

2022

Getz-Short Apartments

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Recommended Citation

Central Washington University, "Getz-Short Apartments" (2022). *What is in a Name?*. 41.
https://digitalcommons.cwu.edu/what_name/41

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What's in a Name? Getz-Short Apartments

The Getz-Short Apartments are named for two men who played prominent roles in the early days of CWU.

The first, Pharis A. Getz, served as the second principal (now known as the university president) of the Washington State Normal School (CWU's original name) from 1894 to 1898. Getz was selected for the position after the school's founding principal, Benjamin Franklin Barge, resigned.

Getz had previously been a teacher of pedagogy at the Oregon State Normal School in Monmouth, Oregon, (now Western Oregon University) and prior to that had been a high school principal in Hafeta, Pennsylvania and in Ashland, Oregon.

Born in New Berlin, Pennsylvania, in 1859, Getz earned his Bachelor's in Education and Master's in Education degrees from the State Normal School at Millersville, Pennsylvania (now Millersville University of Pennsylvania).

Only 35 years old when he became WSNE's principal, Getz immediately began stressing the need for raising the scholastic standards of the school and soon reshaped the institution to offer a more professional teacher preparation program.

A change in the membership of the Board of Trustees (who are appointed by Washington's governor), however, resulted in Getz' decision to resign his post after only four years.

He accepted a position as district manager for the Mutual Life Insurance Company of New York in Ellensburg and continued to play an active role in community organizations such as the Ellensburg Theatre. In 1916, Getz returned to teaching, serving as an instructor at Roosevelt High School in Portland, Oregon, until his death in 1939.

The other name on the apartment complex, G.P. Short, served as a member of the Board of Trustees from 1920 to 1931, including many years as chair.

Short, who was born in Honeoye, New York, in 1875, was educated at Williams College in Massachusetts, and at Cornell University in New York, where he graduated from law school.

After earning his degree, he traveled west to practice law, eventually joining the firm of Kaufman & Frost in Ellensburg. In 1902, Short moved to Cle Elum, where he opened his own practice.

During his term as a trustee, Short played an important role in defeating an effort in 1925 to abolish the normal school and repurpose the buildings for a state custodial school serving handicapped children. Short pointed out that the deed by which the city of Ellensburg had

donated the land for the normal school contained language saying the property could only be used for that purpose.

One of Short's final acts as a trustee was supporting the appointment of Robert E. McConnell as the fifth president of the normal school in 1931.

The 42-unit two-story apartment complex (now open to all students) that bears the names of Getz and Short was built in 1958 as married student housing. It consists of two unattached structures containing 24 one-bedroom units and 18 two-bedroom apartments.

The exterior walls of the flat-roofed complex are concrete and brick. The rectangular buildings are arranged in an irregular plan composed of detached blocks that are connected by sheltered, open-air, concrete staircases with metal railings. The buildings were renovated in 2015.