

# Oregon Historic Site Form

Atkinson School  
5800 Division St  
Portland, Multnomah County

## LOCATION AND PROPERTY NAME

address: <u>5800 SE Division St</u> <input type="checkbox"/> apprx. addr	historic name: <u>Atkinson School</u>
<u>Portland</u> <input type="checkbox"/> vcnty <u>Multnomah County</u>	current/ other names: <u>George H. Atkinson Elementary School</u>
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

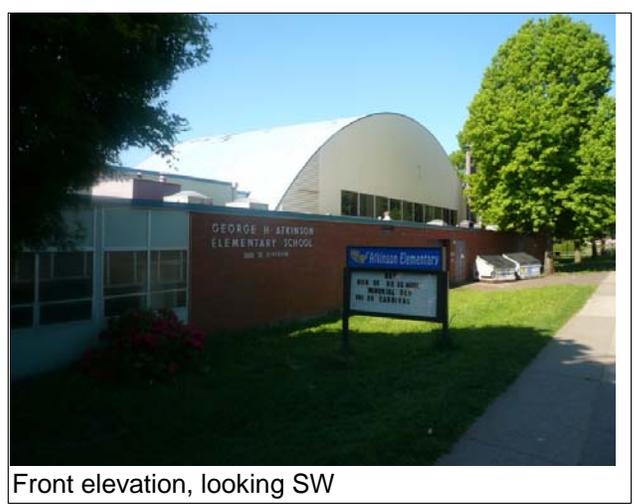
resource type: <u>Building</u> height (# stories): <u>1</u>	total # eligible resources: <u>3</u> total # ineligible resources: _____
elig. evaluation: <u>eligible/significant</u>	NR status: _____ (indiv listed only; see Grouping for hist dist)
primary constr date: <u>1953</u> (c.) <input type="checkbox"/> secondary date: <u>1954</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: _____
secondary style: <u>International</u>	sec style comments: _____
primary siding: <u>Standard Brick</u>	siding comments: _____
secondary siding: <u>Wood:Other/Undefined</u>	
plan type: <u>School (General)</u>	architect: <u>Belluschi Skidmore Owings Merrill (SOM)</u>
	builder: _____
comments/notes: <u>HRI Rank II.</u>	

## GROUPINGS / ASSOCIATIONS

survey project name or other grouping name	<u>PPS Historic Building Assessment 2009</u>	<u>Survey &amp; Inventory Project</u>
farmstead/cluster name:		external site #: <u>234</u> (ID# used in city/agency database)

## SHPO INFO FOR THIS PROPERTY

NR date listed: \_\_\_\_\_  
ILS survey date: 6/9/2009  
RLS survey date: 6/9/2009  
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

Constructed in the Northwest Regional style, Atkinson Elementary School is located northeast of Clinton Park at 5800 SE Division Street. Designed to be expanded as enrollment increased, the campus is comprised of three buildings connected by covered passageways. The single-story buildings form a variation on a finger plan type school with decentralized functions that became popular in the mid-twentieth century. The buildings rely on a variety of materials including brick, glulam beams, vertical tongue and groove siding, and plywood to provide ornament and express their function within the campus. A variety of materials including tile, Douglas fir tongue-and-groove interior sheathing, paneling, and beams, and exposed brick provide durable surfaces with color and variation throughout the interior spaces.

### Architectural Description

Situated in the South Tabor Neighborhood of Southeast Portland, Atkinson Elementary is located at 5800 SE Division Street. Clinton Park surrounds the campus on the south and west. Franklin High School is also located adjacent to the park. The surrounding district is comprised of primarily single family residences built between 1900-1950 (Sanborn Maps 1924-1928, Sanborn Map updated to 1950).

Directly adjacent to the tree shaded play areas of Clinton Park, the 3.06-acre campus retains a pastoral quality despite its urban location. The facility consists of three single story building units configured in roughly an L-shaped plan with connecting corridors. Between the buildings courtyard spaces provide natural light and furnish connections to the outdoors. The primary pedestrian access to the facility is along a paved path that leads approximately 90 feet from Division Street to the school. The principal entrance to the facility is through a covered passageway that connects the administration/ community activity building "A" (234A) and the classroom building "C" (234C) that face Division Street. Additional covered passageways provide connection to an additional classroom building "B" (234B) located at the south side of the campus. Recreation areas on the site include an asphalt paved playground on the south side of the property.

The massing, exterior cladding, and roof forms of the building units visually reinforce their functional differences and hierarchy. The administration/community activity building is highlighted by a vaulted gymnasium space located at its west edge. Cladding on the gymnasium's exterior walls consists of a center panel of vertical tongue and groove siding flanked by horizontal louvers. Cladding on the street elevation consists of brick laid in an all stretcher bond pattern. Fenestration on this portion of the school is limited to a bank of aluminum frame windows with plywood panels at the base of the building and below the roofline at the elevation's east end. Additional illumination is provided by a row of clerestory windows that pierce the exterior wall of the gym. Much of the north side of the building is unfenestrated as a loading dock and windowless metal doors provide access to interior work spaces and the school's boiler room. A metal chimney flue also protrudes from the boiler room to a point that nears the top of the gym roof.

The covered passageways consist of a fixed frame aluminum window set above a plywood panel. Tubular steel columns provide seismic reinforcement on the exterior of the passageways.

The classroom building units feature low pitched shed roofs supported by glulam beams that project to the exterior forming a deep roof overhang. The roof overhang provides sun protection and visual relief in the long horizontal walls. The walls of the classroom building consist of vertical tongue and groove siding that support aluminum frame windows capped by plywood panels.

### Interior description

The interiors of the three buildings are arranged along double loaded corridors that extend east-west. Smaller corridors run north-south to provide additional egress. The corridors feature Douglas fir paneling with a newer linoleum wainscot. The flooring consists of linoleum tiles. Tubular fluorescent light fixtures are suspended from the acoustic tile covered ceiling.

Community spaces are housed in building "A". The walls of the gymnasium feature an exposed brick base capped by Douglas fir tongue and groove paneling. Clerestory windows on the west wall supplement the lighting provided by fluorescent fixtures suspended from the ceiling. Additional space for larger gatherings is provided in the cafeteria/auditorium. This rectangular space is supported by prominent exposed glue laminated beams. A combination of brick and vertically set Douglas fir tongue and groove line the walls.

The majority of the classrooms are rectangular in plan. The illumination provided by windows on the exterior walls is supplemented by interior transoms on the walls that separate the classrooms. Built-in cabinetry for storage lines the interior walls and the doors are recessed into the rooms to prevent door swings from protruding into the corridors. All of the classrooms exhibit replacement fluorescent lighting. All of the original tongue-and-groove ceilings have been covered with acoustic tiles.

The heating system for the building consists of oil boilers located in building "A". The boilers connect to piping that run between the concrete slab and the floors. Convectors in the walls force the air through grills set beneath the windows.

### Alterations/ Integrity

Following the original design, the school was expanded after the construction of its initial building in 1953. Building "B" was added in 1954. By 1959 the additional classrooms spaces planned for building "C" were required. In addition to the planned additions, there have been many alterations to the school including changes to the mechanical systems in 1959, 1962, and 1974; floor tile replacement in 1982 and 1988, and replacement of exterior doors in 1991. Additionally, many of the individual classrooms and offices have been altered or remodeled particularly with the installation of acoustic tiles on the tongue-and-groove ceilings (PPS Atkinson School Facility Profile).

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The plan for Atkinson School remains intact with no additions to the campus design other than buildings planned for in the original design by Belluschi/SOM. The exterior cladding and fenestration is original. The building interiors also retain their original configurations. Many of the original finishes remain intact including the exposed brick and paneling, but significant alterations to the ceiling and lighting have altered the appearance of the interior spaces.

## HISTORY

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

### Statement of Significance

Designed in 1952 and occupied by 1953, George H. Atkinson School replaced Franklin Primary school (1922) that had previously occupied the parcel at Division and 58th Street in Northeast Portland. (PPS Chronology Binder: np.). The new school building, named after pioneer missionary and educator Rev. George H. Atkinson, was constructed during a period of modernization and new construction initiated by Portland Public Schools (PPS) after World War II (Snyder 1979). 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 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: 3). With the funds from the 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 Perkins Will promoted new school types that reflected both evolving educational practices and design philosophies (Perkins and Cocking 1949; passim). Emphasizing the need for economy and rapid construction, the designers adopted new materials that were standardized and mass produced including steel, plywood, and aluminum. Flexibility was achieved 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 his sole building for PPS, Pietro Belluschi, one of Oregon's most prominent architects, employed a variation on the finger plan type school that also utilized principles of the Northwest Regional style in the design of Atkinson Elementary School. An internationally renowned architect who immigrated to the United States from Ancona, Italy, Belluschi encouraged the spread of Modernist principles among American architects during his tenure as head of the A.E. Doyle office in Portland and later as Dean of the School of Architecture at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Belluschi's designs for the Equitable Building (Portland 1945-1948) became an icon of the Modern movement (Ritz 2003: 29-34).

Belluschi's work was also essential to the development of a regional variant on the International style known as the Northwest Regional style. Beginning with the work of John Yeon in the Watzek house (Portland 1937), designers in the Northwest emphasized variation in massing by function, climate response, and expressive detailing of materials rather than applied ornament to provide decoration (McMath 1974: 475). The design principles embodied in the Northwest Regional style were well suited to the single story, finger plan type schools that became popular in American elementary schools in the 1950s (Ogata 2008: 568). Working with the firm Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, Belluschi's designs cost \$660,021.94 to construct (PPS School Chronology Binder).

An excellent example of a finger plan school with a decentralized and functionally segregated floor plan, Atkinson Elementary School is eligible for the NRHP under Criterion C. The school was one of many built by PPS after World War II to modernize and expand its facilities and is therefore not eligible under Criterion A. While there are other public and private buildings more closely associated with Belluschi's work and the Northwest Regional style in the Portland area, the building is nonetheless significant under Criterion C, as a particularly good example of a decentralized school plan that sought to segregate school functions to eliminate distractions and focus educational instruction. The classroom additions made in 1954 and 1959 that extended buildings "A" and "C" contribute to the significance of the building as they evidence how this school plan was easily expanded to meet growing district needs while using compatible design and materials.

## 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 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

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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.

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.

\_\_\_\_\_. *School Chronology Binder*. PPS Archives, Portland, Oregon.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Atkinson 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.

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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, Oregon: Binford and Mort, 1979.



Building 234A facing southwest



Building 234B facing northwest



Building 234A and 234B facing northeast



Entry to building 234C and 234A facing southwest



Building 234B facing northwest

**Atkinson School  
Exterior Photos  
ENTRIX, 2009**



Building 234A gymnasium facing west



Building 234A entry facing north



Building 234A corridor facing west



Covered passageway between Building 234A and 234C facing south

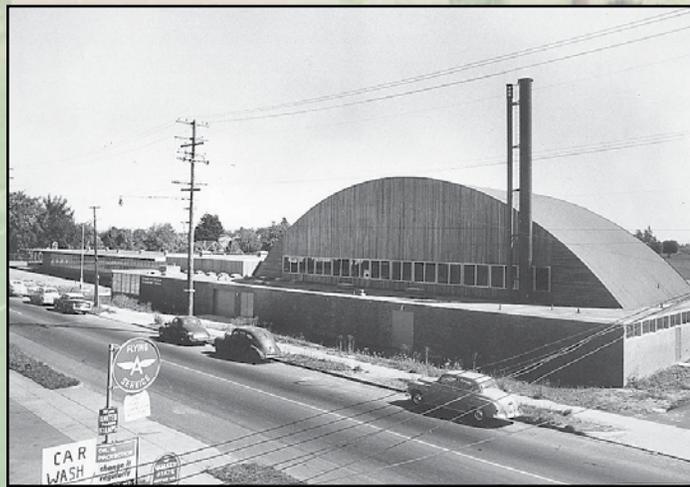
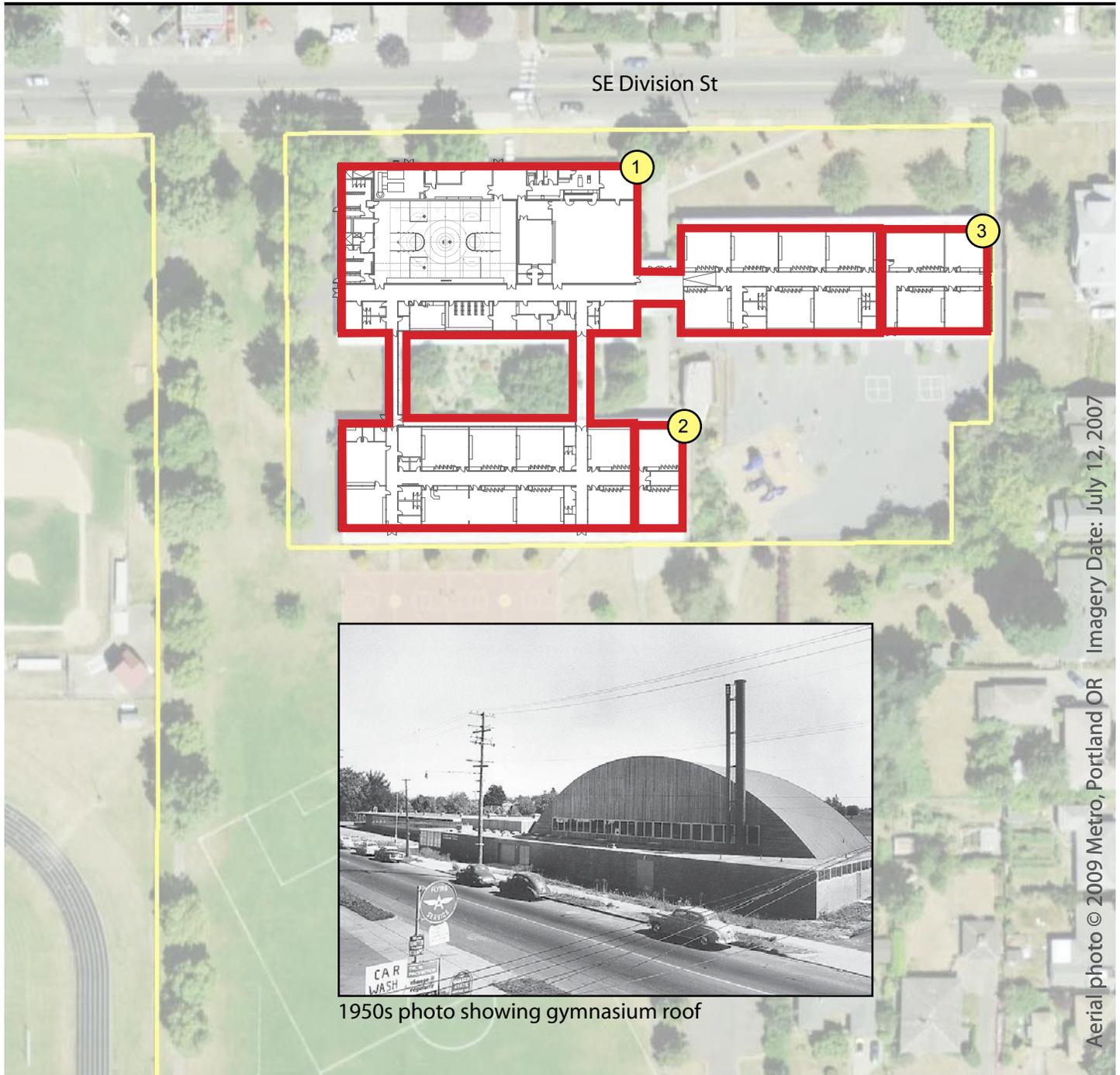


Building 234A cafeteria facing northwest

# Atkinson School

5800 SE Division St, Portland OR, 97206

[View Site in Google Maps](#)



1950s photo showing gymnasium roof



## Historical Significance and Building Integrity

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



## Building Periods

1. Main Building (234A), 1953
2. Two Classroom Add. (234B), 1954
3. Four Classroom Add. (234C), 1959



ATKINSON ELEMENTARY - 234

5800 SE DIVISION 97206

PPS HISTORIC ASSESSMENT



DRAWING: ANNOTATED PLAN

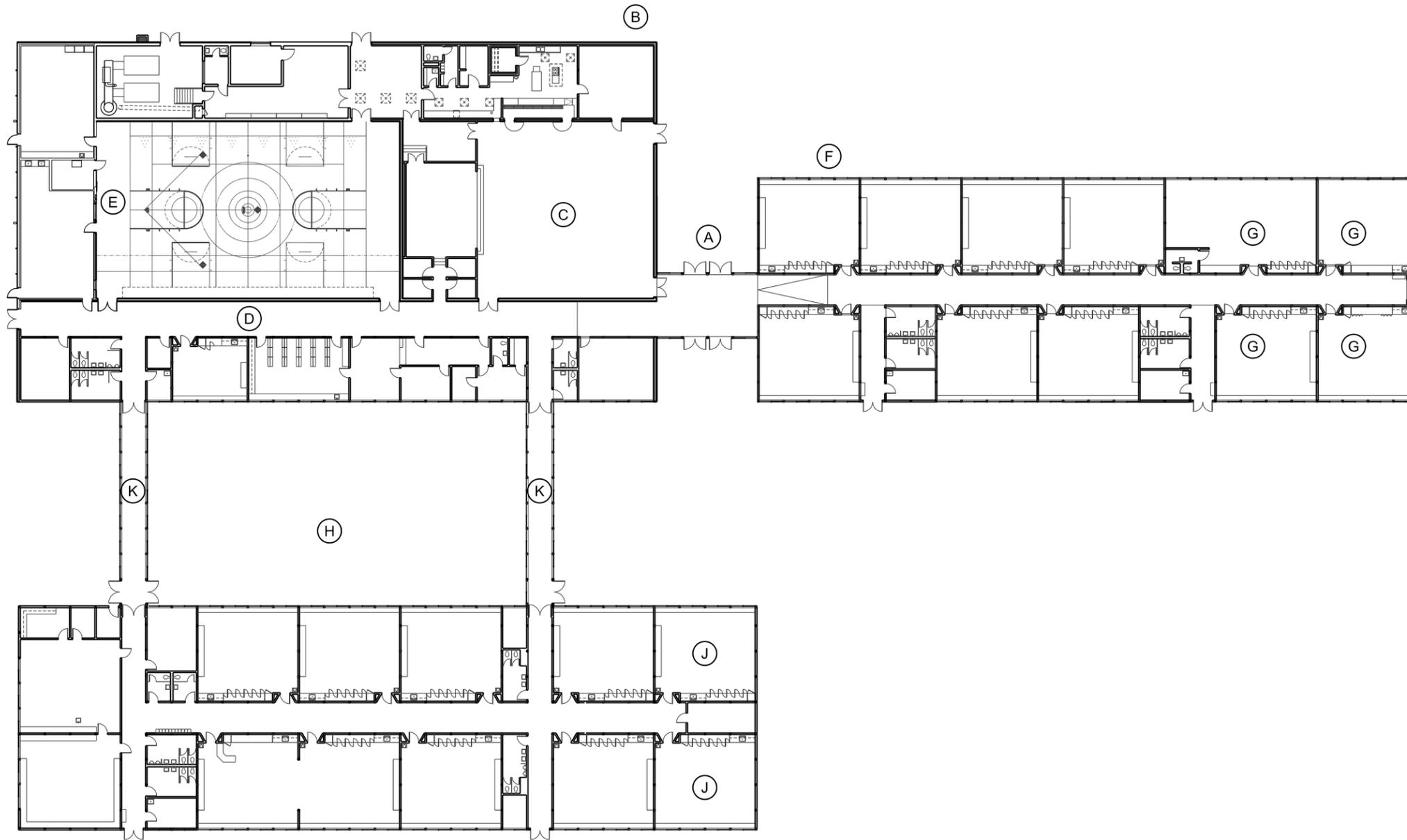
DATE: Sept. 4, 2009

### KEYNOTES:

- (A) MAIN ENTRANCE OF THE 1953 ATKINSON SCHOOL CONSISTS OF TWO SETS OF DOUBLE DOORS.
- (B) THE ADMINISTRATIVE WING OF THE SCHOOL CONSISTS OF A CAFETERIA AND AUDITORIUM, GYMNASIUM, OFFICES, BOILER ROOM, TEACHER'S WORKROOM, AND CLASSROOMS, MUSIC, AND SPECIAL EDUCATION ROOM.
- (C) CAFETERIA/AUDITORIUM FEATURES A STAGE, EXPOSED BRICK INTERIOR WALLS.
- (D) CORRIDOR FEATURES BRICK AND VERTICALLY SET FIR WALLS. THE BOTTOM OF THE FIR SHEATHING IS PROTECTED BY ARTIFICIAL MATERIAL WAINSCOTING.
- (E) GYMNASIUM FEATURES BRICK WALLS WITH VERTICALLY SET FIR ABOVE. THE DROP CEILING CURRENTLY HIDES THE TRUSSES THAT SUPPORT THE BARREL ROOF.
- (F) CLASSROOM WING FEATURES A DOUBLE-LOADED CORRIDOR AND ORIGINALLY CONSISTED OF SEVEN CLASSROOMS AND BATHROOMS. EACH DOOR INTO THE CLASSROOMS IS RECESSED.
- (G) FOUR SPACE CLASSROOM ADDITION ADDED IN 1959. EXTERIOR AND INTERIOR FEATURES SIMILAR MATERIALS AS THOSE FOUND IN ORIGINAL SECTION.
- (H) ENCLOSED COURTYARD FEATURES A STUDENT MANAGED GARDEN.
- (I) CLASSROOM WING FEATURES DOUBLE LOADED CORRIDOR AND RECESSED CLASSROOM ENTRIES.
- (J) TWO SPACE CLASSROOM ADDITION COMPLETED IN 1954.
- (K) SINGLE PANE WINDOW ENCLOSED CORRIDORS. CASSED 4X6 POSTS AND 2X8 BEAMS. STEEL SUPPORT PERIODICALLY (NOT ORIGINAL).

### GENERAL NOTES:

- (1) INTERIORS OF CLASSROOMS FEATURE COAT STORAGE SPACES ALONG THE CORRIDOR SIDE WALLS, EXPOSED WOOD GLULAM BEAMS THAT ALSO SUPPORT AN EXTERIOR OVERHANG, EXPANSIVE SINGLE PANE WINDOWS, HEAT REGISTERS ALONG THE WINDOW SIDE, AND FIR CEILINGS COVERED WITH ACOUSTIC TILES.
- (2) ALTERATIONS INCLUDE REPLACEMENT OF EXTERIOR DOORS, FLOOR TILE REPLACEMENT, INSTALLATION OF SUNSHADES AND WINDOW GUARDS, AND INSTALLATION OF SEISMIC COLUMNS.
- (3) ROOF OF THE THREE BUILDINGS CONSISTS OF A MINIMALLY PITCHED SHED ROOF. BARREL VAULT OVER GYMNASIUM.



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

