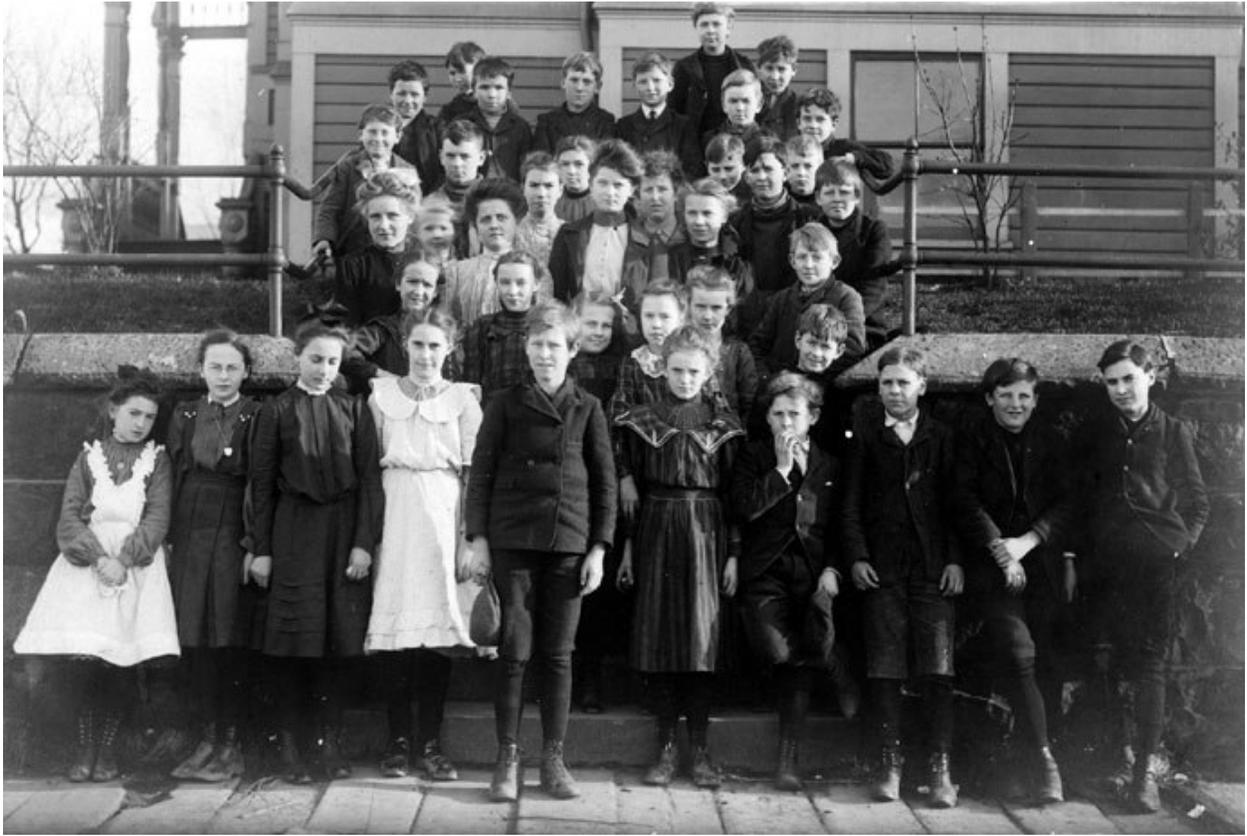


SEHOME SCHOOLHOUSE, BUILT 1861, FIRST PUBLIC SCHOOL BUILDING IN WHATCOM COUNTY  
<https://hamtopia.wordpress.com/gallery/sehome-schoolhouse/>



SEHOME GRADE SCHOOL, BUILT 1890 ON PRESENT SITE OF LAUREL PARK



SEHOME GRADE SCHOOL STUDENTS, UNKNOWN DATE



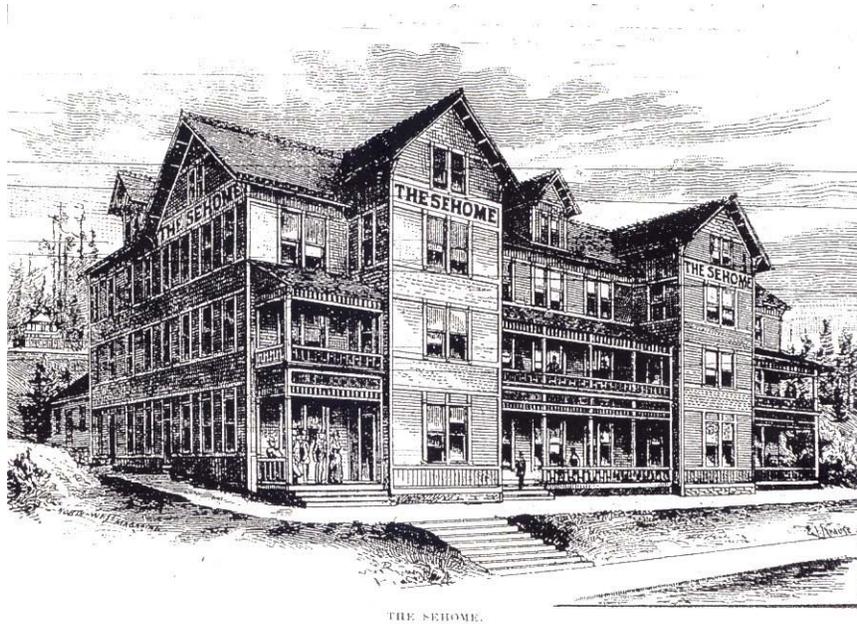
LOOKING SOUTHWEST FROM CHESTNUT STREET IN SEHOME, NOW  
BELLINGHAM. IN 1889

[Town of Sehome] - LOOKING SW FROM CHESTNUT STREET, SEHOME, 1889



Galen Biery Collection #57  
Center for Pacific Northwest Studies  
Western Washington University  
Bellingham, WA 98225

STREETCAR TO SEHOME WHARF, UNKNOWN DATE



THE SEHOME HOTEL [Location??]



THE SEHOME HOTEL, UNKNOWN DATE



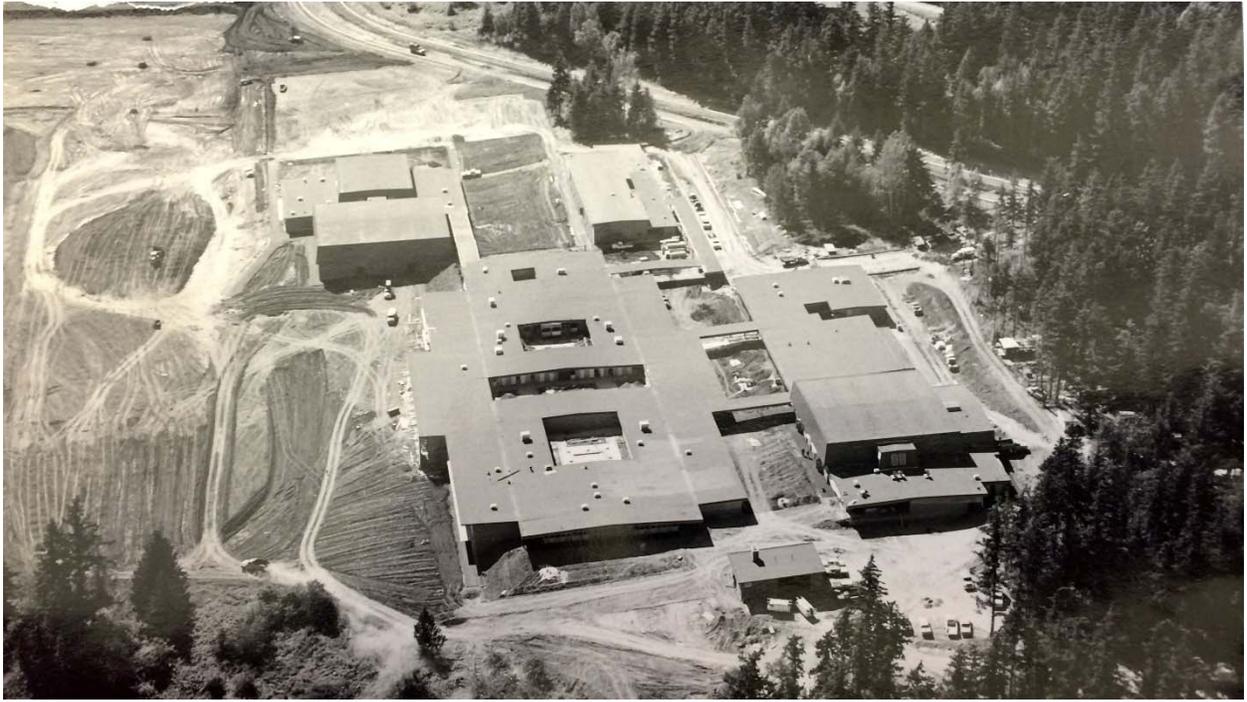
REMAINS OF FORT BELLINGHAM, 1894 [originally built and commanded by Capt. George Pickett]



MILITARY BRIDGE BUILT ACROSS WHATCOM CREEK BY GEORGE PICKETT –  
Currently located connecting Prospect St. and Dupont St. near the Courthouse



MILITARY BRIDGE BUILT ACROSS WHATCOM CREEK BY GEORGE PICKETT





*Photos: (1) Sehome High School's 1966-67 ASB officers pose at the construction site of their new school. From left are Vice President Mark Oiness, Treasurer Heidi Hansen, President Scott Walker, and Secretary Kelly Knight. (2) & (3) Aerial photographs show the original Sehome High School construction, c. 1967. Source: Washington State Archives*

As Bellingham Public Schools prepares to break ground on the new Sehome High School in a [ceremony at the school](#) on Tuesday, March 28, we look back at the construction of the original Sehome High, and some of the planning and vision that went into Bellingham's second high school.

In its time, the original Sehome High School was cutting-edge.

"A school design that would be adequate to meet the needs of the next 50 years was the foremost consideration," read a speech from the dedication of the new school, given Sept. 10, 1967. (View the program for the dedication ceremony for the original Sehome High School [here](#).)

A sprawling campus, with multiple buildings connected by covered outdoor walkways — sometimes referred to as a "California" design — had become popular in the Puget Sound area by the early 1960s. Bellingham school leaders followed the trend, figuring it would provide something they needed for the fast-moving, space-race 60s: flexibility.

"We simply don't know enough about the future directions of secondary education to plan a building that will be adequate for the next 50 years," then-Superintendent Gordon L. Carter said in the text of the dedication speech.

"Educational changes are occurring too fast and science is moving too rapidly to permit anyone to predict what the future high school should be like."

"We decided we should have a building that could stand change without too great an expense, to modernize it to fit a new situation. In a word, we wanted flexibility," Carter said.

Subject areas were segregated in separate buildings. Spaces were created for existing and emerging technologies — “filmstrips, motion pictures, prerecorded tapes, television, phonograph records and teaching machines.” The prevailing opinion at the time was that teachers couldn’t and shouldn’t do all the work. The original Sehome High School was built to create an environment that fostered independent study.

“Time will be the judge of how well the new school building will meet the needs of the citizens of tomorrow,” the dedication speech concluded.

In 2013, voters decided the old Sehome High School had reached the end of its useful life and needed to be rebuilt.

The capital projects manager for Bellingham Public Schools, a Sehome grad himself, said “California style” is a thing of the past.

“It does not lend itself to our weather conditions,” Curtis Lawyer said — putting it mildly.

And the flexibility originally envisioned for the old Sehome never really materialized. Classrooms had been designed so they could be reconfigured using partitions. In the past 50 years, the counselors’ area was changed, and the original space for home economics and typing became a special-education teaching space, but other than that the school layout has remained essentially the same, Lawyer said.

Flexibility and natural daylighting were emphasized in the design of the new school, as with the old. But school planners also wanted to increase student and staff collaboration and safety by putting all of the new Sehome into one building.

“We’re hoping this will foster a better sense of community for the school,” Lawyer said.

Dollar amounts have changed considerably over the past half century, but funding mechanisms are strikingly similar. The total construction cost in 1967 was \$3.8 million. Today, the original construction budget of \$73 million, developed in 2012 for a bond measure approved in 2013, is being revised upward due to unforeseen expenses. Bellingham Public Schools will ask voters to approve approximately \$12 million in an upcoming bond and use capital project funds to cover the remaining costs of Sehome’s construction. Money for other construction projects approved in the 2013 measure can be used to cover the extra costs at Sehome.

The new Sehome is a high priority for Bellingham Public Schools and will be completed regardless of the outcome of the bond vote, coming as early as February 2018.

The same thing happened to school planners in the 1960s. The dedication speech noted the “highly successful bond issue campaign” of 1963 for construction of the original Sehome. More money was needed, however, due to inflation and increased construction costs.

“Additional funds were later voted to complete the building when building costs exceeded the money available,” the speech went on to say.

*“Lessons from the Past” is an occasional series of history features that will appear on the Bellingham Public Schools website.*