

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

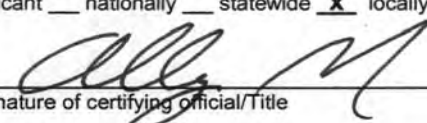
This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of PropertyHistoric name Whitman Elementary School

Other names/site number _____

2. Locationstreet & number 1120 South 39th Street not for publication _____city or town Tacoma vicinity _____State Washington code WA county Pierce code 053 zip code 98418**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

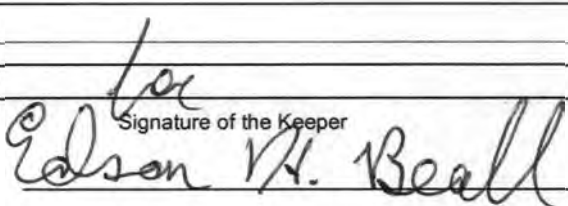

Signature of certifying official/Title11-5-12
DateWASHINGTON STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title_____
Date_____
State or Federal agency and bureau**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- ☒ entered in the National Register.
 ☐ See continuation sheet
- ☐ determined eligible for the
 National Register.
 ☐ See continuation sheet
- ☐ determined not eligible for the
 National Register.
- ☐ removed from the
 National Register.
- ☐ other (explain:) _____


Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

12-26-12

5. Classification**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

☐ private
☒ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not incl. previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Non-Contributing	
1		buildings
		sites
	1	structures
		objects
1	1	Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

n/a

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Functions or Use**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Education- School

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Education- School

7. Description**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Modern Movement (International Style)

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Concrete

roof Build-up

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property.)

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

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NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION:

EXTERIOR

Whitman Elementary School is a one-story building with a daylight basement on the northeastern and east elevations. The main entrance is on the north facade. The building occupies the northeastern end of the site, while a large corrugated metal play shed is directly to the west of the building. A small piece of playground equipment is located on the southeast interior corner of the "L" shaped portion of the building. Asphalt fills most of the remaining portion of the site. Grass playfields, play equipment, and a softball diamond are located on an adjacent playfield to the west, which is at a higher grade and is accessed by stairs just to the southwest of the play shed. Typical of the International Style, the building has minimal applied decoration. The types of windows, extensive glazing, and use of poured concrete are the key design features.

The poured concrete school is irregular in plan, and reads as a series of connected boxes that vary in height and setbacks. The main form of the building is roughly that of a "U," with a substantial extension located on the western end. Most of the building has a flat roof, although the U-shaped arms and the southern portion of the lunchroom/auditorium wing have shallow shed roofs. Eaves on the main elevation are exceptionally shallow while the majority of eaves on secondary elevations are only slightly deeper.

The building's horizontal massing is broken only by a tall "fin," which houses the chimney for the heating system. This detail is towards the center of the main façade, and accentuates the main entrance. The walls are poured concrete and come in two primary finishes, either smooth (with a focused gaze one can barely see the individual sheets of plywood that formed the molds) or a rougher, textured finish created by using vertical 2x4s to create the concrete molds. The main façade predominately uses the smooth concrete finish, while the textured finish is used to accent smaller wall expanses on other elevations. The glazing, most of which are the original steel units, dominates the structure due to its extensive use and the number of different sized lights. The windows accentuate the horizontal lines of the structure, with three or more horizontal lights per a unit. Most of the building has very shallow eaves, further creating the tight building envelope showcased by International Style buildings.

North Elevation

The western end of the main façade is one-story with a recessed clerestoried central section that rises above the main exterior wall height. This articulates the auditorium/multi-purpose room that occupies the inner-

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most portion of the building with its high ceiling. The western-most section of the façade has three ganged aluminum windows. These vertical units are further divided with horizontal muntins. The western and eastern most upper lights are operational awning units, all other units are fixed. The next grouping of windows has fifteen ganged vertical units, each further subdivided into three horizontal lights, one stacked over the next. Counting from the west, windows five, six, nine, ten, thirteen and fifteen have operable middle and upper lights, which work together as a single hopper unit. Window number fourteen has been reglazed and is missing the metal muntin between what were likely the original upper and middle lights.

The wall to the east of the windows has raised metal letters with the school's name and address. The main entrance is slightly recessed and is reached by eleven poured concrete steps. A metal railing divides the wide staircase in half, while poured concrete planters are stepped to rise on either side of the stairs. A pair of double front doors provides entry into the school. Each door has three evenly spaced square lights, one stacked above the other. A transom and sidelight panels are created by large square lights above and to the sides of the doors. The bottom sidelight panels are solid. The entire main opening has a beveled concrete frame accentuating the entrance. To the east of the entrance the grade changes and the façade has a daylight basement below the main floor.

The daylight basement houses mechanical rooms on the western end and classrooms on the eastern portion of the façade, while the main floor provides administrative offices. The mechanical portion of the daylight basement can be reached by four concrete steps, which go below grade to provide access to two additional doors flanked by a number of pipes. A door providing access into the transformer space is located underneath the main floor entrance stairs, another door which provides entry to the janitorial office is on the north façade. Two ganged windows are on the far west of the janitorial office door, each with six horizontal lights. A poured concrete panel with horizontal ribbing delineates the mechanical portion of the building from the start of the classroom space. Six large banks of windows occupy the daylight basement. Each unit is steel and recessed into the concrete opening without additional window trim. Each window grouping is flanked by a poured concrete panel with horizontal ribbing. Each window bay consists of three vertical units with five stacked horizontal lights. The center light and the light above it in the middle window unit operate as an awning window. In some of the bays the uppermost right hand corner lights have been removed to provide space for air ducts. The recessed northeastern corner has a large window unit with three ganged windows, identical to those on the north façade. The horizontal ribbing from the main façade continues on the daylight basement elevation to the recessed portion of the main façade, where it flanks six banked windows. The second and fifth windows each have operating awning units that are made from the middle light and the light directly above it.

A large poured concrete band delineates the daylight basement from the main floor. The main floor has a continuous band of ganged windows with a continuous sill and lintel. The sill and lintel project slightly

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from the building façade. This massive band of windows is made by twenty-seven individual vertical units, each one containing four horizontal lights. The two upper lights are taller than the two lower lights. The windows are ordered so that two units are fixed, followed by two units that have both an operating awning light and an operating hopper light. The windows wrap the eastern corner of the building and continue with an additional four units on the recessed east elevation. The windows are followed by a substantial portion of blank wall. The recessed portion of the north façade is also windowless. While most of the poured concrete on the north elevation only shows the faint plywood mold impressions, the recessed portion on the northeast end shows distinctive mold marks from vertical boards.

East Elevation

The main portion of the east elevation's daylight basement has two sets of double doors on the northernmost end, divided by a concrete wall perpendicular to the street. Three fixed transom lights are above the windows, separated from the windows by a flat-roofed awning. To the north of the doors is a poured concrete pier with horizontal ribbing. This concrete treatment occurs between each of the nine window bays. Each window bay is composed of three ganged vertical windows, each divided into five horizontal lights. The middle light and the light above it form an operational awning window. In almost every bay a single upper light has been replaced with a vent grill.

A wide band of concrete with five evenly spaced horizontal ventilation grills divides the daylight basement from the main floor. Most of the poured concrete on this elevation shows distinctive marks from the vertical boards that made the molds. The entire main floor is glazed from corner to corner, with only the slimmest portion of concrete wall on each end of the elevation. This massive ganging of windows has forty vertical windows, each with four horizontal lights. In each window the top two lights are taller than the bottom two. The general fenestration pattern, with (a) representing a fixed unit and (b) representing an awning unit is that of a-b-b-a-a-b-b-a-a-b-b which repeats the paired window types to the corner, closing with a single (a) window. A secondary entry, slightly recessed under a cantilevered roof, is located around the southeast corner, where the east elevation is significantly recessed. Two concrete stairs are accessed from the south, providing entry to the east facing double doors. This portion of the building is accessed at a split-level between the basement and the main floor, and has a lower roofline. Two square lights are in the upper portion of each entry door, while two square sidelights are on either side of the entry. Twelve lights fill the entire wall above the doors, creating a massive transom.

South Elevation

The south elevation is complex, in part due to the predominantly "U" shape formed by this portion of the building. It also has changes in both height and depth. The far eastern portion of the elevation is the end

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wall for the east façade and lacks fenestration. The lower portion of the poured concrete wall has horizontal ribbing, while the upper portion is poured concrete where individual board patterns from the concrete molds are visible. The main portion of this section is at a split-level, providing space for one of the building's main interior staircases. Entry is on the east elevation. The south elevation is articulated with a series of squares created by a bas relief grid. To the far west is a large ventilation grate. Then the façade extends out a few feet and rises in height as well. This entire section lacks fenestration.

The interior of the "U" forms a courtyard and provides additional entry to the building. The courtyard is reached by seven concrete steps. At the top of the rise a serpentine concrete path accesses the library at the south end of the courtyard while individual classrooms doors on the east and west elevations have access to the courtyard with individual classroom doors. The east and west sides of the "U" each house four classrooms. Each classroom has an exterior metal door topped with a large transom composed of two lights. The lower light is a narrow rectangle, while the upper light is a square.

Starting at the north end of the east elevation, each door is followed by seven vertical windows. The windows have four lights, two narrow lights on the bottom followed by two wider rectangles above. The seven window pattern accommodates several awning and hopper lights. On a window with working lights, a large rectangular awning window is located on the second light and a smaller narrow hopper window is located on the bottom light. The pattern for this elevation is door, 2 working windows, 2 fixed windows, 2 working windows, 1 fixed window, then a door. Starting at the north end of the west elevation the pattern is: 1b-2a-2b-2a-door.

The south-facing wall of the "U" is extended with a small addition from the 2003 remodel. It has a false front a few feet higher than the surrounding walls from the original structure, and is clad with corrugated metal, with horizontal striations. Seven banks of windows of aluminum windows dominate almost the entire wall. The two end windows are slender and narrow, while the five center banks are wide. Each window has seven horizontal lights, stacked one on top of the other. The bottom lights are the tallest rectangles, while each successive light becomes shorter and shorter. Just to the east of center is a protruding entry, essentially a 90-degree corner that juts out of the wall plane. The western wall has a door into the library, a horizontal window near the ground with a square window to the west and a long tall window to the east. The eastern wall has a single horizontal window. A cantilevered metal awning cuts across the entire elevation with a serpentine curve. The southern end of the western-most section of the "U" has three ganged vertical lights followed by six bas-relief squares on the far western end.

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West Elevation

The west elevation is the most irregular of the four building elevations. It is roughly an upside-down "L" shape with projecting sections on both the south and the west ends. The southern portion of the west end has a recessed doorway with clerestory windows on the upper portion of the wall, providing light to the hallway corridor. The rest of the wall is dominated by twenty-three ganged windows. These units, which have four lights each, have two larger lights stacked at the top portion of the window and two narrow lights stacked on the bottom portion. Some of the windows are operating, with the lower of the two larger lights functioning as an awning window while the lower of the two smaller lights is a hopper window. The window pattern, starting from the north is 2 working windows, 2 fixed windows. This repeats 5 times. The last 3 windows are two working units followed by one fixed unit.

The south side of the western-most "L" portion has four distinct levels, each at varying heights articulating the different needs of the building: classroom spaces to the south (flat roof), then a clerestory for additional classroom light on both the south and north elevations (shed roof), followed by a hallway (flat roof) then a taller wall with clerestory lights (flat roof) for the gymnasium portion of the building. There are two kindergarten rooms in this portion of the building, each with their own exterior door. The two doors are near the center of the wall while to the east is a single new six-light window. The lights are stacked in three bands each with two lights. The center light is a larger rectangle. This window is an aluminum replacement unit and is smaller in size than the original steel window. The original steel window is on the far west end of the elevation and is formed by four ganged units, each with three evenly sized horizontal lights. The far western portion of the elevation serves as a bicycle porch and is open on two sides. The roof is supported with a single metal pipe. A chain link fence with a locked gate currently secures the area.

The far northwestern end of the west elevation is the only portion of the building to have a substantial eave overhang. The far southern end of the building is occupied by the fenced-off bike storage area. The rest of the elevation has two fixed horizontal windows glazed with textured glass and covered with a metal grill, a set of recessed double doors, with a single sidelight on each side. These are followed by another pair of fixed horizontal windows glazed with textured glass and covered with a metal grill. A single door then follows. After this fenestration pattern the remaining portion of the elevation juts out. The southern portion has a single door. The west elevation has a tall false front on the southern portion, with a single fixed aluminum (newer) window followed by a door.

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INTERIOR

The historic layout of the school, with the bottom of the "U" housing administrative offices, and the wings of the "U" providing classroom space remains intact. The northwestern most portion of the building still houses the auditorium, which also serves as the lunchroom and gymnasium. The stage, on the west wall, has its original proscenium with a rectangular surround stepped back in three successive levels.

The eastern portion of the north end houses administrative offices. The far eastern arm of the "U" is a double loaded corridor with eight classrooms and a computer room. Four classrooms are on the western elevation, the remaining rooms are on the eastern elevation. An original staircase to the daylight basement is at the southern end of this portion of the "U." Boys' and girls' bathrooms are located near the intersection of the "U." Directly across from the administrative area is the library. The north wall is curved and at the western end of it is a new (2003 remodel) open staircase, which leads to the daylight basement. The western arm of the "U" houses seven classrooms on a double-loaded corridor and another set of boys' and girls' restrooms. Four of the classrooms are on the east side the remaining classrooms and restrooms are on the west side. The large multi-purpose room (auditorium, gym, lunchroom) along with support spaces for storage, and cooking, anchors the northwestern portion of the building. Directly to the south are two kindergarten rooms with additional boys' and girls' restrooms on the far west end. All classrooms located inside of the "U" have both doors accessing the interior hallway and doors that access the outside courtyard.

The daylight basement on the northeastern portion of the building is L-shaped, with three classrooms and mechanical rooms on the northern portion of the "L." A new staircase occupies the west end of the arm, and provides access to the main floor just outside the new library space. The inside corner of the "L" houses boys' and girls' bathrooms. The outer corner of the "L" has a vestibule that provides access to K Street. The southern end of the basement houses 5 classrooms and auxiliary spaces on a double loaded corridor. The east wall has 4 classrooms and a music room while the west wall has a single classroom, a project area, and a room for instructional activities.

INTEGRITY

Changes to this structure are minimal. The majority of the exterior elevations are intact, both in massing and fenestration. Other period details that remain are visible wood mold impressions for significant sections of the concrete pours. This building underwent substantial 7 million dollar renovation in 2003. The architectural firm was the McGranahan Partnership, the general contractor was Quinn Construction. Changes to the exterior footprint were minimal.

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The far northwestern corner, which according to period photos was originally stepped, was filled in partially during a 1978 remodel then completely filled in during the 2003 remodel to accommodate additional kitchen requirements. A small new window is in this portion of the building. The south elevation of the "U" had a new wall added during the 2003 remodel. This wall is clad with horizontal corrugated metal, new windows, and a serpentine curved cantilevered awning. A 90 degree angled corner projects from the elevation, providing an exterior door for the library and additional light into a reading nook. Due to the recessed and elevated nature of this courtyard, this portion of the south elevation is difficult to see from the street, and is not on one of the main building facades.

Interior alterations primarily focused on expanding the library, administration area, and kitchen in addition to providing better ADA access. The building had new flooring added during this time (the predominate flooring surfaces are either a vinyl tile or an industrial carpet) and dropped ceiling panels to address wiring/mechanical updates. The classroom space on the daylight level basement was altered slightly reconfiguring 3 classrooms into one open project area and one instructional activity room. This area is visible on the play on the west end of the floor with a curved corridor wall, clearly indicating the changes from the 2003 remodel.

PLAY SHED

A non-contributing play shed is located to the west of the school. The structure is an open-sided building supported by 10 large steel beams (on the east and wide sides of the structure) each resting on a low concrete cylinder. These support the shed roof, which slants towards the west. Construction date for the play shed is unknown. It is a late 20th century addition, and pre-dates the 2003 remodel.

8. Statement of Significance**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property.) SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

9. Major Bibliographical References**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.) SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering
- ☐ Record# _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Education

Period of Significance

1952

Significant Dates

1952 (construction ended)

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation**Architect/Builder**

Lea, Pearson, & Richards (architect)

Standard Construction Company (builder)

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other

Name of repository:

Various plans on file with the Tacoma
School District, historic photos located in
Tacoma Public Library

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Whitman Elementary School in Tacoma, Washington, is historically significant under National Register Criterion A for its association with the broad planning and construction trends of the Tacoma School District, specifically with its emphasis on contemporary styles in post-WWII era construction, which reflected national educational trends at the time. The building is also significant under Criterion C due to its association with the regionally prominent architectural firm of Lea, Pearson & Richards and as a strong example of International Style architecture. The period of significance for the structure begins and ends in 1952, the date construction was finished. The building still retains a high level of character defining features from this period.

Historic Context

The original Whitman School, one of Tacoma's first four brick schools, was a two-and-a-half story brick building, constructed in 1892. This building had additions in 1899, 1892, and 1912, resulting in a 17 classroom structure. Early school board records indicate that the building was one of the schools named for writers including Bryant, Lowell, Emerson, Hawthorne, Whittier and Irving. Thus Whitman was likely named for Walt Whitman. However, in 1949 school board president Fran Pratt declared the school to have been named for Narcissia and Marcus Whitman. The school was an anchor on the southeast side of the city, a neighborhood filled with Victorian and Craftsman bungalows.

The original Whitman School was severely damaged in an earthquake on April 13, 1949. The 7.1 earthquake, which struck during the middle of the school day at 11:55 am, was centered between Olympia and Tacoma. To date, this is the strongest earthquake to hit post-contact Washington State. Whitman was one of four older brick schools that were significantly damaged by the earthquake, Edison, Lowell, and Willard were the other three. At Lowell a child was killed by falling bricks during the earthquake. Eventually all four schools were condemned and demolished.

Whitman was demolished in 1950. The 700 students attending the school were housed in portables until construction of a new school building was completed in 1952. At the time of construction, the International Style school was the largest of the post-WWII era elementary schools in Tacoma, with 18 classrooms, a gymnasium, and other facilities.

Final plans for the new school, designed by the Tacoma-based firm of Lea, Pearson & Richards, were approved in September of 1949, but the plans were held due to lack of funding. Although a period newspaper article indicates that the state was unable to distribute matching funds for the school's construction in 1950 as originally promised, the project moved forward in April of 1951 with contracts

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awarded for the building: Standard Construction Company for a general contract bid of \$429,900, Stoker Engineering Company for a mechanical bid of \$80,200, and C. & O. Electrical Company with a bid of \$40,124. The estimated cost per square foot at Whitman was \$11.88. The new school was built on what was the former playground site for the old Whitman, almost the entire block between South 39th and 40th and South L and South K Streets. The site of the original Whitman school now serves as playground area for the current school.

Post-WWII Era Schools

The greatest challenge facing American educational systems in the post-World War II era was a dramatically increasing student population combined with rapid suburban growth. At the same time, older urban school enrollments were declining as more affluent families moved to the suburbs. Tacoma, with the rapid growth of its port and the nearby Ft. Lewis Army base, was a part of this national trend. Race became a major issue in urban school districts. Affluent white families fled crowded urban cores, and migration to suburban areas started before the war was barely over. The exodus from downtown was fueled by public policies that stimulated road building combined with inexpensive gasoline and personal transportation. Between 1940 and 1960 America's suburban population grew by 27 million people, more than two times the increase in central cities.

The pressure of growing school enrollment was so severe, that in 1955 editors at *Architectural Forum* worried that every 15 minutes enough babies were born to fill another classroom. Enrollment numbers at the national level do indeed support this concern. Public U.S. school systems had 25.1 million students enrolled in 1949-50. By 1959-60 the number had reached almost 36 million, and peaked in 1971 at 46 million. The shortage of classrooms forced school systems to consider a number of solutions, including portables, split sessions, and temporary buildings. Tacoma utilized all of these solutions to meet their demands. Tacoma's student population increased from 22,157 in 1950 to 29,778 in 1956, a 26% jump in enrollment.

Towards the end of WWII, the Tacoma School Board began to prepare for a new building campaign to address overcrowding in aged elementary schools and the new construction needed in growing suburbs. Local architect Ernest T. Mock was hired to create a needs assessment in 1944. Although the baby-boom population created rising enrollment numbers in Tacoma's schools, it this was not the only factor that pushed the district to construct new schools. The substantial damage caused to school buildings in the 1949 earthquake added additional challenges for the district. The condemning and demolition of four schools built during the 1890s left almost 1,500 children without permanent classrooms. More than 102 classrooms spaces were needed. While space constraints required the district to construct multi-story buildings in heavily populated areas, safety concerns and increasing material costs prompted a close

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examination of one-story schools. Cost, more so than in any previous era, became one of the single greatest factors in new school construction.

In Tacoma, like other areas of the nation, the main building materials used in post -WWII era construction were poured concrete, brick, and plywood. Poured concrete and brick were used in the earlier round of buildings, those from the earlier 1950s, like Lowell and Whitman, while plywood was used for buildings constructed in the late 1950s like Hoyt and Hunt. Masonry construction was originally popular due to lower maintenance and a greater resistance to fire than timber structures. However, the cheaper cost of poured concrete construction and the growing acceptance of modern architectural styles for schools eventually led to a broader acceptance of the material. Plywood became increasingly favored as both material and labor costs rose.

Cost made one-story structures, regardless of cladding, a preferred building type in suburban areas where land was plentiful. However smaller urban lots, like those found at Lowell and Whitman, required taller buildings, often facilitating the use of poured concrete. To complete the massive concrete pours needed for school structures, significant amounts of plywood were needed for the forms. Headquartered in Tacoma, the Douglas Fir Plywood Association (now called the Engineered Wood Association) had an active campaign in the post WWII era to introduce their product, and its potential uses, to both possible private and public clients. The Douglas Fir Plywood Association contracted with professional photographers to document the construction of a number of projects in Tacoma, each showcasing different uses for plywood, from concrete forms to finished carpentry. Several photographs of Whitman's construction, highlighting the use of plywood forms for the concrete pours and plywood underlayment for the roofing, were taken. Although published versions of these images have not yet been located, it is possible that they were used for advertising.

The Tacoma School District worked with a number of different architects, producing schools in various contemporary styles, including International Style and New Formalism. Whitman is one of only two remaining International Style buildings (the other is Lowell, built in 1951 by Lance, McGuire & Muri) in the district that has remained relatively unaltered. It is the also the best surviving example of Lea, Pearson & Richards' work for the district.

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Lea, Pearson, & Richards

The noted architectural firm of Lea, Pearson, & Richards was formed in 1937 by architects Charles Winthrop Lea, Jr., Charles T. Pearson, and John Greenway Richards. In 1983, after the firm had been in business for more than 50 years, the Southwest Washington chapter of the AIA recognized the firm as one of the longest existing intact architectural partnerships. The firm disbanded the next year, when Pearson retired.

Charles Winthrop Lea, Jr. was born in Tacoma in 1903, but grew up in Seattle. He received his education at the University of Washington, University of Pennsylvania, and New York University. He worked as a draftsman for various architecture firms in Philadelphia and for the New York firm of Delano & Aldrich before returning to Tacoma in the early 1930s. Lea was known for his residential projects and was praised by his peers for his special talent with Colonial details. Lea died on April 18, 1990.

Charles T. Pearson, born in 1905, was a native of Chicago who moved to Tacoma as a child in 1919. He attended Stadium High and earned a degree in architecture from the University of Washington in 1931. Pearson worked for the firm of Heath, Gove & Bell in the early portion of his career. Pearson was made an AIA fellow in 1973, and retired from architecture in 1984. He died on August 10, 1994.

John Greenway Richards Sr., a native of Waltham, Massachusetts moved to Tacoma as a child in 1920. He also graduated from Stadium High School and then attended the University of Washington, earning his architectural license in 1932. Like Pearson and Richards he was an associate of Heath, Gove & Bell. He moved to Parkland in 1937. Richard died on April 3, 1985.

There is no known repository for the firm's records. Lea, Pearson, & Richards specialized in the design of banks, churches, schools, and high-end residences, most of which were built in the Tacoma's environs. There were at least 18 schools designed by the firm, the majority of which were built in the 1950s. Most of the schools have either been remodeled beyond recognition or demolished. Besides Whitman the only remaining Lea, Pearson, & Richards designed school in Tacoma that retains most of its original features and massing is Aquinas Academy, (currently housing St. Patrick's Catholic School) a poured concrete structure built in 1957. The firm is known to have designed five schools for the Tacoma School District.

The firm's expertise in school design was significant enough for Pearson to have a place on the program of Washington State University "Problems of Schools Architecture" conference. Held in 1960, the conference was sponsored jointly the school's education and architectural/industrial research divisions. At the conference, participants from across the state came together to collaboratively work on challenges in modern school construction. Another key participant was Tacoma architect Robert B. Price, who often

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PIERCE COUNTY, WASHINGTON

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worked for the Douglas Plywood Association, and also designed a number of buildings for the Tacoma School District. These two firms were the only Tacoma representation in the conference agenda and tellingly dominated post-WWII era school construction in Tacoma and the surrounding areas.

Notable works by Lea, Pearson, & Richards include: National Bank of Washington, Chehalis (1949), the National Bank of Washington, Parkland (1950), Tacoma Savings & Loan Association (1956), Central Lutheran Church (1957), Trinity Lutheran Church at Parkland (1958), the Swasey Branch of the Tacoma Public Library (1960), Kilworth Chapel at the University of Puget Sound (1966), the Bank of Washington Plaza, in cooperation with Skidmore Owings Merrill (1970), and the United Mutual Savings Bank (1973).

International Style

Post-WWII architects and school boards alike rejected traditional historical revival styled Gothic and Classical buildings from prior generations. While part of this was due to changing architectural fashion, the high cost of masonry construction and added architectural embellishments may have also contributed to this disdain for past forms. Pre-war schools with the elaborate historical stylistic references were accused of being designed for the pride of the community and not necessarily for the education of the students.

Internationally and nationally, a major architecture style of the mid-20th century was the International Style, named after an exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art in 1931. This exhibit showcased works by well-known European architects Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, and Walter Gropius. The style was praised for its ability to move beyond slavishly copying previous architectural forms and rejecting historical ornament. Common design details of this style were: square or rectangular footprint and massing, flat roofs, an emphasis on horizontal accents including large expanses of horizontal windows in grid patterns, windows that turn building corners, minimal window reveals, façade angles at 90 degrees, and smooth building surfaces. Another defining stylistic feature was the relationship of ornamentation to the structure. Applied historical ornamentation was shunned, the focus was typically on the intrinsic elegance of materials. Thus color, pattern, and textural variation naturally found in building materials were highlighted. Concrete, glass, and steel were the most common construction materials. The style was popular from the late 1920s through the early 1960s.

A number of architects in Tacoma produced International Style buildings - Lea, Pearson & Richards were among the most prolific, particularly their banking, medical and educational structures. Since programming needs are markedly different for each use, it is challenging to compare the various building types. Most of their residential constructions were conservative single-family wood homes, in a traditional Colonial Revival style. The majority of their churches, while contemporary in their use of materials and lack of external decoration, had traditional plans and gabled roofs. Generally speaking, the firm's commercial

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WHITMAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
PIERCE COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Section number 8 Page 6 of 6

buildings were multi-storied structures when located in established commercial areas, and were one-story with larger expanses of glass when located in newly developing suburban neighborhoods. Photos of their known educational buildings show International Style buildings for all the schools. Those campuses in suburban areas or serving high schools showcased larger lots and multiple buildings while campuses for smaller elementary schools or schools on urban lots typically had a single multi-storied building.

Comparing Whitman Elementary to other schools designed by the firm is difficult since a significant number of their buildings no longer remain. Whitman Elementary is the 3rd of 5 schools designed by Lea, Pearson, & Richards in Tacoma. All showcase elements of the International Style. The first, Downing Elementary (1949, additions) was a one-story brick structure with a daylight basement. Lister Elementary (1950, demolished) a brick and concrete structure, was one-story with a daylight basement. Whitman Elementary (1952), a one-story, daylight basement building was the first to employ poured concrete exclusively, marking a turning point in the use of concrete as the dominate material. St. Patrick's Catholic School (1957) is three stories, and is banked into a steep hillside. Wilson High School (1958, severely remodeled/demolished), the only high school designed by the firm for the Tacoma School District, was constructed of pre-stressed tilt-up concrete panels. By the late 1950s schools constructed for the district by other architectural firms began to showcase other modern styles.

All of the Lea, Pearson & Richards schools were notable for their wide expanses of glazing, typically created by multiple groupings of horizontal panes with metal muntins. Whitman Elementary is an excellent example of this design detail. In comparison to the other elementary schools, which had similar programing and space constraints, Whitman is the most elegantly detailed and most clearly showcases the primary tenants of the International Style though the crispness of the building's massing, the decorative rhythm created by external venting across the front of the structure, and horizontal striations in the wall sections between windows on the main floor. The consistent use of horizontal lights in the large banks of windows continues to emphasize the horizontal elevations. On the main façade the large chimney "fin" that also marks the main entrance, along with the false front on the west elevation, adds an element of contrast and sophistication that the structure would otherwise lack. The window that wraps the second floor northeast corner is a particularly fine detail. Other notable interior details are the curved corners into the boys' and girls' bathrooms and the exposed texture of the plywood forms visible on the poured concrete in the stairwells. The exterior horizontal striations between the windows on the main floor, rhythmic location of vent grates and decorative fin along with the interior curved corners entering the bathrooms and the concentric framing around the stage give the structure a sophisticated Moderne flair that is atypical both for the firm and other schools designed during the same period. The reason for these exceptional details is not known.

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PIERCE COUNTY, WASHINGTON

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PIERCE COUNTY, WASHINGTON

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10. Geographical Data**Acreage of Property** 3.64**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM References on a continuation sheet.)

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Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property.)

See continuation sheet.

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

See continuation sheet.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Caroline T. Swope
organization Kingstree Studios (for Historic Tacoma) date Aug 2012
street & number 2902 North Cedar Street telephone 253-370-6984
city or town Tacoma state WA zip code 98407

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets**Maps**A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.**Photographs**Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property Owner (Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Tacoma School District, Planning and Construction (c/o Pete Wall)
street & number 3223 Union Avenue South telephone 771-3350
city or town Tacoma state WA zip code 98409

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet -

WHITMAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
PIERCE COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Section number 10 Page 1 of 1

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

Whitman Elementary School is located to the southeast of downtown Tacoma, in the East of Section 17, Range 3, Township 20 of the Willamette Meridian, in Pierce County, Washington. The said property is otherwise known as Parcel No. 8935021700.

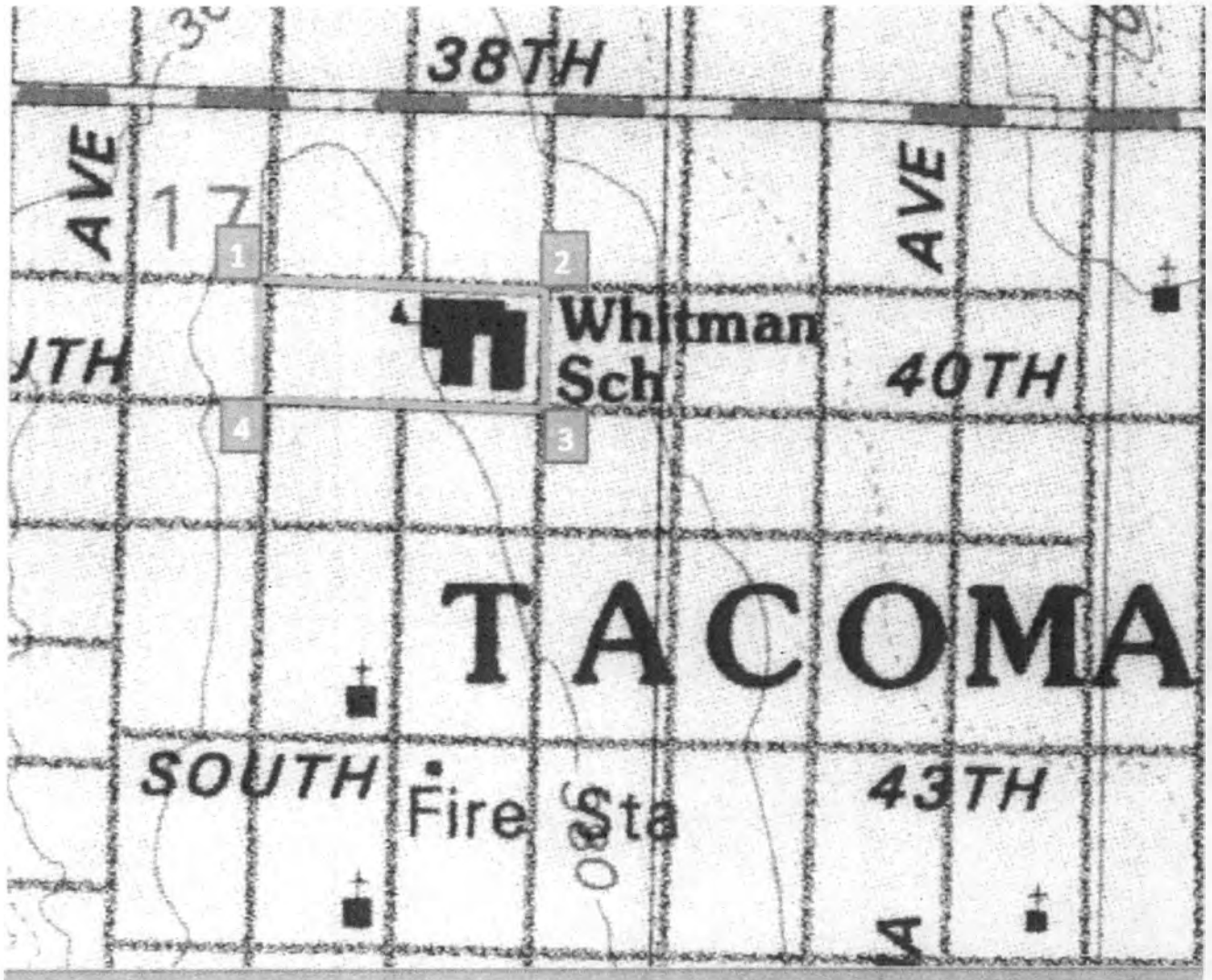
BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:

The nominated property encompasses the urban tax lots that are occupied by the school and its grounds. To the north is South 39th Street, South K Street is to the east, to the south is South 40th Street and to the west is South M Street.

Whitman Elementary School

Pierce County, Washington

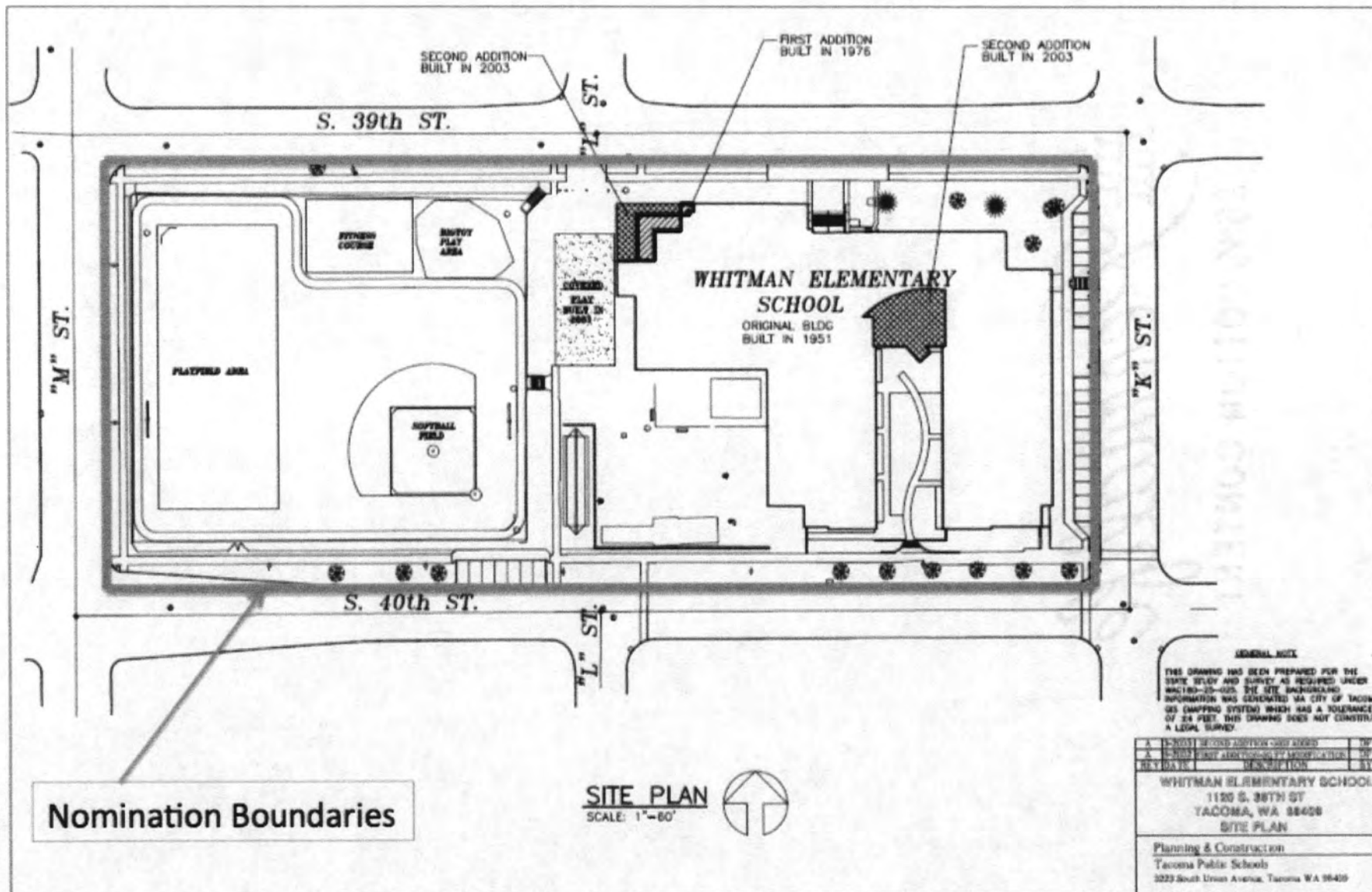
USGS Quad Map Excerpt Showing Nomination Site



UTM References

(Place additional UTM References on a continuation sheet.)

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2	10 Zone	5 428 47 Easting	5 228 859 Northing	4	10 Zone	5 426 78 Easting	5 228 682 Northing



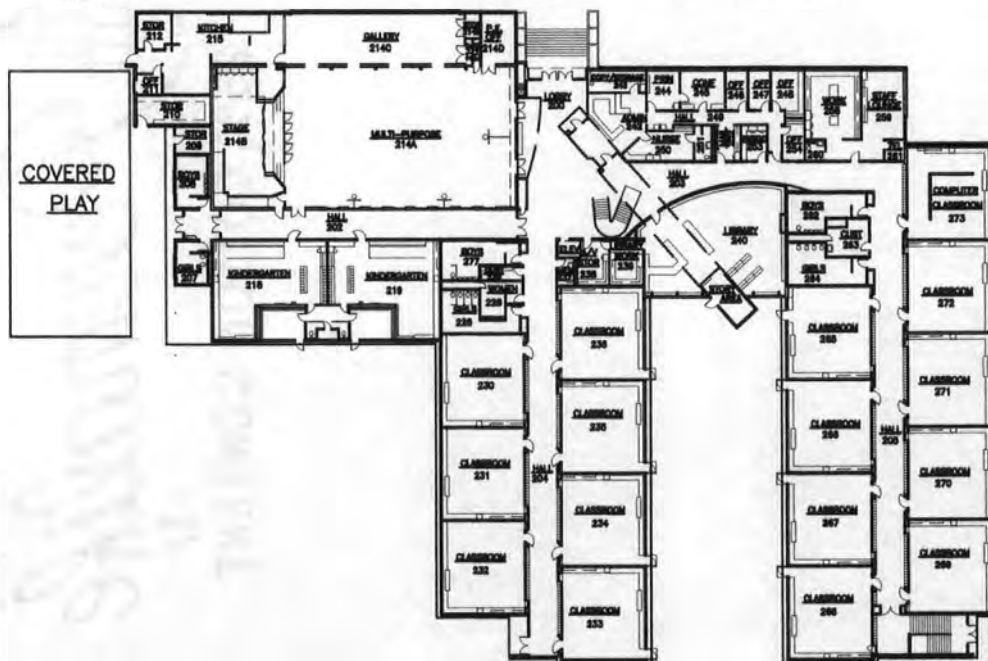
GENERAL NOTE

THIS DRAWING HAS BEEN PREPARED FOR THE SITE STUDY AND SURVEY AS REQUIRED UNDER WAC 19-05-005. THE SITE BACKGROUND INFORMATION WAS GENERATED VIA CITY OF TACOMA GIS (MAPPING SYSTEM) WHICH HAS A TOLERANCE OF 24 FEET. THIS DRAWING DOES NOT CONSTITUTE A LEGAL SURVEY.

NO.	DESCRIPTION	DATE
1	ORIGINAL SECOND ADDITION ONLY ADDED	10/10/03
2	ADDED FIRST ADDITION ONLY ADDED	10/10/03
3	ADDED SECOND ADDITION ONLY ADDED	10/10/03

WHITMAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
1120 S. 38TH ST
TACOMA, WA 98406
SITE PLAN

Planning & Construction
Tacoma Public Schools
3223 South Union Avenue, Tacoma, WA 98409



FIRST FLOOR
SCALE: 1"=40'



BASEMENT FLOOR
SCALE: 1"=40'



WHITMAN ELEMENTARY
1120 SOUTH 39TH STREET
TACOMA, WA 98418
FLOOR PLAN

Planning & Construction
Tacoma Public Schools
3223 South Union Avenue, Tacoma WA 98409

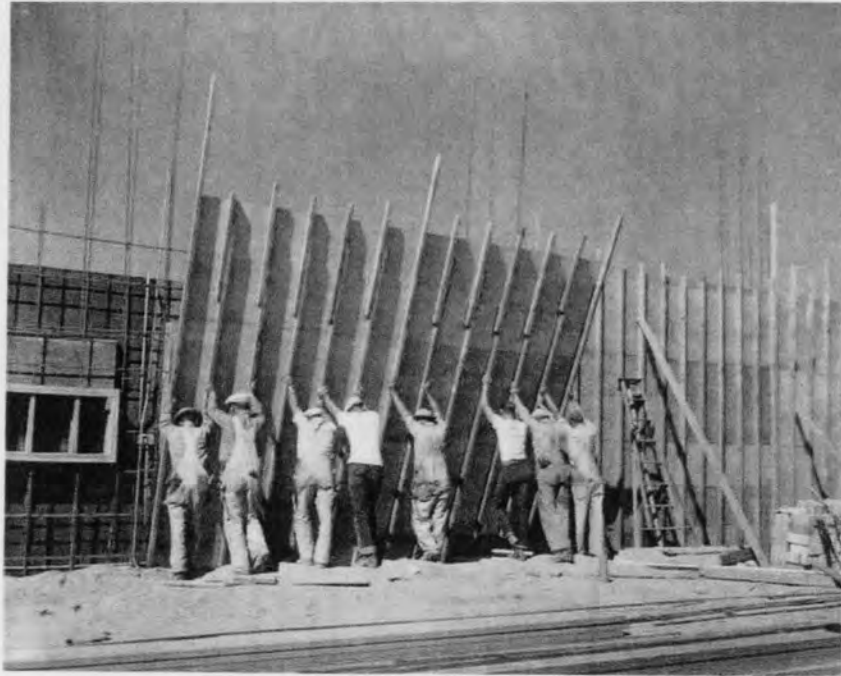
**Historic Images of Whitman Elementary School
located at the Tacoma Public Library**



**Richards Studio Collection Series A74582-2 (Unique: 23963)
Photograph taken on June 16, 1953**



**Richards Studio Collection Series: A60208-11 (Unique: 20379)
Photograph taken on August 6, 1951**



Richards Studio Collection Series: D60208-6 (Unique: 20378)
Photograph taken on August 6, 1951



Richards Studio Collection Series: D60208-4 (Unique: 20377)
Photograph taken on August 6, 1951



Richards Studio Collection Series: D60872-5 (Unique: 9963)
Photograph taken on August 31, 1951



Richards Studio Collection Series: D50797-2 (Unique: 19496)
Photograph taken on June 19, 1950

Name of Property: Whitman Elementary School
City: Tacoma
County: Pierce
State: WA
Name of Photographer: Caroline T. Swope
Date of Photographs: March 2009 & September 2010 & August 2012
Location of Original Digital Files: 2902 North Cedar Street, Tacoma, WA 98407
Number of Photographs: 19

Photo #1 WA_Pierce_Whitman Elementary School_0001
North (left) and west (right) façades, camera facing southeast

Photo #2 WA_Pierce_Whitman Elementary School_0002
North façade, main entry, camera facing southeast

Photo #3 WA_Pierce_Whitman Elementary School_0003
North façade (right) and east elevation (left), camera facing southwest

Photo #4 WA_Pierce_Whitman Elementary School_0004
North façade detail, eastern end, camera facing southeast

Photo #5 WA_Pierce_Whitman Elementary School_0005
North façade detail, daylight basement, camera facing southeast

Photo #6 WA_Pierce_Whitman Elementary School_0006
East elevation (left) and north elevation (right), camera facing southwest

Photo #7 WA_Whitman Elementary School_0007
Southeast corner, south elevation (left) and east elevation (right), camera facing northwest

Photo #8 WA_Whitman Elementary School_0008
Southeast corner, south elevation (left) and east elevation (right), camera facing northwest

Photo #9 WA_Pierce_Whitman Elementary School_0009
South elevation, showing courtyard and 2003 library/rear entry ada compliant addition,
camera facing north

Photo #10 WA_Pierce_Whitman Elementary School_0010
South elevation, courtyard, east arm of "U," camera facing northeast

Photo #11 WA_Pierce_Whitman Elementary School_0011
South elevation, courtyard, west arm of "U," camera facing northwest

Photo #12 WA_Pierce_Whitman Elementary School_0012
South elevation, courtyard, west arm of "U," camera facing northeast

Photo #13 WA_Pierce_Whitman Elementary School_0013
South elevation detail, southwest detail, camera facing northeast

Photo #14 WA_Pierce_Whitman Elementary School_0014
Play shed, southeast corner, camera facing northwest

Photo #15 WA_Pierce_Whitman Elementary School_0015
Auditorium/gym/lunchroom, west wall, camera facing west

Photo #16 WA_Pierce_Whitman Elementary School_0016
Stage detail of Auditorium/gym/lunchroom, west wall, camera facing west

Photo #17 WA_Pierce_Whitman Elementary School_0017
Detail of hallway rounded wall corners and original signage on boy's restroom in the northeast building corner, camera facing northwest

Photo #18 WA_Pierce_Whitman Elementary School_0018
K Street stairwell entry, viewed from main floor, camera facing north

Photo #19 WA_Pierce_Whitman Elementary School_0019
Detail of poured concrete finish on K Street stairwell entry, camera facing west

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Whitman Elementary School

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: WASHINGTON, Pierce

DATE RECEIVED: 11/09/12 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 12/14/12
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 12/31/12 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 12/26/12
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 12001100

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

☒ ACCEPT ☐ RETURN ☐ REJECT 12-26-12 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



WA_Pierce_Whitman Elementary School - 0001

Swope

WA_Pierce_Whitman Element

WHITMAN
ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL
1120



WA_Pierce County _Whitman Elementary School -0002

Swope

WA_Pierce_Whitman Element



WA_Pierce County - WHITMAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - 0003

Slope

WA_Pierce_Whitman Element



WA_Pierce County - WHITMAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - 0004

Swope

WA_Pierce_Whitman Element



WA - Pierce County - Whitman Elementary School - 0005



WA_Pierce County - WHITMAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL -0006

SWOPE

WA_Pierce_Whitman Element



WA - Pierce County - WATMAN ELEMENTARY - 0007



WA_Pierce County - WHITMAN ELEMENTARY - 0008

Swope

WA_Whitman Elementary Sch



WA_PIERCE COUNTY - WHITMAN ELEMENTARY - 0009

Swope

WA_Pierce_Whitman Element



WA _PIERCE COUNTY - WHITMAN ELEMENTARY - 0010



WA - PIERCE COUNTY - WHITMAN ELEMENTARY - 0011



WA_PIERCE COUNTY - WHITMAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - 0012

SWOPE

WA_Pierce_Whitman Element

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WA - PIERCE COUNTY - WHITMAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - 0013



WA_Pierce County - WHITMAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - 0014



WA_PIERCE COUNTY -WHITMAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - 0015

Swope

WA_Pierce_Whitman Element



WA_PIERCE COUNTY - WHITMAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - 0016

Swope

WA_Pierce_Whitman Element

BOYS

A black and white photograph of a school hallway. On the left, a white door is partially open, revealing a sign that reads "BOYS". The hallway has a dark carpet and a drop ceiling. In the background, a wall with horizontal lines is visible through the doorway. A black baseboard runs along the bottom of the walls.

WA_ PIERCE COUNTY - WHITMAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - 0017

Slope

WA_Pierce_Whitman Element



WA_PIERCE COUNTY- WHITMAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL -0018

Swope

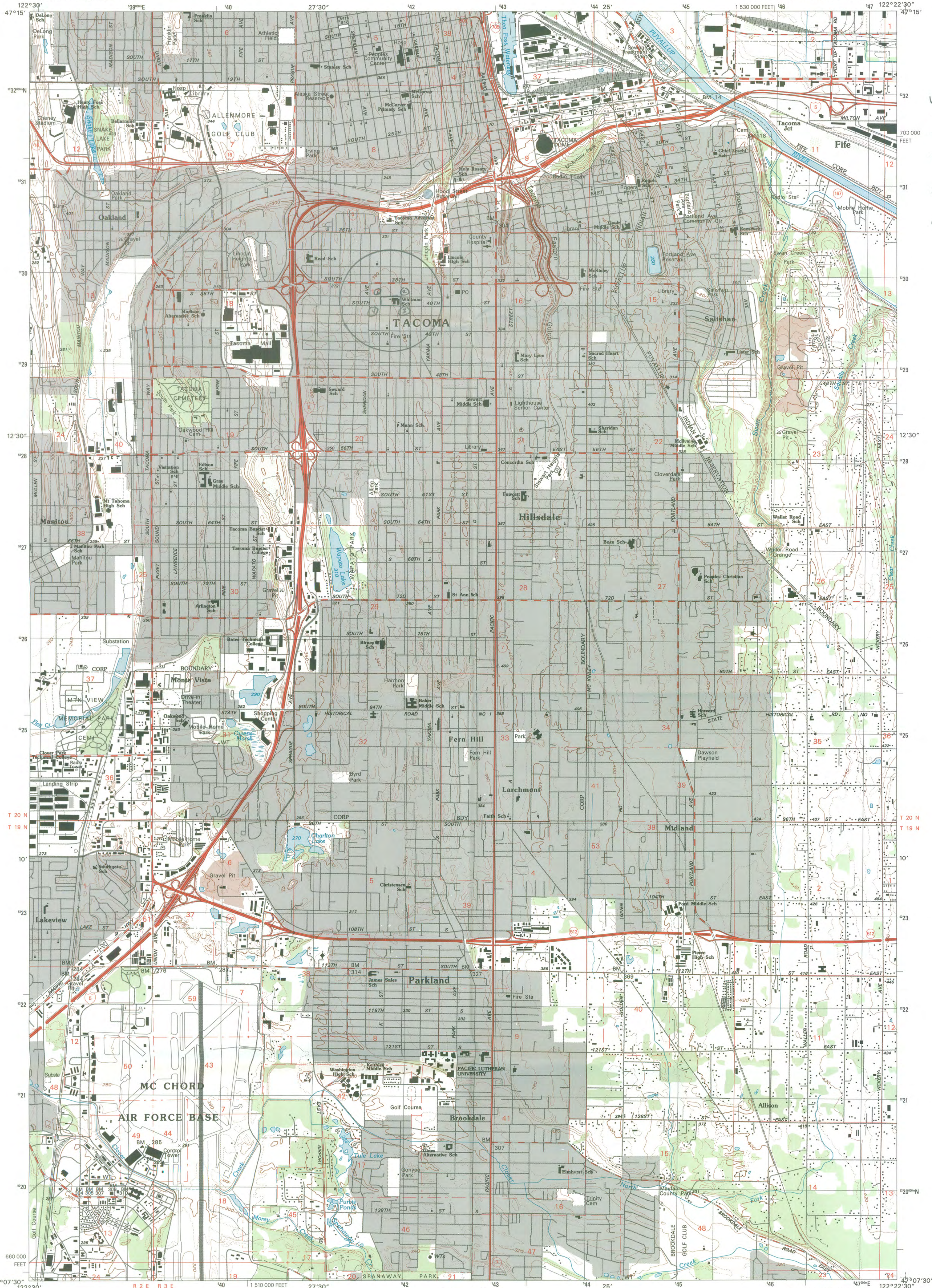
WA_Pierce_Whitman Element



WA- Pierce County - WHITMAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - 0019

Swope

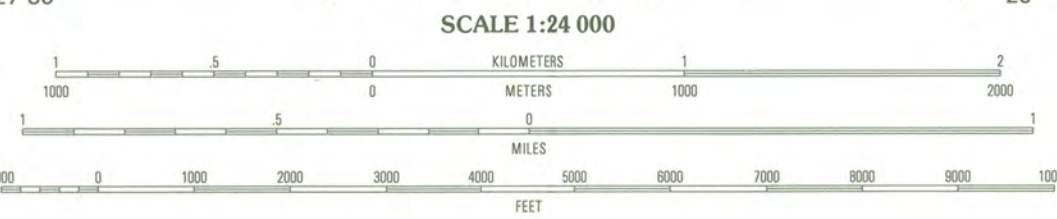
WA_Pierce_Whitman Element



WHITMAN SCHOOL
ZONE 10
1) 542673 E
5228851 N
2) 542647 E
5228859 N
3) 542655 E
5228862 N
4) 542678 E
5228862 N

Produced by the United States Geological Survey
Topography compiled 1957. Planimetry derived from imagery
taken 1990 and other sources. Photosynthesized using imagery
taken 1997; no major culture or drainage changes observed
Public Land Survey System and survey control current as of
1961. Boundaries, other than corporate, verified 2003
Contours and land elevations have not been revised
and may conflict with other content
North American Datum of 1927 (NAD 27). Projection and
1 000-meter grid: Universal Transverse Mercator, zone 10
10 000-foot ticks: Washington Coordinate System of 1927
(south zone)
North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83) is shown by dashed
corner ticks. The values of the shift between NAD 27 and
NAD 83 for 7.5-minute intersections are obtainable from
National Geodetic Survey NADCON software
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of
the National or State reservations shown on this map

UTM GRID AND 2003 MAGNETIC NORTH
DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET
0° 25' 18" N
320 MILS



CONTOUR INTERVAL 20 FEET
SUPPLEMENTARY CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929
(TO CONVERT ELEVATIONS TO THE NORTH AMERICAN VERTICAL DATUM OF 1988, ADD 3 FEET)
TO CONVERT FROM FEET TO METERS, MULTIPLY BY 0.3048

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, P.O. BOX 25286, DENVER, COLORADO 80225
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



QUADRANGLE LOCATION

1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	

Primary highway
hard surface
Secondary highway
hard surface
Light-duty road, hard or
improved surface
Unimproved road
Interstate Route
U.S. Route
State Route

TACOMA SOUTH, WA
1997

NIMA 1578 III NW-SERIES V891





STATE OF WASHINGTON
Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation
1063 S. Capitol Way, Suite 106 - Olympia, Washington 98501
(Mailing Address) PO Box 48343 - Olympia, Washington 98504-8343
(360) 586-3065 Fax Number (360) 586-3067

RECEIVED 2280

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NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Nov 11, 2012

Paul Lusignan
Keeper of the National Register
National Register of Historic Places
1201 "I" Street NW, 8th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20005

RE: **Washington State NR Nomination**

Dear Paul:

Please find enclosed new National Register Nomination forms for:

- **City Ramp Garage – Spokane County, WA**
- **Whitman Elementary School – Pierce County, WA**

Should you have any questions regarding these nominations please contact me anytime at (360) 586-3076. I look forward to hearing your final determination on these properties.

Sincerely,

Michael Houser

State Architectural Historian, DAHP
360-586-3076
E-Mail: michael.houser@dahp.wa.gov