

Oregon Historic Site Form

Wilcox School
833 74th
Portland, Multnomah County

LOCATION AND PROPERTY NAME

address: <u>833 NE 74th</u> <input type="checkbox"/> apprx. addr	historic name: <u>Wilcox School</u>
<u>Portland</u> <input type="checkbox"/> vcnty <u>Multnomah County</u>	current/ other names: <u>Wilcox Elementary School, Kensington 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>0</u> total # ineligible resources: <u>1</u>
elig. evaluation: <u>not eligible/non-contributing</u>	NR status: _____ (indiv listed only; see Grouping for hist dist)
primary constr date: <u>1959</u> (c.) <input type="checkbox"/> secondary date: <u>1966</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: _____	prim style comments: _____
primary style: <u>International</u>	sec style comments: _____
secondary style: _____	siding comments: _____
primary siding: <u>Standard Brick</u>	architect: <u>W.H. Gilmore</u>
secondary siding: _____	builder: _____
plan type: <u>School (General)</u>	
comments/notes:	

GROUPINGS / ASSOCIATIONS

survey project name or other grouping name	<u>PPS Historic Building Assessment 2009</u>	<u>Survey & Inventory Project</u>
farmstead/cluster name:		external site #: <u>292</u> (ID# used in city/agency database)

SHPO INFO FOR THIS PROPERTY

NR date listed: _____
ILS survey date: 7/7/2009
RLS survey date: 7/7/2009
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

The Wilcox School is a one story rectangular shaped brick veneer building. The primary entrance to the facility is recessed under the main roof and located within the south end of the east (front) elevation. A recessed play court, also placed under the main roof, is located on the north end of the west (rear) elevation. The entrance is marked by two metal doors with transoms and side lights. The design for the 1959 building reflects the influence of the International style. Elements such as a linear composition, bands of aluminum windows, flat roofs, overhangs, and lack of ornamentation serve to reinforce the ideals of functionalism and minimalism.

Architectural Description

Wilcox School is situated in the Montavilla neighborhood of East Portland at 833 NE 74th Avenue. The campus occupies an irregular shaped parcel located along NE 74th Avenue and surrounded on the north, west, and south sides by single family residences. The school is located on the east end of the campus, parking is to the south of the building, playgrounds are to the west, and a small rectangular play field is sited in the far southwest corner of the campus.

The single story finger plan building is constructed of wood frame with a brick veneer. Walls on the east (front) and west (back) elevations feature painted metal panels and the east end of the south (side) elevation is covered in wood bevel siding. The horizontal massing of the building is emphasized by a low sloping gable roof and bands of metal casement windows. The wide eaves of the roof feature simple modillions.

The primary entrance to the facility, located on the south end of the east (front) elevation, is recessed under the main roof. At the entrance, the roof is supported by a single metal post. The entrance is marked by two metal doors with transom and side lights. Secondary entrances feature double doors with transoms. Some of the doors are surrounded by textured concrete (marblecrete) panels. A recessed play court, also located under the main roof, is located on the north end of the west (rear) elevation. The play court roof is supported by exposed steel purlins and covered with plywood panels. Bevel wood siding panels the walls.

The 1959 Wilcox Elementary School features one long rectangular shaped wing that is sited on a north-south axis along NE 74th Avenue. The main double loaded corridor extends north-south through the middle of the building and is illuminated by tubular light fixtures suspended from the acoustic clad ceilings. Three entrance halls extend off the main corridor and provide access to street or the expansive school grounds. The corridors feature smooth plaster walls and a rubber base. Flooring throughout the building consists of vinyl tile and carpet. Metal heating units are located in the hallways and console units are located beneath classroom windows.

The principal entrance opens into a foyer with exposed brick walls. The administrative offices share a common wall with the foyer and are visually connected by windows. Built-in mail cubbies are located along one wall of the administrative office.

A multipurpose or play room is located at the north end of the building. This room features a built-up ceiling along the west side of the room, which is supported by metal posts. Metal casement windows illuminate the room.

The classrooms are rectangular in plan with recessed storage areas and sloped ceilings. Many of the built-in cupboards and closets are original to the building. The building is heated by boilers that are located to the west of the foyer.

Alterations/Integrity

Wilcox School had been modified over time to accommodate the evolving educational needs of Portland Public Schools. The most extensive alterations to the school occurred in 1966. At this time play rooms located along the west side of the building were converted into two classrooms. A doorway was also added to the north end of the east (front) elevation. Also during this year, the original covered play court was enclosed to create a gymnasium and a new play court was added to the north end of the west (rear) elevation. In 1978, a storage room was converted into a kitchen. An HVAC unit was installed in 2005 (PPS Wilcox Facility Profile, PPS Wilcox Facility Plan).

In 2005, students from Wilcox School were relocated to Meek School on NE Alberta Court. The facility was reopened as the Columbia Regional Program, which is a testing site for children with physical handicaps. They have converted the multipurpose room into storage space and adapted a number of classrooms into office, meeting, and testing spaces. These alterations have affected the design, materials, workmanship, and feeling associated with the 1959 Wilcox Elementary 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 response to the rapidly expanding population of northeast Portland, the site at 833 NE 74th Avenue was acquired in 1958 for \$99,000. Originally designed as the Kensington School, the facility was renamed in honor of Dr. Ralph Wilcox, the first physician and first schoolteacher in Portland. The building was developed at a cost of \$233,954 in 1959 (Snyder 1979: 242; PPS Chronology Binder). Wilcox Elementary 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 the 1945 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 schools adopted the call of architects and school planners across the country for new types of schools. Nationally known architects including Richard Neutra, Walter Gropius and the Architects Collective, and Perkins Will 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).

Wilcox Elementary School deviated from other schools constructed during the post-war period, which mostly featured the finger plan type. The construction of the facility, wood frame with brick veneer, allowed for economic building and ease of expansion. The school utilized aluminum windows and other mass produced materials readily available after the conversion of the defense industries to manufacturing facilities to provide economical decoration.

Wilcox Elementary School has not retained integrity of design, feeling, and association. The 1966 additions and the reconfiguration of interior spaces for use by the Columbia Regional Program have altered many of the character defining features and principle spaces. In addition, the facility is not a strong example of the planning principles that characterized PPS school design during the mid-twentieth century. Archival research did not reveal that its architect, W.H. Gilmore, was a significant designer in Portland during the mid-twentieth century. Due to loss of integrity and the lack of notable post war planning principles this building is not recommended as eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places 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

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

_____. *Wilcox Elementary School. Facility Plan*.

_____. *Wilcox Elementary School. Facility Profile*.

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



Main building (292A), east (front) elevation, looking northwest.



Main building (292A), west (rear) elevation, looking northeast.



Main building (292A), entrance at east (front) elevation, looking west.



Main building (292A), play court at north (side) and west (rear) elevations, looking southeast.



Main building (292A), south (side) elevation, looking north.



Main building (292A), entrance foyer, looking east.



Main building (292A), storage and office space (originally a multipurpose room), looking north.



Main building (292A), corridor at administrative office, looking north.



Main building (292A), testing room (originally a classroom), looking west.



Main building (292A), mail cubbies in administrative office, looking south.

Wilcox Facility

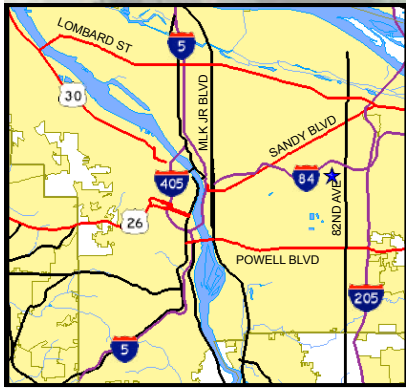
833 NE 74th Ave, Portland OR, 97213

[View Site in Google Maps](#)






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

2009 photograph of the Wilcox School, looking east.



Historical Significance and Building Integrity

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



Building Periods

1. Original (292A), 1959
2. Addition (292A), 1966