widely known to be of high caliber with a real interest and dedication to having students succeed far above what might be expected of them. Over the years, Grant has had a student population with over 75 percent on free and reduced lunch. Nationwide there is a direct correlation between test scores and high numbers of free/reduced lunch applications, yet the average test scores put Grant about in the middle of our 34 elementary schools. This is another indication of teacher dedication and high expectations for students.

Students attending Grant get to live day-by-day the experience of growing up in a multicultural world. Hopefully, they will be better prepared to deal with the real world when they are adults."

The educators, parents, and students, whose footsteps have echoed in our school through past years, provide the inspiration for those still to come, in the American dream of a "solid, free education for each child." The heart and soul of the child yearning to read and learn, the successes and experiences continue with a new generation of teachers and students. The collage of memories indeed enrich the mind, heart, and soul and the clean, newly polished smell of school on opening day will never be forgotten.

American Dream

Now we continue to build memories in the new Grant School, setting a firm foundation for our future citizens with innovative programs, modern media and increased community involvement . . . Our goal is the same, "to provide the highest quality education so that our future will be brighter than our past." We are proud to be a part of this American Dream, of Spokane School District No. 81, and most of all, of Grant School.



Fire escapes were an important addition to old school buildings.