

Oregon Historic Site Form

Sitton School
9930 Smith St
Portland, Multnomah County

LOCATION AND PROPERTY NAME

address: 9930 N Smith St apprx. addr

Portland vcnty Multnomah County

Optional Information
 assoc addresses:
 (former addresses, intersections, etc.)
 location descr:
 (remote sites)

historic name: Sitton School

current/
 other names: Sitton Elementary School, Sitton Primary School

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: 1949 (c.) secondary date: 1954 (c.)
 (optional--use for major addns)

primary orig use: School

secondary orig use: _____

primary style: Northwest Regional

secondary style: _____

primary siding: Vertical Board

secondary siding: _____

plan type: School (General)

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: Jones, William Henry.

builder: _____

comments/notes: _____

GROUPINGS / ASSOCIATIONS

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

farmstead/cluster name: _____ external site #: 184
 (ID# used in city/agency database)

SHPO INFO FOR THIS PROPERTY

NR date listed: _____

ILS survey date: 6/25/2009

RLS survey date: 6/25/2009

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)

Description Summary

Situated in the primarily residential neighborhood of St. Johns in North Portland, Sitton School is located at 9930 North Smith Street. Built in 1949, the school is a simplified version of the Northwest Regional style. The school building (184A) is situated on a 6.3-acre grass and asphalt-covered campus. The single story building sits on a poured concrete foundation. Cladding for the wood frame structure consists of vertical boards with narrow battens. The building is covered by flat and low pitched gable roofs. The rectangular shape plan houses classrooms, a gymnasium, a covered play area, a courtyard, a media center, a cafeteria and an administrative office.

Architectural Description

Situated in the primarily residential neighborhood of St. Johns in North Portland, Sitton School is located at 9930 North Smith Street. Built in 1949, the school is a modest version of the Northwest Regional style. The school building (184A) is situated on a 6.3-acre, grass and asphalt-covered campus. The playground and playfields are located directly to the south, west and north of the school. The parking area is located directly north of the school building.

The building faces N. Smith Street and is approached from the east side. The single story building sits on a poured concrete foundation. A courtyard located on the east side of the building provides additional light for the adjacent classrooms. Cladding for the wood frame structure consists of vertical boards with narrow battens. The building is covered by flat and low pitched gable roofs. The flat roofs on the north wing of the building are masked by a parapet. Fenestration consists of vertical three-light metal frame hinged windows. Single and double-leaf metal doors are found on all the elevations. The double height spaces of the cafeteria, gymnasium, and play area project above the main mass of the west wing. A detached, low scale canopy extends to the north of the front entrance.

The modified finger plan of the school is organized around an O-shaped double loaded corridor. The corridors retain their original wide configuration and low ceiling height. Tubular fluorescent lights are suspended from low acoustic tile ceilings. Flooring consists of linoleum tile.

The classrooms in the east (1949) wing are L-shaped with a small sink located in the alcove. Standard finishes include wood built-ins, doors, and framing. Flooring consists of 12" by 12" tile. There are tubular fluorescent light fixtures suspended from an acoustic tile clad ceiling. Transom windows on the interior wall provide additional light to the corridor. The classrooms in the west (1964) wing do not have the window transoms and clean-up alcoves. These rooms have minimal built-ins and furnishings.

The recreation spaces for the building are centrally located in the west wing to minimize noise and provide easy access to the outdoors. The double height gymnasium is illuminated by three metal frame windows and fluorescent light fixtures. The space retains its original wood floor. The wooden ceiling is supported by metal beams. The concrete walls provide a durable play surface. Additional recreation space is provided in the adjacent covered play area. Metal beams support the high bay ceiling. Utilitarian concrete walls and asphalt floors furnish the durable play surfaces.

The cafeteria is located at the south end of the west wing. The room is illuminated by suspended fluorescent light fixtures. The acoustic tile ceiling is supported by wood ceiling beams. Folding tables and benches recess into the walls. The room has tiled floors and original wood doors.

The media center is centrally located at the intersection of the two wings. The space receives ample light from the south facing windows. The spacious, open room is divided into several work and study areas. The room features wooden book shelves, chairs, and desks.

The building is heated by steam boilers located in the boiler room in the front wing. Grilles set in the walls provide heat and cool air throughout the school. Cool air is pushed through the building's vents by compressor-powered fans.

Alterations/Integrity

The first major addition to the 1949 Sitton School was the construction of the cafeteria and other facilities in 1954. These areas were added to the west of the original rectangular wing that faced N. Smith Street. In 1964 an L-shaped addition created the current O-shaped hallway plan. A gymnasium, a covered play area, 4 classrooms, and a music room were housed in the west portions of the "L". The north wing provided 7 additional classrooms. There have been moderate changes to the interior including a remodeling of the office and the music room in the late 1980s. The floor tiles were replaced in 1991 (Sitton Facility Profile).

As a result of the additions and other alterations, Sitton School no longer retains its integrity. The cladding, roof forms, and fenestration of the 1964 addition are substantially different and incompatible with the original building. Although these additions are located on the rear of the building, the mix of materials and forms detracts from the design, materials, and appearance of the original school.

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

In 1948 the Portland School District acquired the land and school building at 9930 North Smith Street from the St. John's School District for \$ 22,682.13. The school was named in honor of "Lefie" Sitton, a school board member. A 9 classroom building was constructed in 1949 for \$133,333 (Portland Chronology Binder; Snyder 1979: 241). The new Sitton Elementary School was built 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, glass block, 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 Regional 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 incorporated interior courtyards which facilitated access to the outdoors and expanded the opportunities for passive ventilation and daylighting, a hallmark of the Northwest Regional style.

Little information is available on the career or background of William Henry Jones, the architect of Sitton School. He served as the Director of Plant Inspection and Planning for Portland Public Schools from 1947-1950. In this capacity Jones was involved with the early planning of the massive program of construction and modernization implemented by the district in the mid-twentieth century. In addition to Astor School, Sitton, Chief Joseph, and Ball Schools, William Henry Jones is also listed as the architect of the Cleveland Field house and an addition to Capitol Hill school (Portland Chronology Binder).

Although Sitton School was one of the first schools constructed by Portland Public Schools after World War II, the building is not recommended as eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The building exhibits only minimal elements of the Northwest Regional style. Although the mid-century schools were intended to be expanded in response to growing enrollment, the new wings utilize incompatible materials and roof types. In comparison with other schools that utilized a finger plan approach for expansion, this school is not a good example. The placement of the west wing crowds the original building, which does not create the substantial courtyard characteristic of the Northwest style. Although responsible for the design of several Portland public schools, archival research does not indicate the William Henry Jones was considered a master in the Portland area. In addition, due to the incompatible additions the building no longer retains sufficient integrity to be eligible for the NRHP under Criterion 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: 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. In *Space, Style and Structure: Buildings in Northwest America*. Ed. Thomas Vaughan, 628-647. 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

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Superintendent, 1945.

_____. Portland Public Schools Chronology Binder.

_____. Sitton Elementary School. Facility Plan.

_____. Sitton 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.



East elevation front entry



North and west elevations



East elevation front entry



Gymnasium west elevation



North elevation addition

**Sitton School
Exterior Photos
ENTRIX, 2009**



Gymnasium facing west



Office facing northeast



Classroom built-in



Classroom facing east



Covered play area facing northwest



ENTRIX

Down to Earth. Down to Business.™



Updated to 1950 Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Map, Portland, Oregon, Map 307. Arrow points to Sitton Public School.

Sitton School

9930 N Smith St, Portland OR, 97203

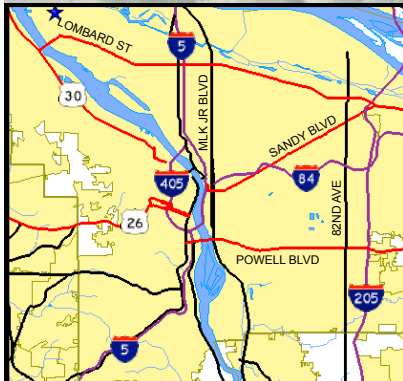
[View Site in Google Maps](#)






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



Sitton School, main entrance, 2009



Historical Significance and Building Integrity

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



Building Periods

1. Original Building (184A), 1949
2. Addition (184A), 1955
3. Addition (184A), 1964