

Eastside, Westside, and Other Early Schools

In early **panoramic** photos of Cottage Grove, the skyline is marked with two beautiful old school buildings. The buildings were 2 and 3 stories high, with basements and distinctive bell towers.

The first of the buildings was the Eastside School built in 1892 near 5th and Jefferson Streets. At the time the wood-frame building was by far the largest school constructed in Cottage Grove and was the pride of the town. High School students were on the upper floor and primary grades were on the first floor.



Eastside School

Eastside school was built during the height of the Lemati Slabtown feud when the east and west sides of town were fighting to become the town center. Surely the fancy new school on the Eastside helped to convince early residents that the future of Cottage Grove lay east of the Coast Fork river.

In 1913 a modern, brick high school was built right next to the Eastside School. The two were neighbors for 11 years, with the elementary kids in the old school and the high schoolers in the new building. The disadvantages of a wood frame school became clear in 1924 when the Eastside School caught fire and the kids had to escape the building.



Jefferson School

The old school with its lovely bell tower was torn down that summer. Central School, also known as Adams school, replaced the Eastside School. The Adams school building is now the South Lane School District office.

The Westside School was built in 1904 on Birch Avenue, near the edge of Mt David, where Community Sharing is now located. A newspaper article from the time boasted about how fortunate the town was, to now have two first rate school buildings. The school served the first through sixth graders from the west side of the river and all of



the 7th and 8th graders in town. One of the most popular teachers at the school was Worth Harvey, who taught 8th grade. Although Mr. Harvey loved teaching and enjoyed his students, the \$75 a month teacher's salary was not enough for him to live on. He left the school in 1907 to work at a Eugene bank. Eli Hall taught the 7th grade at the school in the 1920's. The very busy Mr. Hall taught agriculture, geography, spelling, reading and was the basketball, football and baseball coach.

There was no transportation to school in those days, students had to make their way on their own. Some local farmers, like Walter Huff, would transport kids in wagons or on horseback when the mud became harder to walk through.

The Westside School operated until 1940. A new High School had just opened on Taylor Street and the old High School became Jefferson Elementary School. There was plenty of room for the Westside kids and the brick and masonry building was deemed much safer than the old wood-framed school. The Westside school building was used one more time when it housed the kids from Latham School while their building was being remodeled. The building was torn down in the early 1940's and the Cottage Grove Hospital was built on its site in 1950. It would be 36 years before the west side of town has its own elementary school again when Bohemia School opened in 1976. Jefferson Elementary School was torn down in 1980 to make way for the Jefferson Park Apartments, ending the era of pre-1960 school buildings in the city limits.



Discussion Points

1. Why did brick buildings become more popular than wood structure buildings?
 2. Compare one of these past schools to your school, what benefits would the older building provide? What benefits to more modern schools?
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Vocabulary

Masonry: trade or work of building with bricks or stone

Panoramic: a view or picture with a wide view surrounding the observer

Salary: a fixed regular payment made by an employer to an employee

