



Celebrating the Campus School at Western, 1899-1967

The Campus Schooler

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Ramping Up (& Down)

Why we had ramps, I do not know. I can remember ... that it was most fun either after school or when no one was looking to run down them as fast as you could!—*Judy (Hall) Lewis (6th grade, 1956)*

I once rode the milk cart, full of milk, down the rubber floored ramp.... The subsequent crash was a mess and my reputation suffered.—*Larry Johanson (6th grade, 1947)*

When you entered the building (particularly after summer vacation) the rubber smell told you that it was time to go to school again.—*Peter Gaasland (6th grade, 1949)*

They STILL have the same distinct odor I remember from the olden days!—*Carlin Freeberg (6th grade, 1943)*

It is not a favorite memory, but I remember running down the ramp, missing the turn and running head first into the wall. No permanent injuries.—*Name Withheld!*

We always referred to it as the “school without stairs” ... We would run when we were in the upper grades and would roar down these rubber ramps when we were supposed to be walking down them....—*John R. (“Robbie”) Calhoun (6th grade, 1948)* ■

Realizing the Dream

“The Latest Word in Educational Structures”

Thus did Western’s student newspaper, the *WWCollegian*, enthuse about the new Campus School facility, dedicated sixty-four years ago this month. On May 7, 1943, political and education luminaries from across the state joined the Western and Campus School communities for an elaborate two-day program featuring speeches, music, panel discussions, tours of the new building, and a great many celebratory meals.

Planning for the new Campus School had begun in 1938. Following allocation of state funds in 1939, the decision was made to build the school at the base of Sehome Hill, southeast of the main building, in the area of the old athletic field grandstands. (The first choice had been the wooded hill, crowned by several houses, between the library and the gym). Originally slated to open in January 1942, the building’s completion was continually delayed due to

labor and materials shortages occasioned by World War II.

In January 1943, however, the College’s Trustees confidently set the date for the dedication ceremonies and the building was officially opened with the May events.

Hailed as “one of the finest of its kind in the United States” and “an inspiration for future school buildings in the state,” the new structures’s modernity was a point of enormous pride. Writing in the periodical *Nation’s Schools*, Western’s President W. W. Haggard and the building’s architect, John Paul Jones, pointed to the “unusually large” classrooms, each with an adjoining teacher’s office and a workroom “for craftwork and other noise producing activities.” There were alcoves for reading groups and quiet study, ramps with rubberized flooring rather than stairs, three large playrooms, a health

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Did You Know Miss Snow?

“Coming to Bellingham from Columbia University,” announced the *Weekly Messenger* on October 26, 1934, “is Miss Miriam B. Snow, the librarian of children’s literature.”



With degrees from Albany Teachers College as well as Columbia, and professional experience in New York State and at Peabody College in Tennessee, Miss Snow arrived to assume leader-

ship of the children’s section in the room planned for just this use in the Bellingham Normal’s new library, opened in 1928.

Over the years, Miss Snow would become well-known to Campus Schoolers, who visited her domain as part of their reading instruction classes, or during “field trips” to the library, or during their free time—stimulated by their class work to read, read, read on their own. “She was so wonderful to let us borrow any book we wanted,” recalls alumna Barbara Cunningham (6th grade, 1939). For many years, Miss Snow was also, officially, the Campus School Librarian.

In 1951, Miss Snow married Homer B. Mathes, son of Edward T. Mathes, the Normal’s first president; he died in 1956. Miriam Mathes continued to serve as librarian and teacher until her retirement (as Professor of Library Science) in 1971. Among other accomplishments, she was instrumental in establishing programs at Western to prepare teachers for careers in elementary school libraries and media centers.

An avid traveler, Mrs. Mathes enjoyed adventures around the world well into her eighth decade, describ-

ing these in her 1998 book *Global Retirement*. Her hobbies also included collecting figurines depicting the act of reading. Begun in 1939, her collection grew to include over 250 pieces by 1999, when she donated it to the Western Libraries. Selections from the collection are always on display in Wilson Library.

Generous to Western, Mrs. Mathes’ legacies continue to support students through the E. T. Mathes scholarships and additional gifts to the Libraries. Miriam B. Snow Mathes died in Lacey, Wash., on January 31, 2003, at the age of 97. ■

New School (cont’d)

suite for the nurse and her staff, an auditorium seating 200, and a kitchen connected to a dining room complete with chintz curtains and a working fireplace.

“All the efforts” in designing the building, the authors concluded, “were focused on carrying out the philosophy ... that the child should go to school amidst surroundings conducive to desirable growth and that every modern facility for student teaching should be provided.”

Sadly, Mary Rich, Campus School director since 1924, who had worked tirelessly toward the realization of this dream, did not lead the school into its splendid new home. She had retired in June 1942. Her replacement, Dr. Paul Grim, a Campus School teacher since 1937, would be the first director to enjoy the sparkling new premises.

Now known as Miller Hall and significantly altered by successive renovations, the original building’s superior qualities persist in memory. “A joy,” “magnificent,” “idyllic,” recall some who studied or worked there. For others, it remained a lasting standard: “Although I was fortunate to become principal of several brand new schools during my career,” writes alumnus William DeGrace, “nothing ever matched the facilities available to us in the Campus School building.” ■

Treasure Trove Showcasing Recent Memorabilia Additions

- ▶ **A handmade wooden box, created in 1950**, given by Herb Ershig (6th grade, 1950)
- ▶ **22 report cards and 3 issues of *Junior Viking* (Jan. & June 1933, Jan. 1934)** given by Ruth Hansen (6th grade,)
- ▶ ***The Sixth Grade Report, vol. I, nos. 1 and 3; Campus Herald (undated); Campus Finale, 1953 and 1957; Bellingham Police Dept. Merit Certificate, 1953 and 1957; 3 vintage post cards of Old Main***, given by Andy Pete Mustacich (6th grade,
- ▶ **Report cards, book made in 4th grade, draft of new building cornerstone laying ceremony, handmade paper sample**, given by June (Hardin) Thomas (6th grade, 1941)
- ▶ **Report cards, handmade books, photographs, poems, programs, correspondence, newspaper clippings, copper artwork, and more!** given by Marcia (Ireland) Brookbank (6th grade, 1939)

THANK YOU ONE & ALL!

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