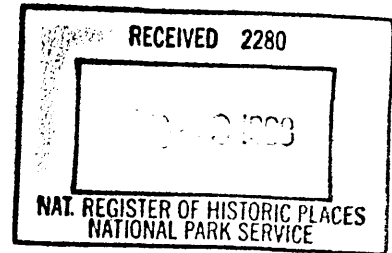


United State Department of the Interior
National Park Service



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 Franklin School, 1910 / South Franklin School, 1915 / Robbins School, 1928

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 4302 S. 39th Ave. not for publication []

city or town Omaha vicinity []

state Nebraska code NE county Douglas code _____ zip code _____

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.)

Michael Sumner
Signature of certifying official

12/15/97
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): _____

Edson H. Beal

2.5.98

ham
Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

Robbins School
Name of Property

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public-local
- public-state
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

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.)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instruction)

EDUCATION: school

VACANT: not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS:
Classical Revival

foundation brick
walls brick

roof asphalt/tar
other concrete/pressed metal

Narrative Description

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

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 patters 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.)

Education

Architecture

Period of Significance

1910-1947

Significant Dates

1910, 1916, 1922

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

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:

Omaha City Planning Department

Robbins School
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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than 1

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1.	15	250 800	4566 840	3.			
2.				4.			

See continuation sheet.

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 Melissa A. Dirr
organization Omaha City Planning date August 1997
street & number 1819 Farnam telephone (402) 444-5210
city or town Omaha state NE zip code 68108

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 THI, Inc. d/b/a/ NuStyle Development
street & number 309 S. 16th Street telephone (402) 345-8000
city or town Omaha state NE zip code 68102

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, (16 U.S.C. 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 Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Robbins School

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Constructed in 1910, with a 1916 addition, the Robbins School is an excellent example of the Neo-Classical Revival style with its projecting pedimented main entrance and symmetrical facade. The two-and-a-half story building has an irregular footprint and is constructed of dark red and blonde bricks with poured concrete beltcourses, lintels, and brick foundation. The school is located in South Omaha on an entire block facing 39th Avenue to the north, Hillsdale Avenue to the east "I" Street to the west and 40th Avenue to the south. Though vacant, the building's structural and architectural integrity remains very good.

The original portion of the building has a symmetrical rectangular floorplan with a highly formalized and ornamented projecting central pedimented portico flanked by three bay wings. Symmetrical massing on the main facade is reminiscent of Georgian Revival styles, but the main features are neo-classically derived and predominate the form, detail and overall effect. The main architectural details of the building include the ornate pedimented portico and cornice. Simple uncut modillions and dentil molding demarcate the cornice encompassing the building. Capping the central pediment are two ancon brackets supporting an antefix from which rises the original flagpole, and a cartouche is located in the tympanum. Blonde colored brick quoins set the central projection off from the rest of the building.

Separating the gabled pediment from the main body of the building is a poured concrete beltcourse below which lies a half circle fanlight window with two square rosettes on either side. This ornamental fenestration rests on top of tripartite window grouping divided by panelled pilasters to give the appearance of a Palladian window located on the second floor directly above the main entrance doors. A date plate and the words "19 Public School 10" in bas relief on the architrave above the main entrance provides physical evidence of its completion date and function. Fenestration on the main facade consists of three openings on either side of the projection each consisting of single pane double hung sashes with poured concrete lintels and arched brick window caps. All bricks on the main body of the building are a dark red variegated color with blonde variegated brick quoins and later additions constructed of blonde brick.

Two additions were added in 1916 and 1922 and kept with the style of the original building including brick quoins, concrete lintels, arched window caps, and detailed cornices. These features help to visually unify the building and makes the transition from one addition to the next very smooth. The only intrusion is a 1976 temporary metal building added to the east side. This building is connected to the historic school through a back doorway. After additions were completed the school was renovated in 1967 and again in 1976. These renovations focused solely on interior upgrading. Currently the school retains its original wood floors, chalk boards, interior crown molding, and trim, and is in very good condition.

Currently the building is not in use after having been vacated by the school in May of 1994. Because of this the windows and main entrance are boarded to protect the remaining unbroken panes. The building itself stands in good condition and retains a high degree of historic integrity.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Robbins School is locally significant under criterion A for its contribution to the educational system of South Omaha, then Omaha proper after its annexation, and criterion C as an excellent local example of Neo-Classical Revival architecture. Constructed in 1910 in South Omaha the school served residents of a newly established and growing Polish immigrant area dominated by meatpacking and the livestock industry. The Neo-Classical Revival architectural style is represented in Omaha mostly through its public buildings and accents on private residences such as porticoed entrances and porches. This building represents an excellent local example of the remaining Neo-Classical Revival style properties in the city and retains a high degree of historic integrity.

South Omaha was a booming town rich in the cattle industry and immigrant culture. This city was autonomous from Omaha with its provisions of large livestock yards and the livestock exchange industry which thrived well into the twentieth century and is still an integral part of the identification of this area of the city. South Omaha's population boom is attributed to the success of the cattle industry, and the rich immigrant culture was bolstered by the ever present need for labor at the packing houses. Omaha successfully annexed South Omaha in 1915 after several other attempts and with much controversy at the same time as the Dundee community. It was at this time that the school came under the control of the Omaha school board. The annexation of these two communities increased the school buildings in Omaha by fourteen to 54 buildings.

Robbin's School was constructed to serve a growing neighborhood primarily of Polish immigrants. At the time of its construction much of the area was still accessed by simple dirt roads, but with the booming immigrant population education facilities for the children were necessary. The graceful four room Neo-Classical Revival style building was constructed in 1910 to serve kindergarten through fourth grade and was named Franklin School. This new building resided on the highest point in the neighborhood. A neighboring school, Lowell School located at 33rd and "J" Streets, served children in fifth through eighth grades. When South Omaha was annexed by Omaha in 1915, the school's name was officially changed to South Franklin since there was already a Franklin School in the Omaha system. As the area continued to grow and neighborhoods became established, more active parents began to petition for four new rooms at South Franklin School. Soon, Lowell School, serving the fifth through eighth graders was sold to the Catholic church to replace an old wood frame school and as a result four new rooms were added to South Franklin in 1916 to accommodate the influx of students and appease the petitioning parents. The school was complete with its final addition of six rooms in 1922.

When the building's additions were complete the school administration began to focus on educational development and maintenance. Beginning in 1924 adult education classes specializing in "Americanization" were instituted to serve the large immigrant population. A Polish immigrant himself, Anthony Zaleski administered this program. The school received its current name, Robbins's School, after a local tragedy when

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two young boys, named Robbins, who attended the school died. The two boys ran into their burning house to rescue their invalid mother, killing one and seriously injuring the other. Tragedy stayed with the family, however, when later in the same year the surviving son died in an unrelated sledding accident. Today a bronze plaque placed by the Board of Education in 1928 resides in the front hall commemorating their heroic actions. The name of the school was officially changed in their honor on March 5, 1928 from South Franklin to Robbins. Robbins school remains the only school in the city named in memory of children.

February 25, 1932 saw the organization of a Parent Teacher Association whose goal it was to improve the school grounds. Dirt roads with wooden sidewalks leading to the building were cindered to enhance the safety of children as they traveled to and from school. This not only improved the school but enhanced the entire area. Other public contributions included the first adult education classes held in 1936, a safety patrol, school newspaper, and the organization of the first school library in the same year. Especially popular were scout and campfire troops since 50 percent of students were contained in kindergarten and first grade. Mabel Thomas, a passionate kindergarten teacher educated local priests on the importance of these two grades causing them to recommend sending children to the school before they entered Catholic school in second grade. This is significant as kindergarten was not considered a necessary part of elementary education until well into the 1950's. The school continued its active role in education until it was closed on May 1, 1994. Currently, the building stands vacant.

ARCHITECTURE

Robbins School is an excellent example of Classical Revival architecture, and one of the best in the city. Neo-Classical Revival architecture experienced a resurgence of popularity as a reflection of the White City at the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Nationwide Classical Revival styles were reacting to the excessive ornament and asymmetry evidenced in Victorian era details. Ornamental echoes from the Classical era lead the way to a more formalized, simple, and symmetrical building character. The popularity of this movement in Omaha is evidenced by approximately 111 sites with classical architectural details identified in local surveys. Omaha's examples date from as early 1886 to 1925. Of the 111 buildings identified most are residences with Classical details and are not eligible for the National Register or need further evaluation. Some of Omaha's other prominent Neo-Classical buildings include the Burlington Station (National Register, 1974), Clarinda-Page Apartments (Local Landmark), and Packers National Bank (National Register, 1985). Within this local context the Robbins School is significant as one of the best and truest surviving examples of the style in the city with ties to South Omaha. The original four room building set the tone for the later additions to Robbins School. Beautifully detailed with Classical Revival style ornaments and massing reflecting the Georgian Revival period specifically, the large building anchors the neighborhood with its location on one of the highest points of land. This school is one of the most outstanding examples of this architectural style in the city and is the only public school that illustrates the style so clearly.

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Neo-Classical Revival style buildings tend to be larger in scale than Greek Revival buildings and not as ornamented as Beaux-Arts buildings. They are typified by pedimented porticoes linteled windows, and Greek order detailing. Generally this is an understated, simple, and graceful style that lends subtlety and symmetry to its buildings. The popularity of the style was boosted by the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago when the Classics were revisited in the White City and became immensely popular and typically American. Building construction began to turn away from the highly manufactured detailing of the Victorian era toward more formal styles incorporating simple symmetry and classical detailing.

Robbins School was constructed in the autonomous city of South Omaha prior to its annexation into Omaha, and, therefore, building records are scarce and difficult to find. At this point no architect has been attributed to the building, although it was most certainly designed by one. This school was built during a boom time in public education and the city of Omaha retains detailed lists of the public schools and their architects. For example, John Latenser, a prominent school architect designed over 30 schools in Omaha and at least one commercial building in South Omaha, though his style differed in fenestration symmetry by this time which excludes him. No other architect was as prolific a designer in the area of schools as Latenser so attribution becomes difficult. Unfortunately the city records for South Omaha are no longer extant, and thorough research has not uncovered any evidence as to an architect.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

"History of Robbins School, 1910-1966" Omaha Department of Education. (typewritten)

Bjorkman, Lynn. South Omaha Historic District National Register nomination, Omaha City Planning Department, August, 1988.

Johnson, Niel M. "South Omaha: A Brief History." Omaha Teacher Corps Project. Omaha 1977.

Whiffen, Marcus. "American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles." M.I.T. Press, 1969.

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BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Robbins School resides on a full block fronting on 39th Avenue to the north, Hillsdale Avenue to the east, "I" Street to the west and 40th Avenue to the south. No other buildings are located on this block.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

This boundary was chosen because it is the original lot and location of the school building and retains all original features of the property.