

Vashon High Schools

By Bruce Haulman and Terry Donnelly

Vashon has an interesting history of building and tearing down high schools. Originally there were two high schools, one at Burton and one at Vashon. The resulting rivalry was intense and at times acrimonious and was one of the factors in the developing mythology of a Mason-Dixon Line dividing the island north from south.

The first high school on the Island was built in 1903-04 on land donated by Miles Hatch on the Burton Peninsula and is seen with its church-like tower in the Burton High School photograph. The first class graduated in 1909. Before then, students completing the eighth grade who wanted to continue their education attended classes at Vashon College. This high school and the current Vashon High School are the only high schools that have not been demolished. The Burton High School is now two homes on the Burton Peninsula.



Burton High School 1910: courtesy Vashon-Maury Island Heritage Museum

The Burton Union High School was just south of the Judd Creek Bridge and was built in 1913 when the Burton, Maury, and southern Vashon school districts unified. It was a two-story brick building overlooking Inner Quartermaster Harbor as seen in Norman Edson's Burton Union High School photograph.



Burton Union High School by Norman Edson: courtesy Vashon-Maury Island Heritage Museum

Vashon High School was built in 1913 when the Vashon and Vermontville (Glen Acres area) School Districts combined to construct a new building north of Vashon town on the main highway where Vashon Elementary School was later located and where The Harbor School now sits. This school was a three-story building that was also used as a grammar school and had a separate wooden gymnasium added in 1914. The Vashon High School with Gymnasium photograph shows the school and gymnasium in the 1930s when it was the Vashon Grade School.



Vashon High School and Gymnasium: courtesy Vashon-Maury Island Heritage Museum

Both high schools operated until 1929 when they graduated their last senior classes. The year before, in 1928, Island voters approved a merger of the two high schools into a single "Union High School." A Union High School District was formed and selected a 20-acre site along the main highway at Center for the new building. In October 1929, voters approved bonds to build the new high school and construction began early in 1930. Consolidation began in 1928 with ninth and 10th grades at Burton and 11th and 12th grades at Vashon, which lasted two years, until the new high school was dedicated in September 1930.



Vashon Union High School: courtesy Vashon-Maury Island Heritage Museum

The new Vashon Union High School graduated the first senior class of 37 seniors in June 1930. The photograph of the new high school, taken during construction, shows a large two-story building with one-story wings on each side. The right hand wing still stands and is part of the campus of the current Vashon High School.

The Burton Union High School building continued to be used as Burton Elementary School until 1953 when the new Burton Elementary was built up the hill to the west, and then was used for other purposes, including building missile nose cones for the Brunswick Company, but was ultimately torn down in 1964. The original Vashon High School continued to be used as a grammar school until it was torn down and replaced by the new Vashon Elementary School in 1954. The wooden gymnasium was taken down in late 2009 and much of the lumber from it was recycled.

The photograph of the current Vashon High School, designed by islander Keith Putnam, was taken in 1977 after it was built and opened in 1973.



Vashon High School 1977: courtesy Vashon-Maury Island Heritage Museum

Vashon Islanders have built a new high school and demolished the old one roughly every 40-50 years. Now that we passed the \$47.7 million bond issue in February, 2011 it appears that we're maintaining that construction timeline. The "new" Vashon High School opened in 2014.



Vashon High School 2014: courtesy The Loop

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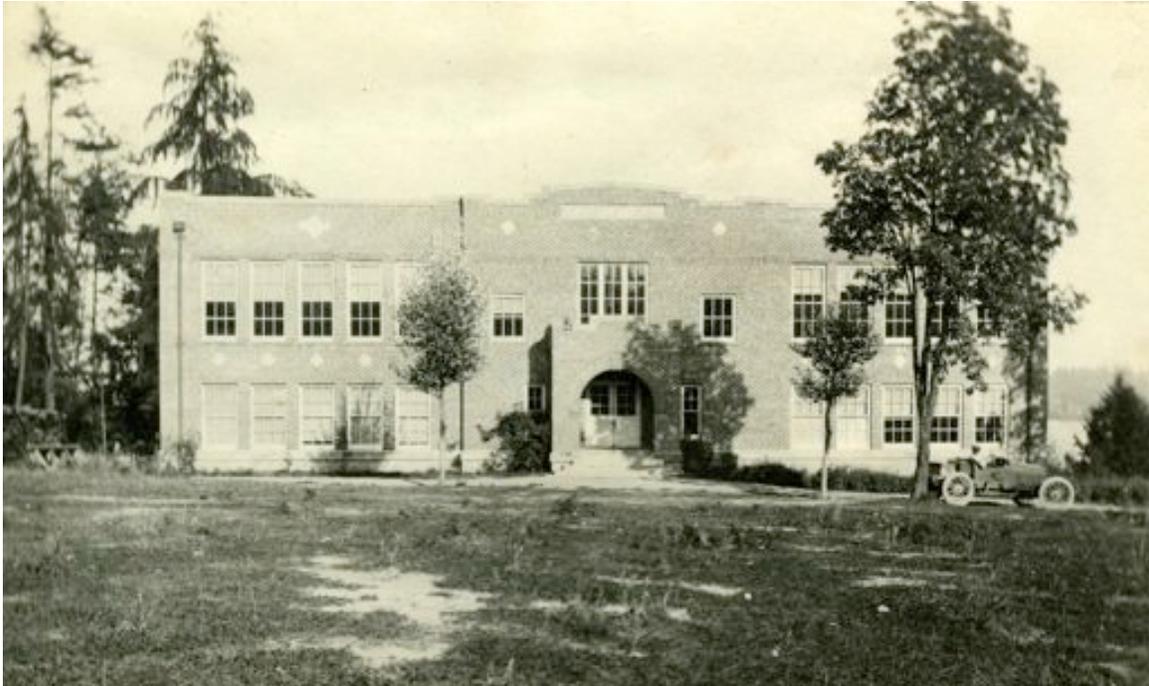
Additional Photographs:



Burton Union High School by Norman Edson: courtesy Vashon-Maury Island Heritage Museum



Burton High School: courtesy The Sherman Family



Burton High School: courtesy The Sherman Family



Vashon High School under construction: courtesy Vashon-Maury Island Heritage Museum



Vashon High School: courtesy Vashon-Maury Island Heritage Museum



Vashon High School: courtesy Vashon-Maury Island Heritage Museum



Vashon High School: courtesy Vashon-Maury Island Heritage Museum



Vashon High School 2014: courtesy John Sage



Vashon High School Plans: courtesy Vashon School District