

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

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

For NPS use only

received **SEP 26**

date entered

OCT 24

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

1. Name

historic Old West Haven High School

and/or common Dr. Carl Giannotti Junior High School

2. Location

street & number 278 Main Street

N.A. not for publication

city, town West Haven

N.A. vicinity of

state Connecticut

code 09

county New Haven

code 009

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied | <input type="checkbox"/> commercial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> structure | <input type="checkbox"/> both | <input type="checkbox"/> work in progress | <input type="checkbox"/> educational |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site | Public Acquisition | Accessible | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object | <input type="checkbox"/> 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 |
| | N.A. | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> military |
| | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: vacant |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> museum |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> park |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> private residence |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> religious |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> scientific |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |

4. Owner of Property

name Brophy and Ahern Development

street & number 680 Third Avenue

city, town West Haven

N.A. vicinity of

state Connecticut

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. City Hall, Town Clerk's Office

street & number Main Street

city, town West Haven

state Connecticut

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title State Register of Historic Places

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1985

federal state county local

depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission, 59 South Prospect Street

city, town Hartford

state Connecticut

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Old West Haven High School is a Neo-Classical Revival-style, load-bearing masonry building. It consists of two major sections: a long rectangular building (220' x 70'), two stories in height (1926), and a rear wing (226' x 75'), three-to-four stories in height, which houses the gymnasium and auditorium (1929). The two sections are connected by a two-story center section (63' x 90') to form an "H" plan. (See Exhibit A for a schematic diagram; Photographs #1, 5-8.)

The building is located on the south side of Main Street between Washington Avenue and Martin Street, just two blocks to the east of West Haven's central business district on Campbell Avenue and the West Haven Green. The surrounding neighborhood is primarily residential, dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Two modern brick apartment buildings are located to the east and west of the building.

Constructed of buff-colored brick set in a Flemish bond, the building rests on a raised concrete foundation which is inscribed in a simulated ashlar pattern. A formed watertable extends around the original section of the building. The entire building has a flat built-up roof with a parapet. Plain and molded grey terra cotta tile is used extensively throughout the original building for Neo-Classical Revival-style details such as the entablature, pilasters, and columns, and as a veneer on the wall and ceiling of the portico. A terra cotta entablature with a projecting cornice, surmounted by the brick parapet, extends across the facade and the east and west elevations of the main block (Photograph #1, 5).

A massive central portico dominates the nine-bay facade, which has matching projecting pavilions at either end (Photograph #1, 2). The pediment of the portico is supported by four full-height fluted columns with foliated Neo-Egyptian-style capitals (Photograph #3). The terra cotta modillions of the ornate pediment as well as the modillions of the building's cornice have been removed but the dentil course and the egg and dart molding remain, as do the terra cotta patera on the frieze of the pediment. The tympanum, also of grey terra cotta, contains a molded cartouche of the globe surrounded by garlands and swags.

Beneath the portico, paired two-story pilasters flank the main entrance. Between each set of pilasters are two tall windows, aligned vertically, with an elaborate terra cotta garland on the wall between them. The pedimented doorway is set within a glazed compound archway (Photograph #4). The original wooden double-leaf doors with transom remain in place, flanked by carved wooden pilasters and sidelights. Above the arch is a terra cotta low-relief sculpture of two figures with shields. A modern wooden sign is inappropriately located between the sculpture and the tripartite window above. The projecting pavilions on the facade at either end of the main block also feature tripartite windows, flanked by terra cotta pilasters. Brick pilasters, with terra cotta bases and capitals, separate the groupings of tripartite windows on the main block between the pavilions and the portico. The east and west elevations of the 1926 building are similarly but more simply detailed. Pilasters of terra cotta define the corners of the main block and the terra cotta entablature is carried around the original building. At either end of the main block a projecting pavilion contains the side entrances and staircases. They are flanked by bands of three windows at each level. The doorways have high entablatures with a narrow projecting cornice and sidelights. The double-hung three-over-three window sash originally used throughout the building were removed about 1964 when the building was reconditioned for use as a junior high school. They were replaced with aluminum-framed one-over-one sash, the only

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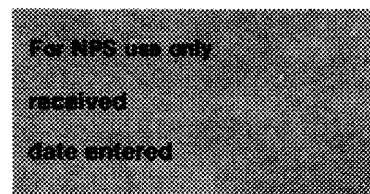
**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Old West Haven High School

Continuation sheet West Haven, Connecticut

Item number 6

Page 1



Representation in Existing Surveys continued

"Architectural Survey of West Haven," 1985. On file with the Planning Department of the City of West Haven.

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

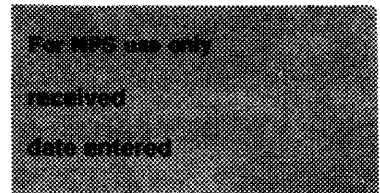
**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Old West Haven High School

Continuation sheet West Haven, Connecticut

Item number 7

Page 2



major alteration to the exterior.

The elevations of the connecting wing, auditorium, and gymnasium are less decorative than the facade. Although the pilasters are retained on the connecting wing, and in a much simplified form on the gymnasium, they are omitted in the auditorium (Photographs #5-7), which has a dropped projecting cornice with a wide entablature. The first-floor windows of the rear (south) elevation of the auditorium have been blocked in. The two-story addition for an access hallway (ca. 1960) has obscured approximately one-third of the north wall of this section (Photograph #5).

Neo-Classical Revival-style detailing is also extensively used on the well-preserved interior of the building, especially in the vestibule, main lobby, and auditorium. Notable features include recessed niches with decorative polychrome plaster urns in the vestibule and the classical-style entrance to the lobby, which is similar in form to the exterior entrance (Photograph #9-11). Marble floors, wainscot, and pilasters, and the extensive use of polychrome plaster detailing--garlands, swags, wreaths, and foliated capitals--enhance the lobby (Photographs #2, 13-15). The ceiling of the lobby displays a slightly recessed large oval with a painted and molded plaster shell design with a decorative oval centerpiece. Shouldered arches flanked by twin pilasters define the entrance to the hallways which open off the lobby. An unusual feature of the south wall is the stained-glass windows set within shallow recessed arches. The auditorium walls also feature full-height pilasters. A central molded plaster cartouche and polychromed Art Deco-style plaster detailing at the corners enhance the stage which measures 38 feet across and rises 28 feet (Photograph #16). The seats have been removed from the level floor of the auditorium and the room was divided about 1960. At that time approximately half of the space was enclosed (across the rear of the room) and partitioned for music and audiovisual rooms.

The axial floor plan of the main block of the building is typical of school construction. A central corridor runs from east to west in this section and also extends to the south in the connecting wing. Generally classrooms open off this corridor on all floors, with offices on the first-floor front.

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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> theater |
| <input checked="" 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) |

Criterion C

Specific dates 1926-7; 1929 **Builder/Architect** Roy W. Foote, New Haven (architect)
C.W. Murdoch, Inc., New Haven (builder)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Old West Haven High School is one of the foremost examples of the Neo-Classical Revival-style institutional architecture in West Haven (Criterion C). This well-preserved school was designed by Roy W. Foote, a noted New Haven architect. It has considerable local historical importance as the first high school built in West Haven.

Architectural Significance:

Roy W. Foote was one of New Haven's most prominent architects. He began his career in the office of Leoni Robinson, acknowledged to be the "dean of local architects and . . . the leader of his profession" Foote established his own architectural firm in 1912. He designed numerous buildings in New Haven: the Powell Building (1921) and the Art Deco-style Southern New England Telephone Building (1937) on Church Street, and the United Illuminating Company Building (1938) on Temple Street. In West Haven he also designed the Washington Street School, a smaller and less distinguished version of the high school. It was built in 1905 at the beginning of his career.

Foote's mature command of the Neo-Classical Revival style is evident in the Old West Haven High School. This building possesses the monumental quality found in some of the much grander institutional buildings designed in this style. This effect is achieved largely through the design of the colossal portico and is further emphasized by the use of terra cotta tile which contrasts with the red brick exterior walls. The dominance of this feature is balanced by the extensive length of the facade with its wide entablature and the simply detailed, matching pavilions. What also distinguishes the building from others of a similar style and function is a lavish use of classical detail on the interior. The excellent state of preservation of the major public spaces of the building is particularly notable.

Historical Background:

The Old West Haven High School is one of nine extant schools built in West Haven between 1890 and 1931. The earliest extant building, the Union School on Center Street, was constructed in 1890 and housed first through tenth grades. By 1900 four-year high school students also attended the school. West Haven's second and third oldest schools are the Renaissance Revival-style Washington Street School (1905) and the Forest Street School (1912), now a senior citizen center and library. All three, however, could not cope with the rapidly growing population of school-aged children in the early twentieth century which reached 600 in the Union School requiring double sessions. By 1915, a decision was made to build a separate high school. Land was purchased in 1916 although the ground-breaking ceremony and construction did not take place until 1925. During this nine year span, West Haven built the St. Lawrence School (1917), a Victorian-Romanesque-style building, and the First Avenue School (1921), a Renaissance Revival-style elementary school. After World War I the City of West Haven proceeded with the high school's construction for a cost of \$546,000 (excluding the auditorium and gymnasium). On February 7, 1927, 596 students, faculty, and principal Seth G. Haley moved into the West Haven High School. Consequently, the erection of other elementary and middle schools followed, such as the Renaissance Revival-style Thompson

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name New Haven

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

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Verbal boundary description and justification

West Haven Land Records, Volume 728: page 51.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries N.A.

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jan Cunningham, Executive Director Edited by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator

organization Greater Middletown Preservation Trust date May 9, 1985

street & number 27 Washington Street telephone (203) 346-1646

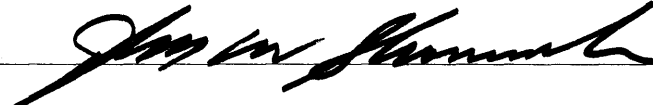
city or town Middletown state Connecticut

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.

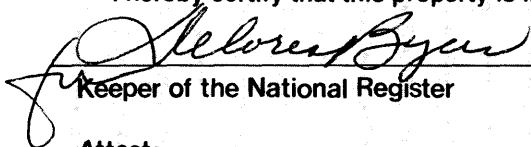
State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title Director: Connecticut Historical Commission date September 19, 1985

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the National Register


Keeper of the National Register

date 10-24-85

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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

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

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received

date entered

Old West Haven High School

Continuation sheet West Haven, CT

Item number 8

Page 2

School (ca. 1925), the early twentieth-century institutional-style Lincoln School (1929), and the Colonial Revival-style Edgar Stiles School (1935).

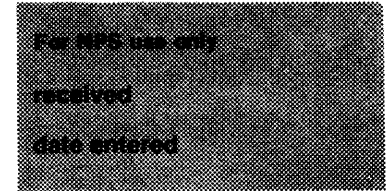
By 1940 West Haven's student population was still increasing due to the influx of laborers attracted to new industrial jobs. Double sessions were again held to accommodate the 1,832 students. In 1956 the school board declared the school had "outlived its usefulness as a high school" and a new modern high school, named the West Haven High School, was built in 1964.² The old high school was renovated for use as a junior high school and renamed the Dr. Carl C. Gionnatti Junior High School to honor the school physician, who had served the community for twenty years. The building closed in 1983 and was sold by the city for redevelopment.

Notes:

1. Elizabeth Mills Brown, New Haven: A Guide to Architecture and Urban Design (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), p. 8.
2. "New Haven Courier," August, 1956.

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

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



Old West Haven High School

Continuation sheet West Haven, Connecticut

Item number 9

Page 1

9. Major Bibliographic References

Brown, Elizabeth Mills, New Haven: A Guide to Architecture and Urban Design. New Haven:
Yale University Press, 1976.

History of West Haven, Connecticut. West Haven: Church Press, 1940.

Miscellaneous Historical Collection, West Haven Public Library.

New Haven City Directory, 1870-1940.

New Haven Preservation Trust Survey (on file with the Connecticut Historical Commission).

West Haven High School Yearbook, 1926.

West Haven News, 1950-84.

West Haven Vital Statistics.

1888 and 1901-02 City Survey Maps.

1923 Sanborn Map.

Exhibit A: Schematic Diagram
Old West Haven High School
278 Main Street, West Haven, CT

