

Oregon Historic Site Form

George School
10000 Burr Ave
Portland, Multnomah County

LOCATION AND PROPERTY NAME

address: 10000 N Burr Ave apprx. addr

Portland vcnty Multnomah County

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

historic name: George School

current/
other names: George Middle School, George Elementary School

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

PROPERTY CHARACTERISTICS

resource type: Building height (# stories): 1 total # eligible resources: 1 total # ineligible resources: 0

elig. evaluation: eligible/significant NR status: _____
(indiv listed only; see Grouping for hist dist)

primary constr date: 1950 (c.) secondary date: 1987 (c.)
(optional--use for major addns) NR date listed: _____

primary orig use: School orig use comments: _____
secondary orig use: _____

primary style: Northwest Regional prim style comments: _____
secondary style: _____

primary siding: Standard Brick siding comments: _____
secondary siding: _____

plan type: School (General) architect: Donald Edmundson
builder: _____

comments/notes: _____

GROUPINGS / ASSOCIATIONS

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

farmstead/cluster name: _____ external site #: 156
(ID# used in city/agency database)

SHPO INFO FOR THIS PROPERTY

NR date listed: _____
ILS survey date: 6/25/2009
RLS survey date: 6/25/2009
Gen File date: _____

106 Project(s)



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ARCHITECTURAL / PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

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

Description Summary

Situated in a primarily residential area adjacent to the St. Johns neighborhood of North Portland, the George Middle School is located at 10000 North Burr Avenue. Built in 1950, the Northwest Regional style school building is situated on a 7.2-acre, grass and asphalt-covered campus. The single-story wood frame building (156A) is clad with brick veneer. The irregular shape plan building provides facilities for classrooms, a gymnasium, an auditorium, a media center, a cafeteria and an administrative office.

Architectural Description

Situated in a primarily residential area adjacent to the St. Johns neighborhood of North Portland, the George Middle School is located at 10000 North Burr Avenue. The George Middle School, which faces North Burr Avenue, is built in the style of many post-World War II schools, with projecting "fingers" and courtyard. Built in 1950, the Northwest Regional style school building is situated on a 7.2-acre grass and asphalt-covered campus. The asphalt-covered playground and playfields are located directly east and southeast of the school. An asphalt-covered half-circular driveway provides access to the front (west) elevation and the parking area is situated on the northwest corner of the school property near the front entrance.

The single story, wood frame school (156A) is oriented on a north-south axis and sits on a concrete foundation. Three projecting wings extend from the main building that runs east to west. The building is covered by interconnecting low pitched gable roofs. The wood frame structure is clad with brick veneer. Fenestration consists of vertical three light metal frame hinged windows. Single and double-leaf metal doors are found on all the elevations. The primary (west) elevation is distinguished by the detached low scale canopy that provides an exterior connection between the gymnasium, auditorium, and other spaces in the west wing of the building.

The interior layout of the school consists of an irregular shape plan. The west wing houses the primary public and community spaces for the school. Three double loaded corridors, lined with classrooms, extend to the east. Finishes in the corridors include brick walls, tubular fluorescent lights suspended from low acoustic tile ceilings, linoleum tile floors, metal framing and molding, built-in display cases, skylights, and wooden classroom doors.

The classrooms are square or rectangular. The rooms retain their original configurations, height, linoleum tile floors, and unpainted wood framing and molding. Standard features include built-in cabinetry and furnishings, closets, and shelving. There are tubular fluorescent light fixtures suspended from an acoustic tile clad ceiling. Transom windows in the corridors provide additional light for the classrooms.

The library is a spacious carpeted open room divided into several work and study areas with wooden book shelves, chairs, and desks.

The cafeteria, located in the front wing, is a spacious room with an acoustic tile ceiling, suspended fluorescent light fixtures, and exposed wood ceiling beams. Folding tables and benches recess into the wall. The room has tiled floors and original wood doors.

The gymnasium, located in the front wing, retains its original configuration, height, and brick walls. Suspended fluorescent light fixtures hang from the ceiling, which is a double height space supported by metal ceiling beams. Additional illumination is provided from the glass block windows.

The cone-shaped auditorium is centrally located and immediately adjacent to the front entry door. Finishes consist of original wood chairs, wall and ceiling light fixtures, wood stage, and brick walls.

The building is heated by steam boilers located in the boiler room in the front wing.

Alterations/Integrity

The most significant alteration to George Middle School occurred in 1988 when an additional 5 classrooms were added to the east side of the school, enclosing the courtyards formed by the projecting fingers. The classroom additions are compatible in design, materials and appearance with the original building. The hallways, classrooms, multi-purpose room, and gymnasium retain their original building materials and features, while there have been minimal modifications to the exterior cladding, roof lines, and fenestration. The school retains its integrity with minimal alterations to the distinctive exterior and interior features.

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

Built in 1950, George Middle School replaced the 1909 East St. John School (Portland Chronology Binder). Named in honor of Melvin Clark George, a pioneer and chairman of the Portland School Board, the new facility was constructed during a period of modernization and new construction initiated by Portland Public Schools (PPS) after World War II (Snyder 1979: 238). 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, Walter Gropius and the 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, 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 popularized by Naramore and Jones. Instead many architects adopted the principles of the Modern movement and its regional variant, the Northwest 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 featured interior courtyards that facilitated access to the outdoors and expanded the opportunities for passive ventilation and daylighting, a hallmark of the Northwest Regional style.

Donald Edmundson, the architect of George Middle School, had considerable experience in the design of public buildings from his nearly 30 years of architectural practice in the Portland area. A native of Oregon, he graduated from Salem High School before attending North Pacific Evangelistic School and classes at the University of Oregon Extension School. In the mid-1920s, Edmundson gained experience in the office of Houghtaling & Dougan, the architects of Washington High School. During World War II, he worked for the Vancouver Housing Authority. From 1943-1953, Edmundson worked independently until he formed a partnership with Neil R. Kochendoerfer. The firm added Evan Kennedy as engineer to the partnership Edmundson, Kochendoerfer & Kennedy in 1962. Edmundson is listed as the sole architect of Kelly School, Columbia School, and an addition to the Cleveland High School. With Neil Kochendoerfer he designed Wilson High School. During Kennedy's tenure, the firm also designed the gymnasium addition for Cleveland High School. Other important projects designed by the firm were Morgan's Alley and O'Bryant Park in Portland and hospitals in the Dalles, Hood River, and Pendleton, Oregon (Ritz 2002: 122).

George Middle School is a good example of the finger plan type school in the Northwest Regional style that exhibits a high degree of integrity with its floor plan, roof forms, cladding, and intact interior finishes. The school is recommended as eligible for the NRHP. The school was built in response to the residential development in North Portland during PPS program of post-war construction and is eligible for the NRHP under Criterion A. Although designed by Donald Edmundson, a successful architect in Portland, archival research does not indicate that the school was a major commission. However, the building is a good example of the use of finger plan schools to facilitate rapid construction and expansion. The building's distinctive covered walkway, central courtyards, broad roof overhangs, expressed structural system, and use of materials to provide functional decoration are all characteristic of the Northwest Regional style, therefore the building is also eligible for 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

Historical Society: Oregon Historical Society

Other Repository: PPS Archives

Bibliography: Bibliography

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.

_____. "The Wood Tradition Expands" 528-647.

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.

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Oregonian. "Arson Delays School Opening." 09-05-1982.

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.

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_____. George Elementary School. Facility Plan.

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

Sanborn Map Company 1924-1928, 1908-Dec. 1950 Sanborn Maps, Multnomah County Public Library, Portland, Oregon. Available at: <https://catalog.mtcolib.org/validate?url=http%3A%2F%2F0-sanborn.umi.com.catalog.mtcolib.org%3A80%2F>. Accessed June 16, 2009.

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



West elevation front entry



North elevation



West elevation entry



North elevation



East elevation

**George School
Exterior Photos
ENTRIX, 2009**



Corridor facing west



Faculty room facing west



Classroom built-in



Media center

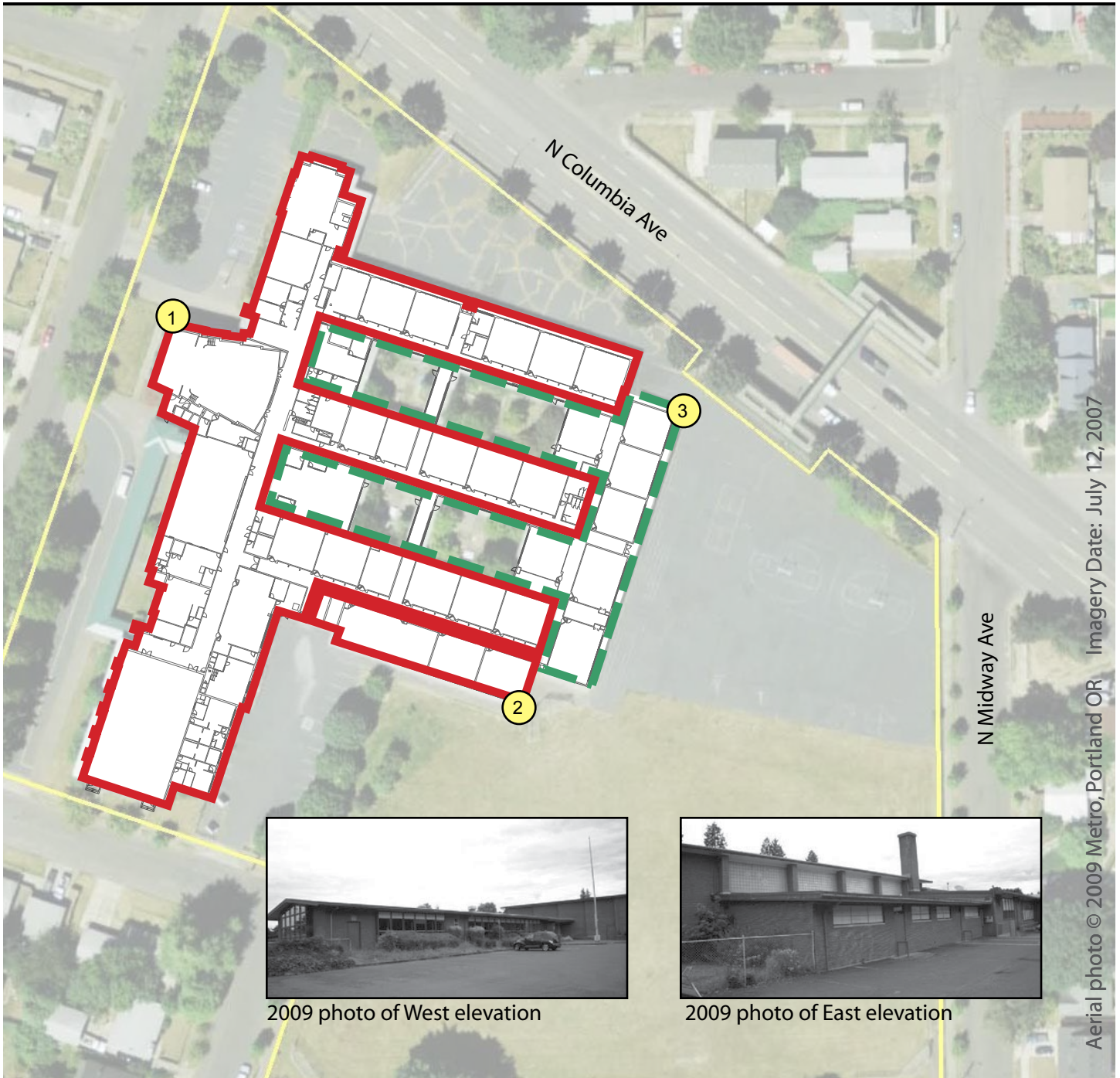


Classroom built-in

George School

10000 N Burr Ave, Portland OR, 97203

[View Site in Google Maps](#)



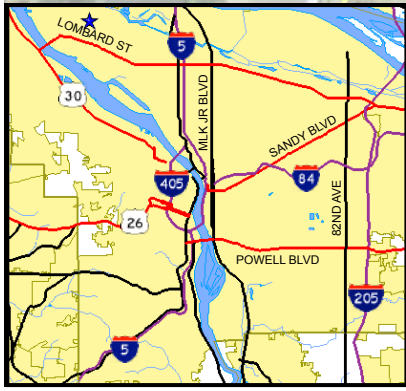
Aerial photo © 2009 Metro, Portland OR Imagery Date: July 12, 2007






2009 photo of West elevation



2009 photo of East elevation



Historical Significance and Building Integrity

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

Building Periods

1. Original Building (156A), 1950
2. Classroom Add (156A), 1964
3. Classroom Add (156), 1988

