

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Pratt School

other names/site number Pratt School

2. Location

street & number 306 Avenue U not for publication

city or town Birmingham vicinity

state Alabama code AL county Jefferson code 073 zip code 35214

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 nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

J. Lawrence Park
Signature of certifying official/Title

Dec 17, 1993
Date

Alabama Historical Commission (State Historic Preservation Office)
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.
 - See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register.
 - See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain): _____

[Signature] Signature of the Keeper

Entered in the National Register Date of Action

1/28/94

1/28/94

Pratt School

Name of Property

Jefferson Alabama

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private, public-local, public-State, public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s), district, site, structure, object

Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Table with columns for Contributing and Noncontributing resources, and rows for buildings, sites, structures, objects, and Total.

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

NA

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Education: School

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/Not In Use

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

neo-classical

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

brick foundation, brick walls, Stone other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

(see attached)

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Description: Pratt School was constructed in four stages between 1910 and 1948 of red brick with simple neo-classical details. The main structure (built in 1910 and added to in 1918) has three stories except for the one-story addition (1925), and the gymnasium addition (c. 1948) which has two stories. The front, east facade has a pedimented roofline, with metal cap, simple metal cornice, and pedimented brick portico with brick corbelling, projecting wood eaves and decorative brackets; the wood double entrance doors are topped by an arched multi-panelled transom in very poor repair. A pair of four concrete stairs with capped brick columns flank the entrance. A walled landing connects the stairs. Recessed bays flank the main portion of the facade; a windowless brick wall with a brick framed panel of highly decorative brick work flanks the front facade. This facade has a series of five 9-panel wood windows on either side of the entrance way on the ground floor. A series of five 9-over-9 wood windows with stone sills and lintels line the main floor, in addition to a single 9-panel window with stone lintels and sills on either side of the entrance way. The top floor windows are a series of five 9-over-9 wood windows with stone sills and lintels; immediately above the portico and beneath the roof pediment is a set of three 9-over-9 windows flanked by a single 9 pane window each with stone sills and lintels.

The northside facade has an identical pedimented capped roofline, and a metal cornice extends the length of the 1910 portion. The metal roof cap ends with the original structure, as does the metal cornice. Arched windows line the ground floor of the original building; thereafter there are three sets of 5 rectangular 9-over-9 windows. Brick pilasters with stone insets separate the original building from additions and is repeated a total of five times along this facade. This pattern is also repeated along the opposite wall which forms an inside wall for the building's courtyard. Along the second and third floors, there are two series of five rectangular 9-over-9 windows divided by two rectangular 3-over-3 windows.

The south facade extends the metal cornice throughout and there is a pedimented roofline identical to the front and north facades, and a decorative brickwork band separates the ground from upper floors. Arched windows line the ground floor throughout; identical rectangular windows with stone lintels and sills remain along the second and third floors.

Rear

The rear facades create a courtyard with the original structure creating the east or front wall; the rear is adjoined to the main building by the one-story concrete auditorium (c. 1925). Windows inside the north facade are identical to the outside north facade, a pattern repeated for the south facade. The original rear facade, which

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Description (continued)

forms the east wall of the courtyard, has a pattern of six rectangular windows divided by an identical series by two smaller rectangular windows.

The rear auditorium facade is concrete and retains a series of three multipaned metal windows which flank the entrance (or exit) door.

The 1948 two-story gymnasium addition, like the main structure, faces Avenue U. It is of identical red brick, and has a pedimented roofline with metal caps. Decorative metal downspouts adorn the front facade. There is a parapet wall at the south facade. The main bay protrudes from the rear gymnasium space. The front bay has a series of four metal silled windows along the side walls; the front facade has four metal windows along each story on either side of the entrance. Each series of four windows is divided by a down spout. The entrance has double wood doors with the original chained metal awning; above the awning is a 8-paned rectilinear metal window. The rear gymnasium space is flanked at the second floor by a single 24-paned metal window, and a series of brick pilasters line the rear facade. Because of the brick, roofline, downspouts and pilasters, the gymnasium visually integrates with the rest of the structure.

Interior

The original building has approximately 15' ceilings intact with plaster walls in fair condition. (There are plaster walls throughout except in the gymnasium). The main entrance area is flanked by plaster bas relief in very deteriorated or destroyed condition. There is a 17' wide main corridor with wood chair rail. Classrooms are intact throughout. Some wood book cabinets remain throughout. Three-over-three wood windows remain above classroom doors. Wood windows with wide wood sills remain in fair condition. Classrooms along the main corridor are separated by double louvered doors with wood coat closets encased with wood. There are also two broom closets. The upper floor has identical staircases at the side; (side entrances have decorative squared plaster banisters).

Auditorium

The auditorium contains a series of five round cast iron columns, and two skylights; there is a series of three concrete pillars. The stage has a wood foundation; wood stairs and banisters remain behind the stage on either side. There is a small dressing room on either side of the stage with tongue and groove walls in poor condition.

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Description (continued)

The entrance into the auditorium is gradually raised and has an iron rail.

Both the exterior and interior are in good to fair condition.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- 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

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- 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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

C) architecture

A) education

Period of Significance

1910 - c. 1943

Significant Dates

c. 1910, 1918, 1925

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

D.O. Whilldin (C. 1910, 1918; C. 1925)

Warren, Knight and Davis (C.1948)

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Pratt School
Name of Property

Jefferson Alabama
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property approximately 5 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	16	511040	3710170
Zone	Easting	Northing	
2			

3			
Zone	Easting	Northing	
4			

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Pamela Sterne King; Melanie A. Betz/AHC Reviewer

organization City of Birmingham date June 1, 1993

street & number 710 North 20th Street, 5th Floor telephone (205) 254-2719

city or town Birmingham state AL zip code 35203

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Board of Education

street & number 2015 Park Place telephone 205-583-4600

city or town Birmingham state Alabama zip code 35203

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. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Statement of Significance

Pratt School is significant as an early example of the work of prominent local architect D.O. Whilldin; and as good example of the early development of education in the Birmingham area. Constructed c. 1910, Pratt School was later added to in 1918 and 1925, and the gymnasium constructed in 1948.

Justification for the Period of Significance - The Period of Significance for the Pratt School extends from the original date of construction, 1910, until 1943, an arbitrary date reflecting the 50 year rule for the National Register.

Criterion C, Architecture - Pratt School is significant as one of the early works of prominent local architect, D.O. Whilldon, and as probably the first and perhaps the simplest of his many school buildings.¹ D.O. Willdin's career spanned the years between 1904 and 1950. During his earlier years, 1910-1927, he designed a number of Birmingham's public schools, apparently on commission by the City of Birmingham. Pratt School was the first of these which was begun before Pratt City became part of Birmingham in 1910. Following completion of Pratt School, he went on to design other schools including Phillips, Wylam, Glen Iris, East Birmingham, Baker, Elyton, Central Park, Ensley, McNeil, and Bush Hills². In 1927, as the last of these were built, the Birmingham Board of Education decided to commission the firm of Warren Knight and David to design all public school buildings.³

Whilldin's architectural style, therefore, is quite typical of Birmingham's public school buildings in the first decades of the twentieth century. He employed relatively simple lines, and used red brick with moderate details. Parapet walls, simple cornices, rectilinear windows, and stone window sills and hoods were common features. His style reflects the seriousness, yet optimism, that dominated the emergence of Birmingham as the iron and steel capital of the South, and was a shining example of the South's participation in the bureaucratized, professionalized Progressive Era.

Following the Board of Education's commission of Warren, Knight and Davis, Whilldin went on to design some of the most important and ornate commercial buildings in downtown Birmingham. Included are the Florentine (1927), Calder's (originally Adam's Department Store) (1928), Ideal Department Store (1928-29), Thomas Jefferson Hotel (1929), and Woolworth's (1930).⁴ Each of these (perhaps with the exception of the Modernistic Woolworth's building) is highly ornate with elaborate use of terra cottas, colors, and classical details. His own office building, built in 1924, is the first such high-style show piece of terra cotta ornamentation and coloration.⁵

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Statement of Significance (continued)

Criterion A, Education - Pratt School is significant as a good example of how educational institutions evolved within the burgeoning governments of the state of Alabama, Jefferson County, Pratt City, and Birmingham.

During the 1891-92 session of the State Legislature, a bill passed granting a charter to the town of Pratt City. In this bill provision was made for the organization and establishment of its public school system. The new school system would be governed by a Board of Education and financed by license money collected from businesses and professions in the town. These revenues would provide funds for school construction as well as for nine months of free education for whites and blacks.⁶

The first Pratt City public school began in 1892, conducted partially in the City Hall building and partially in the existing Mose Fields school house building. In 1893, the first Pratt City school building was built on its present site for white students; a separate school was erected the same year for blacks.⁷

By the time Pratt School was built, Pratt City had established itself as the center of Birmingham's coal and coke industries. The development of Pratt coal (beginning in the 1870s) in fact, marked the start of the modern industrial development of the Birmingham District. From its incorporation in 1891 until its annexation into Greater Birmingham in 1910, Pratt City grew and prospered due, in part, to the vision and planning of Pratt City's leader who envisioned a stable, family - oriented, prosperous community that offered full services to its citizenry. Between 1890 - 1910, miners, merchants, and investors flocked into town, so that by 1910, it was the largest industrial community incorporated into the City of Birmingham. Its planned commercial district, known as the Carline District, was expansive and varied, and the surrounding residential areas bespoke Pratt City's - and Birmingham's - prosperity. As early as 1902, there were five churches, a City Hall, waterworks, a brick livery, an Odd Fellows Hall, a Board of Education and three schools. By 1910 - 11, Pratt City boasted a population of 7,000, and dozens of commercial buildings.⁸

In 1910 the original white school building was demolished and construction began on a new brick structure. While under construction, Pratt City was annexed into Greater Birmingham. When this occurred, Pratt School was changed to Pratt Elementary School; high school students would go to Ensley High School also just annexed. The new building consisted of 16 classrooms, principal's office, teacher's restroom, children's restrooms, store room, and book room. In 1918, the structure

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Statement of Significance (continued)

was partially burned, and a new addition was constructed. This allowed for 4 additional classrooms and a lunchroom.⁹

In 1923, the State Legislature changed the entering age for children from seven to six. As a result the Pratt Elementary School changed from a seven grade basis to an eight grade basis. In the same year the School was reorganized on the Platoon Plan. This plan developed the Home Room system whose goal was to correlate a variety of subjects, cooperate with one particular teacher, and allow the home room teacher to develop a plan according to her own style and methodology. According to one school history, the Homeroom system fulfilled the ideal that the "school of today is not preparation for life but life itself."¹⁰

In 1925 a third unit was constructed at Pratt School this to include seven more classrooms and an auditorium used also as a gymnasium. The present modern gymnasium was built in 1948.¹¹

Each stage of construction reflected the growth of Pratt City and Birmingham, and the determination of leaders to continuously increase their educational offerings.

The period of significance for the Pratt School extends from the original date of construction, 1910, until 1943, an arbitrary date reflecting the 50-year rule for the National Register.

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FOOTNOTES

- ¹ Birmingham Public Library Archives, General Drawings File (D. O. Whilldin).
- ² Birmingham Public Library Archives, Vertical Files (D. O. Whilldin).
- ³ Birmingham Public Library Archives, Vertical Files (Warren Knight and Davis).
- ⁴ White, Marjorie Longenecker, Downtown Birmingham: Architectural and Historical Tour Guide, Birmingham Historical Society and The First National Bank of Birmingham, 1980, pp. 50, 76, 95, 101.
- ⁵ Ibid., p. 101.
- ⁶ History of Pratt School, Birmingham Board of Education, 1952.
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ Birmingham Historical Society, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Pratt City Carline Historic District, 1988.
- ⁹ Birmingham Board of Education, History of Pratt School, 1952.
- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ Ibid.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Birmingham Board of Education, History of Pratt School, 1952.

Birmingham Public Library Archives, General Drawings File (D. O. Whilldin).

Birmingham Public Library Archives, Vertical Files (D. O. Whilldin).

Birmingham Public Library Archives, Vertical Files (Warren Knight and Davis).

Birmingham Historical Society, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Pratt City Carline Historic District, 1988.

Downtown Birmingham: Architectural and Historical Tour Guide, Marjorie Longenecker White, Birmingham Historical Society and The First National Bank of Birmingham, 1980.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

That property lying in the NW1/4 of Section 29, Township 17, R3 West and being bound of the west by Avenue T; on the South by 3rd Way; on the East by Avenue U; and on the North by 3rd Street and Carline Avenue, less and except those lots lying near intersection of 3rd Street and Avenue U, one of which being 120 x 163.5', and the other being 100 x 130' less BRLP Co. ROW, said property being generally known as Pratt School and that building connected by breezeway to Pratt School known as Ramsay YMCA.

Lots 1 - 19, D. Jules Survey
Lots 1 - 8, S. J. Thomas Survey
Lots 4,5 & So. 10' of
Lots 2,3 L. Bossell Survey

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

Boundaries selected are the actual description of the property in the tax assessors office.