

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

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received JUL 23 1985  
date entered AUG 23 1985

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Center School (D009:0115-005)

and/or common Lincoln School

**2. Location**

street & number 1730 South 11th Street NA not for publication

city, town Omaha NA vicinity of

state Nebraska code 031 county Douglas code 055

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	NA in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Vacant

**4. Owner of Property**

name Urban Development, Inc. (Eugene J. Liu or Laurence R. Wagner)

street & number P.O. Box 1136, Downtown Station

city, town Omaha NA vicinity of state Nebraska 68101-1136

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register of Deeds, Omaha/Douglas Civic Center

street & number 1819 Farnam Street

city, town Omaha state Nebraska

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

1984 Omaha/Douglas County  
title Historic Building Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1984 - ongoing  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Omaha City Planning Department and Nebraska State Historical Society

city, town Omaha/Lincoln state Nebraska

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## 7. Description

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<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

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### **Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

Center School is a classroom/gymnasium facility built in 1893 and expanded in 1916; technically it is built of solid masonry load bearing walls supporting wood floor joists; and timber roof trusses supporting wood rafters; formally the building is an articulated two story rectangular structure with a hipped roof, designed as a local adaptation of the Richardsonian Romanesque style.

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Center School, located at 1730 South 11th Street, was constructed in 1893 as a neighborhood grade school facility. The original brick, two story over raised basement building is "U" shaped in plan and topped with a hipped roof. A two story gabled pavilion is centered on the principal eastern facade, with a smaller, minor bay-like projection centered on each of the northern and southern facades.

In 1916 a simple, flat-roofed two story brick addition was added, filling in the "U" portion of the original plan on the building's west side. This addition added two classrooms per floor plus a basement level gymnasium. In 1972, a temporary wood-framed structure was added to the north of the school, adding an additional multi-purpose space.

The building's two main entrances flank the projecting eastern pavilion. Through these arched, sandstone openings are large stairs providing the main vertical circulation. Double-loaded corridors service the classrooms - 7 classrooms per floor (5 in the original building and 2 in the addition) for a total of 14 classrooms. The basement contains the mechanical/boiler/storage functions as well as the girls and boys restrooms and the gymnasium.

The building utilizes a structural system of load bearing solid masonry walls (interior and exterior) on stepped masonry footings. The floors are structured of 2X14's spanning between bearing walls and are covered with hardwood flooring. The hipped roof is constructed of timber trusses on which dimensioned wood rafters bear.

Center School is a fine and well preserved local adaption of the Richardsonian Romanesque style of architecture. The building's facades are composed of thinly-jointed dark red brick with encircling lintel courses, window sills, mouldings and other selected details in red sandstone. The walls are punctuated by groupings of large flat-topped and round arched double-hung windows and topped with heavily dentilled projecting eaves.

The integrity of Center School is very good; it has been maintained extremely well both at the interior and exterior over its long and intensive life. Some minor problems exist with sandstone exfoliation and efflorescence at masonry surfaces. These problems will be corrected however, through a planned certified rehabilitation.

An historic element associated with Center School, while it was known as Lincoln School, is a statue of Abraham Lincoln sculpted by the Austrian artist Franz Zelesny. The statue, first installed at Central High School in 1908, was moved to a position in front of Lincoln School in 1918 where it stood until the school closed in 1984. The statue is presently being stored by the Omaha Public Schools.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1893; 1916 **Builder/Architect** John Latenser, Sr., Architect

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

Center School is architecturally significant as one of only a very few major examples of the Richardsonian Romanesque style remaining in Omaha. The architect of the structure, John Latenser, Sr., was a prolific designer of public schools in Nebraska and Iowa. Center School is one of only three existing Latenser School buildings in Omaha designed in the Richardsonian Romanesque style, a style not generally associated with Latenser.

The late 1880's and early 1890's was a time of great expansion for the Omaha Public Schools. Many of the systems early frame school buildings were being replaced with permanent brick structures. One of the biggest years for school construction was 1892. A newspaper article the following year stated that "the calendar year 1892 has been one of the greatest activity in building permanent school buildings in Omaha. Sites have been bought for eight large permanent schools and all the buildings have been started and will be completed and occupied this year" (Omaha World Herald, February 6, 1893). The ambitious construction program was funded through bonds approved at the November 1891 election and issued in early 1892.

Among the schools appropriated under the bond issue was Center School, now commonly known as Lincoln School, at Eleventh and Center Streets. Opened in 1893, the ten-room brick building replaced an original four-room frame school that had been constructed on the site in 1883. The designer of Center School was John Latenser, Sr., who was the architect for the board of education at the time.

Latenser (1858-1936), a native of Liechtenstein, received technical training in Stuttgart, Germany before emigrating to the United States. He first settled in Chicago in 1881 where he was employed as a draftsman. Latenser's first job upon his arrival in Omaha in 1887 was the design for Webster School at 28th and Webster Streets (non-extant). The contract for Webster School was awarded to Latenser after he convinced school board authorities that his design was superior to those offered by eighteen competitors. Later the school board was to adopt Latenser's method of building schools in units ranging from four to sixteen rooms. Ultimately, Latenser designed 35 Omaha schools, with the most important being Central High School (NRHP, 1979), built between 1900 and 1912. Other major buildings by Latenser include the Douglas County Courthouse (NRHP, 1979) and the J.L. Brandeis and Sons Store Building (NRHP, 1982).

Stylistically, Center School is a good example of Richardsonian Romanesque architecture. The style, based on the work of Henry Hobson Richardson, was often employed in the late 1880's and early 1890's for public buildings and large scale residences. It was also a style that was very popular in the Midwest. Several of Omaha's finest and most important buildings of the late nineteenth century were designed in the Richardsonian Romanesque style. These include the Federal Building (1892-1906), the City Hall (1889-1892) and the Omaha Bee Building (1887-1889), all non-extant. Latenser was superintendent of construction for the Federal Building, appointed under President Grover Cleveland.

Continued

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Omaha South

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

A 

1	5	2	5	4	4	1	0	4	5	6	9	5	1	0
Zone				Easting				Northing						

B 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

C 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

D 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

E 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

F 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

G 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

H 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

### Verbal boundary description and justification

Tax lot Forty-Nine (49), in Section Twenty-Seven (27), Township Fifteen (15) North, Range Thirteen (13) East of the 6th P.M., in the City of Omaha, Douglas County, Nebraska.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state NA code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dan Worth/Architect, Planner; Lynn Meyer, Preservation Administrator

organization Omaha City Planning Department date March, 1985

street & number 1819 Farnam Street, Suite 1110 telephone 402/444-5208

city or town Omaha state Nebraska 68183

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer, for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Richard E. Jones

title Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer date 6-19-85

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

James M. Sammons  
Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the  
National Register

date 8/23/85

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Continuation sheet      Significance      Item number 8      Page 1

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Center School is one of only a very few major Richardsonian Romanesque buildings that remain in Omaha. A fine residential example that exhibited elements of the style, the 1892 Guy Barton House and carriage house (NRHP, 1973), was demolished in 1982. Of the other existing major structures that represent the style, three are schools - Mason School built in 1888, and Columbian and Train Schools, both by Latenser and both funded under the 1891 school bond issue. Latenser's work in the Richardsonian Romanesque style seems to be limited almost exclusively to his designs for schools in the 1890's. The vast majority of his work is in the classical and renaissance revival styles.

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Continuation sheet      Bibliography      Item number      9      Page      1

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Building Permit Records. Omaha City Planning Department, Omaha, Nebraska.

Deeds and Mortgage Records, Douglas County, Nebraska.

John Latenser, "Center School", Architectural Working Drawings (Micro film) on file at the City of Omaha Planning Department.

Omaha Architects File. Omaha City Planning Department. Omaha, Nebraska.

Omaha Public Schools Clipping File Collection, "1890-1894". On file at Joslyn Castle, 3902 Davenport, Omaha.

Omaha World Herald, February 6, 1983.

Nebraska State Historical Society. National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form. Omaha High School, 1979.

Wakeley, A.C. Omaha: The Gate City and Douglas County Nebraska. 2 Vols. Chicago: The S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1917.

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