

HISTORIC DESIGNATION REPORT

**Hoffman School and Site
3060 Durrell Avenue
Cincinnati, Ohio 45207**

**Submitted to:
Cincinnati Historic Conservation Office**

**By:
Cincinnati Preservation Association
430 Reading Road #300
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202**



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This report represents the finding and recommendation for local historic landmark designation of the former Hoffman School in Evanston. The Cincinnati Preservation Association prepared this report.

Background

The Evanston and East Walnut Hills Communities have an interest in the preservation of the Hoffman School Building. Cincinnati Public Schools closed the location as a facility in 2012 and sold the building. It was used by various community groups and organizations including a church. The building was identified within the Evanston Work Plan adopted in 2019 as a building that should be explored for landmark designation.

Summary Statement of Significance

Hoffman School is a significant example of the Jacobethan Revival educational architecture designed by Samuel Hannaford and Sons in 1922 and the school is also reflective of the Progressive Era and City Beautiful movements influence on architecture and planning. Its design reflects the influence of renaissance revival styles, classicism, and progressive era reform philosophy as applied to civic and educational architecture. The school is largely unaltered on the exterior, looking much as it did as when constructed in 1922. The building retains its original windows and doors and decorative finishes, including ornamental stonework with owl figurines. Samuel Hannaford & Sons, the architect of the building, is considered one of Cincinnati's premier architecture firms. Hoffman School was listed in the 1978 Historic Inventory with a ranking of Excellent and as a property which contributes greatly to the historic and/or architectural quality of the city. In the 1998 Cincinnati Public Schools Historic Architecture Inventory, Hoffman School was listed as eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. In 2019 a National Register Questionnaire response determined that the property was eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Boundary

This property consists of consolidated tax Parcel 055-0002-0039-90 which consists of The property described as Durrell Avenue 4.513 Acres Parcels 39 through 55. The parcel is generally bounded on the north by Merrimac Street, on the east by Woodburn Avenue, on the south by adjacent parcels, and on the west by Durrell Avenue.

Justification of Boundary

The above-described boundary constitutes the entire parcel including the building and associated outdoor activity areas and the historic parcel as show in the 1935 plat of existing schools sites.

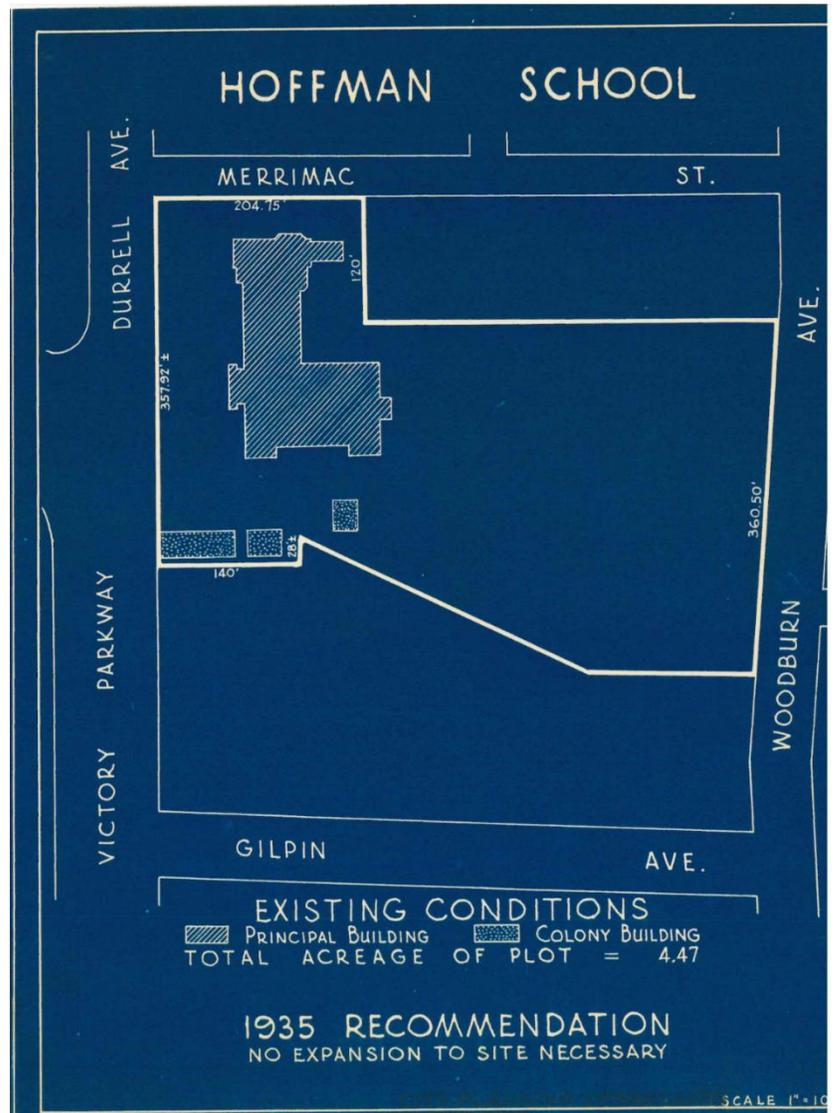


Figure 1: Page from *Plats of Existing School Sites and Recommended New Sites & Expansions from the City of Cincinnati. 1935.*

Statement of Significance

Hoffman School is significant because it is a locally outstanding example of Jacobethan Revival Architecture and the only school designed by the prominent Cincinnati architecture firm of Hannaford and Sons in this style. This meets criteria 3 as set forth in Cincinnati Zoning Code Chapter 1435 which states that Historic significance means that that the attributes of a district, site, or structure that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association, and that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction.

Jacobethan Revival Architecture

The Jacobethan Revival style derives from the architecture of the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I of Great Britain in the 16th century. Unlike other Revival styles, it is in fact a combination of elements from Elizabethan and Jacobean buildings. The Jacobethan Style was coined in 1933 by Sir John Betjeman to describe the mixed of this revival styled which was unique from the contemporaneous Tudor Revival for its emphasis on adornment. This style was popular with residential buildings after the turn of the century, but it had its major impact on educational architecture.”

Identifiable features of Jacobethan Revival Style Architecture include

1. Brick Walls
2. Stone Trim
3. Tudor arches
4. Leaded windows
5. Decorative and ornamental stonework
6. Towers and Turrets
7. Battlement forms are common

Hannaford and Sons

The building is also associated with Hannaford & Sons architecture firm. Hannaford & Sons Architecture firm has its roots with Cincinnati's most prominent architect Samuel Hannaford who designed many of Cincinnati's most prominent landmarks, including City Hall, Music Hall, The Phoenix Building, The Cincinnati Hotel, and Nast Trinity Church. While he retired in 1904 and passed in 1911, the firm he started carried on as Hannaford & Sons. They continued as one of the prominent firms of first half of the 20th century until they dissolved in the 1960s. Their designs included significant additions to the Post Times Star building, Memorial Hall, The Cincinnati Club, and the Emery Building.

Hannaford and Sons Cincinnati Public School designs

Hannaford and Sons designed several other Cincinnati Public School buildings, however, this was the only school they designed in the Jacobethan Revival Style.

Winton Place Elementary. Located at 4750 Winton Rd, designed in Beaux Arts and built in 1888.

Oyler School. Located at 2121 Hatmaker Street, designed in the Art Deco/Eclectic Style in 1930.

Hays School. Located at 1035 Mound Street, designed in the Modern Style in 1953.
Demolished

Cheviot School. Located at 4040 Harrison Avenue, designed in the Colonial Revival Style in 1926.

Carson Montessori School. Located at 4323 Glenway Avenue, designed in the Collegiate Tudor/Modern style in 1916. **Demolished**

Jacobethan Revival Style and Cincinnati Public School designs

There were a four other schools within the Cincinnati School system that were also designed in the Jacobethan Revival Style.

Schiel School. Designed in 1911 by J. Gilmore and located at 2821 Vine Street.
Demolished

Roosevelt School. Designed in 1925 by Fechheimer & Ihorst located at 1559 Tremont Street.

McKinley School Addition. Designed in 1919 by Bausmith & Drainie located at 3905 Eastern Avenue

Central Fairmount School. Designed in 1906 by E.H. Dornette and located at 2475 White Street.

Avondale Elementary School/Samuel Ach Junior High. Designed in 1907 by E.H. Dornette and located at corner of Rockdale and Forest Roads. **Demolished**

Progressive Era School Design

Spanning from the turn of the 20th Century to the 1920s, the Progressive Era was defined by an increase in reforms meant to alleviate the suffering of the working class. In order to accomplish this goal, Progressives believed the government needed to accept greater responsibility for its citizens' well-being. School and education reform were part of this greater movement and the design of schools reflected the noted responsibility for well-being. The expansion of education as a democratic and egalitarian means of quelling class differences began with the mass construction of schools during this period to provide schools for the mass majority of children. Elementary education became widespread creating a highly literate population and Kindergarten became a standard in schools as a way to bring children into schools at a younger age where they could transition into school life. The Progressive Era was notable for a dramatic expansion in the number of schools and students served, especially in the fast-growing metropolitan cities. After 1910, smaller cities began building high schools. By 1940, 50% of young adults had earned a high school diploma. While providing easier and comprehensive education of the population was part of the education reform programming, the improvements in social services for students was largely reflected in the design and architecture of schools as well.

School designs started to include lunchrooms rather than a mid-day break where students would return home. In an effort to mitigate conditions of crowded tenements and living conditions, schools were also built to include shower facilities to help with student hygiene and often gymnasiums and sometimes pools for physical fitness. Access to natural light and air was also another feature incorporated to support hygiene and overall health of the students.

Within Cincinnati Public Schools, the large boom of school construction between the turn of the century and the 1920's reflects the aligning with the expansion of educational access throughout the city. Hoffman School was part of the Progressive Era Expansion for the elementary school age.

Some of the features that Hoffman included that are reflective of the Progressive Era School are:

- Dedicated Lunchroom and cafeteria
- Gymnasium and Shower Facilities
- Outdoor athletic fields and playgrounds
- Access to light and air with large classroom windows and a hallway with windows

City Beautiful Movement

Contemporaneous with the Progressive Era was a period in American architecture and Urban Planning called the City Beautiful Movement. This was a period where urban reform was sought through introducing beatification and monumental grandeur into cities as a way to create moral and civic population among an urban population that suffered from poor living and working conditions. The first large scale expression of this philosophy was the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, known as the White City. With Fredrick Law Olmstead and Daniel Burnham as the producers and directors behind the exhibition, the adoption of large-scale Beaux- Arts monuments ushered in an era that of architecture and urban planning that focused on large grand civic architecture and monuments along grand boulevards, parkways and other efficient transportation routes.

In Cincinnati, the City Beautiful Movement influence can be seen throughout the City, especially in the work of Samuel Hannaford and his architecture firm. Hannaford was a believer and an advocate of the City Beautiful Movement and used his work in both architecture and urban landscapes to provide recognizable civic architecture throughout Cincinnati. Works such as Memorial Hall (1903) used the Beaux-Arts monumentality established at the White City to be a direct link to the City Beautiful Movement. Through other works, such as Hoffman School, the firm used different styles but still provided grandiose ornamentation to provide a monumental presence in the community. Hoffman's placement as an architectural apex on the newly constructed City Beautiful inspired Victory Parkway further defined the influence of the movement onto the design of Hoffman School.

Statement of Integrity

Hoffman School exhibits all seven aspects of integrity. It is in its original location with its original context and setting of surrounding uses of residential and civic uses remaining largely the same from when it was constructed. The design of the building has high integrity as it remains in the same layout, and design as originally constructed. The exterior and interior materials are largely intact. There have been minor interior intrusions on the original design with updated flooring, lights and other minor fixtures. As the majority of the materials remain, including locally made Rookwood tile, the integrity of the workmanship and details of the building is high. As the building remained a school through 2012 and retains the material, design, setting location and workmanship the feeling and association of the building as a school is recognizable.

Architectural Overview

Period of Significance

The period of significance for the building is the design and build completion date of 1922. The school was consistently used through 2012, but the main design and architectural integrity of the building remains with the 1922 construction and design of the building. On the site there are 2 buildings, the historic school building and an auxiliary building in the northeast corner of the parcel. This building is a non-contributing building.

Architectural Description

Structure: Hoffman School and grounds occupies an L shaped 4.513 acre site on Durrell Avenue just northeast of the intersection of Victory parkway and Durrell Avenue. The school sits to the west side of the property and a ball field and school grounds sits on the east portion of the property fronting Woodburn Avenue. It is a large two-story, with partially elevated basement, L shaped red brick building with decorative ornamental stonework and multi-pane double hung windows with transoms on the top 2 floors and double hung multi-pane windows on the basement level. The roofline is crenulated with pilasters topped with grey stone. Entablature is grey stone with decorative dentils and ornamental stonework all over the building including the figures of owls. The off-center tower is three-stories with arched windows and diagonal mullions topped with decorative brick designs and carved stone details. The corners of the tower are rounded smaller towers topped with an oval cap. The doorways on the building are semi elliptical arches with projected entries.

Inside the lobby, there are decorative Rookwood panels and tilework, four-centered/Tudor arches, and wood trim. Across the main hall from the Lobby is an auditorium with a stage at the far end. This has a vaulted ceiling that continues the decorative treatments found in the lobby and hallways.

There are 8 classrooms on the first floor on a double stacked hallway with the classrooms on one side and either a porch or auditorium on the other side. The second floor has 9 classrooms. The partially elevated basement has the gymnasium and additional classrooms. The classrooms are largely in their original configuration with some updated finishes. The original chalkboard and trim work remains in the classrooms. There are stairwells at either end of the school and one central stair. The stairwells have decorative metal railings.

There is a two story porch area on the rear of the school facing the grounds to the east. The doors to the porch line the hallway and provide natural light into the hallway.

Site: Hoffman School is located on the east side of Durrell Avenue between Victory Parkway and Merrimac St. The school is situated parallel to the road with a small grassy lawn and is elevated from the street on a hill and is accessed from the sidewalk by a stairwell. Behind the school to the east is a ball field which was an original part of the ground for the school.

Setting: Hoffman School is located in Evanston, a former suburb later absorbed by Cincinnati. Across Victory Parkway is the neighborhood of Walnut Hills and the Walnut Hills Cemetery. 2 blocks to the south is the East Walnut Hills neighborhood. Directly to the north and east of the property are older residential buildings typically 2 stories and they are a range of brick and frame buildings.

Findings

Planning Considerations

Compatibility With Plan Cincinnati: Sustain Goal 2b: “Preserve Our Built History. Preserve our built history with new development incentives and regulatory measures. Cincinnati’s rich history is best exemplified through our historic buildings and by the built-environment that helps define a neighborhood’s character....” Landmark designation allows for preservation of a highly significant structure in danger of destruction. It will further allow for state historic rehabilitation tax incentives to be used to renovate the school building, thereby preserving this true Cincinnati landmark for future generations to appreciate and enjoy.

Historic Schools create unique opportunities for a reuse into residential. The classrooms sizes provide an easy conversion into apartments. There have been several successful school conversions in Cincinnati and the region into residential uses. These include

Cincinnati

Kirby Road School built in 1910 at 1710 Bruce Avenue

Woodward School (Alumni Lofts) built in 1908 at 1310 Sycamore Street

George F Sands School built 1912 at 909 Popular Street

Walnut Hills Highschool (Schoolhouse Lofts) built in 1895 at 2700 Ashland Avenue

Region

Lincoln-Grant School built in 1930s at 824 Green-up Street, Covington Ky

Thomas Edison School built in 1939 at 1516 Scott Street, Covington Ky

5th District School built in 1901 at 1735 Holman Avenue, Covington Ky

St. Anthony's School (The School Haus) built in 1905 at 330 Center Street, Bellevue Ky

Dayton High School (Schoolhouse Flats) built in 1924 at 208 8th Ave, Dayton, Ky

Compatibility With Evanston Neighborhood Work Plan: Goal page 76: "Evanston Builds upon its rich history through the preservation of buildings and the stories from residents past and present who shaped the neighborhood." Strategy/Action Step "Explore landmark designation for other historic building such as Hoffman School and Calvary United Methodist School. Landmark designation will follow the goals and action steps of the 2019 Evanston Neighborhood Work Plan.

Consistency with CZC Chapter 1435

According to Chapter 1435 of the Cincinnati Zoning Code (Historic Preservation), certain findings must be made before a historic structure can be designated by City Council. The structure must be found to have historic significance. Historic significance means that that the attributes of a district, site, or structure that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association, and:

1. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
2. That are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
3. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
4. That has yielded, or may be likely to yield information important in history or – pre-history.'

Hoffman School has historic significance according to Chapter 1435 of the Cincinnati municipal code. Hoffman School meets Criterion 1 for its association with the Progressive Era and City Beautiful movements and their influence on education design and planning. Hoffman school also meets Criterion 3 for architectural significance as a significant and well-preserved example of the Jacobethan Revival style designed by the prominent local architecture firm of Hannaford and Sons.

Research Methodology

Research was conducted using the resources of the Cincinnati Preservation Association. Resources include various newspaper articles, Cincinnati Public Schools Historic Architecture Survey, the Cincinnati Historic Inventory, and Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of Cincinnati.

References

Plats of Existing School Sites and Recommend New Sites & Expansions: (Cincinnati, Ohio: The City of Cincinnati) 1935.

Cincinnati Public Schools Historic Architecture Inventory, Cincinnati Preservation Association, May 1998

Samuel Hannaford: The Man Who Built Cincinnati.

<https://www.cincinnatihistory.org/post/samuel-hannaford-the-man-who-built-cincinnati>

Evanston Neighborhood Work Plan, The City of Cincinnati, 2019.

Cincinnati Historic Inventories, 1978 and 2003.

Ohio History Inventory Form and National Register Questionnaire, 1977, 1998 and 2019

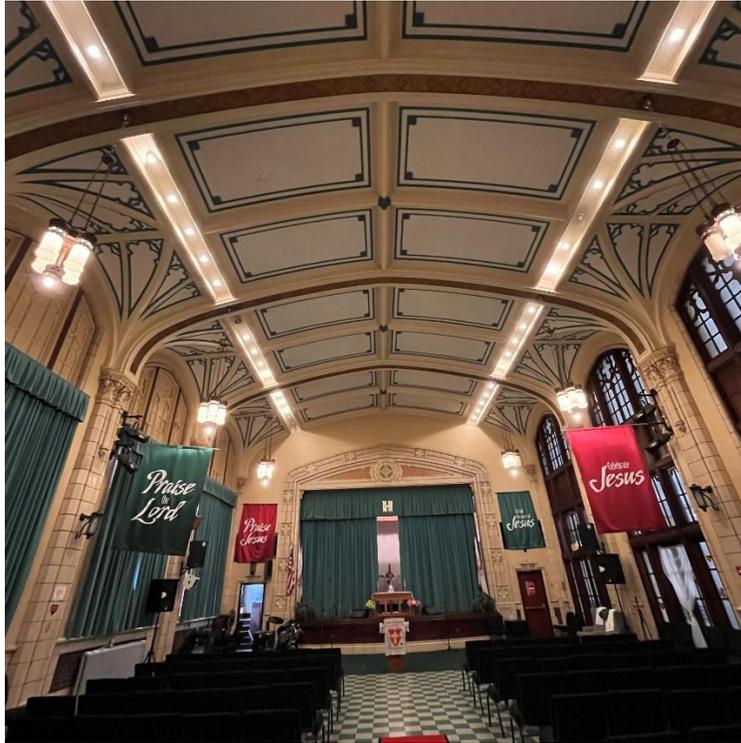
PHOTOGRAPHS



Interior Shot of Lobby with Rookwood Panel



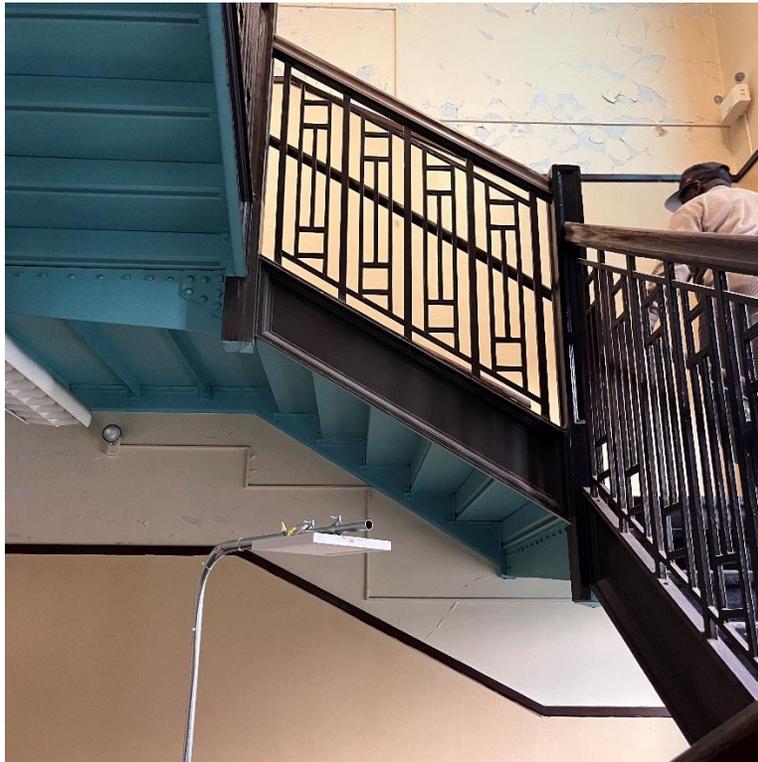
Interior shot of Lobby



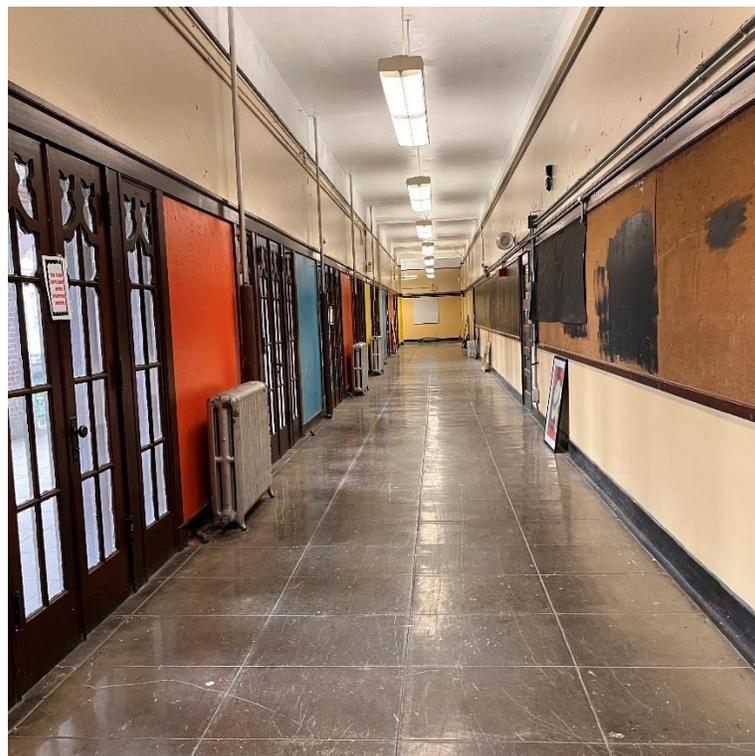
Interior shot of Auditorium



Interior shot of a typical classroom



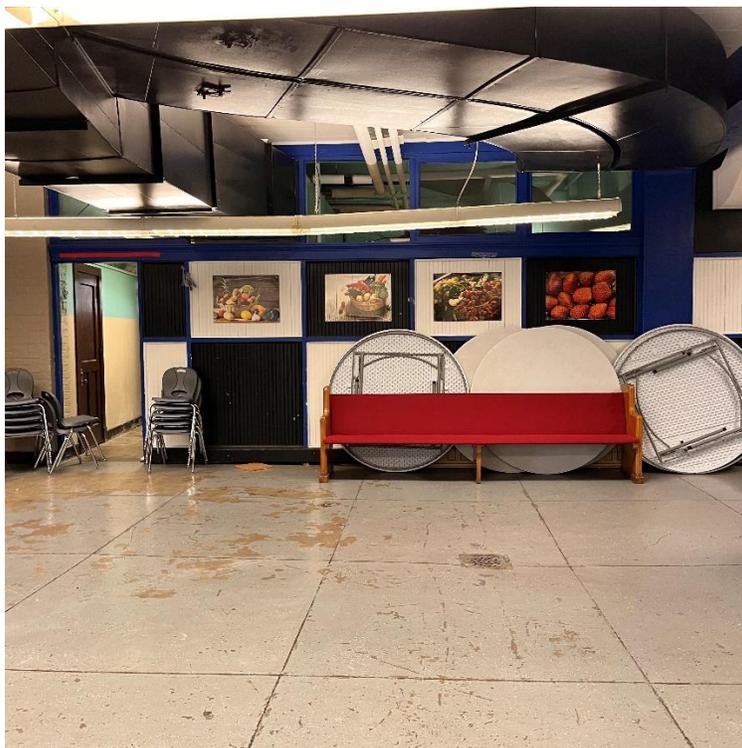
Decorative Ironwork on the stairs



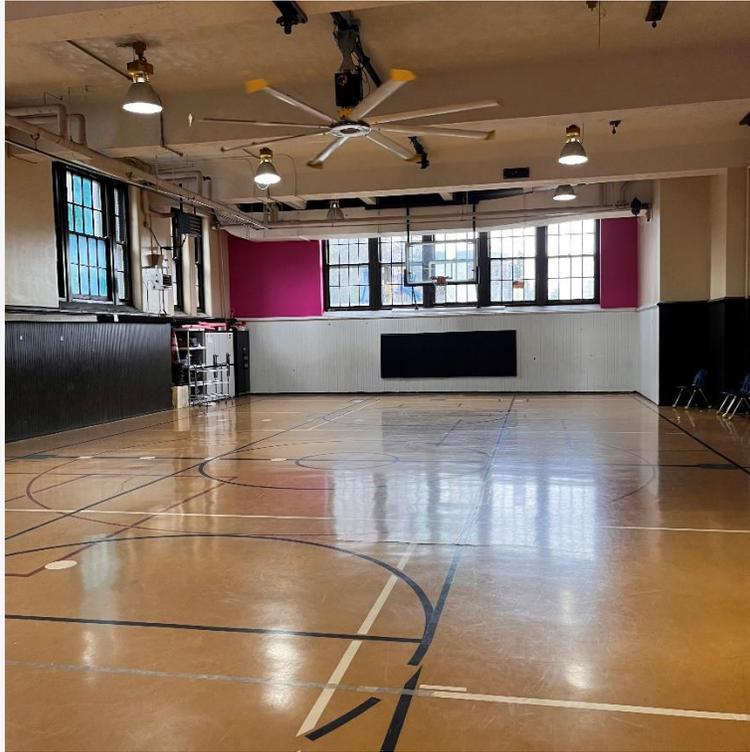
Hallway with doors to the porch



Exterior Porch



Lunch room



Gymnasium



Front of the School looking southeast



Front Entrance of the school and tower



Front of the School looking north east



South elevation of the school



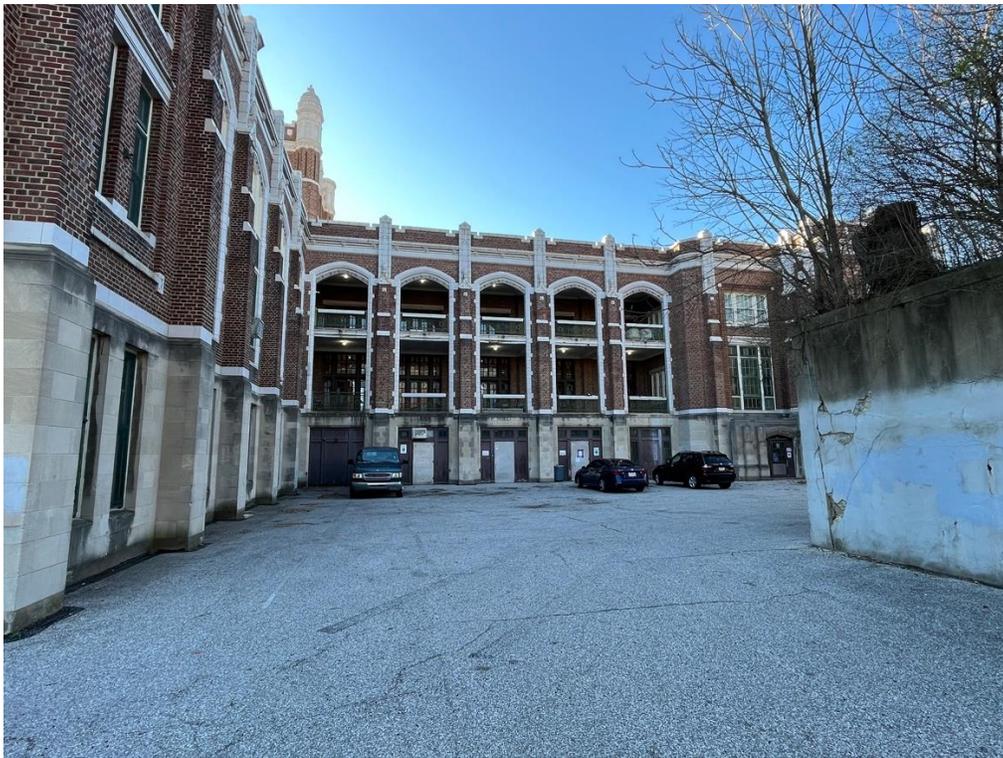
South side and rear of the school



South elevation of the school



South elevation of the school



South elevation of the school



Rear elevations of the school



North and rear elevations of the school



East elevation of the school



Owl details on the school face

