

# Oregon Historic Site Form

Capitol Hill School  
8401 17th Ave  
Portland, Multnomah County

## LOCATION AND PROPERTY NAME

address: 8401 SW 17th Ave  apprx. addr

Portland  vcnty Multnomah County

Optional Information  
 assoc addresses:  
 (former addresses, intersections, etc.)  
 location descr:  
 (remote sites)

historic name: Capitol Hill School

current/  
 other names: Capitol Hill Elementary School

block nbr: \_\_\_\_\_ lot nbr: \_\_\_\_\_ tax lot nbr: \_\_\_\_\_  
 township: \_\_\_\_\_ range: \_\_\_\_\_ section: \_\_\_\_\_ 1/4: \_\_\_\_\_  
 zip: \_\_\_\_\_

## PROPERTY CHARACTERISTICS

resource type: Building height (# stories): 2

elig. evaluation: not eligible/non-contributing

primary constr date: 1917 (c.)  secondary date: 1948 (c.)   
 (optional--use for major addns)

primary orig use: School

secondary orig use: \_\_\_\_\_

primary style: Colonial Revival

secondary style: \_\_\_\_\_

primary siding: Standard Brick

secondary siding: Wood:Other/Undefined

plan type: School (General)

total # eligible resources: 0 total # ineligible resources: 3

NR status: \_\_\_\_\_  
 NR date listed: \_\_\_\_\_ (indiv listed only; see Grouping for hist dist)

orig use comments: \_\_\_\_\_

prim style comments: \_\_\_\_\_

sec style comments: \_\_\_\_\_

siding comments: \_\_\_\_\_

architect: Naramore, F A

builder: \_\_\_\_\_

comments/notes: The Capitol Hill School is listed as an HRI Rank II resource.

## GROUPINGS / ASSOCIATIONS

survey project name or other grouping name: PPS Historic Building Assessment 2009 Survey & Inventory Project

farmstead/cluster name: \_\_\_\_\_ external site #: 144  
 (ID# used in city/agency database)

## SHPO INFO FOR THIS PROPERTY

NR date listed: \_\_\_\_\_

ILS survey date: 6/23/2009

RLS survey date: 6/23/2009

Gen File date: \_\_\_\_\_

**106 Project(s)**



## ARCHITECTURAL / PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

(Include expanded description of the building/property, setting, significant landscape features, outbuildings, and alterations)

### Summary Description

Capitol Hill Elementary School is located in southwest Portland at 8401 SW 17th Street. The primary building on the school campus is an E-shaped classroom and administrative building (144A and B) situated at the southeast corner of the 4.39 acre lot. Originally constructed in 1917, the building received significant additions in 1948 and again in 1952. Other structures on the property include a 1968 portable classroom (144P) and a 1977 covered playshed (144C). The wood frame building rests on a poured concrete foundation. Cladding on the exterior includes red brick, horizontal board siding, and poured concrete. Hipped roofs, covered in standing seam metal panels, cover the various wings that comprise the building. The original building was designed in the Colonial Revival style with the primary architectural ornamentation focused on the entries to the original building. Projecting cross gable roofs with broken pediments, dentils, and pilasters provide a decorative shelter the arched, wood frame, double doors. The fenestration is comprised primarily of grouped metal frame windows that are later replacements.

### Architectural Description

Capitol Hill Elementary School is located in southwest Portland at 8401 SW 17th Street in the Markham neighborhood. Development in the neighborhood consists of a mixture of educational and religious institutions, single family residences, and recent multi-family residential developments. An asphalt-covered parking lot and play areas provide a buffer from Interstate 5 which runs along the north and west sides of the campus. The primary building on the school campus, an E-shaped classroom and administrative building, is situated at the southeast corner of the 4.39-acre lot. Other structures on the property include a portable classroom and a covered playshed.

The wood frame building rests on a poured concrete foundation. Cladding on the exterior includes red brick, horizontal board siding, and poured concrete. Hipped roofs, covered with standing seam metal panels, cover the various wings that comprise the building. The original single story 1917 section of the building is designed in the Colonial Revival style with the primary architectural ornamentation focused at the entries to the original building. Projecting cross gable roofs with broken pediments, dentils, and pilasters provide a covered the entry above the arched wood frame double doors. The fenestration is comprised primarily of grouped metal frame windows. The 1948 and 1952 additions present a notable difference in scale and appearance to the original building. These additions rise two stories tall, are constructed of brick face concrete and/or just concrete. Both of these additions visually overwhelm the original building.

### Interior plan

The primary entry to the building is from the east into a lobby that is flanked by office and spaces. Double loaded corridors extend north-south and east-west to provide access to the classroom and community spaces. The primary classroom and administrative spaces occupy the north and central portion of the E-shaped building. This portion of the school is single story. A two story wing, located at the north side of the building, houses the gymnasium, auditorium, and additional classrooms. In this wing, the red brick is exposed in the corridors, gymnasium, and many classrooms. Flooring consists of a mixture of concrete, carpet, and 6" x 6", 12" x 12", and mosaic tile. Fluorescent light fixtures, suspended from the acoustic tile ceiling, illuminate the corridors.

The primary community spaces for the school are provided in a cafeteria/auditorium and gymnasium. The multi-purpose room is located at the northwest end of the building. This space features glulam beams and blonde wood paneling.

The classrooms are primarily rectangular with built-in cabinetry lining an interior wall. Many classrooms also feature wood chair, picture, and base moldings. Ventilation for the classrooms is provided either through an operable awning panel or a louvered ventilation panel. Heat is provided to the classrooms through a mixture of univents, registers beneath the window, and vents above the door of the interior wall.

### Alterations

There have been extensive alterations to the school. The original (1917) building was a brick clad rectangular building with Colonial Revival detailing. Wings were added to the north and south ends of the building in 1948, resulting in a U-shaped plan. The 1952 wing, added at the north side of the building, resulted in the current E-shaped configuration. In 1968 the portable was added at the northwest end of the campus. The covered playshed was added in 1977. Other alterations include replacement of the floor tiles (1986) and windows (1987). Although each wing of the school retains a relatively high degree of integrity with woodwork, classroom plan, and circulation system intact, the accumulation of the changes to the building and campus has severely reduced the overall integrity of the school. These wings have visually overwhelmed the original building and lack compatible building materials, massing, and scale.

## HISTORY

(Chronological, descriptive history of the property from its construction through at least the historic period [preferably to the present])

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## Statement of Significance

Constructed in 1917, Capitol Hill School was part of a dramatic building program begun by Portland Public Schools in the early 1900s. Gradually influenced by John Dewey's Progressive Education Movement, the district responded to changing city demographics and ideas concerning school safety, sanitation, and child centered instructional methods beginning in the first decade of the 1900s (Rippa, 1997: passim; Cremin 1961: 135-153; Cubberley 1915: 283-290). By 1905, it became increasingly clear that dramatic increases in school-age children outstripped the district's existing classroom capacity and existing schools could not effectively serve areas of the city where new residential development was occurring (Cubberley 1915: 283-285, 288-290).

After several well-publicized school fires elsewhere in the United States, calls for a more fundamental change in the building stock of the district began as early as 1906 when Mayor Lane called for the construction of new "fireproof" school buildings (Oregonian, 10-31-1906). In 1910, various city neighborhood "advancement clubs" joined forces to discuss the unfit school buildings in their respective neighborhoods (Oregonian 07-31-1910). Soon after this meeting, on August 16, 1910, the Portland City Council enacted a requirement that all schools constructed after January 1, 1911 would have to be of fireproof construction (Powers and Corning 1937: 183). By 1914, in the first joint meeting between Portland city officials, Multnomah County Commissioners, and the school board, officials agreed to work with building code officials to encourage the use of fireproof construction and to implement fire safety measures in all existing and future schools (Oregonian, 03-31-1914).

In 1908, Portland Public Schools created the Bureau of Properties in an effort to centralize the management of the district's various properties (Powers and Corning 1937: 182). Within this office, the District architect took on a more formalized role in the design and maintenance of school facilities. Two of the most influential district architects during this period included Floyd Naramore and George Jones who designed a majority of the schools between 1908 and 1932. These new school buildings were often constructed of brick and concrete and were one or two stories in height. To speed the construction of the new schools and to anticipate later growth in the neighborhood, these new buildings were often constructed in units (sometimes referred to as extensible schools) (Powers and Corning 1937: 182). The buildings also contained more differentiated and increasingly specialized instructional spaces such as libraries, gymnasiums, science rooms, music rooms, as well as assembly spaces (Powers and Corning 1937: 182). The architectural details of the new schools were largely encompassed by the Classical Revival, Colonial Revival, and Collegiate Gothic styles; architectural revivals that were viewed as inspirational and appropriate for educational settings (Betelle 1919: 28; Sibley 1923: 66; Patton 1967: 1-8).

The architect of Capitol Hill School, Floyd Archibald Naramore, was adept in the requirements of school design from his tenure as architect and superintendent of school properties for Portland Public Schools (Portland Chronology Binder). A native of Illinois, Naramore attended the University of Wisconsin and graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1907. Naramore's first employment after his arrival in Portland in 1909 was as an engineer for the Northwest Bridge Works. In 1912 Naramore began his tenure as Portland Public School which would continue until 1919. During this period, Naramore designed 16 schools for the district including the Kennedy School, which gained fame as a single story response to the issue of fire safety in American public schools (Evening Telegram, 11-03-1915).

Naramore's success with Portland Public Schools led to a similar position in Seattle, where he designed many of the city's most renowned schools. Architect Victor Steinbrueck, credits Naramore for producing the best quality Motor Age architecture in the Puget Sound area. (Steinbrueck; Space Style and Structure, 1974: 508) Naramore subsequently founded several private architectural partnerships in the Seattle area. The best known firm, Naramore, Bain, Brady & Johansen had early success designing large World War II building projects. In the last half century, the firm grew into one of the largest architectural practices in the world (Ritz 2003: 293).

Capitol Hill Elementary School has changed dramatically from the time that PPS acquired the site at 8401 SW 17th Street for \$8,028.75 in the Capitol Hill neighborhood. In 1917 the district constructed a classroom building and 3 portables for \$15, 277.00. The school took its name from the surrounding neighborhood (Snyder 1979: 237). Between 1926-1928 the district acquired 7 additional lots for \$2,900.00. In response to requests from the community for better facilities including an auditorium, more space, and better heating the district began planning for changes to the school (Oregonian, 03-05-1929). The lack of funding during the depression and World War II delayed the process until 1949 when an addition with 6 classrooms was added to north and south ends of the original building in 1948, resulting in a U-shaped plan. In 1950 additional land was purchased for \$17,235.80. The 1952 wing, added at the north side of the building, resulted in the current E-shaped configuration. In 1968, the portable was added at the northwest end of the campus. The covered playshed was built in 1977 (Portland Chronology Binder; Portland Facility Profile).

Although each wing of Capitol Hill School retains a relatively high degree of integrity with woodwork, classroom plan, and circulation system intact, the accumulation of the changes to the school has severely reduced the overall integrity of the school. The original Colonial Revival building, designed by Naramore, has been overwhelmed by a series of additions that are out of character with the original building and the planning principles introduced during his tenure as Superintendent of Building. There are other Portland schools built during the same period and constructed of similar styles that better exhibit the planning principles for educational buildings of the early to mid-twentieth century. Due to the lack of integrity the buildings are not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, B, or C.

## RESEARCH INFORMATION

(Check all of the basic sources consulted and cite specific important sources)

- |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Title Records           | <input type="checkbox"/> Census Records                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Property Tax Records  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local Histories      |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sanborn Maps | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Biographical Sources | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SHPO Files | <input type="checkbox"/> Interviews                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Obituaries              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspapers           | <input type="checkbox"/> State Archives        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Historic Photographs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> City Directories        | <input type="checkbox"/> Building Permits                | <input type="checkbox"/> State Library         |  |

Local Library: Multnomah County Library

University Library: Portland State University Library

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Historical Society: Oregon Historical Society Other Repository: PPS Archives

Bibliography: Betelle, James O. "Architectural Styles as Applied to School Buildings." *American School Board Journal*. Vol. 58 (April 1919).

Cremin, Lawrence. *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957*. New York: A. Knopf, 1961.

Cubberley, Ellwood Patterson. *The Portland Survey: A Textbook on City School Administration Based on a Concrete Study*. Yonkers-on-Hudson, NY: World Book Co., 1915.

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Portland Public Schools. *Schools Chronology Binder*.

Powers, Alfred and Howard McKinley Corning, *History of Education in Portland*. [Portland]: Work Projects Administration, 1937.

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Ritz, Richard. E. *Architects of Oregon. A Biographical Dictionary of Architects Deceased – 19th and 20th Centuries*. Portland: Lair Hill Publishing, 2003.

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<https://catalog.multcolib.org/validate?url=http%3A%2F%2F0-sanborn.umi.com.catalog.multcolib.org%3A80%2F>. Accessed June 16, 2009.

Sibley, Ernest. "Why I Prefer the Colonial Style." *School Board Journal*: Vol. 66 (January 1923).

Steinbrueck, Victor. "Everyday Architecture in the Puget Sound Area." in *Space, Style and Structure*. Ed. Thomas Vaughan, Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1974.

Snyder, Eugene E. *Portland Names and Neighborhoods. Their Historic Origins*. Portland: Binford & Mort Publishing; 1st edition 1979.



East elevation facing southwest



South and west elevations facing east



North elevation facing south



North elevation facing south



South elevation facing north



Gym facing west



Auditorium



Classroom built-ins



Classroom built-ins and exposed brick

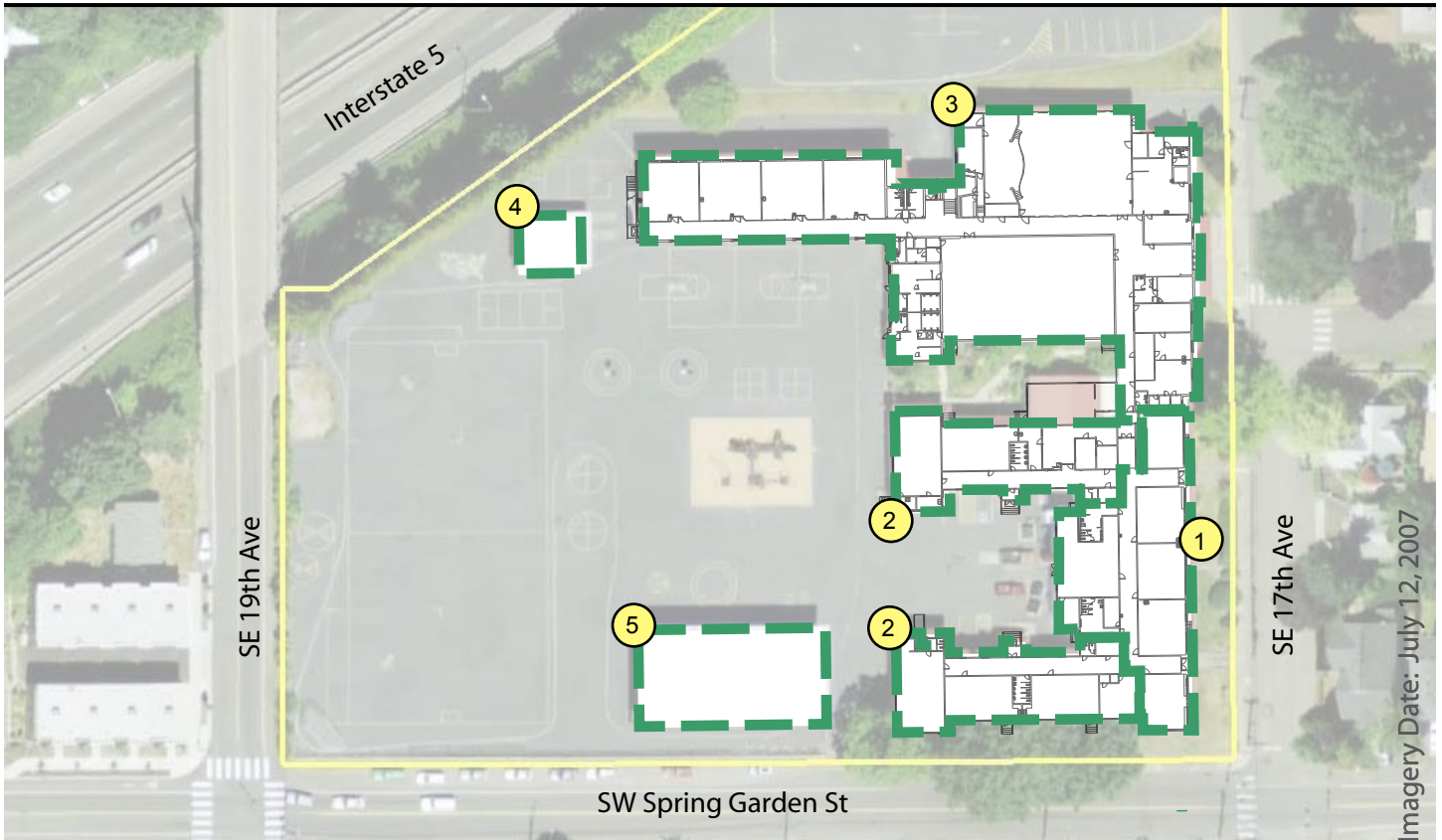


Corridor facing east

# Capitol Hill School

8401 SW 17th Ave, Portland OR, 97219

[View Site in Google Maps](#)

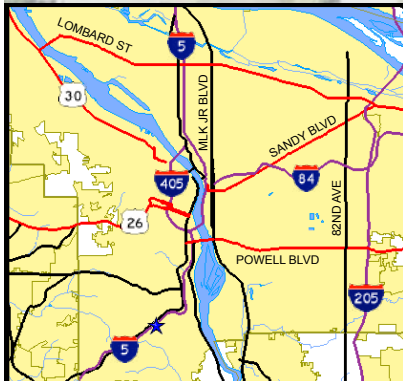


1910s photograph of Capitol Hill School, looking northwest.






1910s photograph of Capitol Hill School, looking west.

Aerial photo © 2009 Metro, Portland OR Imagery Date: July 12, 2007



## Historical Significance and Building Integrity

-  Contrib: High Significance
-  Contrib: Moderate Signif.
-  Non-Contributing



## Building Periods

1. Main Bldg (144B), 1917
2. Addition (144B), 1948
3. Addition (144A), 1952
4. Addition (144P), 1968
5. Addition (144C), 1977