

# Oregon Historic Site Form

Abernethy School  
2421 Orange Ave  
Portland, Multnomah County

## LOCATION AND PROPERTY NAME

address: 2421 SE Orange Ave  apprx. addr

Portland  vcnty Multnomah County

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

historic name: Abernethy School

current/  
 other names: Abernethy Elementary School

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

## PROPERTY CHARACTERISTICS

resource type: Building height (# stories): 3 total # eligible resources: 1 total # ineligible resources: 2

elig. evaluation: eligible/contributing NR status: Listed in Historic District

primary constr date: 1924 (c.)  secondary date: 1955 (c.)  NR date listed: \_\_\_\_\_ (indiv listed only; see Grouping for hist dist)  
 (optional--use for major addns)

primary orig use: School orig use comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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

primary style: Classical Revival: other prim style comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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

primary siding: Standard Brick siding comments: \_\_\_\_\_

secondary siding: Glazed Terra-Cotta

plan type: School (General) architect: Jones, George

builder: Parker and Banfield

comments/notes: HRI Rank III. NRHP listed - Ladd's Addition Historic District - Contributing Resource.

## GROUPINGS / ASSOCIATIONS

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

farmstead/cluster name: \_\_\_\_\_ external site #: 131  
 (ID# used in city/agency database)

## SHPO INFO FOR THIS PROPERTY

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

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)

### Description Summary

The Abernethy Elementary School at 2421 SE Orange Avenue is located on a 3.7-acre campus that consists of a two-story school building (131A), an attached one-story classroom wing (131B) and two portable classrooms (131C). Located in the primarily single family residential neighborhood of the Ladds Addition Historic District in Southeast Portland, it was built in 1924 in the Classical Revival style. The building is a reinforced concrete structure with brick veneer, cast stone, and terra cotta ornamentation. The irregular shaped plan includes classrooms, an auditorium, a gymnasium, a lunch room, and an administrative office.

### Architectural Description

The Abernethy Elementary School, which faces SE Orange Avenue, is situated on a grass-covered and asphalt campus with a play field southwest of the main building. There are asphalt-covered playgrounds west and south of the school. A covered, open-sided play shed (131D) is located northwest of the school. An arboretum/garden and gazebo (131E) are located to the north of the building. Two detached portable buildings occupy the northeast end of the parcel.

The two-story school building is oriented on a southwest-northeast axis. The building is covered by a flat roof and sits on a concrete foundation. The primary mass of the building is E-shaped with a small bay that projects from the northwest side of the building. The west elevation is highlighted by a brick ventilation stack that extends from the boiler room. Cladding for the reinforced concrete building consists of brick veneer. Architectural details in the Classical Revival style include a cast stone cornice, window and door surrounds, and terra cotta panels with ornamental garlands.

The fenestration consists primarily of symmetrically placed metal frame replacement windows with a horizontal sliding opening at the bottom of the window. Divided into three horizontal sections, the upper section of each window is blocked off with louver vents inserted in the corners. Metal frame windows set in the original cast stone surrounds have also replaced the wood frame windows on the stairwell landings between the 1st and 2nd floors. The double-height arched, multi-light wood frame auditorium windows have been retained on the building's front elevation. Radiating brick voussoirs with keystones cap each window. Double leaf metal doors replaced the original wooden entry doors.

The interior layout of the school consists of a modified "U" shape hallway plan with the main hallway running southwest-northeast. The double-loaded hallways retain their original configuration, height, unpainted wood molding and framing, built-in metal lockers, and wooden display cases. Tubular fluorescent light fixtures are suspended from the acoustic tile ceilings. Flooring consists of original linoleum tiles. Original wooden doors provide access to the classrooms from the hallways. Except for the replacement of the 1st/2nd story landing windows, the building's stairwells retain their original concrete steps and landings, plaster veneer walls, wooden railings and molding, and steam radiators.

The one-story brick wing, located at the northeast end of the school consists of two-classrooms with original metal frame hinged windows, tiled floors, low acoustic tile covered ceilings, fluorescent lights, and wood molding and framing. While the building has recessed areas for storing supplies and coats, there are minimal built-in furnishings and cabinetry. Outside the classrooms a flat-roof canopy provides cover for foot traffic between the wing and the main building.

The classrooms in the main building retain their original configurations, height, wood molding, recessed entries, sinks and counters. The majority of the rooms include standard built-in cabinetry and closets for storing coats and supplies. All the rooms feature plaster veneer walls, tiled flooring and vintage tubular fluorescent light fixtures suspended from the acoustic tile ceilings.

The auditorium retains its original balcony, stage, and windows. However, the wall and ceiling lighting fixtures have been removed and/or modified. The original seats were removed to facilitate the use of the room for art and music classes.

There are two gymnasiums located adjacent to one another. A sliding wooden door connects the two rooms. One still functions as a gymnasium, while the other is now utilized as a lunch room. Both spaces retain their high bay ceilings, original configuration and height, ceiling skylights and steel ceiling trusses. The lunch room has cafeteria tables that fold into the walls, which are intact and still in use.

The building is heated by steam boilers located in the room behind the gymnasium. Radiators with metal covers are found in the hallways and in the classrooms.

### Alterations/Integrity

The first significant alteration to the building occurred in 1956 when two classrooms were added to the northwest corner of the building. The first significant modification to the campus was the addition of a two-classroom portable in 1960. The primary alteration to the exterior of the main building was the replacement of most of the wood frame windows in 1987-88. A significant change to the interior occurred in 1988 when the auditorium was remodeled for use as an art room. The covered play shed was added during the 1980s.

The Abernethy School exhibits a moderate degree of integrity. Except for the replacement of the majority of the wood frame windows, original outside doors, and interior features of the auditorium, the school's distinctive exterior and interior architectural features have been retained. The U-shaped corridor plan with its wood molding, framing and display cases in the corridors is intact. Most of the classrooms still exhibit their built-in furnishings, closets, cabinetry and wood molding and framing. The school's brick cladding and cast stone and terra cotta ornamentation is intact.

## HISTORY

# Oregon Historic Site Form

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

## Statement of Significance

Constructed in 1924, Abernethy School was part of a dramatic building program begun by the 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 fire proof 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 from 1908 to 1932.

The architect of Abernethy School, George H. Jones, was well versed in the design of school facilities through his role as Superintendent of building for the district. The son of Thomas J. Jones, who had also served as district architect for many years, George Jones was born in Portland in 1887. After attending Oregon State College for two years, George Jones obtained a degree in architecture in 1913. Jones worked in New York for several years before serving in the U.S. Army Combat Engineers during World War I. Following his return to Portland in 1920, Jones obtained his architecture license. He quickly assumed the position of school architect after his predecessor Floyd A. Naramore became district architect for the Seattle School District.

In his role as district architect, George Jones designed about 25 new schools and supervised the construction of additions for many existing building. Following his tenure with the Portland Schools, Jones went into private practice in Portland. With architect Harold Marsh, he established the firm of Jones & Marsh. Throughout his career Jones continued to specialize in school design, with projects in Pendleton, Klamath Falls and Oregon City. The firm of Jones & Marsh also designed additions to Roosevelt High School in Portland, buildings at Concordia Academy, and the Engineering wing and coliseum at Oregon State College in Corvallis (Ritz 2002 217).

In response to growth in the southeast areas of Portland the District acquired the property at 2421 SE Orange Avenue for \$64,010 in 1923. The building was constructed in 1924 for \$458,624 (PPS School Chronology Binder). The school was one many of Portland's new fire proof buildings that were constructed of brick and concrete. Jones utilized a U-shaped plan characteristic of the schools he designed during this period. Like other PPS buildings constructed during this period, Abernethy contained more differentiated and increasingly specialized spaces (Powers and Corning 1937: 182).

The Classical Revival architectural details of Abernethy School were in keeping with the other revival styles employed by the architects of PPS during this period. This style, along with Colonial Revival and Collegiate Gothic styles, was viewed as inspirational and appropriate for educational settings (Betelle 1919: 28; Sibley 1923: 66; Patton 1967: 1-8). Between the onset of the Great Depression and World War II, few schools were constructed in Portland; however, several schools, including Abernethy, were recipients of Works Progress Administration (WPA) artwork. WPA artist, Enrich Lamade, painted "Pageant of Oregon History" in the Abernethy School library (Horowitz 2008:4). The mural has been painted over (PPS personal communication).

Abernethy School retains moderate integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association, with its plan and exterior and interior finishes largely intact. The 1924 Classical Revival style school is recommended as eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) for its association with progressive era public school construction in Portland (Criterion A). The school was built during the PPS program of progressive era construction and is a strong example of the principles that characterized the design of schools during this era; therefore, it is eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion A. As a good example of the two-story schools that were constructed during the early-twentieth century that embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Classical Revival style school building, Abernethy School is also eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion 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

# Oregon Historic Site Form

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Historical Society: Oregon Historical Society

Other Repository: PPS Archives

## Bibliography: 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.

Horowitz, David. "The New Deal and People's Art: Market Planners and Radical Artists." Oregon Historical Quarterly, Vol 109, Issue 2 (2008).

Oregonian. "Change Favored in School Buildings." 3-31-1914.

Oregonian. "Mayor Lane and the Schools." 10-31-1906.

Oregonian. "School Buildings are Called Unfit." 7-31-1910.

Portland Public Schools. Schools Chronology Binder.

\_\_\_\_\_. Abernethy School Profile.

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

Rippa, Alexander. Education in a Free Society: An American History. New York: Longman, 1997.

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

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



East elevation front entry



West elevation and garden



Gymnasium west (rear) elevation



East elevation entry



East elevation auditorium

**Abernethy School  
Exterior Photos  
ENTRIX, 2009**



Corridor facing south



Classroom built-ins



Classroom built-in



Corridor display case/bulletin board

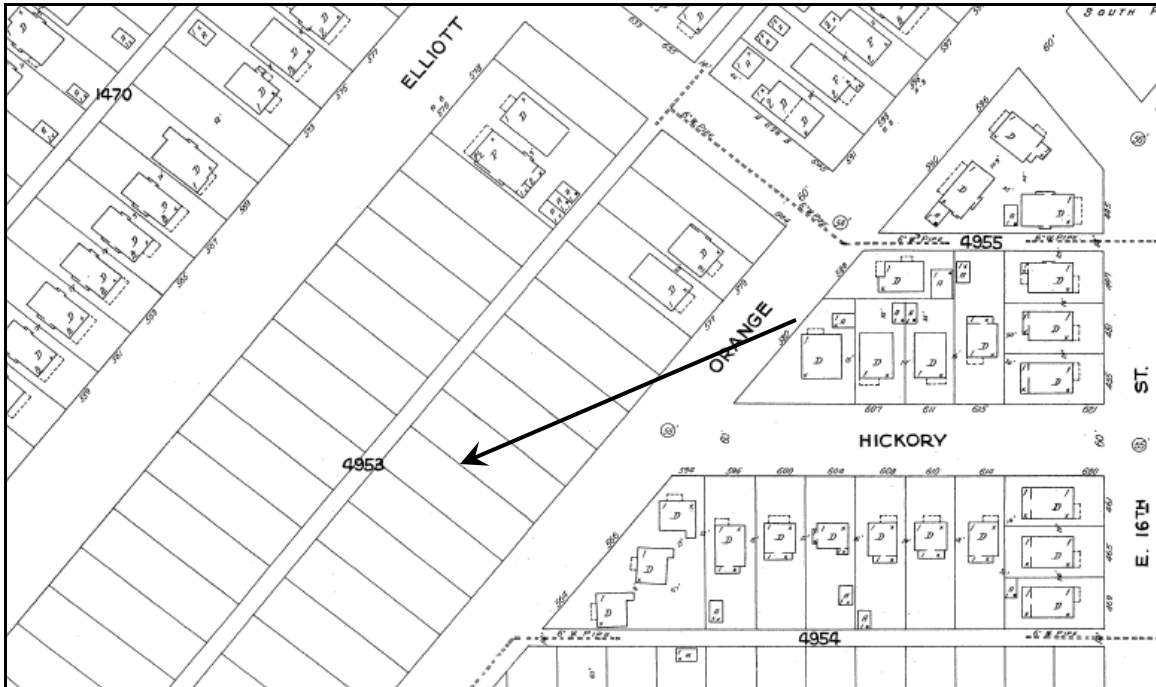


Library



**ENTRIX**

Down to Earth. Down to Business.™

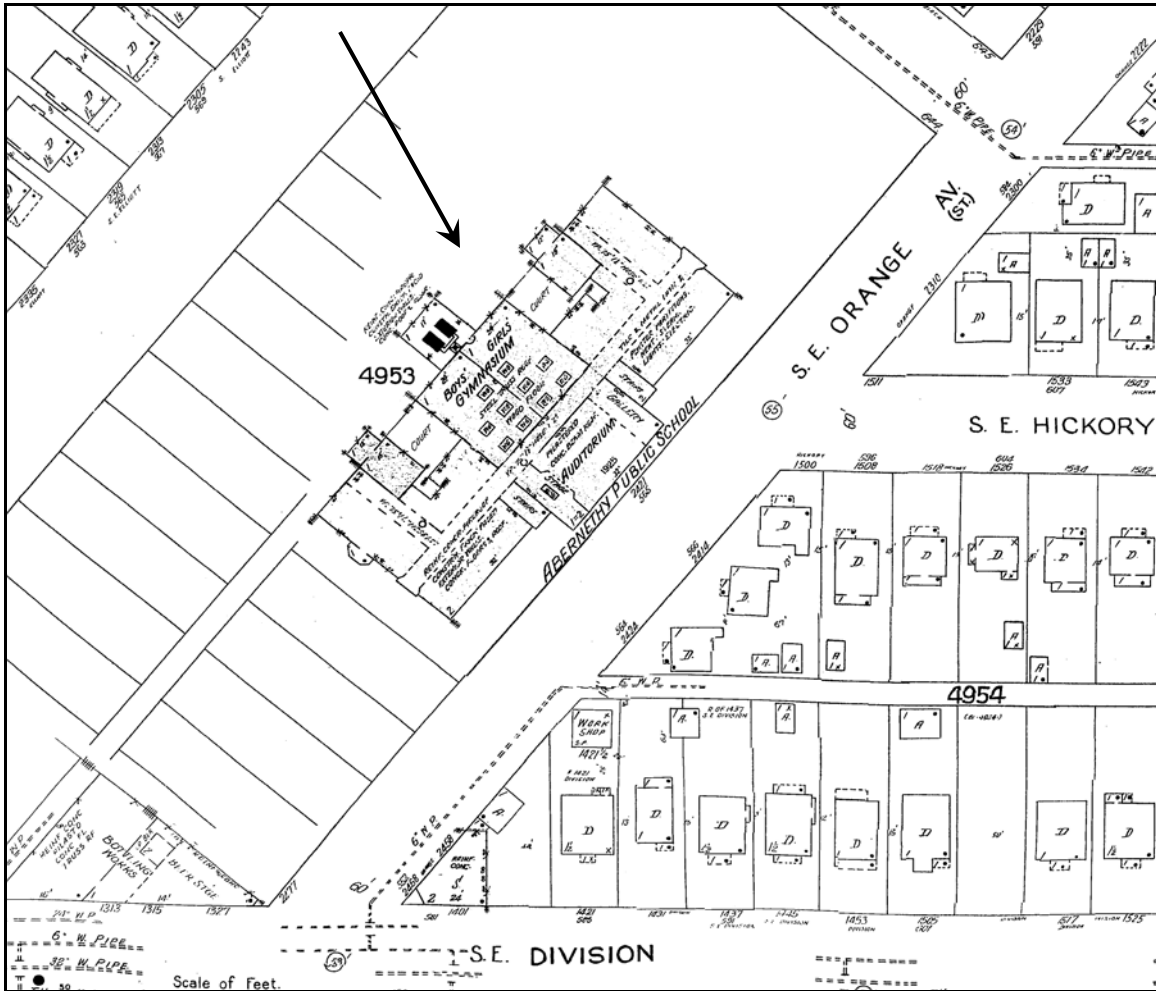


1924-1928 Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Map, Portland, Oregon, Map 769. Arrow points to future location of Abernathy Public School.



**ENTRIX**

Down to Earth. Down to Business.™



Updated to 1950, Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Map, Portland, Oregon, Map 157. Arrow points to Ainsworth Public School. Note the removal of 21<sup>st</sup> Street and the removal of the house that was once situated on the property.



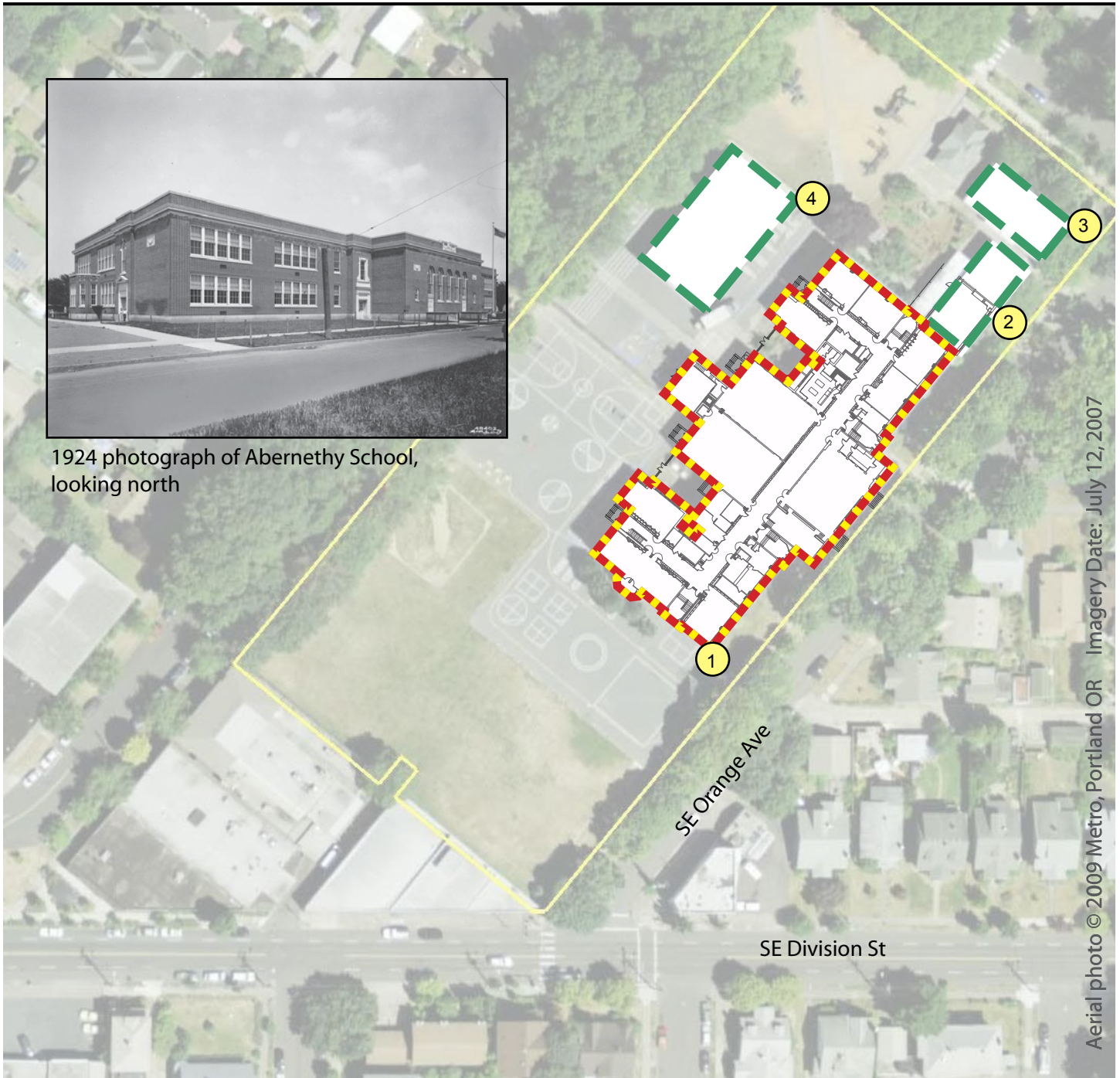
# Abernethy School

2421 SE Orange Ave, Portland OR, 97214

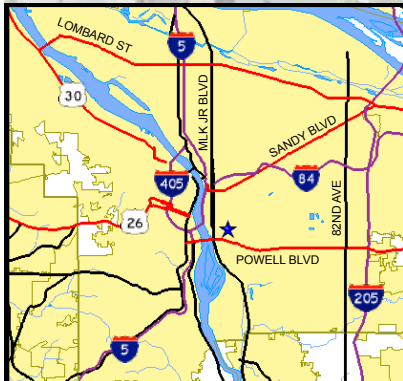
[View Site in Google Maps](#)






1924 photograph of Abernethy 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 (131A), 1924
2. Classroom Add. (131B), 1956
3. Classroom Add. (131C), 1960
4. Play Shed Add. (131D), 1978



ABERNETHY ELEMENTARY - 131

2421 SE ORANGE AVE 97214

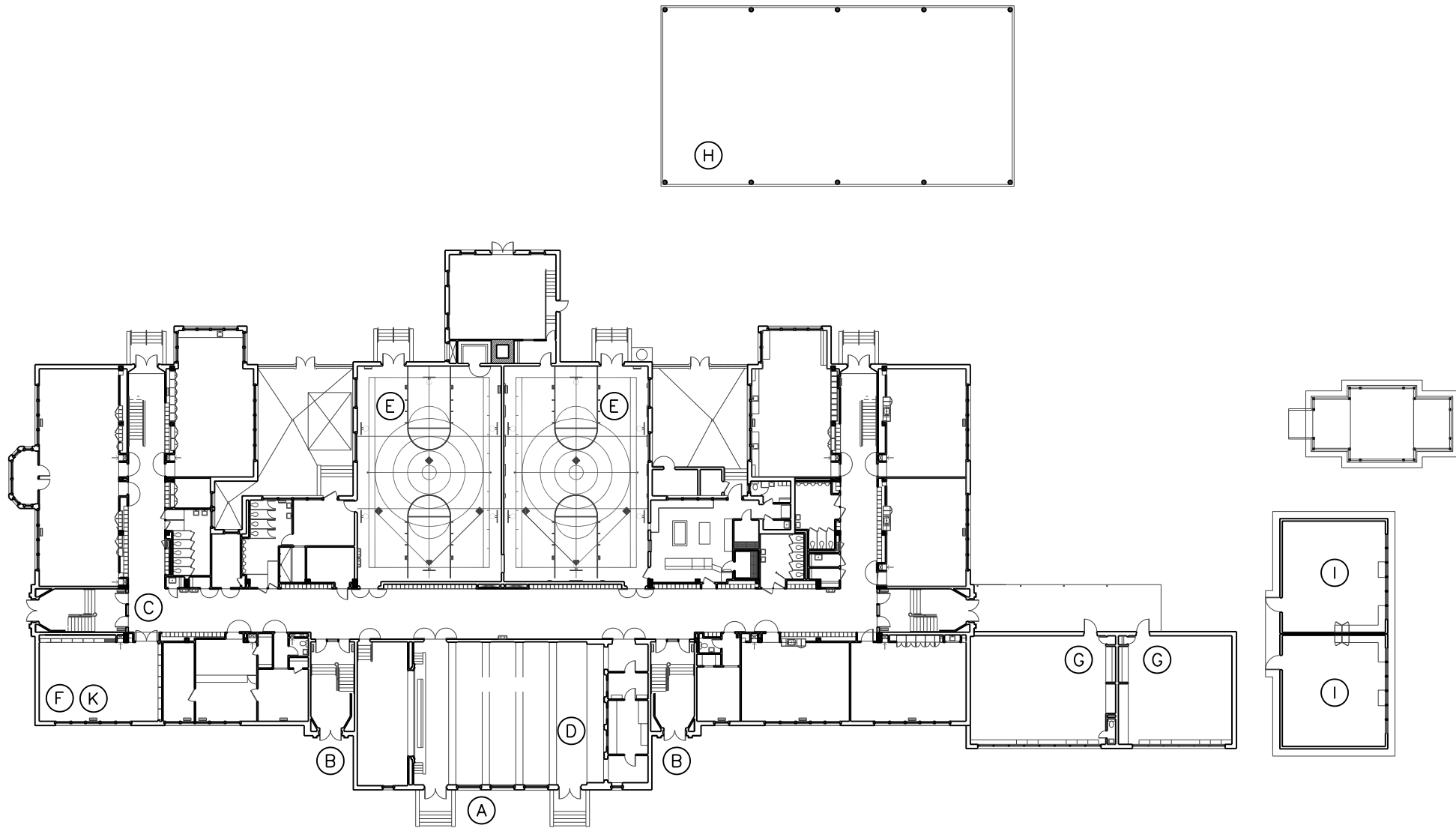
PPS HISTORIC ASSESSMENT

KEYNOTES:

- (A) A CENTRAL BAY PROJECTS FORM THE PRIMARY (EAST) ELEVATION. THE BAY IS FURTHER DISTINGUISHED BY DOUBLE-HEIGHT ARCHED, MULTILIGHT, WOOD FRAME AUDITORIUM WINDOWS. RADIATING BRICK VOUSOIRS WITH KEYSTONES CAP EACH WINDOW
- (B) ENTRY TO THE SCHOOL IS THROUGH A PAIR OF DOUBLE DOORS THAT FLANK THE CENTRAL BAY.
- (C) A U-SHAPED CORRIDOR PROVIDES THE CIRCULATION FOR THE SCHOOL. THE DOUBLE-LOADED HALLWAYS RETAIN THEIR ORIGINAL CONFIGURATION, HEIGHT, UNPAINTED WOOD MOLDING AND FRAMING, BUILT-IN METAL LOCKERS, AND WOODEN DISPLAY CASES.
- (D) THE AUDITORIUM FEATURES ITS ORIGINAL BALCONY, STAGE, AND WINDOWS. THE WALL AND CEILING LIGHTING FIXTURES, HOWEVER, HAVE BEEN REMOVED AND/OR MODIFIED. THE ORIGINAL SEATS WERE REMOVED TO FACILITATE THE USE OF THE ROOM FOR ART AND MUSIC CLASSES.
- (E) THERE ARE TWO GYMNASIUMS LOCATED ADJACENT TO ONE ANOTHER. A SLIDING WOODEN DOOR CONNECTS THE TWO ROOMS. ONE STILL FUNCTIONS AS A GYMNASIUM, WHILE THE OTHER IS NOW UTILIZED AS A LUNCH ROOM. BOTH SPACES RETAIN THEIR HIGH BAY CEILINGS, ORIGINAL CONFIGURATION AND HEIGHT, CEILING SKYLIGHTS AND STEEL CEILING TRUSSES. THE TABLES AND BENCHES THAT FOLD INTO THE WALL FACILITATE THE USE OF THE ROOM AS A CAFETERIA.
- (F) THE CLASSROOMS IN THE MAIN BUILDING RETAIN THEIR ORIGINAL CONFIGURATIONS, HEIGHT, WOOD MOLDING, RECESSED ENTRIES, SINKS AND COUNTERS. STANDARD FEATURES IN THE ROOMS INCLUDE BUILT-IN CABINETRY AND CLOSETS FOR STORING COATS AND SUPPLIES. ALL THE ROOMS FEATURE SHEETROCK WALLS, FLOOR TILES AND VINTAGE TUBULAR FLUORESCENT LIGHT FIXTURES SUSPENDED FROM THE ACOUSTIC TILE CEILINGS.
- (G) TWO ADDITIONAL CLASSROOMS WERE ADDED IN 1956
- (H) PLAYSHED
- (I) PORTABLE
- (J) GAZEBO
- (K) WPA MURAL "PAGEANT OF OREGON HISTORY" (1939) BY ERIC LAMADE

GENERAL NOTES:

- 1 ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS IN THE GREEK REVIVAL STYLE INCLUDE A CAST STONE CORNICE, WINDOW AND DOOR SURROUNDS, AND TERRA COTTA PANELS WITH ORNAMENTAL GARLANDS.
- 2 THE FENESTRATION CONSISTS PRIMARILY OF SYMMETRICALLY PLACED, METAL FRAME REPLACEMENT WINDOWS WITH A HORIZONTAL SLIDING OPENING AT THE BOTTOM OF THE WINDOW.



1 ABERNETHY ELEMENTARY - 1ST FLOOR  
 SCALE: 1" = 40'-0"



DRAWING: ANNOTATED PLAN

DATE: Sept. 4, 2009