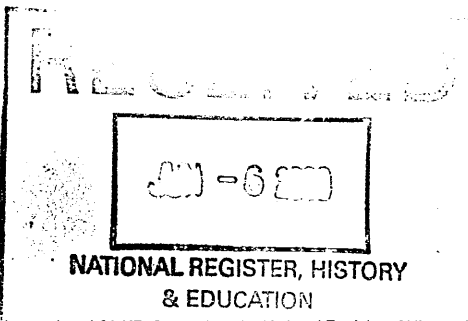


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



National 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 Property

Historic name Kearney Junior High School

Other names/site number Central Elementary School

2. Location

Street & number 300 West 24th Street

Not for publication

City or town Kearney

Vicinity

State Nebraska

Code NE

County Buffalo

Code 019

Zip code 68845

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.)

Walter Sommer
Signature of certifying official

5/31/00
Date

Director, Nebraska State Historical Society
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): _____

Edna H. Beall 7/5/00

[Signature]
Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

Kearney Junior High School

Name of Property

Buffalo County, Nebraska

County and State

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 include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		Buildings
		Sites
		Structures
		Objects
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. Function 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.)

LATE 19TH & 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/Classical Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Foundation Concrete

Walls Brick

Roof Asphalt

Other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Kearney Junior High School

Name of Property

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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 a grave.
- D** A cemetery.
- E** A reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** A commemorative property.
- G** Less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Education

Period of Significance

1925-1950

Significant Dates

1925-26

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Davis & Wilson, architects—Lincoln, Nebraska

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 Buildings Survey # _____
- Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location for additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local Government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: Kearney School District

Kearney Junior High School

Name of Property

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than 1 acre.

UTM References (place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet).

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1.	14	492760	4505150	3.			
2.				4.			

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Elizabeth L. Miller, Historic Preservation Specialist

organization Mead & Hunt, Inc.

date April 2000

street & number 6501 Watts Road

telephone (608) 273-6380

city or town Madison

state WI

zip code 53719-2700

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/title Kearney School District

street & number 301 West 24th Street

telephone (308) 237-6320

city or town Kearney

state NE

zip code 68845

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, (15 USC 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Kearney Junior High School

Name of Property

Buffalo County, Nebraska

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Section 7 Page 1

Introduction

Kearney Junior High School is a two-story, Neo-Classical Revival building. Designed by the distinguished Lincoln architectural firm of (Ellery L.) Davis and (Walter) Wilson, Kearney Junior High School was erected in 1925-26.¹ It is finished with brick, accented with Bedford limestone and rests on a poured concrete foundation. A parapet hides the flat, built-up roof. Kearney Junior High School currently serves as Central Elementary School.

Description

Kearney Junior High School faces north, overlooking West 24th Street (see Photograph No. 1). The school is rectangular in plan and measures 240 feet (east-west) by 121 feet (north-south). Within this rectangular plan, classrooms wrap around the gymnasium and auditorium block, forming a U (see attached plan). The gymnasium and auditorium block is only visible on the south-facing (rear) facade. Brick pilasters articulate the north- (front), east- and west-facing facades. On the same facades, decorative brickwork suggests a frieze, with projecting headers simulating triglyphs (see Photograph No. 2). A limestone cornice with a classical profile completes the entablature. A brick parapet capped with a limestone coping appears above. On all four facades of the school, the fenestration pattern is regular and displays single and paired, steel, multi-paned windows. The bottom portion of each window is a hopper.

The north-facing (front) facade features a central, projecting entrance pavilion with a two-story, pedimented portico of Bedford limestone (see Photograph No. 3). Four monumental stone columns support the portico's entablature. The frieze is inscribed, "KEARNEY JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL." The pediment is embellished with a raking cornice and a cartouche with a garland. Beneath the portico, the wall of the entrance pavilion is veneered with smooth-faced, limestone ashlar. A broad flight of concrete stairs rises to the entrance. The central entrance portal displays fluted pilasters supporting a broad entablature with a denticulated cornice. Above the cornice, the broken pediment frames a pineapple. The entrance itself is composed of a pair of modern glass doors surmounted by a sign reading, "CENTRAL ELEMENTARY 300 WEST 24th ST." Single doors flank the main entrance and display simple, coursed stone surrounds enriched with patera. Above each single door, a large medallion appears. At second-story level, there are three pairs of casement windows. Eight pairs of windows appear at each story on either side of the projecting entrance pavilion.

The east- and west-facing facades are identical (see Photograph No. 4). Fifteen windows, separated by brick pilasters, are shown at each of the first and second stories.

The south-facing (rear) facade is composed of a central, broad, projecting block that houses the gymnasium and the auditorium, flanked by small sections of the main block, where the classrooms are located (see Photograph No. 4). The south-facing facade is not as ornamented as the other facades, although the brick entablature appears on the gymnasium and auditorium block. Two single doors are evenly-spaced on the gymnasium and auditorium block. Three, round-arched windows are centered above, surmounted by four medallions. These windows light the auditorium. On either side of the round-arched windows, five windows are set at each of the first- and second-stories of the gymnasium and auditorium block. Each of the flanking main block sections displays a pair of modern glass doors with a round-arched window above.

¹ Minutes, Kearney School Board, 3 December 1923; and "Kearney Junior High School Building, American School Board Journal, January 1927, pp. 56-58.

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Kearney Junior High School

Name of Property

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Section 7 Page 2

On the interior, the floor plan consists of a central corridor, wrapping around the gymnasium and auditorium block, forming a U. Classrooms are arranged along the outside of the U (see attached plan). The gymnasium and auditorium block includes a kitchen and a cafeteria, which are original to the plan. Overall, the plan is intact, although some classrooms have been subdivided. Interior finishes retain a high degree of integrity and include oak and terrazzo floors, and plaster walls and ceilings. The corridor exhibits a vaulted ceiling, built-in steel lockers that are original to the school, and suspended lights with opaque glass panes (see Photograph No. 5). The auditorium is two stories tall, with fixed wood seating for just over 1,100 students (see Photograph No. 6). The space exhibits decorative plaster work simulating a beamed ceiling and other ornamentation. The proscenium is enriched with classical moldings (see Photograph No. 7), medallions, and the phrase: "KNOWLEDGE IS LIGHT WISDOM IS POWER." The stage doubles as the boys' gymnasium (see Photograph No. 8).

Alterations

Kearney Junior High School retains a high degree of integrity. Exterior alterations are limited to modern glass doors. On the interior, a few classrooms have been subdivided, but the plan is otherwise intact. Kearney Junior High's excellent integrity is especially remarkable considering that it has served as a school, a high-intensity use, for nearly 75 years.

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Kearney Junior High School

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Section 8 Page 1

Statement of Significance: Summary

Kearney Junior High School is architecturally significant at the local level under Criterion C. It is a fine example of the Neo-Classical Revival style and retains excellent integrity. It is also a good and intact example of an early twentieth century junior high school building. It is also eligible under Criterion A for its contribution to the evolution of educational practices in the city of Kearney. The period of significance begins with the date of construction, 1925-26 and continues through 1950 the established fifty year cut-off. This date was chosen because the school operated as a Junior High until its conversion to an elementary school in the Fall of 1967

The History of Education in Kearney

Public schools opened in Kearney not long after the community was settled. Education was very important to the early European-American settlers of Kearney, reflecting the strength of the public school movement in the United States during the mid-nineteenth century. This movement advocated primary education free to all, both for progress and for the well being of society. Perhaps the leading factors in sparking this movement were rapidly increasing industrialization, which required a literate work-force; and the ceaseless tide of immigrants arriving on America's shores in the 1840s, especially from Ireland and Germany, and needing be "Americanized." Educational reformers also thought universal literacy would benefit society in better-informed voters; and would provide equal opportunities to all, reducing stratification in society.

By the early 1920s, there were six elementary schools, a junior high school, and a high school in Kearney. The junior high school, which had been erected in 1882, had eight classrooms. Serving nearly 300 students, the junior high school was so overcrowded that three basement rooms had to be converted into classrooms. Lighting, ventilation, and sanitation in the junior high school were all substandard. The 1923 report of the Kearney Superintendent of Schools recommended replacing the junior high school with a new facility that would add ninth graders, thereby also relieving congestion at the high school.²

In December 1923, the Kearney School Board selected the Lincoln architectural firm of Davis & Wilson to design the new Kearney Junior High School. Ellery Davis presented plans that called for a two-story, Neo-Classical Revival building finished with brick and trimmed with Bedford limestone. The new junior high was designed to accommodate 700 students. Pleased with the plans, the Kearney School Board issued building bonds in the amount of \$250,000 in November 1924 to fund the construction of the new school. The school board awarded the construction contract to Walter Knutzen and Sons. The cornerstone was laid in March 1925. The Kearney Junior High School was dedicated on 24 September 1926.³ It served junior high school students until the Fall of 1967 when it became Central Elementary School.

Architectural Significance

Kearney Junior High School is architecturally significant at the local level under *Criterion C*. It is a fine example of the Neo-Classical Revival style and retains excellent integrity. It is also a good and intact example of an early twentieth century junior high school building.

² Superintendent's Report, Kearney Public Schools, prepared 1923, no page numbers.

³ "Kearney Junior High School Building."

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Kearney Junior High School

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Section 8 Page 2

The Neo-Classical Revival style was popular in this country between 1895 and about 1935, and was especially popular for public buildings. Inspired by the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, Neo-Classical Revival is characterized by formal compositions with a symmetrical facade, portico with monumental columns, decorated moldings, entablatures, and cornices surmounted by a parapet or balustrade.⁴ Kearney Junior High School is an excellent example of Neo-Classical Revival styling because it incorporates all of these features.

Kearney Junior High School is also a fine example of an early twentieth century elementary school building type. As a school building type, Kearney Junior High School reflects the changes that took place in elementary school curriculum in the early twentieth century. During this time, the curriculum expanded beyond the "three Rs." Attention was directed at developing well-rounded individuals with the inclusion of "manual training" for boys, especially woodworking; and "domestic science" for girls, specifically sewing and cooking. A rising concern for health and nutrition led to the inclusion of a gymnasium, lunchroom, and indoor bathrooms. An assembly room or auditorium was included, either as a separate room or as a stage at one end of the gymnasium. This reflected the new role of the elementary school as a community center for Americanizing immigrants and educating the public. Libraries also came into vogue. In the late 1910s, the "library" was a bookshelf located in a corner of each classroom. By the mid-1920s, the library was a separate room. Finally, the state-of-the-art elementary school building of the late 1910s and the 1920s was spacious and light, with good ventilation, heating, and electricity.⁵ Kearney Junior High School's original plan was state-of-the-art for the early twentieth century and included an auditorium with a stage that doubled as the boys' gymnasium, a girls' gymnasium, lockers for both boys and girls, restrooms, a kitchen where lunch was prepared and girls learned to cook, a lunchroom, a large library, an office for the principal, and specialized rooms for sewing, art, music, and science. All of these spaces are intact. Lockers were installed in the hallway. Built-in cupboards, bookcases and cabinets appeared in many of the rooms. Many of these features have been preserved.

Kearney Junior High School was designed by the prominent Lincoln architectural firm of Davis & Wilson. Ellery L. Davis (1887-1956) was born in Florida and raised in Lincoln. He graduated from the Columbia University School of Architecture in 1909. Davis was a partner in the firm of (George) Berlinghof & Davis, in Lincoln, from 1910 until 1915. He practiced on his own from 1915 until 1921, when he took Walter F. Wilson as a partner. Davis & Wilson worked together until Davis' death. His son, Ellery H. Davis, joined the firm in 1936. Walter F. Wilson retired in 1965. The firm continued as Davis Fenton Stange Darling until at least 1981. Davis & Wilson made school building design one of their specialties. Between 1921 and 1953, the firm prepared plans for 40 schools, as well as numerous additions to schools, all in Nebraska. Davis also designed five school buildings while practicing on his own.⁶

⁴ Virginia McAlester and Lee McAlester, A Field Guide to American Houses, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), pp. 343-45.

⁵ William T. Anderson, "The Development of the Common Schools," Wisconsin Blue Book: 1923, (Madison: State Printing Board, 1923), p. 114-119; and any issue of the American School Board Journal from the 1920s.

⁶ "History of the Firm," notes provided by the Nebraska State Historical Society.

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Kearney Junior High School

Name of Property

Buffalo County, Nebraska

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Section 9 - 10 Page 1

Bibliography

American School Board Journal. 1927.

Anderson, William T. "The Development of the Common Schools." Wisconsin Blue Book: 1923, (Madison: State Printing Board, 1923).

Kearney School Board. Minutes. 1923-1926.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee McAlester. A Field Guide to American Houses. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991.

Superintendent's Report, Kearney Public Schools. Prepared 1923.

Verbal Boundary Description

Northeast quarter of Section 2, Township 8, Range 16 North, Buffalo County, Nebraska.

Verbal Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the Kearney Junior High School enclose all the resources historically associated with it, and coincide with the legal boundaries of the parcel on which it sits.

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Continuation Sheet**

Kearney Junior High School

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Section Photos Page 1

Photographs

Photograph 1 of 8

Kearney Junior High School
City of Kearney, Buffalo County, Nebraska
Negative on file in the Nebraska State Historical Society
View of the north-facing (front) facade, looking southwest.

For the photographs listed below, the information is the same as above, except as noted:

Photograph 2 of 8

View of the north-facing (front) facade, looking southeast.

Photograph 3 of 8

Closeup of portico, front facade, looking southwest.

Photograph 4 of 8

View of the south- (rear) and east-facing facades, looking northwest.

Photograph 5 of 8

View of the corridor.

Photograph 6 of 8

View of the auditorium showing the seating.

Photograph 7 of 8

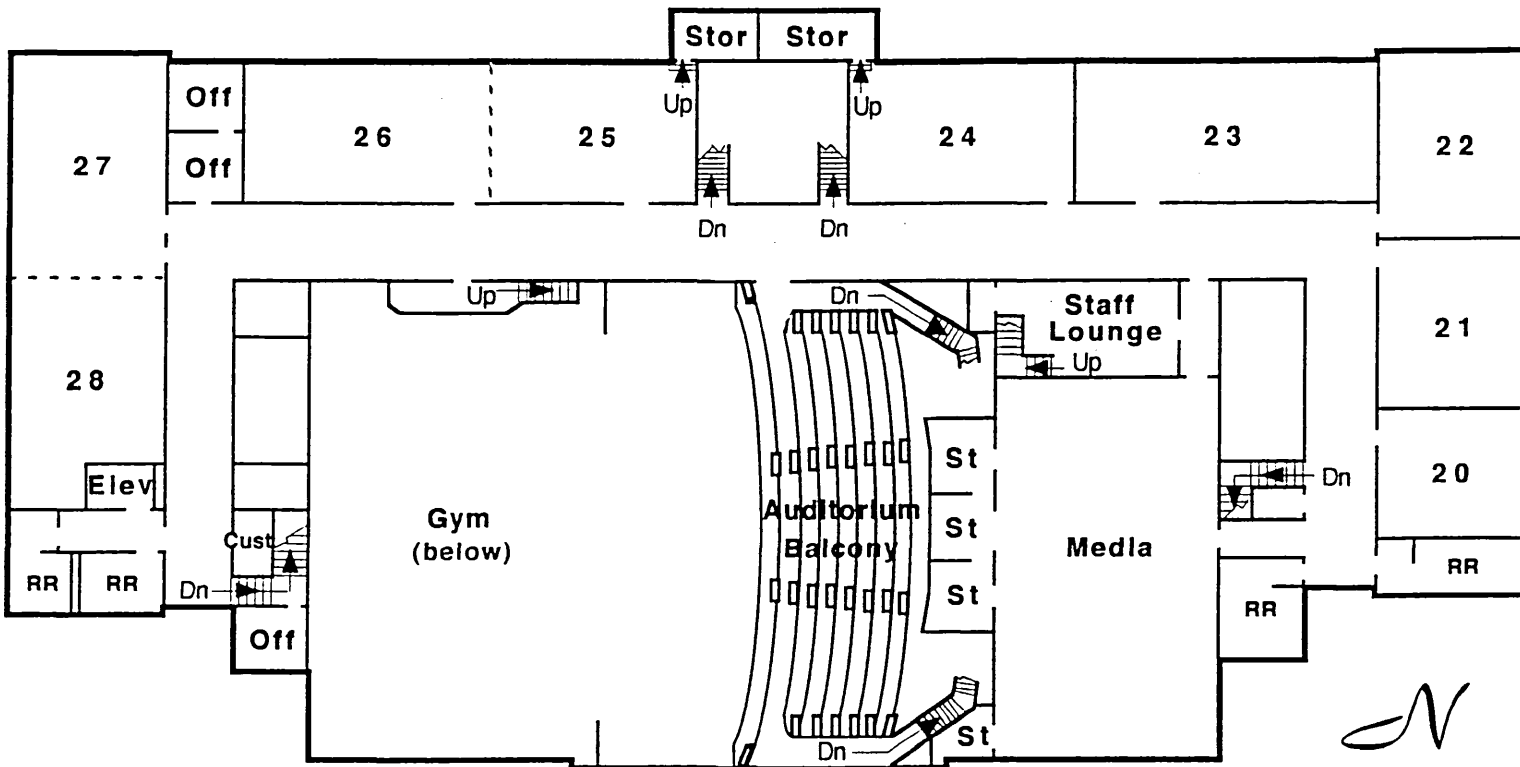
View of the auditorium showing the stage.

Photograph 8 of 8

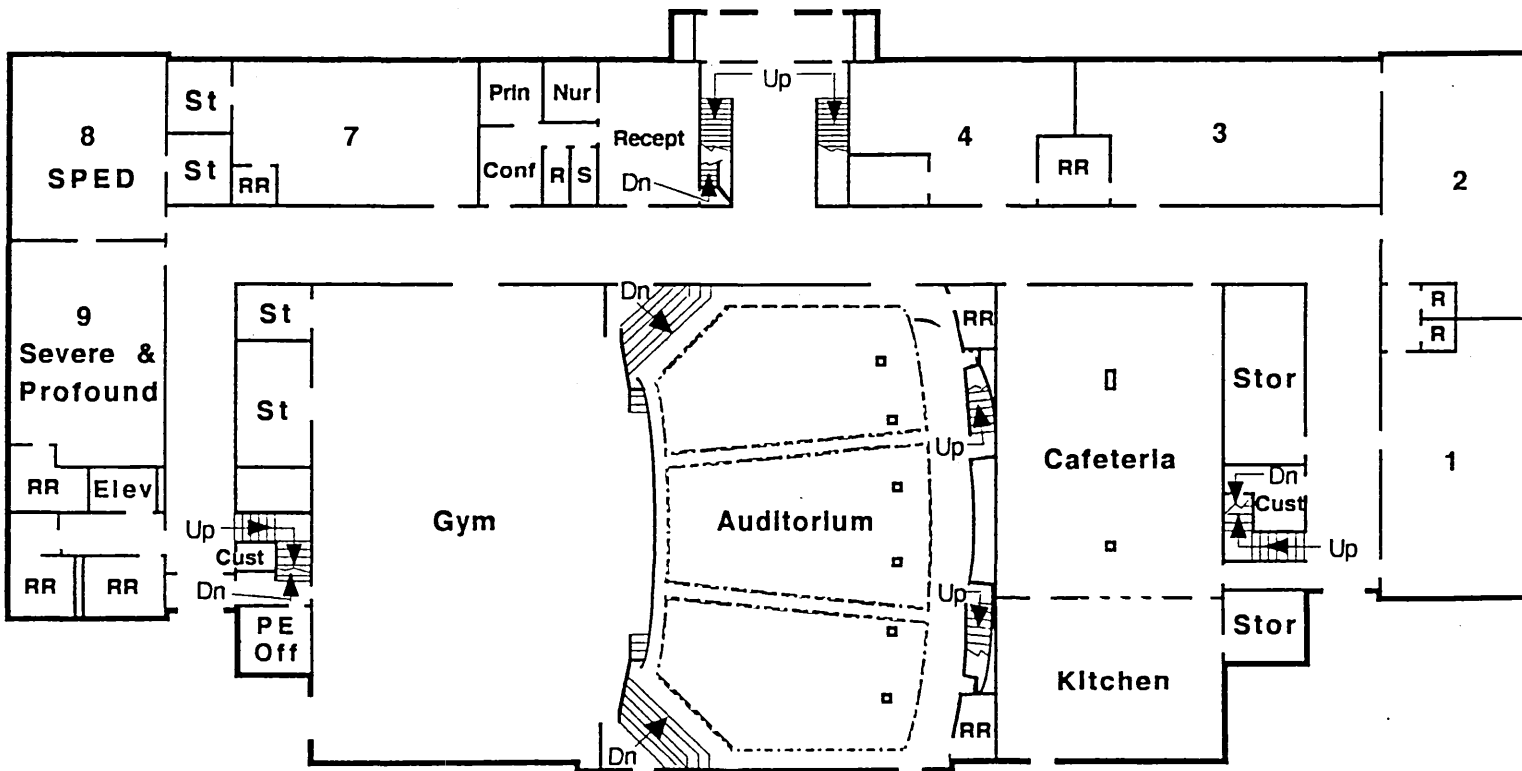
View of the stage/boys gymnasium.
Closeup of bargeboards and carved wood

CENTRAL ELEMENTARY

300 West 24th Street



Second Floor



First Floor