

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received NOV 15 1984
date entered

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

1. Name

historic ISRAEL PUTNAM SCHOOL

and or common Israel Putnam School

2. Location

street & number School and Oak Streets, N/A not for publication

city, town Putnam N/A vicinity of

state Connecticut code 09 county Windham code 015

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name William H. Kennedy, Jr.
c/o Rawley Plumbing Supply
street & number 71 Front Street

city, town Putnam N/A vicinity of state Connecticut

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Putnam Town Clerk

street & number 126 Church Street

city, town Putnam state Connecticut

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title State Register of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1984 federal state county local

depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission

city, town 59 South Prospect Street Hartford state Connecticut

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 type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Israel Putnam School, completed in 1902, is a 2 1/2-story eclectically detailed hip-roofed brick building with Indiana limestone trim (Photograph 1). In plan it has a large rectangular central portion with smaller projecting side wings. A similarly detailed brick two-story addition (Photograph 2) was added to the south side in 1922; because of the set-back, it is not readily apparent from the northwest. Because of the slope of the land, the basement story is exposed in front but concealed behind a high retaining wall at the rear (Photographs 3 and 4). The school occupies a large corner lot at the intersection of School and Oak Streets, at the border between Putnam's commercial district and residential areas to the north and east. Most of the school's parcel is paved over, but the area immediately in front of the building is lawn with trees and shrubs and a walkway to the entrance.

The facade between the side projections is dominated by an arcade of five round-arched openings behind which is recessed the central main entrance (Photograph 5). The limestone arches are carried on square paneled brick piers with granite bases. There are three granite steps leading to the floor of the loggia and in the outermost archways, sections of limestone balustrade. The entry features double doors each with a glass pane (boarded up) over a single large raised panel. Above the doors is a Classical cornice with a triglyphed frieze and a triangular pediment. The remainder of the round-arched entryway is filled out by a large arched transom with lattice-work glazing. To either side of the entrance are large arched openings, partly filled in with modern windows, with similar glazing in the heads and paneled brickwork below the windows. All three openings are outlined with raised brick arches resting on stone impost blocks. At the level of the second-story window sills is a stone stringcourse above a row of small brick dentils. Second-story windows have lattice-glazed transom lights separated from the one-over-one windows by limestone transom bars. Like the school's other windows, they have flat-arched brick lintels with prominent limestone keyblocks.

The side projections are three bays wide and have hip roofs which are somewhat lower than the main roof with which they merge. Windows have two-over-two sash, stone sills, and lintels like those in the central part. Side elevations have the same window treatment, and both north and south sides have secondary entrances. The south entry has been partly blocked up and refitted with modern doors, but the north entrance (Photograph 6) is original and similar to the main entrance. Above the side entrances are wrought-iron balconies supported on stone consoles carved with guttae and acanthus leaves. The rear elevation (Photograph 3) has its windows paired within larger segmental-arched openings. The 1922 extension duplicates the details of the original school with one exception: its facade has five windows across the front, the middle three grouped under a single lintel.

(continued)

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Description (continued):

Other exterior features include raised-brick quoins at the corners of the basement story, a stone watertable, a stone stringcourse at the level of the first-story window sills, and a copper gutter which forms the cornice molding along the roof's projecting eaves. Two large chimneys with long, widely spaced corbels extend above the asphalt-shingled (originally slate) roof. There formerly were four chimneys serving as ventilating shafts, one at each corner of the main part of the building. Originally there were two gabled dormers across the front slope of the main roof and three at the rear; all have been removed.

The interior features wide central corridors with large classrooms to either side. The typical classroom (Photograph 7) has plaster walls, linoleum floor, acoustical-tile ceiling, and original built-in closets. Other original woodwork includes molded window and door surrounds, blackboard frames and picture moldings, and glass-and-panel doors. The corridors are plainly finished with new storage areas on the first floor built out into the hallways. Evidence of the narrow-board southern-pine flooring can be seen in the second-floor corridor. Stairways are located at the two rear corners of the main part of the school. Stairs are of steel construction and are set within enclosed stairwells which, like other major interior partitions, are built of brick. The iron railings are very simple and there are only short lengths remaining of the original oak handrail; the newel ornaments are missing.

Within the attic space, lighted by a large skylight not visible from School Street, is a large plainly finished auditorium area (Photograph 8). The stage is quite small, with carved brackets in the upper corner of the proscenium as the only ornament. From the auditorium is visible the steel trusswork which supports the school's main roof.

The school is in fair condition. Some of the brickwork is damaged and the downspouts are severely deteriorated, but the building's overall structural stability is reported to be sound. Plywood fills in many street-level openings and some exposed glass has been broken. Most of the sash is in poor condition; the present red paint has been recently applied over layers of badly cracked white or cream-colored paint. For the most part, however, the school retains its original appearance and most of its original fabric.

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 type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Criteria A,C

Specific dates 1902 - completed **Builder/Architect** J.C. Fowler and E.I. Wilson, architects

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Israel Putnam School is historically significant as the Town of Putnam's first modern brick school building (Criterion A). The completion of the school in 1902, described in Putnam's annual report as "an epoch in the history of the town," represented the fulfillment of early 20th-century educational ideals of school safety, generous light and ventilation, physical fitness, and pupil amenities. The school's construction also reflects the industrial and ethnic history of Putnam, northeast Connecticut's largest city. Buoyed by the prosperity of several large textile manufacturers, Putnam around 1900 experienced a population increase (in large part millworkers of French-Canadian heritage) which made its old wooden district school obsolete. Israel Putnam School went beyond the basic functional requirements, however: as a large stylish structure built of quality materials, it has architectural significance as well (Criterion C). The quoins, Classical details, arcaded entry porch and other elements are typical features drawn from the stately revival styles of the period and intended to convey an appearance of grandeur and serious purpose.

The area served by Israel Putnam School, the incorporated City of Putnam, was the most built-up and populous part of the larger Town of Putnam. The city had not one but several large textile factories: the Rhodes, Morse and Powhat-ten cotton mills, all controlled by Morse and Nightingale; the Saxon woolen mills; and the Hammond and Knowlton silk mills. The city also benefited from being a railroad junction: the Norwich and Worcester Railroad crossed the New Haven's Boston-New York "Air-Line" in Putnam. Numerous smaller manufacturers and commercial enterprises grew up around the mills, and Putnam developed a substantial commercial core. Growing in large part from continued French-Canadian settlement in the vicinity of the mills, the population of the town reached 7348 in 1900.

Prior to Israel Putnam School's construction, Putnam's students were served by a two-story wooden structure. Unlike the one-room schoolhouses in the outlying areas of town, the Fifth District schoolhouse in the city was a large graded school serving over 400 pupils, but by 1899 the school board regarded it as woefully unsuitable: "the location, surroundings and condition of the building are not such as to inspire enthusiasm," they wrote in their annual report, "and the teachers are badly handicapped by rooms poorly lighted, ventilated and heated." The following year the board declared it "not only entirely inadequate but positively a disgrace to the town." In 1901 the voters approved construction of a new facility.

When completed in 1902, the Israel Putnam School fully met the educational-improvement goals of the board. The high ceilings and large windows allowed natural light to fill the classrooms, while built-in shelves

(continued)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Putnam, Town of. Annual Reports, 1899-1903.

Putnam Patriot, February 24, 1902; September 1, 1923; March 1, 1901;
September 13, 1901.

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 2.7 acres

Quadrangle name Putnam

Quadrangle scale 1:24 000

UTM References

A

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2	5	1	8	9	1	6	1	0
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4	1	6	4	1	4	3	1	1	0
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Zone Easting Northing

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Zone Easting Northing

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Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property includes the school and parking and play area shown as Lot 89, Map 17, Putnam Assessor Records; this represents the historic boundary of the school parcel.

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

state	code	county	code

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Bruce Clouette and Matthew Roth, Partners, edited by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator

organization Historic Resource Consultants date May 10, 1984

street & number The Colt Armory
55 Van Dyke Avenue telephone (203) 547-0268

city or town Hartford state Connecticut

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *John W. Stoneman*

title Director, Connecticut Historical Commission date 11/2/84

For NPS use only

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

John W. Stoneman Director National Register date 12-13-84
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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Significance (continued):

and cupboards provided space for storing teaching materials. Blackboards lined three walls. The large furnace provided heat for classrooms and corridors and also warmed the bottoms of the vent shafts, creating draft. The vent shafts, connected to each classroom, allowed the circulation of fresh outside air, even in winter. More space allowed the town to start a kindergarten in the building. Other facilities included space in the basement for indoor play areas, bicycle rooms, and modern plumbing. The board's awareness of fire-safety resulted in brick construction for both exterior walls and major interior partititons and the use of enclosed steel stairways isolated from combustible materials by brick walls and iron framing. The auditorium was the town's first school facility for entertainments and was used by the high school as well as by the elementary-grade children at Israel Putnam.

Israel Putnam School was thus a modern facility in every way. In its spaciousness it accomodated the needs of a growing city. In its construction it included up-to-date fire-proofing techniques. And in its design it recognized the latest educational ideas: an enriched curriculum which demanded special spaces like the auditorium; the kindergarten, an expression of the philosophy that small children need a separate, different educational environment their first year; and above all, the newly popular idea that light, fresh air, and physical exercise were essential to a child's development. "No town in the state surpasses Putnam in its fine school building," boasted the board in 1903. "The spirit of the school has almost been revolutionized," their report continued, citing an improved "atmosphere of work and a new eagerness to acquire knowledge." The board's enthusiastic assessment of their new building was clearly grounded in the belief, so typical of the Progressive Era, that attitudes could be transformed by an improved environment.

Architectural Significance

Part of the improved environment offered by Israel Putnam School was derived from the building's exceptional architectural qualities. The expensive limestone trim, the elaborate chimneys, the quoins, and the elegant loggia sheltering the entry were details drawn from the Renaissance, Classical and Georgian Revival styles which dominated turn-of-the-century architecture. Like the Classical entrance treatments, these features carried connotations of permanence and importance, what the building committee termed "monumental beauty." Such elements set this building apart from plainer schools of the period and make it one of the more imposing and elaborate structures in Putnam. Some voters questioned the added expense for the stylish exterior, but the majority expressed their approval for "an edifice that would prove an honor to the town and a credit to its people." The elaborateness of the

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Significance (continued):

building was thus intended to not only impress and serve as an example of beauty to the students, but also to indicate the forward-thinking ideas of the people of Putnam. The Putnam Patriot described the school as

a monument to the readiness to do all that is demanded for the education of the present and coming generations, and an expression of the unity and harmony of the people in promoting educational work up to modern demands.

As a final indicator of what the new school meant to the community, the board named it for Israel Putnam, a leading Connecticut figure in the Revolutionary War and the man for whom the town and city themselves were named.

Israel Putnam School is also significant because it sheds light on the work of two little-known architects. John Chandler Fowler and Edward I. Wilson of Boston, Massachusetts, were chosen from a field of six competitors by the school building committee. Although not well-known today, both men appear to have had extensive practices drawing plans for houses in the upper-middle-class suburbs of Boston. J. Chandler Fowler published one such design in American Architect and Building News and is known to have worked on several large North Shore summer residences. Edward Wilson designed at least one other school, the 1895 Magnolia Avenue school in Gloucester, Massachusetts. Despite their collaboration on the Israel Putnam School, the two were not formal partners and maintained separate offices. Putnam School shows their ability to produce a building which in its day was considered a thoroughly up-to-date facility and an aesthetic triumph.

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Souvenirs of Putnam. Putnam: Aspinock Historical Society, 1976.

Sources on the architects:

American Architect and Building News, December 13, 1902, p. 87.

Producer and Builder, January 15, 1895, p. 4.

Obituary of J. Chandler Fowler, Boston Transcript, July 19, 1918.

Boston Public Library, Fine Arts Reference Department, architects file.