

City of Madison Landmarks Commission
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM

Name of Building or Site

Common:	Historic:
Longfellow School	Same

Location

Street Address: 210 S. Brooks Street, aka 1010 Chandler Street Madison, WI 53715	Aldermanic District: 13 (formerly 9)
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Classification

Type of Property:

Building

Zoning District: R3 and R4	Present Use: School; Hospital and Community Education
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Current Owner of Property

Name(s):

Board of Education, Madison Metropolitan School District

Street Address: 545 West Dayton Street Madison, WI 53703	Telephone Number: (608)266-6070
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Legal Description

Parcel Number: 0709-233-0507-7	Legal Description: Lots 1-4 and 9-12, Block 9, Greenbush Addition
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Condition of Property

Physical Condition:

Fair to Good

Altered or Unaltered? Unaltered	Moved or Original Site? Original Site
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Wall Construction:

Load-bearing brick (1918); Structural clay tile with brick veneer (1924, 1938)

gymnasium, locker rooms with showers, and manual training rooms in the basement of the 1918 section; a nurse's office and a lunchroom in the basement, a library and an auditorium on the first floor, and industrial arts and nature study rooms on the second floor in the 1924 section; a gymnasium with locker rooms and showers, and dentist and physician's offices on the ground floor, an expanded library on the first floor, and a music room on the second floor (1938 section). Wall finishes include exposed and painted brick (1918), plastered structural clay tile (1924 and 1938), tile (1938) and plastered wood and gypsum partition walls. The flooring in the classrooms is wood. In the corridors and basement/ground floors the finish is linoleum (1918) or terrazzo (1924 and 1938). The sloping floor of the auditorium is concrete. The original ceilings throughout most of the building, excluding the auditorium and gymnasiums, are concealed with dropped acoustical tile ceilings and hanging fluorescent lights. The auditorium retains its original plaster cornice with alternating shield and floral motifs. Above the stage are plaster figures in classical dress, flanked by swags and wreaths. Most of the interior doors are panelled wood with a glass pane in the upper half. Built-in cupboards, closets and cabinets are found throughout the building. In the 1918 section many of the classrooms retain original air-pump clocks and tiny intercom-phones, and the restrooms have original wood stall partitions and doors.

Alterations to Longfellow School's exterior have been confined to the replacement of some of the original windows on the rear facade. The window openings are unchanged. On the interior, temporary partitions have been installed in the basement, restricting access into the basement gymnasium, and in a few classrooms.

Significance of the Nominated Property

Longfellow School, built in three phases between 1918 and 1938, is architecturally significant as a fine local example of the rare formal brick subtype of the Tudor Revival style sometimes called Elizabethan Revival; of the work of the prominent local architecture firm Law, Law and Potter; and as a school building representing the evolution of elementary education during the early twentieth century. In addition, the building has historical and cultural significance for its association with, and as a symbol of, the ethnically rich Greenbush neighborhood.

Historical Background

In 1869, anticipating that a new school would be needed, the City of Madison purchased block nine of the Greenbush Addition for \$3,000 from Dr. Chandler Chapman and his wife Eugenia.¹ Growth in the "Bush" was slow until about 1875. Between 1875 and 1910, population in the Bush increased rapidly. The ethnic composition was primarily German and Irish until the mid-1890s.² In 1891, the city conveyed block nine to the Board of Education, "for a schoolhouse thereon," for one dollar.³ The Board of Education sold lots 5 through 8, which face South Mills Street, to raise money to build the school.⁴ Greenbush Public School was erected at Chandler and South Brooks Streets, on the southeast corner of the present Longfellow site, and opened in the fall of 1892.⁵

During the 1890s, the character of the Bush began to change as Russian Jews settled in the area. They tended to cluster along Mound Street near South Park Street. Between 1900 and 1915, the ethnic diversity of the Bush increased as Italian immigrants settled in the neighborhood. Many purchased homes in the "Triangle," that part of the Bush that lies east of South Park Street between Regent Street and West Washington Avenue. Fully 99 percent were from Sicily. One third were Albanian-Italians. A

¹Warranty Deeds, Dane County, vol. 144, p. 137.

²Elizabeth L. Miller, "The History and Adaptive Use of the Longfellow School", (Master's thesis, Cornell University, 1984,) pp. 7-9.

³Warranty Deeds, Dane County, vol. 144, p. 137.

⁴Ibid., p. 265.

⁵Miller, pp. 35-36.

percent African-Americans. These ethnic mini-communities would remain an integral part of the Bush until urban renewal.¹¹

In 1924, the central section of the present Longfellow School was constructed. It was designed by James and Edward Law to match the original section. The expanded building continued to be known as the Longfellow Annex, while the 1892 schoolhouse became Longfellow School and the 1909 building became Longfellow Junior High School.¹²

The 1892 building was razed in 1938, and the south section of the present Longfellow School built as a Public Works Administration (P.W.A.) project. It was designed by (James) Law, (Edward) Law and (Ellis) Potter to harmonize with the remainder of the building. The junior high at the rear of the site was demolished about 1940. From that time until 1972, when an alternative high school opened in the building, Longfellow served only elementary students.¹³

In 1957, the city inaugurated an urban renewal program. Despite considerable opposition from Greenbush residents, 52 acres in the Bush, including all of the Triangle, were razed between 1962 and 1965. As a result, much of the Italian and African-American communities were relocated. In the mid-1960s, Longfellow's enrollment declined, and never recovered. Longfellow's use as an elementary school was discontinued in 1980. Since that time, the School Board has leased it to Meriter (formerly Madison General) Hospital. The hospital's employee and community education programs, CPR center, data processing and computer training are housed in the school. In addition, the gymnasiums are used for employee exercise, and the School Board retains one educational program in the building, School Age Maternity.¹⁴

¹¹Miller, pp. 14-15.

¹²James and Edward Law, original plans, February 14, 1924; and Wright's Madison City Directory: 1925, (Madison: Wright Publishing Co., 1925).

¹³Law, Law and Potter, original plans, July 22, 1938; and Wright's Madison City Directory: 1940, (Madison: Wright Publishing Co., 1940)

¹⁴Madison Metropolitan School District, enrollment figures; Valentine, p. 73; WHA, "The Triangle: A Three-Cornered Circle," December, 1983; and Miller, pp. 16-17.

"three Rs." Attention was directed at developing well-rounded individuals with the inclusion of "manual training" in metal and woodworking, and sewing. A rising concern for health and nutrition led to the inclusion of a gymnasium, lunchroom, and nurse's, physician's and/or dentist's offices in the state-of-the-art school. An auditorium was included reflecting a new view of the role of the elementary school, serving as a community center. Libraries also came into vogue during this period. Longfellow incorporated all of these ideas.¹⁷

Historical Significance

From the mid-1850s until the mid-1960s, Greenbush maintained a concentration of ethnic mini-communities unmatched by any other Madison neighborhood. In the nineteenth century, Irish and Germans predominated. After the turn of the century, Greenbush was home to Italians, Russian Jews, African-Americans and Germans. While much of the housing stock of the German enclave remains, and remnants of the Italian community are evident in the restaurants and groceries along Regent and Park Streets, all vestiges of the Jewish and African-American communities have disappeared. No one building symbolizes the Bush's lost ethnic heritage better than Longfellow School. Here, the children of all these communities were brought together and educated. Longfellow's significance is especially important now that much of the Bush is gone.

In conclusion, Longfellow School, built in three phases between 1918 and 1938, is architecturally significant as a fine local example of the rare formal brick subtype of the Tudor Revival style; of the work of the prominent local architecture firm Law, Law and Potter; and as a school building representing the evolution of elementary education during the early twentieth century. In addition, the building has historical and cultural significance for its association with, and as a symbol of, the ethnically rich Greenbush neighborhood.

¹⁷Miller, pp. 44-45.