

City of Madison Landmarks Commission
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (1)

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|---|--|
| <i>Name of Building or Site</i> | |
| <i>Common Name</i> | <i>Historic Name (if applicable)</i> |
| Ruth Bachhuber Doyle Administration Building | Washington School/Washington Grade and Orthopedic School |
| <i>Location</i> | |
| <i>Street Address</i> | <i>Aldermanic District</i> |
| 545 West Dayton Street, Madison 53703 | 4 |
| <i>Classification</i> | |
| <i>Type of Property (building, monument, park, etc.)</i> | |
| Building | |
| <i>Zoning District</i> | <i>Present Use</i> |
| C | administration building/offices |
| <i>Current Owner of Property (available at City Assessor's Office)</i> | |
| <i>Name(s)</i> | |
| Madison Board of Education | |
| <i>Street Address</i> | <i>Telephone Number</i> |
| 545 West Dayton Street, Madison 53703 | (608) 266-6235 |
| <i>Legal Description (available at City Assessor's Office)</i> | |
| <i>Parcel Number</i> | <i>Legal Description</i> |
| 0709-232-2801-3 | University Addition, that part of Outlots 5 & 6 described as follows: beginning at intersection of south line of Dayton and west line of Bedford; thence S 253.6 feet to a point where Bedford angles in a southeasterly direction; thence southwesterly along a line forming an angle in NW quadrant with west line of Bedford 98 degrees 57 minutes a distance of 18 feet, thence southwesterly at an angle to left from last described course produced of 49 degrees 38 minutes a distance of 92.9 feet to a point 12.5 feet northerly from centerline of I.C. Railroad most northerly track measured at right angles thereto; thence westerly along a curve to the left parallel with said centerline of track and 12.5 feet distance northerly therefrom to east line of Frances; thence north along Frances 236 feet to south line of Dayton; thence east along south line of Dayton 410 feet to point of beginning. |
| <i>Condition of Property</i> | |
| <i>Physical Condition (excellent, good, fair, deteriorated, ruins)</i> | |
| good | |

Altered or Unaltered?

Moved or Original Site?

Altered

original site

Wall Construction

brick, load bearing

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Historical Data

| | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <i>Original Owner</i> | <i>Original Use</i> |
| Madison Board of Education | school |
| <i>Architect or Builder</i> | <i>Architectural Style</i> |
| John Flad | Art Moderne |
| <i>Date of Construction</i> | <i>Indigenous Materials Used</i> |
| 1939 | not applicable |

List of Bibliographical References Used

1. "Building for Sturdy Children," Wisconsin State Journal, September 24, 1939, 17-19.
2. "City's New Schools Praised in Cornerstone Ceremonies," Wisconsin State Journal, May 19, 1939, 15.
3. Flad, John J., "Specifications for Washington Grade and Orthopedic School" [1938].
4. Fowkles, John Guy "Always Bursting at the Seams," Wisconsin State Journal, September 24, 1939.
5. Madison Board of Education, Report for the School Year 1935-36, Report of the School Year 1936-37, Report of School Year 1937-38, Eighty-fourth Annual Report 1938-39, Eighty-fifth Annual Report 1939-40, Madison: Board of Education.
6. Noll, Henry "Board Votes on PTA Suggestions," Wisconsin State Journal, May 2, 1939, 10.
7. "Pupils Praise New School Buildings," Wisconsin State Journal, February 5, 1940, 1.

Form Prepared By

Name and Title

Daina Penkiunas, 214 Acewood Blvd., Madison 53714 (608) 243-8144

Organization Represented (if any)

Madison Trust for Historic Preservation

Address

P.O. Box 296, Madison 53701

Telephone Number

(608) 251-4615

Date Nomination Form Was Prepared

March 15, 1996

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LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (3)

Describe Present and Original Physical Construction and Appearance:

The former Washington Grade and Orthopedic School at 545 West Dayton Street was built in 1939 to the designs of Madison architect John Flad. Also called the Washington School, it is currently known as the Ruth Bachhuber Doyle Administration Building. The former school is a large, two-story, pale red brick building filling the front of the block bounded by North Bedford, West Dayton, and North Frances Streets.

The primary elevation faces West Dayton Street. Elements of this facade are repeated on the other elevations: rounded corners, a continuous band of concrete at the sill line of the first floor windows, and a concrete water table. A photograph of the completed building from the 1939-40 Annual Report of the Madison Board of Education indicated changes from the current exterior appearance. The original cornice consisted of a narrow, apparently rounded coping of concrete. This is currently covered with a much larger, green, metal cornice. While vertical divisions of the windows remain the same, the number of lights has decreased from six to three. Of the current three, the upper two are blocked off. The original windows were double hung, three over three.

Moving right from the North Bedford Street corner, the West Dayton elevation contains a broad expanse of wall from the rounded corner, followed by a window bank of five vertical divisions, and then three sets of two. The first and second floor windows mirror each other. After the last set of two windows is the main entrance. This entry lines up with Marion Street which makes a T-intersection with West Dayton. A rounded corner steps back to one of two front doors. A rounded partition, stepping out to the plane for the facade, separates the first door from the second. Both doors appear to be original; they are wood doors with five glass panels. Above each door is a large rectangular relief panel in wood consisting of a rectangle spiraling in on itself. Above the panels are windows, again in wood and having eight horizontal lights. An inset plate on the front stoop gives the name of the builder — J.H. Findorff and Sons. On a landing before the doors are two fluted column bases, approximately 18 inches tall.

To the right of the second door the facade makes a transition to the slightly lower auditorium. After the rounded corner there is an expanse of wall which at its upper level can be seen making a second curve inward. A second curve below steps outward to form the plane of the auditorium. While the overall facade of the school emphasizes the horizontal, the prevailing line of the auditorium is vertical. The facade of this section has six narrow windows faced with decorative metal grilles. Each grille consists of five panels of a stylized design of chevrons along the base, with feather-like verticals at the sides. Some of the bottom panels have fallen out or have been removed. Above the vertical grille is a brick panel of three vertical divisions, with the first and third lines slightly indented. A block with the date of construction, 1939, is located at the center of the auditorium facade. The wing to the right of the auditorium closely resembles the left portion. After the auditorium are two doors, again divided by a rounded partition. The windows here are four groups of two followed by a single bank of five. Again, the upper floors have the same window placement and division.

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The North Bedford Street elevation is similar in treatment. A pair of doors, separated by a rounded partition and set back in the facade by rounded walls provides a secondary entrance. Two column bases are also placed before these doors. The bases are visible in the historic photograph showing the North Bedford and West Dayton corner and the North Bedford Street entrance.

The North Frances Street elevation is somewhat different. From the rounded corner of West Dayton are two pairs of windows per floor. After the second set the roof height steps down, but the window height remains the same. The second story of this lower portion has four single windows. On the first floor there are windows below the first, third, and fourth windows and a single door below the second window. The door is metal panels. As at other entrances, the door is set back from the plane of the elevation. To either side of the metal panels is a smooth, curved, brick wall. At the end of the curve, and at the plane of the main wall, the brick is laid at a diagonal for several courses forming a toothed pattern. Above these are large square lighting panels. The entire entrance is protected by a plain, metal awning. The North Frances Street wing is completed by a single-story extension containing a bank of six windows. While the one-story portion continues the same decorative treatment and rounded corner as the rest of the building, the transition from two to one story results in a square corner.

The rear elevation is utilitarian and irregular, with various extensions from the different wings and the gymnasium. The decorative, sill level stringcourse terminates with the curve. With the exception of the outer corners at North Bedford and North Frances Streets, the corners of the eaves are rectangular. Many windows and openings on this facade have either been blocked off or bricked in. The former playground has given way to a parking lot.

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Significance of Nominated Property and Conformance to Designation Criteria:

The Washington Grade and Orthopedic School is significant for its associations with the history of public education and school building in Madison, as an example of the Art Moderne style applied to an academic building, and as a work of Madison Architect John Flad.

The current Washington School replace three smaller and older elementary schools located in its general vicinity — Washington School, Doty School, and Draper School. In 1936, the Madison Board of Education published the report of the School Building Survey which elevated the physical condition of buildings in use. The report found that the old Washington School, located on North Broom Street and built in 1890, was “a poor building” and “poorly arranged.” Furthermore, “the building [had] a depressing effect both from the outside and the inside - it [had] outlived its usefulness.”¹ Draper School, located on Park Street and built in 1870 was a “poor school building.”² The Doty School, built on West Wilson in 1906, surprised the evaluators; it scored “much better than expected.”³ The survey recommended abandoning Draper and Washington. (The two schools are no longer extant. Doty School has been converted to apartments.)

The following year, 1937, the Board of Education indicated that they were to build a new school in the neighborhood of Barry park to replace Washington, Doty, and Draper. By 1938 the building plans were under way. Owing to the influx of federal funds, additions to existing schools were begun at East High, Dudgeon School, and Longfellow School; and three new elementary schools were under construction: Marquette, Washington, and Lapham School, called the Burrows Field School in early reports. Federal funding was to pay for 45% of the new buildings’ construction costs. Upon completion, approximately 1,800 children would attend the new schools.⁴ By December 1938, John Flad had prepared specifications for Washington School and bids were solicited. On the specifications, Flad lists the school as Job #381, PWA #WIS 1614-F.⁵

By May 1, 1939, the local PTAs and the Board of Education had agreed on names for the three new schools. The cornerstones for all three buildings were lain May 19, 1939. Alderman Patrick H. Barry spoke at the Washington School ceremony. The Wisconsin State Journal

¹ Madison Board of Education, Report of the School Year 1935-36, Being the Eighty-First Annual Report of the Public Schools of Madison, Wisconsin (Madison: Board of Education, November 1936), 53.

² Report of the School Year 1935-36, 48.

³ Report of the School Year 1935-36, 48.

⁴ Madison Board of Education, Beginning the Second Century in the Madison Public Schools, Eighty-fourth Annual Report 1938-39 (Madison: Board of Education, 1940), 61, 64.

⁵ John J. Flad, “Specifications for Washington Grade and Orthopedic School,” an uncatalogued collection in the Wisconsin State Historical Society. The bound specifications indicate that bids would open December 20, 1938.

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noted the many advantages of the buildings, including gymnasiums, shower rooms, auditoriums, science rooms, art and music rooms, and a room built specifically as a library. In addition, the buildings were to make use of new or improved materials, including fire proofing, insulation, and acoustical ceilings.⁶ The Board of Education noted that the “modern materials” used for construction were “practical, easily cleaned, and fire resistant.”⁷ Among the other improvements were “automatically controlled” heating and ventilation.⁸

Madison’s elementary students moved into their new schools on February 5, 1940. On the first day of classes in the new buildings, 500 students were enrolled at Washington, including 70 children in the orthopedic division. Students and teachers commented on how quiet it was in the new building as a result of the “insulated, acoustically treated corridors.”⁹ After the move, the old Doty School became the administration building.

The new school buildings were built along the lines of the newest pedagogical planning, the unit plan. The unit plan separated the school into units by function. By isolating activities, parts of the school could be closed off depending on programming needs. (By the late 1930s school buildings were being put to use by adults and community groups after school hours.) The main unit of the Washington School faces West Dayton Street and contained the auditorium, office, principal’s office, and book storage. The second unit was the physical education unit with gymnasiums, locker rooms, showers, and athletic directors’ offices. Below the gym were the community center with a connecting kitchen, the laundry and drying rooms for the orthopedic unit, workrooms, and storage.

The east side facing North Bedford Street was the grade unit with kindergarten and lower grade classrooms. The second floor would have classes for the upper grades, music room, library, art room, science room, lunch room, kitchen, teachers’ room, and nurse’s office.

The Washington Grade and Orthopedic School is also significant in that it was built to accommodate crippled children within the Madison School District. The first orthopedic school was established January 1928 in the Doty School. It was later moved to the Longfellow “white building.” The reports of the School Board of 1936 indicated an enrollment of 52 in its program for crippled children. By 1937 the number had increased to 67 and to 88 by 1940, just prior to the opening of the new Washington School.

⁶ “Building for Sturdy Children,” Wisconsin State Journal, September 24, 1939, 17-18.

⁷ Madison Board of Education, Democracy: The Worth of the Individual, Eighty-fifty Annual Report 1939-40 (Madison: Board of Education, 1941), 51.

⁸ Eighty-fourth Annual Report 1938-39, 64.

⁹ “Pupils Praise New School Buildings,” Wisconsin State Journal, February 5, 1940, 1.

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The new school was built to be accessible to the handicapped students. The auditorium had wide spaces between the rows. Broad ramps led to the gyms and lunch room. An elevator was constructed in one corner of the orthopedic unit. The entire first floor of the west wing was devoted to the orthopedic unit. It had three large classrooms, two with solariums with southern exposure, special therapy rooms, an office, and a separate entrance on North Frances Street. Special features of the unit were to include a physio-therapy room, a hydro-therapy room with a tank (although it had not been installed by 1940), a cubicle for ultra violet treatment, showers, and exercise and activity rooms.

The Washington School was not the only public school building to accommodate children with disabilities. Madison also educated its deaf children within the public schools. These children had attended Doty School. With the move from Doty, the students transferred to a new department housed in the new Lapham School.

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Significance Addendum:

The Washington Grade and Orthopedic School is further significant as an example of a Public Works Administration funded school building in Madison. The Public Works Administration (PWA) was one of a number of federal programs of the 1930s designed to put Americans back to work during the Great Depression. The specific goal of the PWA was to increase employment in the building industry and in factories which produced and supplied building materials through the construction of "permanent and useful public projects."¹⁰ Of all types of buildings constructed with PWA financing, educational buildings formed the largest category, with elementary and high schools being the most prevalent.

For these projects, architects and contractors were hired locally, leading to a variety of architectural treatments. In their book on public buildings, the PWA's C.W. Short and R. Stanley-Brown provided examples of schools across the country built with agency funding. The schools illustrated are predominantly Georgian Revival, with some regional revival styles used on the West Coast and the Southwest. While not as common, the streamlined Moderne style was scattered throughout the country, used on both large high schools and on small elementary schools.¹¹

Alice Barrows of the Office of Education of the Federal Security Agency wrote in 1939 that the PWA was a lifesaver for the schools. As was found in Madison, thousands of children across the country were housed in old and insanitary school buildings. With the onset of the depression, the yearly capital expenditure per pupil fell to \$2.24 in 1934 (down from the average of \$15.27 in the years 1922-1928). The PWA was able to raise the figure to \$8.80 by 1938.¹² As in Madison at the Washington School, many of these new school buildings subscribed to modern educational programs and included auditoriums, gymnasiums, libraries, and other special use rooms.

¹⁰ C.W. Short and R. Stanley-Brown, Public Buildings: A Survey of Architecture of Projects Constructed by Federal and Other Governmental Bodies (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1939), x.

¹¹ Short and Brown, Public Buildings.

¹² Alice Barrows in Short and Brown, Public Buildings, xviii.