United States Department of the Interior **National Park Service** For NPS use only **National Register of Historic Places** received FFR 12 1805 Inventory—Nomination Form date entered See instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms Type all entries—complete applicable sections 1. Name historic Mason School (D009:0205-009) Mason School and/or common 2. Location N/A not for publication street & number 1012 South 24th Street N/Avicinity of city, town Omaha 031 Douglas code 055 Nebraska code county state 3. Classification Status **Present Use** Category Ownership _ occupied _ public _ district _ agriculture ... museum _X private _X_ building(s) X_ unoccupied commercial __ park __ structure both work in progress educational private residence _ site **Public Acquisition** Accessible entertainment _ religious _ scientific ___ object N/A in process _X_ yes: restricted government ____ being considered ____ yes: unrestricted industrial _ transportation X other: Vacant ____ no _ military **Owner of Property** 4. name Bradley L. Lee, c/o Dalee Realty Inc. 214 Norfolk Avenue street & number Norfolk N/A vicinity of state Nebraska city, town Location of Legal Description 5. Register of Deeds, Omaha/Douglas Civic Center courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. street & number 1819 Farnam Street Omaha Nebraska city, town state **Representation in Existing Surveys** 6. 1984 Omaha/Douglas County has this property been determined eligible? title _yes _X_no Historic Building Survey ____ county __X_ local date federal ____ state 1984 - ongoing depository for survey records Omaha City Planning Department & Nebraska State Historical Society Nebraska Omaha/Lincoln city, town state

OMB No. 1024-0018 Exp. 10-31-84

NPS Form 10-900 (3-82)

7. Description

Condition Check one Check one	good ruin	altered		N/A	
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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Functionally, Mason School is a 16-room classroom facility built in 1888 by the Omaha Board of Education; technically it is built of masonry load-bearing walls spanned by wood joists supporting wood floors, and a wood truss system supporting the roof; formally the building is a two story brick building, an articulated rectangle in plan and designed in the Richardsonian Romanesque style of architecture. Structural and historical integrity has been preserved.

Mason School, located at 1012 South 24th Street, was built in 1888 as part of a program by the Omaha Public Schools to meet the growing enrollment due to Omaha's expansion.

The original two story brick building is rectangular in plan measuring 138' 6'' x 92' 4'' and is topped by a hybrid roof of gabled and flat sections. The symmetrical main east facade as well as the west facade is characterized by projecting gabled two story end pavilions and a central gabled wall-dormer. The north and south elevations are nearly identical. Each contain a central projecting two story gabled pavilion. At either side of the pavilion are one story guarter-circle turret-like forms capped with conical roofs.

In 1936, a brick addition was built directly south of the original school. It consists of a two story rectangular classroom block and an auditorium block, both with flat roofs. Access to the addition is through a "connecting vestibule" centered on the south entrance of the original school building.

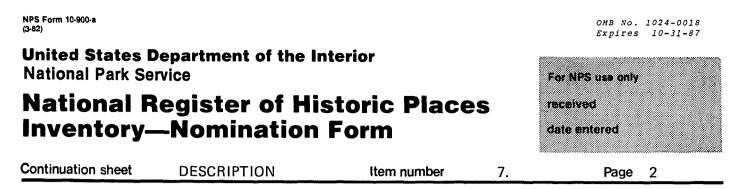
The main entrance to the original school building is through a large semicircular arch centrally located beneath the wall dormer at the eastern facade. Secondary entrances at the north and south facades are also arched and are loated in the central pavilions. Double loaded corridors running the buildings longest dimension (north and south) service eight classrooms per floor. Two sets of ornately spindled wood stairs at each end of the corridor provide the necessary vertical circulation. The western one-half of the basement contains restroom and mechanical functions; the remainder is unexcavated.

Circulation in the 1936 addition revolves around a central first floor corridor that serves as an extension of the first floor corridor of the original building. Access to the second floor classrooms is via a stair located in the northeast corner of the structure. An auditorium space is oriented perpendicular to the classroom block with a stage area that backs onto the corridor wall. Space in the addition is also provided for a small kitchen and dining alcove, a teachers lounge, a physical directors office, a nurses' office and toilet facilities.

The 1888 school building utilizes a structural system of load bearing masonry walls (both interior and exterior) carried on continuous stepped masonry footings. Floors are constructed of dimensional wood framing (2×14 's and 3×14 's) spanning between bearing walls and are finished with strip hardwood flooring. The roof is composed of a hybrid wood truss system, presenting a sloped, gabled section to public view while the inner sections are relatively flat.

Structurally, the 1936 addition is constructed of masonry load bearing walls on simple concrete footings. Concrete beams comprise the floors and roof of the classroom portion of the addition and the connecting vestibule as well as the floor of the auditorium space. Steel I-beams are used to support the flat roof of the auditorium.

Mason School is a fine and well preserved local adaptation of the Richardsonian Romanesque style of architecture, a popular style used in many public and private buildings of this period. The building's facades are composed of common red brick with encircling water table, sill courses, rustications and other selected details of limestone. The facades are punctuated by groupings of large double hung windows, round arched at the first and attic levels and flat arched at the second level. Decorative stamped galvanized iron is used generously at the building's cornice line, at the wall dormer and pavilion pediments and at the window head mouldings.



In terms of style, the addition to Mason School is very pragmatic with embellishment limited to stonework at the east and south classroom entrances and a simple encircling brick cornice.

Decorative interior features of the original 1888 building include pressed-metal ceilings throughout, turned balusters and carved newell posts at the north and south stairways, wainscotting and decorative door and window moldings and headblocks. Interior finishes in the 1936 addition are spare, limited to the use of simple panel doors and wood moldings.

The integrity of the Mason School complex is very good due to the past maintenance by the Omaha Public School system. The original school building, however, has undergone some alteration. Two prominent, ornate roof vents have been removed and the original slate roof has been replaced with asphalt shingles. All exterior brick and stone surfaces have also been painted, causing some moisture entrapment and exfoliation. All of these problems are to be addressed in the certified rehabilitation of the building.

8. Significance

1700–1799 _X_ 1800–1899	Areas of Significance—C archeology-prehistoric archeology-historic agriculture X architecture art commerce communications		I landscape architectur law literature military music	re religion science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater transportation other (specify)
Specific dates	1888/1936	the second s	388 Builder: Hadden, Roch	

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

1888 Architect: Mendelssohn, Fisher and Lawrie 1936 Builder: Borchman 1936 Architect: H. R. Brigham

Mason School is architecturally significant as one of the finest of only a very few Richardsonian Romanesque style buildings extant in Omaha. Additionally, the building is significant as a work of the prominent early Omaha firm of Mendelssohn, Fisher and Lawrie, and as the oldest extant school in the City.

Mason School was erected in late 1888, a time of tremendous economic growth in Omaha. Business, wholesaling and manufacturing were all increasing rapidly, as was residential development, and the need for new school facilities was particularly acute. On January 1, 1888 bonds were issued for \$200,000 for the purpose of building Mason and five other structures to accommodate the growing school age population.

Mason School was designed by the prominent Omaha architectural firm of Mendelssohn, Fisher and Lawrie in the Richardsonian Romanesque style. Inspired by the work of Henry Hobson Richardson of Boston, the style was extremely popular nationally in the 1880's and early 1890's, particularly for public buildings and large scaled residences. Many of Omaha's finest buildings of that period — now lost — were Richardsonian Romanesque. They included the Federal Building (1892-1906), the City Hall (1889-1892) and the Omaha Bee Building (1887-1889). Mason School, the oldest extant school building in the City, is one of only a very few Richardsonian Romanesque style buildings that remain in Omaha, and the best example of the four remaining schools of that style.

The firm of Mendelssohn, Fisher and Lawrie evolved from one of the City's earliest professional partnerships – Dufrene and Mendelssohn, formed in 1881. Dufrene had worked as an architect in Nebraska since 1867, first in partnership with T. B. Borst, and then alone during the 1870's. Mendelssohn, born in Berlin in 1842, had studied in New York and practiced in Detroit prior to coming to Omaha. The 1884 Christian Specht Building (NRHP, 1977) is a product of the Dufrene and Mendelssohn partnership. In 1885 Mendelssohn left Dufrene and entered into a partnership with architect George Fisher. The firm operated as Mendelssohn and Fisher in 1885 and then as Mendelssohn and Lawrie in 1887 when Fisher left the firm for a year and Harry Lawrie, a native of Scotland, joined Mendelssohn. Fisher then rejoined the firm and the partnership of Mendelssohn, Fisher and Lawrie was formed.

It is quite possible that, of the three principals in the firm of Mendelssohn, Fisher and Lawrie, Harry Lawrie had the greatest influence on the design and style of Mason School. Prior to his arrival in Omaha in 1887, the year before Mason School was built, Lawrie had worked for four years in Chicago with Burnham and Root. John Wellborn Root, the principal designer for the firm, was greatly influenced by Richardson (Mumford) and did much of his work in the Richardsonian Romanesque style. Richardson himself visited Burnham and Root in Chicago during the time that Lawrie was employed there (Hoffman) and Lawrie worked on several Richardsonian Romanesque style buildings while with Root including the Art Institute and the Phenix Building. Several details on Mason School are particularly reminiscent of some of Roots work in the Romanesque style. They include the tourelles that occur at either side of the gable over the main entrance, the manner in which the round arch of the main entrance is set apart from the plane of the wall by including it within a projecting, rectilinear surround, and the use of diaperwork in the gable ends. Elements that are more typical of Richardson's work are the arched windows that are linked together in series and the quarter-round turrets that flank the north and south entrances.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property <u>2.25 acres</u> Quadrangle name <u>SOUTH OMAHA</u>, NEBR.-IOWA UTM References

Quadrangle scale <u>1:24000</u>

A 1 5 Zone	251301210 Easting	4 5 7 0 4 6 0 Northing
c		
E		
G		

B Zone	Easting	Northing
F		
н		

Verbal boundary description and justification

South 38 feet of Lots 39 and 46, and all Lots 40 through 45, and North 1/2 of the West 280 feet of Lot 59, Redicks Second Addition, Douglas County, Nebraska, including only the immediate setting for the school and excluding the adjacent playgrounds which no longer retain their historical and physical integrity.

and excluding the adjacent p	playgrounds which no	<u>longer ret</u>	<u>ain their h</u>	istorical and physic	al in
List all states and counti					
state N/A	code	county		code	
state N/A	code	county		code	
11. Form Pre	epared By				
	ity Planner, Architect Preservation Administra	tor			
organization Omaha City F	Planning Department	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	date	May, 1985	
street & number 1819 Far	nam Street, Suite 1110		telephone	(402) 444-5208	
city or town Omaha			state	Nebraska 68183	
12. State His	storic Prese	ervatio	n Offica	er Certificati	on

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national _____ state ____X local

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

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State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title

e Director, Nebraska State Mistorical Society

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

Mncolou un June M. McPherson Junkeeper of the National Register Linker (1-1

Attest:

Chief of Registration

date

date

date 3/13/86

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

Continuation sheet	Bibliography	Item number	9	Page	1	

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