

Oregon Historic Site Form

Whitman School
7326 Flavel St
Portland, Multnomah County

LOCATION AND PROPERTY NAME

address: <u>7326 SE Flavel St</u> <input type="checkbox"/> apprx. addr	historic name: <u>Whitman School</u>
<u>Portland</u> <input type="checkbox"/> vcnty <u>Multnomah County</u>	current/ other names: <u>Marcus Whitman Elementary School</u>
Optional Information assoc addresses: (former addresses, intersections, etc.) location descr: (remote sites)	block nbr: <u>SEC</u> lot nbr: <u>R99</u> tax lot nbr: <u>R33650</u> township: _____ range: _____ section: _____ 1/4: _____ zip: _____

PROPERTY CHARACTERISTICS

resource type: <u>Building</u> height (# stories): <u>1</u>	total # eligible resources: <u>1</u> total # ineligible resources: <u>0</u>
elig. evaluation: <u>eligible/significant</u>	NR status: _____ (indiv listed only; see Grouping for hist dist)
primary constr date: <u>1954</u> (c.) <input type="checkbox"/> secondary date: <u>1955</u> (c.) <input type="checkbox"/> (optional--use for major addns)	NR date listed: _____
primary orig use: <u>School</u>	orig use comments: _____
secondary orig use: _____	
primary style: <u>Northwest Regional</u>	prim style comments: <u>Fifties modern</u>
secondary style: <u>Utilitarian</u>	sec style comments: _____
primary siding: <u>Standard Brick</u>	siding comments: _____
secondary siding: _____	
plan type: <u>School (General)</u>	architect: <u>Church, Newberry & Roer</u>
	builder: _____
comments/notes:	

GROUPINGS / ASSOCIATIONS

survey project name or other grouping name	<u>PPS Historic Building Assessment 2009</u>	<u>Survey & Inventory Project</u>
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farmstead/cluster name: _____ external site #: 290
(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)



ARCHITECTURAL / PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

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

Summary Description

Whitman School is located at 7326 SE Flavel Street in southeast Portland. The 7.27-acre campus consists of a U-shaped building (290A) built in 1954. The Northwest Regional style school incorporates an interior garden to provide maximum light and ventilation to the classrooms. The wood frame building is clad in red brick. Moderately sloped gable roofs cover the single story building. Fenestration consists of grouped metal frame windows.

Architectural Description

Whitman School is located at 7326 SE Flavel Street in southeast Portland. The 7.27-acre campus consists of a U-shaped building built in 1954. Recreational facilities include asphalt play areas located on the west side of the building and grass playfields on the south end of the campus. The Northwest Regional style school incorporates an interior garden to provide maximum light and ventilation to the classrooms. Also illustrative of the Northwest Regional style is the prominent gabled portico that marks the front entry, the exposed beam structure, and variations in massing to express internal functions on the building's exterior. The use of modern materials including stainless steel, plywood panels, steel columns, and glulam beams throughout the building is also characteristic of the post-war schools. The wood frame building, clad in red brick, rests on a poured concrete foundation. Moderately sloped gable roofs cover the single story building. Fenestration consists of grouped metal frame windows.

The main entry to the building is at the northeast corner beneath a gabled portico. The primary public areas of the building, including the administrative office, library, auditorium, and gymnasium, are located immediately adjacent to the entry. A U-shaped double loaded corridor provides access to the classrooms. The walls of the corridors are covered in exposed brick, a composite wainscot, and plaster. Tubular fluorescent lighting fixtures are suspended from the ceilings. Flooring consists of a mixture of 6"x6" and 12"x12" tile, carpet, and hardwood.

Public spaces in the building consist of the cafeteria and gymnasium. The slightly pitched ceiling of the cafeteria is supported by glulam beams. The walls feature blonde plywood panels and vertical tongue-and-groove boards. The cafeteria retains its folding tables and benches. The gymnasium is located immediately opposite the cafeteria. The slightly pitched roof is supported by glulam beams. The walls feature exposed brick.

The classrooms are primarily square or rectangular with built-in cabinetry on the walls opposite and adjacent to the windows. The classroom windows feature an operable awning window beneath a group of 3 fixed-frame windows.

Alterations/Integrity

Since the construction of the Whitman School in 1954 there have been only minimal alterations to the building or campus. The south end of the west wing of the primary building was extended in 1955 to provide space for 2 additional classrooms. The only interior modifications consist of modest remodels to the classrooms, in order to support additional functionality. The school retained the original built-ins and other materials during these remodels (Portland Facility Profile). The Whitman School retains its integrity with its original plan and massing intact. The interior and exterior finishes are original. The major community spaces and corridor configuration are unaltered.

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 1954, Whitman 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 the 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, the Walter Gropius led 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.

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In response to the residential growth in southeast Portland, Portland Public Schools acquired land at SE Flavel Street for \$20,138 in 1953. The district named the new school in honor of Marcus Whitman, a missionary killed by Indians near Walla-Walla, Washington in an event commonly referred to as the "Whitman Massacre" of 1847. The new building, constructed for \$664,728.73, opened in 1955 (Snyder 1979: 242; Portland Chronology Binder).

For the design of Whitman School, the firm Church, Newberry & Roer adopted the building program and principles that dominated the discourse for school design during the second half of the twentieth century. The firm grew out of an earlier practice founded by Morris Whitehouse, who was well versed in the design of public buildings from earlier work on Jefferson and Franklin High School with the firm of Lazarus, Whitehouse & Fouloux. Walter Church worked with Whitehouse on the design of the State Capital Building in Salem and the Oregon State Library. After Whitehouse passed away in 1944, the firm hired additional partners to assist with the challenges of post-war building in the rapidly growing State of Oregon. Important projects by the firm included the Lincoln Building in (1948), the State Public Service Building (1949), and the State Highway Office Building (1951) (Ritz 2003: 75-76). The firm of Whitehouse, Church, Newberry and Roehr had previously designed Scott Elementary school and additions to Collins View and Duniway schools for PPS.

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, cladding, and many interior finishes intact, Marcus Whitman Elementary School is recommended as eligible for the NRHP. The 1954 school was built in response to the residential development in southeast Portland during the PPS program of post-war construction and is eligible for the NRHP under Criterion A. Although designed by Church, Newberry & Roer, a successful architecture firm 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 gable roof entry, central courtyard, 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.

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.

_____. Whitman Elementary School. Facility Plan.

_____. Whitman 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

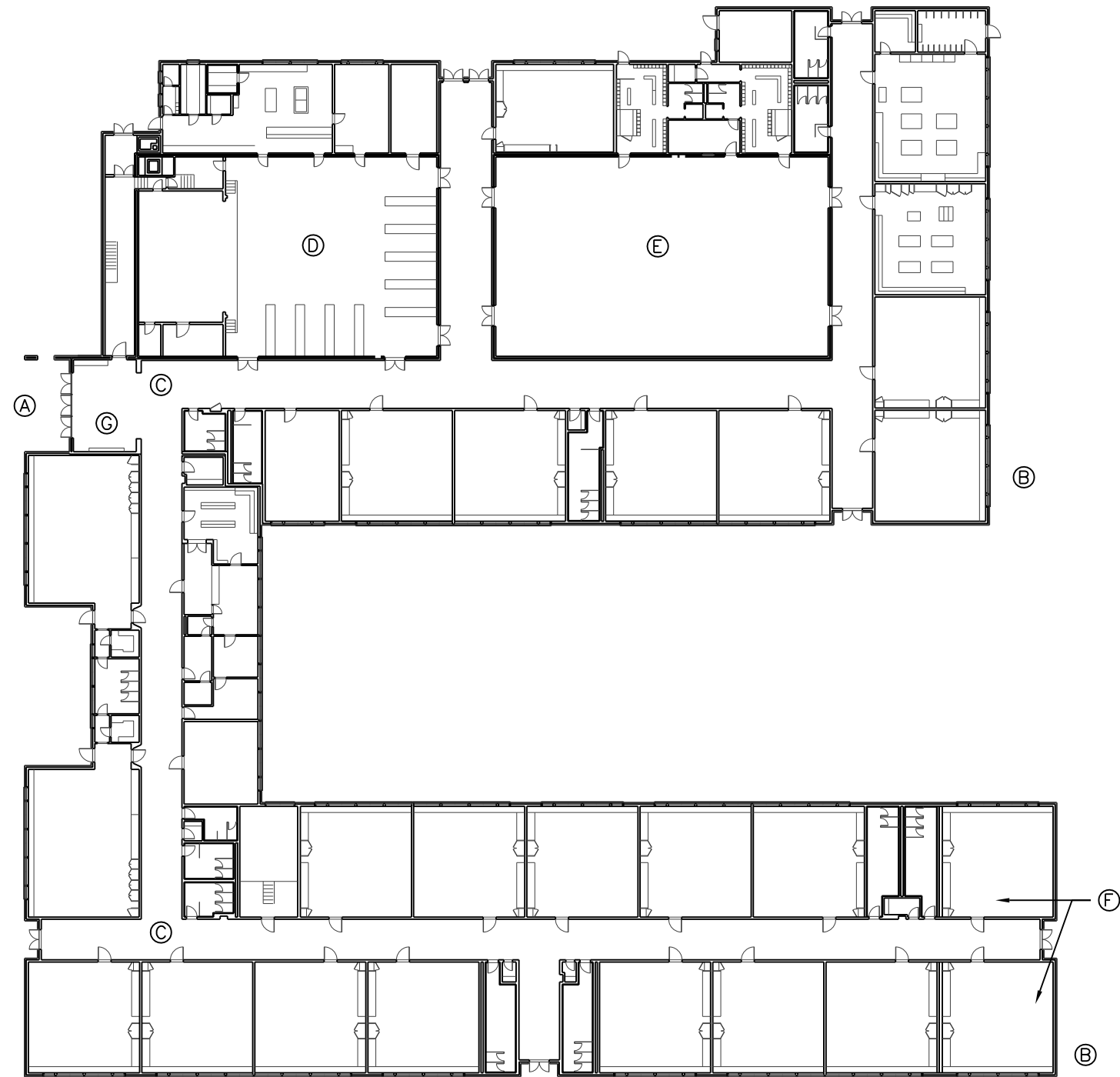
1924-1928, 1908-Dec. 1950 Sanborn Maps, Multnomah County Public Library, Portland, Oregon. Available at: <https://catalog.multcolib.org/validate?url=http%3A%2F%2F0-sanborn.umi.com.catalog.multcolib.org%3A80%2F>. Accessed June 16, 2009.

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

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

KEYNOTES:

- (A) THE ENTRY TO THE 1954 SCHOOL IS BENEATH A COVERED PORTICO THAT IS A CHARACTERISTIC FEATURE OF THE NORTHWEST REGIONAL STYLE.
- (B) THE TWO PARALLEL WINGS OR "FINGERS" CREATE AN INTERIOR COURTYARD THAT PROVIDES ADDITIONAL LIGHT AND VENTILATION FOR THE CLASSROOMS.
- (C) AN H-SHAPED DOUBLE LOADED CORRIDOR SERVES AS A CIRCULATION SPINE. THE WALLS OF THE CORRIDOR ARE COVERED WITH EXPOSED BRICK, SHEETROCK, AND A COMPOSITE WAINSCOT.
- (D) THE SLIGHTLY PITCHED CEILING OF THE CAFETERIA IS SUPPORTED BY GLULAMINATED BEAMS. THE WALLS FEATURE BLONDE PLYWOOD PANELS AND VERTICAL TONGUE-AND-GROOVE BOARDS.
- (E) THE DOUBLE HEIGHT SPACE OF THE GYNASIUM IS SUPPORTED BY GLULAMINATED BEAMS. THE TABLES AND BENCHES RECESS INTO SPACES IN THE BRICK LINED WALL.
- (F) 2 CLASS ROOMS WERE ADDED TO THIS WING IN 1955.
- (G) THE WALLS OF THE LOBBY FEATURE EXPOSED BRICK. TWO STAINLESS STEEL COLUMNS DELINEATE THE ENTRY INTO THE MAIN HALLWAY. BRICK BENCHES PROVIDE SEATING FOR STUDENTS WAITING TO BE PICKED UP.

INTERIOR KEYNOTES:

- (1) THE CLASSROOMS ARE RECTANGULAR WITH GROUPED METAL FRAME WINDOWS ON THE EXTERNAL WALL. THE INTERIOR WALLS ARE LINED WITH BLONDE WOOD BUILT-INS. THE BEAMS THAT SUPPORT THE GABLE ROOF ARE VISIBLE IN THE CLASSROOMS.
- (2) FENESTRATION CONSISTS OF GROUPED METAL FRAME WINDOWS.
- (3) THE SCHOOL EXHIBITS CHARACTERISTIC ELEMENTS OF THE NORTHWEST REGIONAL STYLE INCLUDING THE GABLED PORTICO, PROJECTING EAVES, VARIETY OF CLADDING MATERIALS, AND USE OF A COURTYARD TO ENHANCE PASSIVE VENTILATION AND DAYLIGHTING.



WHITMAN ELEMENTARY – 290

7326 SE FLAVEL ST 97206

PPS HISTORIC ASSESSMENT



DRAWING: ANNOTATED PLAN

DATE: Sept. 4, 2009



East elevation facing west



West elevation



North and east elevations showing gymnasium



North elevation facing southeast



South courtyard



Courtyard lobby



Gymnasium facing north



Classroom built-ins and sloping ceiling



Auditorium facing north



Media Center

Whitman School

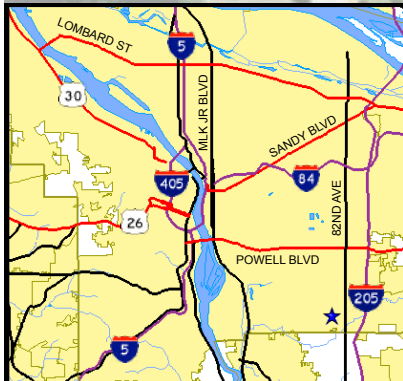
7326 SE Flavel St, Portland OR, 97206

[View Site in Google Maps](#)






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

2009 photograph of the front entrance to the Whitman School.



Historical Significance and Building Integrity

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



Building Periods

1. Main Building (290A), 1954
2. Addition (290A), 1955