### Location and Property Name

- **Address:** 5401 NE Prescott St
- **Historic Name:** Rigler School
- **Current/Others Names:** Rigler Elementary School
- **Block Number:**
- **Lot Number:**
- **Tax Lot Number:**
- **Township:**
- **Range:**
- **Section:**
- **1/4:**
- **Zip:**

### Property Characteristics

- **Resource Type:** Building
- **Height (# Stories):** 2
- **Total # Eligible Resources:** 5
- **Total # Ineligible Resources:** 1
- **NR Status:**
- **Electronic Site #:** 276
- **Survey Project Name or Other Grouping Name:** PPS Historic Building Assessment 2009
- **Survey & Inventory Project:**

### SHPO Info for this Property

- **NR Date Listed:**
- **ILS Survey Date:** 6/26/2009
- **RLS Survey Date:** 6/26/2009
- **Gen File Date:**
- **106 Project(s):**

### Additional Information

- **Remote Sites:** (Former addresses, intersections, etc.)
- **Architect:** Jones, George H.
- **Builder:**
- **Comments/Notes:**

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The Rigler School is located at 5401 NE Prescott St in Portland, Multnomah County. It is a Mediterranean Revival style school with standard brick primary siding and concrete secondary siding. The school was constructed in 1931 and is eligible for evaluation as significant. The current address is Rigler Elementary School. The property has 5 eligible resources and 1 ineligible resource. The property was surveyed on 6/26/2009.
Situated in the primarily single family residential neighborhood of Northeast Portland, the Rigler Elementary School at 5401 NE Prescott Street is located on a 9.2-acre campus that consists of a two-story school building (276A) and four detached portable/modular (276 P1,2,3,4) classrooms. Built in 1931, the Mediterranean Revival style building with minor Art Deco influences and a pantile roof is a reinforced concrete structure with brick veneer and cast stone ornamentation. The building’s modified L-shaped plan includes classrooms, a library, an auditorium, a gymnasium, a cafeteria, and an administrative office.

Architectural Description

Situated in the primarily single family residential neighborhood of Northeast Portland, the Rigler Elementary School is located at 5401 NE Prescott Street. The Rigler Elementary School, which faces NE Prescott Street, is situated on a grass-covered and asphalt 9.2-acre campus with play fields, a play shed, and playgrounds north and west of the school. The school facilities consist of a two-story school building (276A) and four detached portable/modular (276 P1,2,3,4) classrooms. During the mid-1950s, a one story brick addition was constructed onto the rear (east wing) of the building. The school's parking area is located to the southwest of the main building.

The two-story school building with a ground floor basement is oriented on an east-west axis. The reinforced concrete building is covered with variegated brick. The rectangular mass of the building sits on a concrete foundation. Polygonal bays project from the front and side elevations. The building features Mediterranean Revival style detailing with Art Deco influences. Red pantiles cover the roof. The windows and doors feature cast stone surrounds. The recessed main entrance has an arched window above the door capped with voussoirs and keystones. An ornamented cast stone panel inscribed with the school's name is located above the door. The north (rear) elevation is highlighted by a brick-cladded stack that extends from the boiler room.

The windows consist primarily of symmetrically placed metal frame replacement windows with a horizontal sliding opening at the bottom of each window. Divided into three horizontal sections, the upper section of each window is blocked off with louvered vents. Single and double leaf metal doors replaced the original wooden fixed-pane entry doors.

The interior layout of the school consists of a modified L-shaped hallway plan on both floors. The double-loaded hallways feature marble splash guards behind the water fountains, wooden display cases, unpainted molding and framing, and built-in metal lockers. Most of the wood molding and framing is intact and in superb condition. The 2nd floor hallway in the original section of the building is in good condition although the molding is painted and lockers were added. Flooring consists of original linoleum. The original single leaf wood doors provide access to the classrooms from the hallways. The 1955 wing hallway has a narrow configuration, tiled and plaster veneer walls, and unpainted, wooden doors, framing and molding.

While some of the 1st/2nd story landing arched windows were replaced, the stairwells retain their original concrete steps and landings, plaster veneer walls, wooden railings and molding, and steam radiators.

The majority of classrooms retain their original configuration, height, wooden doors, linoleum tile floors, clean-up alcoves, and wooden built-ins and closets. The wood framing and molding has been painted. The 1955 wing classrooms have wooden built-ins and closets, and unpainted wood molding and framing.

The auditorium, located on the 1st floor, features many original details including the stage, boxed ceiling, and wall light fixtures. New ceiling fixtures have been introduced. The original seating is intact but the front rows were removed. The room is illuminated by original wood frame semi-circular/arched multi-light windows.

The gymnasium, located on the first floor, retains its original configuration and height including a high bay ceiling supported by steel trusses. The facility has brick walls, built-in lockers, and wood frame multi-light double hung sash windows.

The building is heated by steam boilers located in the ground floor basement facing north. Radiators with metal covers are found in the hallways, stairwells and in the classrooms. Grilles set in the wall provide heat and cool air for the basement rooms. Cool air is pushed through the building’s vents by compressor-powered fans.

Constructed in the late 1940s, the 4 portables are located west of the main building. The buildings are wood frame with hip roofs and vertical panel cladding. Fenestration consists of three-pane wood frame hinged windows and single leaf wood doors. The classrooms have minimal built-in classroom furnishings and cabinetry.

Alterations/Integrity

The first major additions/modifications to the school occurred when the 1955 wing was added to the north side of the school. The first major additions/modifications to the interior occurred during the mid-1970s, in the northeast and northwest wings. In 1976, there was major interior remodeling of the auditorium, library, and of the classrooms and hallways. In 1987, metal frame windows replaced most of the original wood frame multi-light windows (Rigler Facility Plan, Profile).

The Rigler School maintains a moderate degree of integrity. The one-story, 1955 brick rear wing is located on the road and is compatible with the building's historic scale, design, features and materials. While most of the windows were replaced, the original arched/semi-circular windows are present in the auditorium, gymnasium, and several of the stairwell landings. The school's variegated brick cladding, red pantile roof, and cast stone
**Statement of Significance**

Built in 1931, Rigler School was named in honor of Frank Rigler, the superintendent of Portland Public Schools from 1896-1913 (Snyder 1979: 241). The school was constructed for $232,538 during a period of progressive era growth that responded to changing city demographics and ideas concerning safety, sanitation, and child centered instruction (Portland Chronology Binder; 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 current 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).

Rigler School was designed by one of the most influential architects hired by Portland Public Schools (PPS), George Jones. Along with Floyd Naramore, Jones designed a large majority of the schools between 1908 and 1932. Beginning in 1908, with the emergence of the Bureau of Properties, PPS district architects took on a more formalized role in the design and maintenance of school facilities. The Bureau of Properties was created by PPS to centralize management of the district’s properties (Powers and Corning 1937: 182).

For Rigler School, George Jones adopted the building program and principles that dominated the discourse for school design during the first half of the twentieth century. After several well-publicized school fires in U.S. cities, calls for a more fundamental change in the building construction began as early as 1906 (Oregonian, 10-31-1906). 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).

Many of Portland’s new fire proof buildings, such as Rigler, were constructed of brick and concrete. While Rigler deviated from the U-shaped plan that was characteristic of schools constructed during this period, the building plan is similar; a long lateral corridor is connected to other wings of the building by short hallways. Like other PPS buildings constructed during this period, Rigler contained more differentiated and increasingly specialized space (Powers and Corning 1937: 182).

Rigler Elementary School was constructed in the Mediterranean Revival style that was popular for educational buildings during the first half of the twentieth-century. Architectural revivals, such as Classical Revival, Colonial Revival, and Collegiate Gothic were viewed as inspirational and appropriate for educational settings (Betelle 1919: 28; Sibley 1923: 66; Patton 1967: 1-8).

In the late 1940s, four portable classrooms were added to the Rigler School campus to accommodate an increasing number of students. The first major additions/modifications to the school occurred when the 1955 wing was added to the north side of the school. In the 1970s and 1980s modest alterations occurred in various classrooms and offices. The most substantial alterations occurred in 1987 when the exterior windows were replaced (Rigler Facility Profile).

Rigler School retains its integrity with minimal alterations to its plan and exterior and interior finishes. The 1931 school is recommended as eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) for its association with progressive era public school construction in Portland (Criterion A). Rigler Elementary School is a good example of the two-story Georgian style school buildings that were constructed during the early-twentieth century. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of the style as applied by George Jones to school buildings in Portland; therefore, it is also eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion C.

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**Bibliography**


Oregonian. “Mayor Lane and the Schools.” 10-31-1906.

Portland Public Schools. School Chronology Binder. PPS Archives, Portland, Oregon.


---. Rigler Elementary School. Facility Profile.


Sanborn Map Company


South elevation front entry

South elevation front entry

South elevation front entries

South elevation front entry

East elevation addition

Rigler School
Exterior Photos
ENTRIX, 2009
Corridor facing west
Stairwell entry hall
Auditorium facing north
Corridor facing south
Gymnasium facing north

Rigler School
Interior Photos
ENTRIX, 2009
1924-1928, Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Map, Portland, Oregon, Map 1226. Arrow points to the old Rigler Public School prior to the construction of the new building.
**Building Periods**

1. Original Building (276A), 1931
2. Addition (276P3, P4), 1947
3. Addition (276P1, P2), 1948
4. Addition (276A), 1955

**Historical Significance and Building Integrity**

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

1932 photograph of the Rigler School, looking north.