

PH036170X

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
MAR 2 1976
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED JUN 17 1976

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC
Powell School
AND/OR COMMON
"Free School"

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
2331-Sixth Avenue, North

__NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN
Birmingham

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

__ VICINITY OF

STATE
Alabama

CODE
01

COUNTY
Jefferson

CODE
073

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"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Birmingham Board of Education

STREET & NUMBER
2015 7th Avenue, North

CITY, TOWN
Birmingham

__ VICINITY OF

STATE
Alabama

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Jefferson County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER
716 21st Street, North

CITY, TOWN
Birmingham

STATE
Alabama

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Historic Site Survey, Jefferson County, Alabama

DATE
December, 1972

__FEDERAL __STATE COUNTY __LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS Birmingham Regional Planning Commission

CITY, TOWN
Birmingham

STATE
Alabama

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

EXCELLENT
 GOOD
 FAIR

DETERIORATED
 RUINS
 UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED
 ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Powell School is a three story red brick structure with stone foundation in the Victorian Gothic style, typical of turn of the century school buildings. Completed in 1888, it was erected on the site of the first public school in Birmingham which was built in 1874. The building is rectangular in shape and symmetrically designed. Measuring 11'6" by 74'1", the structure faces east and is located on a 1.3 acre lot in the heart of the city.

The east, and originally main, facade is composed of three primary bays, which are further divided into three bays separated vertically by pilasters and horizontally by brick courses. Windows on the main floors are double hung with six over six lights and those at the basement level are half-sized with four lights. The pedimented gable, outlined in stone contains a three part round arched window with header brick molding.

The central bay projects approximately four feet enclosing a one story crenellated portico and the base of the bell tower which had to be removed in 1951 for safety reasons. The original main entrance is distinctly Gothic in character repeating in stone the arch and steep pediment of the gables. The base of the tower has a pair of narrow windows above the portico, windows on two floors of the projecting portion and is flanked by three stories of very narrow windows.

North and south elevations repeat the same three bay arrangement. The central section contains a one story portico with crenellation. Windows within this section consist of a central pair of narrower windows. The mansard roof terminated in a bracketed cornice that is interrupted only by the gables and bell tower.

The symmetrical three bay facade occurs again in the rear elevation. Here the central section takes the form of a three sided projecting bay which includes all three floors. Each side of the bay has a single double hung sash window. The end bays are identical to those of the other elevation.

The floor plan on all three levels is essentially the same with bisecting halls and four large classrooms, each 25' x 32'. Stairs are located at both ends of the hall and have wooden fixtures on the banister to prevent children from sliding on them. Other distinctive features include very high ceilings 20" walls and a fireplace, the only one in a Birmingham school.

In 1951 an inconspicuous brick building was constructed on the grounds to provide an auditorium, lunchroom, kitchen and boiler room. Further improvements to the facility were made in 1969. The masonry was cleaned, regouted and repointed. Interior work included installing firewalls, fire resistive bricks and separating classrooms from stairwells. One of the classrooms was converted to a school museum and repository for early school system records and memorabilia.

When this site for the first school in Birmingham was selected, citizens objected because it was too far out in the country. Today the Powell School is located in the core of a 20th century industrial city with nearby housing projects and busy streets. Fortunately a small lawn, shrubs and some trees remain on the grounds.

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 type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1888

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Powell School was built in 1888 on the site of Birmingham's first public school and is now the oldest school building in the city. It became the center of this rapidly growing city's educational system and was the most up to date facility of its time in the South.

With the organizational and financial assistance of the young city's prominent citizens, the "Free School", as it was first called was actually initiated by the working people of the city who could not afford the private schools. In 1873 these people came to Colonel John Terry for assistance and he persuaded his friend Colonel James R. Powell, founder of Birmingham and president of the Elyton Land Company, to donate four city lots. The school was constructed in 1874 at the corner of Sixth Avenue and Twenty-Fourth street. Colonel Terry held the first city bonds issued which financed the construction cost.

This first school was a simple two story brick structure with four classrooms. It opened its doors on March 1, 1874 with approximately 150 pupils; only one year after a cholera epidemic brought death and financial disaster to the fledgling city. The school was to serve the white children residing in the city or within one-half mile of the city limits. Although called the "Free School", initially students paid twenty-five cents to one dollar according to their grade to attend. During these years, the school was administered by the Mayor and Aldermen.

By 1883 several more schools were added to the city's system, a wing was added to the Free School, and a superintendent of schools was required. Mayor A. O. Lane appointed Dr. J. H. Phillips, launching the more sophisticated school system. Dr. Phillips divided the Free School into three units: primary, elementary and high school, creating Birmingham's first secondary school at this location, beginning in one room. This same year Colonel Terry suggested changing the name of the school to honor Colonel Powell, who not only donated the land but also turned over his salary as mayor to the school while he was in that office.

The system outgrew the structure and by 1886 the Powell School was declared unsafe and razed. The Board of Education commissioned a team to secure plans and specifications for a new structure. Plans for the present Powell school resulted from a trip the team and Dr. Phillips made to study schools in the major midwestern cities as well as recommendations made by the architect.

As the city of Birmingham built more schools, Powell continued to operate as an elementary school. Until World War I it was used in the city's teacher training program. More recently, Powell helped initiate special programs in remedial reading and for the blind

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Armes, Ethel - The Story of Coal and Iron in Alabama. 1910, republished; Bookkeepers Press, Birmingham 1972.

Birmingham Board of Education, Research Department, files, blueprints, floor plans, contract files, newspaper files.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.3

UTM REFERENCES

A	1, 6	5, 1, 8, 2, 5, 0	3, 7, 0, 8, 8, 8, 0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C			

B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

W. Warner Floyd, Executive Director & Donna Hole

ORGANIZATION

Alabama Historical Commission

DATE

February 17, 1976

STREET & NUMBER

725 Monroe Street

TELEPHONE

832-6621

CITY OR TOWN

Montgomery

STATE

Alabama

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 National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Miss B. Howard Jr.

TITLE

SHPO Ala.

DATE

Feb. 23, 1976

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

W. J. Mumford

DATE

6/17/76

Acting DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

Charles A. Ferguson

DATE

6.16.76

Acting KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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student. When Birmingham celebrated its centennial in 1972, the Powell School participated with its own program. At this time the school's principal Mr. Gordon Starr and a former teacher, Mrs. Nell Hawthorne, created a school museum in the building to display artifacts and records relating to the school system's history. Presently, the school is operating at full capacity for grades kindergarten through eight.

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Birmingham Public Library, Southern History Department, Vertical Files.

McClinton, Curtis - personal inspections, June and July, 1974.

Phillips, Marshall - "A History of the Public Schools in Birmingham, Alabama";
M. A., University of Alabama, 1939.

Powell School Museum files, old textbooks, old photographs, drawings, files, papers,
newspaper clippings. History of Powell School written by Miss Hattie Grimes and
Mrs. Gordon Starr and others.