Oregon Historic Site Form

LOCATION AND PROPERTY NAME

address: **4401 SE Evergreen St** ☐ apprx. addrs

Portland ☐ vcnty **Multnomah County**

historic name: **Lewis School**

current/ other names: **Meriwether Lewis Elementary School, Lewis Primary 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): **1**

elig. evaluation: **not eligible/non-contributing**

primary constr date: **1952** (c.) ☐ secondary date: **1956** (c.) ☐
(optional--use for major addns)

primary orig use: **School**

secondary orig use:

primary style: **Contemporary**

secondary style:

primary siding: **Standard Brick**

secondary siding:

plan type: **School (General)**

comments/notes:

total # eligible resources: ____ total # ineligible resources: **1**

NR status:

NR date listed: ____ (indiv listed only; see Grouping for hist dist)

orig use comments:

prim style comments:

sec style comments:

siding comments:

architect: **Thompson, Raymond**

builder:

GROUPINGS / ASSOCIATIONS

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

farmstead/cluster name:

external site #: 267
(ID# used in city/agency database)

SHPO INFO FOR THIS PROPERTY

NR date listed: ____

ILS survey date: **6/22/2009**

RLS survey date: **6/22/2009**

Gen File date: ____

106 Project(s)

South elevation

ARCHITECTURAL / PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

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

Description Summary

Situated in the Woodstock neighborhood of southeast Portland, Meriwether Lewis Elementary School is located at 4401 SE Evergreen Street. The school occupies the northwest portion of the 5.49-acre campus. The primary entrance to the campus is from the south on SE Evergreen Street. The L-shaped wood frame building (267A) features a variety of cladding including brick veneer, tongue-and-groove wood, and concrete block. The single story building rests on a poured concrete foundation. The wings of the building are clad in a variety of intersecting shed and shallow pitched gable roofs. Fenestration consists of grouped metal and wood frame windows.

Architectural Description

Situated in the Woodstock neighborhood of northeast Portland, Meriwether Lewis Elementary School is located at 4401 Se Evergreen Street. Development in the vicinity of the school consists of a mixture of single family residence, larger multi-family residential buildings, and commercial buildings. The school occupies the northwest portion of the 5.49-acre campus. The primary entrance to the campus is from the south on SE Evergreen Street. Asphalt covered play areas are located on the southeast side of the campus. The campus features notable gardens located along its northwest and south east elevations, developed through community partnerships that provide opportunities for environmental education.

The wood frame building features a variety of cladding including brick veneer, tongue-and-groove, and concrete block. The single story building rests on a poured concrete foundation. Although the primary mass of the building is L-shaped, the building is designed as several interconnected wings (or fingers) with intersecting gable and shed roofs. Cantilevered roof overhangs highlight the entrances to the various wings. Fenestration consists of grouped metal and wood frame windows.

Glass entry doors provide access to the lobby on the southwest side of the school. From the lobby double loaded corridors provide access to the school facilities. Classrooms occupy the majority of space in the south wing. In addition to five classrooms, the north wing houses the media center, gymnasium, and cafeteria. The concrete block walls of the gymnasium and auditorium are exposed. Linoleum tiles cover the corridor and classroom halls. Fluorescent light fixtures are suspended from the acoustic tiles that cover the ceiling.

The classrooms in the south wing are L-shaped with a storage and sink area located in the small alcove formed by the L. Wood built-ins on the interior walls provide additional acoustic barriers between the classrooms. The slope of the shed roof is visible in the classrooms. Tubular fluorescent light fixtures are suspended from the classroom ceilings.

Alterations/Integrity

There have been limited alterations to the school building and grounds since its construction in 1952. The school originally consisted of only the south wing. In 1956/7 the north wing was added. Interior alterations include floor tile replacement in 1986 and 1987 The building retains a high degree of integrity with interior finishes, cantilevered entries, roof form, primary public spaces, and central circulation spine intact.

HISTORY

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

Statement of Significance

Built in 1952, Meriwether Lewis Elementary School was constructed during a period of modernization and new construction initiated by Portland Public Schools (PPS) after World War II. 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 adopted the call of architects and school planners across the country for new types of schools. Nationally known architects including Richard Neutra, the Architects Collective – led by Walter Gropius, 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, glass block, and aluminum. In many buildings, architects achieved flexibility through the building's structure by employing non-load-bearing partitions 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).

In response to the growing population of southeast Portland, the district acquired land in the Dover Addition for $99,375.00. Named in honor of explorer Meriwether Lewis, the school was constructed in 1952 for $173,334.24. The school was first occupied in 1953 (Snyder 1979: 239; Portland Chronology Binder). Designed to be built quickly and expanded as enrollment grew, an addition that included the cafeteria/ auditorium, gymnasiums, and nine classrooms was built for $397,203.000 in 1957. In 1959, the district sold 2 lots of the original property for $1,050.00. Interior alterations include floor tile replacement in 1986 and 1987 (Portland Facility Profile).

The architect of Meriwether Lewis Elementary School, Raymond Thompson, was experienced in the design of public buildings from over 20 years of Architectural practice. A native of Oregon, Raymond Thompson attended Washington High School in Portland. He obtained a Bachelor of

Architecture from the University of Oregon in 1929. Thompson married Polly Povey, a fellow student of architecture at Oregon in 1929. The Thompsons left Portland in 1929, residing in Denver, St. Louis and several cities on the east coast, and Ohio before returning to Portland in 1948. Upon his return to Portland, he worked in Pietro Belluschi's architectural firm until 1951 when he became the District architect for the Portland Public Schools. Thompson designed three additions for Ainsworth, Beaumont, Kellogg School, Laurelhurst, and the main building at Normandale, Sacajawea, Bridger, and Lewis schools. Thompson worked for the district until 1953 when he established a firm with his wife, Polly Povey Thompson. The two architects practiced together until Polly Povey Thompson's death in 1993. In addition to the buildings for Portland Public Schools, the Thompson firm was known for its designs for the Culver City Hall/Fire Station and the Wasco Fire Station (Ritz 2003).

Although Lewis Elementary School retains its integrity with its floor plan and many exterior and interior finishes intact, it is not recommended as eligible for the NRHP. The school was built during the PPS program of post-war construction but archival research does not indicate that it influenced the design of other schools buildings, the curriculum, or future planning for the schools, therefore, it is not eligible for the NRHP under Criterion A. As district architect, Raymond Thompson designed multiple buildings for the Portland Public Schools, archival research does not indicate that this is a significant example of his work. Although the building exhibits some characteristic elements of mid-twentieth century school design, in comparison with other schools from this period in Portland, Lewis Elementary School is not a strong example of the type or the style that would be eligible for the NRHP under Criterion C.

RESEARCH INFORMATION

(Check all of the basic sources consulted and cite specific important sources)

- ☐ Title Records
- ☑ Sanborn Maps
- ☐ Obituaries
- ☐ City Directories
- ☐ Census Records
- ☑ Biographical Sources
- ☑ Newspapers
- ☐ Building Permits
- ☐ Property Tax Records
- ☑ SHPO Files
- ☐ State Archives
- ☐ State Library
- ☑ Local Histories
- ☐ Interviews
- ☑ Historic Photographs

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.

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.
(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 Chronology Binder.

Portland Public Schools. Repairing, Rehabilitating and Modernizing the School Plant. Portland: Portland Public Schools. Office of the Superintendent, 1945.

_____. Lewis Elementary School. Facility Profile.

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.

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

South elevation facing west

West elevation

East elevation facing northwest

South elevation facing northwest

North elevation

Lewis School
Exterior Photos
ENTRIX 2009

Covered passage between buildings

Classroom built-ins

Cafeteria facing east

Classroom built-ins and sloping ceiling

Gymnasium facing east

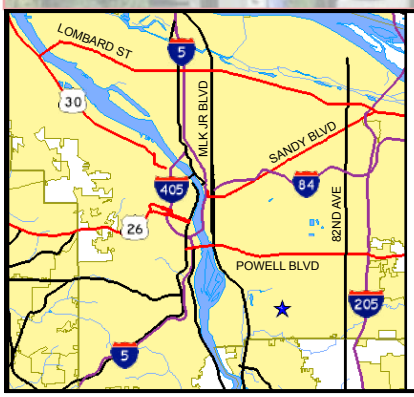
Lewis School
Interior Photos
ENTRIX 2009

Lewis School

4401 SE Evergreen St, Portland OR, 97206

View Site in Google Maps

1952 elevation drawing for Meriwether Lewis Primary School.



Historical Significance and Building Integrity

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

N

0’ 50’ 100’ 200’

Building Periods

1. Original Building (267A), 1952
2. Classroom Addition (267B), 1956