

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For HCRS use only

received APR 28 1982

date entered JUN 1 1982

1. Name

historic Jersey City High School

and/or common William L. Dickinson High School

2. Location

street & number 2 Palisade Avenue N/A not for publication

city, town Jersey City N/A vicinity of congressional district 14th

state New Jersey code 34 county Hudson code 017

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Jersey City Board of Education

street & number 88 Clifton Place

city, town Jersey City N/A vicinity of state New Jersey

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Hudson County Administration Building

street & number 595 Newark Avenue

city, town Jersey City state New Jersey

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N.J. Historic Sites Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1981 federal state county local

depository for survey records Cultural and Environmental Services

city, town Trenton state New Jersey

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Built in 1906 and enlarged in 1911 following the same design as the original, the Dickinson High School, spectacularly sited along the brow of the highest elevation in Jersey City and overlooking New York City, is a massive Beaux Arts style building. The school is three stories on a heavily rusticated stone base and first floor. Central and corner classical pedimented stone pavilions with pilasters and engaged columns flank triple-arch raised entrances with second and third floor connecting brick arms.

Nearly square (17 bays by 19 bays) when first completed in 1906, Dickinson High School originally had only projecting pedimented corner pavilions. The 1911 expansion doubled the size of the school, developing the north facade corner pavilions into a larger 7 bay center pavilion, and making a mirror image of the original design.

The entire school has a heavily rusticated raised limestone base and first floor. The large windows are 2/2 sash with round arches. The triple-arch entrances have bracketed balustrades. On the south facade all three archways are doorways, but the two entrances on the longitudinal facades have a single entry flanked by round arch windows. The north facade has only a single arch balustraded entry.

The second and third floors between the pavilions are brick capped by a bracketed stone cornice and balustrade with openings corresponding to the fenestration below. The windows of the second and third floors have 2/2 sash with stone lintels and raised keystones. There are raised spandrel panels between the second and third floors.

The Vermont granite pavilions contrast with the limestone base and brick arms. The center projecting pavilions have engaged colossal Corinthian columns on a raised base and a bracketed and carved pediment. In the center of the carving on the east facade is an open book encircled by the words KNOWLEDGE and INDUSTRY. The figures on the right are involved in academic studies while those on the left are studying industrial arts and crafts. The corner pavilions have colossal Corinthian capital pilasters enframing the three bay fenestration. The bracketed pediments have bullseye motifs with Gibbs surrounds.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1904-12 **Builder/Architect** John T. Rowland

Statement of Significance (In one paragraph)

Dickinson High School, Jersey City's oldest secondary school, is one of the most impressive public educational facilities of the period in New Jersey and emblematic of the exuberant civic pride which produced such a monumental building. The physical development of the school is a superb illustration of educational philosophy in transition in the early 20th century. Designed in 1906 as an academic secondary school, the 1911 expansion was a response to Jersey City's rapid demographic changes and a general evolution of education philosophy away from academic curriculum towards the more practical studies of industrial and mechanical trades introduced in the Progressive Era at the turn of the 20th century. Containing facilities for both academic and industrial students, the Dickinson High School was one of the earliest experiments in a comprehensive education system in the state.

Functioning continuously since opening in 1906, Dickinson High School, because of its unique facilities for industrial training, was used as an army training post in World War I and World War II. It was among the first schools in the state to establish a continuing education program. It is still the city's largest high school and only evening school. The large capacity of the high school auditorium made the Dickinson High School, a public facility, a center of Jersey City's political and cultural life.

Embellished by its geographic prominence overlooking lower Jersey City and the New York Harbor, the Dickinson High School is a fine example of Beaux Arts style architecture. Designed by architect John T. Rowland, both in its original form and its expansion, the Dickinson High School resembles Claude Perrault's 1668 colonnade for the Louvre in Paris, France.

John T. Rowland, Jr. (1871-1945) was the leading architect in Jersey City throughout the first four decades of the 20th century. The list of his commissions reads like an enumeration of the city's major private and public buildings. He designed, for example, the Labor Bank building, the Jersey Journal building, and the Public Service building, all at Journal Square, and the Duncan Apartments, at 2600 Hudson Boulevard. In addition to his private practice which began in the 1890's, around 1901 Rowland became the architect for the Jersey City Board of Education, a post he held until his death, 44 years later. In this function he designed all four of the high

9. Major Bibliographical References

UNIV NOT VERIFIED

See Continuation Sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property 10.756

Quadrangle name Jersey City

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A	<u>118</u>	<u>579840</u>	<u>4509000</u>
Zone	Easting	Northing	

B			
Zone	Easting	Northing	

C			
Zone	Easting	Northing	

D			
Zone	Easting	Northing	

E			
Zone	Easting	Northing	

F			
Zone	Easting	Northing	

G			
Zone	Easting	Northing	

H			
Zone	Easting	Northing	

Verbal boundary description and justification

Block 545 - Jersey City Tax Map

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
<u>N/A</u>			

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

Revised by Terry Karschner, Office of Cultural and Environmental Services

name/title Barbara Petrick, teacher

organization Dickinson High School

date 3/1/81; 8/1981

street & number 2 Palisade Avenue

telephone (201) 547-5735

city or town Jersey City

state New Jersey

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

Deputy

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title Deputy SHPO

date 12/23/81

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register Entered in the National Register

Keeper of the National Register

date 6/1/82

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

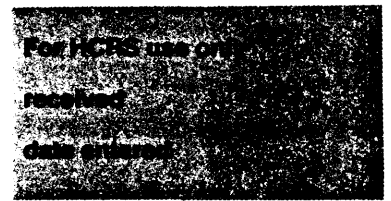
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Jersey City High School

Continuation sheet Jersey City, Hudson Co., NJ Item number 7

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Description (continued)

The interior of the Dickinson School is divided into classrooms enclosing corridor halls, a gymnasium/auditorium, and an open courtyard. While the exterior features of the 1906 section and the 1911 addition are identical and the plan is similar, the interior spaces of the two units differ somewhat in classroom size and useage. Smaller traditional curriculum classrooms around the gym and auditorium are found in the 1906 section. The 1911 addition has spacious industrial arts rooms around an open courtyard.

In the basement of the 1906 section is a two story gymnasium surrounded by lockers and classrooms. A corridor hall and corner stairways separate additional locker rooms, showers, offices, and storage rooms around the perimeter of the original unit. The first floor has numerous classrooms and several supply rooms around a corridor hall and the second floor of the gym. The main, or south, entry vestibule is decorated with marble walls, frescoes, and an arched paneled ceiling. The main entry hall has a Greek design mosaic and terrazzo tiled floors and two large landing staircases with round column supports. The stairs are iron with ornamental banisters and railings. The second and third floors focus on a large auditorium (atop the gym) with a stage and 2,000 capacity seating. The 26 double door entrances provide access. At the corners of the auditorium are exit stairs joined by hall corridors. Around the perimeter of halls are classrooms; and in the south end on the second floor, the library.

The 1911 addition was designed as an industrial and mechanical arts facility, and the rooms in the basement and first floor are considerably larger than the original classrooms. Enclosing a hall corridor and an interior courtyard (with power plant), the basement and first floor originally had a forge and foundry shop, a milling room, a woodworking shop, a print shop, a photography lab, and an electrical shop; since redesigned for other purposes. The second and third floor classrooms are similar to those in the original unit.

Just north of the main school is a 1933 gable roofed gymnasium with three cross gables and a severe three story yellow brick edifice featuring a simple Moderne three arch entry and symmetrical fenestration. This building was constructed into a steep grade at the east and acts partially as a retaining wall. It has swimming pool, gymnasium, and cafeteria facilities.

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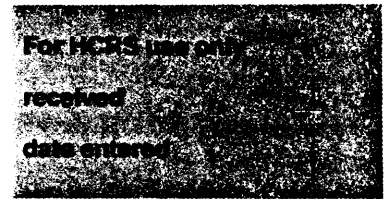
Page 2



Description (continued)

At one point it was suggested that the County purchase the site and landscape it for a park, at the center of which the city would build its new high school. This plan was not adopted but vestiges of it can be seen in the park-like surroundings of the school: the terraced hillside, the spacious lawn area, the stone circular overlook on the east side, the grand Baroque staircases of granite, the two massive wrought iron entrance gates to the school grounds, and the iron fencing embedded in heavy stone bases along the perimeter of the property at Palisade Avenue and Newark Street. At the north, the property has been paved for a faculty parking lot.

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Significance (continued)

schools then in use in the City - Dickinson, Lincoln, Henry Snyder, and Ferris - 25 public schools and seven parochial schools. Rowland was also responsible for the design of the 1930's Jersey City Medical Center.

The site of the Dickinson High School is on the brow of the Palisades overlooking the old lower city, the Hudson River and Manhattan Island, the entrance to New York Harbor and the Atlantic Ocean to the east, and the meadowlands stretching west toward Newark. During the Revolutionary War, Washington and Lafayette used this point on the Palisades to reconnoiter the movements of the British on Manhattan, in the Harbor, and at Paulus Hook, the fort which guarded the entrance to the mainland.

In 1806 the United States Government, aware of the strategic military importance of the spot, purchased this area, called the Harrison tract, and erected an arsenal on the west side of the property (across what is now Palisade Avenue). The east side (where the school now stands) was a camping ground for the troops which had been sent to guard the entrance to New York Harbor, the soldiers from New York having been sent north to the Canadian border. "Arsenal Hill," as it was then known, was used by the U.S. Government again during the Civil War as a barracks and training ground for Union troops. These events are commemorated by a bronze plaque placed on the south side of the building in 1916 by the Daughters of the War of 1812.

In the late 19th century, the New York Junction Railroad purchased the arsenal property to obtain the right of way to lay tracks and build freight yards along the bed of the Old Mill Creek which ran along the base of the hill, once a navigable stream and now a thoroughfare for freight trains. The hilltop above with its abandoned arsenal was variously considered as a site for the City Hall, the Courthouse, the Hudson County Jail, or a County park. At one point it was suggested that the County purchase the site and landscape it for a park, at the center of which the city would build its new high school. This plan was not adopted but vestiges of it can be seen in the park like surroundings of the school: the terraced hillside, the spacious lawn area (now a parking lot), the stone observatory on the east side, and the grand staircase of granite and wrought iron at two entrances to the school grounds. The city planted trees around the school, built sidewalks, furnished park benches, and erected lamp posts with the vision of a city park

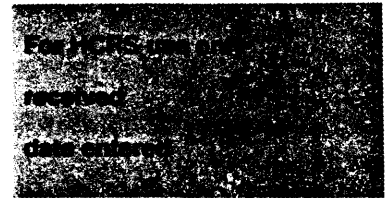
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Significance (continued)

open to the public in mind emblematic of the direction and energy of the "New Idea" Republicans who, in 1901, defeated the Democratic machine and elected Mark Fagan, Jersey City's youngest mayor (and the city's last Republican mayor).

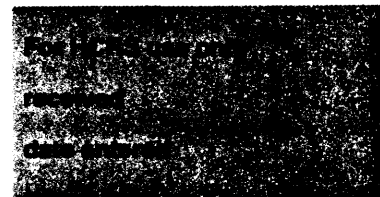
In the decade that followed, Fagan, with the assistance of George L. Record, his Corporation Counsel, managed to extract long overdue revenues from the railroads and corporations and embark on an ambitious era of municipal building, the jewel of which was Dickinson High School.

As so often happened in Jersey City, the long-awaited building of the first public high school became the focus of political controversy. Both the site and the classically impressive architecture were deliberately selected by the Fagan administration to create a public landmark of great prominence. Architect John T. Rowland, then embarking on a long career as city architect, was instructed to design a "handsome, substantial, massive-looking building," a model that would "be a good advertisement for the city." The Democrats, unwilling to allow the Republicans to take credit for such a conspicuous urban reform, fought the selection of the hilltop site, citing its unhealthy proximity to the old graveyard on Waldo Avenue, numerous saloons, and the railroad yards below.

When Mayor Fagan broke ground for the school in 1904, he was fulfilling a longstanding campaign promise of politicians to erect a proper home for Jersey City High School, the city's first secondary school which had been founded in 1872 and had occupied the two upper floors of #5 Grammar School on Bay Street ever since. The idea of a free public secondary school was not popular for some time, being labeled a "rich man's school supported by the poor." When the city veered toward bankruptcy in the 1870's, it was partly through the efforts of the first superintendent of Jersey City schools, William L. Dickinson (1819-1883; after whom the school was later named), that the school was not abandoned. However, public support and funds for the erection of a separate high school building were not found until the turn of the century. In all that time the curriculum of the secondary school had not changed much from the time Dickinson had established his Classical Institute on Grove Street in 1839. The secondary school was attended mainly by the children of the upper class, and liberal arts - the classical curriculum of language, science, and mathematics - was intended mainly to prepare students for high education and the professions.

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Significance (continued)

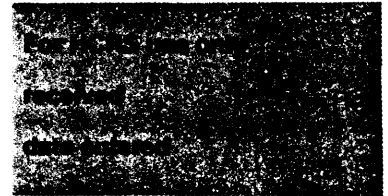
When the first half of Dickinson was completed in 1906, it was designed as a traditional academic school with the latest modern equipment. Its lecture halls were equipped with stereopticons, its science laboratories were equalled only by the facilities of the Ivy League colleges. The largest circulating branch of the Jersey City Public Library was established in the school, and its 2000 seat auditorium was intended as a public forum for debate and a lecture hall for cultural events for the whole community. Classical murals and friezes, some donated by alumni, would, it was hoped, be the beginning of a municipal art gallery. In the Progressive Era, the public school was envisioned as a community center.

Between 1900 and 1910 the population of Jersey City increased by 30% and high school enrollment more than doubled. The surge in immigration; the increasing industrialization and prosperity of the city; and compulsory education laws - all contributed to the dramatic growth and changes in the character of the student population. During this time (and partly as a result of these sociological changes), the philosophy and aims of secondary education in America changed as well. The school was no longer seen as a place solely for intellectual training, but also for developing "efficient industrial citizenship". It was responsible for a heterogeneous group of students, many of whom would not go to college, but instead needed training in some trade or vocation. Therefore, when the northern addition to Dickinson was planned (doubling in size of the school), it was designed primarily with industrial education in mind. Once again, the very finest and most elaborate, up-to-date facilities were incorporated. A complete foundry and forge shop were installed in the basement and first floor of the new building. The school had, in fact, the capabilities of a small manufacturing plant and did produce for some years all its own school furniture and all the printed material required by the Jersey City Board of Education.

At first it was planned to have two separate schools, one academic and one industrial, in one building. The remnant of this plan is seen in the difference between the older, southern facade which says "Jersey City High School" and the newer, northern one, which says "Industrial and Technical High School." It was finally decided, however, that two separate educational establishments could not peaceably co-exist in one building and, when the new school opened in 1912, it was billed as the first "comprehensive High School," offering complete, equal and integrated facilities for academic, industrial, commercial, and vocational training.

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Significance (continued)

Hailed as a great experiment that embodied the latest ideas of educational reform, Dickinson High School was visited in the next decades by hundreds of educators from all over the world. Visitors from over 500 cities across the United States, Europe, and the Far East, whole boards of education, school architects, and trustees toured its facilities, which ran day and night (an evening technical and commercial school was established, and Columbia University offered extension courses at night). There is no doubt that many school buildings in that era were influenced by the design of Dickinson High School, which was especially praised for the smooth integration of all its parts.

The American school in the Progressive Era was viewed as providing for various community needs, and Dickinson's auditorium (for a long time the largest public meeting hall in New Jersey) was in constant use for club meetings, debates, dramatic productions by visiting companies, concerts, and lectures by many figures of national and international prominence. Helen Keller, Paderewski, Fritz Kriesler, Madame Schumann-Heinck, Amos Pinchot, and many others appeared under its stained glass ceiling. During the presidential campaign of 1912, Taft, Wilson, and Roosevelt each held political rallies in the auditorium. There was some controversy over whether a public school facility should lend itself to political parties, but the only speaker of note to be denied permission was Communist Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, whose projected appearance in 1915 aroused the opposition of the up-and-coming Commissioner of Public Safety, Frank Hague. Some thirty years later, then Mayor Frank Hague, passed the Jersey City mayoralty on to his nephew at a gigantic political rally in the Dickinson Auditorium.

With the outbreak of World War I, Frank Mathewson, who had organized and directed Dickinson's industrial department, placed the school's unique facilities at the service of the government. In the summer of 1918 the school was used as an army training post. Some 400 "soldier-mechanics" from the metropolitan area were housed in the school and given training in carpentry, electrical work and machine operations. Evening classes in marine engineering and navigation were held under the auspices of the Federal Shipping Board. In 1921, Dickinson received a special commendation from the War Department for its service in the establishment of the Student Army Training Corps.

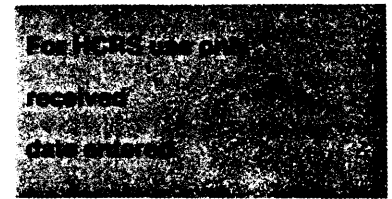
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Significance (continued)

On Armistice Day 1922, a bronze memorial was unveiled at the main entrance to the school. The sculpture depicts the Alma Mater, personified by a woman in flowing robes, urging on two doughboys, one of whom is dying. The face of the dying doughboy was modeled on that of Albert Quinn, a nationally-known amateur athlete, and both a student and teacher at Dickinson. His name, together with thirty other graduates who died in the War, is enscribed on the marble base of the monument. The memorial, whose sculptor, Carl Illava, also designed the memorial to the 7th Regiment in Central Park, was paid for by funds raised from the students.

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1:24,000. Revised from 1943, 1947.

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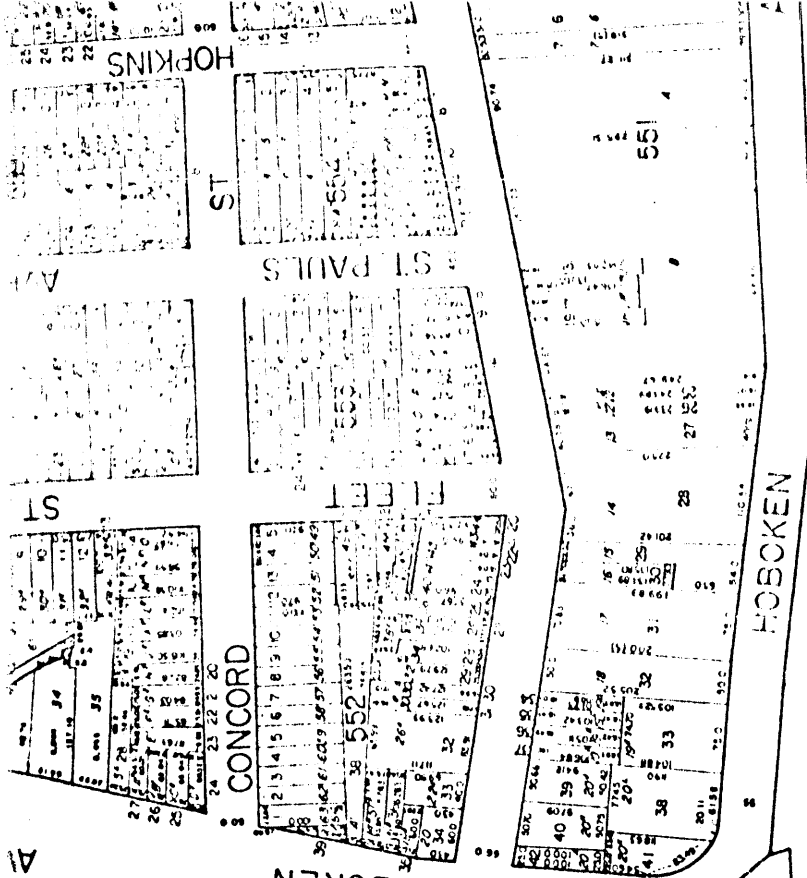
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Map Reference:
 City of Jersey City
 Hudson County, NJ
 Tax Map, 1977

3.03

HOBOKEN

U.S. ROUTE # 1

WASHBURN ST

4.09

PALISADE

Jersey City High School

10.28 acres

CONRAIL DOCK BR.
 E-L R.W.Y., LONG CLASS

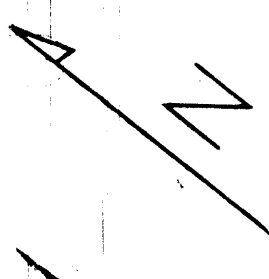
DIVISION ST
 HINTON ST

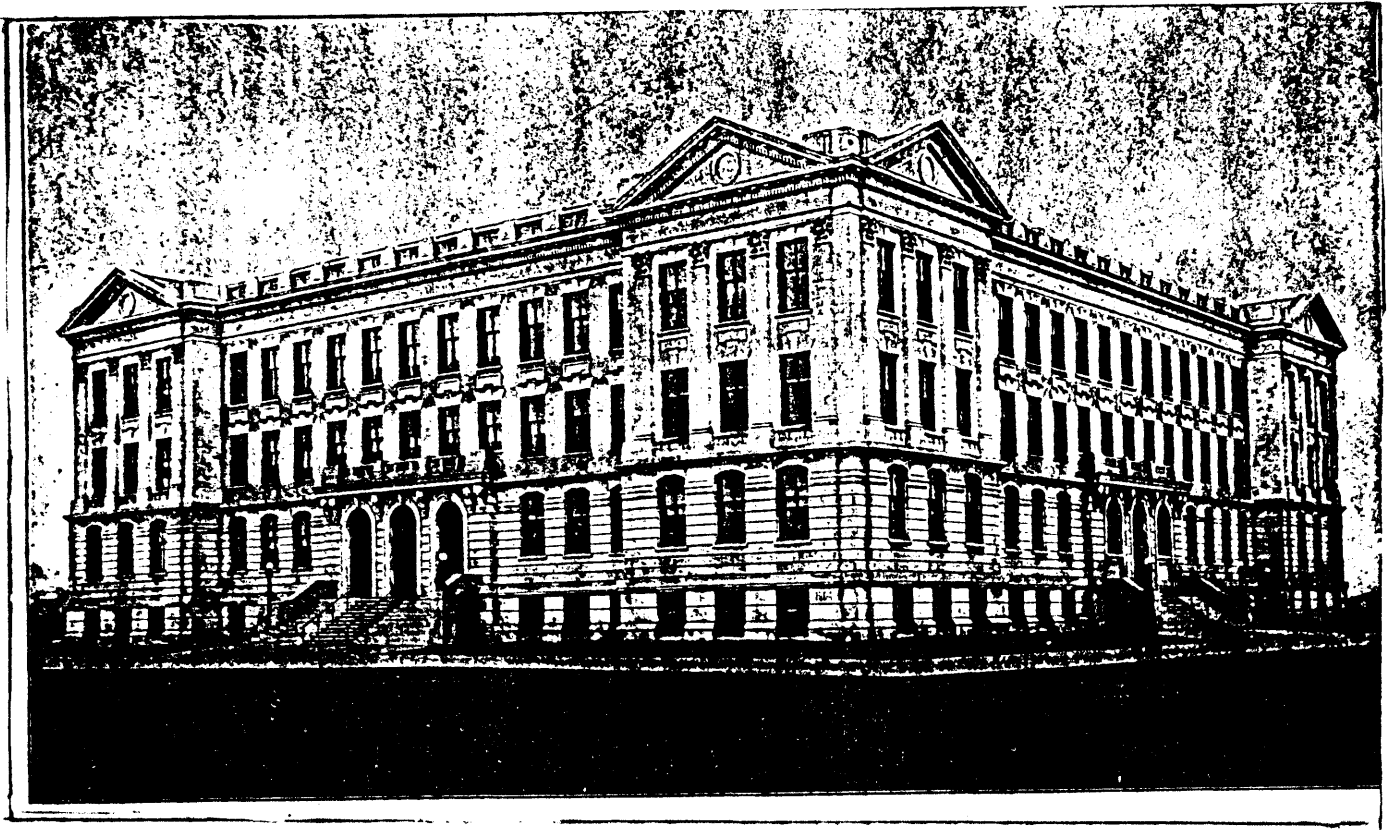
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N.J. JUNCTION BRANCH, MAIN LINE

PAVONIA AVE

EIGHTH ST

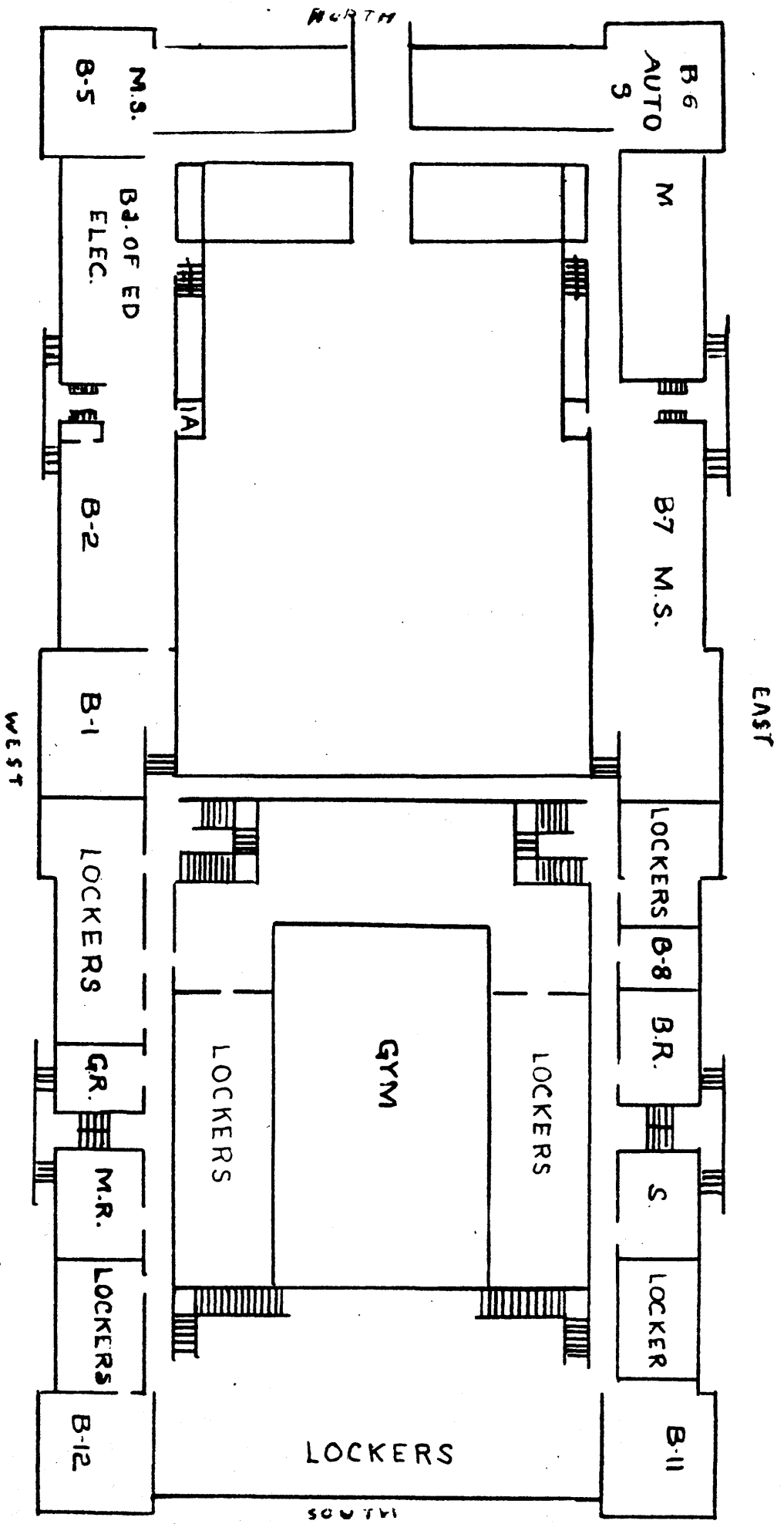




Dickinson High School , 1910.

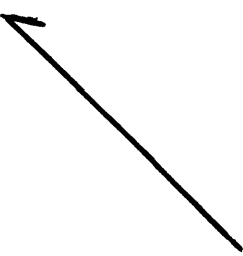
Before expansion

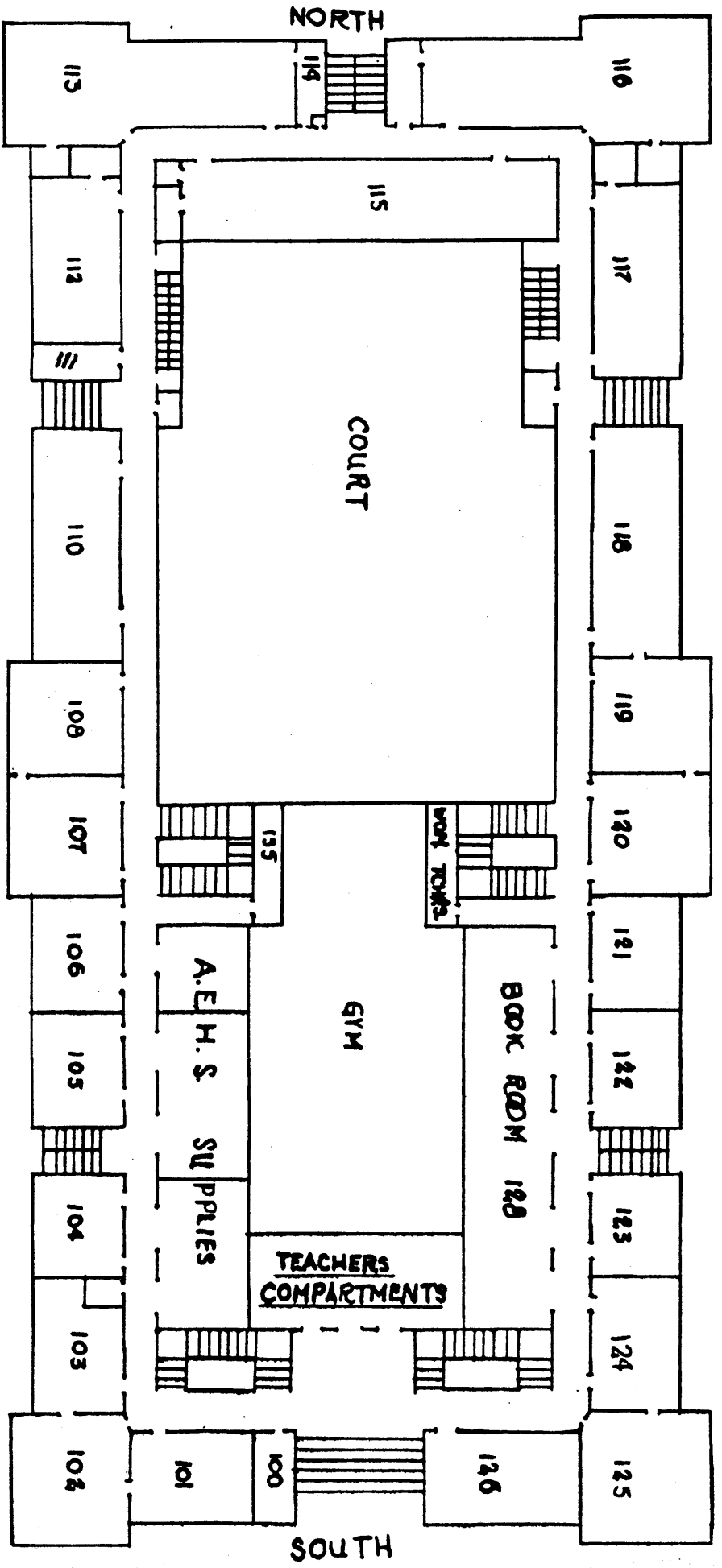
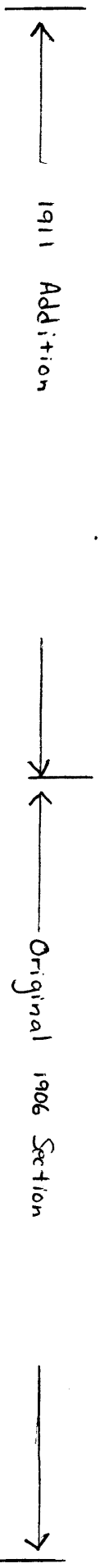
Ref: Muirhead, Walter Gregory. Jersey City of Today



JERSEY CITY HIGH SCHOOL
 HUDSON COUNTY
 NEW JERSEY

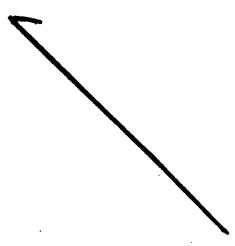
BASEMENT PLAN

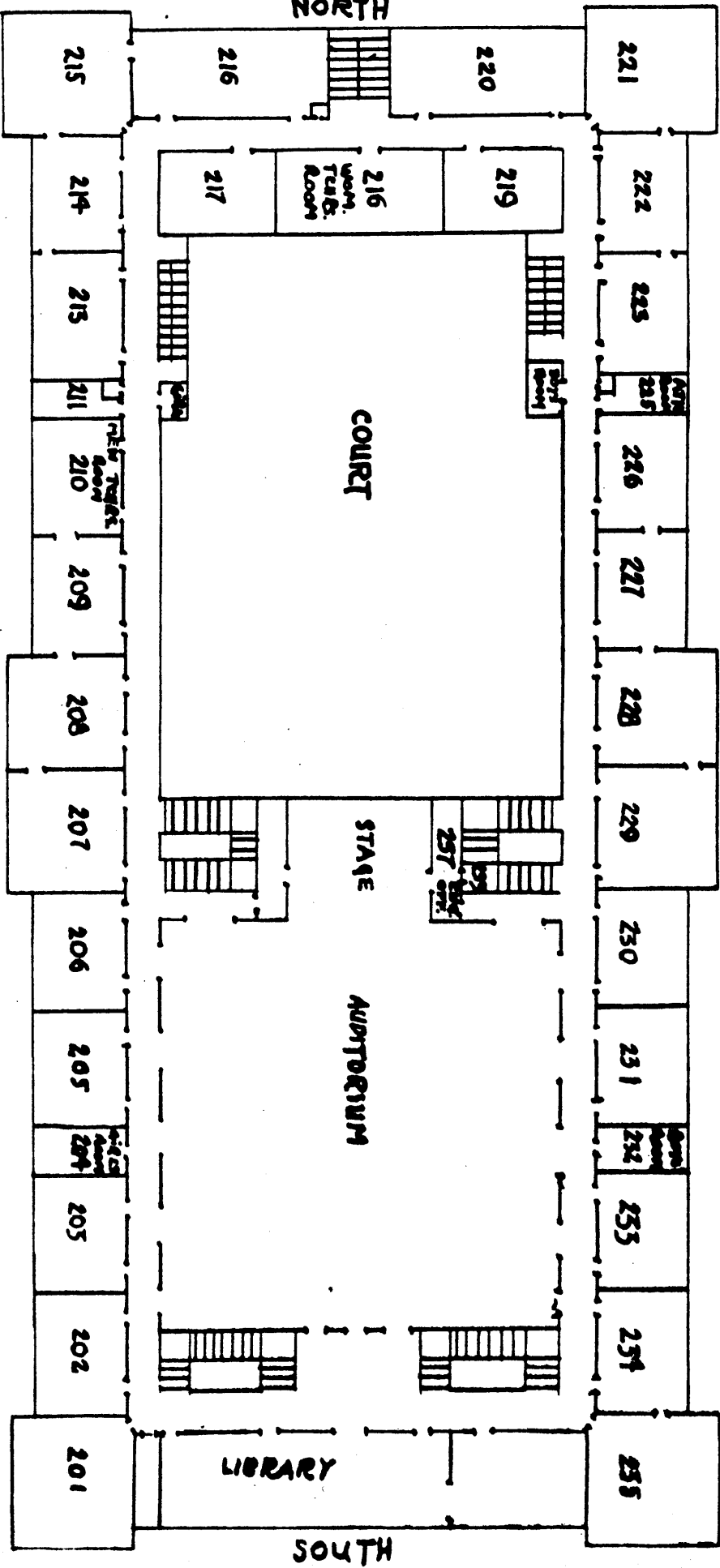
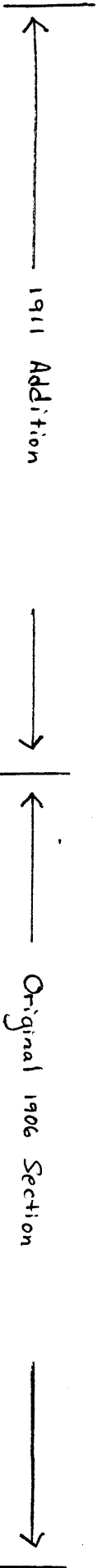




JERSEY CITY HIGH SCHOOL
 HUDSON COUNTY
 NEW JERSEY

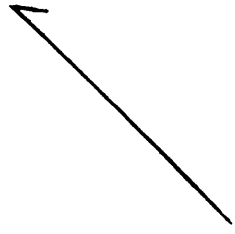
FIRST FLOOR PLAN





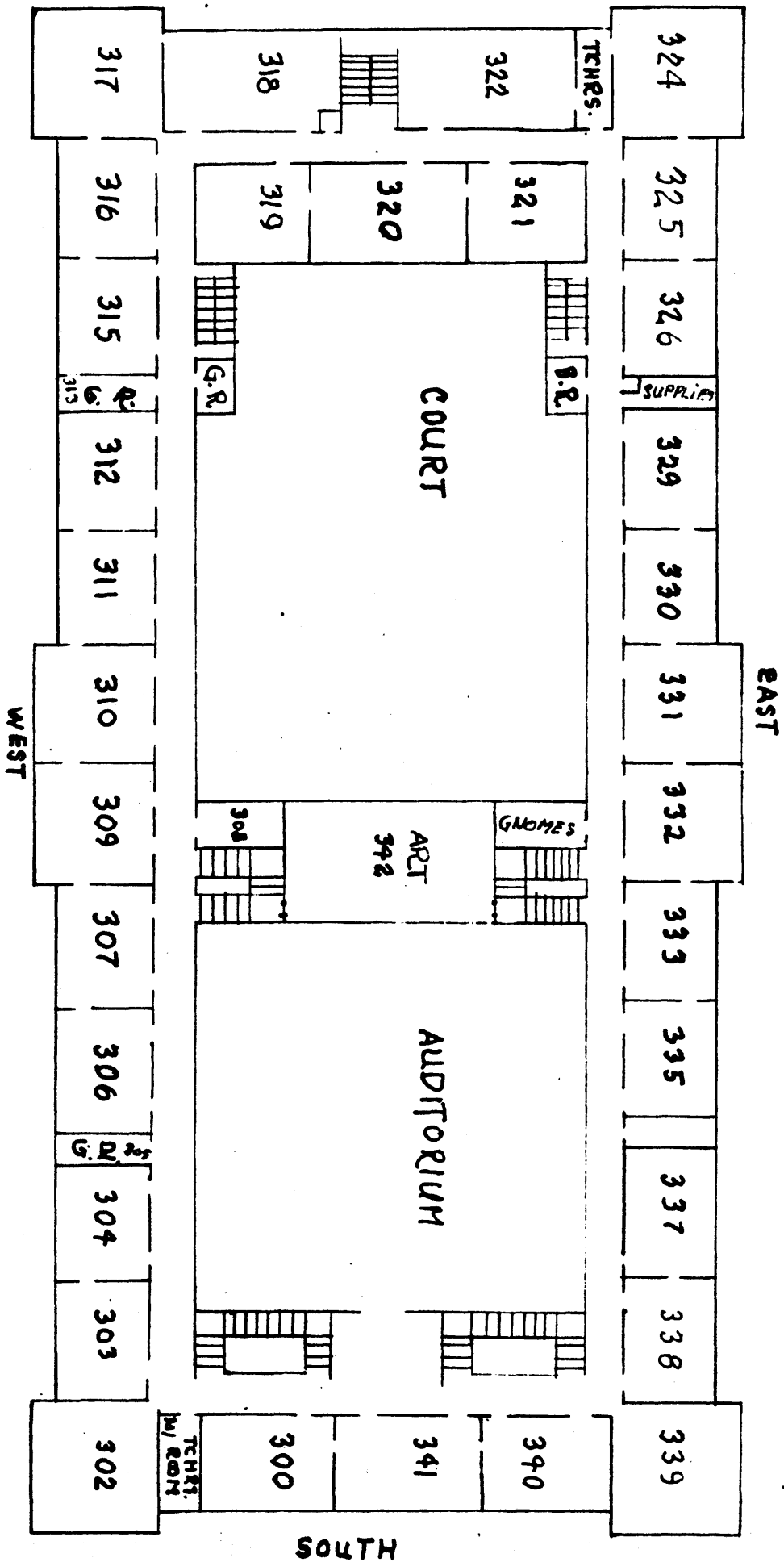
JERSEY CITY HIGH SCHOOL
 HUDSON COUNTY
 NEW JERSEY

SECOND FLOOR PLAN



JERSEY CITY HIGH SCHOOL
 HUDSON COUNTY
 NEW JERSEY

THIRD FLOOR PLAN



1911 Addition

Original 1906 Section

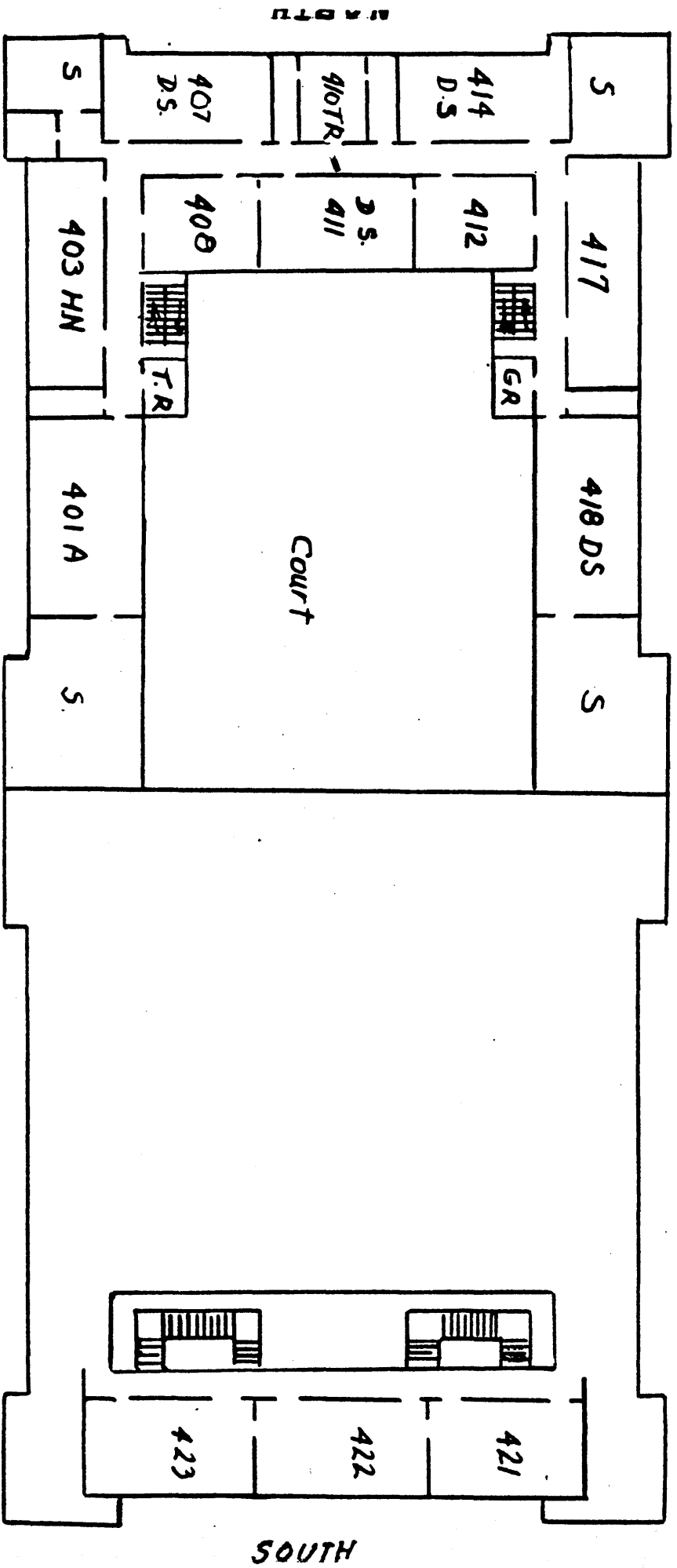
EAST

WEST

SOUTH

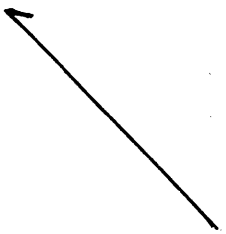
1911 Addition

Original 1906 Section

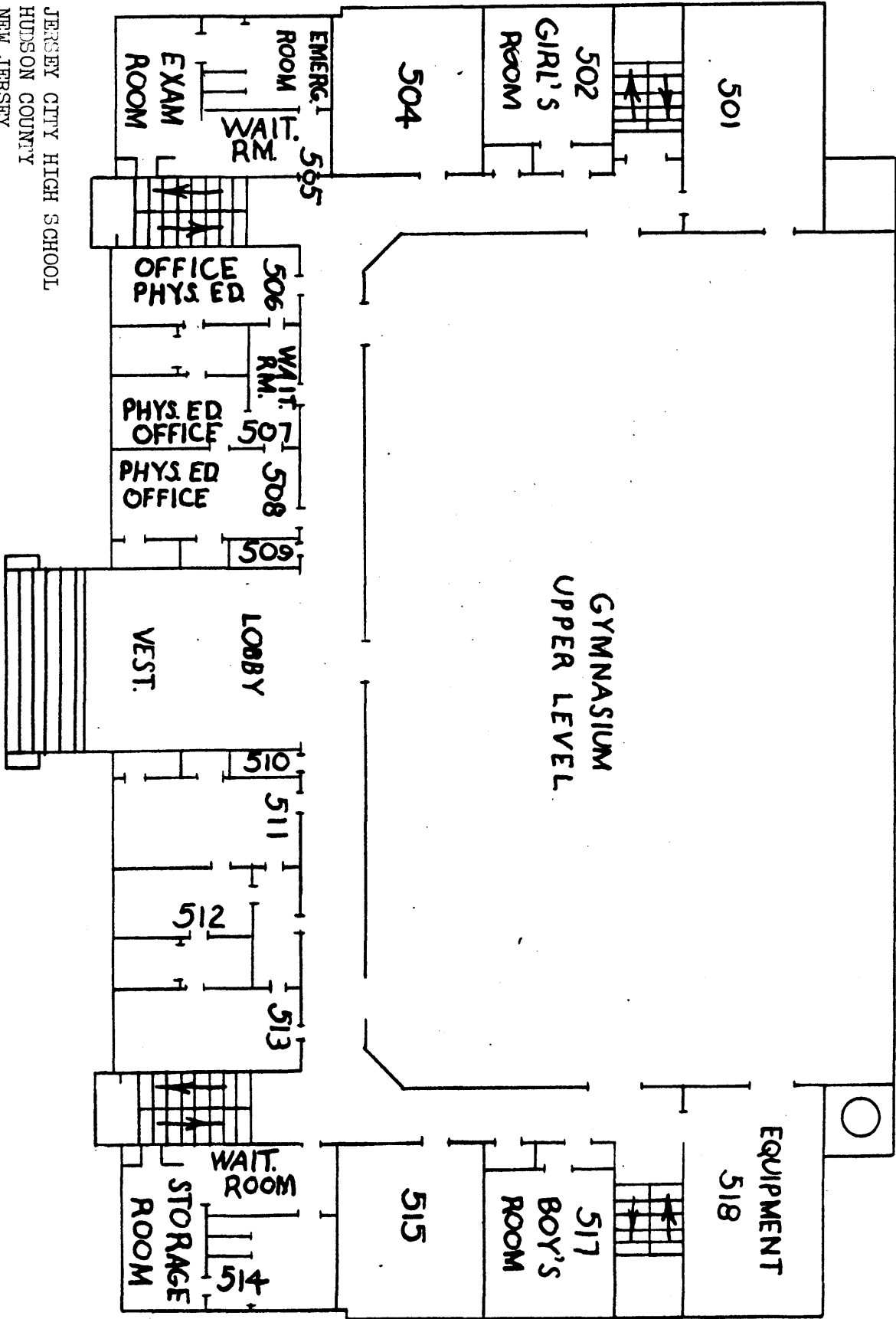


JERSEY CITY HIGH SCHOOL
HUDSON COUNTY
NEW JERSEY

FOURTH FLOOR PLAN



JERSEY CITY HIGH SCHOOL
HUDSON COUNTY
NEW JERSEY



GYMNASIUM
UPPER LEVEL

501
502 GIRL'S ROOM
504
EMERG. ROOM
WAIT. RM.
EXAM ROOM

506 OFFICE PHYS ED
507 WAIT. RM.
508 PHYS. ED OFFICE
509 PHYS. ED OFFICE

LOBBY
VEST.

510
511
512
513

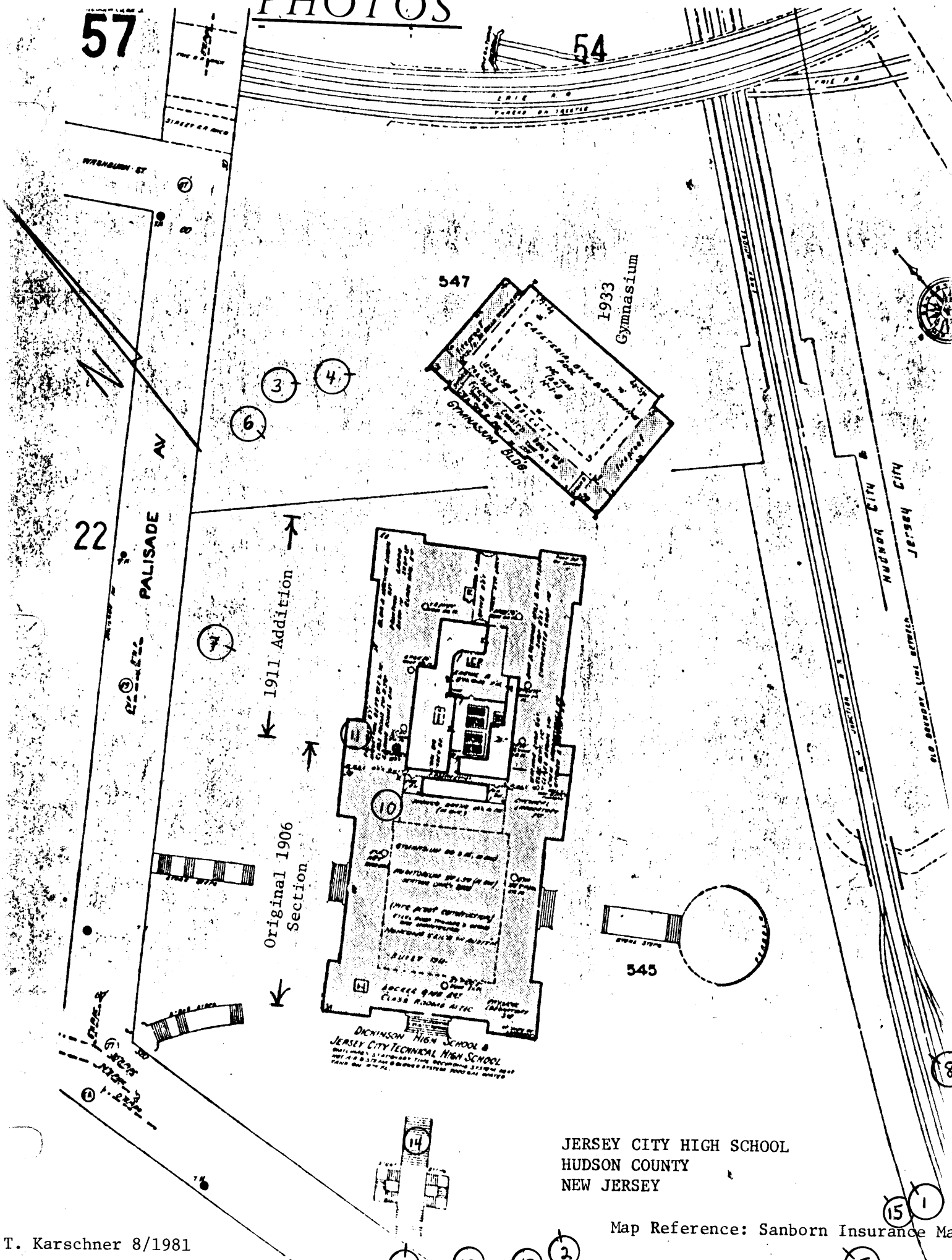
514 STORAGE ROOM
WAIT. ROOM
515

517 BOY'S ROOM
518 EQUIPMENT
519

PHOTOS

57

54



547

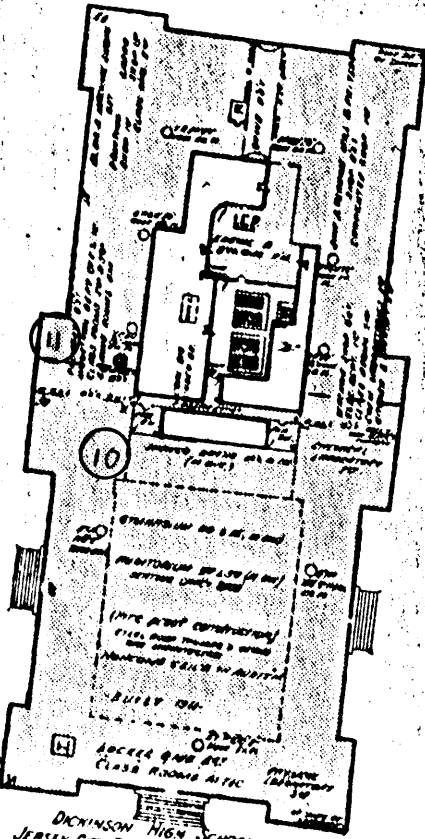
1933
Gymnasium

22

PALISADE AV

1911 Addition

Original 1906 Section



DICKINSON HIGH SCHOOL &
 JERSEY CITY TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL
 HUDSON COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

545

JERSEY CITY HIGH SCHOOL
 HUDSON COUNTY
 NEW JERSEY

Map Reference: Sanborn Insurance Map

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