

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received FEB 12 1986
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)

and/or common Mason School

2. Location

street & number 1012 South 24th Street

N/A not for publication

city, town Omaha

N/A vicinity of

state Nebraska

code 031

county Douglas

code 055

3. Classification

Category

district

building(s)

structure

site

object

Ownership

public

private

both

Public Acquisition

N/A in process

being considered

Status

occupied

unoccupied

work in progress

Accessible

yes: restricted

yes: unrestricted

no

Present Use

agriculture

commercial

educational

entertainment

government

industrial

military

museum

park

private residence

religious

scientific

transportation

other: Vacant

4. Owner of Property

name Bradley L. Lee, c/o Dalee Realty Inc.

street & number 214 Norfolk Avenue

city, town Norfolk

N/A vicinity of

state Nebraska

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register of Deeds, Omaha/Douglas Civic Center

street & number 1819 Farnam Street

city, town Omaha

state Nebraska

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title 1984 Omaha/Douglas County
Historic Building Survey

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1984 - ongoing

federal state county local

depository for survey records Omaha City Planning Department & Nebraska State Historical Society

city, town Omaha/Lincoln

state Nebraska

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Continuation sheet	DESCRIPTION	Item number	7.	Page	2
--------------------	-------------	-------------	----	------	---

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

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates	1888/1936	Builder/Architect	1888 Builder: Hadden, Rocheford and Gould 1888 Architect: Mendelssohn, Fisher and Lawrie 1936 Builder: Borchman 1936 Architect: H. R. Brigham
Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)			

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 1886 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 2.25 acres

Quadrangle name SOUTH OMAHA, NEBR.-IOWA

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	5	2	5	3	0	2	0	4	5	7	0	4	6	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing							

C

Zone		Easting				Northing							

D

Zone		Easting				Northing							

E

Zone		Easting				Northing							

F

Zone		Easting				Northing							

G

Zone		Easting				Northing							

H

Zone		Easting				Northing							

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.

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

state	N/A	code	county	code
state	N/A	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dan Worth/City Planner, Architect
Lynn Meyer; Preservation Administrator

organization Omaha City Planning Department date May, 1985

street & number 1819 Farnam Street, Suite 1110 telephone (402) 444-5208

city or town Omaha state Nebraska 68183

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature James A. Hanson

title Director, Nebraska State Historical Society date February 4, 1986

For NPS use only

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

June M. McPherson Keeper of the National Register date 3/13/86

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Bibliography Item number 9 Page 1

Building Permit Records. Omaha City Planning Department, Omaha, Nebraska.

Deeds and Mortgage Records, Douglas County, Nebraska.

Hitchcock, Henry-Russell. The Architecture of H. H. Richardson and His Times. Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1981.

Hoffman, Donald. The Architecture of John Wellborn Root. Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1973.

Mumford, Lewis. Roots of Contemporary American Architecture, 37 Essays from the Mid-Nineteenth Century to the Present. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1972.

Omaha Architects File. Omaha City Planning Department. Omaha, Nebraska.

Omaha Public Schools Clipping File Collection, "1885-1890". On File at Joslyn Castle, 3902 Davenport, Omaha.

Nebraska State Historical Society. National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form. Omaha High School, 1979.

Wakeley, A. C. Omaha: The Gate City and Douglas County Nebraska. 2 Vols. Chicago: The S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1917.

Whiffen, Marcus American Architecture Since 1780, A Guide to the Styles. Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1969.