

# Oregon Historic Site Form

Stephenson School  
2627 Stephenson St  
Portland, Multnomah County

## LOCATION AND PROPERTY NAME

address: 2627 SW Stephenson St  apprx. addr  
 Portland vcnty Multnomah County

historic name: Stephenson School  
 current/  
 other names: Stephenson Elementary 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: 1965 (c.)  secondary date: 1975 (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: 0 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: Robert Koch  
 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 #: 190  
 (ID# used in city/agency database)

## SHPO INFO FOR THIS PROPERTY

NR date listed: \_\_\_\_\_  
 ILS survey date: 6/23/2009  
 RLS survey date: 6/23/2009  
 Gen File date: \_\_\_\_\_

106 Project(s)



South and west elevations

## ARCHITECTURAL / PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

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

### Description Summary

Situated in the residential neighborhood of Arnold Creek in Southwest Portland, Stephenson Elementary School is located at 2627 SW Stephenson Street. The 1964 building (190A) features elements of the Northwest Regional style including a variety of cladding, roof types, and massing organized to furnish light and ventilation, and provide easy access to the outdoors. The one-story wood frame building features an irregular massing comprised of several wings. The various wings are covered by a mixture of gable, flat and hip roofs. Siding consists of vertical board with battens and wood shingle. Facilities provided by the building include classrooms, a gymnasium/cafetorium, media center/library and an administrative office.

### Architectural Description

Situated in the residential neighborhood of Arnold Creek in Southwest Portland, the Stephenson Elementary School is located at 2627 SW Stephenson Street. The 8.88-acre campus provides plentiful space for play fields and future school expansion. There is an asphalt-covered half-circle driveway and parking lots located opposite the school's main entrance. An asphalt-covered playground is located directly to the east of the school.

Built in 1964, Stephenson Elementary School features elements of the Northwest Regional style including a variety of cladding, roof types, and massing organized to furnish light and easy access to the outdoors. The school is oriented on a north-south axis, and sits on a concrete foundation. The various wings that comprise the school are covered by a mixture of gable, flat, and hip roofs. The front (south) elevation is dominated by the vaulted double height space of the gymnasium/cafetorium on the east wing. A classroom wing extends to the southwest of the main entry. Two additional wings project in a pinwheel configuration from the north and west elevations. Siding consists of vertical board with battens and wood shingles. Fenestration consists of fixed single pane and metal and wood frame pivot windows. A pair of double-leaf metal doors are located at the two recessed entrances on the front elevation. A prominent skylight is situated on the hip roof of the southwest classroom wing. Another skylight is located on the east elevation of the Media Center on the north wing.

The interior layout of the school is organized around a primary north-south corridor that connects to several classroom wings. The low, narrow, double-loaded corridors retain their original configuration and features, consisting of concrete walls, fluorescent lights, acoustic tile ceilings, wood display cases, linoleum floors, metal framing and molding and wooden classroom doors.

The multipurpose gymnasium/cafetorium, located immediately adjacent to the entry, is the most dominate feature in the school layout. The arched roof that covers the double height space is supported by horizontal metal beams. Hanging acoustic tiles and fluorescent lights are suspended from the horizontal wood plank ceiling. Other features include concrete and wooden walls, a wooden stage, and tile floors. The folding tables and benches that recess into the wall facilitate the use of the space as a cafeteria.

The Media Center/Library is a spacious, carpeted, open room divided into several work and study areas including a loft with chairs and desks and a skylight.

The classrooms also exhibit their original configurations, height, linoleum tile floors and wood framing and molding. Standard features include wooden book cases and cabinets, sinks and counters, and tubular fluorescent light fixtures suspended from an acoustic tile clad ceiling. Several of the classrooms have projecting "greenhouse" type windows.

### Alterations/Integrity

In 1975 the wing that houses the media center and five open classrooms was added to the north side of the school. In 1987, the two classrooms that project to the east and additional two classrooms located in the southwest corner of the original building were added. Due to these additions, Stephenson School does not retain its integrity of design and feeling.

## 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

Named for John Stephenson, a pioneer who settled in the surrounding district, Portland Public School acquired the property in 1959 for \$29,480 in response to the rapidly growing population in the southwest areas of the city (Snyder 1979: 241; Portland Chronology Binder). Built in 1965, Stephenson Elementary School was one of the later schools 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 design of Stephenson Elementary School, architect Robert Koch, 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 around the country and throughout Portland 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, 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, another hallmark of the Northwest style, which facilitated access to the outdoors and expanded the opportunities for passive ventilation and day lighting.

Stephenson School does not retain a level of historical integrity commensurate with other Portland Elementary Schools constructed in a similar style during the post war period; therefore, Stephenson School is not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). While the Northwest Regional style and finger plan type are discernable on the building, several additions have diminished the building's integrity of design and feeling. Due to the loss of integrity, Stephenson is not eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criteria 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" 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.

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*.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Stephenson Elementary School Facility Profile*.



South (gymnasium) and west elevations



Southeast elevation; upper and lower parking areas



Southeast elevation entry



Gymnasium east elevation



North and east elevations

**Stephenson School  
Exterior Photos  
ENTRIX, 2009**



Corridor facing north



Media Center



Corridor facing west



Classroom built-ins

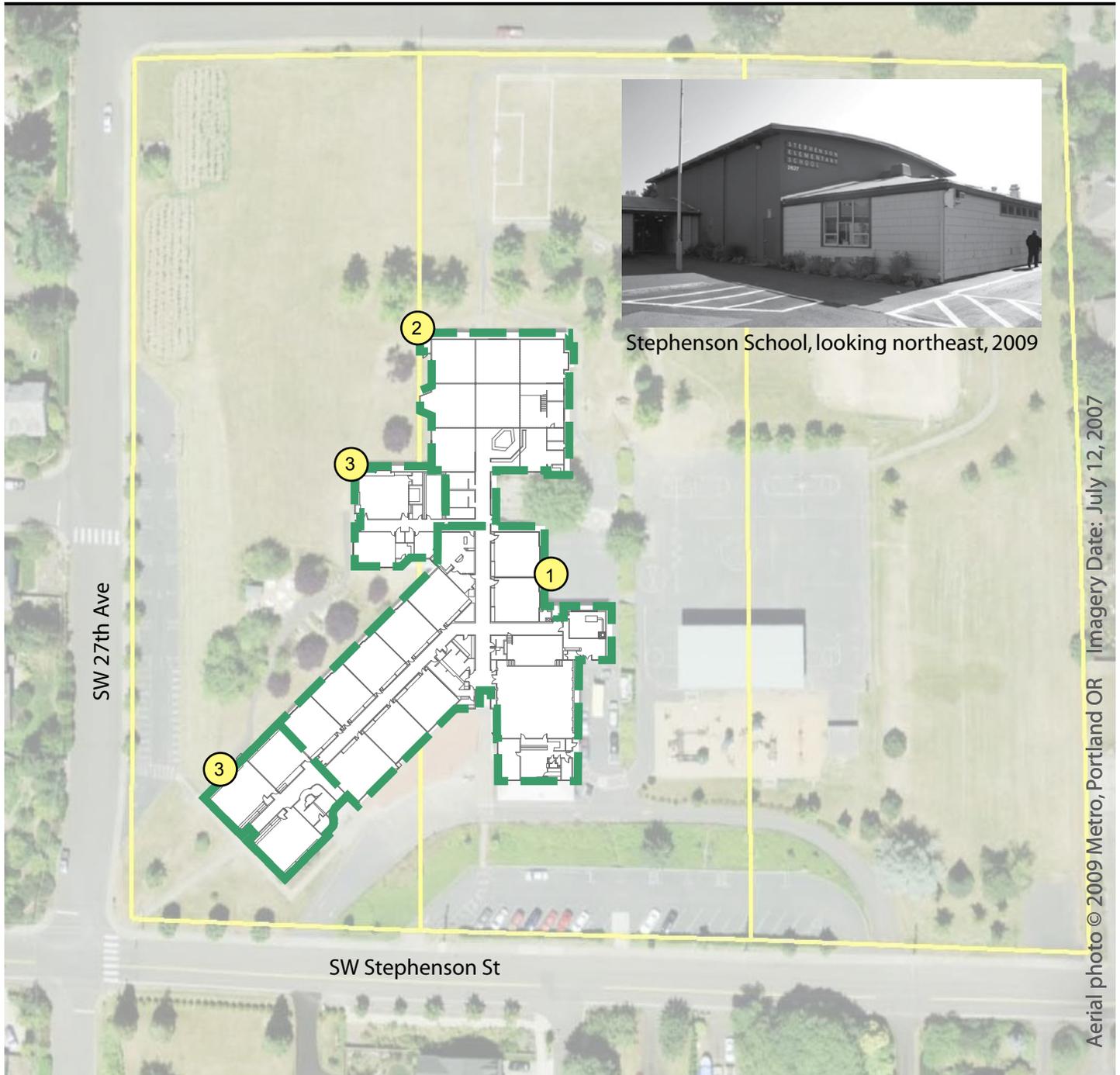


Classroom

# Stephenson School

2627 SW Stephenson St, Portland OR, 97219

[View Site in Google Maps](#)



Stephenson School, looking northeast, 2009

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



## Historical Significance and Building Integrity

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

## Building Periods

1. Original Building (190A), 1964
2. Addition (190A), 1975
3. Addition (190A), 1987

