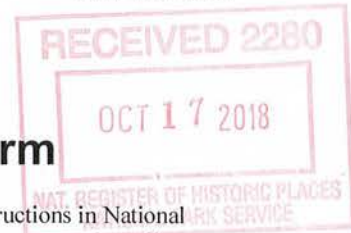


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



# 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 National Register Bulletin, How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. 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.

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Peoria High School Old Main

Other names/site number: Peoria High School

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

### 2. Location

Street & Number: 11200 North 83<sup>rd</sup> Avenue

City or Town: Peoria State: Arizona County: Maricopa

Not for Publication:  Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A \_\_\_ B \_\_\_ C \_\_\_ D

<u>Kateen Russell</u>	<u>15 Oct 2018</u>
Signature of certifying official/Title:	Date
<u>Arizona State Parks and Trails</u>	
State or Federal Agency/Bureau or Tribal Government	

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
Signature of commenting official:	Date:
Title:	State or Federal Agency/Bureau or Tribal Government

Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- Entered in the National Register
- Determined eligible for the National Register
- Determined not eligible for the National Register
- Removed from the National Register
- Other (explain) \_\_\_\_\_

*[Handwritten Signature]*

*11/20/18*

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

- Private
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

**Category of Property**

- Buildings
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>          </u>	Buildings
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	Sites
<u>1</u>	<u>6</u>	Structures
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	Objects
<u>2</u>	<u>6</u>	Total

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

Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION/school

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**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION/school

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**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> & 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS

Spanish Colonial Revival

**Materials** (Enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior material of the property: concrete, stucco, terra cotta, and clay tile.

**Narrative Description**

Summary Paragraph

Peoria High School Old Main (Old Main) is located on the Peoria High School campus in the city of Peoria, Arizona. Built in 1922 and designed in the Spanish Colonial Revival Style by the locally prestigious architecture firm of Lescher, Kibbey, and Mahoney, the historic school building is two stories tall with a daylight basement. The foundation is concrete, and the walls are a combination of concrete and brick and sheathed in stucco with terra cotta ornamentation. The main classroom building has a truncated cross-hipped roof clad in clay tile. The auditorium wing has a flat roof with clay tiled coping on the parapets. The front façade of the building is embellished with

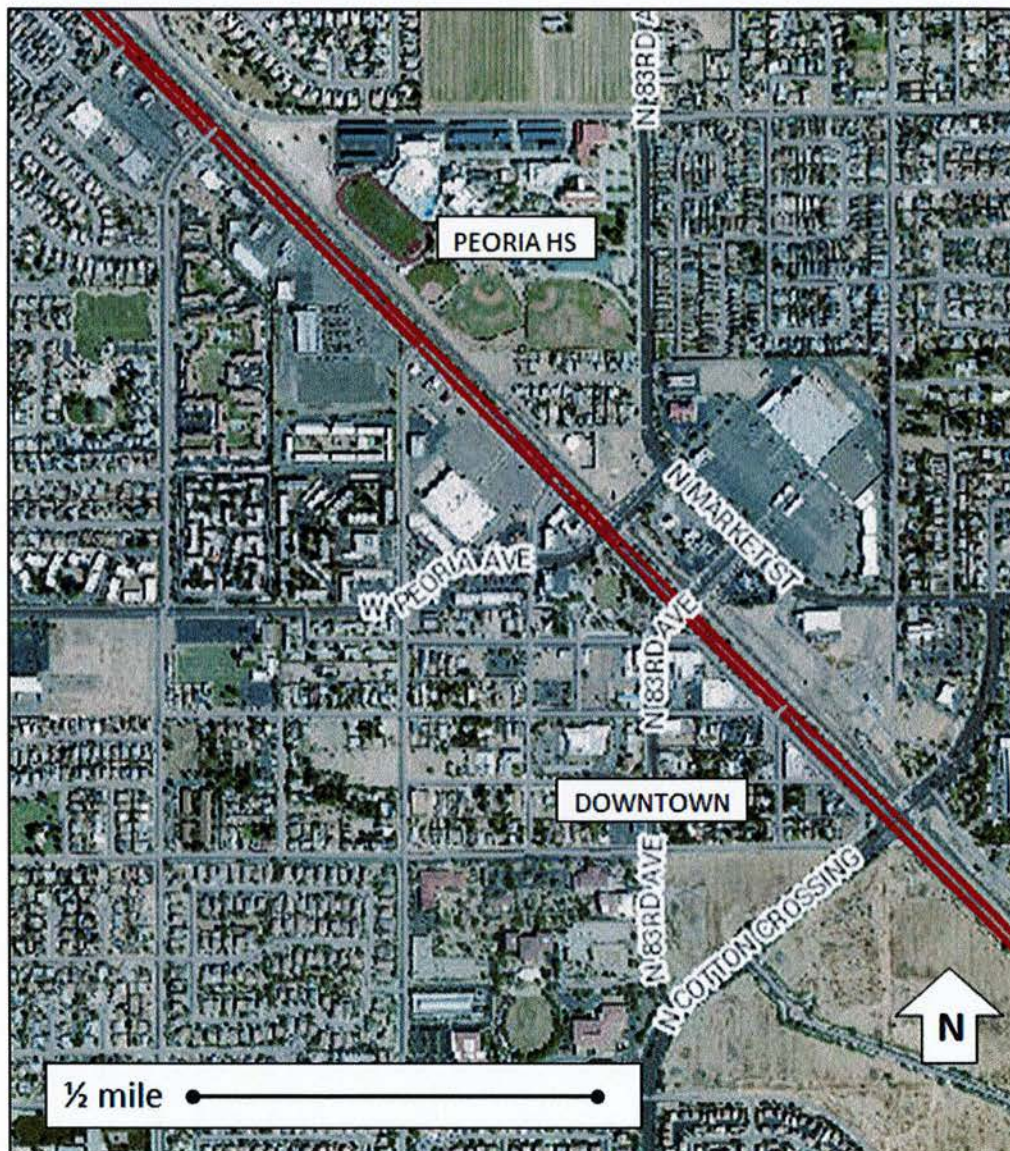
Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State

Churrigueresque ornamentation. The building has received some additions and alterations but continues to possess a high level of integrity.

### Narrative Description

Old Main is situated in the northeast portion of the campus of Peoria High School in Peoria, Arizona, a suburban city of 163,000 residents located approximately fourteen miles northwest of downtown Phoenix. The high school campus covers thirty-eight acres within a multiple use area of agricultural, commercial, and residential properties and is located one-half mile north of the Peoria old town quarter and municipal complex (figure 1).<sup>1</sup>



**Figure 1. Location of Peoria High School. Courtesy of the Maricopa County Assessor's Office.**

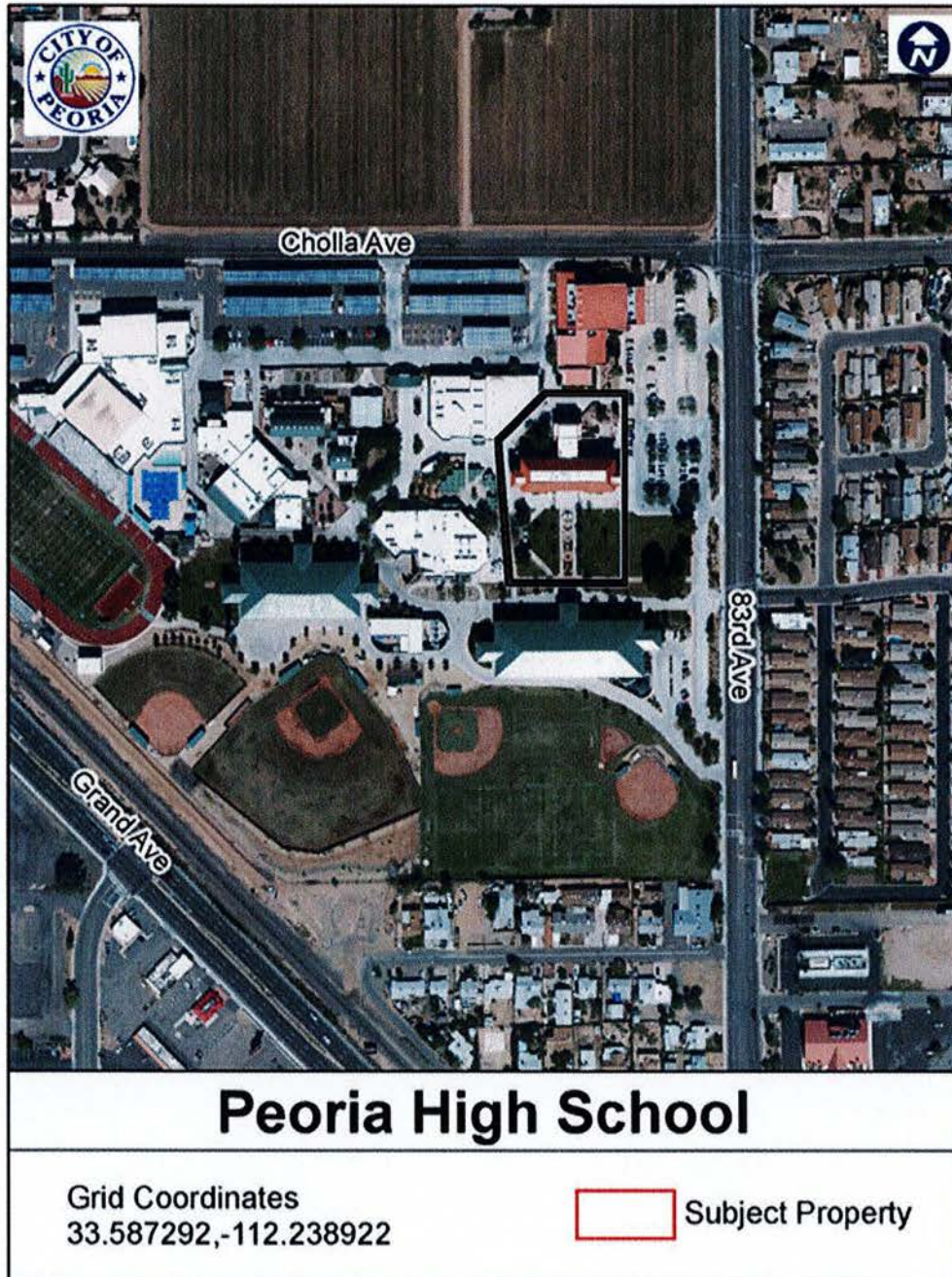
Old Main is surrounded on three sides—north, south, and west—by newer campus buildings, separated by a concrete walkway (figure 2). To the east and northeast are parking lots. To the south

<sup>1</sup> "All About Peoria," <https://www.peoriaaz.gov/NewSecondary.aspx>, accessed 25 April 2018.

Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State

and southeast of Old Main is a landscaped open space, the western portion of which is included in this nomination; this latter area offers the best view of the building, creating a symmetrical relationship between building and landscape.



**Figure 2. Peoria High School Campus. Courtesy of the City of Peoria.**

The landscape in front of Old Main is minimal, mature, and immaculately maintained, consisting of flood-irrigated lawn and palms flanking a central two-path concrete walkway that leads to the entrance of the building (figure 3). The walkways border a flagpole, fountain, and a series of three raised garden beds, all in alignment with the entrance. The fountain was built after the period of

Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State

significance and is a non-contributor to this nomination, as are the three garden beds in the series and two flanking the entrance. The flagpole dates to the construction of the building.

The architects designed Old Main in the Spanish Colonial Revival Style. It is a two-story building, with a t-shaped plan, built of a combination of reinforced concrete and brick walls and clad in stucco. The main classroom building is 190 feet long and sixty-five feet deep, aligned on an east-west axis, with a forty-foot wide auditorium wing extending sixty-nine feet to the north from the rear of the building.

The main entrance to Old Main is centered on the classroom building's southern façade and the auditorium is centered and perpendicular to the northern façade. The roof of the classroom building is cross-hipped, truncated, and sheathed in clay tile with corniced eaves. Small wings extend from the main building covering staircases on the east and west ends. The roofs of these wings match the roof of the main building and are also hipped, truncated, and clay-tiled.



**Figure 3. Front facade, facing north. All photographs are by Vincent Murray unless otherwise noted.**

The foundation of Old Main is concrete, recessed into a daylight basement, which is four feet below grade, with window openings to bring natural light into the lower level of the building. The walls of the daylight basement are concrete, clad in stucco, with rusticated courses of terra cotta.

Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State

The auditorium, built of concrete and brick with a stucco finish, is one-and-one half stories tall with a recessed, albeit windowless, basement, and a flat roof with low parapets capped with a hipped clay tile coping (figure 4). The auditorium has two small, single-story wings that were gender-specific dressing rooms. Similar to the auditorium, the wings also have flat roofs with low parapets capped with a hipped clay tile coping.



**Figure 4. Auditorium wing, facing west.**

The main entrance to Old Main is within a recessed bay in the southern façade, with a shed-roofed pediment clad in clay tiles and supported by terra cotta Solomonian columns with composite capitals. Terra cotta pilasters with matching capitals within the bay provide depth to the arcade. Located in the arch above the entrance, in the keystones of the arches, on the capitals of the columns, and above the windows flanking the entrance, are Churrigueresque embellishments.

The classroom building can also be accessed by the two small wings and two doorways adjacent to the auditorium. These latter entrances are accessible by a staircase and ramp on the respective west and east sides of the auditorium, which also provides access to the west and east doors of the auditorium.

The doors of the classroom building and auditorium are metal with fixed, single lights. Above the main entrance, which has a double door, is a fixed multi-light transom. Similar transoms are above the doors in the rear of the building. The west and east entrances to the auditorium have double

Peoria High School Old Main

Maricopa, Arizona

Name of Property

County and State

doors; the stage and dressing room entrances are respectively solid slab with a fixed transom and single light.

Integrity

The historic setting of Old Main has changed; when originally built it was the only building centered on a ten-acre lot surrounded by hundreds of acres of farmland; the original high school trustees envisioned numerous buildings on the school campus, which were, in fact, added later. Since the building's construction, the campus has also grown over time, almost quadrupling its original size to thirty-nine acres and, by the end of the twentieth century, residential subdivisions and commercial establishments replaced most of the agricultural properties surrounding the school.

With the exception of Old Main, all of the current buildings and structures located on the high school campus date to the 1970s or later. While these changes affect the setting, the open lawn in front of Old Main maintains a vantage point to view the building, contributing to its historic aesthetic and symmetry, and is included within the nomination boundaries.



**Figure 5. The eastern 1958 stairwells, facing west.**

When completed in 1922, a set of stairs from the first floor on the west end of the classroom building were to lead to an arcade connecting to a shop building that was never built. On the opposite end of the building was a set of windows. In 1958, the school erected external stairwells at both ends of the building, removing chimneys (figure 5). Unlike the earlier stairs on the west end of the building, the



Peoria High School Old Main

Maricopa, Arizona

Name of Property

County and State

stairwells provided access to the second floor as well as the first. This modification was performed for safety reasons.<sup>2</sup>

These external stairwells were designed to be in harmony with the design, with rectangular window openings, arched doorways, and truncated hipped roofs clad in clay tiles. Additional access came to Old Main in August 1980, when an elevator was installed in one of the interior stairwells and an accessibility ramp was added to the east entrance of the auditorium.<sup>3</sup>

A terra cotta cornice graces the second floor of the main building but was apparently removed from the auditorium during a remodeling of the wing in 1963. During this remodeling, the windows of the auditorium were also filled in, smoothing over the rectangular openings while leaving the decorative openings evident. The windows of Old Main were originally wood, multi-light, and either double-hung, casement, or Hauser awning style. Beginning in 1963 and through 1992, many of the windows were replaced with smaller, single-hung aluminum. During a recent remodeling, the windows were replaced with fixed anodized aluminum windows sized to the window openings.<sup>4</sup>

By 2008, the building was experiencing structural issues and was closed. With bond funds, the district began a \$6.5 million rehabilitation project in 2011 that lasted two years. During this time, the roof structure was removed, rebuilt, and re-clad in clay tile to maintain its historic appearance. Modifications were made to classrooms to allow for more contemporary multi-purpose uses, such as movable walls to create collaborative spaces. The project also included the installation of the aforementioned, energy efficient, insulated fixed windows to increase safety and add comfort to the building and allow Old Main to be used year-round.<sup>5</sup>

These contemporary changes to the building illustrate the changing safety and construction requirements to address evolving needs of the school and do not detract substantially from the integrity of the building. Instead, they reinvigorate the usefulness of a community landmark by repurposing it for twenty-first century educational use while preserving its historic character.

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns 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.

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<sup>2</sup> "Peoria High Face Lifting Nearly Done," *Arizona Republic*, 16 January 1958, 24.

<sup>3</sup> "Cactus High is Dedicated in Glendale," *Arizona Republic*, 4 February 1979, A35 and "Peoria High School renovation plans offered," 29 September 1981, Extra B2.

<sup>4</sup> "Bond Issue Passes with Peoria Vote," *Arizona Republic*, 9 January 1963, 20 and "Peoria district to sell bonds to build school," 6 May 1992, 22.10.

<sup>5</sup> "Historic Peoria School Gets a Face Lift," *Arizona Republic*, 24 July 2014, online [www.azcentral.com](http://www.azcentral.com), accessed September 15, 2015.

Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State

**Criteria Considerations**

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1922-1968

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1922

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Lescher, Kibbey & Mahoney, Architects

Eagan Construction Company, Builder

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Peoria High School Old Main

Maricopa, Arizona

Name of Property

County and State

### Summary Paragraph

Peoria High School Old Main is significant under Criterion A, in the area of Education at the local level. Built in 1922, the well-preserved, former rural high school building reflects the importance of providing a secondary education to residents of an agricultural community in Arizona during the early decades of the twentieth century. While Old Main has experienced some alterations to adapt it to contemporary use, it retains a sufficient level of integrity to convey its historic character and significance to the community it serves.

### Developmental History

#### *The Quest for a New High School*

On April 29, 1889, the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors approved the creation of a school district to provide educational services to children living in the northwest Salt River Valley. The newly created School District No. 11 received the local appellation of Peoria School District, named for a little unincorporated community primarily developed by a group of immigrants and investors from Peoria, Illinois.<sup>6</sup> As described by the *Arizona Silver Belt* newspaper of October 1, 1887:

On the desert fifteen miles northwest of Phoenix, is a small settlement of people from Peoria, Il. They are the vanguard of a large colony, who have bought lands and water rights from the Arizona Canal Co. A town site has been located and called "Peoria," after the Illinois city of that same name from whence they came.<sup>7</sup>

The settlers were encouraged by the 1885 completion of the Arizona Canal which, when combined with the Desert Land Act of 1877, led to the eventual reclamation and development of hundreds of thousands of acres in the western Salt River Valley. The Desert Land Act encouraged the development of arid and semi-arid lands in the western United States by increasing the amount of land allowable under the Homestead Act of 1862 from 160 acres to 640 acres, if the homesteaders reclaimed, irrigated, and cultivated the land. Unlike the Homestead Act, the Desert Land Act did not require residency, only that the land be irrigated for cultivation within three years. These changes led to a substantial amount of land speculation and fraud, but also increased the amount of land being reclaimed from the desert as intended. Subsequent to the canal's completion, and with direct ties to the Arizona Canal Company, the Arizona Improvement Company incorporated to assist in the acquisition of public lands and the purchase of water rights from the canal company to irrigate those lands.<sup>8</sup>

As part of its ambitious development plan, the Arizona Improvement Company created a one-hundred-foot wide road from the northwest corner of the Phoenix townsite (7<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Van Buren Street) and extended it in a northwesterly direction. By 1889, the road called Grand Avenue connected Phoenix to the developing communities of Alhambra, Glendale, and Peoria. Around the

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<sup>6</sup> *Book of Meeting Minutes* (Phoenix: Maricopa County Clerk of the Board of Supervisors, 1889), 3: 522.

<sup>7</sup> *Arizona Silver Belt*, 1 October 1887, 1.

<sup>8</sup> Bradford Luckingham, *Phoenix: The History of a Southwest Metropolis* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989), 29; Karl S. Landstrom, "Reclamation under the Desert-Land Act," *Journal of Farm Economics*, 36:3, (August, 1954), 500.

Peoria High School Old Main

Maricopa, Arizona

Name of Property

County and State

same time the county supervisors were creating School District 11, local landowners were laying out the Peoria townsite and selling lots.<sup>9</sup>

According to Kathleen Gilbert's commemorative history of Peoria, local lore purports the initial enrollment as a dozen students, which tapered off so significantly during the first school year annulment of the district was likely. Serendipitously, a family passed through the community on their way to Phoenix and were convinced to remain, assuring the community of a stable student body. An abandoned store in the downtown provided a temporary schoolhouse until one was built in 1891.<sup>10</sup>

By the end of the nineteenth century, the concurrent growth and prosperity of Phoenix substantially influenced the development of Peoria. Phoenix became connected to the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1887 and was selected as the territorial capital in 1889. In 1895, the Santa Fe, Prescott, and Phoenix Railway Company—a subsidiary of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway—completed its line paralleling Grand Avenue and passing through the center of the Peoria townsite. The new branch connected Peoria to both the new capital and to the markets in the eastern United States and west coast.<sup>11</sup>

To accommodate an increasing population, and to replace the 1891 building that burned down a year earlier, in 1906, the community erected a new schoolhouse now known as the Central School. Located at Orange Avenue (83<sup>rd</sup> Avenue) and Madison Street, the Peoria School was the typical “one-room” schoolhouse, serving the educational needs of students from all grades. High school, as a separate educational entity, was not an option for students in the northwest Salt River Valley until 1911, when an effort to create a new secondary school came from the town of Glendale to the southeast.<sup>12</sup>

Founded in 1891, Glendale was a slightly newer community than Peoria and, by the beginning of the twentieth century, slightly larger. Also located on Grand Avenue and, eventually, the railroad line, Glendale was also closer to Phoenix and the recipient of greater promotional efforts by the Arizona Improvement Company. In 1891, the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors formed Glendale's school district under the name “Jefferson School District No. 40.” At the same time, to the east of Glendale, the supervisors formed the Washington School District No. 6, reassigning the new district a number from an earlier district.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.; *Arizona Republican*, 4 July 1890, 4 and 22 July 1890, 1; *Book of Deeds* (Phoenix: Maricopa County Recorder's Office, 1890), 17:261-265.

<sup>10</sup> Kathleen Gilbert, *More than a Century of Peoria People, Progress, & Pride* (Phoenix: Heritage Publishers, Inc., 2004), 7; Robert Carriker and Melanie Sturgeon, *Historic Resource Survey: Peoria, Arizona* (Phoenix: Arizona State Parks, 1997), 13; Jodey Elsner, *Peoria* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 105.

<sup>11</sup> Ann Tilghman, “The Central School,” *National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form* (Peoria: City of Peoria, 1982), 8.1; “Plat of Peoria,” *Book of Maps* (1897), 2:57; *Book of Articles of Incorporation* (1891), 1:416-422.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 8.2; Jodey Elsner, *Peoria* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 105; Kathleen Gilbert, *More than a Century of Peoria People, Progress, & Pride* (Phoenix: Heritage Publishers, Inc., 2004), 24; Sandy Finerman, *A Complete History of the Glendale Union High School District, 1911-1978* (Glendale: Glendale Union High School District Print Shop, 1978), 34.

<sup>13</sup> *Book Meeting Minutes* (1891), 4: 244-245. Note: the original District 6 was the McMillen School District, created by the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors in 1879. It served the town of McMillenville and adjacent mining communities and became part of Gila County in 1881. “Notes in and Around Glendale,” *Arizona Republican*, 4 December 1891, 1.

Peoria High School Old Main

Maricopa, Arizona

Name of Property

County and State

Two decades later, School District Nos. 6, 11, and 40 were all in need of a formal high school; the closest high school was in Phoenix. In 1911, the town of Glendale led the way towards a unified goal--a union high school to serve the students of the three school districts. Subsequent to voter approval, Glendale Union High School started classes in the storeroom of a local business with an enrollment of seventeen students. A bond election the following year led to the construction of the new high school that opened its doors in 1913.<sup>14</sup>

By the end of the decade, Glendale Union High School had become overcrowded and the citizens within the Peoria School District decided to provide their students a secondary education closer to home. Using rented space for temporary classrooms, the citizens of School District No. 11 passed a bond in the amount of \$175,000 to fund their own high school. The Peoria High School Trustees purchased a ten-acre lot from Chauncey and Marie Clark for \$5,000 in the newly created Peoria Heights subdivision for use as the high school campus. The trustees then hired the preeminent architecture firm of Lescher, Kibbey, and Mahoney to design the community's new high school.<sup>15</sup>

The company philosophy was to design for the client and the buildings often reflected the people who were involved with the project at the time more so than the vision of the architect. Nevertheless, the firm also adhered to changing architectural style while honing the plans to the needs of the client.<sup>16</sup>

### *Design and Construction*

Funding for the new high school came from bond funds, approved in 1920 by School District No. 11 voters in the amount of \$175,000, for design, construction, and all necessary equipment. Voters throughout Arizona approved almost \$2 million for school construction that year and many of the schools turned to Lescher, Kibbey, and Mahoney for their design needs.

The school bond system was a major source of business for the architectural firm. Between 1912 and 1941, the firm designed eighty elementary schools and thirty-one high schools, including Peoria High School. While the number of elementary schools designed by the firm decreased during the 1920s, the number of high schools increased. Beginning with Florence Union High school (1916) and into the following decade, the firm's large building architectural styles also transitioned to Spanish Colonial Revival and Mission Revival while retaining the formality and symmetry of the Neo-Classical forms used previously. The design the firm created for Peoria High School exemplified this transition.<sup>17</sup>

The Mission Revival Style was seen as the Californian counterpart of the Georgian Revival that was then popular in the Eastern United States. Coinciding with a concerted effort to preserve the Spanish missions established by Catholic priests in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Mission Revival Style evolved in the late 1880s as a regional expression of romantic nostalgia, one of a series of revival styles that evoke the architecture of an earlier era, albeit with less than historic

<sup>14</sup> "Glendale Wants a High School," *Arizona Republican*, 5 May 1911, 12.

<sup>15</sup> "Few Peoria Pupils to Glendale High," *Arizona Republican*, 5 September 1920, 5 and "Peoria to have a High School this Year," 21 August 1920, 14.; "Peoria Heights," *Book of Maps* (Phoenix: Maricopa County Recorder's Office, 1921), 10:9; *Book of Minutes* (Phoenix: Maricopa County Board of Supervisors, 1920), 15:394; "Warranty Deed," *Book of Deeds* (Phoenix: Maricopa County Recorder's Office, 1922), 164:432.

<sup>16</sup> "Architect's career measured by his legacy of landmarks," *Arizona Republic*, June 7 1981, SL1 and SL6.

<sup>17</sup> *Arizona Republican*, 18 May 1920, 13; "Many School Buildings to be Put Up in Arizona," *Tombstone Weekly Epitaph*, 18 July 1920, 6; Rosalie Stafford, Roger Brevoort, and Douglas Kupel, "Mohawk Valley School," *National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form* Phoenix: Arizona State Parks Board, 1986), 8.5-6.

Peoria High School Old Main

Maricopa, Arizona

Name of Property

County and State

accuracy. In the case of the Mission Revival Style, which became popular across the American Southwest, the identifying features were typically curvilinear “mission-shaped” dormers or parapets, wide overhanging eaves, porch roofs supported by square piers and arches, red clay tile roofing, and smooth stucco clad walls.<sup>18</sup>

Also featuring smooth stucco walls and clay tile roofs, Spanish Colonial Revival deviated from the more vernacular-based, less adorned simplicity of its Mission Revival predecessor by including elaborate ornamentation imitating the churches and monasteries of the Iberian Peninsula and prominent cities in Spanish America, which themselves affected the stylistic elements of Mediterranean civilizations. This effort led to a greater palate of cultural details drawn from Arabic and Italian sources, as well those of the Byzantines, Persians, and Greeks as was evident in the works of Goodhue and Winslow at the Panama California exposition. As with the Mission Style, Spanish Colonial Style made its way east into the American Southwest, but with much less elaboration that was portrayed at the 1915 exposition. Even in California, the more highly decorative elements derived from the Spanish Renaissance (Plateresque) and Baroque (Churrigueresque) periods and applied on facades and entrances were typically reserved for luxury homes such as the Hearst Castle in San Simon and the public buildings in Balboa Park (site of the 1915 exposition).<sup>19</sup>

The characteristic features of Spanish Colonial Revival vary due to its eclectic adoption from foreign influences but typically include but are not limited to: stuccoed exterior walls; low pitched clay tile roofs or flat roofs with tiled parapets; shallow or corniced eaves; arcaded porches with shed roofs; and elaborate carved or cast ornamentation.<sup>20</sup>

When the firm completed their original plans for the new high school in December 1920, the drawings presented called for a Spanish Colonial Revival-style two-story building with an asymmetric U-shape plan with the entrance and auditorium at one end of the building connected by an arcade to a similar styled, single story C-shaped shop building (see figure 6). The buildings were designed to be built of brick and coated in stucco, with a combination of cross-gabled and cross-hipped roofs clad in clay tiles.<sup>21</sup>

The main portion of the planned complex was the administration-auditorium building and it was quite imposing. To the rear of the auditorium was a prominent boiler room, suspended above the stage, its flat roof jutting above the roof line. Slightly higher, and with greater prominence, was a tower rising from the classroom portion of the building. Almost twice the height of the two-story school, the tower had a hipped roof clad in clay tile and wrought iron balconies facing each of the cardinal directions (see figure 7).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> William S. Collins, et. al, “The Single Family Residential Architecture of Josias Th. Joesler in Tucson and Pima County, Arizona, 1927-1956,” E.5-6, 15-16; Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1981), 213.

<sup>19</sup> William S. Collins, et. al, “The Single Family Residential Architecture of Josias Th. Joesler in Tucson and Pima County, Arizona, 1927-1956,” E.20-24; Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780*, 225.

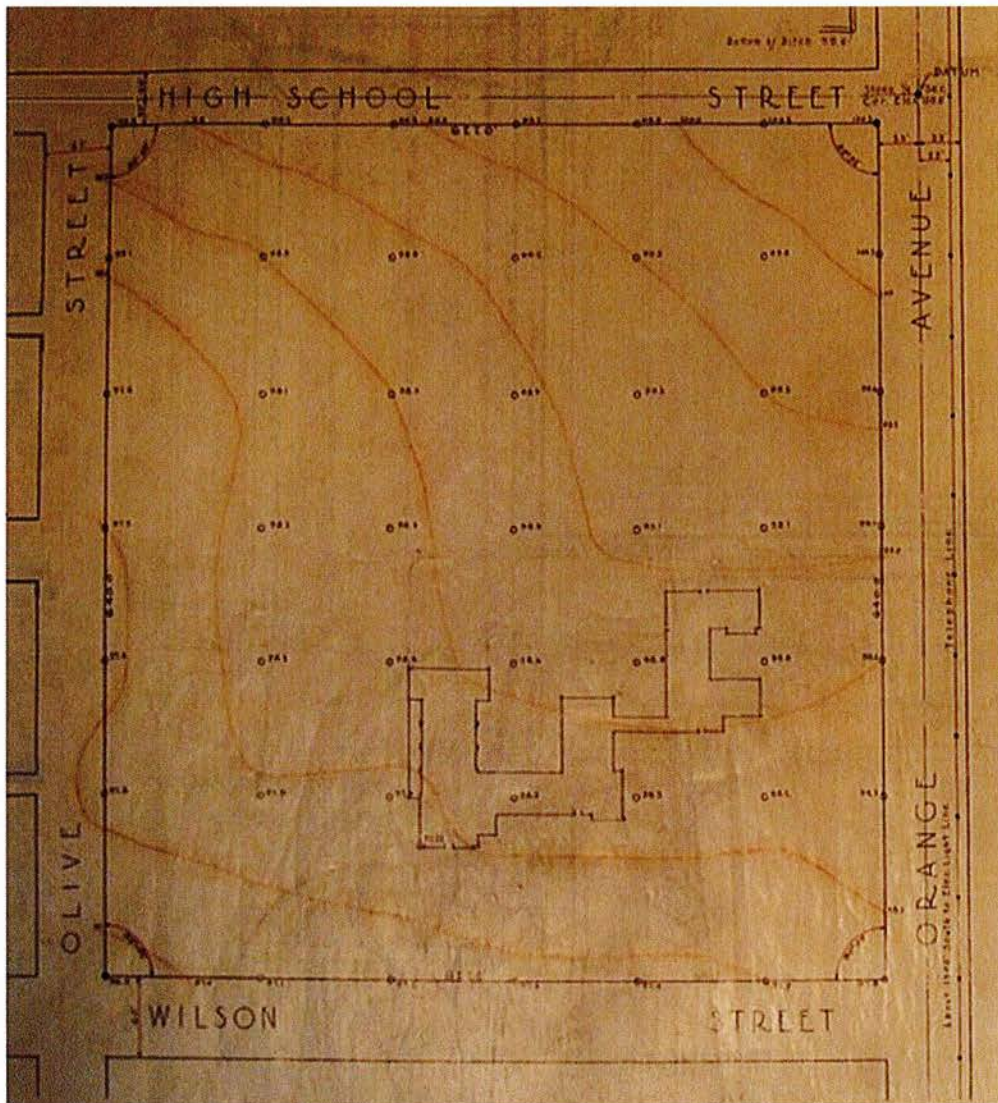
<sup>20</sup> Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780*, 225; Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 417.

<sup>21</sup> Royal W. Lescher and John R. Kibbey, “Peoria High School,” (Tempe: Lescher-Mahoney Architectural Collection, Arizona Historical Society-Papago Park), December 1920.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State



**Figure 6. Plan of Grounds, Peoria High School, December 1920. Courtesy of the Arizona Historical Society-Papago Park.**

According to *The Privilege You Earn: History of the Peoria Unified School District*, Peoria High School District Superintendent Arthur E. Haage received a letter from the University of California that had been scoring the school plans. The letter stated that the anticipated funding for the school, estimated at \$120,000, would be insufficient to cover half of the planned school construction. The architectural firm would literally need to return to the drawing board to draft a less expensive high school.<sup>23</sup>

Around this time, Mahoney became partner in the firm and took an active role in revising the drawings and the resulting plans for the high school were completely different. The site plan placed the high school within the center of the lot and, instead of an almost ecclesiastical looking building with its prominent tower, the design borrowed from the then-popular Neo-Classical Style, such as that used in the then-recently constructed high school in the town of Chandler. Designed by

<sup>23</sup> Kristina Minister, *The Privilege You Earn: History of Peoria Unified School District, 1889-1986* (Peoria: Oral History Center, Inc., 1986), 5.

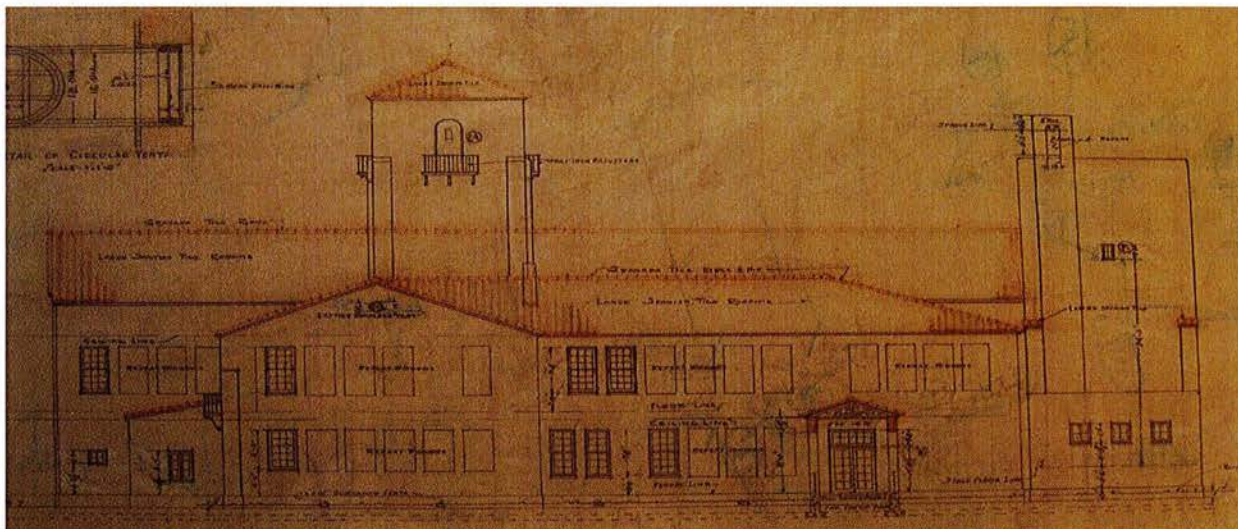
Peoria High School Old Main

Maricopa, Arizona

Name of Property

County and State

Mahoney's previous employers, Allison and Allison, Chandler High School possessed monumental proportions including a massive portico with six ionic columns (figure 8). Similar features were also in the revised plans for Peoria High School (figure 9), though the Churrigueresque elements emphasized that the architectural style was Spanish Colonial Revival.<sup>24</sup>



**Figure 7. East Elevation of Peoria High School, December 1920. Courtesy of the Arizona Historical Society-Papago Park.**



**Figure 8. Architects' sketch of proposed Chandler High School, ca. 1921. Courtesy of the Chandler Unified School District.**

The final plans for the high school contained Mahoney's touch. While draftsmen Lloyd LeRaine Pike and Albion Roy Walker worked on much of the building, Mahoney personally designed the Churrigueresque ornamentation. Peoria High School was the designer's first large project after becoming a partner in the newly renamed firm of Lescher, Kibbey, and Mahoney, and the Churrigueresque ornamentation was a physical signature on the project (see figure 10).<sup>25</sup>

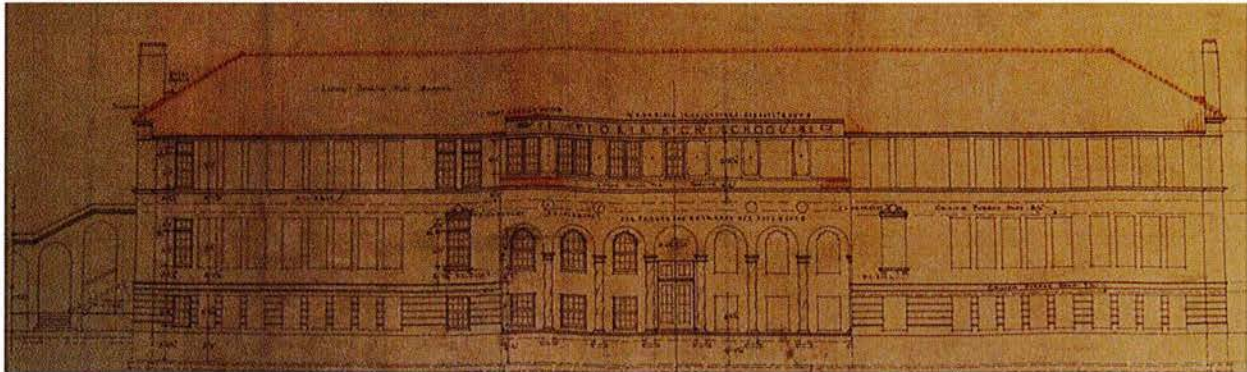
<sup>24</sup> Kevin Weight, "Chandler High School," *National Register of Historic Places*, 8.31.

<sup>25</sup> *Phoenix City and Salt River Valley Directory, 1919* (Los Angeles: Arizona Directory Company, 1919), 388 and 403.

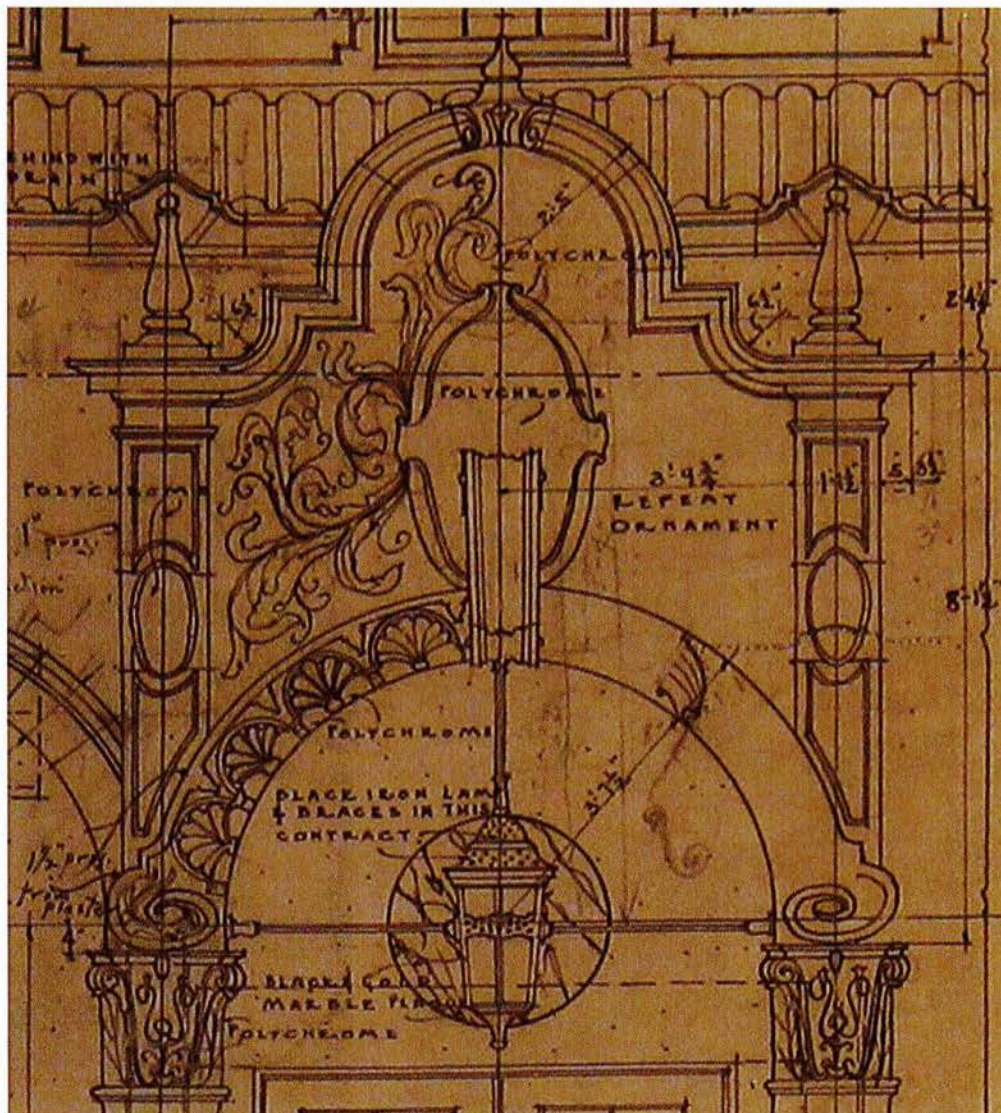


Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State



**Figure 9. South Elevation of Peoria High School, August 1921. Courtesy of the Arizona Historical Society-Papago Park.**



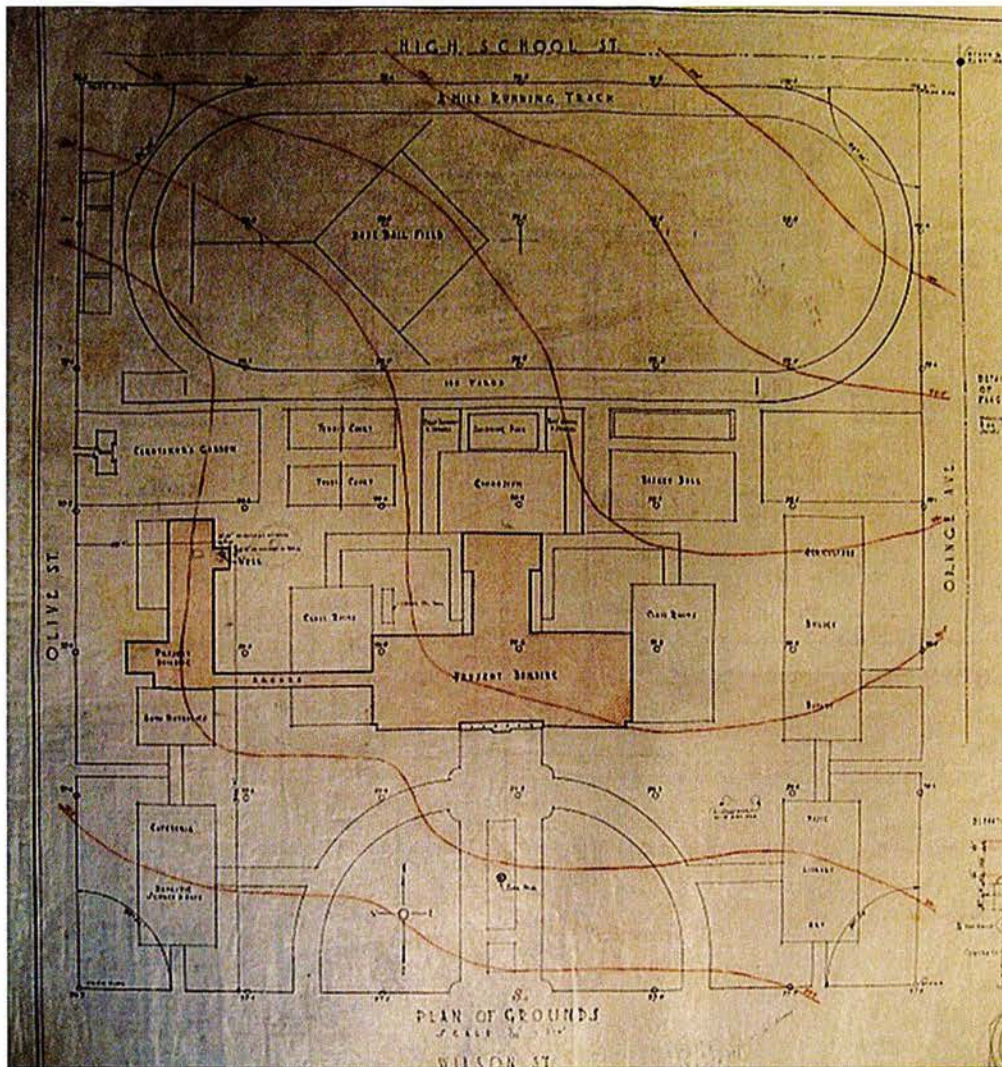
**Figure 10. Churrigueresque ornamentation drawn by Leslie J. Mahoney, August 1921. Courtesy of the Arizona Historical Society-Papago Park.**

The architectural firm completed the plans in August 1921 and they were approved by the school district the following month. Construction costs for the Peoria High School were estimated at

Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State

\$150,000 even before the firm completed the drawings. The school district board awarded the contract to the Eagan Construction Company. The first bid exceeded the budgeted amount, so its figures were taken only for the main building. As originally planned, the main building was to connect to an L-shaped, single-story, woodworking and metal shop building designed in Spanish Colonial Revival Style and accessed from the main building via a seventy-foot arcade. However, due to budgetary limitations, neither the shop nor the arcade were built.<sup>26</sup>



**Figure 11. Plan of Grounds, Peoria High School, August 1921. Courtesy of the Arizona Historical Society-Papago Park.**

Apparently envisioning dramatic expansion over time, the site plan for the high school (figure 11) included future classroom additions on the east and west ends of the building and a gymnasium addition to the auditorium. Wings on the gym would provide for gender-segregated lockers and showers and be flanked by basketball and tennis courts. A combination baseball diamond and quarter-mile track was located at the northern edge of the high school lot. Other future buildings included cafeteria/domestic science and arts, auto mechanics, music/library/arts, and

<sup>26</sup> "Accept Plans for New Peoria High School Building," *Arizona Republican*, 5 September 1921, 5 and "Let Contract for New Peoria High School Building," 29 September 1921, 9.

Peoria High School Old Main

Maricopa, Arizona

Name of Property

County and State

agriculture/biology/botany. Of these, only the cafeteria and auto mechanic buildings came to fruition as planned, and not until much later.

In the meantime, the new school addressed the needs of secondary education through accommodation. In the day basement were two classrooms, a dining room, cooking room, sewing room, fitting room, and agricultural laboratory. In addition to the teachers' lounge and principal's administration offices, the first floor included three classrooms, a library and a study hall. Flanking the entrance to the auditorium were the girls' and boys' restrooms and lockers. Four more classrooms were located upstairs along with physics and chemistry laboratories, lecture room, office, and rooms for typing and bookkeeping classes.

The high school building was completed in time for the Fall 1922 semester, though the rest of the campus grounds remained bare. The community was very proud of their new high school and, since funds for developing the campus landscape were limited, approximately fifty men and boys, aided by six donated horse teams, spent September 23 leveling the baseball diamond, running track, basketball, and tennis courts. Women and girls from the community also participated, preparing a lunch for the workers that included an abundance of ice cream.<sup>27</sup>

### **The New High School**

On January 23, 1923, the residents of Peoria celebrated the formal opening of the school with a special program which included a piano, violin, and a soprano performing music by Jean Delphin Alard, Giacomo Puccini, E. A. McDowell, Francisco Di Nogeno (Emilie Frances Bauer), Ludwig van Beethoven, Alfredo D' Ambrosio, and Henryk Weiniawski. Domestic science students served refreshments and the public toured the new building to learn about the preparations made to provide the students a "thorough course in high school work."<sup>28</sup>

Though the student body was small, the course work was impressive and included a broad range of course offerings: three years of English, two years of foreign language, two years of math, one year of history, one year of social science and civics, one year of chemistry or physics, and six electives from commercial (business courses), home economics, manual training, music, or other academic subjects. The teachers were educated and specialists at the high school level. The high school also brought in speakers to talk on a wide variety of subjects at special assemblies open to the public.<sup>29</sup> By 1923, the high school was accredited by the North Central Association of High Schools, which was unusual for a school as new as Peoria. According to University of Arizona professor A. O. Neal, the recognition was based on the scholastic standing of the faculty, excellent school equipment, and good attendance.<sup>30</sup>

While the school building, faculty, and curriculum measured well, the athletic fields could best be described as "rudimentarily developed." According to Ira Murphy, one of the first students enrolled (and decades later, the school superintendent)the sports facilities were makeshift:

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<sup>27</sup> "Students and Men at Peoria Level School Grounds," *Arizona Republican*, 24 September 1922, 3.6.

<sup>28</sup> "Formal Opening of New Peoria High School on Friday," *Arizona Republican*, 17 January 1923, 3.

<sup>29</sup> Kristina Minister, *The Privilege You Earn*, 27.

<sup>30</sup> "Quit Business in Peoria Monday to Play with the Kids," *Arizona Republican*, 4 April 1923, 3.

Peoria High School Old Main

Maricopa, Arizona

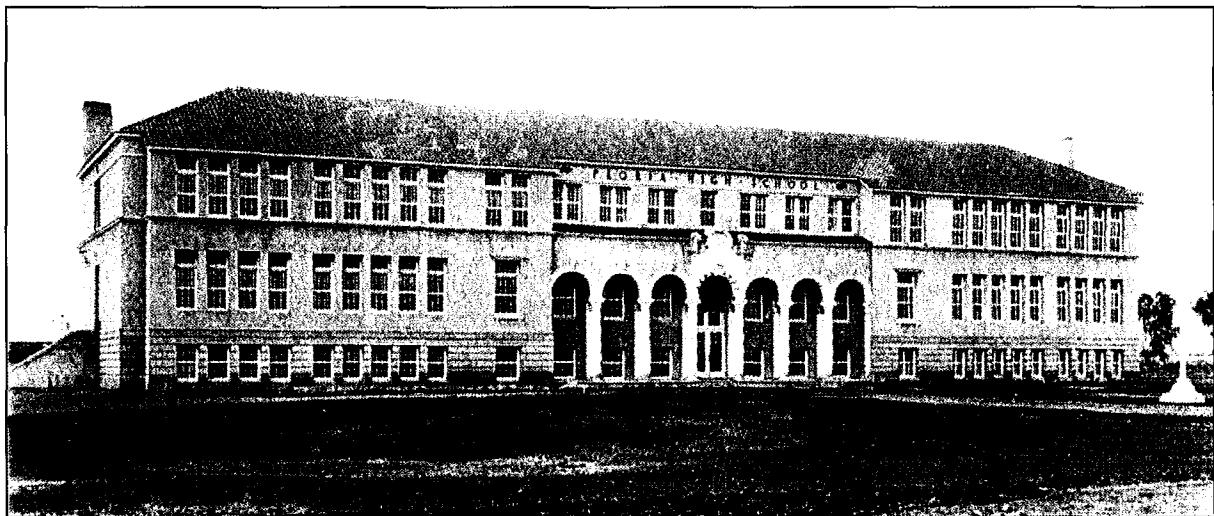
Name of Property

County and State

I think, my second year there, they put in some dirt tennis courts, only two of those. And they bought four steel (tennis) rackets, I can recall that, and a few played tennis. The showers were down under the old stage (of the auditorium). And they ran two pipes in and tied a tin can on the end of each one and poked holes in it. So, if you played and took part in athletics, why, you'd go get your shower, 'course nothing but cold water. But also, if you know that country, it gets real dusty. And when they played basketball outside on the courts, Why, oh, the dust would probably be four or five inches deep. Well, if you took a shower and then went to get your clothes which they had some old pillars in there, nails, and you'd hang your overalls and whatnot on these nails. But they had a one by twelve board, a few of those, to walk down where you could get under the shower, and then go back and put your clothes on. 'Course there weren't enough of those. By the time you got your clothes on, your feet were so dirty from walking in that dust, you just as well not have taken a shower.<sup>31</sup>

The one-mile road from the town center to the campus was a dirt track, locally referred to by the irrigation ditch that it paralleled as "Lateral 21," though appearing on the plat and plans as Orange Street. With inclement weather, the road could become a mud bog, hence the community wanted the one-mile stretch from the town paved for inclement weather. The various civic organizations attempted to acquire funding to pave the road but failed. However, after some effort, the county board of supervisors and highway commission allocated the necessary funds and construction of the road began in the summer of 1923 and was completed before the beginning of the fall semester.<sup>32</sup>

When built, Peoria High School towered over the agricultural fields around it and the desert beyond the fields (figure 12). It was larger than any buildings in the downtown, and vastly surpassed the needs of the then-current student body. In 1921, shortly after the creation of the high school district, the graduating class numbered one. The following year, that number grew to three.



**Figure 12. Peoria Old Main, n.d. Courtesy of YourValley.net.**

<sup>31</sup> Kristina Minister, *The Privilege You Earn*, 26.

<sup>32</sup> "Formal Opening of New Peoria High School on Friday," *Arizona Republican*, 17 January 1923, 3; "Contract Awarded for Long-Awaited Strip of Paving," 29 July 1923, 3, and "Install Officers Of Women's Club At First Meeting," 21 September 1923, 2.1.

Peoria High School Old Main

Maricopa, Arizona

Name of Property

County and State

According to Ira Murphy, when the new high school opened, the freshmen made up more than half of the students, numbering “twenty-five or so” from the eighth grade and included men in their early twenties, who “...hadn’t had a chance to go to (high) school, but now they had their own high school....”<sup>33</sup> In early twentieth century Arizona, high schools were open to all who completed the work of the elementary school and the new school was no different.<sup>34</sup>

Teachers had to possess at the least a Normal School diploma and first year hires included James A. Diffen as principal, Perry June teaching math and physics, Ms. Ethel Spooner languages, Ruth Holson commercial classes (bookkeeping, typing, and shorthand), Alfred Taylor taught band and History and Miss W. Ambler domestic sciences.<sup>35</sup>

The new high school supplied more than just an education for the children of the community; it was a point of civic pride. Sports teams competed with others around the state and home games offered a special respite on weekends. In addition to covering the interscholastic competition, the school newspaper, *El Camaleon*, became the de facto newspaper for the community and depended on local advertising for its production costs.<sup>36</sup>

Perhaps in response to the older students who registered for classes when the new high school first opened, in 1924, in addition to providing an education for the youth of the community, Peoria High School began offering night classes for adults. Initially, the evening program was a success, with over a hundred students enrolled in the first year taking courses in Spanish, woodshop, home economics, English, and math. The evening students represented a broad sample of the local populace with ranging in age from sixteen to sixty-plus.<sup>37</sup>

During the 1925-1926 school year, the number of night school enrollees peaked at 167, and students were able to take courses in cropping and poultry, dressmaking and millinery, typing and shorthand, commercial arithmetic and algebra, commercial law, state and federal constitutions, Spanish, and various English classes. The popularity of the curriculum soon led to a decline in attendees over the next few years as new high schools opened in nearby communities such as Litchfield, Tolleson, and Buckeye. However, the high school district discovered early that a need existed for adult education and as enrollment decreased the school board created policies such as minimal class sizes (eight), “good faith fees (\$2), and superintendent approval for regular students to attend evening courses. Later, the board waved minimal class size for students who needed graduation credit.<sup>38</sup>

### **Expanding the School**

Though planned with a lot for the high school, as a residential subdivision, Peoria Heights was unsuccessful. Beginning in 1927, School District No. 11 trustees purchased ten acres directly south of the high school grounds for an elementary school. The previous year, a fire destroyed the grammar school leading the elementary and high school districts to consolidate. As part of the

<sup>33</sup> Kristina Minister, *The Privilege You Earn*, 22.

<sup>34</sup> Emery N. Ferriss, *The Rural High School: Its Organization and Curriculum* Bulletin 25, No. 1 (Washington: Department of Interior, Bureau of Education, 1925), 31.

<sup>35</sup> “Engage teachers for coming year at Peoria schools,” *Arizona Republican*, 15 April 1923, 9.

<sup>36</sup> Kristina Minister, *The Privilege You Earn*, 23.

<sup>37</sup> Kristina Minister, *The Privilege You Earn*, 23

<sup>38</sup> “Night School At Peoria To Start Sessions Monday,” *Arizona Republican*, 22 October 1926, 2.11; Kristina Minister, *The Privilege You Earn*, 23,

Peoria High School Old Main

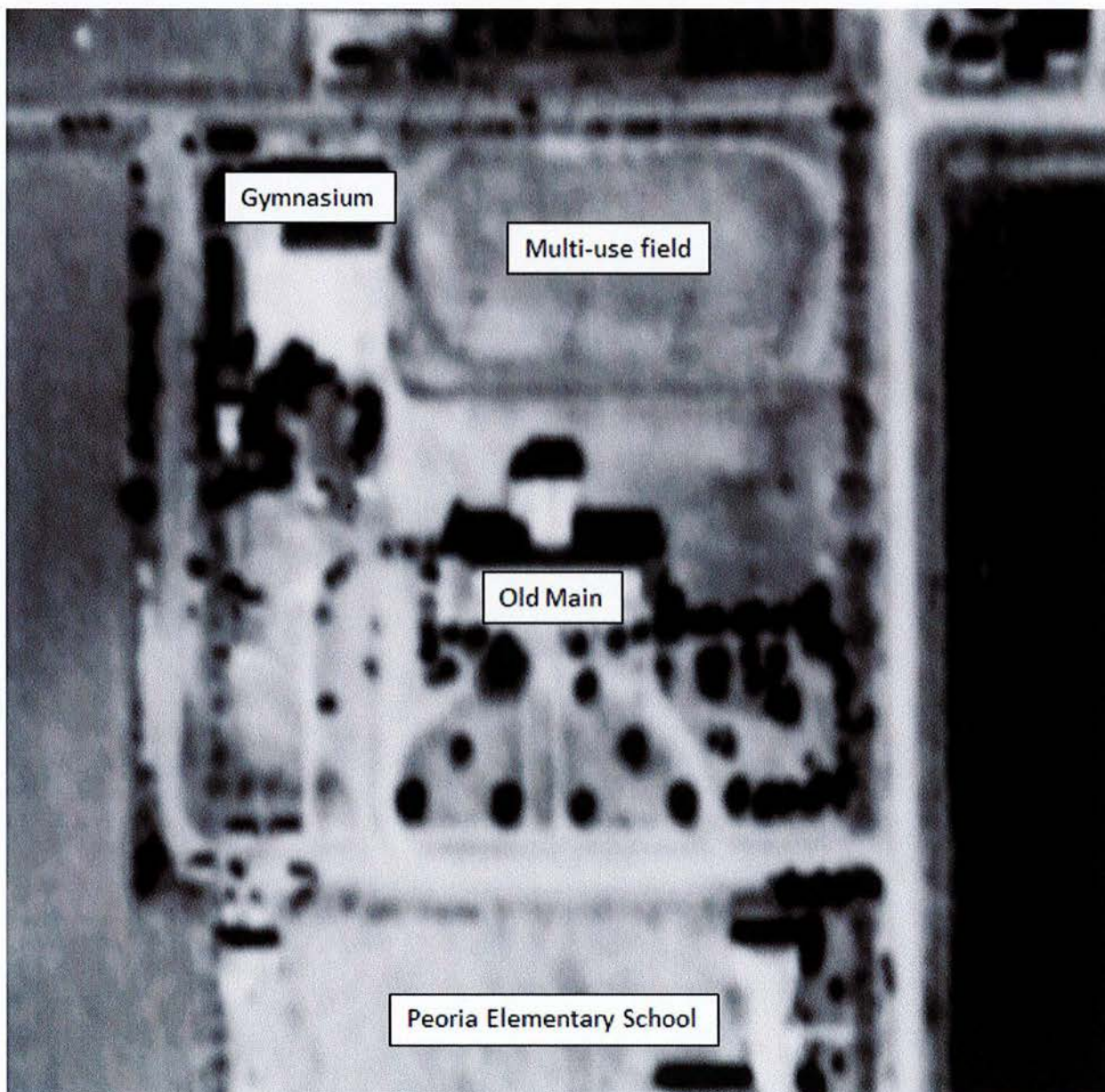
Maricopa, Arizona

Name of Property

County and State

merger, and to eventually share resources, the new elementary school was built on land adjacent to the high school.<sup>39</sup>

Until 1936, however, the high school remained the only educational building located on the original ten-acre lot. Then, with support from the Works Progress Administration, the school district erected a gymnasium. In the decades that followed, the campus expanded in size, adding buildings, playfields, and other amenities as necessary, such as an outdoor multi-use athletic area in 1948.<sup>40</sup>



**Figure 8. Peoria High and Elementary Schools, ca. 1949. Courtesy of the Flood Control District of Maricopa County.**

<sup>39</sup> "Fire Destroys Peoria School \$50,000 Loss," *Arizona Republican*, 25 February 1926, 1 and "Ten-Acre Tract Adjoining Peoria High School Sought," 13 March 1927, 3.1

<sup>40</sup> "Peoria School Gets Gymnasium," *Arizona Republic*, 19 July 1936, 4.1 and "Peoria Athletic Area Planned," 27 May 1948, 21.

Peoria High School Old Main

Maricopa, Arizona

Name of Property

County and State

In 1958, what was now called Old Main underwent \$50,000 in upgrades, including the addition of the enclosed stairwells at the east and west ends of the building. The interior was also modified when the school district's maintenance staff installed acoustic tiles and "modern lighting" in all of the classrooms.<sup>41</sup>

Bond elections in the 1960s provided for additional changes to the exterior of Old Main, specifically the building's windows. In 1963, a remodel of the auditorium included filling in the windows, smoothing over the rectangular openings while leaving the decorative openings evident. In 1969, while expanding the campus and constructing new buildings, the district also began the process of replacing original windows on the classroom portion of the Old Main and installing smaller, single-hung, aluminum windows with infill at the bottom and top of the window openings.<sup>42</sup>

In 1981, Old Main received more upgrades, including improvements to its electrical system, a sprinkler system, and an elevator and a ramp to improve accessibility inside and outside of the building. Another bond election in 1992 included funds for additional renovations of Old Main's windows.<sup>43</sup>

By the beginning of the twenty-first century, Old Main began to exhibit problems requiring the building to be closed in 2008. That year, a structural study reported that the wood framework was rotting and bowing under the weight of the tile roof. Apparently, according to the study, sometime in the past, structural beams between floors were cut to install electrical conduit. The north side of the roof on the classroom portion of the building was sagging and, around 2001, high winds severely damaged several of the roof trusses. Roof leaks caused damage to the trusses and the partial collapse of ceilings in classrooms and the auditorium. Sixty percent of the classroom roof trusses were overstressed, as were 100 percent of the auditorium roof trusses. Trust web to chord connections were also overstressed, along with trust bottom chord splices, floor joists, and floor beams.<sup>44</sup>

Even with the problems, the building was deemed structurally sound. While there was talk of demolition, the community united in support of its preservation. The major hurdle for preserving the building was the economic downturn. As Old Main was being closed, the State of Arizona was drastically reducing the budget for the state's School Facilities Board which provides funds for school maintenance and construction. However, local supporters, under the banner of "Save Old Main," worked diligently to convince a sympathetic school board that the building was worth saving.<sup>45</sup>

In September 2011, the Peoria Unified School Board began the process of preserving Old Main with its approval of spending \$1.6 million remaining from a 2005 bond to begin renovation. During the next few years, additional funds totaling \$6.5 million were used to rehabilitate Old Main and construction completed in June 2014. Included in the renovations were the removal and replacement

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<sup>41</sup> "Peoria High Face Lifting Nearly Complete," *Arizona Republic*, 16 January 1958, 24.

<sup>42</sup> "Bond Issue Passes with Peoria Vote," *Arizona Republic*, 9 January 1963, 20 and "Peoria district to sell bonds to build school," 6 May 1992, 22.10.

<sup>43</sup> "Peoria High School Renovation Plans Offered," *Arizona Republic*, 29 September 1981, Extra B.2 and "Peoria to district to sell bonds to build school," 6 May 1992, 22.10.

<sup>44</sup> Jack Gordon, "Peoria High School Old Main: Structural Feasibility Study," (Phoenix: Gervasio & Associates, Inc., 2008), 9-15.

<sup>45</sup> "2 school board members honored," *Arizona Republic*, 13 December 2008, P.8, "School board will discuss Old Main on Friday," 17 November 2010, Z2.5, and "Peoria schools' needs mount amid scarce dollars," 23 September 2011, z2.4.

Peoria High School Old Main

Maricopa, Arizona

Name of Property

County and State

of the roof, the installation of insulated windows, flexible classroom space and mobile furniture, a science lab, work rooms and collaborative spaces, and a student lounge. Meanwhile, the exterior of the building, especially the Churrigueresque embellishments drawn by Lester J. Mahoney, remained unchanged preserving the historic character of the building.<sup>46</sup>

These changes adapted Old Main to the current educational needs of the community and the 1922 high school building now serves as the home for the Peoria Flex Academy, a non-traditional high school, and a specialized training center called MET Professional Academy where students receive an advanced medical, engineering, and technology curriculum, learning valuable skills as well as college credits. Through the efforts of the community and its school district to save and preserve the building, Peoria High School Old Main remains a testimony to the early and ongoing efforts to provide a quality secondary education for students.

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<sup>46</sup> "Funds OK'd to re-roof Old Main," *Arizona Republic*, 25 September 2011, B2 and "2 school board members honored," *Arizona Republic*, 13 December 2008, P.8; "Old Main Gets Green Light for Continued Renovations," *Peoria Times*, 15 March 2013. Accessed online at [http://www.peoriatimes.com/news/article\\_168c1bd6-8dea-11e2-9966-001a4bcf887a.html](http://www.peoriatimes.com/news/article_168c1bd6-8dea-11e2-9966-001a4bcf887a.html); "Historic Peoria Gets a Face Lift," <http://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/peoria/2014/07/24/historic-peoria-school-gets-facelift/13112171/> accessed May 15, 2015; Jodey Elsner, *Peoria*, 112 and 118.



Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State

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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 # \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office

\_\_\_ Other State agency

\_\_\_ Federal agency

Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

### 10. Geographical Data

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: N/A

Latitude: 33.587292 Longitude: 112.238922

### Verbal Boundary Description

The area around Peoria High School Old Main extending around the landscaped areas and including the grassy area to the south.

### Boundary Justification

Due to Peoria High School Old Main being surrounded by newer development, the area delineated offers the best vantage points for viewing the building and its significant features, especially from the south.

### 11. Form Prepared By:

Name/Title: Vincent S. Murray, Architectural Historian

Organization: Arizona Historical Research

Street & Number: 1155 East Bishop Drive

City or Town: Tempe State: Arizona Zip Code: 85282

Email: vince@azhistory.net

Telephone: (480) 829-0267 Date: October 15, 2018

Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State

### **Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- Maps: A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

### **Photograph Log**

Name of Property: Peoria High School Old Main

City or Vicinity: Peoria

County: Maricopa County

State: Arizona

Photographer: Vincent S. Murray

Date Photographed: May 22, 2015

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

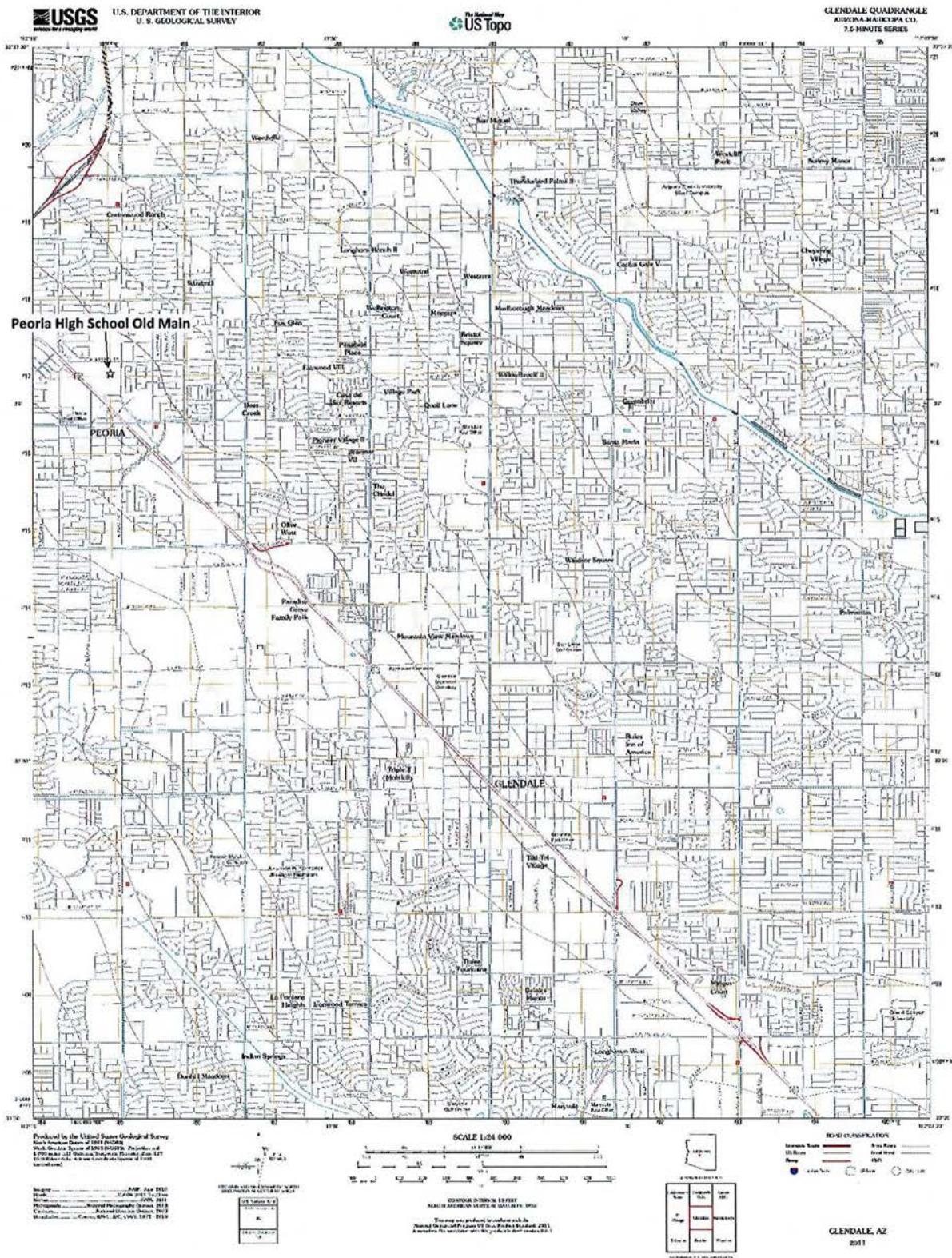
1. Front façade, facing north.
2. Front façade, facing northwest.
3. Rear and auditorium, facing southwest.
4. Rear of auditorium, facing south.
5. Rear of building, facing southeast.
6. Auditorium, facing east.
7. Enclosed staircase on west end, facing northeast.
8. Front façade facing northeast.
9. Close-up of terra cotta feature above the entrance, facing south.
10. Flag pole, facing east.

**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.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

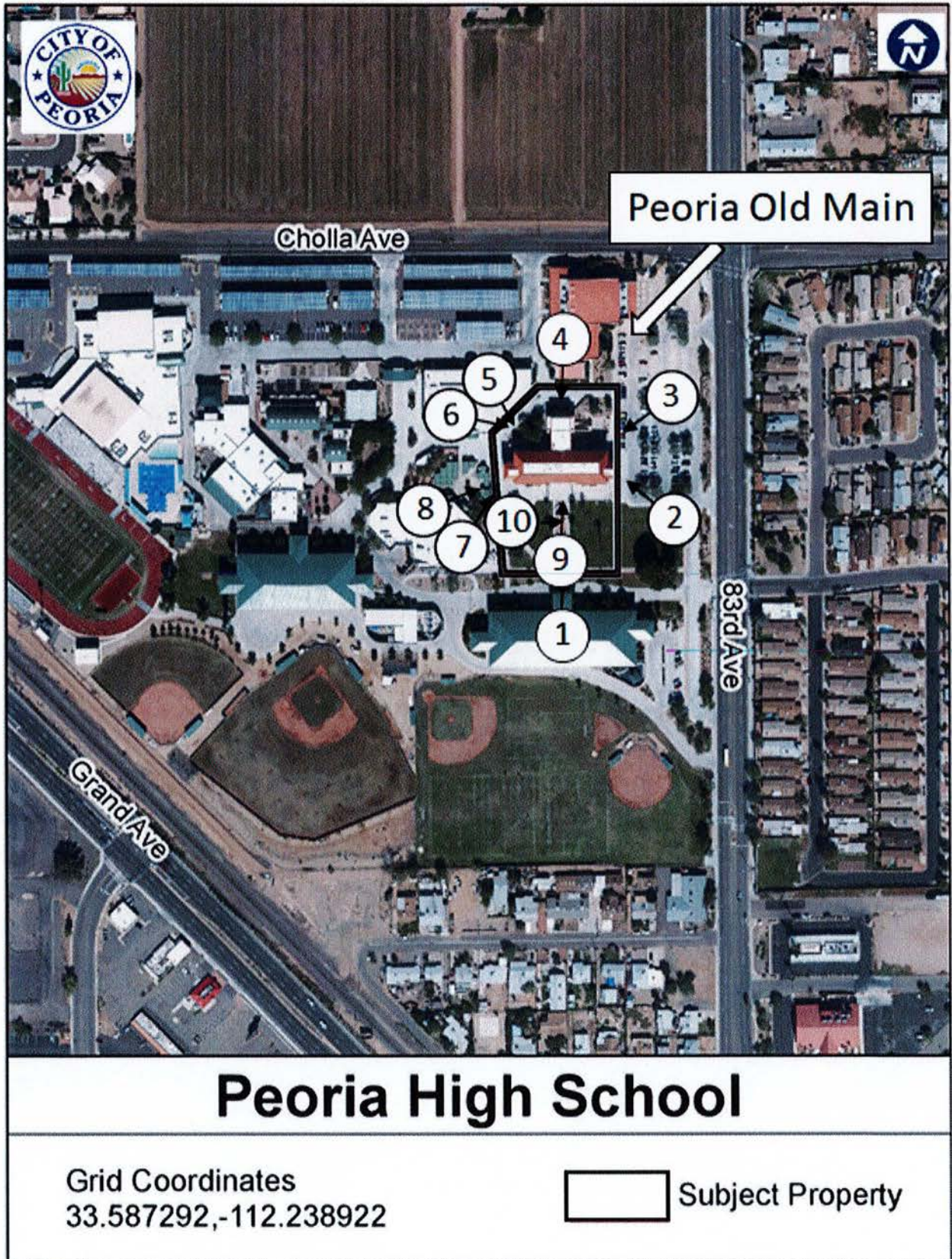
Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State



Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State



Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State



**Photo 1. Front façade, facing north.**

Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State



**Photo 2. Front façade, facing northwest.**

Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State



**Photo 3. Rear and auditorium, facing southwest.**



Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State



**Photo 4. Rear of auditorium, facing south.**

Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State



**Photo 5. Rear of building, facing southeast.**

Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State



**Photo 6. Auditorium, facing east.**

Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State



**Photo 7. Enclosed staircase on west end, facing northeast.**

Peoria High School Old Main

Maricopa, Arizona

Name of Property

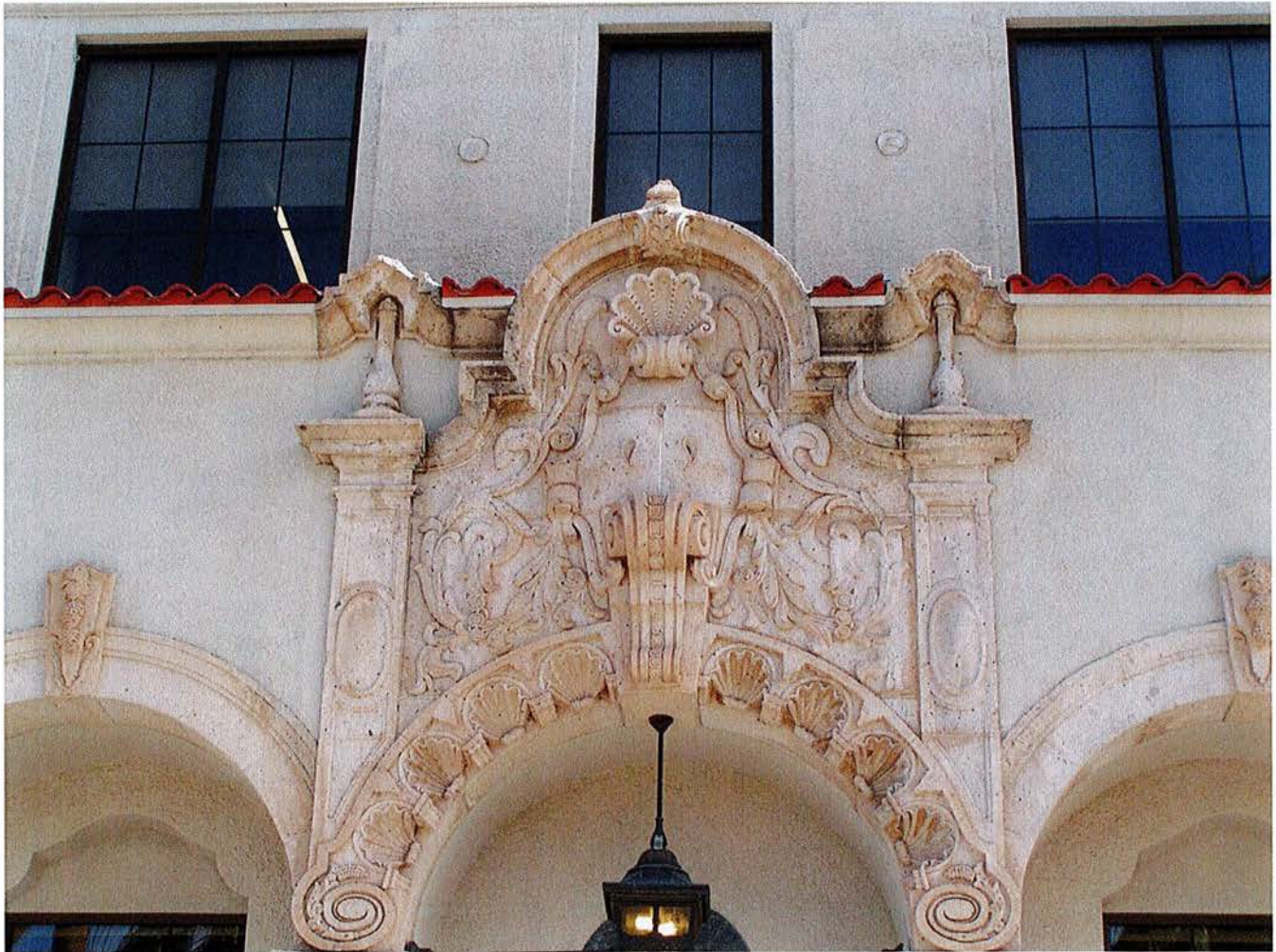
County and State



**Photo 8. Front façade facing northeast.**

Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State



**Photo 9. Close-up of terra cotta feature above the entrance, facing south.**

Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State



**Photo 10. Flagpole facing east.**



PEORIA HIGH SCHOOL





FLORIDA HIGH SCHOOL



100

HOME OF THE MOTHERS

GMC











PEORIA HIGH SCHOOL







National Register of Historic Places  
Memo to File

# Correspondence

The Correspondence consists of communications from (and possibly to) the nominating authority, notes from the staff of the National Register of Historic Places, and/or other material the National Register of Historic Places received associated with the property.

Correspondence may also include information from other sources, drafts of the nomination, letters of support or objection, memorandums, and ephemera which document the efforts to recognize the property.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 10/17/2018      Date of Pending List:      Date of 16th Day:      Date of 45th Day: 12/3/2018      Date of Weekly List:

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

Accept       Return       Reject      11/20/2018 Date

Abstract/Summary  
Comments:

Recommendation/  
Criteria

Reviewer Roger Reed  Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2278 Date 11/20/18

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No      see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



**ARIZONA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE (SHPO)  
NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION  
TRANSMITTAL FORM  
\*\*FEDERAL EXPRESS\*\***

**DATE:** December 6, 2016

**TO:**

**J. Paul Loether, Deputy Keeper and Chief  
National Register and National Historic Landmark Programs  
National Register of Historic Places  
1201 Eye St. NW, 8th Fl.  
Washington D.C. 20005-5905**

**FROM:**

**Vivia Strang, CPM  
National Register Coordinator  
AZ State Parks  
State Historic Preservation Office  
1100 West Washington Street  
Phoenix AZ 85007**

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Vivia Strang".

**National Register Nominations:**

**Brown, Grace and Elliot House  
Tucson, Pima, Arizona**

**Peoria High School Old Main  
Peoria, Maricopa, Arizona**

**Accompanying documentation for each National Register Nomination is enclosed, as required. Should you have any questions or concerns please contact me at [vstrang@azstateparks.gov](mailto:vstrang@azstateparks.gov) or 602.542.4662.**

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Peoria High School Old Main

Other names/site number: Peoria High School

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

## 2. Location

Street & Number: 11200 North 83rd Avenue

City or Town: Peoria State: Arizona County: Maricopa

Not for Publication:  Vicinity:

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide  local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

\_\_\_ A \_\_\_ B  C \_\_\_ D

Returned

<u>Kelvin Leung</u>	<u>6 December 2016</u>
Signature of certifying official/Title: <u>AZ STATE PARKS / SAPO</u>	Date
State or Federal Agency/Bureau or Tribal Government	

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal Agency/Bureau or Tribal Government

Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

\_\_\_ Entered in the National Register

\_\_\_ Determined eligible for the National Register

\_\_\_ Determined not eligible for the National Register

\_\_\_ Removed from the National Register

\_\_\_ Other (explain) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

Private

Public – Local

Public – State

Public – Federal

**Category of Property**

Buildings

District

Site

Structure

Object

**Number of Resources within Property**

Contributing

Noncontributing

1

\_\_\_\_\_

Buildings

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Sites

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Structures

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Objects

1

\_\_\_\_\_

Total

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

Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State

## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

EDUCATION/school

Current Functions

EDUCATION/school

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> & 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS

Spanish Colonial Revival

### Materials

Principal exterior material of the property: concrete, stucco, terra cotta, and clay tile.

### Narrative Description

#### Summary Paragraph

Peoria High School Old Main (Old Main) is located on the Peoria High School campus in the city of Peoria, Arizona. Built in 1922 and designed in the Spanish Colonial Revival Style by the locally prestigious architecture firm of Lescher, Kibbey, and Mahoney, the historic school building is two stories tall with a daylight basement. The foundation is concrete, and the walls are a combination of concrete and brick and sheathed in stucco with terra cotta ornamentation. The main classroom building has a truncated cross-hipped roof clad in clay tile. The auditorium wing has a flat roof with clay tiled coping on the parapets. The front façade of the building is embellished with Churrigueresque ornamentation. The building has received some additions and alterations, but continues to possess a high level of integrity.

#### Narrative Description

Old Main is situated in the northeast portion of the campus of Peoria High School in Peoria, Arizona, a suburban city of 163,000 residents located approximately fourteen miles northwest of downtown Phoenix. The high school campus covers thirty-eight acres in a multiple use area consisting of agricultural and commercial properties and residential subdivisions, and is one-half mile north of the Peoria old town quarter and municipal complex.<sup>1</sup>

To the immediate north, northwest, and southwest, Old Main is surrounded by newer campus buildings, separated by a concrete walkway. To the east and northeast are parking lots. To the south and southeast of Old Main is a landscaped open space, the western

<sup>1</sup> "All About Peoria," <https://www.peoriaaz.gov/NewSecondary.aspx>, accessed 25 April 2015.

Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State

portion of which is included in this nomination; this latter area offers the best view of the building, creating a symmetrical relationship between building and landscape.

The landscape in front of Old Main is minimal, mature, and immaculately maintained, consisting of flood-irrigated lawn and palms flanking a central two-path concrete walkway that leads to the entrance of the building. The walkways border a flagpole, fountain, and a series of garden beds, all in alignment with the entrance.

The architects designed Old Main in the Spanish Colonial Revival Style. It is a two-story building, with a t-shaped plan, built of a combination of concrete and brick walls and clad in stucco. The main classroom building is 190 feet long and sixty-five feet deep, aligned on an east-west axis, with a forty-foot wide auditorium wing extending sixty-nine feet to the north from the rear of the building.

The main entrance to Old Main is centered on the classroom building's southern façade and the auditorium is centered and perpendicular to the northern façade. The roof of the classroom building is cross-hipped, truncated, and sheathed in clay tile with corniced eaves. Small wings extend from the main building covering staircases on the east and west ends. The roofs of these wings match the roof of the main building and are also hipped, truncated, and clay-tiled.

The foundation of Old Main is concrete, recessed into a daylight basement, which is four feet below grade, with window openings to bring natural light into the lower level of the building. The walls of the daylight basement are concrete, clad in stucco, with rusticated courses of terra cotta.

The auditorium, built of concrete and brick with a stucco finish, is one-and-one half stories tall with a recessed, albeit windowless, basement, and a flat roof with low parapets capped with a hipped clay tile coping. The auditorium has two small, single-story wings that were gender-specific dressing rooms. Similar to the auditorium, the wings also have flat roofs with low parapets capped with a hipped clay tile coping.

The main entrance to Old Main is within a recessed bay in the southern façade, with a shed-roofed pediment clad in clay tiles and supported by terra cotta Solomonic columns with composite capitals. Terra cotta pilasters with matching capitals within the bay provide depth to the arcade. Located in the arch above the entrance, in the keystones of the arches, on the capitals of the columns, and above the windows flanking the entrance, are Churrigueresque embellishments.

The classroom building can also be accessed by the two small wings and two doorways adjacent to the auditorium. These latter entrances are accessible by a staircase and ramp on the respective west and east sides of the auditorium, which also provides access to the west and east doors of the auditorium.

The doors of the classroom building and auditorium are metal with fixed, single lights. Above the main entrance, which has a double door, is a fixed multi-light transom. Similar transoms are above the doors in the rear of the building. The west and east entrances to



Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State

the auditorium have double doors; the stage and dressing room entrances are respectively solid slab with a fixed transom and single light.

### Integrity

The historic setting of Old Main has changed; when originally built it was the only building centered on a ten-acre lot surrounded by hundreds of acres of farmland. When it was built, the original high school trustees envisioned numerous buildings on the school campus, which were, in fact, added later. Since the building's construction, the campus has also grown over time, almost quadrupling its original size to thirty-nine acres and, by the end of the twentieth century, residential subdivisions and commercial establishments replaced most of the agricultural properties surrounding the school.

With the exception of Old Main, all of the current buildings and structures located on the high school campus date to the 1970s or later. While these changes affect the setting, the open lawn in front of Old Main maintains a vantage point to view the building, contributing to its historic aesthetic and symmetry, and is included within the nomination boundaries.

When completed in 1922, a set of stairs from the first floor on the west end of the classroom building were to lead to an arcade connecting to a shop building that was never built. On the opposite end of the building was a set of windows. In 1958, the school erected stairwells at both ends of the building, removing chimneys. Unlike the earlier stairs on the west end of the building, the staircases provided access to the second floor as well as the first. This modification was performed for safety reasons.<sup>2</sup>

These small covered stairwells were designed to be in harmony with the design, with rectangular window openings, arched doorways, and truncated hipped roofs clad in clay tiles. Additional access came to Old Main in August 1980, when an elevator was installed in one of the interior stairwells and an accessibility ramp was added to the east entrance of the auditorium.<sup>3</sup>

A terra cotta cornice graces the second floor of the main building, but was apparently removed from the auditorium during a remodeling of the wing in 1963. During this remodeling, the windows of the auditorium were also filled in, smoothing over the rectangular openings while leaving the decorative openings evident. The windows of Old Main were originally wood, multi-light, and either double-hung, casement, or Hauser awning style. Beginning in 1963 and through 1992, many of the windows were replaced with smaller, single-hung aluminum. During a recent remodeling, the windows were replaced with fixed anodized aluminum windows sized to the window openings.<sup>4</sup>

By 2008, the building was experiencing structural issues and was closed. With bond funds, the district began a \$6.5 million rehabilitation project in 2011 that lasted two years. During

<sup>2</sup> "Peoria High Face Lifting Nearly Done," *Arizona Republic*, 16 January 1958, 24.

<sup>3</sup> "Cactus High is Dedicated in Glendale," *Arizona Republic*, 4 February 1979, A35 and "Peoria High School renovation plans offered," 29 September 1981, Extra B2.

<sup>4</sup> "Bond Issue Passes with Peoria Vote," *Arizona Republic*, 9 January 1963, 20 and "Peoria district to sell bonds to build school," 6 May 1992, 22.10.

Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State

this time, the roof structure was removed, rebuilt, and re-clad in clay tile to maintain its historic appearance. Modifications were made to classrooms to allow for more contemporary multi-purpose uses, such as movable walls to create collaborative spaces. The project also included the installation of the aforementioned, energy efficient, insulated fixed windows to increase safety and add comfort to the building and allow Old Main to be used year-round.<sup>5</sup>

These contemporary changes to the building illustrate the changing safety and construction requirements to address evolving needs of the school and do not detract substantially from the integrity of the building. Instead, they reinvigorate the usefulness of a community landmark by repurposing it for twenty-first century educational use while preserving its historic character.

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns 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

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

### Areas of Significance

ARCHITECTURE

### Period of Significance

1922

<sup>5</sup> "Historic Peoria School Gets a Face Lift," *Arizona Republic*, 24 July 2014, online [www.azcentral.com](http://www.azcentral.com), accessed September 15, 2015.

Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State

Significant Dates

1922

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Lescher, Kibbey & Mahoney, Architects

Eagan Construction Company, Builder

**Statement of Significance**

Summary Paragraph

Peoria High School Old Main is significant under Criterion C, in the area of Architecture at the local level. It is a well-preserved, representative example of a rural high school building designed in the Spanish Colonial Style by the locally prominent firm of Lescher, Kibbey, and Mahoney. Its exceptional design and workmanship reflect the importance of secondary education to residents of an agricultural community in Arizona during the early decades of the twentieth century. While Old Main has experienced some minor alterations, it retains a high level of integrity conveying its historic character and architectural significance.

Developmental History

*The Quest for a New High School*

On April 29, 1889, the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors approved the creation of a school district to provide educational services to children living in the northwest Salt River Valley. The newly created School District No. 11 received the local appellation of Peoria School District, named for a little unincorporated community primarily developed by a group of immigrants and investors from Peoria, Illinois.<sup>6</sup> As described by the *Arizona Silver Belt* newspaper of October 1, 1887:

On the desert fifteen miles northwest of Phoenix, is a small settlement of people from Peoria, Il. They are the vanguard of a large colony, who have bought lands and water rights from the Arizona Canal Co. A town site has been located and called "Peoria," after the Illinois city of that same name from whence they came.<sup>7</sup>

The settlers were encouraged by the 1885 completion of the Arizona Canal which, when combined with the Desert Land Act of 1877, led to the eventual reclamation and development of hundreds of thousands of acres in the western Salt River Valley. The Desert Land Act encouraged the development of arid and semi-arid lands in the western United States by increasing the amount of land allowable under the Homestead Act of 1862 from 160 acres to 640 acres, if the homesteaders reclaimed, irrigated, and cultivated the land. Unlike the Homestead Act, the Desert Land Act did not require residency, only that

<sup>6</sup> *Book of Meeting Minutes* (Phoenix: Maricopa County Clerk of the Board of Supervisors, 1889), 3: 522.

<sup>7</sup> *Arizona Silver Belt*, 1 October 1887, 1.

Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State

the land be irrigated for cultivation within three years. These changes led to a substantial amount of land speculation and fraud, but also increased the amount of land being reclaimed from the desert as intended. Subsequent to the canal's completion, and with direct ties to the Arizona Canal Company, the Arizona Improvement Company incorporated to assist in the acquisition of public lands and the purchase of water rights from the canal company to irrigate those lands.<sup>8</sup>

As part of its ambitious development plan, the Arizona Improvement Company created a one-hundred-foot wide road from the northwest corner of the Phoenix townsite (7<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Van Buren Street) and extended it in a northwesterly direction. By 1889, the road called Grand Avenue connected Phoenix to the developing communities of Alhambra, Glendale, and Peoria. Around the same time the county supervisors were creating School District 11, local landowners were laying out the Peoria townsite and selling lots.<sup>9</sup>

According to Kathleen Gilbert's commemorative history of Peoria, local lore purports the initial enrollment as a dozen students, which tapered off so significantly during the first school year annulment of the district was likely. Serendipitously, a family passed through the community on their way to Phoenix and were convinced to remain, assuring the community of a stable student body. An abandoned store provided a temporary schoolhouse until one was built in 1891.<sup>10</sup>

By the end of the nineteenth century, the concurrent growth and prosperity of Phoenix substantially influenced the development of Peoria. Phoenix became connected to the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1887 and was selected as the territorial capital in 1889. In 1895, the Santa Fe, Prescott, and Phoenix Railway Company—a subsidiary of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway—completed its line paralleling Grand Avenue and passing through the center of the Peoria townsite. The new branch connected Peoria to both the new capital and to the markets in the eastern United States and west coast.<sup>11</sup>

To accommodate an increasing population, and to replace the 1891 building that burned down a year earlier, in 1906, the community erected a new schoolhouse now known as the Central School. Located at Orange Avenue (83<sup>rd</sup> Avenue) and Madison Street, the Peoria School was the typical "one-room" schoolhouse, serving the educational needs of students from all grades. High school, as a separate educational entity, was not an option for students in the northwest Salt River Valley

<sup>8</sup> Bradford Luckingham, *Phoenix: The History of a Southwest Metropolis* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989), 29; Karl S. Landstrom, "Reclamation under the Desert-Land Act," *Journal of Farm Economics*, 36:3, (August, 1954), 500.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*; *Arizona Republican*, 4 July 1890, 4 and 22 July 1890, 1; *Book of Deeds* (Phoenix: Maricopa County Recorder's Office, 1890), 17:261-265.

<sup>10</sup> Kathleen Gilbert, *More than a Century of Peoria People, Progress, & Pride* (Phoenix: Heritage Publishers, Inc., 2004), 7; Robert Carriker and Melanie Sturgeon, *Historic Resource Survey: Peoria, Arizona* (Phoenix: Arizona State Parks, 1997), 13; Jodey Elsner, *Peoria* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 105.

<sup>11</sup> Ann Tilghman, "The Central School," *National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination Form* (Peoria: City of Peoria, 1982), 8.1; "Plat of Peoria," *Book of Maps* (1897), 2:57; *Book of Articles of Incorporation* (1891), 1:416-422.

Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State

until 1911, when an effort to create a new secondary school came from the town of Glendale to the southeast.<sup>12</sup>

Founded in 1891, Glendale was a slightly newer community than Peoria and, by the beginning of the twentieth century, slightly larger. Also located on Grand Avenue and, eventually, the railroad line, Glendale was also closer to Phoenix and the recipient of greater promotional efforts by the Arizona Improvement Company. In 1891, the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors formed Glendale's school district under the name "Jefferson School District No. 40." At the same time, to the east of Glendale, the supervisors formed the Washington School District No. 6, reassigning the new district a number from an earlier district.<sup>13</sup>

Two decades later, School District Nos. 6, 11, and 40 were all in need of a formal high school; the closest high school was in Phoenix. In 1911, the town of Glendale led the way towards a unified goal--a union high school to serve the students of the three school districts. Subsequent to voter approval, Glendale Union High School started classes in the storeroom of a local business with an enrollment of seventeen students. A bond election the following year led to the construction of the new high school that opened its doors in 1913.

By the end of the decade, Glendale Union High School had become overcrowded and the citizens within the Peoria School District decided to provide their students a secondary education closer to home. Using rented space for temporary classrooms, the citizens of School District No. 11 passed a bond in the amount of \$175,000 to fund their own high school. The Peoria High School Trustees purchased a ten-acre lot from Chauncey and Marie Clark for \$5,000 in the newly created Peoria Heights subdivision for use as the high school campus. The trustees then hired the preeminent architecture firm of Lescher, Kibbey, and Mahoney to design the community's new high school.<sup>15</sup>

### *The Architects*

The architecture firm of Lescher, Kibbey, and Mahoney began with Royal William Lescher in 1910. A 1902 graduate of Throop Polytechnic Institute (California Institute of Technology), Lescher was involved in construction in Los Angeles and Buffalo, New York

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 8.2; Jodey Elsner, *Peoria* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 105; Kathleen Gilbert, *More than a Century of Peoria People, Progress, & Pride* (Phoenix: Heritage Publishers, Inc., 2004), 24; Sandy Finerman, *A Complete History of the Glendale Union High School District, 1911-1978* (Glendale: Glendale Union High School District Print Shop, 1978), 34.

<sup>13</sup> *Book Meeting Minutes* (1891), 4: 244-245. Note: the original District 6 was the McMillen School District, created by the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors in 1879. It served the town of McMillenville and adjacent mining communities and became part of Gila County in 1881. "Notes in and Around Glendale," *Arizona Republican*, 4 December 1891, 1.

<sup>14</sup> "Glendale Wants a High School," *Arizona Republican*, 5 May 1911, 12.

<sup>15</sup> "Few Peoria Pupils to Glendale High," *Arizona Republican*, 5 September 1920, 5 and "Peoria to have a High School this Year," 21 August 1920, 14.; "Peoria Heights," *Book of Maps* (Phoenix: Maricopa County Recorder's Office, 1921), 10:9; *Book of Minutes* (Phoenix: Maricopa County Board of Supervisors, 1920), 15:394; "Warranty Deed," *Book of Deeds* (Phoenix: Maricopa County Recorder's Office, 1922), 164:432.

Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State

before arriving in Arizona in 1908. After working as office superintendent for the firm of Fitzhugh and Fitzhugh, Lescher started his own architecture firm in 1910.<sup>16</sup>

Over the next few years, Lescher was quite active becoming one of Phoenix's leading architects, working on his own and as a local representative for the El Paso firm of Trost and Trost. His solo work included designing homes, churches, Mesa's first hospital, and the Littleton school near the community of Cashion. Within a few years, his popularity and workload had increased to a point where Lescher needed a partner, and he found one in John Rinker Kibbey.<sup>17</sup>

Kibbey studied at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, earning bachelor's and master's degrees in architecture. He taught courses at the Art Institute of Chicago and Armour Institute of Technology (currently the Illinois Institute of Technology) before joining Royal Lescher in 1913. While Lescher possessed practical experience, Kibbey brought theoretical experience to the proverbial drafting table.<sup>18</sup>

Kibbey's education at Massachusetts Institute of Technology followed a pattern of American architectural education development that had in its origins the École des Beaux Arts in Paris. The design philosophy of the École exerted a major influence on the architectural theory and education in the United States during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The term "Beaux Arts," which is derived from the École, is more often applied to Neo-Classic buildings based in Roman, Renaissance, and Baroque models. However, it also describes broadly based design theory is seen applied in the stylistic variations of buildings designed by architects trained at École or, in Kibbey's case, at schools attempting to emulate the Parisian school's framework of ideas.<sup>19</sup>

The educational philosophy of École des Beaux Arts focused on aesthetic design as exemplified by monumental works and approached through a unique analytic methodology beginning with an esquisse (a first rough design drawing showing general features) and formulating solutions through an appropriate parti (the basic general scheme of an architectural design) which would be applicable to any design problem. Fundamental to this compositional procedure were principals promulgated by a distinctive ideology emphasizing symmetry, harmony, and balance without adhering to a specific architectural style.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Donna Reiner, "From Gas Stations to Chicken Coups: The Architecture Firm of Lescher and Mahoney, Phoenix, Arizona, 1910-1974" (Phoenix: n. p., 2006), 1-2; *Arizona Republic*, 5 September 1908, 6.

<sup>17</sup> "Construction Takes Boom," *Arizona Republican*, 25 August 1912, 12, "A New Hospital for the Gem City," 12 September 1912, 2 and "Shriner Will Build Temple," 3, Advertisement, 13 January 1913, 8.

<sup>18</sup> *Bulletin of the Art Institute of Chicago* October 1911, Volume V, number 11), 29. *Bulletin of the Armour Institute of Technology: General Information* May 1912, 10.

<sup>19</sup> William S. Collins, R. Brooks Jeffrey, Janet H. Parkhurst, and Linda P. Weed, "The Single Family Residential Architecture of Josias Th. Joesler in Tucson and Pima County, Arizona, 1927-1956," *National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form* (Phoenix: Arizona State Historic Preservation Office, 2015), E.6-7; Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998) 378-379.

<sup>20</sup> William S. Collins, et. al, "The Single Family Residential Architecture of Josias Th. Joesler in Tucson and Pima County, Arizona, 1927-1956," E.8-9.

Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State

The rigid training of L' École and its American assimilators became attractive to architects in their romanticized efforts to apply old styles to new architectural movements in the decades following the American Civil War. Though the American curriculum deviated slightly from that of the French, it never-the-less impacted the nature of architecture in the United States into the 1930s. As is evident in their design, the Beaux Art principals were readily applied to large public buildings built during that period in Arizona. Some of the characteristics readily seen are raised first floors, hierarchies of space, arched windows, subtle uses of polychrome, and classical embellishments such as statuary, balustrades, garlands, pilasters, and cartouches prominently displayed as an homage to a classical architectural style.<sup>21</sup>

The primary focus of the firm Lescher and Kibbey centered on public buildings, including courthouses, civic buildings, and schools designed in the popular architectural styles of the time. The Neoclassical Style became the firm's choice for larger buildings during the early years, as represented by Yuma High School (1913), Globe High School (1914), Central School in Mesa (1914), Mohave County Courthouse in Kingman (1915, listed on the National Register 1983), Graham County Courthouse (1916, listed 1982), and Florence High School (1916, listed 1987).<sup>22</sup>



Figure 1. Drawing of Central School in Mesa, Arizona by Lescher and Kibbey. *Arizona Republican*, 23 May 1913.

Popularized by the Chicago World's Fair in 1893, the Neo-Classical Style emerged as the prevalent style in the United States for large public buildings such as courthouses, city halls, and schools, many adhering to the Beaux Art parti conventionally employed among architects of the period. Characterized by a grandeur of scale but a simplicity of geometric

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., E.8-9; Cyril M. Harris, *Illustrated Dictionary of Historical Architectural* (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1977), 202, 455.

<sup>22</sup> "Union High School Board Adopts Plan for Building," *Yuma Examiner*, 2 December 1913, 4, and "High School Plans Are Nearly Finished," 3 February 1914, 1; "Valley Schools Not Behind Those of Most Cities of the Country," *Arizona Republican*, 23 May 1915, 3, "Local Architects Have a Quarter of a Million in Work Underway in Various Sections," 3 October 1915, 8, and 7 December 1913, 16.

Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State

forms, Neo-Classical buildings are most recognizable by the dramatic use of columns at the entrance.<sup>23</sup>

In 1917, Kibbey enlisted in the American military to serve during World War I. During his partner's hiatus, Lescher hired Ira Earl Frary, a former partner of California architect J. Cather Newsom. However, Frary found the heat in Phoenix not to his liking and decided to return to California. He informed Leslie Joseph Mahoney, telling him, "I'm out in Arizona, and it's hotter 'n hell over there. I'm not going to stay." Mahoney, believing that his California place of employment would run out of work, and he of compensation, decided his predilection for financial stability was greater than Frary's intolerance of Arizona's balmy climes and applied for the vacant position. Lescher hired him as a designer.<sup>24</sup>

Mahoney studied at Santa Clara College (Santa Clara University). Before coming to Arizona, he worked as the assistance designer to Los Angeles architect Albert C. Martin and the firm Allison and Allison. Mahoney was also involved in the Los Angeles Architecture Club, an atelier affiliated with the Society of Beaux-Arts Architects in New York. At the atelier, he studied under Henry Harwood Hewitt, who had graduated from the University of Chicago, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and L' École des Beaux Arts, and specialized in school buildings.<sup>25</sup>

Mahoney came to the firm with a fresh perspective on large building design, which was a good fit for the types of projects Lescher and Kibbey were involved in. He was also likely influenced by the stylistic elements then popular in California due to the Panama California Exposition of 1915 and the work of Bertram Goodhue and Carlton Winslow, Sr., who brought an emphasis to the Spanish Colonial Revival Style and the use of Churrigueresque ornamentation. In 1920, he became a partner in the firm of Lescher, Kibbey and Mahoney.<sup>26</sup>

### *Design and Construction*

Funding for the new high school came from bond funds, approved in 1920 by School District No. 11 voters in the amount of \$175,000, for design, construction, and all necessary equipment. Voters throughout Arizona approved almost \$2 million for school construction that year and many of the schools turned to Lescher, Kibbey, and Mahoney for their design needs.

The school bond system was a major source of business for the architectural firm. Between 1912 and 1941, the firm designed eighty elementary schools and thirty-one high schools,

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Rothweiler, "Graham County Courthouse," *National Register of Historic Places Nomination-Inventory Form* (Phoenix: Arizona State Parks Board, 1982), 7.0-1 and 8.0-1.

<sup>24</sup> *Architect and Engineer* (December 1910) 23:2: 97; "Architect's career measured by his landmarks," *Arizona Republic*, 7 June 1981, SL1 and SL6 and "Leslie J. Mahoney, Phoenix Architect," 14 July 1985, B13.

<sup>25</sup> *Twenty-fifth Annual Report of the Trustees for the Year Ending June First MDCCCIV* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1904), 33.

<sup>26</sup> Donna Reiner, "From Gas Stations to Chicken Coups, 3-4; Lawrence A. Herzog, *From Aztec to High Tech: Architecture and Landscape Across the Mexican-United States Border* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1999), 109.



Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State

including Peoria High School. While the number of elementary schools designed by the firm decreased during the 1920s, the number of high schools increased. Beginning with Florence Union High school (1916) and into the following decade, the firm's large building architectural styles also transitioned to Spanish Colonial Revival and Mission Revival while retaining the formality and symmetry of the Neo-Classical forms used previously. The design the firm created for Peoria High School exemplified this transition.<sup>27</sup>

The Mission Revival Style was seen as the Californian counterpart of the Georgian Revival that was then popular in the Eastern United States. Coinciding with a concerted effort to preserve the Spanish missions established by Catholic priests in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Mission Revival Style evolved in the late 1880s as a regional expression of romantic nostalgia, one of a series of revival styles that evoke the architecture of an earlier era, albeit with less than historic accuracy. In the case of the Mission Revival Style, which became popular across the American Southwest, the identifying features were typically curvilinear "mission-shaped" dormers or parapets, wide overhanging eaves, porch roofs supported by square piers and arches, red clay tile roofing, and smooth stucco clad walls.<sup>28</sup>

Also featuring smooth stucco walls and clay tile roofs, Spanish Colonial Revival deviated from the more vernacular-based, less adorned simplicity of its Mission Revival predecessor by including elaborate ornamentation imitating the churches and monasteries of the Iberian Peninsula and prominent cities in Spanish America, which themselves affected the stylistic elements of Mediterranean civilizations. This effort led to a greater palate of cultural details drawn from Arabic and Italian sources, as well those of the Byzantines, Persians, and Greeks as was evident in the works of Goodhue and Winslow at the Panama California exposition. As with the Mission Style, Spanish Colonial Style made its way east into the American Southwest, but with much less elaboration that was portrayed at the 1915 exposition. Even in California, the more highly decorative elements derived from the Spanish Renaissance (Plateresque) and Baroque (Churrigueresque) periods and applied on facades and entrances were typically reserved for luxury homes such as the Hearst Castle in San Simon and the public buildings in Balboa Park (site of the 1915 exposition).<sup>29</sup>

The characteristic features of Spanish Colonial Revival vary due to its eclectic adoption from foreign influences but typically include but are not limited to: stuccoed exterior walls;

<sup>27</sup> *Arizona Republican*, 18 May 1920, 13; "Many School Buildings to be Put Up in Arizona," *Tombstone Weekly Epitaph*, 18 July 1920, 6; Rosalie Stafford, Roger Brevoort, and Douglas Kupel, "Mohawk Valley School," *National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form* Phoenix: Arizona State Parks Board, 1986), 8.5-6.

<sup>28</sup> William S. Collins, et. al, "The Single Family Residential Architecture of Josias Th. Joesler in Tucson and Pima County, Arizona, 1927-1956," E.5-6, 15-16; Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1981), 213.

<sup>29</sup> William S. Collins, et. al, "The Single Family Residential Architecture of Josias Th. Joesler in Tucson and Pima County, Arizona, 1927-1956," E.20-24; Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780*, 225.

Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State

low pitched clay tile roofs or flat roofs with tiled parapets; shallow or corniced eaves; arched porches with shed roofs; and elaborate carved or cast ornamentation<sup>30</sup>

When the firm completed their original plans for the new high school in December 1920, the drawings presented called for a Spanish Colonial Revival-style two-story building with an asymmetric U-shape plan with the entrance and auditorium at one end of the building connected by an arcade to a similar styled, single story C-shaped shop building (see figure 2). The buildings were designed to be built of brick and coated in stucco, with a combination of cross-gabled and cross-hipped roofs clad in clay tiles.<sup>31</sup>

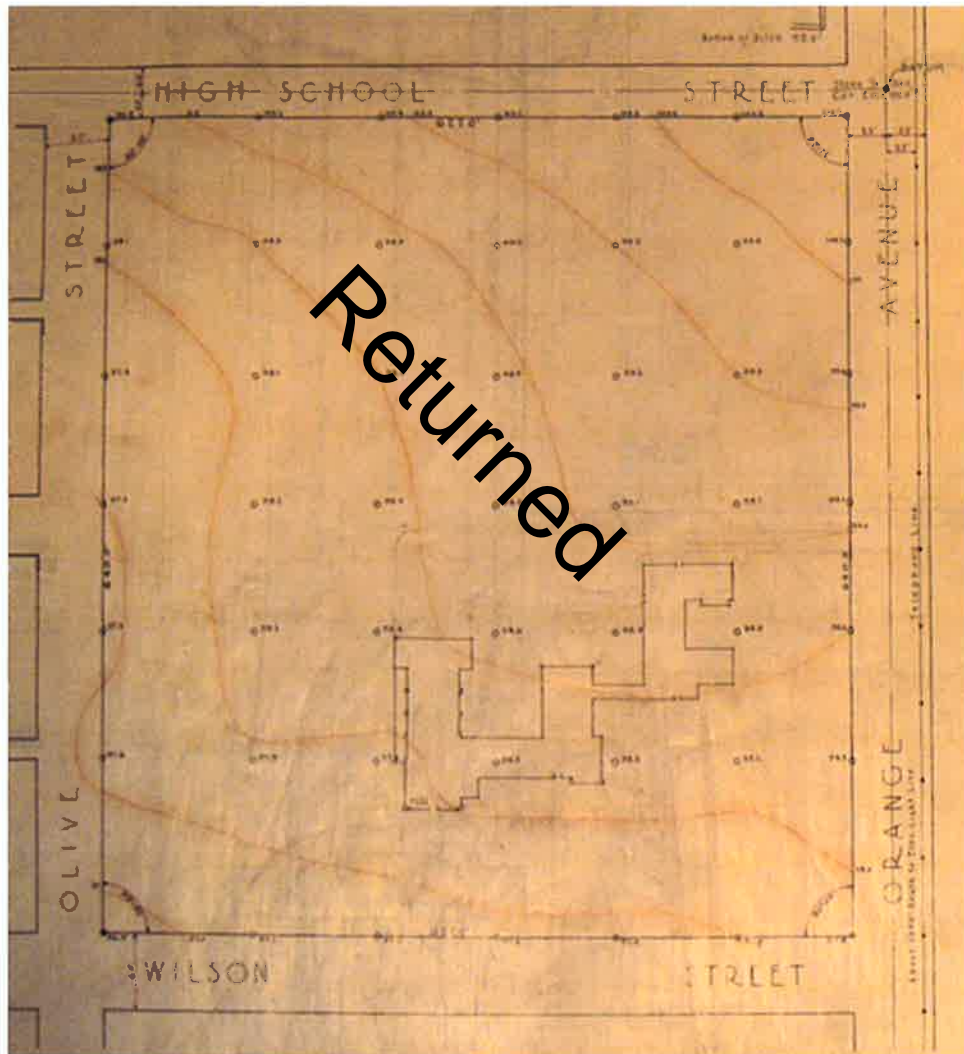


Figure 2. Plan of Grounds, Peoria High School, December 1920.  
Courtesy of the Arizona Historical Society-Papago Park.

<sup>30</sup> Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780*, 225; Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 417.

<sup>31</sup> Royal W. Lescher and John R. Kibbey, "Peoria High School," (Tempe: Lescher-Mahoney Architectural Collection, Arizona Historical Society-Papago Park), December 1920.

Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State

The main portion of the complex was the administration-auditorium building and it was quite imposing. To the rear of the auditorium was a prominent boiler room, suspended above the stage, its flat roof jutting above the roof line. Slightly higher, and with greater prominence, was a tower rising from the classroom portion of the building. Almost twice the height of the two-story school, the tower had a hipped roof clad in clay tile and wrought iron balconies facing each of the cardinal directions (see figure 3).<sup>32</sup>



Figure 3. East Elevation of Peoria High School, December 1920. Courtesy of the Arizona Historical Society-Papago Park. This design was not used.

According to *The Privilege You Earn: History of the Peoria Unified School District*, Peoria High School District Superintendent Arthur E. Haage received a letter from the University of California that had been scoring the school plans. The letter stated that the anticipated funding for the school, estimated at \$120,000, would be insufficient to cover half of the planned school construction. The architectural firm would literally need to return to the drawing board to draft a less expensive high school.<sup>33</sup>

Around this time, Mahoney became partner in the firm and took an active role in revising the drawings and the resulting plans for the high school were completely different. The site plan placed the high school within the center of the lot and, instead of an almost

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Kristina Minister, *The Privilege You Earn: History of Peoria Unified School District, 1889-1986* (Peoria: Oral History Center, Inc., 1986), 5.

Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State

ecclesiastical looking building with its prominent tower, the design borrowed from the then-popular Neo-Classical Style, such as that used in the then-recently constructed high school in the town of Chandler. Designed by Mahoney's previous employers, Allison and Allison, Chandler High School possessed monumental proportions including a massive portico with six ionic columns (see figure 4). Similar features were also in the revised plans for Peoria High School (see figure 5), though the Churrigueresque elements emphasized that the architectural style was Spanish Colonial Revival.<sup>34</sup>



Figure 4. Architects' sketch of proposed Chandler High School, ca. 1921. Courtesy of the Chandler Unified School District.

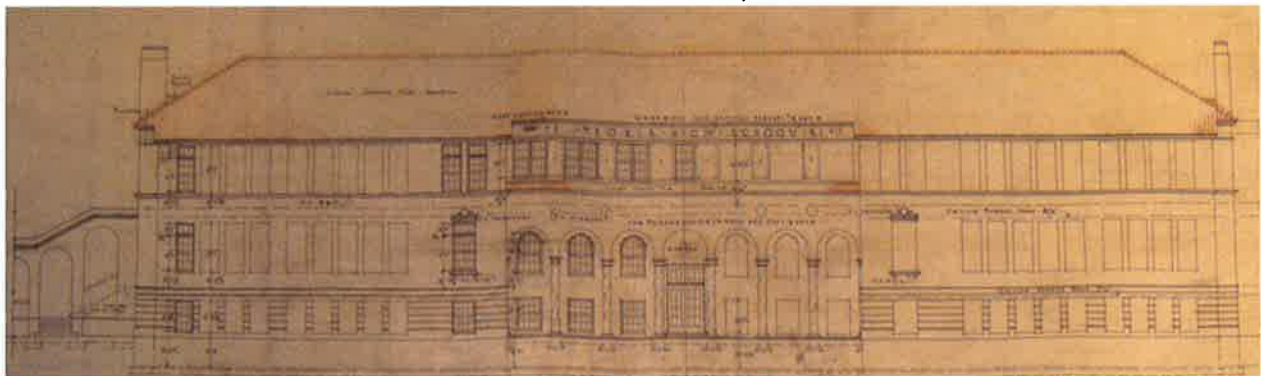


Figure 4. South Elevation of Peoria High School, August 1921. Courtesy of the Arizona Historical Society-Papago Park.

The final plans for the high school contained Mahoney's touch. While draftsmen Lloyd LeRaine Pike and Albion Roy Walker worked on much of the building, Mahoney personally designed the Churrigueresque ornamentation. Peoria High School was the designer's first large project after becoming a partner in the newly renamed firm of Lescher, Kibbey, and

<sup>34</sup> Kevin Weight, "Chandler High School," *National Register of Historic Places*, 8.31.

Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State

Mahoney, and the Churrigueresque ornamentation was a physical signature on the project (see figure 6).<sup>35</sup>

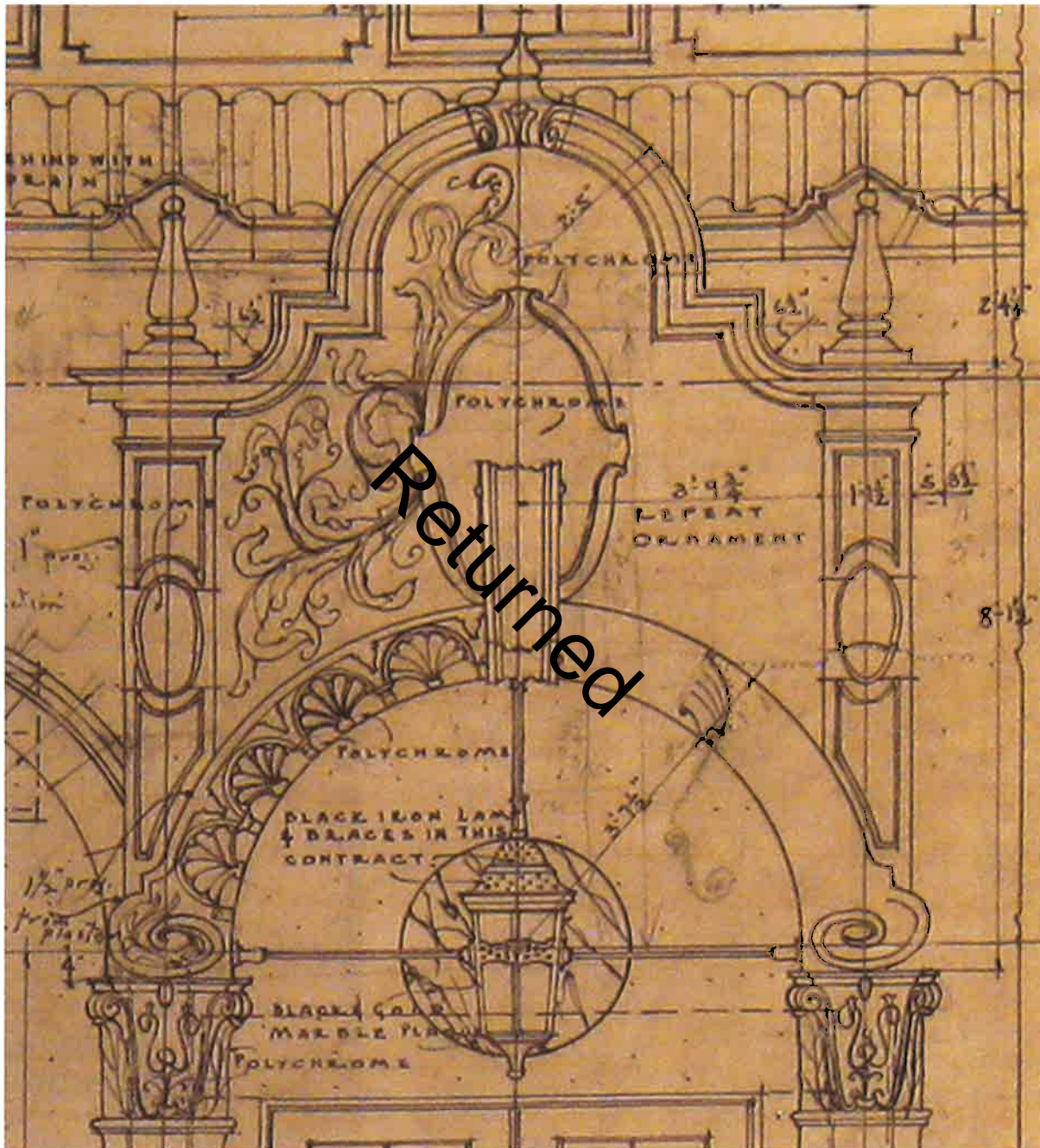


Figure 5. Churrigueresque ornamentation drawn by Leslie J. Mahoney, August 1921. Courtesy of the Arizona Historical Society-Papago Park.

The architectural firm completed the plans in August 1921 and they were approved by the school district the following month. Construction costs for the Peoria High School were

<sup>35</sup> *Phoenix City and Salt River Valley Directory, 1919* (Los Angeles: Arizona Directory Company, 1919), 388 and 403.

Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State

estimated at \$150,000 even before the firm completed the drawings. The school district board awarded the contract to the Eagan Construction Company. The first bid exceeded the budgeted amount so its figures were taken only for the main building. As originally planned, the main building was to connect to an L-shaped, single-story, woodworking and metal shop building designed in Spanish Colonial Revival Style and accessed from the main building via a seventy-foot arcade. However, due to budgetary limitations, neither the shop nor the arcade were built.<sup>36</sup>

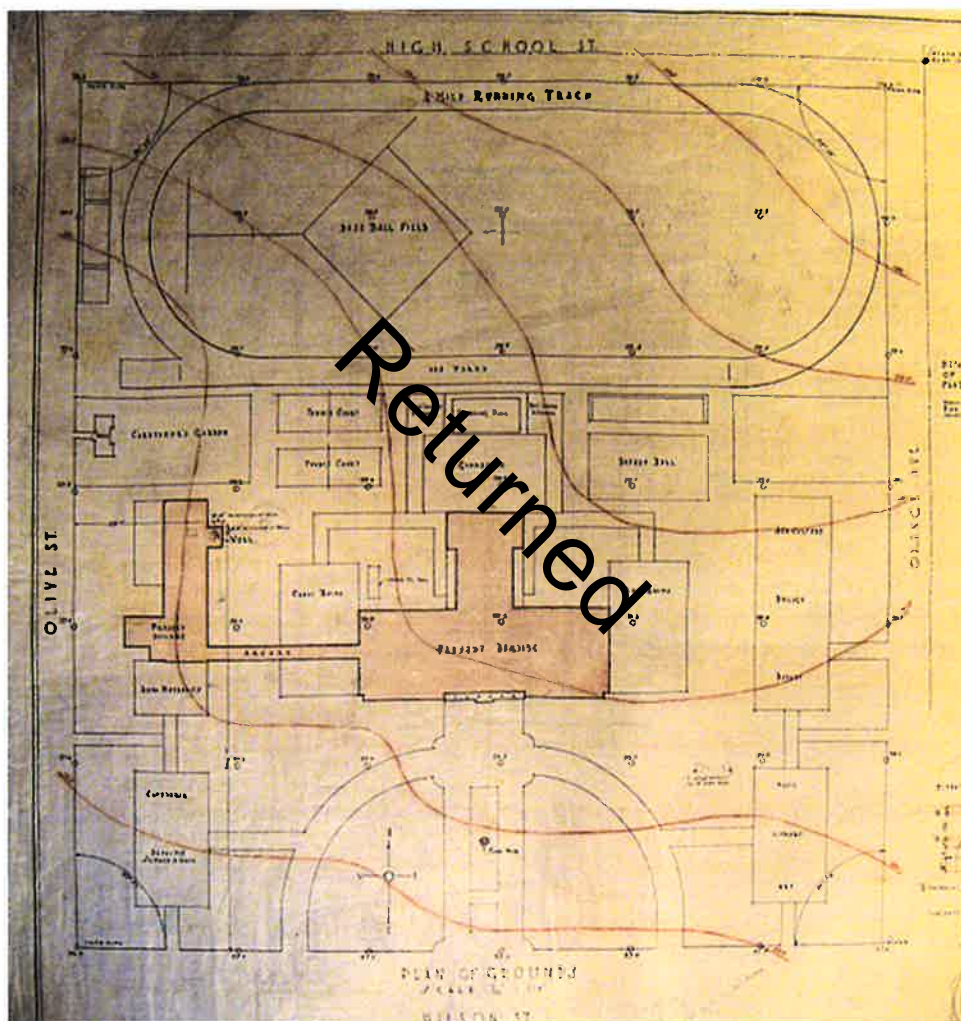


Figure 6. Plan of Grounds, Peoria High School, August 1921.  
Courtesy of the Arizona Historical Society-Papago Park.

Apparently envisioning dramatic expansion over time, the site plan for the high school (see figure 7) included future classroom additions on the east and west ends of the building and a gymnasium addition to the auditorium. Wings on the gym would provide for gender-segregated lockers and showers and be flanked by basketball and tennis courts. A combination baseball diamond and quarter-mile track was located at the northern edge of

<sup>36</sup> "Accept Plans for New Peoria High School Building," *Arizona Republican*, 5 September 1921, 5 and "Let Contract for New Peoria High School Building," 29 September 1921, 9.

Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State

the high school lot. Other future buildings included cafeteria/domestic science and arts, auto mechanics, music/library/arts, and agriculture/biology/botany. Of these, only the cafeteria and auto mechanic buildings came to fruition as planned, and not until much later.

The high school building was completed in time for the Fall 1922 semester, though the rest of the campus grounds remained bare. The community was very proud of their new high school and, since funds for developing the campus landscape were limited, approximately fifty men and boys, aided by six donated horse teams, spent September 23 leveling the baseball diamond, running track, basketball, and tennis courts. Women and girls from the community also participated, preparing a lunch for the workers that included an abundance of ice cream.<sup>37</sup>

Kibbey left Arizona soon after the construction of Peoria High School. Perhaps like Mahoney's brief predecessor, Ira Frary, he found the climate in California more appealing. Shortly after his departure, the new name for the firm, which would carry forward for decades, became Lescher and Mahoney.<sup>38</sup>

#### *Changes Over Time*

As a residential subdivision, Peoria Heights was unsuccessful and, beginning in 1927, School District No. 11 trustees purchased ten acres directly south of the high school for an elementary school. After a fire destroyed the grammar school on February 24, 1926, the grammar and high school districts decided to consolidate. As part of the merger, the new elementary school was built on land adjacent to the high school, and eventually shared resources.<sup>39</sup>

The high school was the only educational building located on the original ten-acre lot until 1936, when a gymnasium was erected with support from the Works Progress Administration. In the decades following the construction of the high school, the campus expanded in size, adding buildings, playfields, and other amenities as necessary, such as an outdoor multi-use athletic area in 1948.<sup>40</sup>

In 1958, what was now called Old Main underwent \$50,000 in upgrades, including the addition of the enclosed stairwells at the east and west ends of the building. The interior was also modified; acoustic tiles and "modern lighting" were added to all of the classrooms by the school district's maintenance staff.<sup>41</sup>

Bond elections in the 1960s provided for additional changes to the exterior of Old Main, specifically the building's windows. In 1963, a remodel of the auditorium included filling in the windows, smoothing over the rectangular openings while leaving the decorative

<sup>37</sup> "Students and Men at Peoria Level School Grounds," *Arizona Republican*, 24 September 1922, 3.6.

<sup>38</sup> Donna Reiner, "From Gas Stations to Chicken Coups, 5.

<sup>39</sup> "Fire Destroys Peoria School \$50,000 Loss," *Arizona Republican*, 25 February 1926, 1 and "Ten-Acre Tract Adjoining Peoria High School Sought," 13 March 1927, 3.1

<sup>40</sup> "Peoria School Gets Gymnasium," *Arizona Republic*, 19 July 1936, 4.1 and "Peoria Athletic Area Planned," 27 May 1948, 21.

<sup>41</sup> "Peoria High Face Lifting Nearly Complete," *Arizona Republic*, 16 January 1958, 24.

Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State

openings evident. In 1969, while expanding the campus and constructing new buildings, the district also began the process of replacing original windows on the classroom portion of the Old Main and installing smaller, single-hung, aluminum windows with infill at the bottom and top of the window openings.<sup>42</sup>

In 1981, Old Main received more upgrades, including improvements to its electrical system, a sprinkler system, and an elevator and a ramp to improve accessibility inside and outside of the building. Another bond election in 1992 included funds for additional renovations of Old Main's windows.<sup>43</sup>

By the beginning of the twenty-first century, Old Main began to exhibit problems requiring the building to be closed in 2008. That year, a structural study reported that the wood framework was rotting and bowing under the weight of the tile roof. Apparently, according to the study, sometime in the past, structural beams between floors were cut to install electrical conduit. The north side of the roof on the classroom portion of the building was sagging and, around 2001, high winds severely damaged several of the roof trusses. Roof leaks caused damage to the trusses and the partial collapse of ceilings in classrooms and the auditorium. Sixty percent of the classroom roof trusses were overstressed, as were 100 percent of the auditorium roof trusses. Trust web to chord connections were also overstressed, along with trust bottom chord splices, floor joists, and floor beams.<sup>44</sup>

Even with the problems, the building was deemed structurally sound. While there was talk of demolition, the community united in support of its preservation. The major hurdle for preserving the building was the economic downturn. As Old Main was being closed, the State of Arizona was drastically reducing the budget for the state's School Facilities Board which provides funds for school maintenance and construction. However, local supporters, under the banner of "Save Old Main," worked diligently to convince a sympathetic school board that the building was worth saving.<sup>45</sup>

In September 2011, the Peoria Unified School Board began the process of preserving Old Main with its approval of spending \$1.6 million remaining from a 2005 bond to begin renovation. During the next few years, additional funds totaling \$6.5 million were used to rehabilitate Old Main and construction completed in June 2014. Included in the renovations were the removal and replacement of the roof, the installation of insulated windows, flexible classroom space and mobile furniture, a science lab, work rooms and collaborative spaces, and a student lounge. Meanwhile, the exterior of the building, especially the

<sup>42</sup> "Bond Issue Passes with Peoria Vote," *Arizona Republic*, 9 January 1963, 20 and "Peoria district to sell bonds to build school," 6 May 1992, 22.10.

<sup>43</sup> "Peoria High School Renovation Plans Offered," *Arizona Republic*, 29 September 1981, Extra B.2 and "Peoria to district to sell bonds to build school," 6 May 1992, 22.10.

<sup>44</sup> Jack Gordon, "Peoria High School Old Main: Structural Feasibility Study," (Phoenix: Gervasio & Associates, Inc., 2008), 9-15.

<sup>45</sup> "2 school board members honored," *Arizona Republic*, 13 December 2008, P.8, "School board will discuss Old Main on Friday," 17 November 2010, Z2.5, and "Peoria schools' needs mount amid scarce dollars," 23 September 2011, z2.4.



Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State

Churrigueresque embellishments drawn by Lester J. Mahoney, remained unchanged preserving the historic character of the building.<sup>46</sup>

These changes adapted Old Main to the current educational needs of the community and the 1922 high school building now serves as the home for the Peoria Flex Academy, a non-traditional high school, and a specialized training center called MET Professional Academy where students receive an advanced medical, engineering, and technology curriculum, learning valuable skills as well as college credits. Through the efforts of the community and its school district to save and preserve the building, Peoria High School Old Main remains a testimony to the early and ongoing efforts to provide a quality secondary education for students.

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<sup>46</sup> "Funds OK'd to re-roof Old Main," *Arizona Republic*, 25 September 2011, B2 and "2 school board members honored," *Arizona Republic*, 13 December 2008, P.8; "Old Main Gets Green Light for Continued Renovations," *Peoria Times*, 15 March 2013. Accessed online at [http://www.peoriatimes.com/news/article\\_168c1bd6-8dea-11e2-9966-001a4bcf887a.html](http://www.peoriatimes.com/news/article_168c1bd6-8dea-11e2-9966-001a4bcf887a.html); "Historic Peoria Gets a Face Lift," <http://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/peoria/2014/07/24/historic-peoria-school-gets-facelift/13112171/> accessed May 15, 2015; Jodey Elsner, *Peoria*, 112 and 118.

Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State

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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 # \_\_\_\_\_

recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- Maps: A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

### Photograph Log

Name of Property: Peoria High School Old Main

City or Vicinity: Peoria

County: Maricopa County

State: Arizona

Photographer: Vincent S. Murray

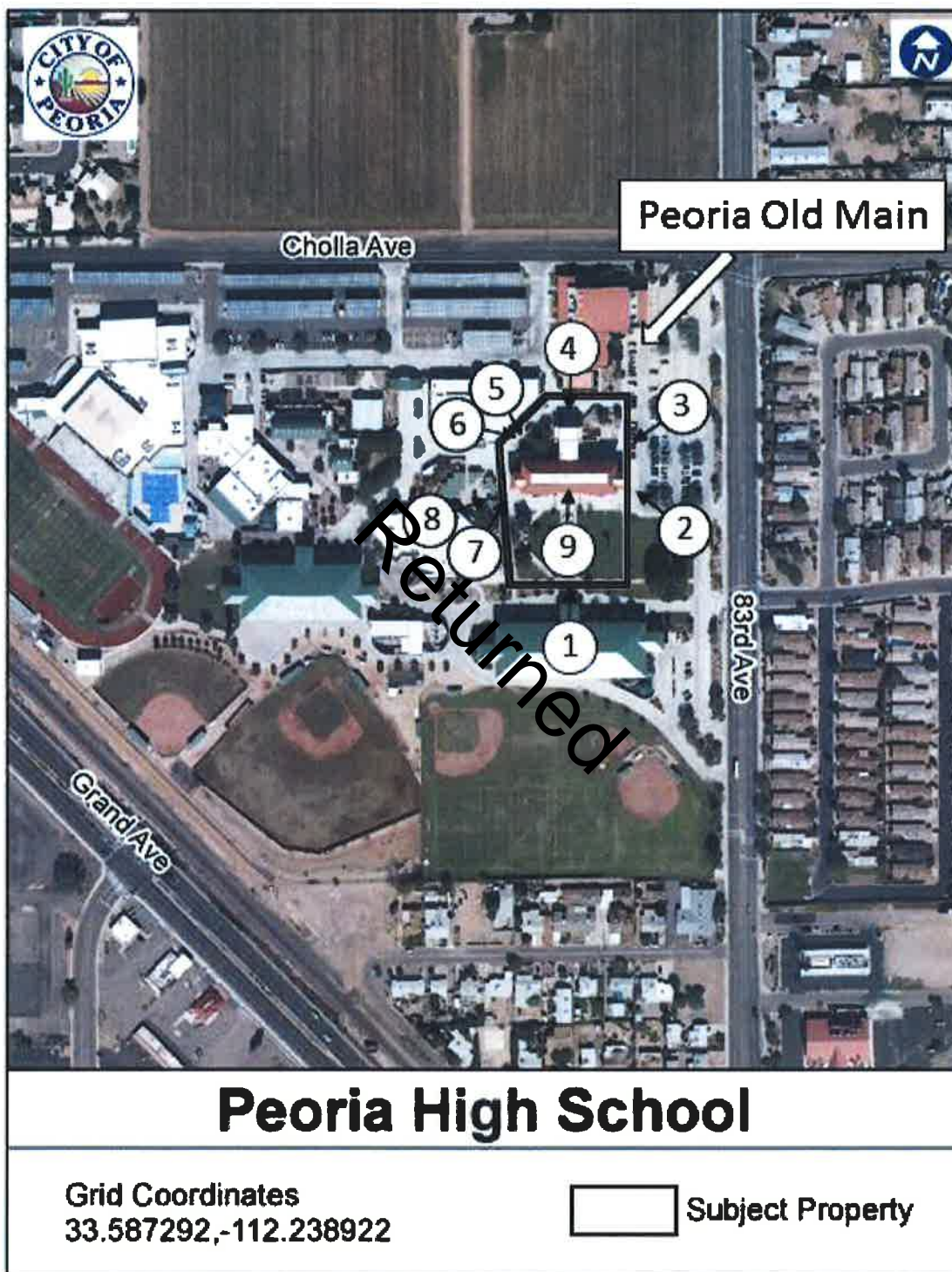
Date Photographed: May 22, 2015

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1. Front façade, facing north.
2. Front façade, facing northwest.
3. Rear and auditorium, facing southwest.
4. Rear of auditorium, facing south.
5. Rear of building, facing southeast.
6. Auditorium, facing east.
7. Enclosed staircase on west end, facing northeast.
8. Front façade facing northeast.
9. Close up of terra cotta feature above the entrance, facing south.

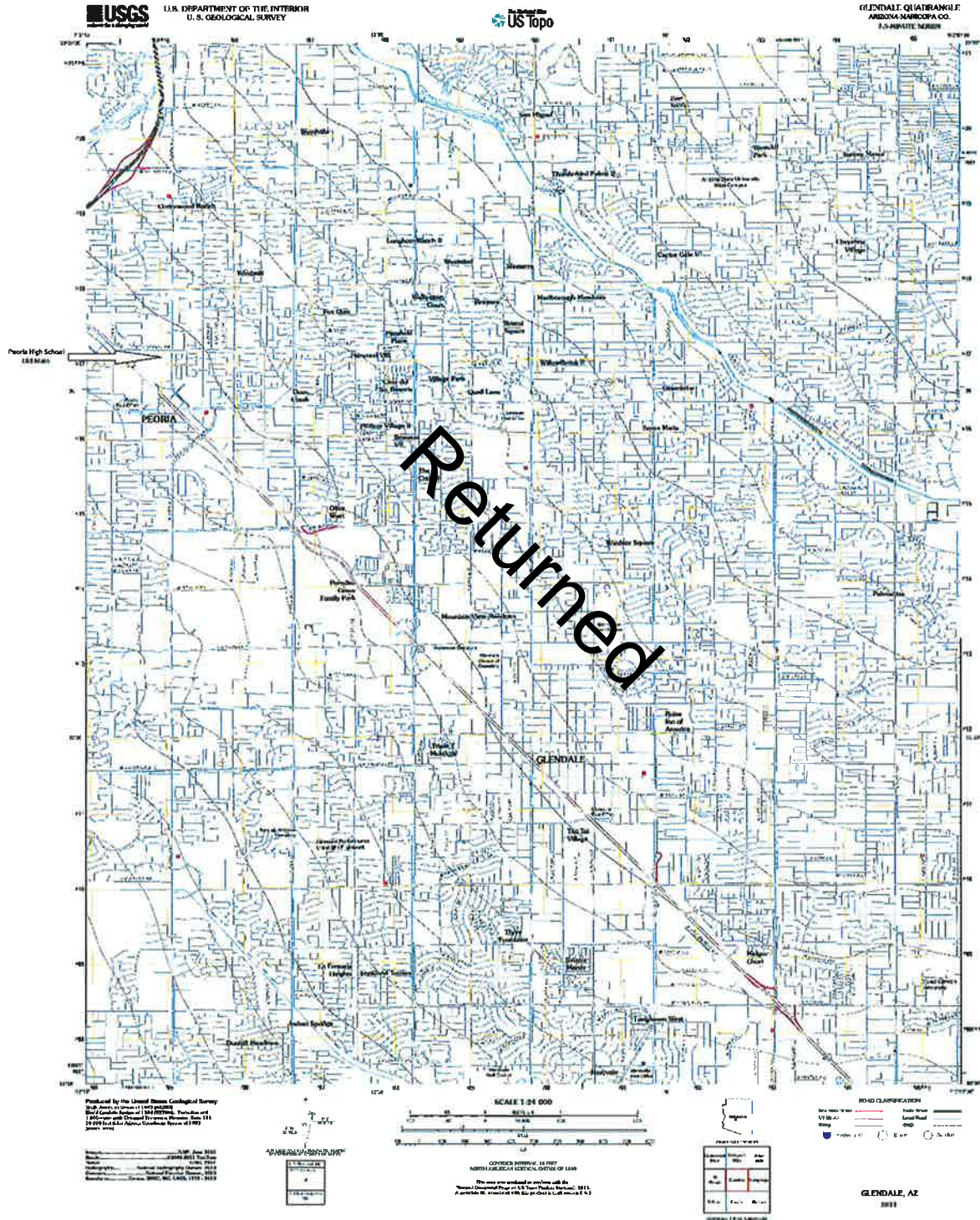
Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State



Peoria High School Old Main  
Name of Property

Maricopa, Arizona  
County and State





Returned

Peoria HS #1



Returned

Peoria HS #2

Returned

100

HOME OF THE  
PANTHERS

Peoria HS #3







Returned

Peoria HS #4



Returned

Peoria HS #5



Returned

Peoria HS #6



Returned

Peoria HS # 37



PEORIA HIGH SCHOOL

Returned

Peoria Hs #8



Returned

Peoria #5 #9

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places**

**Comments  
Evaluation/Return Sheet**

**Property Name:** Peoria High School Old Main  
**Property Location:** Peoria, Maricopa Co., AZ  
**Reference Number:** SG551  
**Date of Return:** 1/24/2017

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**Reasons for Return**

The current documentation for the Peoria High School Old Main is being returned for additional information. The nomination was submitted under Criterion C, with the area of significance of architecture, at the local level, for the period of significance of 1922.

While the narrative description describes some changes made to the school, key character-defining features have been compromised. An evaluation of the integrity of the school is needed to determine how much remains from the date of construction. In addition, floor plans and interior photographs are needed to illustrate how the property "continues to possess a high level of integrity." For a school building, photos should include entryways, stairways, hallways, classroom arrangements, decorative features, and the auditorium. Please key interior photographs to floor plans.

The property also includes a fountain and garden beds and should be noted in the resource counts.

Based on additional research and documentation, this property may be eligible under Criterion A, under Education. Additional information would be needed to justify the role this property played in the community and for a broader period of significance. For educational significance, information regarding student populations, educational curriculums, and comparisons with other high school curriculums should be part of the Section 8, statement of significance.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Lisa Deline, Historian  
National Register of Historic Places

**ARIZONA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE (SHPO)  
NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION  
TRANSMITTAL FORM  
\*\*FEDERAL EXPRESS\*\***

**DATE: October 3, 2018**

**TO:**

**Joy Beasley  
National Register of Historic Places  
1849 C Street NW, Mail Stop 7228  
Washington, D.C. 20240**

**FROM:**

**William Collins  
National Register Coordinator  
State Historic Preservation Office  
1100 West Washington Street  
Phoenix AZ 85007**

**National Register Nomination New Submittal:**

**Catalina Foothills Estates Job #399 House  
Tucson, Pima County  
(Associated with The Single Family Residential Architecture of Josias Th. Joesler  
and John and Helen Murphey in Tucson and Pima County, Arizona 1927-1956  
MPDF)**

**National Register Nomination Resubmittal:**

**Peoria High School Old Main  
Peoria, Maricopa County**

**Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at  
wcollins@azstateparks.gov or 602.542.7159.**