

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

**NATIONAL  
REGISTER**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See Instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the Instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Type all entries.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Washington School  
other names/site number N/A

### 2. Location

street & number 501 North Cayuse  not for publication  
city, town Walla Walla  vicinity  
state Washington code WA county Walla Walla code 071 zip code 99362

### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>—</u>	<u>—</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>—</u>	<u>—</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> objects
			<u>1</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

### 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.  See continuation sheet.

Jacob E. [Signature] 10/16/91  
Signature of certifying official Date  
Washington State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

### 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:  
 entered in the National Register. Entered in the National Register 11/21/91  
 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

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)  
Education: schoolCurrent Functions (enter categories from instructions)  
Vacant/Not in Use

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)Romanesque Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone  
walls brickroof other: asphalt shingle  
other other: cast stone

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Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Constructed in 1901, Washington School is a two story brick schoolhouse characterized by substantial masonry construction and dominated by a monumental Romanesque Revival tower on the principal facade. The structure is situated on a large schoolyard that covers an entire city block in northwest Walla Walla, bounded by Cayuse on the east, Pine on the north, Cherry on the south, and 11th on the west. Immediately south of the schoolhouse is a one story brick and frame gymnasium and classroom annex constructed in the 1960s. The annex, which obscures some views of south elevation of Washington School, does not contribute to the nomination. Despite the proximity of the annex, and deterioration to the historic school, the nominated structure retains good integrity of form, structure, and architectural character.

Washington School is built on a rectangular plan, with projecting central pavilions on the secondary north and south side elevations and an engaged tower rising on the principal east facade. The building stands two stories above a daylight basement, and is capped by a medium pitched hip roof with boxed eaves underscored by modillions. The basement level is constructed of coursed, rusticated sandstone blocks, trimmed with a smooth cast stone beltcourse. The upper stories are faced in brown brick with sandstone trim and crowned by a brick frieze and cornice. The roof is sheathed in shingles.

The cubic massing of the building is relieved--and the building given a dramatic vertical emphasis-- by a front tower which rises a full story above the main block and is capped by a steeply pitched pyramidal roof. The tower is square in plan and composed of three stages. The base level, faced entirely in stone, serves as an entry portal for the structure. A flight of nine stone steps leads to a large round arch opening. The arch, which is composed of sandstone voussoirs with a carved keystone, springs from squat cast stone colonetes with ornate Romanesque style capitals. The colonetes rest on heavy stone plinths. Above the arch, the portal is lighted by two rectangular openings, above which is a stone cornice molding with modillions. Inside the portal, a second flight of nine steps leads to the double leaf front entry doors. The doors are panelled and lighted by a transom and sidelights. The interior of the portal is trimmed with brick wainscoting.

The second and third stages of the tower are faced in brick and unified by a slightly recessed panel which rises from the base to the cornice. The second stage features an engraved cast stone name plate, inscribed "Washington School," above a band of rectangular windows. The third stage of the tower features the belfry with round arch louvered openings on the facade and side elevations. The principal arch is composed of stone voussoirs supported by cast stone colonetes. Above the belfry the cornice of the tower is ornamented with modillions beneath projecting, boxed eaves.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Section number   7   Page   2   Washington School Walla Walla Co., WA

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Fenestration across the building is composed of tall rectangular windows (many of which retain the original two-over-two double hung wood sash), symmetrically arranged in bays of three and four. In most cases, the windows have been boarded and the lights broken, although many of the wood sashes remain beneath the plywood. The windows are trimmed with hoods composed of rusticated sandstone.

The north and south side pavilions project slightly from the main block, and provide secondary entries into the school. Like the main entrance, the side doors are set within round arch portals, trimmed with stone voussoirs. Above the entries, large windows--composed of a fanlight above a pair of double hung windows--light the interior stairways. A small hip roof dormer projects from the rear (west) slope of the main roof, and brick chimneys, ornamented with panels and corbelled caps, rise above the roof ridge.

The interior of the school is arranged on a T-plan, with classrooms organized around a broad central entry hall and a perpendicular hall leading to the north and south stairwells. On the main floor, these halls are ornamented with columns. The classroom floors retain the original hardwood flooring, plaster walls, and millwork trim. The two side stairs in the north and south pavilions rise to the upper level in a straight-reverse plan, and feature turned balusters and round newel posts. The classrooms on both floors retain panelled doors, framed by shelf entablatures; chair and cornice moldings; baseboards; and some original chalk boards. In some of the classrooms, the original two-over-two double hung wood sash is intact beneath the plywood panels. The basement level features playrooms and storerooms.

Although the property is somewhat deteriorated through neglect and has not been in use for over a decade, the building retains good integrity, is structurally sound, and preserves the essential features of its original architectural character.

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**8. Statement of Significance**

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Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

 nationally     statewide     locallyApplicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     DCriteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Education  
Architecture

Period of Significance

1901-1941

Significant Dates

1901

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Not Known

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State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Constructed at a time of severe overcrowding in local schools, Washington School is historically significant for its association with the development of a modern school system in Walla Walla at the turn of the century. The two story structure, characterized by substantial masonry construction and a handsome Romanesque Revival tower, was viewed as a "vital necessity" by school officials when it opened in 1901. The new structure provided a modern facility for eight grades, and relieved a critical shortage of classroom space in the city. Washington School was one of a handful of similar brick structures constructed during the period, and, like the others, it continued to serve the community for most of the 20th century. Although no longer in use, the school remains an architectural landmark and one of the best preserved reflections of the growth of the Walla Walla school district.

**Historical Background:** The first school held in the pioneer community of Walla Walla was organized in the winter of 1861-62, when Mrs. A. J. Minor held classes for about a dozen students in a private residence. The following year, a public school district --the first in Eastern Washington--was organized in the city, and superintendent J. F. Wood asked Mrs. Minor to continue on as the first public school teacher. For the first few years, classes were held in a store building on Main Street and by the fall of 1864 enrollment had reached 93 pupils. In 1866, the first school building was erected, funded by community subscription and built on land donated by Dr. Dorsey Baker. In 1889, the first high school program was established, with classes taught in the Paine School building (constructed the year before).

By the turn of the century, population growth in Walla Walla had outstripped the capacity of the existing school facilities. To meet the demand, Sharpstein School was constructed in 1898. The multi-story brick structure was designed by local architect Henry Osterman, and dominated by a dramatic front tower. But an expanding student population continued to pressure the district's capacity.

In January, 1901, the Walla Walla Union reported that fully one-fourth of all school-age youngsters in the city were out of school because the "public schools were full to overflowing."<sup>1</sup> The situation was temporarily relieved by sending students to school "in shifts," but the school board sought a more permanent solution in May when it announced plans to build a new structure in the northwest part of the city.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Children Out of School," Walla Walla Union, January 4, 1901.

<sup>2</sup>"Will Build the New School," Walla Walla Union, May 10, 1901.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Section number 8 Page 2

Washington School Walla Walla Co., WA

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Although some citizens questioned the expense involved in constructing another large facility so soon after Sharpstein, the board viewed construction as “a vital necessity.” “The decision of the board has been made,” proclaimed school board member W. R. Criffield. “Those who oppose it now simply throw stumbling blocks in the way of the children it is the desire of all of us to see receiving proper care and attention, which cannot be given them as conditions now are.”<sup>3</sup>

Like Sharpstein, the new school was to be constructed entirely of brick, a reflection of the city’s commitment to providing substantial and fireproof classrooms for students. Indeed, the design of the new school closely mirrored the older building’s plan and character, complete with a Romanesque central tower. The school was to be located at the corner of Ninth and Cherry in the city’s Fourth Ward, and plans called for two stories of classrooms, with a full basement for “playroom” use. A special feature of the school was the folding doors between classrooms on both floors that allowed creation of larger auditorium spaces when needed.

Although Washington School was not completed in time for the start of classes in September, the need for the building became even more apparent that fall as over 1,400 students enrolled. When the facility was finally opened later that year, the school initially employed four teachers (all women) who taught the first four grades. But soon, “as congestion [at other schools] warranted,”<sup>4</sup> the school accommodated the full eight grades of the common school curriculum, and Washington School successfully met the city’s need for additional classroom space for at least the next few years.

Washington was the second in a series of brick schoolhouses built at the turn of the century, which collectively served the city for most of the 20th century, and gave Walla Walla almost at once a reputation as a “city of schools” (as it was called by Coast Magazine in 1908).<sup>5</sup> Following Sharpstein and Washington schools, the district constructed Green Park (1905) and the first high school building (1908). Each of the primary schools cost between \$40,000 and \$60,000 to construct (the high school cost over \$100,000) and each was distinguished by substantial architectural character and masonry construction. Green Park, listed in the National Register in 1990, and Washington schools remain the best preserved of the group.

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>“City Schools Will Open Next Monday,” Walla Walla Union, August 29, 1901.

<sup>5</sup>H. H. Turner, Walla Walla, Washington: City of Schools and Churches, The Coast, March, 1908, pp. 53-56.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

# **National Register of Historic Places Registration Form**

Section number   8   Page   3  

Washington School Walla Walla Co., WA

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In the late 1970s, Washington School was closed by the district and students were transferred to the newly constructed Blue Ridge Elementary School. In 1981, the school district sold the property to the city, which boarded up the school house and remodelled the non-historic annex for use as a community center. In 1990, the city sold the entire parcel to the Walla Walla Housing Authority, which has maintained the school but not yet embarked on a rehabilitation.

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

- Robert A. Bennett, Walla Walla: Portrait of a Western Town, 1804-1899, Walla Walla: Pioneer Press, 1980.
- Grant Bond, "Public Schools of Walla Walla County," The Coast, Vol. 15, No. 3, March, 1908, pp. 170-171.
- "Children Out of School," Walla Walla Union, January 4, 1901.
- "City Schools Will Open Next Monday," Walla Walla Union, August 29, 1901.
- Illustrated History of Southeast Washington, Chicago: Western Historical Publishing Co., 1906, pp. 94-197.
- H. H. Turner, "Walla Walla Washington: City of Schools and Churches," The Coast, Vol. 14, No. 3, March 1908, pp. 53-56.
- "The Washington School: New Building in Fourth Ward is Named," Walla Walla Union, July 13, 1901.
- Neil Whitehurst, "Schools of Yesteryear," Walla Walla Union-Bulletin, February 25, 1990, p.2A.
- "Will Build the New School," Walla Walla Union, May 10, 1901.

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 Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property two

UTM References

A	<u>11</u>	<u>395550</u>	<u>5102300</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B	Zone	Easting	Northing
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C	Zone	Easting	Northing
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D	Zone	Easting	Northing
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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 1-9, Block 4, Lots 1-5, Block 5; Block 8; Magallon Addition to the City of Walla Walla, together with vacated portions of 10th Avenue North.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the parcel historically associated with the Washington School.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

Name/title L. Garfield  
 organization OAHP  
 street & number 111 21st SW, Mail Stop KL-11  
 city or town Olympia

date August 1991  
 telephone (206) 586-2901  
 state Washington zip code 98504