

Oregon Historic Site Form

Creston School
4701 Bush St
Portland, Multnomah County

LOCATION AND PROPERTY NAME

address: 4701 SE Bush St apprx. addr

historic name: Creston School

Portland vcnty Multnomah County

current/
other names: Creston Elementary School

Optional Information

assoc addresses:
(former addresses, intersections, etc.)

location descr:
(remote sites)

block nbr: _____ lot nbr: _____ tax lot nbr: _____

township: _____ range: _____ section: _____ 1/4: _____

zip: _____

PROPERTY CHARACTERISTICS

resource type: Building height (# stories): 1

total # eligible resources: 2 total # ineligible resources: 0

elig. evaluation: eligible/significant

NR status: _____

primary constr date: 1948 (c.) secondary date: 1964 (c.)
(optional--use for major addns)

NR date listed: _____ (indiv listed only; see Grouping for hist dist)

primary orig use: School

orig use comments: _____

secondary orig use: _____

primary style: International

prim style comments: Art Moderne

secondary style: _____

sec style comments: _____

primary siding: Stucco

siding comments: _____

secondary siding: Standard Brick

architect: Wolff & Phillips

plan type: School (General)

builder: _____

comments/notes: HRI Rank II.

GROUPINGS / ASSOCIATIONS

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

farmstead/cluster name: _____ external site #: 243
(ID# used in city/agency database)

SHPO INFO FOR THIS PROPERTY

NR date listed: _____

ILS survey date: 6/4/2009

RLS survey date: 6/4/2009

Gen File date: _____

106 Project(s)



South elevation

ARCHITECTURAL / PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

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

Description Summary

Situated in Creston Kenilworth neighborhood of southeast Portland, Creston Elementary School is located at 4701 SE Bush Street. Built in 1946, the school building (243A) is situated on a mostly grass-covered 8.65-acre campus. Additional structures on the parcel include the 1953 Creston Annex (243B) which is a contributing resource. The International style school is L-shaped with flat and low pitched gable roofs. The single story building rests on a poured concrete foundation. Cladding for the wood frame structure consists of a mixture of brick veneer and stucco. The school facilities include classrooms, a gymnasium, a library, an auditorium, and a cafeteria.

Architectural Description

Situated in the Creston-Kenilworth neighborhood of southeast Portland, Creston Elementary School is located at 4701 SE Bush Street. Development in the surrounding area consists primarily of single family residences built after World War II and larger commercial buildings along SE Powell and SE Foster Roads. Grass covered playfields separate the main school building from the Creston Annex. The 8.65-acre campus is adjacent to the tree shaded Creston Park. The primary entrance to the campus is from the south at the intersection of SE 48th Avenue and SE Bush Street.

The single story decentralized plan of the 1948 International Style school is characteristic of post-war Elementary Schools with its low pitched shed and flat roof. The modified L-shaped finger plan structure rests on a poured concrete foundation. Cladding for the wood frame structure consists of a mixture of red brick laid in an all stretcher pattern, concrete, horizontal board, and white stucco. The Creston Annex is covered with a similar roman brick facing and features a butterfly roof. Fenestration for both buildings consists primarily of metal frame windows with an operable hopper.

The primary entry to the school is recessed between two angled bays that form a plaza on the south elevation. The three double entry doors are recessed beneath a broad roof overhang that is supported by two round columns. The windows that flank the main doors consist of horizontally ribbed panes of glass that are mottled to disperse light to the interior. The entry to the building is into a rectangular entry lobby. The lobby connects to an L-shaped double loaded corridor that provides access to the classrooms and other spaces. Flooring consists of a mixture of 12"x12" linoleum tile, hardwood, and concrete. Tubular fluorescent light fixtures provide illumination for the classrooms and the corridors. A small concrete porch is located on the east side of the south elevation.

The principal public areas are located immediately adjacent to the entry lobby. The auditorium features curved interior walls lined with flush wood paneling. The paneling is capped by a distinctive three band fillet molding. The sides of the aisle seats are embellished with applied Art Moderne motifs.

The classrooms are primarily L-shaped. Built-in bookcases and closets create a small entry foyer for each classroom. The rounded corners of the cabinets are characteristic of the Art Moderne style. Clerestory windows provide additional light for the classrooms. Additional classrooms are housed in the fingers that project from the west wing of the building. Each of these spaces features two bathrooms as well as a direct exit out to the playground and Creston Park.

The double height gymnasium features a flat roof constructed of reinforced concrete. Projecting concrete columns buttress the walls.

Alterations/Integrity

The Creston School campus has evolved gradually since its construction in 1948. The Annex was added in 1953. In the 1967 the classrooms in the northwest wing were remodeled after a fire caused significant damage. The windows were replaced in 1990. Other modest alterations to the interior have occurred including the replacement of some of the floor tiles (1989) and classroom cabinets (1990). Despite the alterations, the school retains its integrity. The Annex is located on the rear elevation and features similar materials to the original building. The 1967 remodel did not alter the corridor configuration or the original projecting fingers on the west side of the school. The gymnasium and cafeteria retain their distinctive Art Moderne details. The school retains its original floor plan, massing, roof forms, and cladding.

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

Named for the surrounding subdivision, the current Creston School replaced the original 1907 facility that was destroyed in a fire in 1944 (Sydney 1979: 239; PPS Chronology Binder). The new school was constructed for \$845,461.28 as part of the dramatic building program initiated by Portland Public Schools after World War II. In 1945, the citizens of Portland approved a ballot measure that provided \$5,000,000 over five years to construct, improve, and rehabilitate its public school buildings (Portland Public Schools 1945: 2). The ballot measure enabled PPS to respond to the explosive growth in school-age children that had occurred in the city as a result of the arrival of defense plant workers and their families, as well as the deferred maintenance arising from the lack of funds during the depression (Portland Public Schools 1945: 2-3). Beginning with this initial bond measure, PPS embarked on an effort to improve its school facilities through renovations, additions, and new construction of over fifty schools between 1945 and 1970.

For the new building program, PPS schools adopted the call of architects and school planners across the country for new types of schools. Nationally known architects including Richard Neutra, the Walter Gropius led Architects Collective, and the Perkins Will architectural firm promoted new school types that reflected both evolving educational practices and design philosophies (Ogata 2008: 567-568; Perkins and Cocking 1949: 238-246). Emphasizing the need for economy and rapid construction, the designers adopted new materials that were standardized and mass produced including steel, plywood, glass block, and aluminum. In many buildings, architects achieved flexibility through the building's structure by employing non-load-bearing partition walls and zoned ventilation and heating systems. Folding walls and moveable cabinets provided additional flexibility intended to enable teachers to rearrange rooms based on lesson plan and activities (Ogata 2008: 568).

Although many of the architects for schools in Portland continued to design their schools to be extensible, designers turned away from the two-story schools with centralized massing. Instead many architects adopted the principles of the Modern movement and its regional variant, the Northwest Regional style, choosing to express functional areas through massing and materials to create innovative forms (McMath 1974: 628). Classrooms featured extensive built-ins that included sinks, slots for bulky rolls of paper, and coat storage. Many buildings incorporated interior courtyards which facilitated access to the outdoors and expanded the opportunities for passive ventilation and daylighting.

The firm of Wolff & Phillips adopted the principles of Modernism and mid-twentieth century ideals about education for the design of Creston School. George Wolff, a native of Portland and graduate of the University of Oregon Architecture, gained experience working in the various Portland offices during the 1920s. During the Great Depression, Wolff worked with the WPA mapping sewer lines throughout Portland. In 1942 Wolff joined into partnership with Truman Phillips. Phillips, another graduate of the University of Oregon, had previously worked with John Hunzicker in Eugene, Oregon. During his tenure with the Hunzicker firm Phillips primarily designed residential buildings in the Revival styles, including the Wallace and Glenn Potter House (NRHP1929). Phillips was made a partner in the firm of Hunzicker, Smith & Phillips in 1929. After this firm dissolved due to the lack of commissions during the Depression, Phillips worked with multiple firms before establishing the partnership with Wolff. In the 1940s Wolff's friendship with the Kaiser family led to important commissions for the firm including worker's housing at Bonneville Dam, planning for the Oregon, Vancouver, and Swan Island Shipyards, and the design for Vanport city (Ritz 2003: 316,437-438). In Portland, the firm designed the Portland Child Service Center, which represented a cutting edge design based upon the "ring school" concept originally conceived of by modernist architect Richard J. Neutra (Reid 1951: 116-120).

Even before the opening of the school, the designs for Creston were published in "Architectural Record" in 1945 (Architectural Record August 1945: 48-53). Creston School, the first building constructed by Portland Public Schools since 1932, was heralded as the "Finest in the Northwest" at its opening in 1949 (Oregonian. 01-02-1949). Featured in the nationally distributed book School Planning that was published in 1951, the school was noted for its use of the "square type" and "free standing type" of classrooms as well as the separation and differentiation of the school facilities that could be used by the public from the instructional spaces (Reid 1951: 152). The structural system and interior lighting was also noted as being "novel" for using a raised central roof with clerestory windows that could light the interior walls of classrooms which would then light the corridors through the use of glass block along interior corridor walls.

In addition to these qualities, the school's sprawling single story plan was also intended to segregate children according to age group. In addition to self contained areas for the kindergarten and lower grades along the building's west side, the campus featured individual playgrounds for kindergarten, intermediate, and junior high students. The building also included specialized spaces equipped for instruction in arts and crafts, shop, and home economics. The school also exhibits the early use of the double height auditorium to differentiate the administrative and more public wing in an otherwise asymmetrical plan that was characteristic of the buildings of the period. The mixture of exterior cladding materials including stucco, horizontal board, and brick veneer emphasized the horizontality and decentralized planning.

Although portions of the school were remodeled following a 1967 fire, the building retains its distinctive interior and exterior features and overall finger plan. The major architectural spaces including the west side classrooms, entry plaza, auditorium, and gymnasium all remain intact. The Creston Annex is also a contributing resource. Creston Elementary School is recommended as eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its associations with the growth of the Portland Public School district in the mid twentieth century and for its associations with emerging educational philosophies, most notably by the segregation of younger children from the larger school populations and the initiative to have schools used by the broader public in the late 1940s. The building is also eligible under Criterion C as a significant project by the Wolff & Phillips architectural firm whose designs for Creston were promoted in at least one nationally distributed publication.

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 | |

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4701 Bush St
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Local Library: Multnomah County Library University Library: Portland State University Library
Historical Society: Oregon Historical Society Other Repository: PPS Archives

Bibliography: Bibliography

Architectural Record. "Using Specialized Classrooms and Fully Developed Public Spaces." August 1945: 48-53.

McMath, George. "A Regional Style Comes to the City." In *Space, Style and Structure: Buildings in Northwest America*. Ed. Thomas Vaughan, 467-499. Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1974.

Ogata, Amy F. "Building for Learning in Postwar American Elementary Schools." *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 67, no. 4, December 2008: 562-591.

Oregonian. "New Creston School Finest in the Northwest Opens Monday." 01-02-1949.

Perkins, Lawrence B and Walter D. Cocking. *Schools*. New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1949.

Portland Public Schools. *Repairing, Rehabilitating and Modernizing the School Plant*. Portland: Portland Public Schools. Office of the Superintendent, 1945.

_____. *School Chronology Binder*.

_____. *Creston Elementary School. Facility Plan*.

_____. *Creston Elementary School. Facility Profile*.

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

Ritz, Richard. E. *Architects of Oregon. A Biographical Dictionary of Architects Deceased – 19th and 20th Centuries*. Portland: Lair Hill Publishing, 2002.



ENTRIX

Down to Earth. Down to Business.™



South elevation, main entrance (243A)



Creston Annex (243B) looking north.



Main building, west classrooms (243A)



Typical ancillary entrance (243A)



Main building, looking toward gymnasium (243A)

**Creston School
Exterior Photos
ENTRIX, 2009**



Auditorium, looking from balcony (243A)



Main lobby (243A)



Detail of auditorium chairs, note Art Modern motif on seat ends (243A)



Typical corridor (243A)

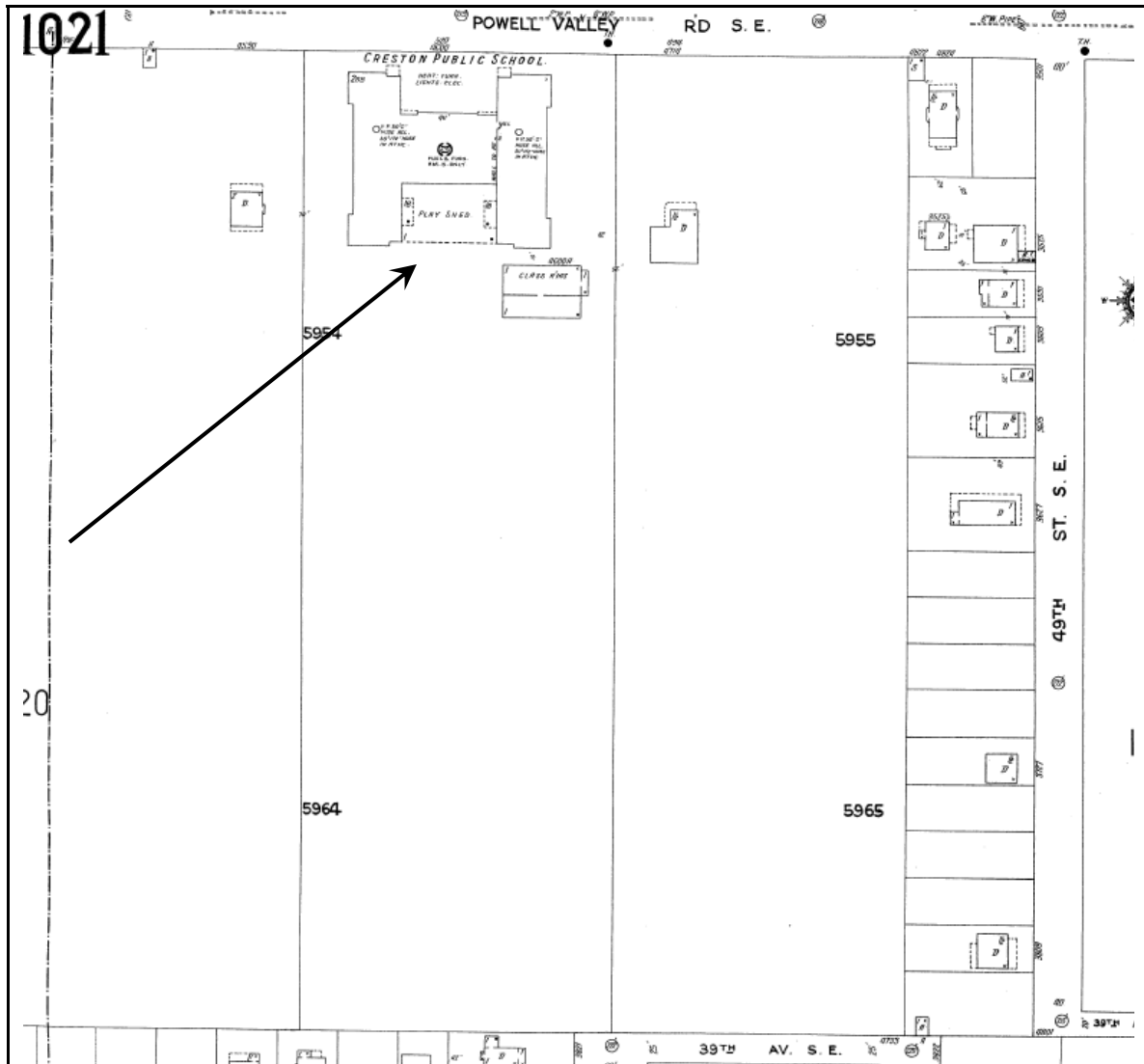


Typical classroom, note rounded walls and glass block windows that light corridor (243A).



ENTRIX

Down to Earth. Down to Business.™

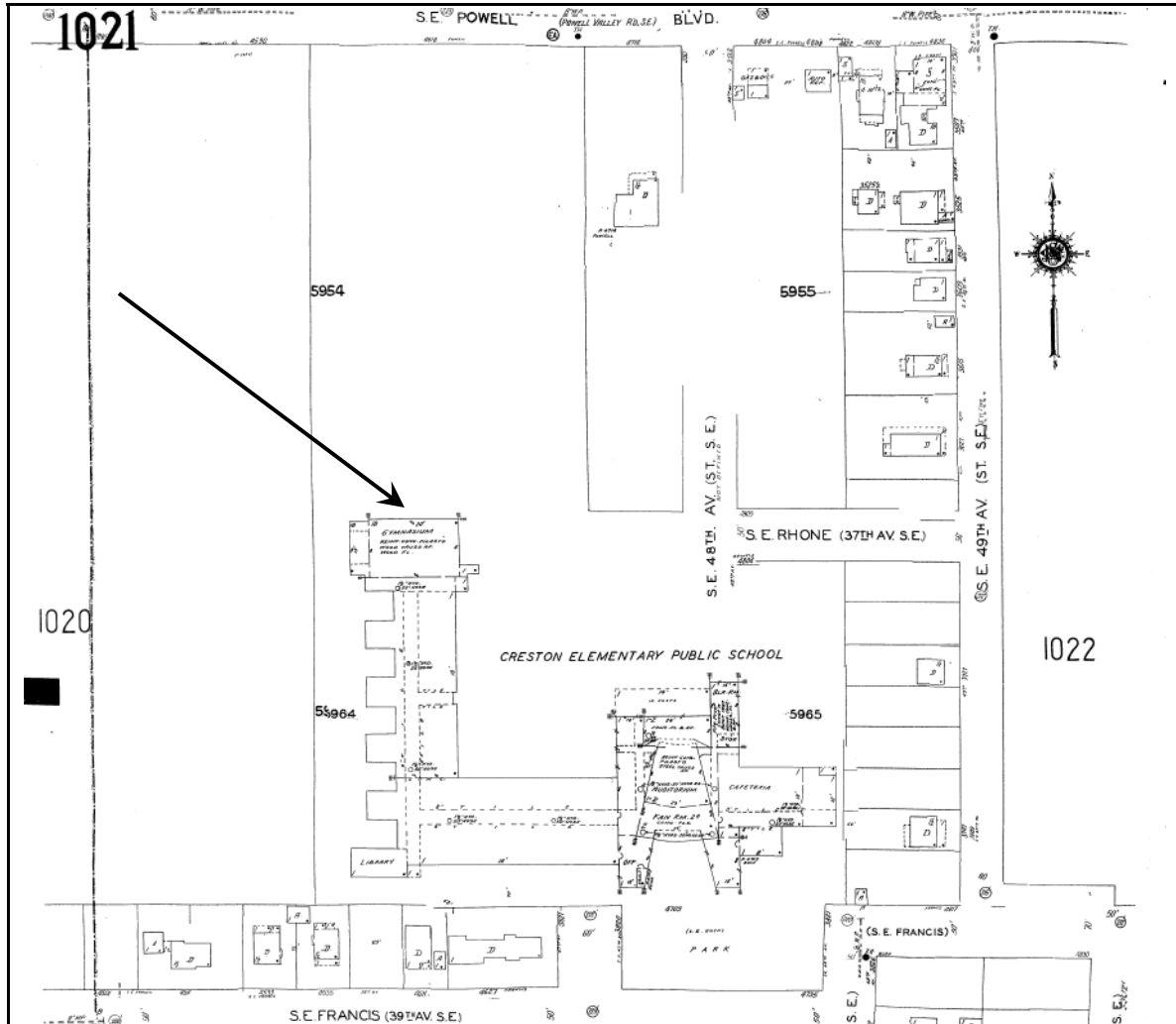


1924-1928, Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Map, Portland, Oregon, Map 1021. Arrow points to future location of new Creston Elementary Public School. Note location of old school.



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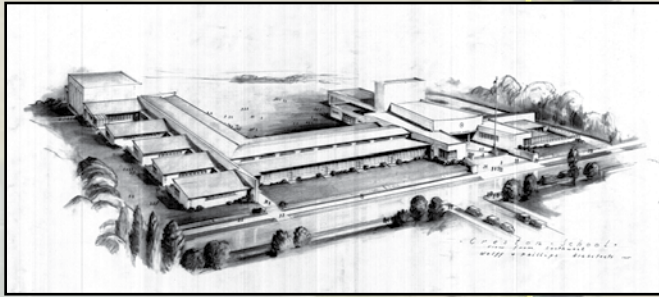
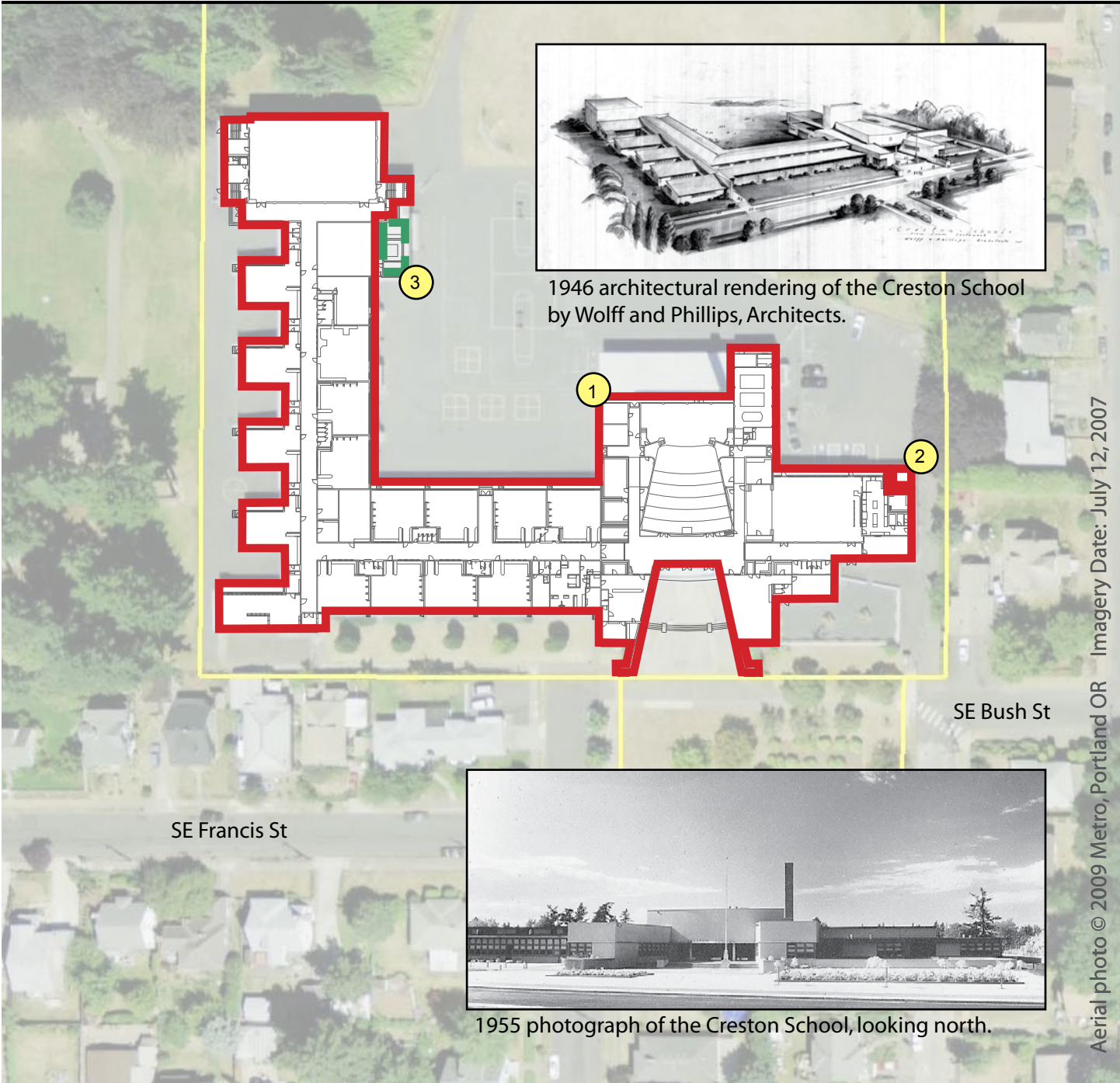


Updated to 1950 Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Map, Portland, Oregon, Map 1021. Arrow points to Creston Elementary Public School. Note school location and street changes.

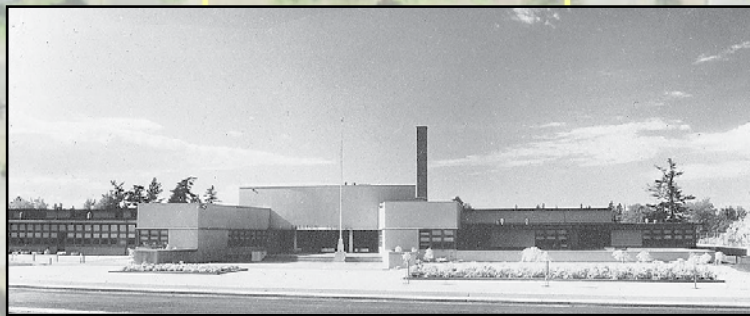
Creston School

4701 SE Bush St, Portland OR, 97206

[View Site in Google Maps](#)

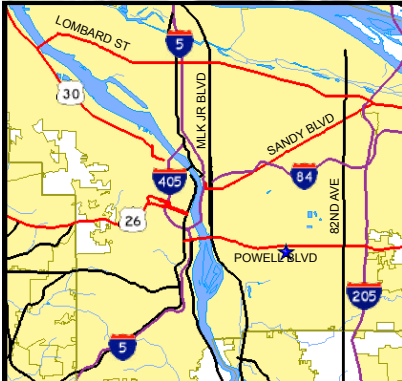


1946 architectural rendering of the Creston School by Wolff and Phillips, Architects.






1955 photograph of the Creston School, looking north.

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



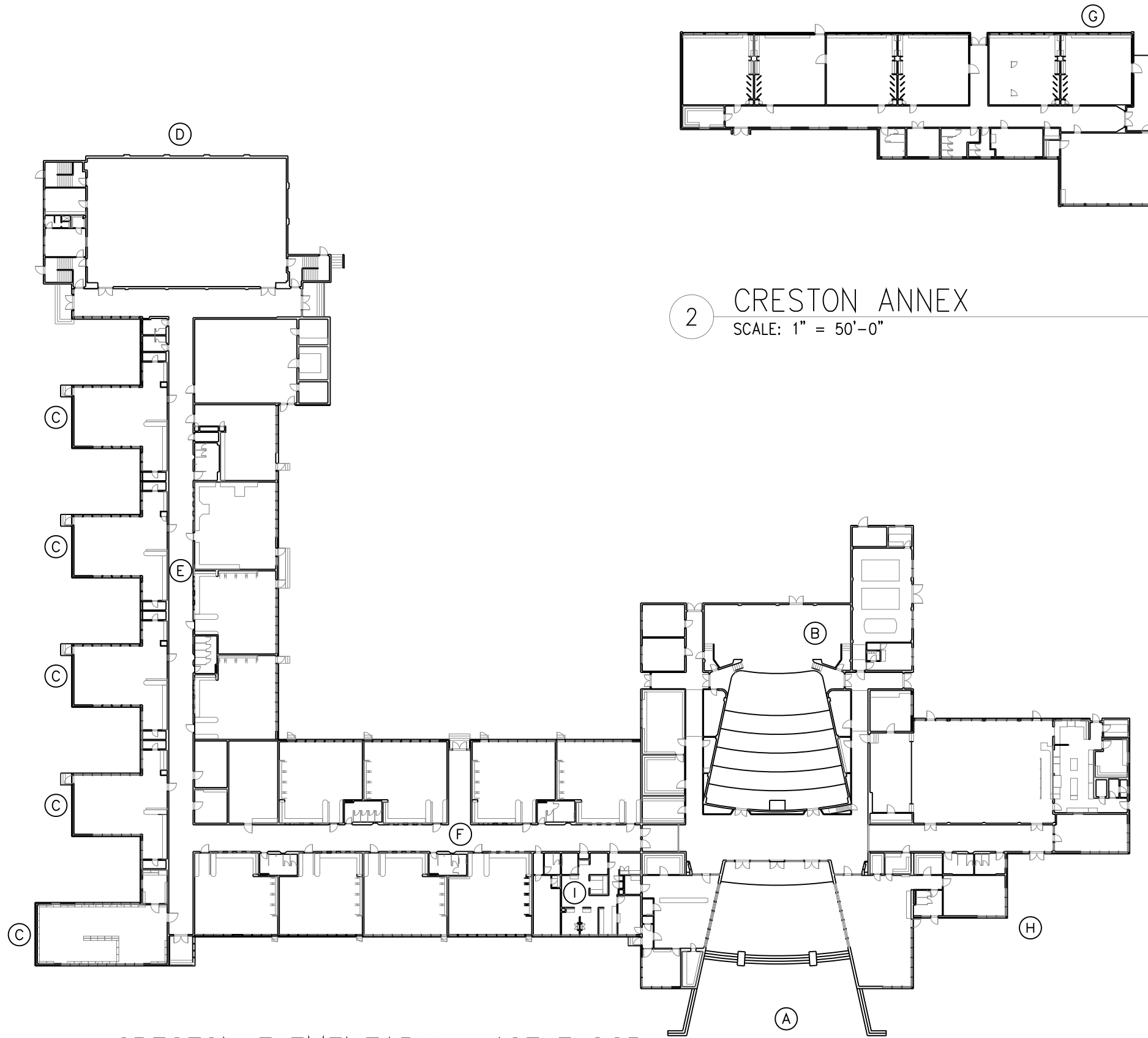
Historical Significance and Building Integrity

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



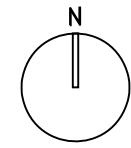
Building Periods

1. Main Building (243A), 1946
2. Addition (243A), 1954
3. Addition (243A), 1967



1 CRESTON ELEMENTARY – 1ST FLOOR
SCALE: 1" = 50'-0"

2 CRESTON ANNEX
SCALE: 1" = 50'-0"



KEYNOTES:

- (A) THE MAIN BUILDING (1946) HAS TWO ANGLED AND PROJECTING ARMS FORMING A BROAD OPEN PLAZA THAT LEADS TO A SERIES OF THREE DOUBLE DOOR ENTRIES. THE ENTRY IS RECESSED BY A BROAD OVERHANG SUPPORTED BY TWO ROUND COLUMNS. THE WINDOWS THAT FLANK THE MAIN DOORS CONSISTS OF HORIZONTALLY RIBBED OR CORRUGATED PANES THAT ARE MOTTLED TO DISPERSE LIGHT TO THE INTERIOR.
- (B) AUDITORIUM FEATURES CURVED INTERIOR WALLS LINED WITH FLUSH WOOD PANELING AND A DISTINCTIVE THREE BAND FILLET MOLDING THAT TOPS THE PANELING. THE AISLE SEAT ENDS FEATURE A STREAMLINED ART-MODERNE MOTIF.
- (C) A SERIES OF CLASSROOM "FINGERS" EXTEND FROM THE CENTRAL CORRIDOR. THESE CLASSROOMS FEATURE CLERESTORY WINDOWS ON THEIR NORTH SIDES AND FULL LENGTH WINDOWS ON THEIR SOUTH SIDES. EACH CLASSROOM ALSO FEATURES A DIRECT EXIT TO AN EXTERIOR PLAY AREA AND TO A NEIGHBORING CRESTON PARK AND ALSO CONTAIN THEIR OWN BATHROOM FACILITIES.
- (D) THE FLAT ROOF GYMNASIUM CONSTRUCTED OF REINFORCED CONCRETE WITH PROJECTING CONCRETE COLUMNS THAT BUTTRESS THE EXTERIOR WALLS.
- (E) MUCH OF THIS AREA OF THE SCHOOL WAS DAMAGED BY FIRE AND WAS RESTORED TO ITS PRESENT CONDITION IN 1967.
- (F) CLERESTORY WINDOWS EXTENDING FROM EAST TO WEST ALONG THE ROOF PROVIDE INTERIOR LIGHT INTO THE CLASSROOMS WITH SOME LIGHTFILTERING INTO THE NEIGHBORING CORRIDOR THROUGH SQUARE UNITS OF GLASSBLOCK.
- (G) THE CRESTON ANNEX (1954), AN EARLY EXAMPLE OF A SMALL PRIMARY SCHOOL DESIGNED IN THE NORTHWEST REGIONAL STYLE, CONSISTS OF SIX CLASSROOMS AS WELL AS A LARGE PLAYROOM. THE BUTTERFLY ROOF AND EXPOSED WOOD CEILING BEAMS REPRESENT CHARACTER DEFINING ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS.
- (H) CONCRETE PORCH FOR AN INFORMAL EATING AREA.
- (I) CRESTON DENTAL CENTER, IN OPERATION SINCE THE SCHOOL OPENED, HAS BEEN THROUGH SEVERAL REMODELS WITH THE LAST DATING TO 1992.

GENERAL NOTES:

- 1 ALL EXTERIOR CLASSROOM WINDOWS WERE REPLACED WITH MODERN WINDOWS IN 1990.
- 2 ALL EXTERIOR DOORS LOCATED IN CLASSROOMS ON THE WEST, EAST AND NORTH SIDES OF THE BUILDING WERE REPLACED IN 1986.
- 3 THE EXTERIOR WALLS FEATURE A BASE OF ROMAN BRICKS THAT LIE BELOW EXTERIOR WALLS THAT FEATURE EITHER BANKS OF LARGE VERTICAL WINDOWS OR HORIZONTAL CLAPBOARD.
- 4 INTERIORS OF INDIVIDUAL CLASSROOMS FORM A DISTINCTIVE L-SHAPE AND EXHIBIT SHELVING AND/OR CABINETS THAT TERMINATE AT ROUNDED AND STREAMLINED EDGES.



CRESTON ELEMENTARY – 243
4701 SE BUSH ST 97206

PPS HISTORIC ASSESSMENT



DRAWING: ANNOTATED PLAN

DATE: Sept. 4, 2009