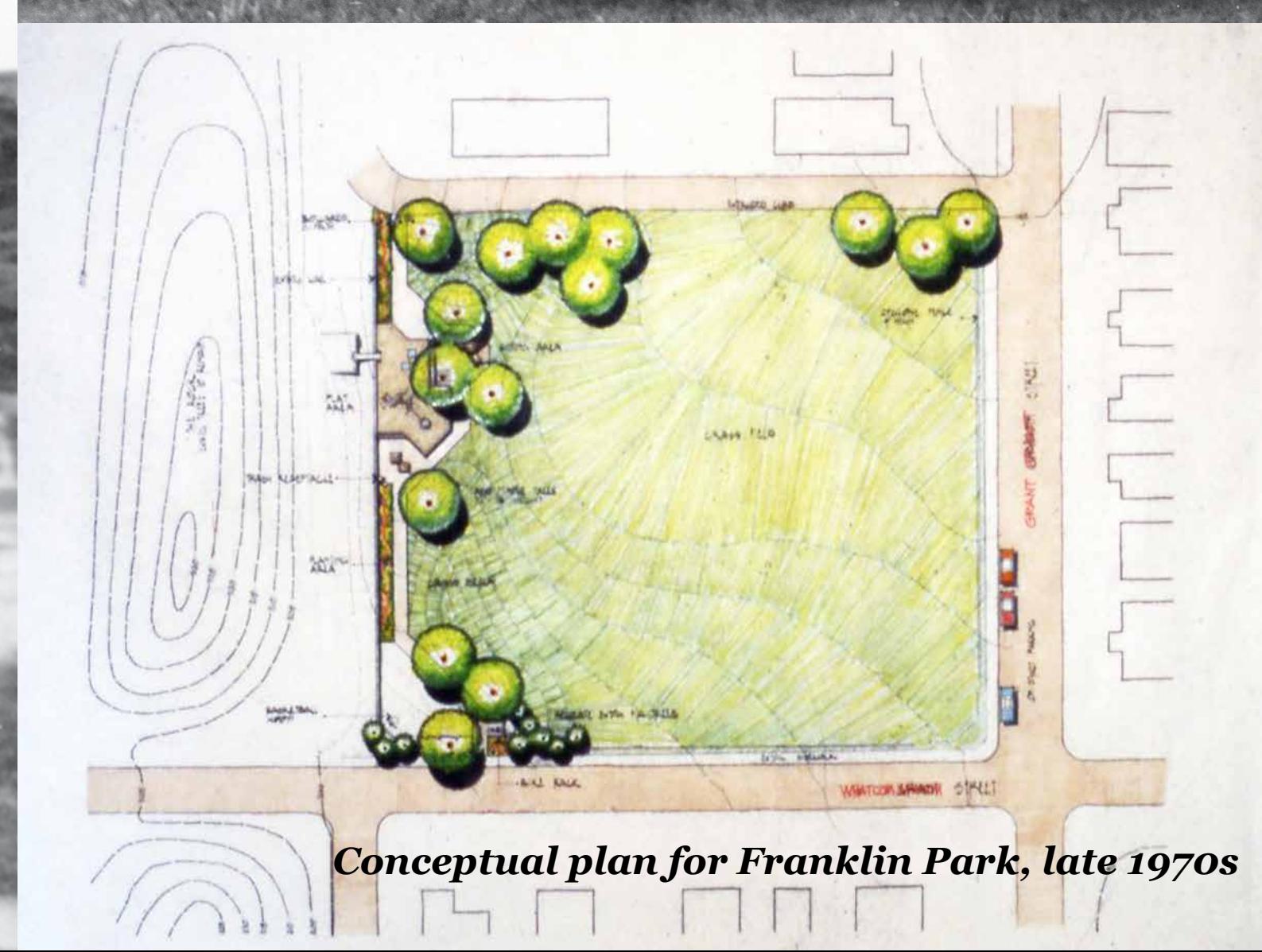




Franklin School, shown here in the 1950s, stood on this site for 68 years.



Franklin School class photo, c. 1907



Conceptual plan for Franklin Park, late 1970s

## Neighbors transformed this place's history

The story of this park is one about neighbors stepping up to the plate to make their community a better place and to create something of value for generations to come.

This had been the site of the brick Franklin Elementary School, built in 1904 and demolished in 1972, which served the York and Sehome neighborhoods. In 1977, some of those residents attended public hearings of the Mayor's Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee and Parks Bond issue meetings to speak in favor of making the former school site a park, and the City acquired the property from the school district and Franklin Park became a reality.



For the next 13 years the new park was in use, but by 1990 it was time to do something about the old school's playground equipment still in use. A Neighborhood Improvement Program grant was awarded in 1991, providing \$8,000+ to purchase new playground equipment and pay for other improvements.

The neighborhood subsequently raised \$2,500 in funds, volunteer labor, and materials...and, in the years since, the activity of local volunteers around the park has contributed to its upkeep. In 2006, the City awarded the neighborhood association a Neighborhood Initiative Program grant of \$150,000 which funded a redesign and major upgrade of the park and its amenities...including evaluation of local playground equipment by kindergartners from the nearby Loving Space School on Ellis Street.



In August 2017, the park was officially renamed to honor Harriet Spanel, a Washington State Senator (1993–2009) and Legislator (1987–1993) for our legislative district, who had led that effort back in 1977 to create this park on the site of the former school.

Special thanks to Jeff Jewell and the Photo Archives of the Whatcom Museum



Franklin Elementary School demolished

The York Neighborhood Organization is formed by local volunteers  
City acquires Franklin School property and creates Franklin Park

Grant from City for park improvements

1990

2000

2010

2020

Bellingham section of Interstate 5 opens

Vietnam War

World War II

The Great Depression

Korean War

World War I

Washington becomes the 42nd state of the Union

Seattle founded

Whatcom Mill established on Bellingham Bay

Washington Territory established

Whatcom County created

Town of Whatcom (now downtown Bellingham) established; town of Sehome founded

American Civil War

1850

1860

1870

1880

1890

1900

1910

1920

1930

1940

1950

1960

1970

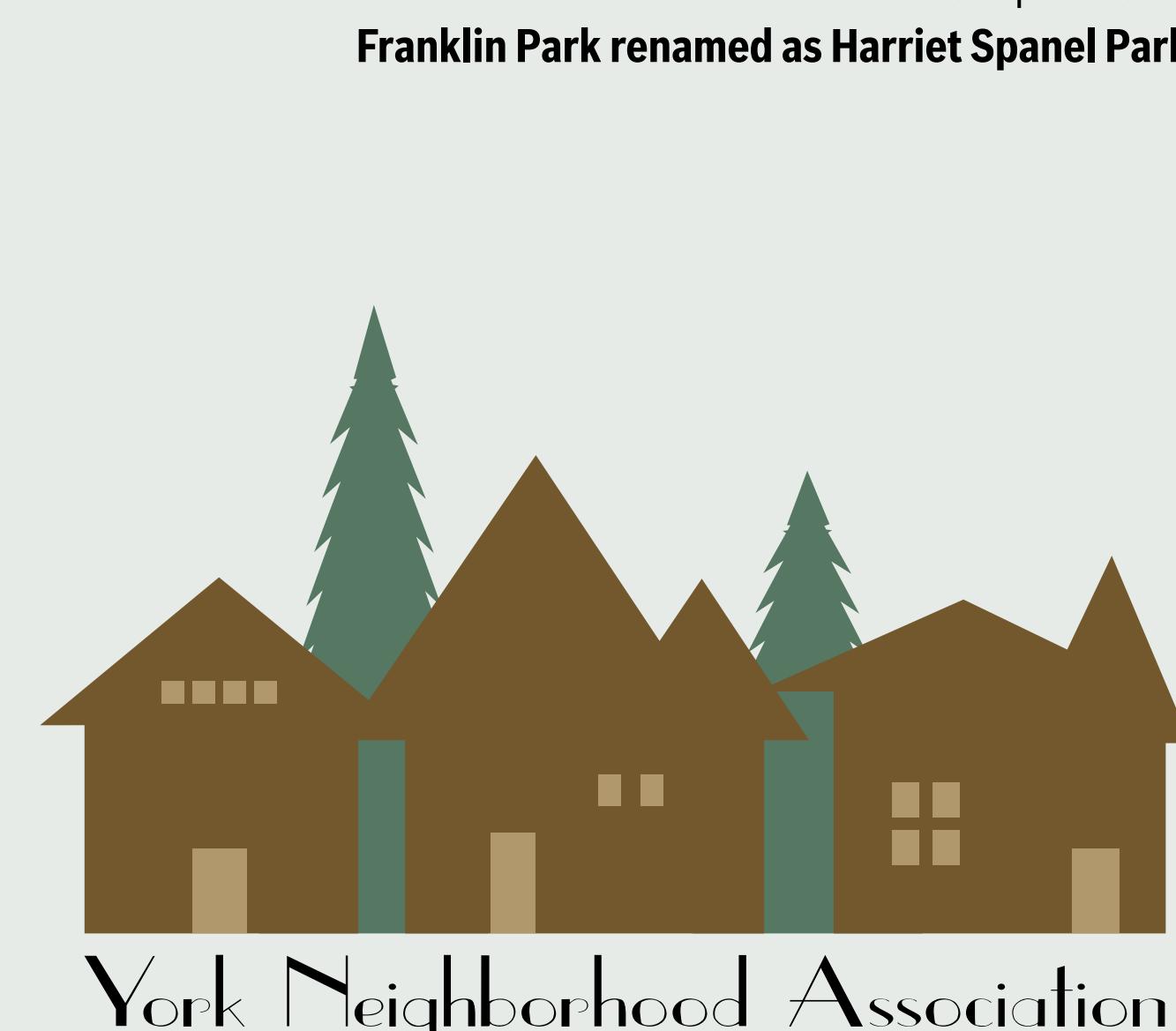
1980

1990

2000

2010

2020



This sign was created by the York Neighborhood Association  
thanks to a City of Bellingham "Small and Simple" Grant.



