

NPS Form 10-900  
(Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018  
APR 20 1990

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

=====

1. Name of Property

historic name: Main School

other name/site number: Old Main AHRS Site No. FAI-244

=====

2. Location

street & number: Seventh Avenue and Cushman Street

not for publication:       

city/town: Fairbanks

vicinity:       

state: AK county: Fairbanks North Star code: 040 zip code: 99701

=====

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: Public-local

Category of Property: Building

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>  1  </u>	<u>    </u>	buildings
<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	sites
<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	structures
<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	objects
<u>  1  </u>	<u>  0  </u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. See continuation sheet.

Judith E. Bettner
Signature of certifying official

Aug. 15, 1990
Date

Alaska
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 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):

Autawille Lee 9/27/90

for Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic: Education Sub: School

Current : Education Sub: School, Administration

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

Modern Movement: Art Deco

Other Description: N/A

Materials: foundation Concrete roof Concrete  
 walls Concrete other \_\_\_\_\_

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

Main School is an early Fairbanks example of an Art Deco building. Its construction is reinforced concrete with 12"-14" thick walls and poured-in-place structural columns. Built in 1933-1934, it replaced a wood-framed school destroyed by fire in early December 1932.

Following the fire, conceptual and schematic drawings for the new school were quickly prepared by Joseph Boyer, Inspecting Engineer for the Federal Building, a reinforced concrete building then under construction in downtown Fairbanks, and Walter Kubon, Building Inspector for the City of Fairbanks. The Portland firm of Tourtellotte & Hummel was selected to prepare construction drawings. The city contracted with the William MacDonald Construction Company of St. Louis, Missouri, to construct the building. The school officially opened on February 12, 1934.

The original structure had 35,500 square feet of space. It was a three story structure with the lower floor partially below grade. Roughly a "T" floorplan, classrooms and offices were located on all three floors. A 4,000 square foot gymnasium/multi-purpose room extending 51 feet to the west was centered on the rear (west) facade. A roof-mounted wood flagpole rose over the front entry. Interior elements (missing today) included three large skylights that lit the front stairwell and a teachers' lounge,

8. Statement of Significance

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

Applicable National Register Criteria: A, C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A

Areas of Significance: Architecture  
Education

Period(s) of Significance: 1934-1940

Significant Dates: 1934

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Tourtellotte and Hummel  
William MacDonald Construction Company

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.  
X See continuation sheet.

An integral part of the community's history, Main School was the only school building in Fairbanks for seventeen years. At the time of its construction in 1934, the three-story reinforced concrete building was the most modern school facility in the Territory of Alaska. The building represents the conscious effort on the part of Fairbanks citizens to change the temporary, waterfront town character of the community to that of a more progressive, permanent city landscape. An Art Deco style public building, Main School is also of architectural significance in Fairbanks. It was modelled after another Art Deco reinforced concrete building, the Federal Building (listed in the National Register of Historic Places on August 2, 1978) constructed in 1933-1934.

In 1900, Congress passed a Civil Code for the District of Alaska. The law provided for the incorporation of towns and designated fifty percent of the license fees collected by an incorporated town for operation of public schools. The town of Fairbanks, founded in 1902 and incorporated in 1904, replaced its small school on the north bank of the Chena River in 1907.

9. Major Bibliographical References

X See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

N/A

- 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:

- X State historic preservation office
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: 1.84 acres

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

Table with 4 columns: A, B, C, D. Values include 06, 465925, 7190630.

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: See continuation sheet.

The property is located on Block 104, Fairbanks Townsite.

Boundary Justification: See continuation sheet.

The boundary includes the entire city block that has historically been associated with the school.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: Russell H. Sackett/Jonathan M. Nielson
Organization: GDM Inc./Tanana-Yukon Historical Soc. Date: April 14, 1989
Street & Number: P.O. Box 73768/P.O. Box 1336 Telephone: 907-452-7213
City or Town: Fairbanks State: Alaska Zip: 99707

NPS Form 10-900-a  
(8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7

=====  
fir wainscoting used throughout the corridors. The plaster ceilings have been covered with suspended ceilings. The typical floor covering was vinyl asbestos tile, but Alaskan marble, quarried on the Prince of Wales Island and used in the Federal Building, was laid in the front lobby and entrance. This remains today.

By the late 1930s additional space was needed to accommodate a growing school population. In 1939, an addition of 12,350 square feet was constructed as a Public Works Administration project with the design purportedly prepared by Alaska Architectural Company. The addition was added to the south side of the building. It more than doubled the south facade and wrapped around the auditorium to form a new west elevation. Classrooms and a cafeteria were included. The former exterior wall was replaced by a full-height partition. When this partition was removed, the new cafeteria opened onto the multi-purpose area.

The exterior south facade repeated the established system of bays. The new west wall became a gently curving arc punctuated only by three plain pilasters. Double doors provide entry on this facade.

Another addition was constructed in 1948, adding more classrooms and large open areas on the northwest end of the building. The design was by a local firm, Alaska Architectural and Engineering Company. (This company may be successor to the Alaska Architectural Company.) The architects used the same exterior and interior design elements to make the addition fit with the original building. A major entry was added to the rear facade. Double doors under a narrow transom are set within a recessed alcove. Small lights flank the recess. The word "Auditorium" is spelled above the recess with seven inch high cast aluminum letters.

Other than these two additions, which almost doubled the size of the original building, Main School has not been altered appreciably. Carefully designed, the two additions blend into and strengthen the Art Deco exterior. Repetitive use of identical bays and the attention to similar use of volume and spacing have created a building with an unified exterior. Unfortunately, interior connections have not been as carefully considered. Both additions tie to the original building at a split level entry and at stair landings, creating an incoherent circulation pattern. One has to go up and down in order to progress in a horizontal direction.

NPS Form 10-900-a  
(8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7

=====  
The front facade, which faces east towards Cushman Street, measures 151 feet and is divided into five bays. Alternate bays recede and form an undulating rhythm. Each of the three central bays is divided into three vertical sections by four simple pilasters which run the full height of the building and end above the parapet edge. A narrow, incised design element punctuates the upper portion of each pilaster. A single, large, multi-pane, double hung window is located within each bay and clearly marks floor levels. The spandrels are accented by simple incised designs.

The building entrance is centered and recessed within the middle bay. Double doors with large glass panes are located beneath a large square transom with twelve lights. A cast bronze nameplate with incised letters reading "1933 Fairbanks Public Schools" is located directly above the alcove. Two aluminum light fixtures flank the entry. Wide concrete steps lead to the entrance.

The two outermost bays have no windows. Instead, each plain concrete wall is relieved by a large rectangle recessed slightly into the surface of the second and third floors. Two similar but much smaller rectangles decorate the ground floor.

The same window, spandrel and pilaster pattern is used on the north and south facades, each of which measure 73'4". Originally identical, both facades contained seven bays formed by six pilasters.

The exterior exhibits true Art Deco characteristics. The strong vertical lines of the pilasters and design of the parapet draw the eye upwards. Further strengthening this upward, linear movement is the current paint scheme, dark column against light wall colors. Applied ornamentation, geometric accents, and repetition of design elements provide additional Art Deco styling.

Main School maintains its historic fabric and integrity and possesses strong associations for Fairbanks. The building represents the first time the community chose to use reinforced concrete. (The Federal Building was earlier, but represents a Washington, D.C. decision, and the Empress Theatre was an individual's choice.) Main School represents community support for a substantial, permanent building. It is an excellent example of Art Deco architecture, a style utilized for several public buildings constructed in Fairbanks in the 1930s.

NPS Form 10-900-a  
(8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8

=====  
The new school, between 8th and 9th Streets and Cushman Street, was a two-story frame building measuring 76' x 64'. This structure burned on December 5, 1932. Although the fire left the city without a school building, it did end the City Council's ongoing debate whether or not to build a new school.

Joseph D. Boyer, Inspecting Engineer for the Federal Building, and Walter Kubon, Building Inspector for the City of Fairbanks hastily prepared conceptual drawings for a new school and broad cost estimates for the City Council to discuss on December 10th. The men used the plans and construction costs of the Fairbanks Federal Building, then under construction, as a basis for estimating. They estimated that the cost for a reinforced concrete school building would be \$127,000, about half the cost of the Federal Building. The earlier Fairbanks school buildings had been wood. City Council members, and later community residents, hotly debated building a reinforced concrete structure or a wood frame structure.

As required by law, the City of Fairbanks applied to Congress for permission to bond for construction of the school. Congress granted the request, but only for \$100,000, two-thirds of what the city requested, and stipulated that any bonding had to be approved by 76 percent of the taxpayers in the city. Residents of Fairbanks defeated the bond issue the first time, but passed it the second time. Two events, an earthquake and a fire, convinced enough Fairbanks residents to change their votes. Studies following a devastating earthquake in California in 1933 recommended reinforced concrete over other building materials. The fire occurred in the basement of the new Federal Building in April. The fire department credited the building's concrete construction as a primary reason the structure was not lost.

Construction of Main School began shortly after the second vote. The reinforced concrete, three-story school was completed in January 1934, four months behind schedule. It was the first concrete school building in the Territory of Alaska. Along with the Federal Building, the school ushered in a new era for the community of Fairbanks. Chatanika School, the last of the rural schools at the mining camps around Fairbanks, closed in the mid-1930s. Although some miners boarded their children with families in Fairbanks, the majority began to "winter" in the community. By 1935, the population of Fairbanks was 2,778.



NPS Form 10-900-a  
(8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number  8

=====  
The school building was the focus of much community social activity. Plays, debates, and athletics involved students and their families as well as many others in the community. Because it was the only high school within miles, the Fairbanks High School basketball team participated in a league comprised of teams sponsored by various local organizations and including teams from the University of Alaska and the military's Alaska Communications System. For many years, the area in front of the school served as a skating rink during the winter.

Additional classrooms along the south side and seating on the west side of the gym were added in 1939. More classrooms were added on the north side of the gym in 1948. Until 1951, Main School was the only school in Fairbanks. After that it was the community's high school for five years, then the junior high school for sixteen years. From 1976 until the present, Main School has been the school district administrative center and the Fairbanks alternative high school.

NPS Form 10-900-a  
(8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number   9  

=====

Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, 1932-1934.

Johnson, Scott, Planning Department, Fairbanks North Star Borough, Alaska.  
Personal communication, 1989.

Matheson, Janet. Fairbanks, A City Historic Building Survey 1985.  
(Fairbanks, Alaska: City of Fairbanks, 1985).

Moody, James E., Fairbanks, Alaska. Personal communication, 1989.

Naske, Claus-M. and L.J. Rowinski. Fairbanks: A Pictorial History.  
(Norfolk, Virginia: The Donning Company, 1981).

NPS Form 10-900-a  
(8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number Photograph identification

=====

1. Main School (AHRS Site No. FAI-244)  
Fairbanks, Alaska  
Jane Williams  
August 1988  
Office of History & Archaeology, P.O. Box 107001, Anchorage, Alaska  
99510  
Looking north
2. Main School (AHRS Site No. FAI-244)  
Fairbanks, Alaska  
Jane Williams  
August 1988  
Office of History & Archaeology, P.O. Box 107001, Anchorage, Alaska  
99510  
Looking northwest
3. Main School (AHRS Site No. FAI-244)  
Fairbanks, Alaska  
Jane Williams  
August 1988  
Office of History & Archaeology, P.O. Box 107001, Anchorage, Alaska  
99510  
Looking north at detailing on front facade
4. Main School (AHRS Site No. FAI-244)  
Fairbanks, Alaska  
Jane Williams  
August 1988  
Office of History & Archaeology, P.O. Box 107001, Anchorage, Alaska  
99510  
Looking east
5. Main School (AHRS Site No. FAI-244)  
Fairbanks, Alaska  
Jane Williams  
August 1988  
Office of History & Archaeology, P.O. Box 107001, Anchorage, Alaska  
99510  
Looking southeast