

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED MAR 18 1981
DATE ENTERED APR 27 1981

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC Old Rockville High School and East School
Rockville School Complex

CE
3-17-81

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER School and Park Streets.

CITY, TOWN

Rockville Vernon

NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

2nd

STATE

CT

VICINITY OF

CODE 09

COUNTY

Tolland

CODE

013

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Town of Vernon, Board of Education

STREET & NUMBER 30 Park Street

CITY, TOWN

Rockville

VICINITY OF

STATE

CT

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, VERNON TOWN CLERK
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

STREET & NUMBER Memorial Building, 24 Park Place

CITY, TOWN

Rockville

STATE

CT

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE State Register of Historic Places

DATE

1981

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

Connecticut Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN

Hartford

STATE

CT

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This complex, located in downtown Rockville, Connecticut, consists of two large brick buildings separated by a tarmac parking lot (Fig. 1). The larger structure, the former Rockville High School, was constructed in 1892 in the Richardson Romanesque style, and stands on the northeast corner of Park and School Streets (Figs. 1 and 2). The second structure, located further to the east along School Street, is known as the East School (Figs. 3 and 4). It is Italianate in design and was built in 1870. Behind the two buildings to the north, the land slopes upwards; and behind the parking lot and the East School, there are a lawn, trees and some old playground equipment. To the north and east of the complex is a residential area of large, nineteenth-century residences; while to the south and west lies the commercial area of the town. Neither of these buildings is used as a school today. The former high school houses the offices of the superintendent of the Vernon Public Schools (Rockville was an incorporated city within the town of Vernon). The East School is used for storage.

The high school building is a vigorous Richardsonian Romanesque composition. Constructed of brick (common bond in Flemish variation), this is a 2½-story structure (with a full basement), and is essentially rectangular in form. The foundation is rough-faced, granite ashlar; and the roof is covered with blue-grey slates.

The exterior elevations of the building are highly asymmetrical, and they display a number of interesting decorative features. At the southwest corner of the building is a massive, four-story, square tower. Above the foundation, long, narrow windows mark the first two stories. In the third story, there is a double row of smaller, square windows; and the final story is a belfry formed by an open arcade (Fig. 5). Above, there is a parapet and a steeply-pitched hipped roof with copper cresting along the ridge. At each corner of the tower are slender, polygonal turrets terminating in rounded stone caps which project above the belfry's parapet. These turrets begin at the second story and spring from granite corbels which have intricately carved foliated designs (Fig. 6).

Besides one face of the tower, the west elevation of the building (facing Park Street) is mostly taken up by a massive, crenellated entrance porch. This structure is dominated by a large, stilted archway into which the granite stairs lead towards the recessed double doors. To the left of the porch are three narrow arched windows; while above are the rectangular windows of the second floor and a peaked-roof attic gable with a large, round-arched window.

The School Street or south facade has three major elements. At the western end is the tower. In the center is a 2½-story block which terminates in attic gable similar to the Park Street facade. This block also contains an entranceway recessed in an arched opening,

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although the arch is round, not stilted, and there is no projecting porch. The third and easternmost element is a large block which projects slightly. It consists of two stories defined by rows of rectangular windows and a very large attic gable with a round-arched window having fan-like glazing bars and a row of small squared windows underneath.

The east elevation of the building is remarkable only for a projecting two-story bay which encompasses a stairway.

Finally, the north elevation has a projecting block with a large attic gable at its eastern end which matches the corresponding element on the south facade. There are three triangular bays in the center; and, then, five arched windows on the first story of the facade's western end.

Below the roof of the entire building, there is a wooden cornice with modillions, under which the last nine courses of the brick sidewalls are stepped to form a corbelled frieze. All the window lintels and sills are rough-faced granite; and the recessed openings are filled with modern 1-over-1 steel sash with flat panels at the top. Only the arched windows in the attic gables are original.

The interior of the building reveals a typical central-hallway distribution plan. The first floor has been recently renovated into offices for the staff of the superintendent of schools. Most of the ceilings have been lowered through the use of acoustical tiles, and many walls have been covered with wood panelling. The entrance from School Street leads to a large central stairway (Fig. 9) constructed of narrow oak tongue-and-groove vertical boarding and heavy oak posts. The second floor is much more original with rooms containing high, pressed-tin ceilings, oak doors, and narrow oak floors. The attic floor is mostly used for storage, but there is one particularly interesting room in the tower. This small space, about 14' by 14' is lighted not only by the double row of squared windows which can be seen from the outside, but also by a skylight in the ceiling. The light to this skylight is obtained through the open arcade of the belfry; and, so, the roof of the tower acts only as a canopy above this "interior" roof.

The second building of this complex is the East School. Smaller than the former high school, it is a rectangular, 2½-story building constructed of brick (common bond in Flemish variation).

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Because of the slope of the land, the basement on the south side is really the first story of the building. The foundation is constructed of cut granite blocks; and the gable roof, with its ridge parallel to School Street, is covered by asphalt shingles.

The exterior of the building is regular and symmetrical. The main (south) facade is seven bays wide. At the center, in front of the main door, is a magnificent, Italian Gothic portico (Fig. 7). It has a flat roof, a modillioned cornice with brackets at the corners; and it is supported by plain, clustered columns which rise upwards to form ogee-shaped openings on the front and sides. Above this composition are central arched windows with narrow, paired, round-headed, 4-over-2 sash. These windows have arched granite lintels with prominent key stones.

The east and west facades are plain and four bays wide.

The rear facade of this building has a peculiar arched porch which projects at right angles from the center of the wall at the first story level and forms a bridge to a rear doorway in the second story. Otherwise, this facade is also quite plain.

Under the eaves of the building are large, paired cornice brackets (Fig. 8). All of the windows, with the exception of the central arched windows on the front facade, are covered by plywood; but the original 6-over-6 sash remain underneath. Over all of these rectangular windows are heavy granite lintels.

The interior plan of this building is straightforward. The half-basement contains a boiler room and girls' and boys' lavatories. The central oak staircase leads to hallways on both the first and second floors. Each floor contains four classrooms, all of which have high, pressed-tin ceilings (Fig. 10), slate blackboards and narrow, oak floors.

This building has undergone several changes. First, iron fireescapes have been erected at the front and rear. Another change was the removal of the central bell cupola. This was blown off with half the roof in the hurricane of 1938 and was not replaced. Finally, some years ago, a wooden porch, similar in style to the front portico, was removed from the rear of the building.

In general, both buildings are in good, stable condition.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Local History
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES	East School: 1870-built High School: 1892-built	BUILDER/ARCHITECT	East School: unknown High School: F. R. Richmond
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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Rockville School Complex possesses two areas of significance. First, the two buildings are noteworthy examples of late nineteenth century architectural styles adapted to school construction (criterion C). Second, the schools are significant to the local history of the town in which they are located, while reflecting the general development of public education nationally (criterion A).

The East School, overall, is a spare, competently designed Italianate structure. The large, paired cornice brackets, the arched central windows of the main facade, and the square cupola (now gone) are typical decorative features of this style. What gives this building character and sets it off from other similar structures is the magnificent Italian Gothic portico over the main doorway. This is a most unusual embellishment for such an otherwise modest, utilitarian structure. It reminds us that the influence of John Ruskin, who was an ardent admirer and publicist of Italian Gothic architecture, was deep and powerful on both sides of the Atlantic.

Whereas the East School is an utilitarian structure embellished by appended details, the Old Rockville High School is a pure and significant example of a particular architectural style, in this case, Richardsonian Romanesque. Only one fact is known about the architect, Francis R. Richmond: that he lived and worked in Springfield, Massachusetts from 1890 until 1911 when his name disappears from the city directories. He was, however, obviously skillful, creating a building that expressed the full Richardsonian vocabulary: materials of contrasting hues (in this case, red brick and grey granite), a tower with polygonal turrets, steep attic gables, deeply recessed windows, multi-planed roof, a crenellated porch, foliated corbels, round arches, and decorative brickwork.

This style, of course, was the legacy of Henry Hobson Richardson, who died at forty-seven in 1886. Richardson's influence was very great nationwide; and buildings which imitated his interpretation of historical Romanesque architecture continued to enjoy favor until the turn of the century.¹ Thus, it was quite natural for a committee of Rockville citizens meeting in 1891 to select a design for their new school which expressed this "modern" style.

These buildings also contribute to a better understanding of

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

The Rockville Journal, September 7, 1893.

Brookes, George S. Cascades and Courage: The History of the Town of Vernon and the City of Rockville. Privately Printed, 1955.

Hicks, John D. The American Nation: A History of the United States

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

UTM NOT VERIFIED
ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.6

UTM REFERENCES Quadrangle name: Rockville, CT

A 18 711800 4638140
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

D

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The property is comprised of Lot 14, Block 108 (High School) and Lot 6, Block 108 (East School) as shown on Vernon Assessors Map 54.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Hal Keiner, Consultant

ORGANIZATION Connecticut Historical Commission DATE Sept. 29, 1979

STREET & NUMBER 59 South Prospect Street TELEPHONE (203) 566-3005


CITY OR TOWN Hartford STATE CT


12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE LOCAL x

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

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE 
TITLE Director, Connecticut Historical Commission DATE March 4, 1981

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
	Entered in the National Register DATE <u>4/27/81</u>
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION	
ATTEST:	DATE
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	

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the history of Rockville and the development of public education nationally. Both buildings were constructed in response to the rapid growth of Rockville after the Civil War. The town's prosperity was based on textiles; and, as new factories were built and old ones were expanded in the boom which followed the war's end, working men and women moved into the community, rapidly increasing the number of school age children. The building of the East School was meant to lessen overcrowding at the smaller district schools scattered throughout the town.²

In the same year, 1870, a high school course of study was established in the town under the guidance of a young schoolmaster. The first class consisted of two brothers who graduated in 1873. From this modest beginning, the popularity of the high school course steadily increased.³ This prompted a town meeting in 1890 to appoint a committee, "...to procure plans, specifications and estimate of cost for the erection of a High School building..."⁴ Opened in 1893, the new school cost \$50,000 to build and furnish.⁵

It should also be noted that the construction of the Rockville High School occurred during a period when secondary education was rapidly expanding throughout the United States. Industrial growth and commercial development created a need for better educated young adults who were trained in science, business skills, modern languages and other technical subjects. The old private academies were inadequate to provide mass secondary education; and, in consequence, the number of public high schools in the United States increased from 600 in 1870 to 6,000 in 1900.⁶

These educational trends are clearly illustrated in the physical arrangement of space in these schools. The East School is a simple, straightforward plan with four classrooms on the first floor and four more on the second. This, obviously, is an elementary school, designed for self-contained, graded classes where children sat at desks learning the rudiments of reading, writing and arithmetic. The Old Rockville High School, in contrast, is a much more complex building. Its rooms were designed for particular purposes, and its broad halls facilitated the movement of students from one area to another. For example, on the first floor there was a large lecture hall and, on the second, a library, physics laboratory, and a chemistry laboratory.⁷ Finally, it is interesting to note that this building was only used as a high school until 1924, a period of thirty-one years, when it was replaced by a new and more complex facility.

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Footnotes

¹Marcus Whiffen, American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles (Cambridge, MA: The M. I. T. Press, 1969), pp. 133-140.

²On the general growth of Rockville and educational development, see, George S. Brookes, Cascades and Courage: The History of the Town of Vernon and the City of Rockville, Connecticut (privately printed, 1955), passim.

³On the establishment of the high school course, see Mrs. Gardner Stanley, "History of Vernon and Rockville" (typescript, 1936), p. 108.

⁴Brookes, Cascades and Courage, p. 234.

⁵Ibid.

⁶John D. Hicks, et al., The American Nation: A History of the United States from 1865 to the Present (4th ed., Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1963), p. 235.

⁷Brookes, Cascades and Courage, p. 235.

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