Feature Article

Fall City Schools Part 1: Early Schools

First School (1873-1885)
Richards School (1885-1890)
Lyceum Hall (1888 and later, as needed)
White School (1890-1900)
Brown School (1900-1915)
(Patterson Creek School, 1885-1915)

Sources

First School (1873-1885)

In early 1873, as families began coming to the area that would later be Fall City, it became important that there be a school for their children. A group of parents got together and mapped out a plan to build a 24-foot by 30-foot building on the north bank of the Snoqualmie River, since most of the children lived on that side of the river. Chief John Saniwa of the Snoqualmie tribe suggested the school be built where his Council House had been, on a small rise of ground that had never flooded, directly across the Snoqualmie River from Boham’s trading post. This would be the first building in the Snoqualmie Valley built specifically for school use.
Watson Allen had just completed construction of his sawmill at the mouth of Tokul Creek and the first lumber produced was rafted down to the school site. The parents supplied the nails, windows and hand-split cedar shakes for the roof. Some of the single men, whose families had not yet arrived, also volunteered their time to assist the parents. No photos are available of the school in its original form. The sketch on the previous page is from the Corliss book, *Fall City, In the Valley of the Moon*.

This was the school that greeted the first teacher, Mrs Laurilla Foresman, and her five students, Elma and Amanda Thomas, Ellen Stearns, Druzilla and Jessie Taylor, on the first day of school in the summer of 1873. The Taylor sisters lived on the south side of the Snoqualmie River and had to be taken to school by dugout. Their uncle, James Taylor, had the job of ferrying the girls twice a day. One winter, when the river was frozen over except for the swift water in the center, a dugout canoe was anchored across the center between the two ice masses, to allow the students to cross.

School was held in this little building for over ten years. It also served as a center for community life—neighborhood gatherings, parties, Grange meetings, church services, and a polling place for county, state, and national elections. Before the school was granted district status, the teacher was paid by the parents and some teachers boarded with families nearby. At first there were no grades at the school. School was held for two to three months, for as long as money held out, and not always at the same time of year. In 1878 the school was designated as District 20 in King County, and school continued there until 1885.
In 1885 or 1886, Philo Rutherford brought his mother, Prudence Rutherford, to the land where the First School was, owned at that time by the Rutherford family. According to family history, they remodeled the building somewhat and lived in it until 1888. Jack Bush and his wife acquired the property in 1903.

Alex Chisholm and his wife Eva moved to Fall City in 1908, living initially in a logging camp near Lake Marie. A year or two after that they moved into the First School building and lived there for some years. The photo above is one of the nicest photos of the building, with an addition and new roof on the east side. It is often called “Aunt Eve’s house”, but with no date given. It is not known how long they lived there, but they next moved into a house on Patterson Creek, which was built in 1923.
In this poor reproduction of an early postcard (1930s?), the first school building is visible, facing the river, just west of the end of the first concrete bridge. At this stage, additions have been made to both sides of the original building. Large billboards at the bridge entry are seen, also shown later in the 1940 Washington State Archives photo, shown below. By this time, it is looking pretty worn.

In the early 1960s, an unsuccessful attempt was made to find support to move and repair the building, but it did not succeed, and this historical building was torn down by the current land owner.
Richards School (1885-1890)

By 1884, most of the school age children lived south of the Snoqualmie River. Permission was obtained to have a school near SE 4th Pl just west of the Raging River bridge. It was called Richards School because Wes Richards and his family lived briefly in the building. Almus Rutherford was the last teacher in the first school and the first teacher in this one. Only one photo exists, shown above, and there are few memories recorded of this period.
Lyceum Hall (1888-1889)

The increasing number of students soon overcrowded Richards School and in 1888 and 1889, the Lyceum Hall (located where the current Masonic Hall stands) was used for overflow. This unpainted single-room building with a tall square front was built by Bemis and Walker as a furniture factory and later became known as Lyceum Hall. It was used for a variety of community events such as a debating society and singing school and various meetings. A newspaper, *King County Record* was published there for a while starting in 1906.
In 1890 the third school building was ready for classes. Little is known about its construction or design, but it was the first school in town with a bell tower and was painted white, hence the name White School. This school faced 4th Street (SE 44th PL) between 335th and 336th PL SE. The first enrollment consisted of 31 boys and 27 girls. Ten years later, the increasing number of students reached the limits of space, and the Lyceum Hall was pressed into service once again to accommodate the overflow. It was in the White School that paper replaced slates and the school term was increased from six months to nine months.

A house was built on the White School site by the Bonell family in 1920.
The first two-story schoolhouse in Fall City was built in 1900. It faced what is now 336th PL SE. It was painted brown...hence the name. In the corner of the large schoolyard behind the Brown School a gymnasium was built, where the girls’ and boys’ basketball teams would have played.

Eighth grade graduation (shown at left c1902) was the highest education available in Fall City until 1903, when the school board created a high school. Teacher Daniel Daum, shown in the 1902 photo, was the first high school teacher and principal. Nine students were admitted to the high school in the fall of 1903. The first Fall City High School graduation, with four graduates, was held in the spring of 1904.
This elaborate diploma (only the top portion shown) was for the 1914 graduation of Oliver McCaffree, the last graduation for students attending the Brown School.
After more than a decade had passed, in spite of the Brown School’s much greater size, it became obvious that an even larger facility would soon be needed. By 1914, a portion of the Brown School students was again being taught in Lyceum Hall. The Falls City Masonic Lodge records show that they rented the lower floor of the Masonic Hall to the School District in 1914, for $10/month. By that time, planning was underway for the Brick School, which opened in 1915.

It is not known when the Brown School building was taken down, but a house was built in that location in 1923 by Neal Hemingway. It was later the home of Elmer and Gladys Sorenson from 1927 to 1950.
Patterson Creek School  
(1885-1915)

As the population along Patterson Creek began to grow, the parents petitioned to form a school district, the reason being that it was too far for the children to walk to Fall City. In 1885, School District 48 was formed. The school was built on the west side of what is now 308th St SE, just south of Redmond-Fall City Road. It was a one-room building with a bell tower. In 1915 the students began attending the new Brick School in town.

Grades 1-8  
Patterson Creek School  
c1910
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Sources

Unless otherwise credited, all photo are from the collection of Snoqualmie Valley Historical Museum. Our thanks to them for sharing these important photos. Materials were excerpted from Fall City In the Valley of the Moon by Margaret Corliss, A History of the Snoqualmie Valley by Ada Hill, and Jack’s History of Fall City by Jack Kelley.