

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

**SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD**

NRIS Reference Number: 02001489

Date Listed: 12/04/2002


Latah School  
Property Name

Spokane  
County

WA  
State

Rural Public Schools in Washington From Settlement to 1945 MPS  
Multiple Name

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This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

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

12/4/02  
Date of Action

**Amended Items in Nomination:**

**Significance:**

*Criteria Consideration G: Significance within the Last 50 Years* needs to be checked and justified.  
[The property meets Criteria Consideration G as a property of exceptional importance in the history of local education. The building served as the primary (high school) educational facility for the community of Latah and surrounding rural areas from 1908 until 1958; as such a period of significance up to 1958 is logical, justified and appropriate.]

The Period of Significance is revised to read: *1908-1958*.  
[The building's later civic use after 1958 is not shown to be exceptional under Criteria Consideration G. Under Criterion A the period 1909 to 1958 is justified and appropriate (see above).]

*Architecture* is removed as an Area of Significance since NR Criterion C is not checked or justified.

**Photographs:**

The SHPO has verified that the date of the photographs is 2002 not 1994 as noted on the date stamp.

**These revisions were confirmed with the WA SHPO office.**

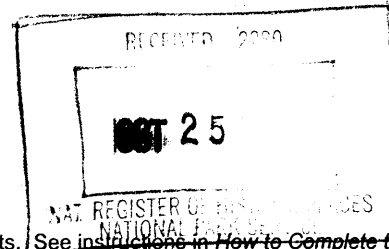
**DISTRIBUTION:**

National Register property file  
Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

1489



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 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. 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 LATAH SCHOOL  
other names/site number UNION HIGH SCHOOL

2. Location

street & number 515 NORTH MAIN not for publication   
city or town LATAH vicinity \_\_\_\_\_  
state WASHINGTON code WA county SPOKANE code 063 zip code 99201

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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.)

10/23/02  
Date

WASHINGTON STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE  
State or 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 commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this 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 of Keeper:   
Date of Action: 12/4/02

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- \_\_X\_\_ private
\_\_ public-local
\_\_ public-State
\_\_ public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- \_\_X\_\_ building(s)
\_\_ district
\_\_ site
\_\_ structure
\_\_ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing. 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.)

\_\_RURAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN WASHINGTON: FROM SETTLEMENT TO 1945

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: \_\_EDUCATION\_\_
Sub: \_\_SCHOOL\_\_

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: \_\_WORK IN PROGRESS\_\_
Sub: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

\_\_LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS\_\_
\_\_AMERICAN RENAISSANCE\_\_

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation \_\_STONE\_\_
roof \_\_ASPHALT\_\_
walls \_\_BRICK\_\_

other \_\_\_\_\_

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

See Continuation Sheet

**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.)

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a 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.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

See Continuation Sheet

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION \_\_\_\_\_  
 ARCHITECTURE \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1908-1961 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1908 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

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

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

GEORGE WILLIAMS (Architect) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**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:  
\_\_\_\_\_**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property \_\_\_\_\_ 1.32 acres \_\_\_\_\_

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	11	488250	5236475
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

**Verbal Boundary Description**

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

The nominated area is located within the City of Latah, B.F. Copelen's Addition, Block 17, Lots 1-8.

**Boundary Justification**

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

The nominated parcel includes the entire parcel historically associated with the Latah School, Spokane County Parcel No. 51301.1101

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title \_\_\_\_\_ LINDA YEOMANS \_\_\_\_\_

organization \_\_\_\_\_ HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLANNING \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_ JULY 2002 \_\_\_\_\_

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ 501 WEST 27<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_ (509) 456-3828 \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ SPOKANE \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ WA \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_ 99203 \_\_\_\_\_

**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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name STEVEN & MARIE WIDMYER

street & number 1319 ASH AVENUE telephone (208) 664-5081

city or town COEUR D'ALENE state ID zip code 83814

**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 the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**LATAH SCHOOL  
Spokane County, Washington**

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**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION**

**Summary Statement**

Built in 1908, the Latah School is located in the southeastern corner of Spokane County in the town of Latah, Washington. The small agricultural community is sited along Latah Creek (also called Hangman Creek) that winds through the undulating hills of the Palouse, the rich farmland of northeastern Washington and Idaho which is renown for its abundant wheat, pea and lentil production. The Latah School is a good example of the American Renaissance style as adapted to a country schoolhouse. The two-story brick masonry building follows a rectangular footprint with formal massing and has a hip roof, a prominent corbelled entry arch, and multiple rows of tall windows. In 1915, a lawn and maple trees were planted around the schoolhouse, and in 1920, a gymnasium was built onto the rear of the building. The Latah School is in fair condition and retains a high level of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

**Current Appearance and Condition**

*Site*

The Latah School is sited at the top of a hill overlooking the town of Latah. The building is built on Lots 1 through 8 of Block 17 in B. F. Coplen's Addition to Latah on the southwest corner of Seventh and Main Streets. The schoolhouse faces east and is surrounded by lawn, evergreen shrubs, and deciduous trees. Surrounding the site are houses built from the late 1890s through the 1950s. An asphalt-surfaced playground area and tennis court abuts the schoolhouse on the northeast corner of the property. The entire property, comprising the lawn, trees, playground, tennis court, schoolhouse and gymnasium, forms a square footprint that measures 240 feet wide and 240 feet deep.

*1908 Schoolhouse Exterior*

The Latah School is comprised of two main sections: a two-story brick masonry building built in 1908, and a one-story gymnasium addition built in 1920 (which is attached to the c. 1908 building with a small, two-story enclosed breezeway). The 1908 building forms a rectangular footprint that measures 71 feet wide and 61 feet deep with over 8600 square feet on the first and second floors. The building rises two stories and has a low-pitched hip roof with wide, overhanging boxed eaves. The soffit is constructed of tongue-and-groove boards and reveals shadows of modillions set 16 inches apart that were originally attached under the eaves. A band of cornice dentils is located below the soffit. The roof is covered with composition asphalt shingles. A red brick chimney

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rises from the center of the roof. The load-bearing brick masonry walls of the schoolhouse are made of red and blonde-colored bricks laid in a common bond. A blonde brick belt course separates the foundation from the first floor, and the first floor from the second floor. The foundation is made of basalt stone. Tall, one-over-one, double-hung, wood-sash windows form symmetrical fenestration patterns on the north, east, and south elevations of the building.

The facade of the Latah School is distinguished by a central projecting, full-height bay that measures 15 feet wide. The bay has a blonde brick corbelled arch that frames a recessed entrance on the first floor. Wooden steps rise from the front walkway up to the recessed entrance. The corbelled arch is embellished with a large keystone and two brick impostes capped with Ionic capitals. A matching blonde brick corbelled arch crowns a window pair above the entrance. The window pair has transom lights and one-over-one, double-hung, wood-sash window units. A keystone and an arched drip mold made of blonde brick accentuate the window arch. A horizontally aligned, rectangular panel is located between the recessed entrance on the first floor and the arched windows on the second floor. The panel face is made of cast concrete and is outlined with a course of blonde bricks. Proclaiming the building's use, the words "PUBLIC SCHOOL" are cast in the panel. Symmetrically placed, one-over-one, double-hung, wood-sash windows are located on the face of the building and surround the central bay. The second-story windows are capped with blonde brick segmentally arched crowns. A blonde brick belt course separates the first floor from the second floor and forms a Greek key design as it follows the outline of the upper portion of each window. A blonde brick drip mold outlines the belt course. Concrete lug sills anchor each window. Twin belt courses made of blonde brick separate the basalt rock foundation of the building from the first floor.

The north elevation of the building is visible from Seventh Avenue and may be considered a secondary facade. Six second-story windows and six first-story windows form a symmetrical pattern. The south elevation of the building has six windows on the first floor, and three single windows and two window pairs on the second floor. Six segmentally arched, multi-paned windows are located in the basalt rock foundation. The west elevation is located at the rear of the schoolhouse and also has symmetrically placed windows. At this location, a two-story bay (that matches the dimensions of the building's facade bay) projects from the wall plane. A two story addition constructed in 1920 is attached to the face of the bay.



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Double entry doors, made of paneled wood, open from the facade's recessed entrance into a foyer and central hallway. The hallway from the east front entrance extends to double doors on the west side of the building. A five-foot-wide staircase is located on the south wall of the hallway and rises to the second floor. The staircase is made of ebony-finished fir and features an open string with a turned-post balustrade. A square, incised newel post influenced by the Eastlake style anchors the stairs. The hallway is flanked by two classrooms on the south side of the building and two classrooms on the north side of the building. Each of the four classrooms have a cloakroom and corbelled entryways that open to the classroom. The classrooms are trimmed with painted woodwork that includes floor molding, chair and picture rail molding, and door and window surrounds. Some parts of each classroom retain a portion of their original chalk board and chalk rail. A few of the original wood paneled interior doors remain with original brass hardware. Most walls are made of plaster-and-lathe construction, the floor is made of fir planks, and the ceilings on the first floor are 12 feet high. Cast-iron radiators are located in each classroom. Some of the original milkglass schoolhouse-type lights are stored in a closet.

The second floor of the 1908 schoolhouse has a central hallway and six rooms. The principal's office is located at the head of the stairs on the west wall and is flanked by two classrooms. The southwest classroom is divided in half by an interior partition wall. A large assembly room extends from the south wall to the north wall along the east side of the second floor. Today, wood framing studs (installed in 2000) separate the assembly room into five spaces proposed as future bedrooms and bathrooms. A temporary open staircase made of wood rises from the second floor to the attic of the schoolhouse along an interior partition wall in the center of the assembly room. The second-floor ceilings are 11 feet high and the floor is made of fir planks.

The basement is made of basalt rock perimeter walls that are two-feet-thick. The north third of the basement is a crawl space while the remaining space in the basement is composed of three rooms and a closet that were used as a coal room, a locker room, and a band room. The basement floor is a combination of poured concrete and packed dirt.

*1920 Gymnasium Addition and Enclosed Breezeway*

In 1920, an enclosed breezeway and a gymnasium were built onto the 1908 schoolhouse. The enclosed breezeway and gymnasium are both constructed of hollow clay blocks that are clad with brick veneer. The enclosed breezeway is attached to the center bay of the west elevation of the

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schoolhouse. The breezeway measures 36 feet wide and projects 20 feet to a set of double doors that open to the attached gymnasium. The breezeway has two eight-over-one double-hung, wood-sash windows on the north elevation and one missing window and a door on the south elevation. Concrete steps protected with a railing made of threaded iron pipe rise to the door. The interior of the breezeway contains two lavatories, a storage closet, an exterior door on the south wall, and a hallway that is flanked by two staircases. The stairs rise to a balcony and gallery built above the first floor of the gymnasium.

The gymnasium is a rectangular building built on a west-facing slope. Due to a drop in grade, the building has a daylight basement. The building has a low-pitched hip roof covered with aluminum sheathing. One-over-one, double-hung, wood-sash windows form a symmetrical fenestration pattern around the building on the north, west, and south elevations. The south elevation has two sliding garage doors. The western-most door opens to a garage that extends under the building. The next door east opens to three large storage rooms in the basement of the building that were once used as the metal and wood shop classrooms. The first floor of the building contains a gymnasium which is a large, undivided room with a second-floor gallery that rings the room on the south, east, and north sides of the building. Acting as columns, peeled logs support the gallery. A raised stage is located on the west wall of the gym. The gym floor is made of solid maple and the ceiling is covered with tongue-and-groove cedar paneling.

**Original Appearance and Alterations**

The 1908 schoolhouse was originally built with a bell tower sited above the center bay on the building's facade. According to historic photographs of the school, the tower was 15 feet wide, 15 feet deep, and appeared to rise about 30 feet from the roof above the center bay. It had a convex-curved square roof that was accentuated with a modillion course. The roof was supported by round columns located at each corner of the tower which was anchored to a square dormer on the schoolhouse. Due to structural difficulties, the bell tower was reportedly removed twice sometime between 1930 and 1935 (Lederer). According to historic photographs of the building, a shed dormer was originally located on the south roof slope and was also removed when the bell tower was dismantled. Sometime during the period from 1961 to 2000, the original wood modillions were removed, leaving silhouettes of their original placement.

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The interior floor plan and room designs of the building have changed little since the schoolhouse was constructed. Minor changes soon after the schoolhouse was built include interior partition walls with doorways that were built in the northeast corner and the southwest corner classrooms on the second floor. On the first floor, the wall dividing the northwest and northeast classrooms was partially removed during the 1930s. During most of the time period between 1961 and 2000, the schoolhouse was vacant and suffered abuse from neglect and decay due to weather and vermin.

*1920 Enclosed Breezeway and Gymnasium*

The enclosed breezeway and gym have undergone few alterations since they were built. The lavatories in the breezeway were removed in the 1990s. In 2000, the walls in the gym were restored and painted, damaged windows were repaired, and the floor was refinished.

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Spokane County, Washington**

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**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

*Summary Statement*

Built in 1908 and 1920 respectively, the Latah School and its attached gymnasium is one of the oldest, largest, and best preserved rural brick schoolhouses in the Palouse farming region in southeastern Spokane County. From 1908 to 1958, the schoolhouse symbolized Latah's commitment to education and community development, serving as the area's primary educational structure. Associated with the evolution of public education in Spokane County, the two-story, brick masonry Latah School reflects early 20th-century building practices advocated for schools, including fire-resistant building materials and a preferred schoolhouse design for graded classrooms. Besides providing a public education to children and students from Latah and surrounding communities, the Latah School served as a meeting place for political, religious, benevolent, and other civic and social gatherings in the area. The Latah School and gymnasium are one of the best and last surviving examples of the early 20th-century property types "rural brick schoolhouse" and "gymnasium" and meet the registration requirements described in the National Register Multiple Property Documentation (MPD) for the multiple property listing, "Rural Public Schools in Washington From Early Settlement to 1945". Historically significant, the Latah School is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A.

**Historic Context**

*Rural Public Schools in Washington State*

The MPD reported that permanent American settlement in Washington State began during the 1850s:

Encouraged by the Homestead Act of 1862, settlers in eastern Washington established livestock ranches and wheat farms. Rural communities developed as trading centers for the agricultural regions or as supply centers for the Northwest mining industry...But, the real stimulus to growth--and the force that unified the region--was the arrival of transcontinental rail lines in the 1880s... As a result, the state's largest settlements grew rapidly into cities, and rural areas were able to ship their natural resources or commodities to a national market (pg. E:1).

The organization of early schools followed a common pattern as described in the MPD:

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A group of settlers interested in the education of their children would call a meeting of the heads of the families in the neighborhoods, elect directors, secure a place for holding a school, raise money by taxation or voluntary contribution for support of the school, employ a teacher and open a school...land was often donated by a settler and the first schoolhouse was built through community labor...evidence suggests that the earliest public schools were located along well-traveled roads in rural regions or in towns (pg. E:2).

In 1877 and 1878, a territorial board of education was established along with a format for the first graded schools. A recommended course of study was outlined with division of grades into primary (grades 1 and 2), intermediate (grades 3, 4, 5), grammar (grades 6 and 7), and high school (grades 8 and 9). The MPD reported that such a "system established the graded progression of academic studies which characterizes public education today" (pg. E:5).

Even with legislation and the systematic organization of school districts and graded school formats, most rural schools remained *ungraded* in the 1870s and 1880s. However, by the time Washington was granted statehood in 1889, the condition and organization of rural schools had improved dramatically. Graded school formats with established curricula were implemented and early, primitively constructed schools were gradually replaced by frame construction and, increasingly in the 20th century, by brick construction to meet demands for fire resistant building materials. Two mechanisms were created and provided by the State for the development of high schools in less populated districts. These mechanisms were *union schools* and *consolidation*. The MPD explained that the colloquial term "union schools" was used collectively to define graded schools, which were built to accommodate students from a cluster of small rural communities that served two or more districts. Later, beginning in the 1930s, consolidation was used on a larger scale where many districts combined resources resulting in the construction of much larger schools (pg. E:5).

*Latah, Washington*

Permanent Euro-American settlement in the Latah area began in the early 1870s. Located in the extreme southeast corner of Spokane County, the region was characterized by Latah Creek and the fertile hills and valleys that nestled around the waterway as it stayed its winding course. Palouse and Coeur d' Alene Indians who lived in the area, fished the creek and ate camas root, balsamroot, and other edible tubers that grew along the riverbanks.

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One of the first homesteads established in the area was located just north of the present town of Latah. First, a small store and post office, and later, a stage coach stop, were built and opened to serve the settlers who were beginning to drift into the area via the mail route that connected Walla Walla to Spokane. Soon, families began staking pre-emptive homestead claims throughout the hills and valleys around Latah Creek and raised crops and grazed cattle and horses on the abundant bunch grass growing in the area. One of these families was the Coplens, who came from the area around Dayton, Washington.

A March 1979, article in *Spokane City Preview Magazine* chronicled the origins of the farming town of Latah. The article reported that Benjamin Franklin Coplen homesteaded 160 acres along Latah Creek in 1873, in the northeast quarter of Section 30, Township 21 North, Range 45 East. Ten years later in 1883, gold was discovered in the Idaho Mountains. The discovery necessitated the need for supply points and shipping facilities to transport the ore. The town of Latah and rail transport were chosen, and with the promise of a railroad through his land, Ben Coplen began planning a townsite for the town of Latah in 1884. His hunch was good and by 1887, the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company had completed construction of its line through Latah (Bishop, Keifer, and Patton 20).

An April 6, 1889 article printed in the *Latah Times* described Latah as “a beautiful little town” with “one of the best railroads” and the “most inviting section of the country for health, wealth, and industry.” Reflecting the town’s desire for growth, the article issued a plea from the townspeople that said, “All we want is immigration; there is plenty of room for those who want houses in the great Palouse country.” By 1890, Latah’s population had reached 232 and was growing (Polk 841), and by 1892, there were 450 people living in the town (Lederer). That same year, Latah was incorporated. In the ensuing years, the townsite developed with churches and schools, stores and shops, banks and blacksmiths. Streets were graded, sidewalks were laid, trees were planted, and more homes were built. Area farmers began to be widely recognized for their quality wheat and lentil harvests. The town of Latah thrived during the early 1900s along with neighboring communities. These towns included Waverly, Spangle, Rosalia, Fairfield, and Rockford. Spokane, 40 miles north, remained the largest city in the region and dominated the area as the business, agricultural, and transportation center for Eastern Washington (Lederer).

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Spokane's population continued to grow, albeit slowly, after 1910, but Latah and other small agricultural communities in southeastern Spokane County did not grow substantially during that time. Many of the surrounding farms that were developed during the late 1800s and the early 1900s were consolidated, and a few are still worked by the descendants of early homesteaders. Today, Latah is one of many small, early 20th-century-farming towns in Spokane County that retains remnants of its historic architecture. One of the best intact examples is the Latah School.

*Latah Schools*

The evolution and progression of education in Latah mirrors that for rural public schools described in the MPD, "Rural Public Schools in Washington from Early Settlement to 1945." Beginning in the 1870s, six schools were built that served the Latah community. Constructed in 1908, the Latah School was the town's first public high school and remains the largest brick schoolhouse and public building ever built in Latah. The five schools that preceded the 1908 Latah School began with a small frame building erected sometime in 1877. It was located a few miles east of town. The Bell School was built a few years later to replace the first school. Historical records indicate that a third school was built during the late 1880s, this time in the town of Latah. The school was called the Latah School and held classes in conjunction with the Bell School (Latah Class 7-8).

As Latah developed and its population grew, so did its interest in higher education. An article from the *Latah Times* dated April 6, 1889, reported that city leaders met to implement a plan "for the purpose of building and conducting a college or academy in Latah." Trustees for the school were elected who purchased a block of eight lots for \$400 from Ben Copen. The property was located at the top and west side of Main Street between Sixth and Seventh Streets (warranty deed #14-70). Here, a large, two-story wooden building, called the Latah Academy, was erected. The school was private and held classes taught by Professor Walker, a graduate of the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. A *Latah Times* article dated July 22, 1891, explained that "the term military academy" was "somewhat misleading." The article stated that "the work is the same as that done in any of our American schools and academies, having the three courses--literary, scientific, and classical. The military feature is merely a secondary one, the school having for its first object physical development, and second, discipline." The Latah Academy was well attended by both boys and girls, and by 1893, "the question of building an addition to the present academy was discussed..." (*Latah Times* 1 April 1893).

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**LATAH SCHOOL  
Spokane County, Washington**

In 1891, the Latah School (built in the 1880s) was replaced. The new schoolhouse was a two-story frame building with two rooms on each floor. It was located at the top of the Main Street hill between Ninth and Tenth Streets, three blocks north of the Latah Academy. Ben Coplen, who owned the property (Lots 1-8, Block 6, Coplen Park Addition), sold it to Spokane County School District #61 for \$200 (warranty deed #33-34). The new school was known as the Latah Public School but was sometimes called Latah School District #60, which referred to its numerical placement among school districts located in Spokane County. The school offered classes for grades one through eight. School records indicate that when the school was built, the age of students in the primary grades ranged from 10 to 20, and those in higher grades ranged from 16 to 25. Apparently the schoolhouse was not adequate. Historical accounts reported that "each room of the school was equipped with a stove. When the wind blew, it would blow the smoke back into the rooms and the building would creak and sway. The teachers would have to dismiss school for fear the building would fall down or the children would choke to death" (Latah High School Class of 1946 pg. 7a, 7b).

*The 1908 Latah School*

In 1902, the Latah Academy was sold to Latah Lodge #76 of the Independent Order of Oddfellows for \$1050 (warranty deed #70091). The building served as the Oddfellows Hall until May 1907, at which time it was sold to Spokane County School District #60 for \$500 (warranty deed #175720). The building was then moved to Market Street in the southwest portion of the town. During this time, the Latah School, which was built in 1891 and located three blocks north of the Latah Academy, was considered "condemned and beyond" (Latah High School Class of 1946 pg. 8). School records reported that a special meeting was called by Latah's school board "on March 13, 1907, to consider the building of a new school house for the district. It was decided that bonds would be sold, the amount not to exceed \$13,000, the interest at 6% annually... A special school election was held for the purpose of deciding whether to accept the school board's suggestion to raise money by the sale of bonds, or to borrow the money. The people voted to accept the sale of bonds" (Latah High School Class of 1946 pg. 8).

Coeur d'Alene, Idaho architect George Williams was hired and construction of the new school commenced (Latah High School Class of 1946 pg. 8). The building's design called for a large, two-story brick masonry structure with over 8600 square feet of classroom space and multiple rows of tall windows for illumination and ventilation. Advocated and recommended by State



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educators, brick masonry construction was used to help retard the threat of fire. While a concrete panel above the buildings front door says "Public School," Latah's new union school (defined as a graded school that served two or more districts) was always commonly referred to as the Latah School by the students and the surrounding community. Latah area resident Glen Leitz recalled that one of the best descriptions of the Latah School was written as a class project by students from the Class of 1946. Entitled, "A Brief History of Latah," the following account is theirs:

It wasn't long before this new [schoolhouse] wonder was completed, and to start the New Year off right, the Union High School [Latah School] was begun on January 1, 1908.

It would have been great to have been in Latah that morning when the new shining bell in the high tower rang for the first time. But, still, it would have been greater to have been able to have attended the first class held under that bell. Imagine the feeling of those boys and girls, who had attended the inconvenient wooden school, to be able to walk into their own bright red brick building with shining, smiling windows. They must have been elated and very, very proud.

The building had a great many windows, front and rear entrances, and the bell tower, mentioned before, had a flag pole that reached high into the sky from which proudly waved the flag of our country. The first floor of the school building had four classrooms with their respective cloak rooms, a long hall, and stairways leading to the basement and the second floor. The main feature on the second floor was the very large and long assembly hall at the south side, of which there were two small recitation rooms. There was no library room. There were two classrooms similar to those on the first floor, a hall and that ever-remembered OFFICE where the principal sat sternly at his desk.

It was a very beautiful and convenient building. Students from the communities surrounding Rosalia, Spangle, Waverly, and Fairfield boarded in Latah [with various families] and went to high school. This certainly was an advantage to the town of Latah. It was also convenient for the citizens of Latah; their children could stay at home and still get a higher education. It gave those who could not afford to go away to school a better education (pg. 8).

Like a beacon perched on top of the Main Street hill, the new Latah School was the town's crowning glory and reflected the townspeople's commitment to education. A Spokane newspaper

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article said the schoolhouse occupied “one of the most slightly locations” in the town and had “electric lighting...city water” and a “moving picture plant” (*The Harvest Guide* 8 June 1967). When the school opened in 1908, eleven teachers were employed with monthly salaries ranging from \$50 to \$100. School records included in *Pioneer Schools: A History of Schools in Fairfield, Mt. Hope, Latah and Waverly Areas, 1890-1939*, revealed high school curricula was extensive and included reading, spelling, writing, arithmetic, grammar, geography, physiology, and history of civics. Gordon Lederer, Class of 1939, remembered that classrooms on the first floor were reserved for children attending grade one through eight. During the 1930s, he recalled that hot lunches were partially funded by the federal government, and the northwest classroom on the first floor (originally used for fifth and sixth grades) was equipped with a small kitchen. The room doubled as the school cafeteria and home economics room. Roy Bartlett attended classes in the school from 1926 to 1938, and said school enrollment numbered about 75-100 each year during that time period. He remembered the second floor of the building was the domain of the high school students. It included a student assembly room (which also served as the study hall) located in the southeast corner, a small library and classroom devoted to English literature in the southwest corner, and the math and science classroom in the northwest corner of the building. One of Roy Bartlett’s favorite memories was recalling the classroom in the northeast corner of the school. He said, “In there, you could get the girls to do your typing assignment, so it was called the ‘flirting room’.”

The report written by the Class of 1946 noted that a piano was installed in the school in 1908, and that the school’s first physician and truant officer were elected in 1909. Steam heating fired by coal was installed in 1910, smooth concrete walkways were laid in front of the school in 1911, and, “green things (other than freshman) began growing around the school building in 1915, when trees and grass were planted” (pg. 9). Tennis courts were laid at the school with one court located on the northeast corner of the school property (where the parking lot is today) and another court on the south lawn. In 1920, a gymnasium was built and attached to the rear elevation of the school. A *Spokane Daily Chronicle* newspaper article from 1921 described the new gym as “a commodious building with up-to-date equipment including lockers and shower baths” (*The Harvest Guide* 8 June 1967). It replaced an earlier c. 1911 frame building (demolished) that served as the school’s first gym and was located just south of the water tank on the southwest corner of Main and Seventh Streets.

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With the development of a gymnasium, tennis courts, and an extensive lawn that surrounded the school, which was used as a playing field, organized sports became increasingly popular in the Latah community. The Class of 1946 stated in their report that "Latah became the center of basketball" in southeastern Spokane County and that the "Latah Basketball Team advanced faster than any other team around" (pg. 10-11). Gordon Lederer, Class of 1939, remembered that the team was known as the Latah Bobcats and that the school colors were blue and gray. Other team sports were organized including baseball, tennis, and ice-skating.

The Latah School held its first high school graduation in 1909, and its last high school graduation in 1958. At that time, the town of Latah joined with the surrounding towns of Waverly, Fairfield, Plaza, and Spangle in a consolidation now known as the Liberty School District (Lederer). The Latah schoolhouse was then used for town meetings, civic affairs, and other community events. In 1961, the building was vacated. In 1984, carpenter Otto Tanner and his wife Laurelie bought the property and sold it in 1998 to Carol Olson for \$10,000. In 1999, Steven Widmyer and his wife Marie bought the schoolhouse for \$35,000 and are currently rehabilitating the property for use as an event house.

**Historical Significance--Criterion A**

*MPD Registration Requirements*

To be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, under the Rural Public Schools in Washington from Early Settlement to 1945 MPD the document states that "a rural schoolhouse must strongly convey its historic character in both physical and associative ways and must have documented historical significance when evaluated within the context of rural community history" (F:1). The MPD states:

Given the simple yet distinctive form of the schoolhouse type, eligible schools must retain integrity of scale, massing, roof shape, exterior cladding and trim, and fenestration in order to convey their historic character... Additions or alterations to the schoolhouse completed during the period of significance may reflect the evolution of local education and should be evaluated within that context... Ideally, eligible schoolhouses retain interior integrity, too. Character defining features include original floor plan, flooring and wall materials, trim, and blackboards... (F:1).

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Generally, gymnasiums and shelters are significant only when they are contributing elements of larger schoolhouse complexes. As such, the eligible gymnasium will be located on a property that includes a schoolhouse, school yard, and ancillary structures... Eligible gymnasiums and shelters will retain the utilitarian physical characteristics which define the type: simple massing; original roof shape; unornamented exterior of wood, stone, or brick; multi-paned windows; and an open interior with high ceiling (F:7).

In addition...the schoolhouse property should ideally include the historic school grounds with sufficient integrity to reflect the period of development and the design intentions of the educators and builders (F-5).

The Latah School and its attached gymnasium meet the MPD requirements for the property types "rural brick schoolhouse" and "gymnasium." Built in 1908, the schoolhouse was constructed during the time period (1870s to 1945) designated by the MPD. The schoolhouse is well preserved and retains a high degree of integrity of massing, roof shape, exterior cladding and trim, and fenestration that convey the building's historic character. The schoolhouse also possesses interior integrity found in character defining features. The MPD states,

The interiors of rural schools were simple in both plan and finish. Plaster-and-lathe walls were trimmed with wood baseboards, wainscoting, chair rails, picture rails, and window and door surrounds. Blackboards were mounted to the classroom walls. Indoor facilities sometimes included a cloakroom, storage space, and (in larger schools) indoor plumbing... In the largest schools, second floors or basement levels provided extra space (F:3).

The interior of the Latah School retains character defining features that include some of the original plaster-and-lathe walls and fir floors and steam radiators, wide wood staircase, wood baseboards, chair rails, picture rails, window and door surrounds, wall-mounted blackboards, cloakrooms, storage closets, second floor classrooms, and a basement.

Built in 1920, the Latah School gymnasium was constructed during the time period (1870s to 1945) specified by the MPD. The gym retains excellent integrity of massing, roof shape, unadorned exterior cladding and trim, fenestration, interior floor plan, hardwood maple floor, and

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plain woodwork. The breezeway that connects the auditorium to the schoolhouse was also constructed in 1920, and included the addition of indoor lavatories for boys and girls, reflecting the community's trend towards sanitation and health education. An enclosed room built at grade under the west third of the gymnasium was designed for use as a garage for the school bus, a transportation trend that grew and prevailed throughout Spokane County. The school grounds that surround the schoolhouse retain their original design found in a flagpole, a tennis court, and a lawn and trees that were planted in 1915.

*Significance*

From 1908 to 1958, the Latah School was the product of determination and widespread belief in the value of education by the townspeople of Latah, Washington. This is especially poignant given the statistics reported in the April/May, 2002 issue of *Northwest Woman* that said "only six percent of all Americans had graduated from high school, and one in ten could neither read nor write" in 1908 when the Latah School was built (Buckham 54). In addition to its role as a center for academic and athletic education, the schoolhouse and gymnasium are significant as the site of public assemblies, civic celebrations, and other important events that occurred in the Latah community from 1958 to 1961. The schoolhouse reflects the evolution of public education and the common school system adopted in southeastern Spokane County, and depicts early 20th-century architectural design philosophy and recommendations made by educators throughout the State. Alluding to its design and brick masonry construction, an article in *City Preview Magazine* from March, 1979, stated that the Latah School, "built in 1908, was the first modern high school in the [southeastern Spokane County] area" (Bishop, Keifer, and Patton 21). Surrounding communities, including Waverly, Fairfield, and Rosalia, sent their students to the Latah School before they built their own brick schoolhouses. The MPD states,

The evolution of graded curricula led to the construction of larger, hip roof structures with multiple classrooms. In the early 20th century, as population increased, progressive legislators, state school superintendents, and normal school officials aggressively advocated standardized school design, better classroom facilities, fireproof construction, and facilities for physical education and teacher housing. As a result, schoolhouses from the early 20th century were built increasingly of brick and reflected the spacious, well-lighted designs advocated by the educational reformers (F:4).

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The use of masonry schools patterned on standardized plans was advocated and the hip roof brick schoolhouse, so well represented in the Latah School, became the prevalent model in the Washington State.

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**PHOTOGRAPHS**

*All photographs taken by consultant in February, 2002.*

Photo 1 of 8	Latah School--east facade.
Photo 2 of 8	Latah School--east facade entrance.
Photo 3 of 8	Latah School--south elevation.
Photo 4 of 8	Latah School--south elevation of gym in foreground and schoolhouse in background.
Photo 5 of 8	Latah School--north elevation of schoolhouse in foreground and gym in background.
Photo 6 of 8	Latah School--staircase on second floor, looking down to first floor hall.
Photo 7 of 8	Latah School--first floor classroom in northeast corner of building.
Photo 8 of 8	Latah School--first floor classroom in northeast corner of building.

**PHOTOCOPIES**

*Photocopies 2nd and 3rd generation by color photocopy machine, 2002.*

Photocopy 1 of 4	Latah School--circa 1908--rear southwest elevation of school--looking northeast.
Photocopy 2 of 4	Latah School--circa 1908--east facade and southeast corner of building looking northeast.
Photocopy 3 of 4	Latah School--circa 1915-1920--east facade of building--looking west.
Photocopy 4 of 4	Latah School--circa 1916--southeast corner room on 2nd floor--looking south.

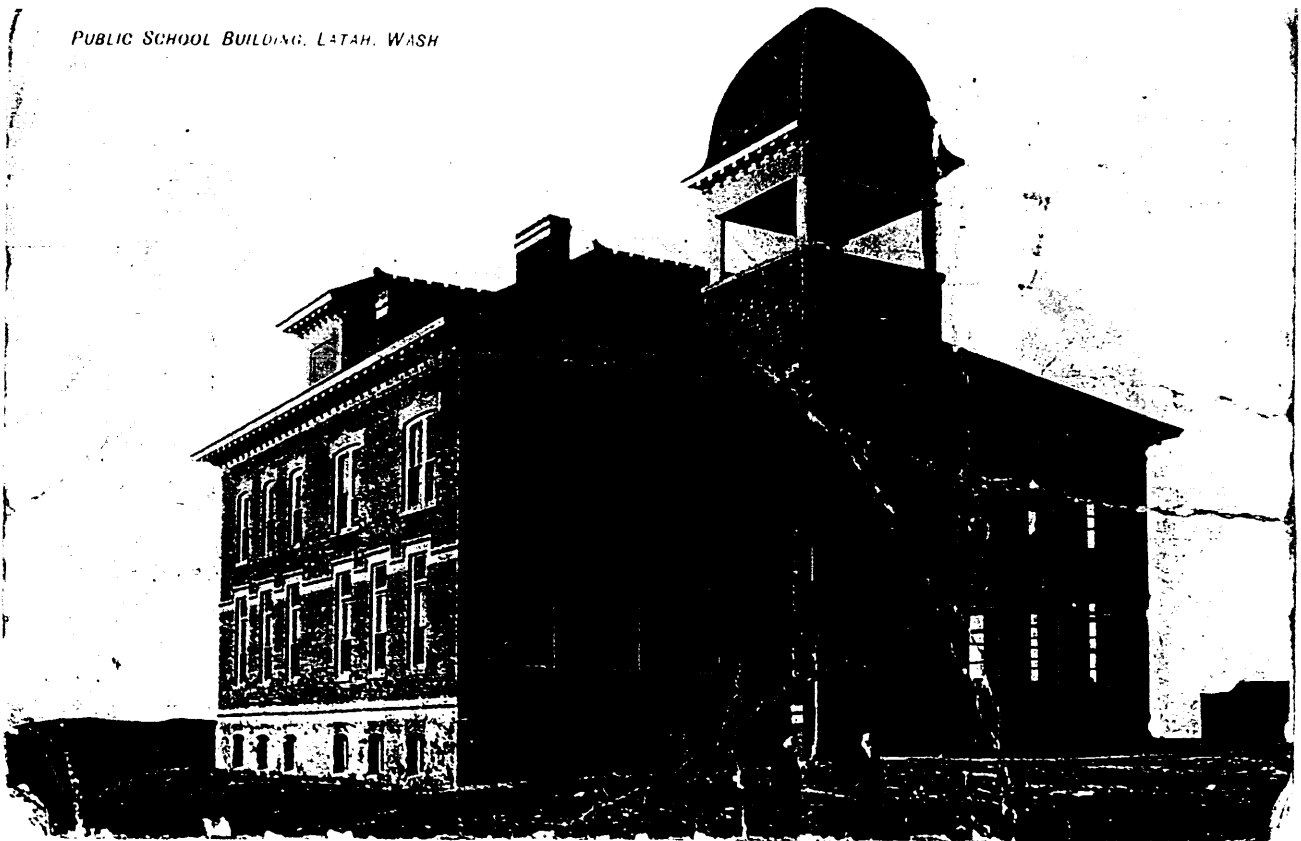
# LATAH SCHOOL

515 North Main Street  
Latah, WA

**A postcard photograph of the Latah School  
taken in 1908  
just after it was built.**

*(Courtesy of the Kreyssler Family)*

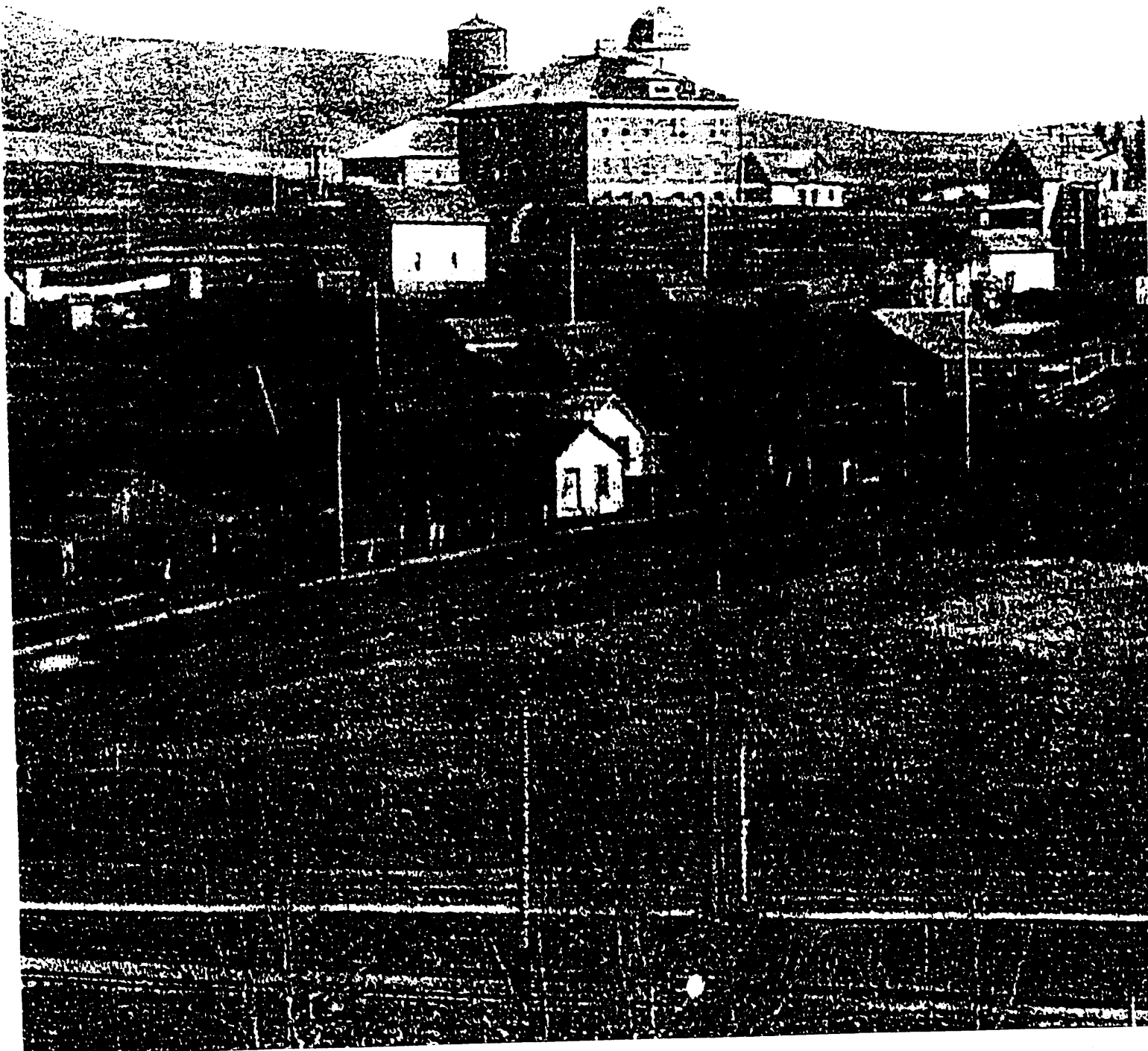
*PUBLIC SCHOOL BUILDING, LATAH, WASH*



# LATAH SCHOOL

*515 North Main Street  
Latah, Washington*

Photo taken in circa 1908-1914.



# LATAH SCHOOL

*515 North Main Street  
Latah, Washington*



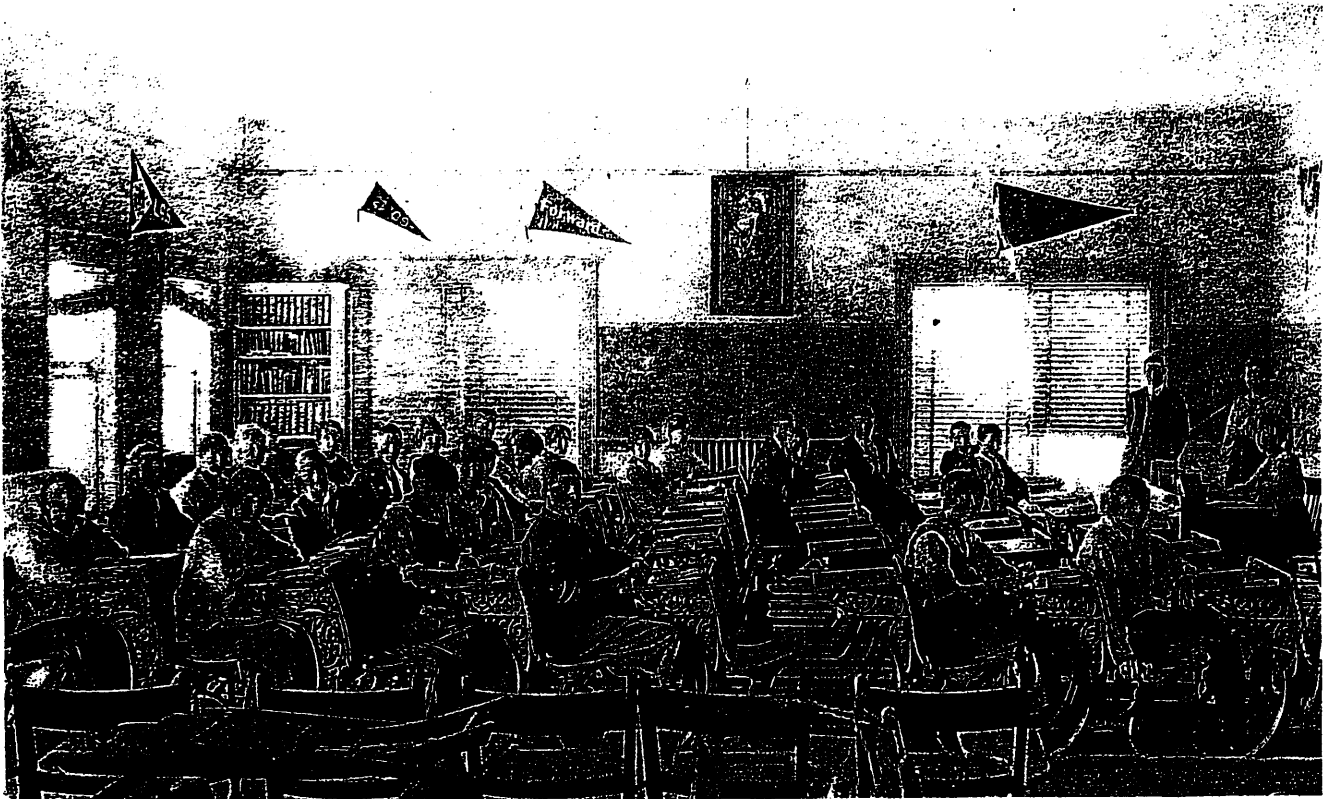
Photo taken after 1915 when the trees were planted.

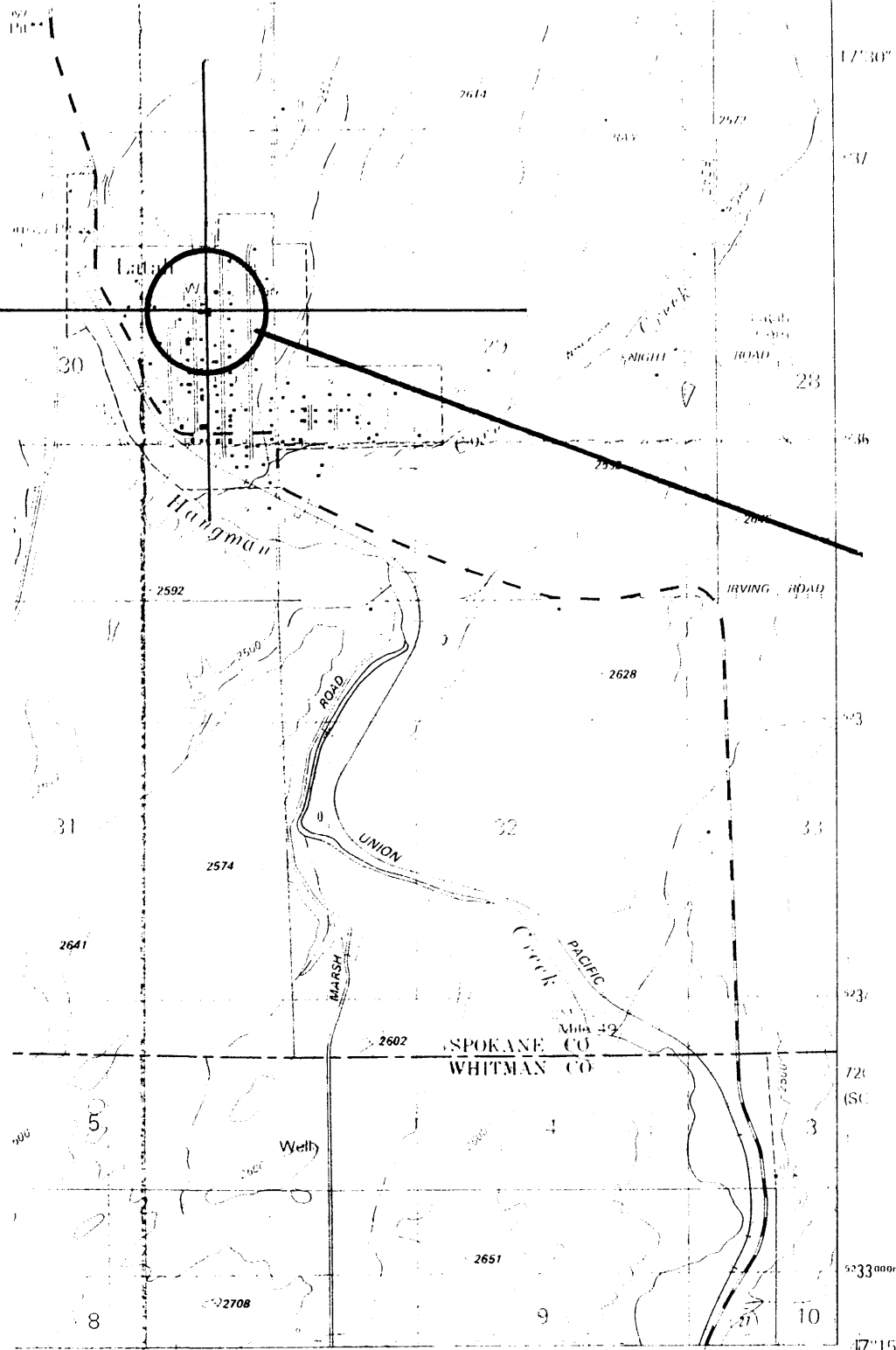
**Designed by Architect, George Williams  
Built in 1908**

# LATAH SCHOOL

*515 North Main Street  
Latah, Washington*

Photo taken in circa 1916 of 2nd-floor, southeast corner classroom used at that time as a study hall.





**LATAH SCHOOL**

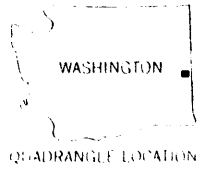
Spokane County,  
Washington

Zone	011
Easting	488250
Northing	5236475

*USGS 1:24,000 Series*

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Primary highway hard surface	Light duty road, hard or improved surface
Secondary highway hard surface	Unimproved road
Interstate Route	U.S. Route      State Route



**LATAH, WASH.**  
 TA 2 FAIRFIELD 15 QUADRANGLE  
 N4715 -W11707 5/7 5

1980

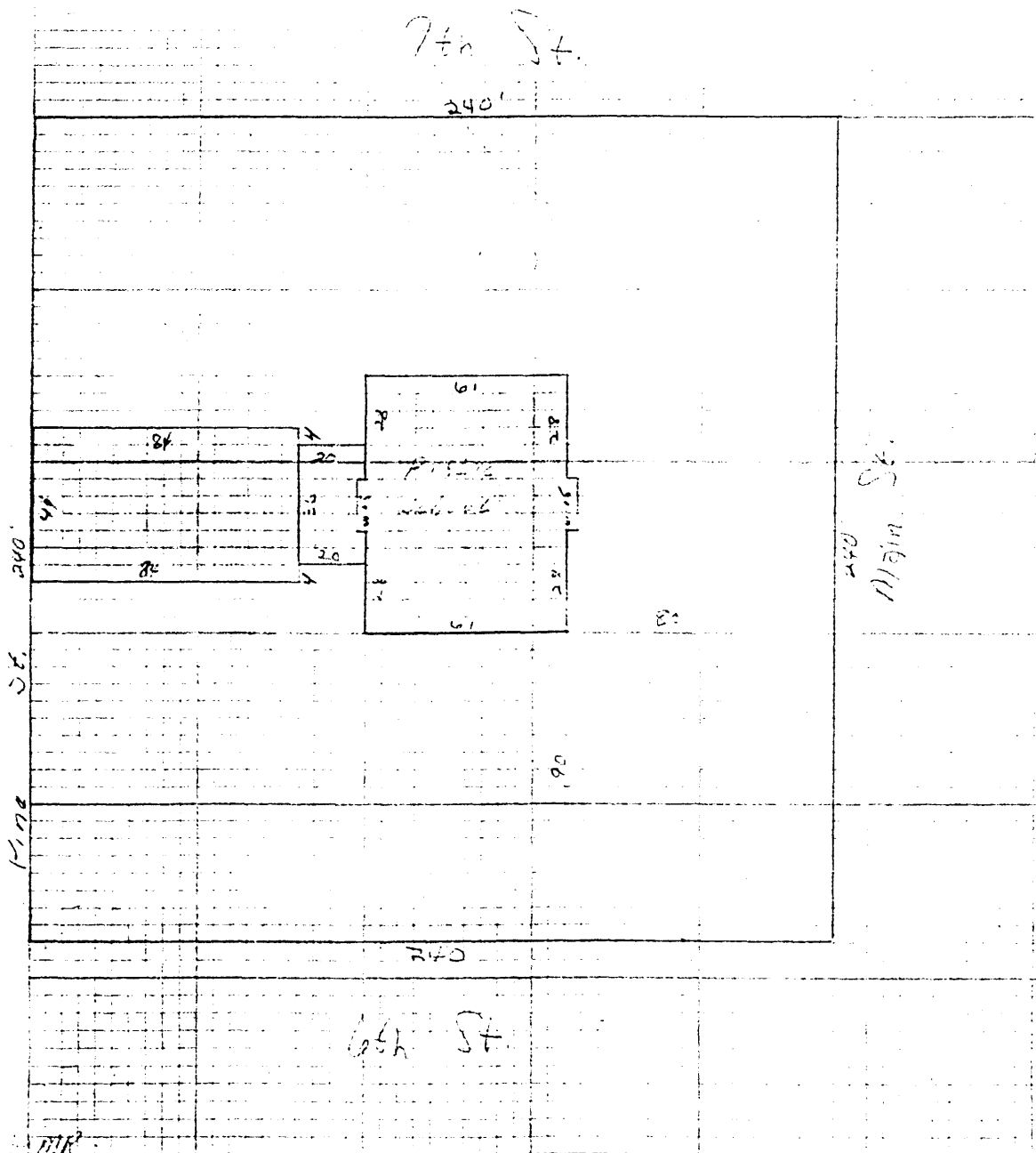
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# LATAH SCHOOL

515 N. Main Street  
Latah, WA

## Site Plan Map

(from Spokane County Assessor's Records, 2002)

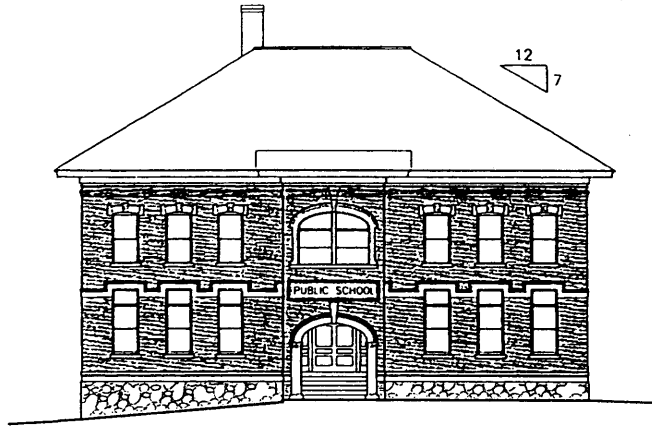






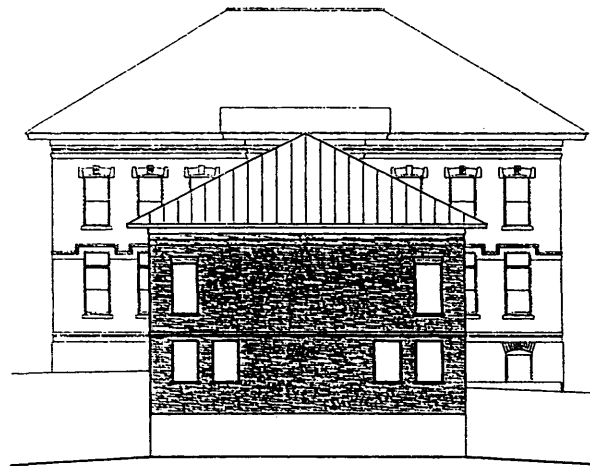
STEVEN A. MEEK  
ARCHITECTS

201 HUTTON BLDG  
9 S. WASHINGTON  
SPOKANE, WA. 99201  
TEL (509) 456-2524  
FAX (509) 456-3306



EAST ELEVATION

Not To Scale



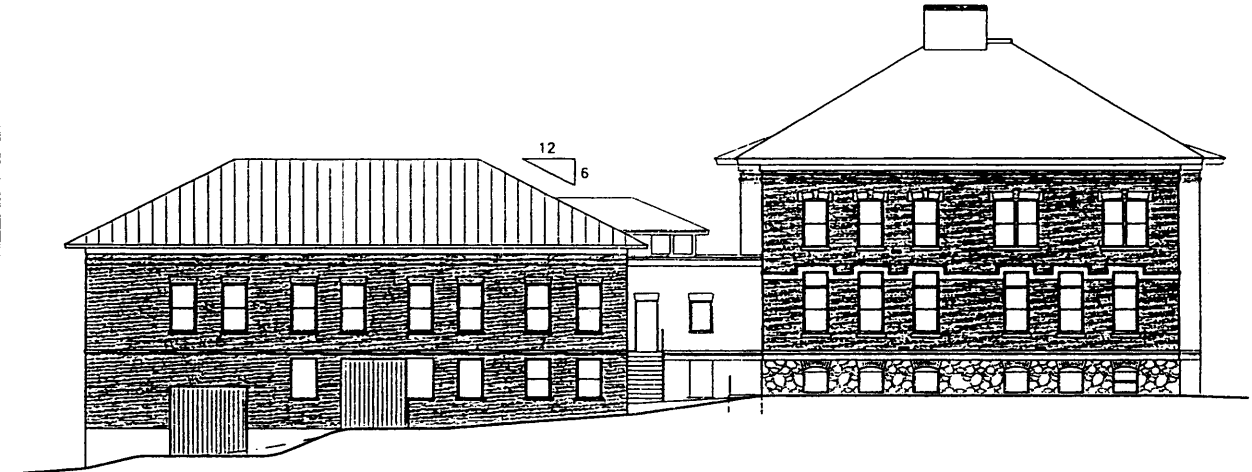
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Not To Scale



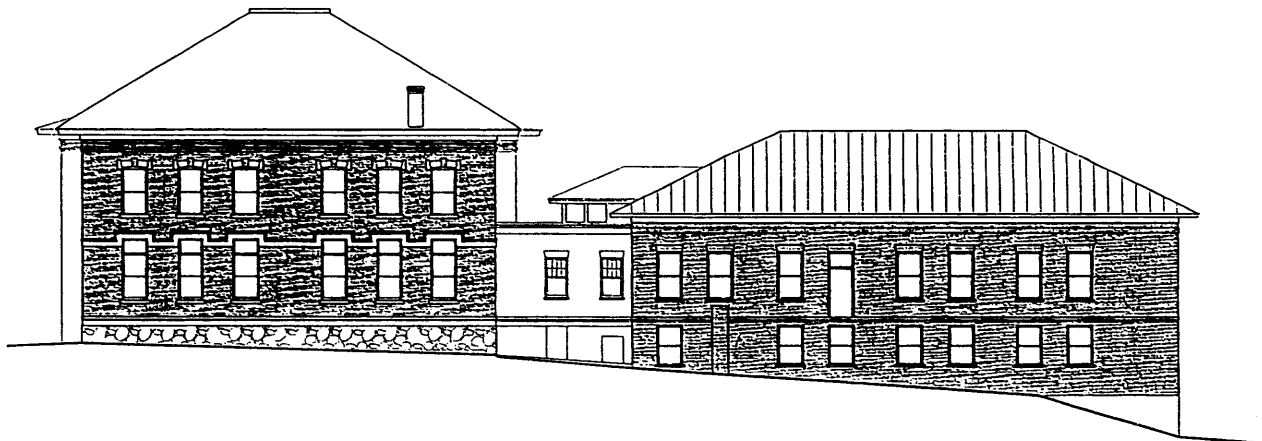
STEVEN A. MEEK  
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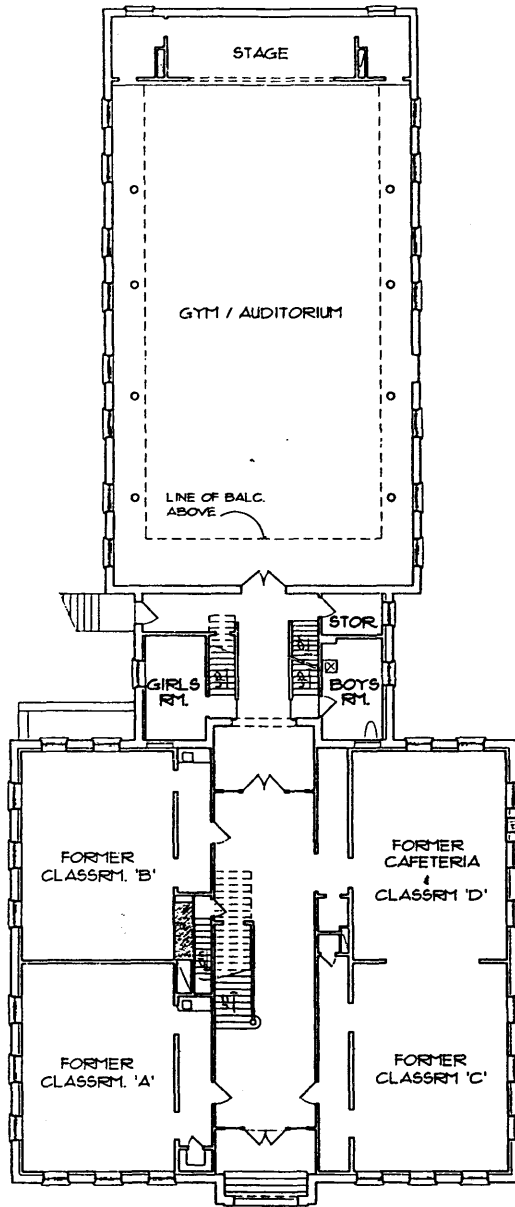
SOUTH ELEVATION

Not To Scale



NORTH ELEVATION





Not To Scale



EXISTING 1ST FLOOR PLAN  
 SCALE: 3/64" = 1' - 0"



KEY

-  EXISTING WALL
-  NEW 2x6 PARTITION WALL
-  EXISTING DOOR
-  PROPOSED DOOR

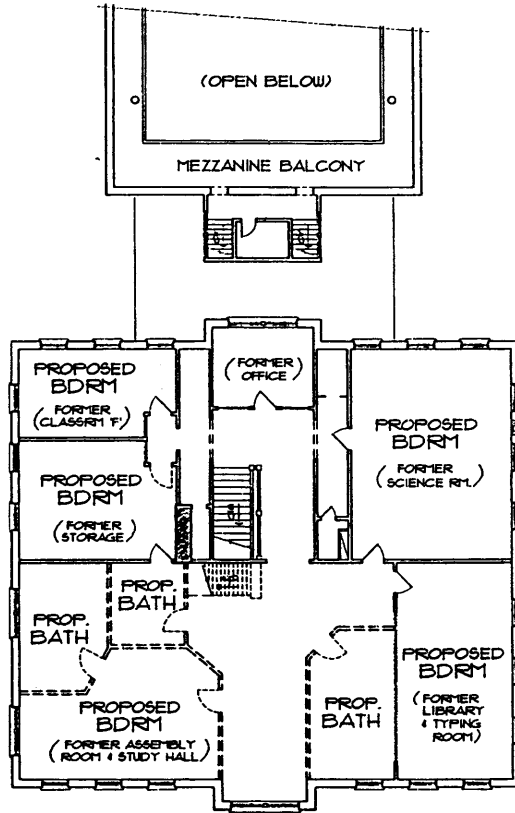


STEVEN A. MEEK  
 ARCHITECTS





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 9 S. WASHINGTON  
 SPOKANE, WA. 99201  
 TEL (509) 456-2524  
 FAX (509) 456-3306

**NOTE**

THIS 'AS-BUILT' PLAN REFLECTS WHAT WAS SEEN AND MEASURED DURING A SITE VISIT CONDUCTED ON JUNE 22, 2000. AT THAT TIME, SOME OF THE SPACES FEATURED ORIGINAL PLASTER OVER EXTERIOR BRICK WALLS, EXPOSED BRICK WALLS, ORIGINAL PLASTER WALLS OVER ORIGINAL STUDS, FURRED OUT 2x6 WALLS COVERED WITH GYPSUM BOARD, AND NEW 2x6 FRAMED PARTITIONS WITH NO FINISH.



**KEY**

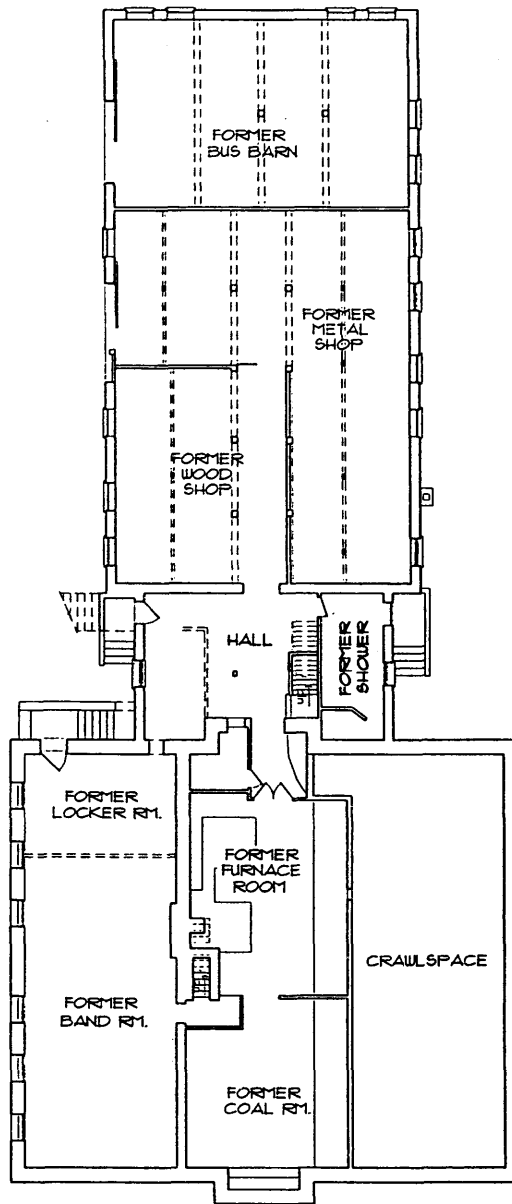
-  EXISTING WALL
-  NEW 2x6 PARTITION WALL
-  EXISTING DOOR
-  PROPOSED DOOR

**EXISTING 2ND FLOOR PLAN**  
SCALE: 3/8" = 1' - 0"



**STEVEN A. MEEK  
ARCHITECTS**

201 HUTTON BLDG  
9 S. WASHINGTON  
SPOKANE, WA. 99201  
TEL (509) 456-2524  
FAX (509) 456-3306



EXISTING BASEMENT PLAN  
 SCALE: 3/64" = 1'-0"



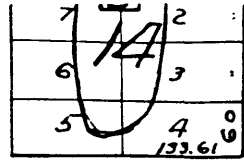
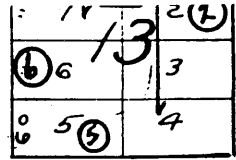
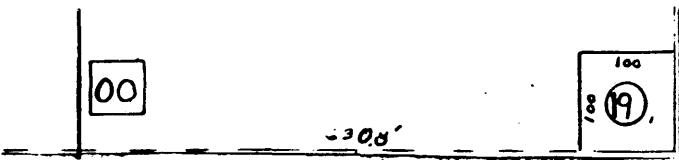
KEY

- EXISTING WALL
- NEW 2x6 PARTITION WALL
- EXISTING DOOR
- PROPOSED DOOR



STEVEN A. MEEK  
 ARCHITECTS

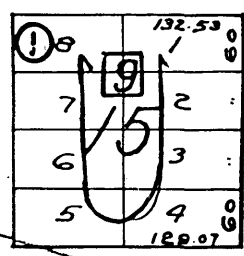
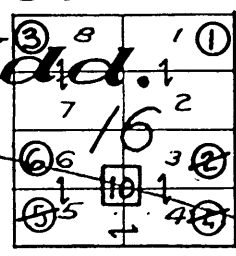
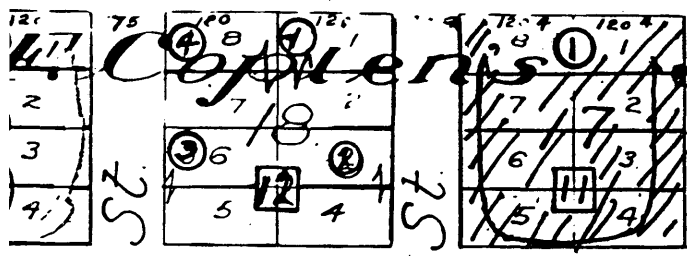
201 HUTTON BLDG  
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30

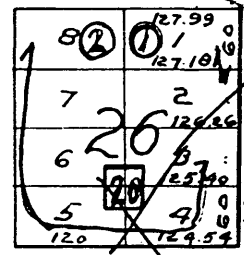
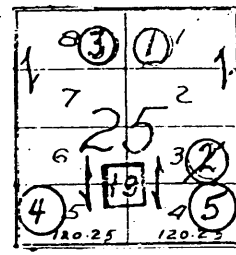
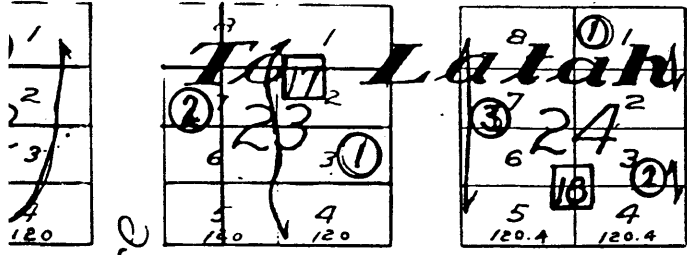
Seventh St.

St.



Sixth St.

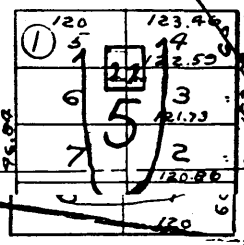
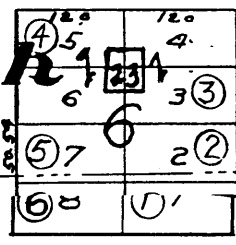
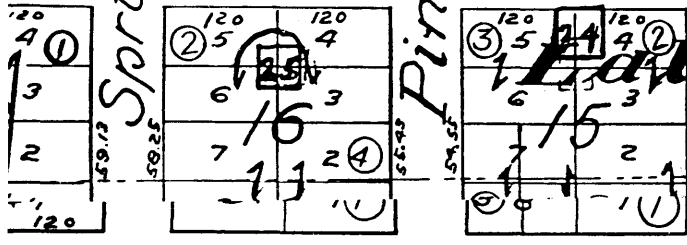
St.



Latah  
INSIDE CITY 8.61 AC.  
LATAH SCHOOL  
WA.

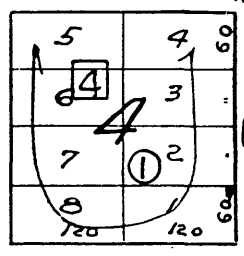
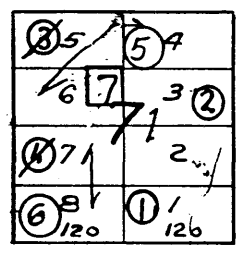
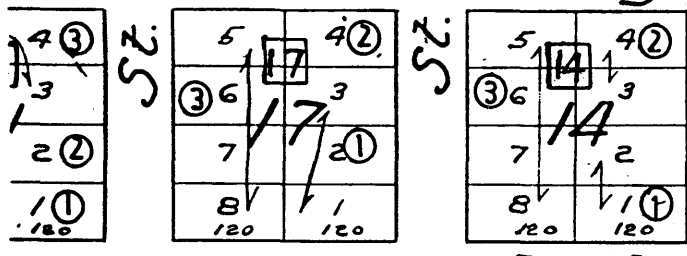
Fifth St.

St.



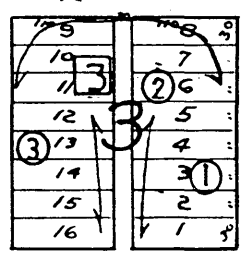
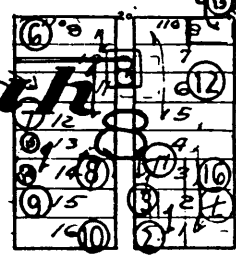
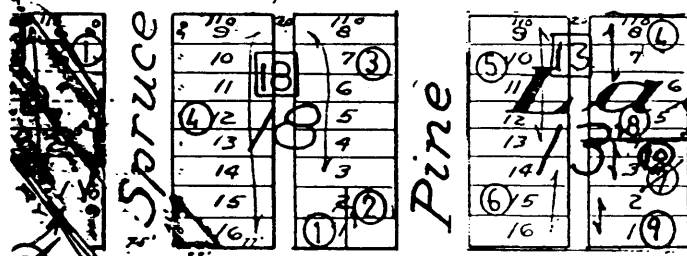
Bridge St.

St.



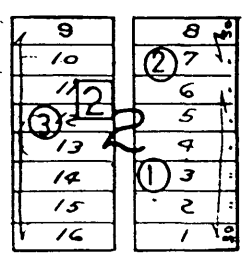
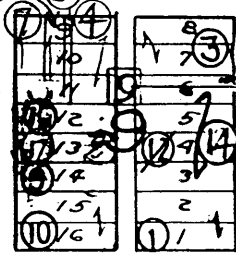
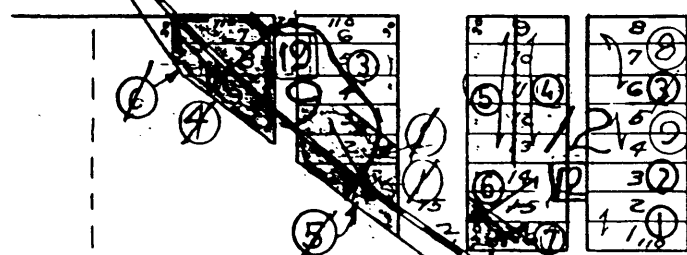
Mill St.

St.



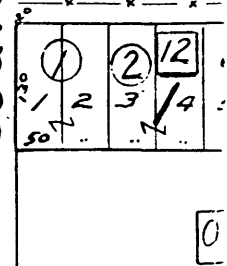
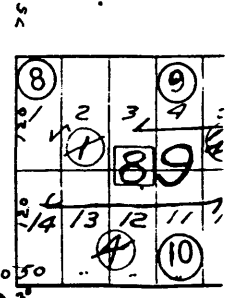
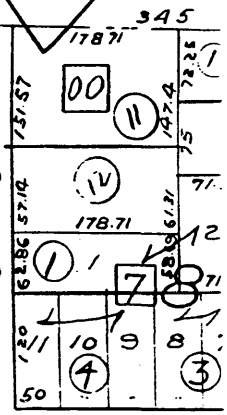
Market St.

St.



County Road

St.

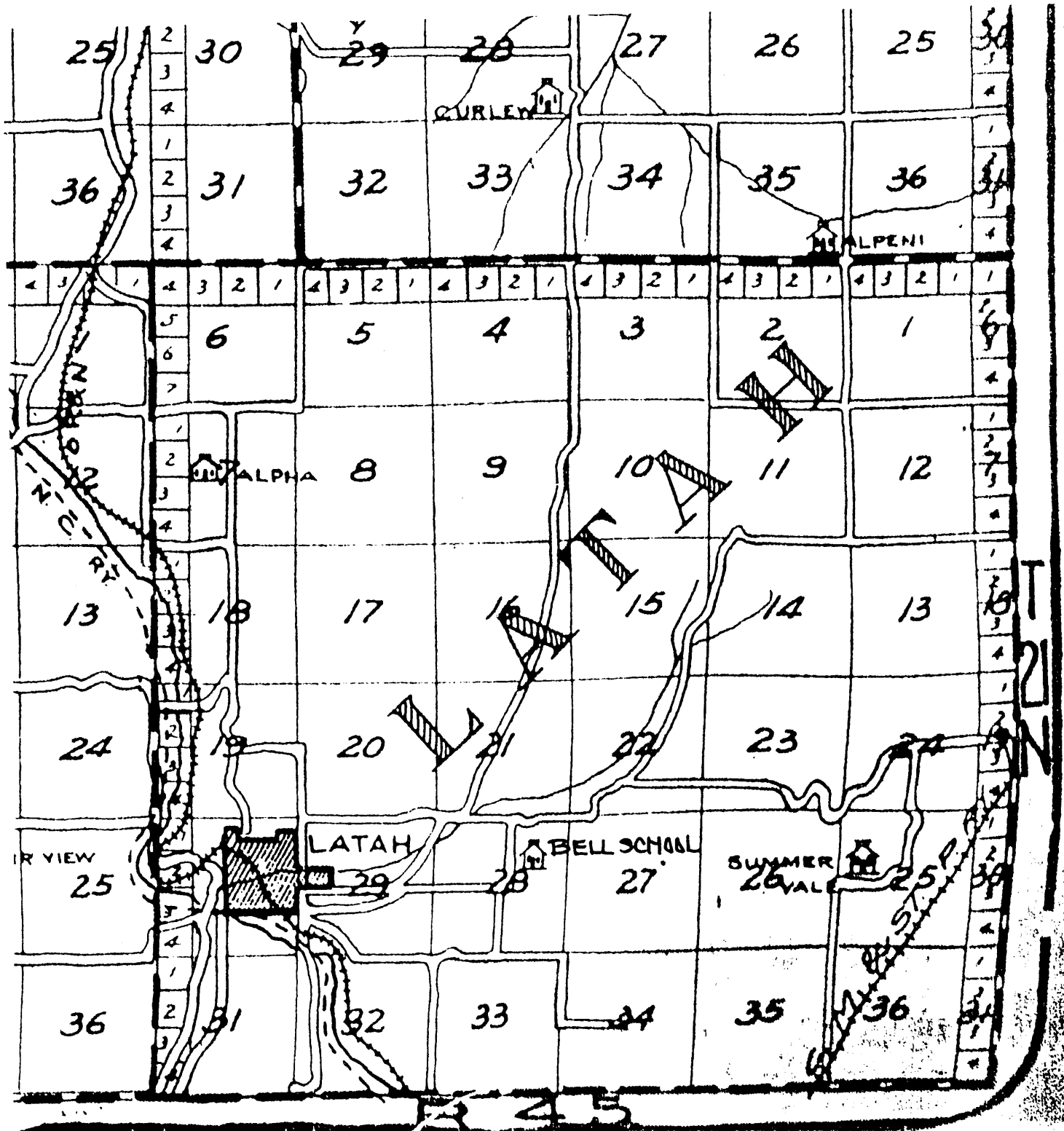


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# LATAH SCHOOL

515 N. Main Street  
Latah, WA

## 1908 Spokane County Township Map of Schools (Courtesy of the Spokane Public Library, Northwest Room)



# LATAH SCHOOLS

Latah, WA

## LATAH PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT #60

School built in 1891

Two-story frame building with bell tower

Demolished in 1908

## LATAH PUBLIC SCHOOL or UNION SCHOOL

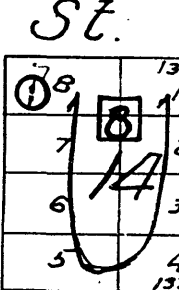
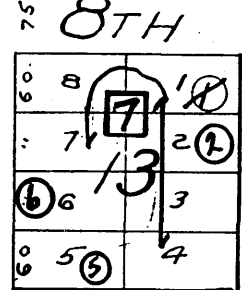
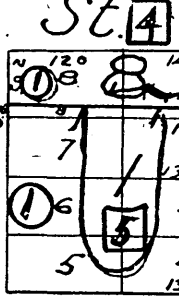
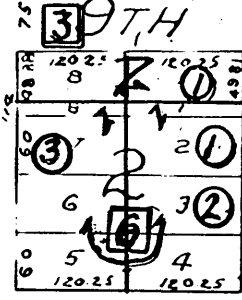
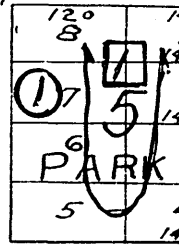
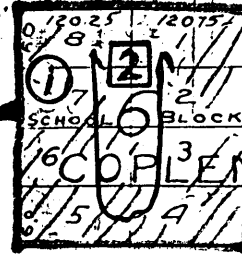
School built in 1908

Two-story brick masonry building with bell tower

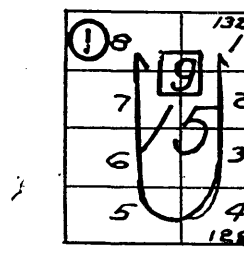
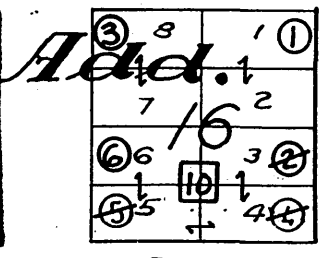
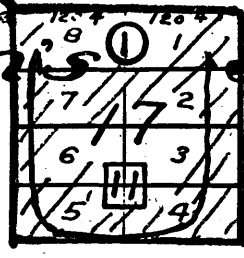
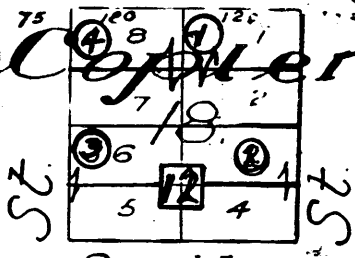
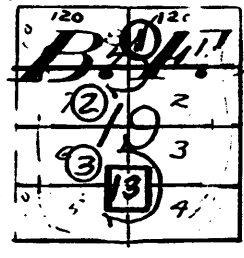
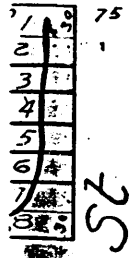
Bell tower demolished c. 1930

Gymnasium built in 1920-1926

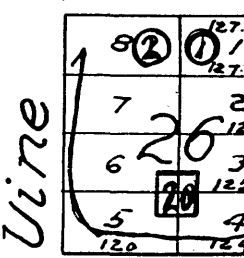
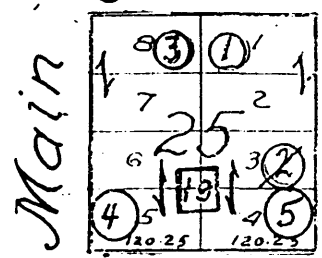
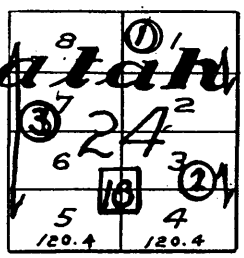
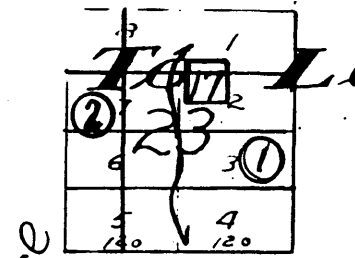
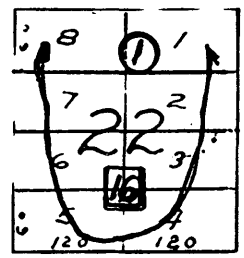
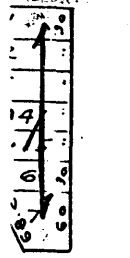
Brick veneer over hollow clay tile construction



## Seventh



## Sixth



## Fifth

