Form No. 10-300 (Rev. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

DATA SHEET

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED DEC 8 1976
DATE ENTERED AUG 29 1977

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC: Cornish School

AND/OR COMMON: Cornish School of Allied Arts

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 710 East Roy Street — __NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN: Seattle — __ VICINITY OF — CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: 1st - Joel Pritchard

STATE: Washington — CODE: 53 — COUNTY: King — CODE: 033

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
__DISTRICT	__PUBLIC	X OCCUPIED	__AGRICULTURE	__MUSEUM
X BUILDING(S)	X PRIVATE	__UNOCCUPIED	__COMMERCIAL	__PARK
__STRUCTURE	__BOTH	__WORK IN PROGRESS	X EDUCATIONAL	__PRIVATE RESIDENCE
__SITE	**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**	**ACCESSIBLE**	X ENTERTAINMENT	__RELIGIOUS
__OBJECT	__IN PROCESS	X YES: RESTRICTED	__GOVERNMENT	__SCIENTIFIC
	__BEING CONSIDERED	__YES: UNRESTRICTED	__INDUSTRIAL	__TRANSPORTATION
		__NO	__MILITARY	__OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME: Cornish School of Allied Arts
Max Gurvich, Chairman of the Board of Trustees

STREET & NUMBER: 710 East Roy Street

CITY, TOWN: Seattle — __ VICINITY OF — STATE: Washington 98102

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: King County Administration Building

STREET & NUMBER: Fourth and James

CITY, TOWN: Seattle — STATE: Washington 98104

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE: Washington State Inventory of Historic Places

DATE: 1974 — __FEDERAL X STATE __COUNTY __LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Washington State Parks & Recreation Commission

CITY, TOWN: P. O. Box 1128, Olympia — STATE: Washington

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
__EXCELLENT	__DETERIORATED	X UNALTERED	X ORIGINAL SITE
__GOOD	__RUINS	__ALTERED	__MOVED DATE_____
X FAIR	__UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Ground was broken for Cornish School on Seattle's Capitol Hill in January, 1921 and the new building opened for summer session in July of that year. Seattle architect A. H. Albertson designed the school in the Spanish Colonial Revival style; it was constructed of brick covered on three sides with stucco and trimmed with ornamental terra cotta. The structure was built for the rapidly expanding school founded seven years earlier by Nellie Cornish. Its original use as a conservatory of allied arts continues to the present. The exterior of the building has not been altered; the appearance differs only in paint color, from the original peach to dusty-rose to buff to the present white.

The designer of the building, Abraham Horace Albertson, came to Seattle in 1907 as supervising architect for the White-Henry-Stuart Building, and stayed until his death in 1962. He was a native of New Jersey and a graduate of Columbia University, class of 1895. His work includes the Northern Life Tower, Condon Hall and the Infirmary at the University of Washington, St. Joseph's Church (all Seattle); Municipal Building (Everett), Security Building (Olympia), and Becker Building (Aberdeen). During World War I, he designed a Navy housing project in Bremerton ("we had a profit of $10 a house," he said), and received a citation from the federal government which stated that no housing project had been better designed. The housing project award brought Albertson to the attention of C. D. Stimson, president of Metropolitan Building Company, whose wife headed the pledge drive for the building fund committee. Through the Cornish Realty Company, an organization formed to locate and fund new quarters for the school, Stimson commissioned Albertson to design the building.

Volunteer Park (National Register), a focal point for Capitol Hill, lies approximately five blocks northeast of Cornish School. Development of the park in 1887 created a reason for people to travel to the hill and helped spur residential development there. Lumber barons, bankers, shipping tycoons, and those newly rich from the Alaska gold fields built expensive homes there. A gate at Roy Street, seven blocks east of Cornish School, blocked 14th Avenue (then known as Millionaires Row) from through traffic and provided a private entrance to Volunteer Park. Broadway, one block east of Cornish School, served as the funeral street for processions to the cemetery at the park; it was later paved and electric trolleys installed. As automobiles became popular with the rich, many of whom lived on the hill, auto dealers followed their clients, and Broadway became known as "auto row". Broadway remains the major commercial street on Capitol Hill. When the I-5 Freeway cut into Capitol Hill's west flank in 1963, the natural relationship to the city was interrupted and many homes were lost. The freeway provided new views west over Lake Union and the Olympic Mountains beyond, but changed the quality of the residential environment. Large new apartments built along the western slope to capture the views often block views from behind them. The freeway brought noise and air pollution as well as more multi-unit apartments. Commercial services accommodated the change with shops and restaurants catering to the new residential mix, particularly along Broadway. The block partially covered by Cornish School is zoned for low density multiple residence use; the neighborhood south and east of the school is zoned both low and high density multiple residence. One block north of the school a single family residence zone begins; one block east, on Broadway, the zoning is community business. The mixture of multi- and single-family and commercial buildings gives a range of use, and age and income groups, that makes Capitol Hill urban in its diversity.

Form No. 10-300a
(Rev. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED DEC 8 1976
DATE ENTERED AUG 29 1977

Cornish School is located in the NE¼ Section 29, T.25, R.4E of the Willamette Meridian. The original property is comprised of Lots 1, 2, 3, and 21 through 24 inclusive in Block 2 of Sarah B. Yesler's First Addition to the City of Seattle. The main building occupies most of Lots 1 and 2 and the west portion of Lots 23 and 24, with its south elevation fronting on East Roy Street. The property slopes steeply to the west. From this site the school commands a view of the city surrounding Lake Union and, beyond, the Olympic Mountains. The westerly view has been only minimally impacted by new construction; the original view of Mt. Rainier to the southeast has been completely blocked by a high-rise building. When the school was constructed, the north portion of the property was covered with an old cherry orchard where summer students studied and ate their lunches. In 1936, the orchard was leveled to make room for two small outbuildings and a parking lot. One of the shingled buildings was built as a radio studio and now serves as a print shop; the other building is used for woodworking. Landscaping is simple, consisting primarily of tall trees surrounding the building. Two large elms on the southeast corner of the property, nearly as tall as the building, shade the street and sidewalk. Several cedars grow to the west of the front entrance and a poplar shades the southwest corner of the building and the penthouse balcony. Maples on the northwest corner of the property are taller than the building. A low flowering hedge defines small patches of lawn.

The building is basically rectangular in shape, with various protrusions and extensions, and measures 177 feet 6 inches in length by widths varying from 48 feet to 65 feet. The long dimension is oriented in an east-west direction. The sloping site allows three stories on the east and five stories (including above-grade basement and sub-basement) on the west. The exterior wall surfaces are stucco over brick, except the north, or back, face, which is exposed brick. The basically flat roof of built-up roofing covers most of the building. A parapet,topped with terra cotta coping, edges the flat portion of the roof. The west end, over the penthouse, has a hip roof of metal tile.

The south, or front, elevation is organized into five irregularly-spaced sections, with the central and two end sections slightly recessed. Brick entrance steps lead across a courtyard, edged by a low wall of stuccoed concrete, to the main entrance in the central section. The entranceway, a slightly-stilted arch, is flanked by free-standing columns supporting wrought iron lanterns. The twisted columns with octagonal capitals, of ocher and sage-green terra cotta, use a twined leaf pattern. Terra cotta plaques forming the inner face of the arch are embossed with a dogwood motif and names of great artists. Double doors, windows at either side, and transoms above, are all constructed of decorative wrought iron backed with glass. A plaque above the entrance, with two terra cotta torches at each side, contains the inscription "The Cornish School", with a second line below it: "Dance, Drama, Music." Third-story windows in the central section are framed by five slightly-stilted arches, divided by engaged columns similar to those at the entrance. Rectangular plaques above these windows, separated by terra cotta torches, display the names Pavlova, Sunge, Wagner, Morris and Whistler. The two projecting bays on the south face contain similar window groups with four arches. Above these windows, panels divided by columns show dancers in bas-relief. The panels were designed and presented to the school by Alonzo Lewis, Seattle sculptor, who used Cornish dance pupils as models. The

Form No. 10-300a
(Rev. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED DEC 8 1976
DATE ENTERED AUG 29 1977

west section contains another arched doorway, similar to the main entrance, which opens to the stairway of the top floor penthouse. The series of four windows on the third floor of this section, looking out the penthouse living room, is rectangular rather than arched. First and second floor windows are double-hung and rectangular in shape; several have wrought iron balconies. Terra cotta frames the arches and forms the sills on all windows. Vertical rows of individual windows occur at the three inner stairway locations.

The east elevation parallels Harvard Avenue East. An arcade with a sloping metal tile roof follows the building and turns, at the northeast corner of the building, along a high wall to the street. This angle permitted a lawn (recently bricked in) used for an annual May Day festival. The L-shaped arcade contains three arches in each leg. Each arch is supported on either side by a terra cotta column with octagonal capital and separated from the next column and arch by a short expanse of stuccoed brick. Brick and terra cotta tiles form diamond patterns on the concrete floor of the arcade. The tiles display a stylized bird motif. Wrought iron tie rods under the arcade roof run from the building walls to the arcade walls. The leg of the arcade next to the building opens into the lobby of the theater through several double doors, making it possible for patrons to step outside during intermission. A third-story window group of four arches resembles those on the south elevation. The plaques above the windows name Debussy, Whitman, Thoreau, and MacDowell. To the left of the window group, on the east elevation, a third-story door opens on to a wrought iron balcony. A plaque over the door, framed by terra cotta torches, displays profile faces in a possible representation of comedy-tragedy masks. Two small rectangular windows, one above the other, indicate the stairway in the southeast corner of the building.

The arcade on the east side of the building opens into the lobby of the theater, which seats two hundred downstairs (main floor) and one hundred in the balcony. Behind the stage are two dressing rooms and, beyond them, a small rehearsal hall. Across the hall from the theater entrance is the publicity office and a large lounge with a fireplace. This fireplace caused a heated controversy after construction had begun, with one side arguing that five hundred dollars could be saved by eliminating it. The students decided to raise the money for "their" fireplace by selling bricks for a dollar each, and soon the necessary money was turned over to the building committee. Further along the hall, beyond the main entrance, lie the business offices and director's office (with fireplace) in the southwest corner of the building. The main hall runs the length of the building and serves as a gallery for exhibitions of students' work. The basement contains an apartment for the superintendent of the building, storage rooms and workrooms; the sub-basement, a steam-heating plant and fueld room. The second floor holds eighteen private studios and small classrooms. The third floor is divided into four studios, each with a large metal and wire glass skylight, used for dance and painting. The west end of the third floor contains the penthouse apartment, which includes living room with tiled fireplace, dining-room, kitchen,two bedrooms and bath. The living room opens onto a balcony, along the west side of the building, with a view of Lake Union, much of the city, and the Olympic Mountains.

GPO 892 455

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
__PREHISTORIC	__ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	__COMMUNITY PLANNING	__LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	__RELIGION	
__1400-1499	__ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	__CONSERVATION	__LAW	__SCIENCE	
__1500-1599	__AGRICULTURE	__ECONOMICS	__LITERATURE	X SCULPTURE	
__1600-1699	__ARCHITECTURE	X EDUCATION	__MILITARY	__SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
__1700-1799	X ART	__ENGINEERING	X MUSIC	X THEATER	
__1800-1899	__COMMERCE	__EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	__PHILOSOPHY	__TRANSPORTATION	
X 1900-	__COMMUNICATIONS	__INDUSTRY	__POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	X OTHER (SPECIFY) dance	
		__INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1921 BUILDER/ARCHITECT A. H. Albertson

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Cornish School, founded by Nellie C. Cornish in 1914, was a pioneering venture not only in the Northwest but in the world. It was one of the first organized schools for the arts, and remains the region's only conservatory offering comprehensive training in all the arts. The interdisciplinary program enbraces music, dance, fine art, design and theater. Cornish School was the beginning of cultural life in the Northwest and continues to act as a feeder institution for the area's symphonies, ballets, galleries and theaters. Nellie Cornish believed in developing intelligent spectators as well as training students to be professionals. Thus local graduates, especially in the early years, helped create a climate in which the arts were appreciated and understood. The first students came from the Seattle area; in time, they came from all over the country, Europe and Asia. From the beginning, Nellie Cornish recruited instructors for the school from all over the world. Cornish graduates, for over sixty years, have gone on to teach and perform and create around the world. The Cornish training and Cornish philosophy -- the basic interrelatedness of all the arts -- go with them, supporting the current fund drive claim that Cornish is "the local school with the national reputation."

Nellie Cornish came from three generations of pioneer ancestors. A great-grandfather, John Craig, at the age of four, was the sole survivor of an Indian massacre in Virginia; he later fought in the Revoluntionary War. A widowed great-grandmother, Rose Simpson, left Scotland with her eight children to seek her fortune in America. The Simpsons homesteaded in Illinois and the sons joined the California gold rush. Nellie's father, Nathan Arlington Cornish, was gifted with great curiosity; he was by nature a pioneer and independent thinker. When only fourteen, he started his business career as an itinerant photographer. While visiting relatives in Indiana, he saw the famous Laurence Barrett playing with a local stock company and became forever stage-struck. When he was eighteen years old, he joined a traveling group of actors. He traveled all over the country for two years, leading an adventurous existence which left its mark upon his life. He was shot by a rival after escorting a girl to her hotel room. Grandfather Cornish found his son and took him home, and Nathan looked forward to studying for law as soon as his health would permit. Nathan met Nellie's mother, Jeannette Simpson, at a county fair in Nebraska soon after his return.

Nellie Centennial Cornish was born on her Grandfather Cornish's farm near Greenwood, Nebraska on July 9, 1876 -- several days after a local celebration of the nation's centennial. By 1881, Nellie had a younger sister and brother and the family moved to Oberlin, Kansas. After two years in Kansas, Nellie's father showed symptoms of tuberculosis and joined Grandfather Simpson on a sheep ranch in eastern Oregon. Nellie rode the train on the first through trip of the Union Pacific Railway from Omaha to Portland, Oregon; the journey took six days. The sheep were lost in a snow storn that first winter. Nellie's father opened a law office (Condon and Cornish, attorneys-at-law) and founded a bank in the nearby town of Alkali, named ater an alkaline substance found in the water. The town knew its name had to be changed it it wanted to attract newcomers, so they chose Nathan's middle name, "Arlington", to

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Browne, Ellen Van Volkenburg, and Beck, Edward Nordhoff, editors. Miss Aunt Nellie. Seattle: University of WAshington Press, 1964.

Scrapbooks of newspaper and magazine clippings, letters, other momentos. Annual volumes 1921-1976. Archives and Records, University of Washington.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one

UTM REFERENCES

	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
A	10	550950	5274700
B			
C			
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

Leslie Scott

ORGANIZATION

Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation

DATE

June 1976

STREET & NUMBER

P. O. Box 1128

TELEPHONE

(206) 753-4117 4011

CITY OR TOWN

Olympia

STATE

Washington 98504

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL X 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 Dorothy M. Skoglund

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE November 30, 1976

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE 8/29/77

~~DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION~~

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

~~KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER~~

DATE 8.23.77

GPO 888-445

Form No. 10-300a
(Rev. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED DEC 8 1976
DATE ENTERED AUG 29 1977

honor him. Nellie attended St. Mary's Academy in Portland, Oregon. She studied piano there and practiced daily in a large room with ten pianos, all being used at once. The Cornish family lived in Alkali/Arlington for five years and then moved to Blaine, Washington where Nathan opened the First National Bank in 1889. Blaine was incorporated in 1891 and Nathan was elected its first mayor. Nellie stayed out of school for a year when her family moved to Blaine and used the time to teach her first piano lessons. She was fourteen that year and each of her ten pupils paid her 50¢ for an hour's instruction a week. Nellie attended Holy Names Academy in Seattle but soon convinced her parents to let her study piano at Cook Musical Institute in Portland. She graduated from North Central Grammar School in Portland. She planned to go on to high school but her mother became ill and Nellie was needed at home. Blaine lost its boom-town excitement and Nathan moved his family to Spokane, Washington where they ran a rooming house. Nellie's mother died and her father remarried; Nellie was on her own. She taught piano lessons in Arlington and in Blaine and became a governess for two girls near her own age. She sent to the Portland Board of Education for outlines of high school courses, studied them at night, and delivered them the next day. After several years Nellie decided she was ready for the "big city."

Nellie Cornish arrived in Seattle in April, 1900; the population at that time was 80,691. She was hired as a saleswoman at Sherman and Clay's music store. They fired her six weeks later but helped her to find pupils for piano lessons. Nellie was invited to share a studio in the Holyoke Block (National Register), a building where artists, especially musicians, worked and where many of them lived in their studios. Nellie lived there and taught music until the Holyoke was sold to the Federick & Nelson Department Store as an annex. She began to gather material for a book on teaching music to children. While doing her research, she kept seeing the name "Calvin Brainerd Cady." Cady's object was not "pianoizing, vocalizing or violinizing" but opening the student to the world of music ideas. Nellie saved her money and took a course from Cady in Los Angeles in the summer of 1911. Nellie's work attracted the attention of Dr. Henry Suzzallo, President of the University of Washington, who offered her a teaching position at the University during the summer sessions of 1912 and 1913.

Nellie Cornish opened the Cornish School of Music in 1914. She rented one small room on the second floor of the Boothe Building, across from Broadway High School, for twenty dollars a month. A piano, a blackboard and three chairs comprised her equipment. She taught all private lessons in the homes of her pupils; only theoretical subjects were taught in the school itself. The school was planned to be an elementary school of the arts -- all the arts -- with music as the major subject, but she had only piano students at the beginning. Violin and folk dancing were added before the first year was over. By 1915, the school had taken over the entire floor, and singing, French, painting and eurythmics were also taught. Enrollment grew; Nellie increased the teaching staff and added ballet, drama (acting, playwriting, staging), composing, and a marionette department -- the first in any school in the United States.

GPO 892 455

The devotion of Nellie Cornish to a then-revolutionary ideal, that of teaching all of the arts as an integrated concept, led to the establishment of her school. During her early experience as a piano teacher, she had felt the need for broader instruction than was possible in the classic half-hour lesson once or twice a week. The course she took from Calvin Brainerd Cady further refined her ideas. She believed that no art could be isolated from the others, and that the complete unity of the arts could be understood only through the coordinated study of music, drama, painting and dance. The Cornish School expanded until it offered the comprehensive training in the arts that Nellie Cornish envisioned. Much of her time was spent revamping the various departments of the school so that the curriculum would remain balanced; her frequent trips recruited new instructors for subject she perceived as being weak.

With the same zeal that she used in assembling an outstanding faculty, Nellie Cornish also enlisted the support of prominent local citizens. In 1920, she met with a group of them to discuss expanding the school. They considered the construction of a new building but advised her to look instead at a large residence on Seattle's fashionable First Hill. They spent a month considering it; in the meantime, the school's enrollment was growing at a rate of fifty pupils a week. They outgrew the First Hill residence before they acquired it. The Cornish Realty Company was formed to plan larger quarters for the school. Edgar Ames was president and Mrs. C. D. Stimson was asked to take charge of pledges for the building fund. For a year, Nellie spoke nearly every day before community groups, telling of the school's unique history and its need for proper housing. Contributions slowly came in and construction of the new building began on January 21, 1921 at Harvard and Roy Streets in Seattle. 1921 was not a year of economic promise for Seattle. World War I had been over for three years and all the shipyards were closing. It was said that a hundred families left Seattle each week, and many of them had children in Cornish.

By the spring of 1921, 600 of the 1600 pupils had withdrawn. But Nellie managed to keep the school going and on July 9, 1921, took occupancy of the new building. Along with serious study, the first month in the building brought a number of social activities, beginning with the dedication of the building. The local press featured the life of the school. One newspaper editorialized: "If Seattle is to become a truly metropolitan city, every effort for its development as an educational and cultural center is highly important. The contribution to that end, made by the Cornish School during its seven years of existence, has been very substantial."

That summer, neighbors circulated a petition asking that the Cornish School be closed on the grounds that it was "a public nuisance to the neighborhood" because of its noise. Residents asked for a temporary injunction to restrain operation of the building until it was made soundproof and a ventilating system installed. The Court was asked to make the injunction permament unless the windows were at all times closed. Complains alleged that property values had fallen by one-third in the neighborhood. In December, 1921 the case of Neighborhood versus Cornish School opened in Superior Court with Judge A. W. Frater presiding. It lasted for a week. According to the Seattle Star, "Some of Seattle's most elite society testified. Names of friendly witnesses read like the Blue Book of Seattle," The attacking neighborhood also mobilized quite a few prominent citizens. Judge Frater had an interest in culture. In announcing his decision, Frater said, "The Cornish School is one of the important activities in Seattle . . . . Neighborhoods change and cities grow . . . ." He advised neighbors to sell their homes and move to the country if they found city noises unbearable. The battle was won.

Enrollment boomed in the 1920s and kept the school going while times were good. Nellie Cornish expanded the purpose of the school to make it more than a place where teaching was done; it became the center of all artistic endeavor in the area. Performances were given nearly every week. The school sponsored a group of touring players and later a traveling quartet. Perhaps the Nellie Cornish approach to education was more appreciated in New York or in Europe than in Seattle. Although the school often served 1,000 to 1,500 students a year, the financial situation was always precarious. Annual deficits were covered by loyal supporters, but every April became an agonizing time. Collapse of the stock market in 1929 and the progressive loss, through death, of its financial supporters, brought problems for the school. New board members did not understand Nellie's concept of the essential interrelatedness of the arts, and began to dictate changes in the curriculum. Financial difficulties increased. In 1937, at the age of sixty-one, Nellie Cornish resigned as active director of the school. She left Seattle to live in New York and California with her adopted daughter, Elena Miramova, and returned about a year before her death in April 24, 1956.

Nellie Cornish was described by Martha Graham as "a small, round, plump little lady with the dynamism of a rocket." Mark Tobey called her a "beacon of hope to the young." In his autobiography, Maurice Browne said she was "a little round untidy woman who had greatness," She came to Seattle with a dream, a grammar school disploma, no money and no connections. She was a self-made educator who overcame her feeling that because she lacked formal education she had no right to teach. She was known as "Miss Aunt Nellie" to the hundreds of students she mothered. Many letters from students testify to her warmth and generosity as well as her energy.

Nellie Cornish brought scores of gifted teachers and students to what was then an isolated corner of the country. Among those associated with the Cornish School were Calvin Brainerd Cady, noted Boston educator; Maurice Browne, founder of the Chicago Little Theater; Adolph Bolm, once a member of the Diaghiloff Ballet and one of the greatest dancers the world has known; Martha Graham, probably the best known American choreographer of modern dance (she gave her first solo performance at Cornish); Michio Ito, Japanese dancer; Cornelius Van Vleet, one-time first cellist of the New York Philharmonic; Mordecai Gorelik, New York stage designer; Arnold Gantvoort of the Cincinnati College of Music; Marcel Grandjany, French harpist; Sylvia Tell, prima ballerina of the Chicago Opera and the San Carlo; Robert Schmitz, pianist; Mark Toby, internationally known painter (he taught painting classes at Cornish when an unknown); Muriel Stuart of the America Ballet School; Rudolph Schaeffer of the Schaeffer School of Design in San Francisco; Moroni Olsen, founder of the Moroni Olsen Players; Walter Reese, nationally known illustrator; and Chet Huntley, former news commentator on a national network.

Seattle Mayor Gordon S. Clinton declared July 9, 1957 to be Nellie Cornish Day. It would have been her eighty-first birthday. In his proclamation, he said: "Nellie Cornish brought the city esteem and recognition throughout the world as the home of a rare institution. She had the unusual capacity for bringing forth the best artistic qualities in those who surrounded her as teachers and students in the arts. Nellie Cornish Day will give an opportunity for the city to show its appreciation for a woman who devoted her life to fostering its cultural growth." A similar proclamation in 1975 by Governor Daniel J. Evans stated: "The State of Washington finds it most appropriate to set aside a time of special recognition of the tremendous contributions made to our community by the distinguished faculty and students of the school . . . I urge all citizens to join me in honoring and supporting the Northwest's most respected and celebrated professional training center for the arts."

Today, the Cornish School of Allied Arts continues its interdisciplinary approach. New courses have been added over the years to the basic departments of music, dance, fine art, design and theater. Current enrollment approaches 1,000 students, including regular students taking a full program and special students taking one or two courses from pre-school level through college. Legal control of the school changed several times: Cornish Realty Company became The Cornish School Foundation in 1924, assuming the assets and the debts of the school; and the Music and Art Foundation took over in 1954 when it paid off the mortgage. When the school incorporated in 1974, the building was deeded over to the Cornish School of Allied Arts. The school is now an accredited four-year college offering a bachelors degree in fine arts. The allied arts concept, the student interest -- and the financial difficulties -- continue.

AUG 29 1977

Interviews with Melvin Strauss, Director of Cornish School, and David Shaw, Assistant Director. May-June, 1976.

Copy of blueprints for Cornish School. Building Department, City of Seattle.