

Oregon Historic Site Form

King School
4906 6th Ave
Portland, Multnomah County

LOCATION AND PROPERTY NAME

address: 4906 NE 6th Ave apprx. addr
Portland vcnty Multnomah County

historic name: King School

current/
other names: Martin L. King Elementary School, Highland High 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): 2 total # eligible resources: 0 total # ineligible resources: 1

elig. evaluation: not eligible/non-contributing NR status: _____
 (indiv listed only; see Grouping for hist dist)

primary constr date: 1925 (c.) secondary date: 1952 (c.)
 (optional--use for major addns) NR date listed: _____

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

primary style: Late Gothic Revival prim style comments: Collegiate Gothic
 secondary style: _____ sec style comments: _____

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

plan type: School (General) architect: Jones, George
 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 #: 262
 (ID# used in city/agency database)

SHPO INFO FOR THIS PROPERTY

NR date listed: _____
 ILS survey date: 6/19/2009
 RLS survey date: 6/19/2009
 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)

Summary Description

Martin Luther King Elementary School is located at 4906 NE 6th Street in the King neighborhood of northeast Portland. A series of additions and extensions comprise the mass of the main rectangular, two story building (262A & 262B). Originally constructed in 1926, the school building received two major additions to the south in 1952 and 1976. Much of the building is covered with a flat roof that is concealed behind a parapet. The reinforced concrete structure, faced with red brick, rests on a poured concrete foundation. The 1926 part of the school is constructed in the Collegiate Gothic style which is expressed through the use of cast stone architectural ornamentation that includes Tudor arches and quoins at the entries, a beltcourse, parapet crenels, and coping. The 1952 addition is also constructed of concrete with brick facing with minimal architectural ornamentation. The 1976 King Neighborhood Facility (262C) currently utilizes a connected L-shaped masonry wing at the south end of the parcel.

Architectural Description

Situated in the King neighborhood of northeast Portland, Martin Luther King Jr. PK-8 School is located at 4906 NE 6th Avenue. The neighborhood consists of a mixture of single family residences built between 1900 and 1950, mid-size multi-family residential buildings, and larger commercial and retail buildings (Sanborn maps 1908-1924, Sanborn map updated to 1950).

The primary school facilities are located in the north portion of the rectangular, two story building. The King Neighborhood Facility currently utilizes a connected L-shaped wing at the south end of the parcel. The school building and Neighborhood facility occupy the east portion of the 4.97-acre campus. Play areas and an open space maintained by the City of Portland are located to the west. Asphalt covered parking areas are located at the north and south ends of the building.

The school was constructed over three distinct periods. The original 1926 section, consisting of the northernmost part of the building, rises two stories. It is a reinforced concrete building, faced with red brick that rests on a poured concrete foundation. A flat roof is concealed behind a parapet that exhibits widely spaced crenels and terra cotta coping. The 1926 building conveys its Collegiate Gothic style through the strategic use of cast stone architectural ornamentation at critical parts of the building. Entranceways, for instance, project from the exterior walls and are emphasized by modest engaged buttress on the sides, cast stone quoins that outline door surrounds, as well as Tudor arched doorways. Cast stone crenels, coping, and a beltcourse provide additional architectural decoration to the original building.

The 1952 one and two story wing to the south is also constructed of concrete with red brick facing, but is largely stripped of architectural elaboration. The entrances are recessed into the building and are emphasized by the use of plain concrete. Fenestration consists primarily of grouped metal frame windows set in the original wood surrounds. The 1976 addition is also constructed of red brick but reflects the influences of the Brutalism in its asymmetrical fenestration and angular roof forms.

Interior

The original 1926 school building follows an H-shaped plan that originally featured an auditorium in the top part of the H and a gymnasium in the bottom part. The original front entrance was situated to the south but is now covered over by the 1952 addition. The current primary entry to the school is from the west on N.E. 6th Avenue. A series of double loaded corridors provide access to the offices, classrooms, and community gathering spaces. A courtyard at the south end of the building separates the school building from the Neighborhood Facility. The school features a mixture of flooring including 6x6 and 12x 12 tile, hardwood, concrete, and carpet. Doors are a mixture of original wood, newer metal, and hollow core with a wood veneer. Fluorescent light fixtures are suspended from acoustic tile clad ceilings.

The classrooms are primarily rectangular with built-in cabinetry on the interior walls. Interior partitions and half walls subdivide many of the classrooms on the east side of the 1st floor.

Two boilers in the basement provide heat for the school. The ductwork is exposed on the basement level of the building. Metal univents beneath the windows provide heat to the classrooms.

Alterations/Integrity

The original H-plan building has been significantly altered by a series of later additions. In 1952 the L-shaped addition wing that was added to the south covered over four of the original building's entrances. In 1974 another L-shaped building, utilized by the Neighborhood facility, was added at the south end of the campus. A 1976 remodel resulted in adaptation of the auditorium for use as a media center, alterations to the gymnasium, and changes to corridors, classrooms, and interior finishes (Martin Luther King Jr. Facility Profile).

Due to the extensive alterations and additions, Martin Luther King Jr. PK-8 School no longer retains its integrity. On the exterior, the original character of the school is still evident from the handsome brickwork, projecting bays, and ornamental details in the Collegiate Gothic style but the accumulation of additions and interior alterations have substantially reduced the integrity of the building's design and workmanship.

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

Constructed in 1926, Martin Luther King Elementary School (formerly Highland) was part of the last wave of an extensive building program begun by Portland Public Schools in the early 1900s. Gradually influenced by John Dewey's Progressive Education Movement, PPS 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 between 1908 and 1932. These new school buildings were often constructed of brick and concrete and were one or two stories in height. To speed the construction of the new schools and to anticipate later growth in the neighborhood, these new buildings were often constructed in units (sometimes referred to as extensible schools) (Powers and Corning 1937: 182). The buildings also contained more differentiated and increasingly specialized instructional spaces such as libraries, gymnasiums, science rooms, music rooms, as well as assembly spaces (Powers and Corning 1937: 182). The architectural details of the new schools were largely inspired by the Classical Revival, Colonial Revival, and Collegiate Gothic styles; architectural revivals that were viewed as inspirational and appropriate for educational settings (Betelle 1919: 28; Sibley 1923: 66; Patton 1967: 1-8).

The architect of Martin Luther King (formerly Highland) Elementary School, George 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 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 buildings. 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 2003: 217).

The district acquired the property at 4906 NE 6th Street in 1898 for \$1,350.00. The first building on the property was moved from the site of the old Albina Homestead School property in 1891. After acquiring additional land in 1903, the district proceeded to build additions to the building in 1904, 1906, 1909. The school board acquired additional land in 1912 and subsequently erected a manual training building on the property (PPS School Chronology Binder).

Additional land was acquired in 1925 to facilitate the construction of a new two-story, brick school with an H-shaped plan known as Highland Elementary School (PPS School Chronology Binder). Immediately after the new school was built, the old frame school, which once occupied the location of the current King Neighborhood Center, was demolished (Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps updated to 1950). In 1952, a one and two story, L-shaped wing was added to the south of the main building.

Immediately following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the school was renamed in his honor (Oregon Journal 05-10-1968). Hundreds of other schools across America followed suit as a result of the tragedy. In 1974 the King Neighborhood Center opened at the south end of the campus (PPS School Chronology Binder).

In 1977 the school underwent a substantial remodel that included adaptation of the auditorium for use as a media center, alterations to the gymnasium, and changes to corridors and interior finishes (Martin Luther King Jr. Facility Profile). The design was intended to "enhance the early childhood education program which has replaced the traditional kindergarten through eight concept" (Oregonian 03-15-1977). The changes enabled classrooms of the same grade level to be organized in clusters with large windows and space in between. Space in the corridors adjacent to the classrooms was turned into instructional space. An unusual feature was the provision inside each cluster of a cubbyhole that could be used to separate individual children from the class without requiring them to be sent to the principal for discipline. The remodel was also intended to ease fears among parents and neighborhood residents that the school would be closed.

Although designed by George Jones during his tenure as Superintendent of Building for Portland Public Schools and associated with several events related to the growth of the Portland school district, Martin Luther King Elementary School does not retain a level of historical integrity commensurate with other Portland Elementary Schools constructed of similar styles during the same period and is therefore not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. While the Collegiate Gothic style is clearly discernable on the building, several alterations have diminished the building's integrity of materials, design, and feeling. These alterations include the removal of windows, prominent addition on the south elevation,

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construction of the Neighborhood facility at the south end of the property, extensive interior modifications that have blurred the original corridor plan and altered major spaces that included the original auditorium. Due to the loss of integrity, Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School is not eligible under NRHP Criteria A, B, or 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: 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.

Oregon Journal. "King School Dedicated Here." 05-10-1968.

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.

Oregonian " School Directors Face Legal Action." 09-04-1931.

Oregonian. "Remodeling expands King students learning space." 03-15-1977.

Portland Public Schools. Schools Chronology Binder.

_____. "Annual Report of the Portland Schools 1926.

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.

Sanborn Map Company

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

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

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



North elevation facing south



East elevation



West elevation



Neighborhood facility facing west



East elevation facing west

**King School
Exterior Photos
ENTRIX, 2009**



Exit door and converted corridor facing north



Classroom facing northwest



Partitioned classroom facing south



Auditorium converted to library

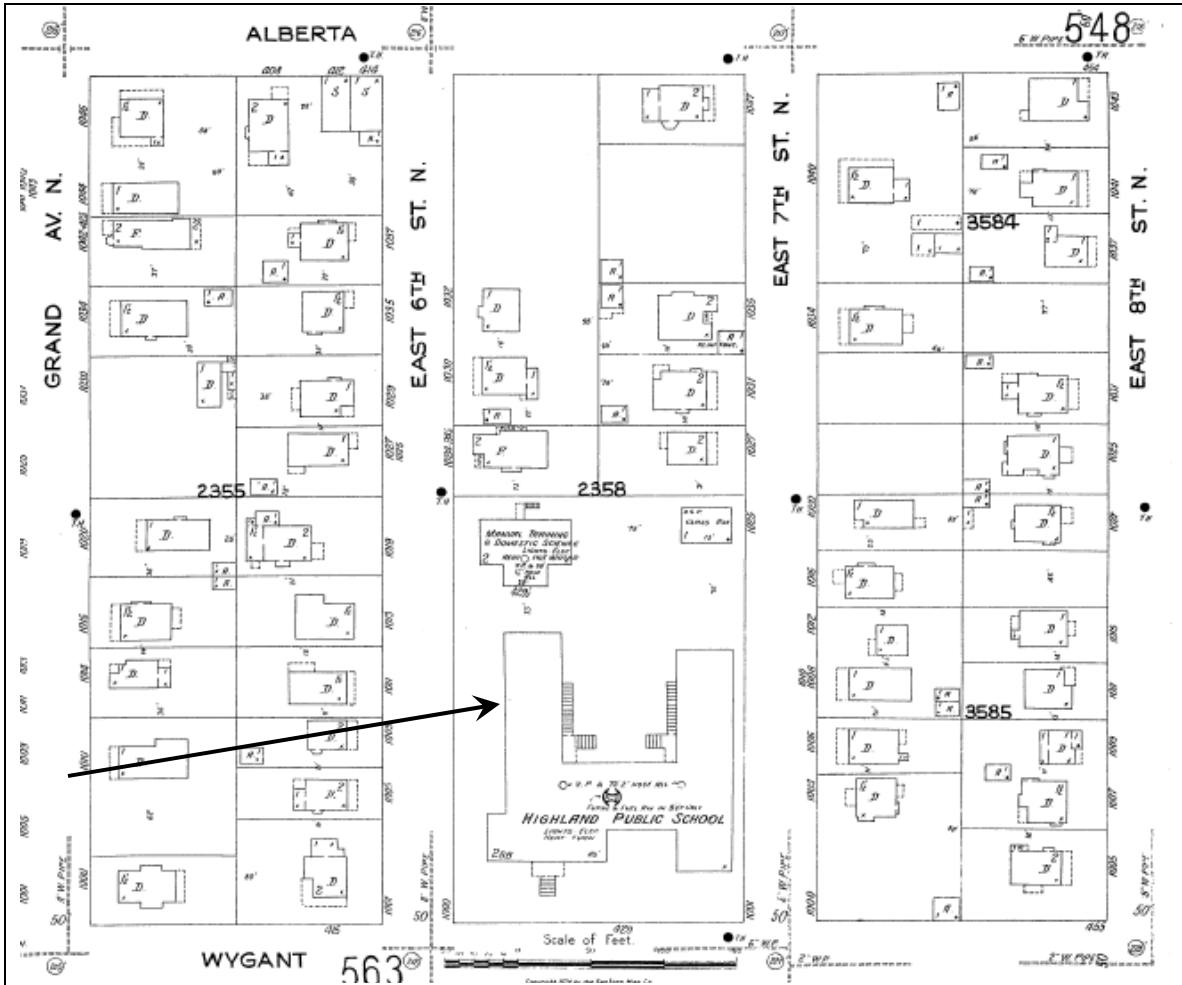


Classroom built-ins in 1950 addition



ENTRIX

Down to Earth. Down to Business.™

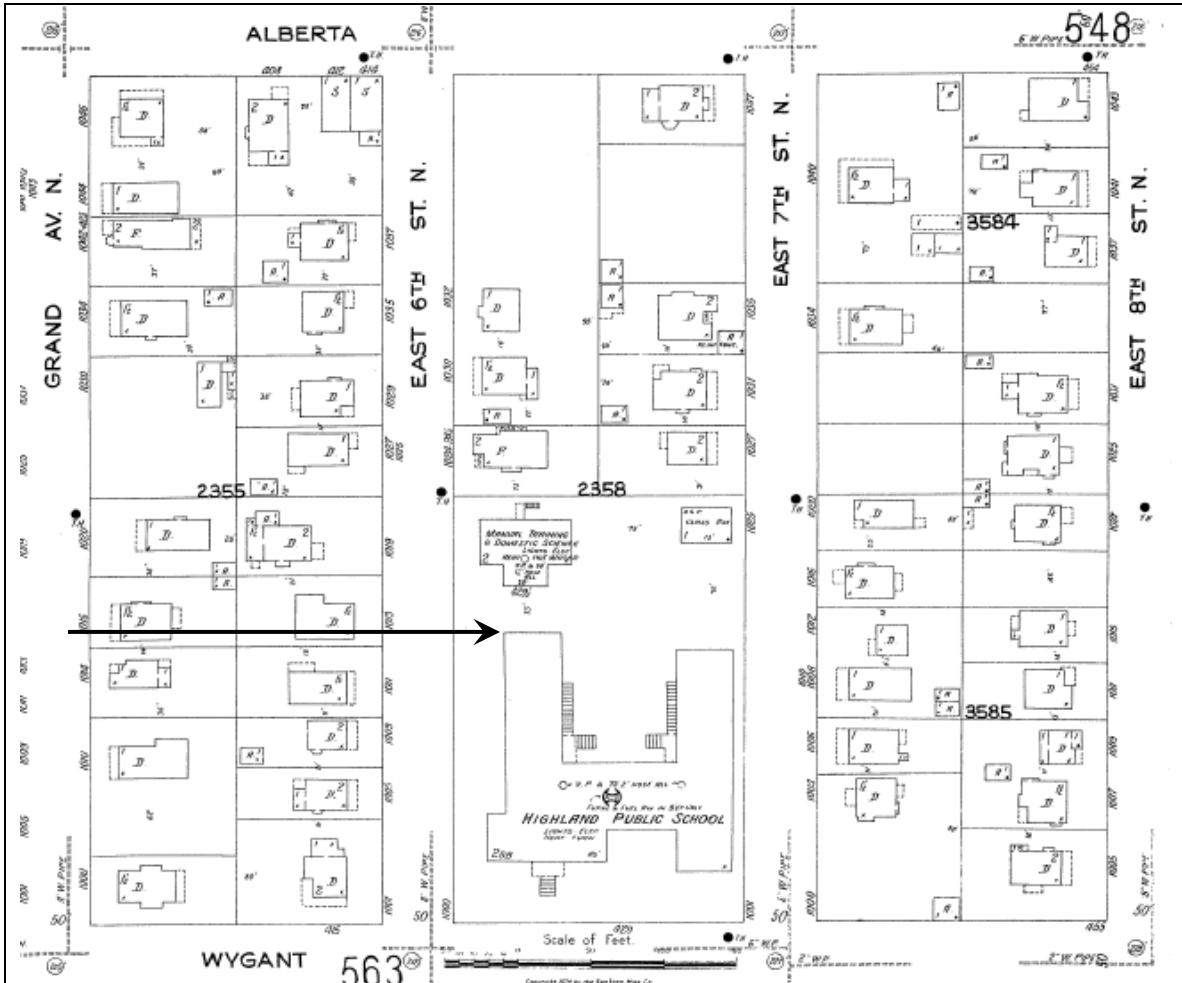


1908-1909, Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Map, Portland, Oregon, Map 236. Arrow points to Highland Public School prior to construction of the newer school to the north.



ENTRIX

Down to Earth. Down to Business.™

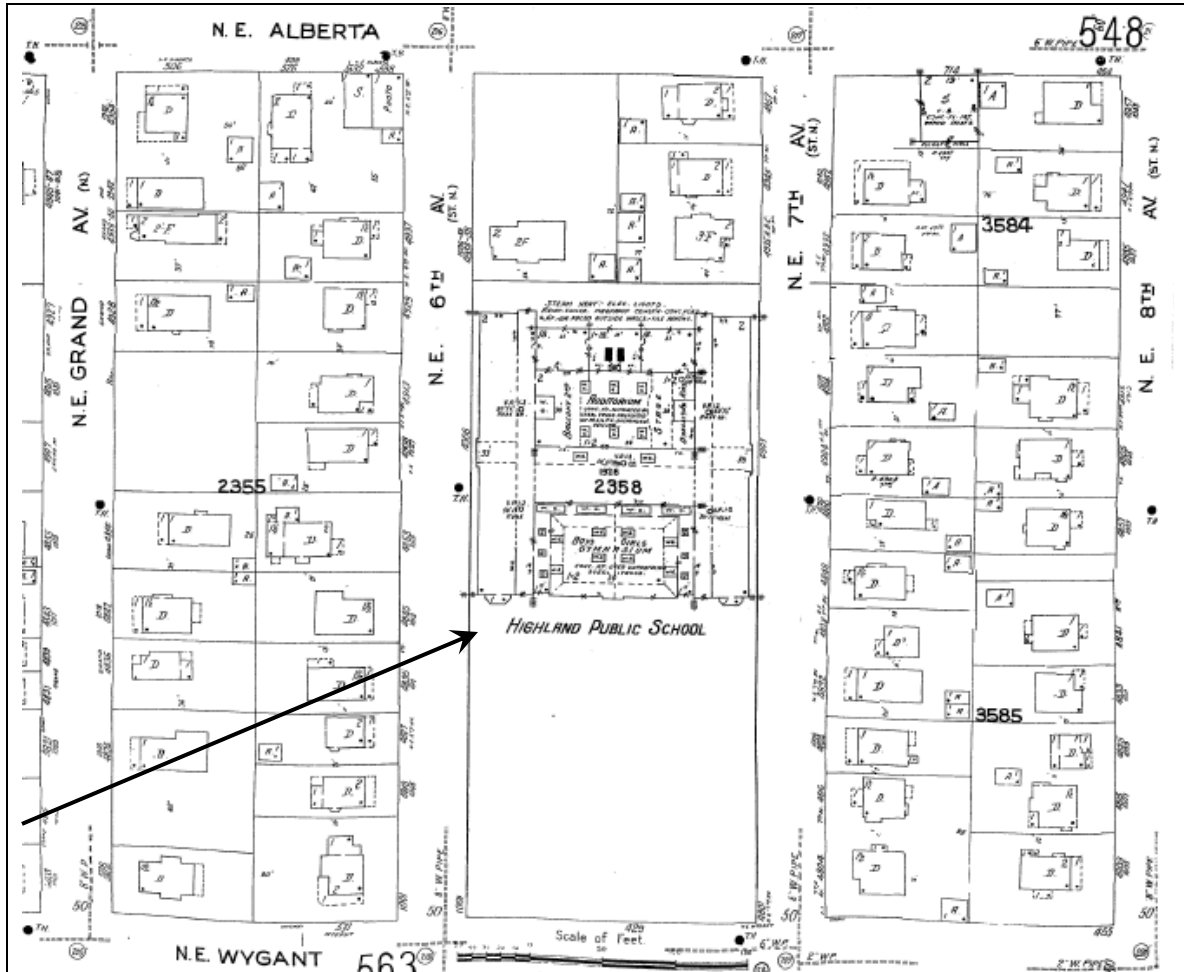


1924-1928, Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Map, Portland, Oregon, Map 547. Arrow points to the former Highland Public School prior to the construction of the newer school building.



ENTRIX

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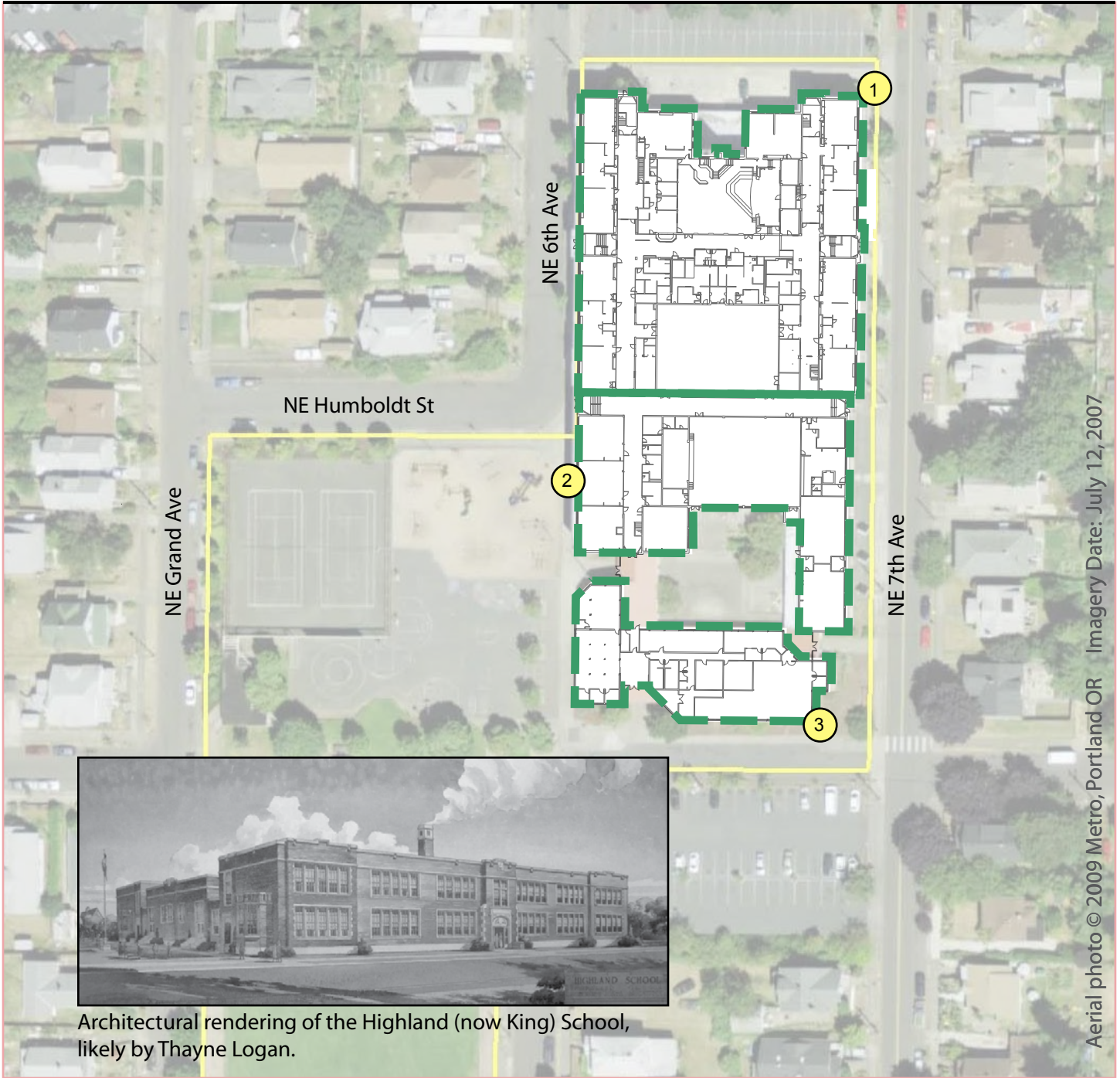


Updated to 1950 Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Map, Portland, Oregon, Map 547. Arrow points to Highland Public School (now King). Note change of building location and removal of older school that once occupied the southern part of the lot.

King School

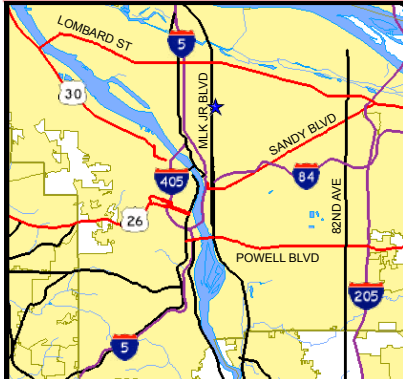
4906 NE 6th Ave, Portland OR, 97211

[View Site in Google Maps](#)






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

Architectural rendering of the Highland (now King) School, likely by Thayne Logan.



Historical Significance and Building Integrity

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



Building Periods

1. Original Building (262A), 1925
2. Addition (262B), 1952
3. Addition (262C), 1974