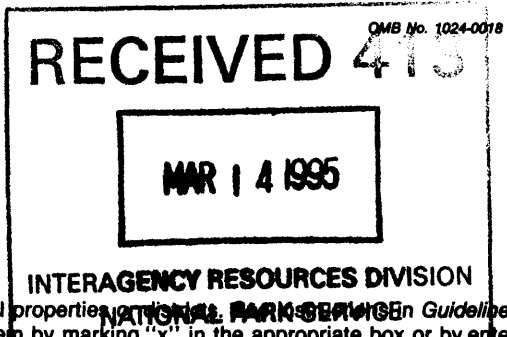


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name River Street School  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 60 River Street N/A not for publication  
city, town Red Bank N/A vicinity  
state New Jersey code NJ - 034 county Monmouth code 025 zip code 07701

3. Classification

| Ownership of Property                       | Category of Property                            | Number of Resources within Property |                  |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|------------------|
|   |   | Contributing                        | Noncontributing  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) | <u>1</u>                            | _____ buildings  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-local       | <input type="checkbox"/> district               | _____                               | _____ sites      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-State       | <input type="checkbox"/> site                   | _____                               | _____ structures |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal     | <input type="checkbox"/> structure              | _____                               | _____ objects    |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> object                 | <u>1</u>                            | <u>0</u> Total   |

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register -0-

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.  See continuation sheet.  
Signature of certifying official [Signature] Date 3/13/95  
Assistant Commissioner for Natural & Historic Resources/DSHPO  
State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.  
Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

5. 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:) \_\_\_\_\_

Edson H Beall 4.14.95  
Entered in the National Register

Signature of the Keeper [Signature] Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

**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)

LATE 19th and 20th CENTURY REVIVALS/  
Classical Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick  
walls brick  
terra cotta (trim)  
roof bituminous  
other N/A

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G    N/A

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

EDUCATION

Period of Significance

1917-c. 1935

Significant Dates

1919

1926

c. 1935

Cultural Affiliation

undefined

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Truex, Fred M.

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A  
 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 # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other

Specify repository: Monmouth County Library, West. Branch, Archives; Freehold Historical Assoc.; Red Bank Public Library

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property approx. 1 acre Long Branch NJ Quad

UTM References

A 18 578420 4466020  
Zone Easting Northing  
C \_\_\_\_\_

B \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing  
D \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

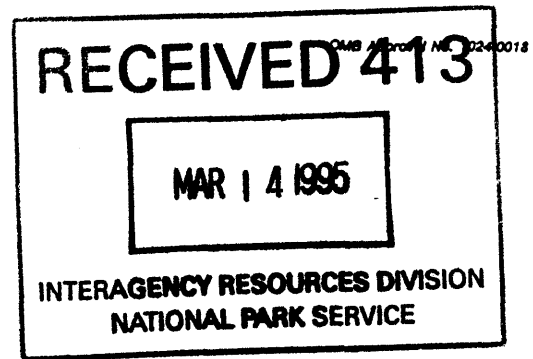
name/title Cynthia A. Rose/Associate  
organization Noble Preservation Services, Inc. date 10/25/94 revised 1/4/95  
street & number 10 Log House Road telephone (215) 679-5110  
city or town Zionsville state Pennsylvania zip code 18092

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

River Street School, Monmouth County, New Jersey

Section number 7 Page 1



The River Street School is located on the corner of River Street, Bridge Street, and Shrewsbury Avenue in a primarily residential turn-of-the-century neighborhood in Red Bank, New Jersey. The school evolved from a small 1919 structure with four rooms per floor, to a larger structure with many additional classrooms and an auditorium in 1926, and grew even larger with the addition of six classrooms in c. 1935. Fred M. Truex, Architect, established the design framework and palette of materials for the original 1919 composition and with the success of his design the later additions closely followed his intentions (see photograph 1). Built of brownish red brick with white terra cotta trim, the structure stands in form and detail as a good example of the Classical Revival architectural style.

Rising three full stories from grade to its flat roof, the structure is essentially L-shaped in plan with a gymnasium/auditorium of rectangular shape protruding from the rear, forming a "T" with the main block (see photographs 2, 3). Fenestration is provided by large 9/9 wood windows primarily grouped in three and five bay arrangements. The main elevation is symmetrical in form with the main entrance distinguished by a slightly projecting white terra cotta surround which extends from the Gothic arched double door opening with sidelights and transom, to the recessed spandrel panels between the 2nd and 3rd stories (see photograph 4). An arched parapet section with Gothic and Jacobean details breaks through the flat roofline and bears the words "River Street School." The central section of the brick parapet, flanking the terra cotta entablature, contains a diamond pattern of black headers characteristic of the Jacobean style. Secondary entrances that flank the main entrance and are located at the ends of the main elevation also contribute to the overall symmetry while hinting at the interior floor plan. Terra cotta belt courses above the first and third story windows further elongate the appearance of the structure.

The side elevations are similar to the main elevation in materials and window type, and include blind windows of patterned brick with the corners marked by inset terra cotta squares. The rear elevation continues the materials and general configuration of the front and side elevations, however, the majority of the rear facade brick has been painted with a cementitious paint. Projecting from the center of the main block of the "L" is a largely intact, two story brick gymnasium/auditorium addition. This section is distinguishable as having a unique usage by its smaller scale and windows of paired 3/3 sash.

The interior of the school is comprised of a double loaded corridor in the main block of the "L" with classrooms to either side. A single loaded north-south corridor provides access to classrooms in the section contained in the foot of the "L". Administrative offices are contained on the first floor by the main entrance. Stairs accessing the first through third floors exist at

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

River Street School, Monmouth County, New Jersey

Section number 7 Page 2

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each entrance location along the main elevation. The central entrance contains a double stair and extends only to the second floor (see photograph 5). An additional stair is centered in the section forming the "L". These stair halls contain plaster walls and ceilings, metal baseboards which continue as stringers, metal treads and risers, and oak trim cap rails. Several of the stairs are terminated at the third floor with a decorative iron balustrade that contains geometrical shapes.

Floor to ceiling metal and glass doors with large multi-pane surrounds, lead from the main entrance, to the 1st floor east-west corridor. Typical finishes in the corridors include plaster walls, concrete floors, wood chair rail and picture rail, and oak door surrounds with transoms in the earlier two sections (see photographs 6, 7). Classrooms contain similar finishes such as plaster walls and ceilings, and molded window trim, baseboard, and door trim. Additionally the classrooms originally contained wood trimmed chalkboards and coat closets, however, most of these elements have been seriously damaged by vandals over the years.

Careful examination of the interior features, specifically offsets in the building and distinctive trim pieces, revealed the juxtapositioning of the various builds. The 1919 section contains simple wooden door trim recessed into the curved plaster walls. The doors contain six light transoms above. Six light transoms are also located above the doors in the 1926 section, however, the trim is notably wider and contains an applied trim piece at the edges. Shorter door heights, and the elimination of transoms distinguishes the c. 1935 final build. The classroom window trim further distinguishes the three periods of construction with the 1919 and 1926 trim being simple wooden beveled moldings recessed in the plaster walls, and the c. 1935 trim being bold, projecting moldings with wooden caps. It should also be noted that the wall dividing the 1919 and 1926 sections was thicker relative to any other interior partition walls, further proving that it was once an exterior wall. On the exterior, the c. 1935 build is indicated by the fenestration with the 1925 section containing bays of five windows and the c. 1935 section comprised of smaller bays with three windows.

The main entrance hall is on axis with the gymnasium/auditorium section which is entered through two double leaf doors with a large glass transom above. The gymnasium is finished with a wood floor, plaster and glazed brick walls, and a pressed metal ceiling (see photograph 8). A wooden balcony with tiered wooden benches and a metal pipe railing is supported from the ceiling trusses. The proscenium is simple in design with a wood paneled apron skirt, and small carved urns at the upper corners (see photograph 9). A large skylight provides substantial light to the room.

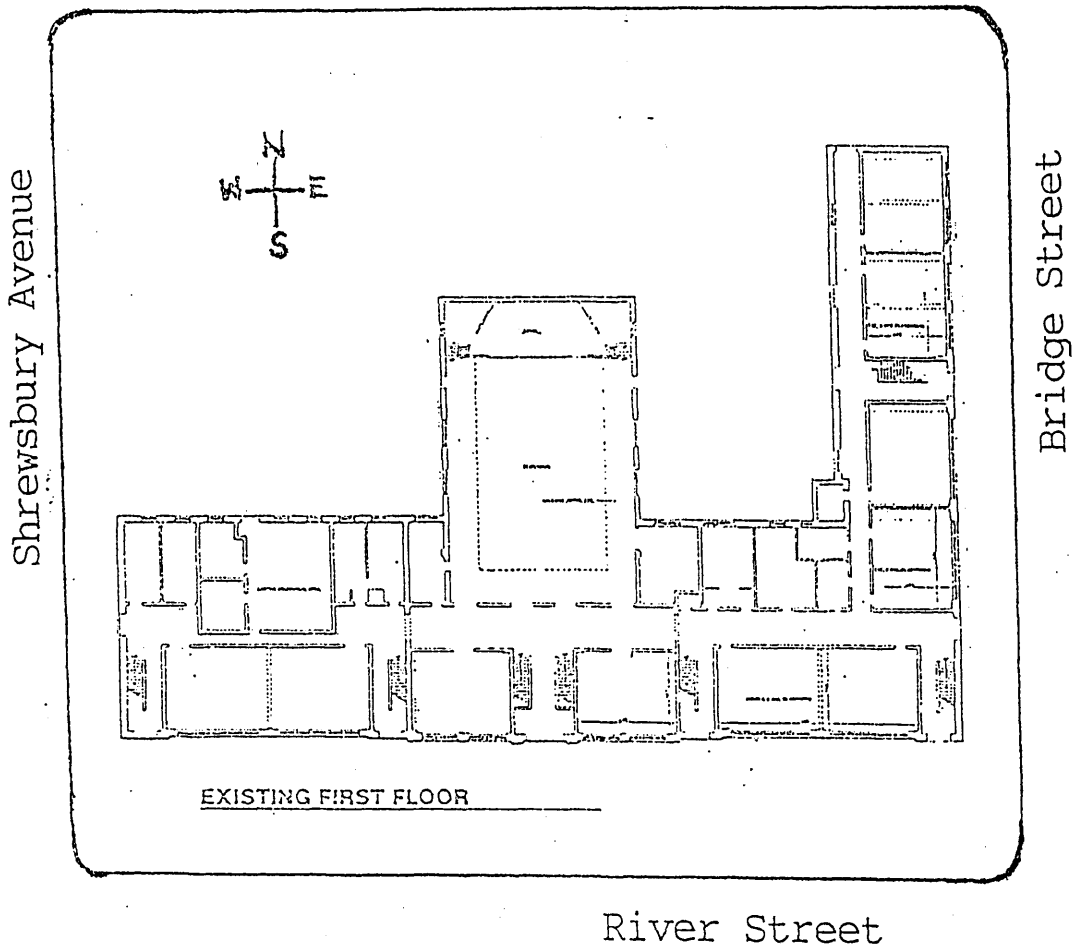
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River Street School, Monmouth County, New Jersey

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River Street School  
Red Bank, New Jersey  
Site Plan



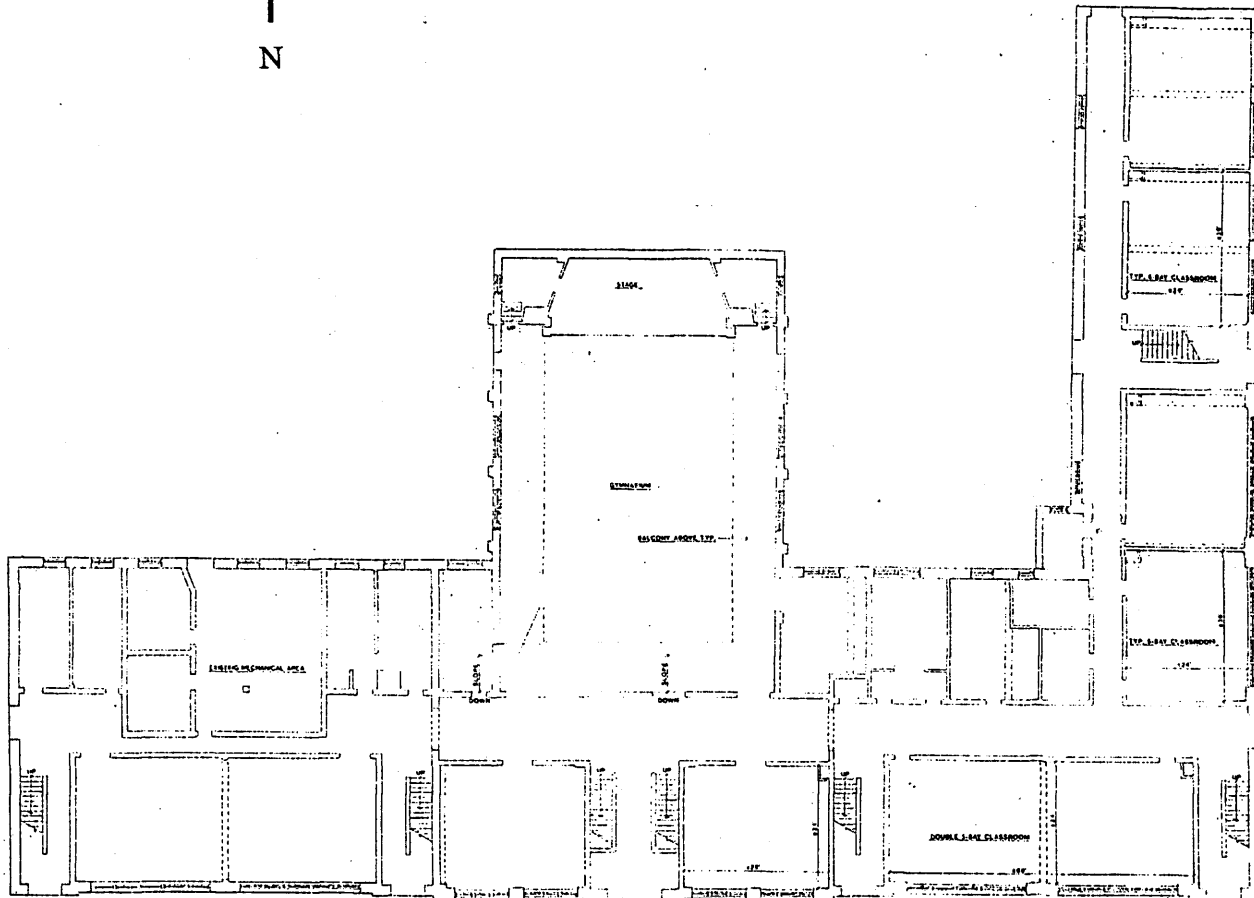
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River Street School, Monmouth County, New Jersey

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## FIRST FLOOR PLAN





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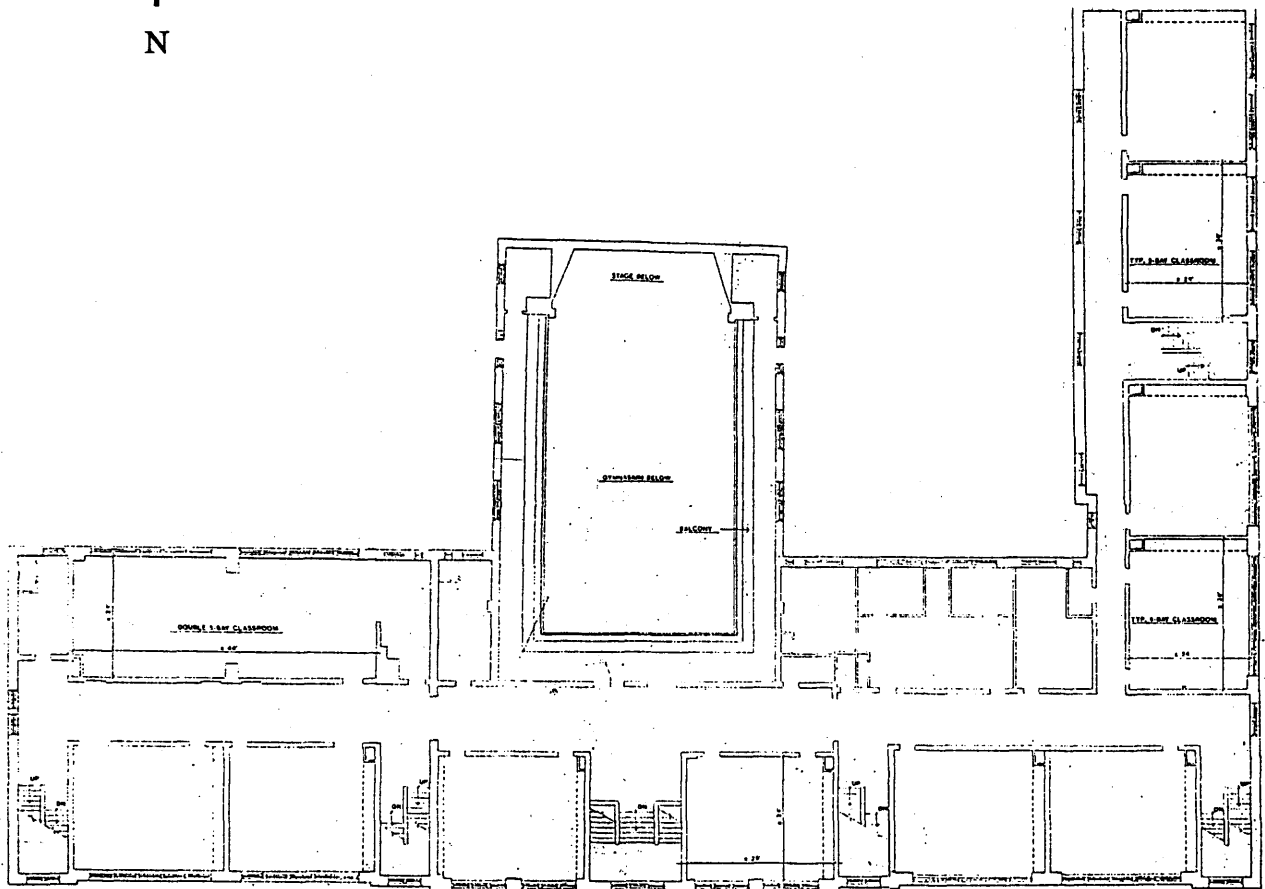
# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

River Street School, Monmouth County, New Jersey

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## SECOND FLOOR PLAN

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N



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National Park Service

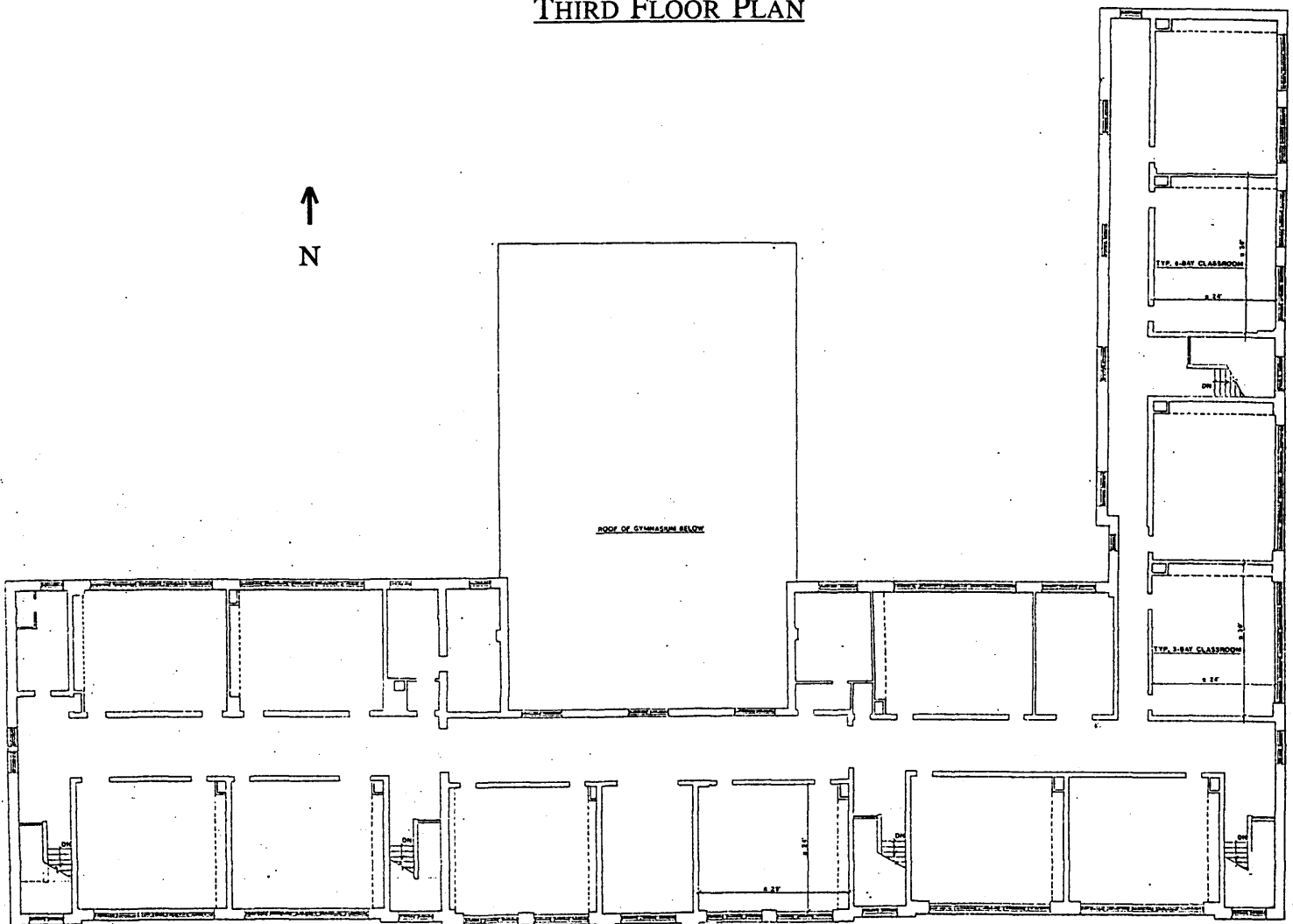
# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

River Street School, Monmouth County, New Jersey

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## THIRD FLOOR PLAN

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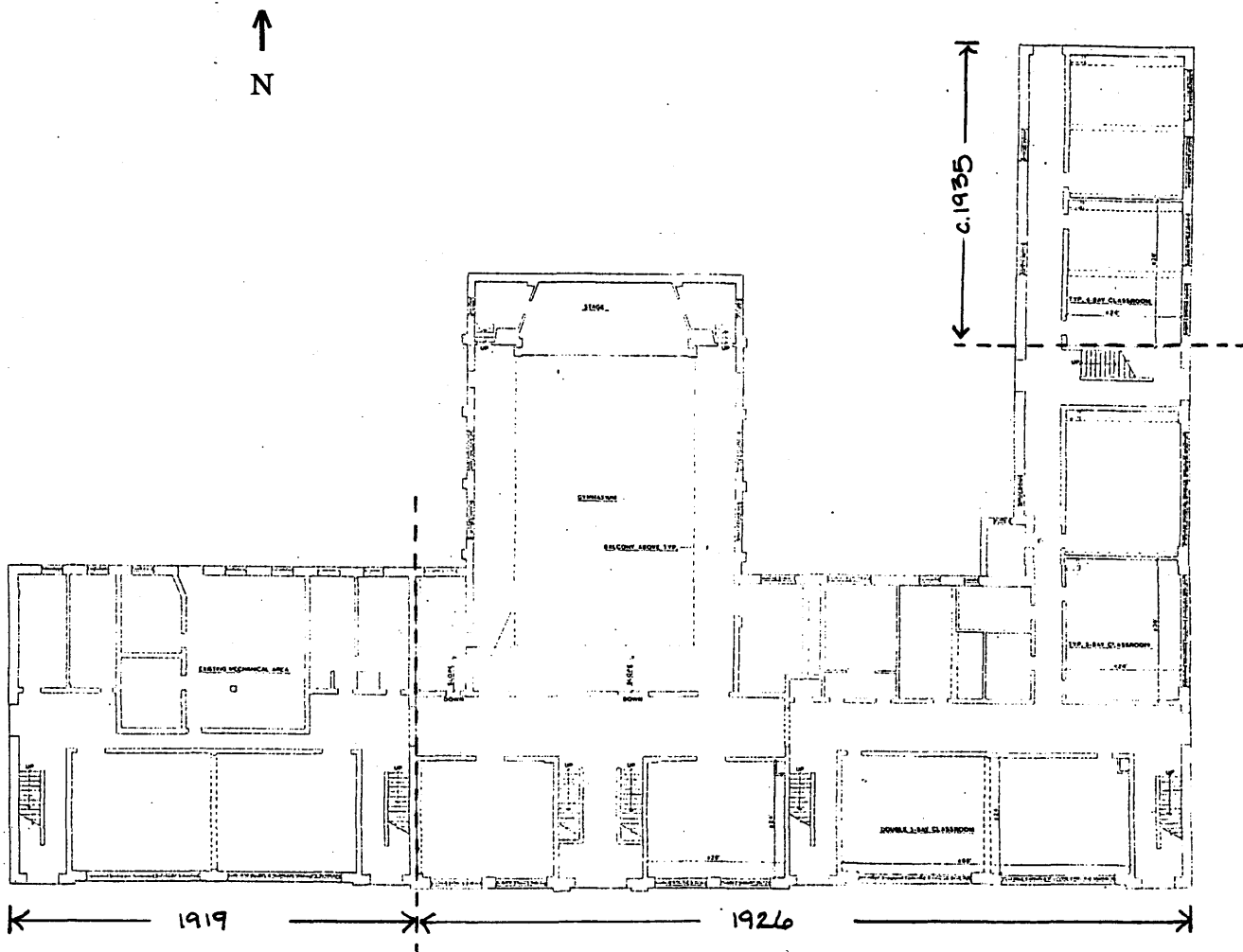
# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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## FLOOR PLAN INDICATING LOCATIONS OF ADDITIONS

### FIRST FLOOR



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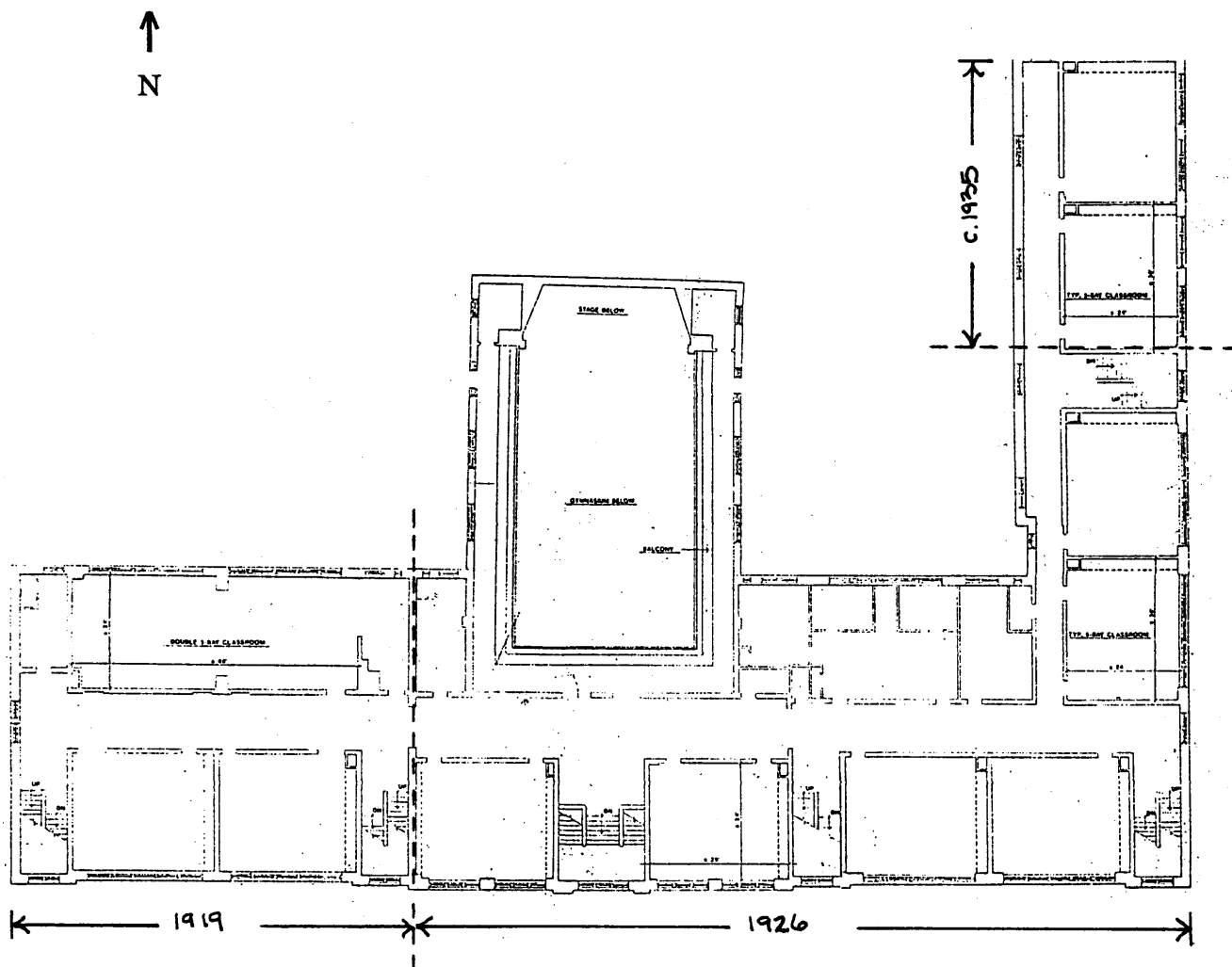
# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

River Street School, Monmouth County, New Jersey

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## FLOOR PLAN INDICATING LOCATIONS OF ADDITIONS

### SECOND FLOOR



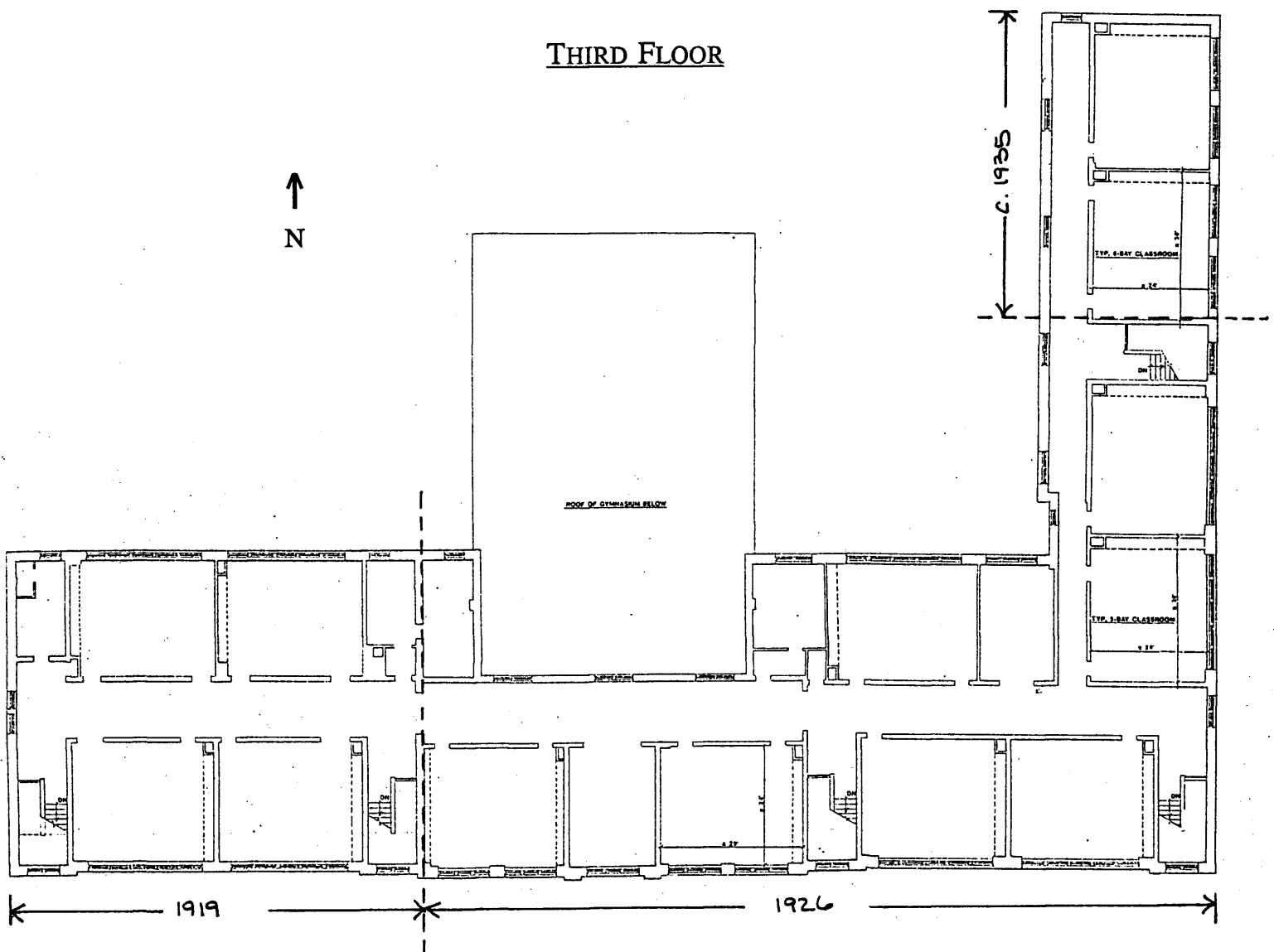
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FLOOR PLAN INDICATING LOCATIONS OF ADDITIONS



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National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
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River Street School, Monmouth County, New Jersey

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PHOTOGRAPHS

River Street School  
Monmouth County, New Jersey  
Robert Powers, Photographer  
April 1994  
Noble Preservation Services, Inc.

Photo No.

Photograph Location

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 | Looking at Marble Plaque in 2nd Floor East-West Corridor of 1919 Section |
| 2 | Looking Northeast at West and South Elevations                           |
| 3 | Looking Northwest at South and East Elevations                           |
| 4 | Looking North at Main Entrance   |
| 5 | Looking South at 1st Floor Main Stair                                    |
| 6 | Looking West in 2nd Floor East-West Corridor                             |
| 7 | Looking at Typical Classroom Door Trim                                   |
| 8 | Looking South in Auditorium/Gymnasium                                    |
| 9 | Looking North in Auditorium/Gymnasium at Proscenium                      |

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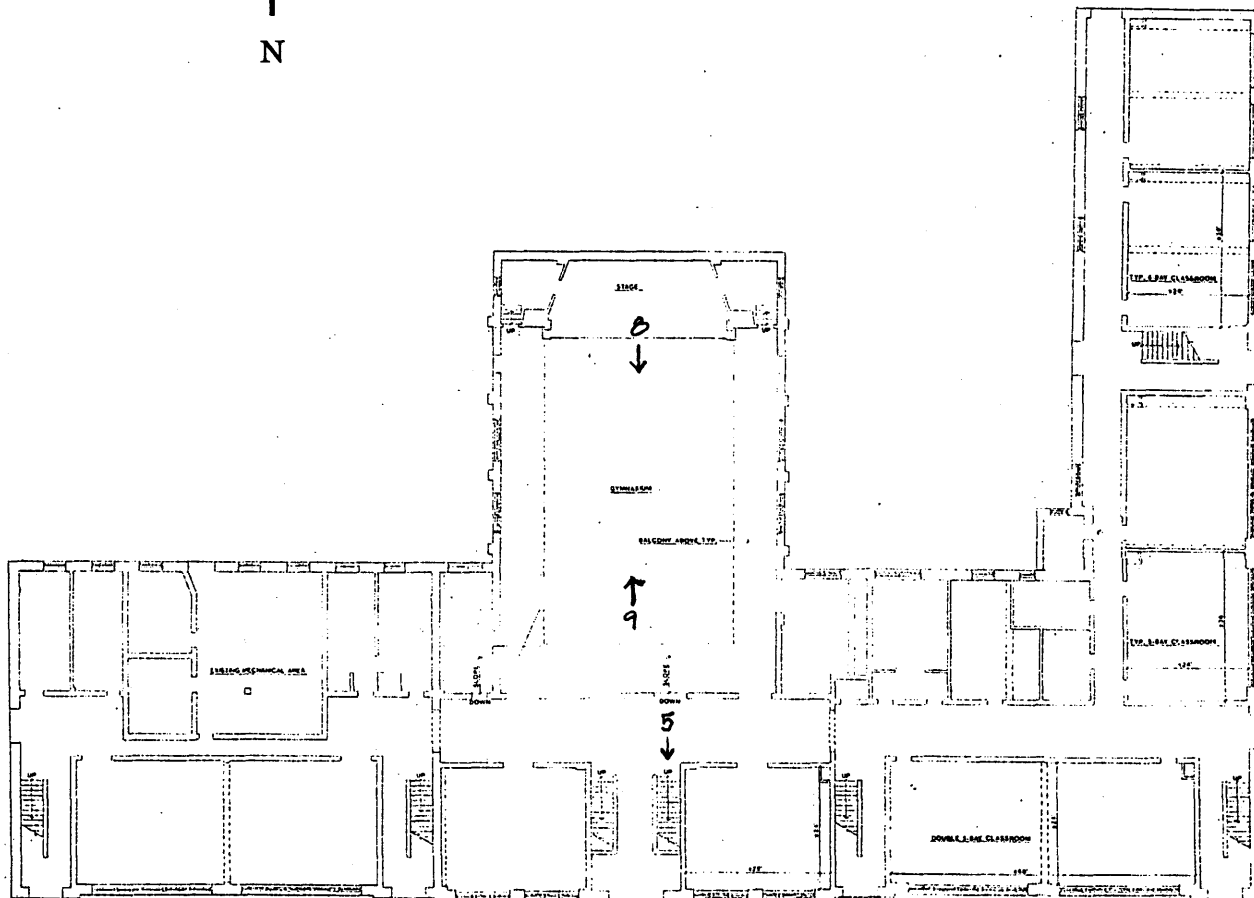
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## PHOTOGRAPH KEY

### FIRST FLOOR

↑  
N



↖  
2

↑  
4

↖  
3

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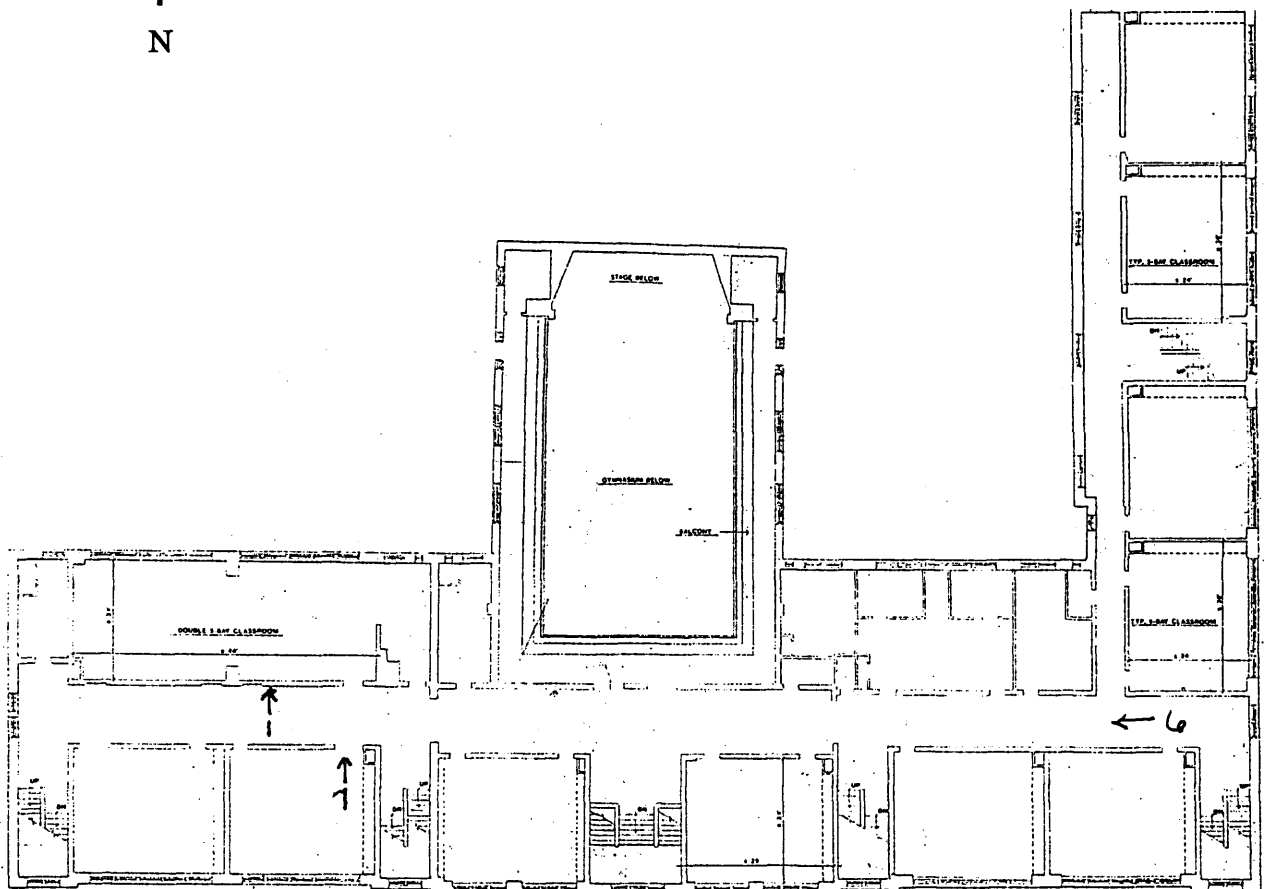
River Street School, Monmouth County, New Jersey

Section number 7 Page 12

## PHOTOGRAPH KEY

### SECOND FLOOR

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N





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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

River Street School, Monmouth County, New Jersey

Section number 8 Page 1

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## DEVELOPMENT OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE AMERICAN SCHOOL BUILDING

One of the major functions of education in a society is the transmission of culture. Formal institutions for providing this education are necessary for cultural preservation. Educational practices were instituted in this country from its inception, though informal and generally unregulated. By the Civil War, the basic pattern of the American public school systems had been formed and the task then became improving the quality of instruction. With that came a movement toward the formal study of children's behavior and the writings of education reformers. The evolution of the American school, from the one room schoolhouse into the mega-structures today, came about through the growing school bureaucracy, the development of construction standards, and the philosophies of the leading theorists and their conviction that transformation of the classroom was central to educational success.

The turning point in educational reform and the manifestations of modern educational philosophies on school building design occurred around the turn of the 20th century. In order to place the River Street School in a proper context, it is important to review the 19th century educational system and the architectural principles inherent in 19th century American school buildings.

### Educational Expansion and the 19th Century School Building

While teaching during the 17th and 18th centuries was primarily initiated in the home, the early nineteenth century saw the establishment of more formal schools, typically one room schoolhouses. These schoolhouses had little identity, as education was still the shared responsibility of the family, church and community. More importantly, was the movement by townships and cities which began setting aside land for schools. It was during this period that the notion of organized, community schooling came into being.

The typical school building during the early 19th century was described by a teacher in a New England school in 1810 as, "...a structure standing near the center of town, 22 x 20 feet in dimension, five or so windows of twelve pane sash, plaster walls and ceilings, connected desks aligned around the perimeter for the older students, and small benches for the younger children, a larger desk and chair near the center for the instructor, and a large and deep fireplace with a tall chimney. The ventilation of the schoolroom was as much neglected as its temperature; and

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River Street School, Monmouth County, New Jersey

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its cleanliness, more perhaps than either. There were no arrangements for cleaning feet at the door, or for washing floors, windows etc."<sup>1</sup>

Technological advances were not yet impacting teaching tools, however, it was during this time (c. 1820) that the most important instructional device was introduced, the slate. This apparatus included a thin piece of slate stone with a wood frame surround. The pencil used to write was also slate and produced a light, but legible line. Later, larger slates or "blackboards" were added which became the most significant feature in the classroom.

With the early 19th century national recognition of the importance of formal education brought widespread construction of elementary schoolhouses in the country, particularly in the northeast. In many states, school districts were established with elected board members. These districts were decentralized and were generally drawn along ward lines. Governors, legislators, and town councils began public discussions of the necessity for increased enrollment which meant the construction of more schools. Between 1820 and 1850 financial appropriations for schools in this country doubled.<sup>2</sup> With the increased attention on bettering schools came the formation of scholarly American education journals. The first of such was begun in 1826 and was entitled, *American Journal of Education*.

Circumstances were changing and with this came a rethinking of school building design. In 1830 the American Institute of Instruction offered a prize for the best essay on schoolhouse construction.<sup>3</sup> Enthusiasm for the new building type continued and in 1848 Henry Barnard published *School Architecture* where he explained, "the schoolhouse, properly arranged, could help promote habits of order and neatness, and cultivate delicacy of manners and refinement of feeling."<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, it was not for more than a decade past this publication that the design of schoolhouses was seriously considered by American architects.

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<sup>1</sup> James A. Johnson, et al, *Introduction to the Foundations of American Education* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, Inc. 1969.

<sup>2</sup> James A. Johnson et al, 228.

<sup>3</sup> William W. Cutler, III, "A Preliminary Look at the Schoolhouse; The Philadelphia Story, 1870-1920," *Urban Education* VIII No. 4 (January 1974):381.

<sup>4</sup> Cutler, 382.

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River Street School, Monmouth County, New Jersey

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The schoolhouse undoubtedly remained a simple structure during the mid-19th century best described as, "...roughly clapboarded, might possibly receive a coat of red or yellow paint, but more likely paint was lacking both inside and out...the schoolroom was lathed and plastered and was lighted by 5 or 6 small windows of 12 panes each...just inside was a fireplace, a master's desk or table...against the wall were long, backless benches...seats and desks were pine or oak, rudely fashioned by a local carpenter. The entry contained a few nails in the wall for the hanging of hats...<sup>5</sup>

The prevalence of formal education, particularly in the northeast and Mid-Atlantic states directly corresponds to the transformation of society from agrarian to industrial-based societies. The industrial revolution, by the mid-1800s, was the driving force in changing the basic nature of society and thus allowed for the spread of education as we know it today.

Free public elementary education was an idea that had been accepted and was spreading across America. Steady progression in the study of education progressed through the last half of the nineteenth century and educational philosophy developed into a science. Until the mid-nineteenth century, the one-room schoolhouse was the standard, where children from a range of ages studied together and the idea of graded education had not yet been conceived. The Oswego State Normal School in Oswego, New York was the first school to organize into grades and this became a model across the nation. This was the catalyst for multiple room schools and rendered the one room schoolhouse obsolete.

In the State of New Jersey, the support for common schools led to the passage of the "thorough and efficient" amendment to the New Jersey Constitution in 1875. This amendment and the development of the state system of education resulted from actions of the state's legislators and school administrations to eradicate illiteracy, and integrate immigrant children. As a result, state funding was increased, public schooling was made free across the state, the monitoring of school districts formalized, and funds were allocated for public high schools.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Clifton Johnson, *Old-Time Schools and School-Books* (New York:Dover Publications, Inc., 1963), 104.

This passage was excerpted from a more detailed description of a period schoolhouse.

<sup>6</sup> Harriet Lipman Sepinwall, *The History of the 1875 "Thorough and Efficient" Amendment to the New Jersey Constitution in the Context of Nineteenth Century Social Thought on Education: The Civil War to the Centennial* (New Brunswick, NJ:Ph.D. Dissertation, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, May 1986), ii.

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The period between the Civil War and the turn-of-the-century was a time of change in America and in education. Developing industrialism brought progress in science and technology in the schools which resulted in marked improvements in sanitation, and in the potential for human comfort mechanisms such as heating and ventilation. School designers paid closer attention to the need for healthful and efficient schools.

From 1850-1900 decentralized administrations throughout the region continued to construct small schools. In many cities, school administrators began enlisting the work of some of the region's great architects for assistance. Such masters included Samuel Sloan who was granted approximately twenty-five Philadelphia school commissions, followed by his student Addison Hutton who was given several school commissions. Sloan's school designs called for a single large room on each floor which could be transformed into as many as four classrooms by the use of movable partitions.<sup>7</sup> Sloan also suggested the installation of clothes closets, improved lighting, heating and ventilation. Hutton improved on the Sloan plans but among other innovations, Hutton introduced a single-loaded corridor running the length of each floor which accommodated more than one classroom per floor allowing each school to contain more children.<sup>8</sup> These innovations laid the groundwork for the rethinking of the school building which was to occur in the first decade of the 20th century.

### Educational Refinement and the Early 20th Century School Building

By the early 1900s school importance in the lives of children and families had far exceeded the dreams of educators a half century before. This period of educational refinement is the most significant in American education and prompted the construction of the building type recognizable as the 20th century school.

The turn-of-the-century brought a phenomenal growth of enrollment and the continued refining of the educational system. It was during this time that the centralized school systems were coming into being. Throughout the country, ward districting was eliminated in favor of a central school board that was given full control over larger districts. While school boards were established in the last decade of the nineteenth century, the role of the superintendent was not

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<sup>7</sup> Jefferson M. Moak, et al., *Philadelphia Public Schools National Register Nomination* (Philadelphia:unpublished nomination, 1987)

<sup>8</sup> Moak, et al.

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well been defined until after the turn-of-the-century. Typically, prior to 1900 superintendents generally were employed in unrelated occupations and superintendent remained a part-time position. In the cities, teachers formed organized unions in response to the government's gaining control. These newly established centralized boards assumed great control over many aspects of the design including setting and the size of buildings. A notable change in the region was that the size of school increased to serve more than one ward or neighborhood. Lot sizes also increased with schools now occupying an entire city block rather than one small lot which was often the case in the nineteenth century. It was also during this time that the government expanded their role in education, establishing rigid regulations and minimal standards for school design.

Perhaps the most significant societal change to effect the system was the further industrialization of society and the migration of people to the cities seeking employment at the factories. Children were no longer working the farms and could stay in school for longer which meant many more years of education were possible. By 1914 the majority of children across the country attended through the 8th grade, particularly in the cities. By 1918 all states had compulsory school attendance laws.<sup>9</sup> In 1890 the school year in most states was 135 days, but by 1930 this figure had increased to 170. Continuing enrollment increased to such a degree that between 1890 and 1920 high schools were constructed at a rate of 1 per day.<sup>10</sup>

It was also during this period that the states became genuinely concerned with teacher qualifications. In 1916, John Dewey published *Democracy in Education*, a treatise that had a greater impact on American education than any other publication before or since that time.<sup>11</sup> This book laid the basis for modern education theory and practice. Dewey proclaimed progressive education philosophies, emphasizing teacher-student planning and the idea of learning as an active and not a passive process. He also provided new knowledge about child growth and development. Dewey became America's most influential educational philosopher and gained wide acceptance in America.

The following year, the federal government passed the Smith-Hughes Act, the purpose of which

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<sup>9</sup> James A. Johnson et al, 238.

<sup>10</sup> B. Edward McClellan and William J. Reese ed., *The Social History of American Education* (Chicago:University of Illinois Press, 1988), 161.

<sup>11</sup> James A. Johnson et al, 240.

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River Street School, Monmouth County, New Jersey

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was to improve education in the fields of agriculture, trade or industry, and home economics. This legislation furnished funds to improve programs and train teachers in these areas. Shortly after curriculums were again expanded to include studies in social studies and science. The Smith-Hughes Act brought the need for designated rooms in the schools for these specialized programs. Changes were seen on a regional level as small, unspecialized schools created under a decentralized school system were replaced by larger, specialized schools built by centralized administrative systems.

The need for specialization in school design led to the development of specialized architectural firms, made up of architects who exclusively sought school commissions. Among these specialists was the firm of Guilbert & Betelle, Architects of Newark, New Jersey. The firm of Guilbert & Betelle became expert school planners and mastered the use of the Collegiate Gothic style in school buildings across the state of New Jersey. The exteriors of their buildings generally were brick with cut stone and terra cotta highlights. The Collegiate Gothic style was utilized in the vast majority of their school building designs as the style adapted itself in a consistent way to the large window openings and small piers that they felt were necessary to successful school building design. Their early 20th century schools became models for architects throughout the region.<sup>12</sup>

Guilbert & Betelle sought to achieve efficiency in plan by providing buildings that were used for many purposes, both educational and social. To achieve this blend, they utilized design concepts such as good circulation, centralized administration, fire safety, and ease of maintenance. It was at this time that a departure from the single-loaded corridor plan had occurred. Throughout the majority of their commissions, Guilbert & Betelle employed the use of the double-loaded corridor. Another of their more common design principles was the isolation of the auditorium and its arrangement to the administrative offices and to the stairs and exits. Guilbert & Betelle planned for the after-hours usage of the school auditoriums and placed the auditorium entrance, opposite the main entrance yet accessible to administrative offices while having the capacity to close off corridors. The galleries of the assembly rooms they designed were generally entered from the second floor corridor, by the main stair. This arrangement eventually became standard school construction practice. Guilbert & Betelle also established standard room sizes which were utilized in many schools in New Jersey. In Philadelphia, the standard room size in 1867 was 24 x 32; in 1889 the size had shrunk to 20 x 28. Guilbert & Betelle were utilizing rooms of 25 x 32 in 1915 but cautioned against the use of larger rooms. Another common theme in their

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<sup>12</sup> Rawson W. Haddon, "Modern American Schoolhouses; Some Recent Examples of Specialized Buildings, Guilbert & Betelle, Architects," *The Architectural Record* 36 (September 1914):253-259.

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school commissions was the utilization of built-in blackboards along the front wall and on one side wall, with coat closets located to the rear.<sup>13</sup>

Some of their best examples of the use of the Collegiate Gothic style in school design includes such works as the Ridge School in Newark; the Newark Normal School; the Washington School in East Orange; the Horace Mann School in Bayonne; South Side High School in Newark; East Orange High School; the Central Commercial and Manual Training High School in Newark; and the Montgomery School also in Newark. By the 1910s the Jacobean Revival, Classical Revival, and the Collegiate Gothic styles so impeccably portrayed by Guilbert & Betelle were a popular choice for school designs across the northeast.

Guilbert & Betelle's strict adherence to the Collegiate Gothic style was best exemplified in their exterior elevations. Their interiors, however, were compositions of modified traditional floor plan arrangements to meet the modern American building regulations and education principles. In fact, their work, and the work of their contemporaries began assuming a more American style or an *Americanization* of the traditional details. In the September 1914 edition of *The Architectural Record* their plans for the ideal class room and kindergarten room were presented. These plans included specified dimensions of the classroom including desk locations and sizes, blackboard locations, as well as window and door locations. Architects throughout the region adopted Guilbert & Betelle's designs and implemented their standards in schools throughout the 1910s and 1920s.

After World War I America emerged as an industrial giant and American education developed into a gigantic enterprise. The continuing evolution of public school design now reflected not only changing national and state trends in educational philosophy, but also reflected the ideas of preeminent architects. Schools were constructed throughout the region which included outstanding examples of a wide range of nationally popular architectural styles.

Government intervention continued through the 1920s which marks the decade during which building codes or standards were vigorously implemented across the country. Many of the nineteenth century frame schoolhouses burned and a crusade of building laws followed which brought about the construction of buildings that were fire-safe. These building laws went even further in specifying the amount of air that should be provided per pupil, the number and type of toilet facilities, the lighting minimums, adequate air temperatures, as well as standards for

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<sup>13</sup> Haddon, 244-248.

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room size and furnishings. Ten feet was adopted as the standard width for corridors.<sup>14</sup> A typical New York classroom size was 24 feet in width, 28 feet in length, and 12 feet in height.<sup>15</sup>

Trade publications during the 1930s are the most accurate indicator of the rapidly changing educational philosophies following the depression. An article in *Architectural Record* lists the more prevalent changing practices. In terms of programmatic evolutions, the nursery school became its own institution, a day-long program of food, rest and play had developed, a general health program was established, visual and auditory methods of instruction were utilized, and generous provisions for art, handicrafts, and dramatics were provided. In turn, a change in school form and function followed with architectural changes that included, adequately planned land setting, orientation of school buildings to take advantage of natural light, easy transition from indoors to outdoors, room size requirements vis-a-vis vision distances to the blackboard, desire for a restful atmosphere, standards in air conditioning, lighting, soundproofing, furnishing, and decoration. This 1936 article also promoted mobility in school design, including the use of prefabricated units, and the use of steel and glass and other materials that could be manufactured in standard units and readily assembled on the site at a minimal cost.<sup>16</sup>

## THE RIVER STREET SCHOOL

The River Street School gains its historic significance for containing the distinctive characteristics and features which define the Classical Revival style of architecture and for its importance as an educational institution within the community. Its interior plan reflects the ideas of some of the leading educational theorists of the day. The structure remains intact from its original period of construction and stands in good condition as a representative example of the

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<sup>14</sup> William Roger Greeley, "The Fourth Dimension in Schoolhouse Design," *The Architectural Forum* XXXVI (April 1922):128-129.

This article also expounds on 1920s construction costs, and includes a price of 32 cents per cubic foot as an estimated cost for fireproof construction of stair halls and corridors.

<sup>15</sup> "Standards for Planning the Elementary School Classroom," *The Architectural Record* 81 (April 1937):8BT.

<sup>16</sup> Lester Dix and James E. Mendenhall, "Housing America's New Education," *Architectural Record* 79 (June 1936):431.



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critical design features which are common in early 20th century school building architecture. Its additions are a reflection of the steady early 20th century growth of Red Bank. By 1931 the school had become the largest and most significant elementary school in the Borough.

The River Street School is located in a working class residential neighborhood less than 1/2 mile west of the Red Bank town center. The area currently consists of houses constructed between the 1890s and 1930s, of varying architectural styles including late Victorian and modest Queen Anne. Its location on the corner of *River Street* and *Bridge Avenue* provides an indication of the river related industry history of the town.

Red Bank began as a small river bank town with stores and taverns to serve those working on the river. While the town remained primarily rural in nature in the 19th century, a bridge was built across the river as early as the 1830s connecting Red Bank to Middletown, Fairview, and points north.<sup>17</sup> By the mid-19th century, industry in Red Bank was booming due in part to its proximity to New York City. Between 1844 and 1854 the rapid population growth prompted the establishment of many of the town's early churches. Accordingly, schools began popping up in Red Bank and by 1869 there were four schools in the area.<sup>18</sup> In 1870 Red Bank was formally incorporated as a town which precipitated the formation of necessary service industries including the Red Bank Water-Works, which supplied pure water to the town's residents, and the Red Bank Gas-Light Company, which brought gas lighting to the town in 1871.<sup>19</sup> A large population boom followed between 1875 and 1900 with immigrants from many European countries settling in the new town. In 1900 Red Bank was comprised of 37% Irish, 30% Black, 18% German, and 10% Italian and Jews.<sup>20</sup> Though the rapid influx of immigration diminished, Red Bank's population continued a steady growth well into the 20th century.

*The Annual Report of the State Board of Education and the Superintendent of Public Instruction of New Jersey* reveals that by the turn of the 20th century, the New Jersey educational system

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<sup>17</sup> Franklin Ellis, *History of Monmouth County New Jersey* (Shrewsbury, NJ:Shrewsbury Historical Society, 1974), 597.

<sup>18</sup> Ellis, 602.

<sup>19</sup> Ellis, 600.

<sup>20</sup> T.J. McMahon, author/publisher, *Red Bank Graphic 1870-1970, A Presentation in Words and Pictures of the Town of Red Bank* (Fair Haven, NJ:T.J. McMahon, publisher, 1970), 31.

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had been organized into 21 counties with each county then broken into districts. Monmouth County was organized into 36 districts, with the Borough of Red Bank comprising its own district. The 1910 annual report revealed that Red Bank's attendance had increased over one year by nearly 10%. This was one of the most substantial gains in the state.<sup>21</sup> Attendance records indicate that the increase continued for more than a decade and then tapered to a 6% increase in 1925.<sup>22</sup>

In 1910 less than half of New Jersey's 36 districts expended money for new construction, alterations and/or additions. Red Bank, however, expended \$3,000.00 in that year toward building construction. The 1910 Annual Report summation of Monmouth County states that great progress was made in the matter of new school buildings in Monmouth county including extensive additions to present buildings and increased accommodation for school children have been made at Red Bank, Matawan, and Allentown.<sup>23</sup> It was undoubtedly the substantial increase in attendance, a result of Red Bank's influx of immigrants that led to Board of Education to decide to erect a new elementary school.

The River Street School was designed by Fred M. Truex, a New York City architect who practiced in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. A listing of building contracts in the Monmouth County Library reveals 28 Truex commissions in the county, including 17 in Red Bank, between 1895-1930.<sup>24</sup> Review of these contracts indicates that his commissions were primarily residential in nature, generally contracted by local attorneys. The River Street School, commissioned late in his career possibly through his many connections with local prominent attorneys, exemplifies his mastery of the classical revival style.

A marble plaque on the wall in the 2nd floor corridor of the school is inscribed:

"Erected AD 1917

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<sup>21</sup> *Annual Report of the State Board of Education and of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of New Jersey* (Somerville, NJ: The Unionist Gazette Association, State Printers, 1911)

<sup>22</sup> *Board of Education of New Jersey Report* (Trenton, NJ: Published by the State, 1924), 227.

<sup>23</sup> *Annual Report...*, 35.

<sup>24</sup> "Monmouth County Building Contracts," Monmouth County Library, Western Branch, Archives, Manalapan, NJ, unpublished listing of building contracts in Monmouth County, NJ.

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Board of Education  
Fred M. Truex, Architect<sup>25</sup>

This is the only date-plaque on the building, however, the terra cotta frontice above the main entrance bears the date 1925. This disparity among dates was explained by historic research and recent building investigations. The 1917 and 1925 dates were proven to be the dates of the project initiation rather than the dates of completion. It was determined that the 1917 build was not completed for two years, and the 1925 build was finished in 1926.

Planning for the new elementary schoolhouse had begun by December 1916. Concurrent with the planning of the River Street School, the Red Bank Board of Education had also decided to build a new high school in the district. An informal meeting of the Red Bank Board of Education was conducted in December 1916 to discuss the purchase of the River Street property for \$6,000.<sup>26</sup> Discussions and planning continued for nearly one year, with the war being the primary reason for the delay in construction, as a great need for larger accommodations was apparent in newspaper articles of the day. In a board of education meeting held to discuss the scope of the construction the night before, the Red Bank Register reported on January 29, 1917,

"The strongest argument put forth, and the one which seemed to have the most effect on those present, was that it was a bad time now to build two big schoolhouses, on account of the tremendous increase in the price of building material. This has increased from 35 to over 100 per cent in the various lines of building material which enter into a building. It was said that the price of building material would drop to its former level as soon as the European war came to an end. If a new building of eight or sixteen rooms could accommodate the children of the town until the war ended, there would be a great saving to the people in the cost of the school buildings, if other buildings were not put up until after the war."

"The general trend of opinion expressed was in favor of buying the Wise lot and putting up an eight-room or possibly a sixteen-room building on the Bridge avenue end of the lot, but not to undertake anything more than that until after the war and until the prices of building materials had come down to a normal

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<sup>25</sup> The plaque also contains the names of the Board officers and members.

<sup>26</sup> *Red Bank Register*. "Site for the New School." December 6, 1916.

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figure."<sup>27</sup>

Between January and September 1917 the board retained Fred M. Truex to design the River Street School structure, and retained a local architect to design the high school. During a board of education meeting in late September, it was decided that the building contracts would be awarded in October 1917 and the work would be started immediately after the awarding. The schoolhouses, however, would still not be ready for use during the 1917 school term.<sup>28</sup> With the increasingly stringent fire standards at the forefront, the board of education publicly stated,

"Each schoolhouse will be enclosed with brick, with terra cotta trimming, will be three stories high and will be as nearly fireproof as it is possible to make a building. Wooden floors will be laid on reinforced concrete and the only other parts of the buildings which could catch fire will be some of the wooden doors. Every precaution against fire will be taken not only in regard to the kind of material used for construction but also in regard to safety devices."

"The new buildings will mark the first attempt that has ever been made at Red Bank to build schoolhouses with an eye to the future needs of the town. Both schoolhouses will be so constructed that they can readily be enlarged and this will mean a large saving to the taxpayers in the years to come."

"The West Red Bank schoolhouse will face River Street, with two entrances, one for girls and one for boys. It will be 65 1/2 x 85 feet. It will be much nearer to Shrewsbury Avenue than to Bridge Avenue. On the ground floor will be two playrooms, two sets of toilets and a boiler room. The playrooms will be divided by accordion doors, which can be folded up if it is desired to use the two rooms for parties or other affairs. The boiler room and heating system can readily be enlarged as the size of the school increases."

"On the second floor will be a kindergarten room, three classrooms, two rest rooms and toilets for the kindergarten class. The third floor will have four classrooms, a teacher's room and toilet and a stock room. In each classroom in the building will be three built-in closets, one for hanging clothes, one for the use

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<sup>27</sup> *Red Bank Register*. "Town Schools Discussed." January 29, 1917.

<sup>28</sup> *Red Bank Register*. "Two New Schoolhouses." September 23, 1917.

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of the teacher and one for storing stock."<sup>29</sup>

Construction delays continued, and finally, two years later, in September 1919, the River Street School was opened for enrollment relieving the congestion which had existed for several years in the nearby Shrewsbury Avenue School.<sup>30</sup> The Red Bank Register reported that the number of pupils registered in the Red Bank public schools continued to increase for the year 1919 with 1,767 students enrolled. The number of pupils in each school in Red Bank was as follows: senior high school 207, junior high school 483, Mechanic street school 261, Oakland street school 273, Shrewsbury avenue school 140, Beech street school 115, and River street school 288.<sup>31</sup>

The structure opened in 1919 as a small three story structure with approximately four rooms per floor and a central double-loaded corridor with stairs and lavatories at the end walls, as had been planned. The school contained a kindergarten, first grade, three divisions of the fourth grade, a fifth grade, and two divisions of the sixth grade.<sup>32</sup> Its awkward siting on the block, being in the very southwest corner is indicative of the Board of Education's realization that future expansion was eminent.

Subsequently, the building was then expanded seven years after its original completion, when building materials returned to their pre-war prices, with an addition nearly three times the size of the original structure. This 1926 addition provided for approximately twenty classrooms with additional stairs and lavatories as required, and the large gymnasium/auditorium centrally located to the rear. While it is unclear whether Truex was commissioned for this addition, the architect of the 1926 section exactly followed Truex's original design principles, as well as his palette of materials, resulting in an addition virtually indistinguishable from the original section. Upon the completion of this 1926 section, the River Street School only occupied a portion of the existing block. Seven additional buildings were located on the block to the rear of the school, leaving a rather limited school yard.

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<sup>29</sup> *Red Bank Register*. "Two New Schoolhouses." September 23, 1917.

<sup>30</sup> *Red Bank Register*. "1,767 Pupils Enrolled." September 10, 1919.

<sup>31</sup> *Red Bank Register*. "1,767 Pupils Enrolled." September 10, 1919.

<sup>32</sup> *Red Bank Register*. "1,767 Pupils Enrolled." September 10, 1919.

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In 1931 the Planning Board of Red Bank authored "The Red Bank Plan." This comprehensive plan for public improvements was presented to the Mayor, Council, and to the citizens of Red Bank. A discussion of the schools of Red Bank, including the River Street School was included. Regarding the River Street School, the board wrote,

"The River Street School is the largest public school in the Borough of Red Bank. It was built in two sections. The first portion, near Shrewsbury Avenue, was built in 1919. A large addition, including an auditorium, was completed in 1926. At present, all of the elementary school grades from kindergarten through the sixth year as well as all of the junior high school grades, are conducted in this building. In addition, there are two special classes. The enrollment was 565 children in the kindergarten through the sixth grade, 167 pupils in the junior high school, and 30 children in the special classes, making a total of 762 pupils enrolled in the school."<sup>33</sup>

This report also mentions that the school was expected to absorb all of the increased school population in the western section of the borough for at least the next twenty years. It continues to state that the size of the plot on which this school has been built is so limited that it does not permit a logical expansion of the present building, to say nothing of providing a playground. The "Plan" proposed that the borough should acquire the entire block (including the seven unrelated buildings, which the board deemed "not of great value") bounded by Catherine Street, River Street, Shrewsbury Avenue, and Bridge Avenue. This, the board stated, "...would provide the River Street School with playground space, which would be adequate for the school years to come, as well as provide land for the enlargement of the existing buildings."

A few years later, likely c. 1935, a third section was added to the northeast, providing six additional classrooms. Again, the architect continued Truex's design concepts with respect to room size, location, and materials.

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<sup>33</sup> Planning Board, Red Bank, New Jersey, "The Red Bank Plan" 1931. Report prepared by the Red Bank Planning Board, J. D. Tuller, Chairman, and presented to the Mayor, Council, and to the citizens of Red Bank. Comprehensive Borough Plan for public improvements.

Included in this report is a photographic image of the west and south (main) elevations which depicts the elevations as identical to the existing in configuration and detail.

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Strictly adhering to the classical tradition, the main elevation is symmetrical in execution and retains those essential elements which characterize the Classical Revival style. With its large windows of 9/9 sash, its central projecting entrance with flanking secondary entrances, and its ornate molded terra cotta elements, the school stands as an outstanding institutional and architectural landmark in its residential scale neighborhood. The school is laid out on an axial plan, a critical component of this style as established by leading school designers such as Guilbert & Betelle, with the main entrance hall on axis with the gymnasium, bisected by the east-west corridor. Truex adhered to the construction methods that were developing as standards during the period including utilizing 10' wide double-loaded corridors, masonry construction, and terra cotta block fire-proofing of the stair tower walls. The floor plan of the River Street School further emulates the characteristics typical of schools of the period. The 28 x 30 room dimensions with the blackboard on two sides and coat closet to the rear were typical; the concept of after-hours auditorium usage was made possible by the location of the auditorium, readily accessible to the main entrance with doors to close off the main corridor, and the main stair terminating at the 2nd floor auditorium gallery.

The River Street School embodies the mainstream educational philosophies of its day with the specialized playrooms with folding dividing doors, an idea drawn from the writings of Dewey and other leading period philosophers. As stated in the 1931 "*Red Bank Plan*," the school was the largest and most significant elementary school in the borough. Its additions, the 1926 in particular, a reflection of the steady early 20th century growth of Red Bank. With its classically designed exterior, characterizing the popular architectural style of its period, and its intact trimwork and wide corridors with transomed classroom entrances, the River Street School conveys the critical design elements of a period school building. The school remains in good condition with a high degree of architectural integrity and clearly meets the criteria for educational significance and thus is eligible for the National Register under criteria A and C.

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BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at a point in the intersection of the northerly line of River Street with the easterly line of Shrewsbury Avenue, and running; thence

- (1) North 06 degrees 30 minutes West, along the easterly line of Shrewsbury Avenue, a distance of 150.00 feet to a point; thence
- (2) North 83 degrees 30 minutes East, along the southerly line of Lot 6, Block 74, Tax Map, a distance of 168.00 feet to a point; thence
- (3) North 06 degrees 30 minutes West, along the easterly line of Lots 6 & 7, Block 74, Tax Map, a distance of 100.00 feet to a point; thence
- (4) South 83 degrees 30 minutes West, along part of the northerly line of Lot 7, Block 74, Tax Map, a distance of 93.00 feet to a point in the southeasterly corner of Lot 1-B, Block 74, Tax Map; thence
- (5) North 06 degrees 30 minutes West, along the easterly line of Lots 1-B and 1-A, Block 74, Tax Map, a distance of 50.00 feet to a point in the southerly line of Catherine Street; thence
- (6) North 83 degrees 30 minutes East, along the southerly line of Catherine Street, a distance of 260.00 feet to a point in the intersection of the southerly line of Catherine Street with the westerly line of Bridge Avenue; thence
- (7) South 06 Degrees 30 minutes East, along the westerly line of Bridge Avenue, a distance of 300.00 feet to a pint in the intersection of the westerly line of Bridge Avenue with the northerly line of River Street; thence
- (8) South 83 degrees 30 minutes West, along the northerly line of River Street, a distance of 335.00 feet to a point in the easterly line of Shrewsbury Avenue, said point being the pint and place of Beginning.

This description is drawn in accordance with a survey prepared by William W. Stroby Associates dated April 20, 1981.

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### BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

This is the entire lot as per the property deed where the River Street School is located, commonly referred to as 60 River Street. Tax Map - Block 74, Lot 5.01.