

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

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historic name: Sequoia Union High School  
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2. Location

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street & number: 1201 Brewster Avenue

city/town: Redwood City

not for publication: N/A

vicinity: N/A

state: CA county: San Mateo code: 081 zip code: 94062  
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3. Classification

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Ownership of property: public

Catagory of property: district

Number of resources within property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
___ 5 ___	___ 3 ___	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	___ 1 ___	structures
___ 2 ___	_____	objects
___ 7 ___	___ 4 ___	Total

Total of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A



FEB 24 1995

OHP

Sequoia Union High School

San Mateo County, CA

7. Description

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Architectural Classification.

20th Century Revival/Spanish Colonial Revival

Other description: \_\_\_\_\_

Materials: foundation: concrete      roof: tile/composition shingle  
                  walls:           concrete           other: wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

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8. Statement of Significance  
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Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: state

Applicable National Register criteria: A, B, C

Areas of significance: Education/Architecture/Performing Arts

Period(s) of Significance: 1923-1945

Significant dates: 1923

Significant Person(s): Carrington, Otis M.  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Coffey, Alfred I. & Werner, Carl /Wilson, D.E.

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above. X See continuation sheet.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

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 Building 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 -- Specify Repository: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property: 34.516 acres  
UTM References: Zone Easting Northing

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundry Description:  See continuation sheet.

Boundry Justification:  See continuation sheet.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: Kent L. Seavey/Preservation Consultant

Organization: Sequoia High School Alumni Association Date: Sept. 1, 1994

Street & Number: P.O. Box 2534 Telephone: (415) 377-1488

City or Town: Redwood City State: CA Zip: 94064

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INTERAGENCY RESOURCES DIVISION

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

The nomination boundaries for Sequoia Union High School encompass 34.516 acres of the original site purchased for the facility through a local bond measure on Nov. 10, 1920, and 7 contributing buildings and associated landscape features from the period of historic development, 1923-1945. The two story reinforced concrete school building with focal tower and adjacent auditorium were designed in the Spanish Colonial Revival style of architecture in 1923 by noted San Francisco architects Carl Werner and Alfred I. Coffey. The asymmetrically planned complex was constructed on the park like grounds of a former Redwood City estate. The principal buildings employ stuccoed wall surfaces, varied roof forms covered in Spanish tile or red composition roofing, have arched and arcaded openings and are unified, in part, by cast cement surface detailing drawn from the decorative vocabulary of Spanish architecture. Mr. Coffey was responsible for the 1928-29 girls gymnasium, cafeteria and machine shop, plus wing additions to the school building and auditorium, all in concert with the schools original architectural design. A one story rectangular wood frame shop building was constructed in 1939-40 as part of a W.P.A. project. The nomination includes the two remaining historic entry gates. A major change has been the replacement of wooden window sash with aluminum awning type on some school buildings, and the removal of Spanish tile from the main school building and the girls gym for seismic safety. Other changes to the exterior of the buildings have been minor. There are 4 noncontributing features within the nomination boundaries. They include an auto shop, built in 1948, the new boys gym and Lenkurt science lab, both constructed in 1958, and a 1960 concrete swimming pool. Overall the Sequoia High School complex retains a high level of integrity and a strong sense of time and place.

The present Sequoia High School occupies 34.516 acres of the original landscaped park like grounds that housed the former estates of Horace Hawes (1857-1880); Moses Hopkins (1880-1902); William J. Dingee (1902-1909); and Albert Pissis (1909-1920). The only remaining evidence of this period of occupation, aside from the shape of the site, are the concrete entry path and associated planting beds with decorative benches built by cement magnate William J. Dingee after 1902.

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Dingee was also responsible for transforming a rockery at the rear of his mansion into the rustic landscape setting with summer house that became an important focal point of the campus, first as the "Garden of the Cherokee", and later as the "Japanese Tea Garden".

While this landscape feature has been altered considerably over time, its continued presence evokes strong feeling and association with the traditions and values particular to the school and its alumni. Both William Dingee and Albert Pissis were responsible for the wooded appearance of the campus with its tree cover of mature native and introduced species, some of which are specimen examples. Pissis moved some palm trees from the 1915 Panama Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco to the estate.

San Francisco architects Carl Werner and Alfred I. Coffey were particularly successful in their siting of the educational complex on the northwest side of the older estate grounds. They placed the main school building on the site of the former Dingee mansion, back from the traffic of El Camino Real and masked by the wooded landscaping. It fronted on Dingee's cement planting beds and walkway, creating a handsome ceremonial entry. The original L shaped two-story reinforced concrete Spanish Colonial Revival building with its towered entry on a raised piazza, enclosed Dingee's rustic garden at the inside angle of the ell, affording excellent views of this landscape feature from most of the inside classrooms. The rectangular two-story auditorium was constructed just NW of the school building and parallel with Brewster Avenue, the school's main entrance, making the facility easily accessible for public performances while masking the academic campus from intrusive street noise. A boys gymnasium, in the same architectural style, was constructed to the SE of the school building. This feature was replaced with the new, noncontributing cement block gymnasium in 1958. An ornate wooden stable and carriage house, originally constructed about 1875 by Moses Hopkins, and greatly improved by William Dingee after 1902, was sited to the rear of the auditorium. It served as the mechanical arts building, and later as a maintenance facility. It was demolished in 1958 to make room for the noncontributing concrete block Lenkurt Lab building. Two or three minor wood frame buildings associated with the Dingee/Pissis estate period including a gatehouse, bunkhouse and residence were either moved or demolished during the period of significance, 1923-1945.

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In 1928 architect Alfred I. Coffey designed a series of additions for the school complex in keeping with the original Spanish Colonial Revival buildings. They included a two-story reinforced concrete wing addition to the main school building, making its original ell plan a U. A one-story wood frame music building addition at the rear (SW) of the auditorium. A one-story stuccoed wood frame cafeteria and boiler room SE of the new school wing, and connected by a covered one-story arcaded walkway, and a two-story cement block and stuccoed wood frame girls gymnasium immediately adjacent to the SE side of the new cafeteria. A one-story concrete block shop building was designed for a site SW of the auditorium behind the old carriage house. All of these buildings were executed in 1928-29 except for the shop building, which was constructed in 1932.

During the Depression of the 1930s the school complex saw extensive repair and upgrading of the physical plant and grounds as a product of the Works Progress Administration. The school library was expanded in a one-story wood framed addition extending from the main block of the school building into the grounds of the "Japanese Tea Garden". The design, by the San Francisco architectural firm of Blanchard & Maher, employed wood joinery detailing to maintain the character and ambiance of the gardens. A new pedestrian entry was built at El Camino Real and Broadway in 1941 that combined this oriental wood joinery motif with the older Spanish Colonial Revival style in a roofed pergola fronting a stuccoed concrete wall carrying the school name. Five new classrooms were added to the 1929 rear wing of the main school building. A final addition to the main school building was constructed in 1949 by Blanchard, Maher. Called the commercial arts wing, the one-story stuccoed wood frame wing runs parallel with Brewster Avenue. A new one-story stuccoed wood frame shop building was built parallel to the 1932 machine shop. This feature was demolished in 1994 for new classroom construction. The school playing fields were improved and expanded, with Stanford University assisting in the development of a new running track on the SE side of the campus, along James Avenue.

Noncontributing buildings constructed on campus within the proposed district boundaries, but after the period of significance include the 1948 one-story auto shop, at the rear of the industrial arts complex to the SW facing Elwood Street.

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The 1958 concrete block gymnasium on the site of the original boys gym, directly SE of the main school building, the 1958 one-story concrete block Lenkurt Lab, between the music building and industrial arts facilities on the NW side of the campus along Brewster Avenue and a concrete swimming pool between the boys and girls gym in 1960 replacing the original constructed in 1928. Of these 4 noncontributing features only the industrial design of the 1948 auto shop is in keeping with the historic character of the contributing buildings within the proposed district boundaries.

All of the contributing buildings and their associated landscape features have seen changes over time due in part to the nature of the educational institution. Most were affected by legal requirements for protection of the life safety of the students. Reasonable care was taken with these modifications to retain the basic character defining qualities of the original buildings. The Sequoia High School campus retains a high level of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. The proposed district evokes a strong sense of time and place. As noted by David Gebhard in his *Guide to Architecture in San Francisco & Northern California*: "The half century old, rambling Spanish Colonial Revival plant looks almost as though it had really been here for centuries". Any student who attended the school during the period of significance 1923-1945 would have no problem recognizing it today.

The buildings that remain from the historic period are the main school building (1923-1949), auditorium and music building (1923-1928), cafeteria (1928-29), girls gymnasium (1928-29), and industrial arts building (1932-1940). The school gate entries along Brewster Ave. (1924), and at Broadway and El Camino Real (1941-1991) are included in the nomination as objects. The following inventory describes each contributing building individually.

**1. Main School Building (1923 with additions in 1928, 1939 and 1949)**

The main school building is two-story, of reinforced concrete construction and irregular in plan with a partial basement. The exterior wall cladding is stucco.



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The broad, horizontal plane of the NE facing facade is broken up by three slightly projecting cross gables at the NW and SE ends of the main building block and in the central arched and slightly recessed entry, set behind an open raised piazza. The massive round headed wooden double doors have multiple glazed panels. An elaborate door surround employs cast cement pilasters enriched by urns in low relief, supporting an equally ornate entablature surmounted by two cast cement owls over a marble sign with Sequoia High School carved in it. A rectangular window above the entablature is framed in relief and capped by a broken scroll pediment. The original small paned wooden windows in this feature, and throughout the building, were replaced with three and four part aluminum awning types in July of 1961. There are small, narrow rectangular access windows behind the owl sculptures and flanking the main doorway, where they are covered by simple wrought iron grilles.

A three-story tower directly to the right of the main entry is capped by a shallow pavilion roof covered in Spanish tile with a slender cast cement finial above. Round recessed windows appear in all four elevations just below the roofline, and above a projecting arched corbel table. The corbel table caps the second stage of the tower with its tall pierced arches supported on paired spiral columns. Both the second and third stage of the tower have chamfered corners. On the second stage they were niched to carry large cast cement urns, which were removed in the early 1980s as part of a seismic safety program. The vertical corners of the tall, square, projecting tower base are outlined in shallow relief as is an arched panel across the top of this feature, echoing the form of the corbel table above. A tall, arched window with a surround of voussoirs above, and a cast cement balconet below characterize the tower base's principal elevation. There is also a much smaller arched window just below and centered on the balconet.

The classroom wings, flanking the main entry are capped by medium pitched side gabled roofs, fronting flat roofs behind. Originally finished in Spanish tile on the front elevations, they are now covered with a reddish composition shingle, as are the end gable roofs of the projecting bays. This was a product of the early 1980s seismic safety program. These roof surfaces are not visible from the public right-of-way.

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The asymmetrical composition of the facade is anchored by the three slightly projecting bays of the main entry and SE and NW gable ends of the building, which also act as counterpoint to the mixture of tall arched window openings and rectangular, three part aluminum industrial sash that characterize the planar surfaces of this elevation. Three large arched window openings to the left of the main entrance are articulated by projecting piers, capped with cast cement consoles where they sweep back to pierce the roofline with bollard like projections. Sheet copper spandrels with pressed figures in relief, supported by narrow, fluted columns front these openings. The SE projecting bay has two banks of the industrial type windows in a 1/2/1 rhythm.

The pattern of fenestration along the wing to the right of the main entrance has three banks of 1/3/1 industrial windows. The NW end bay has three tall arched openings capped with projecting roundheaded hoods springing from foliated cast cement brackets. The slightly recessed cement spandrels between the first and second floor are plain, and emphasize the horizontal line of the wing. (A smaller scaled set of three arched windows can be found on the central entry gable at the second floor to the left of main doorway.)

The shorter leg of the original ell plan of the main school building, facing the NW, continues the industrial window pattern of 1/3/1 at the second-story over a series of paired single lights along the first floor. This elevation is articulated by two second story bays, projecting slightly from their gabled wall dormers. These features are carried on simple cast cement brackets that echo the rhythm of the tower corbel table, and incorporate that feature's spiral columns as part of their three part window forms. A tall narrow chimney, pierced at the top, with a tile roof is found on the NE side of the bay nearest the facade.

The 1928 two-story wing addition at the west end of the main school building changed the irregular ell plan into a U. This wing was stepped back from the earlier building with a square stairwell connecting the two structures. A side gabled roof was employed across the short axis of the new wing at its NW end to match the appearance of the earlier building.

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The rest of the roof surface is flat. All of the school's flat roof surfaces are covered with tar and gravel. Fenestration in the new wing continued the use of the 1/3/1 industrial windows on both floors. All second story windows in the main school building, along the SW rear elevations have been fitted with temporary metal brise-soleil.

The 1949 commercial arts addition to the main school building by Blanchard & Maher turned the U plan into an F configuration. The one-story stuccoed wood frame building has a monitor roof, covered in composition shingle. Fenestration is a continuous ribbon band of three lights. They are narrow awning types, above and below a fixed, square obscure glass panel.

**2. Auditorium (1923, music wing addition 1928-29)**

The Auditorium is a two-story reinforced concrete building, basically rectangular in plan resting on a concrete foundation. It has a one-story wood frame music building addition to the rear (SW), also on a concrete foundation. The exterior wall cladding of the auditorium and music wing is stucco. The auditorium is in a basilica form. The NE facing facade is symmetrical, and is characterized by a massive central entry in the shape of a triumphal arch, with one-story tiled shed roofed bays on either side. The forebay of the deeply recessed compound arch entry springs from a pair of decorative lintels supported on cast cement columns and pilasters with Corinthian capitals. Spiral columns articulate the inner walls of the arch. The massive rectangular double wooden doors have glazed panels. The word AUDITORIUM incised into a cement spandrel separates the doors from a fixed arched window with turned wooden grille above. A decorative frieze of cherubs in arcaded niches caps the entry below a slightly overhanging hipped roof, covered in Spanish tile.

Three arched windows, springing from two spiral columns with slightly projecting cast cement hoods, are found directly above the shed roofed bays on either side of the main entry. They are inset with pierced wooden screens. Single, fixed diamond patterned windows are centered high in each of these side bays, which function as bathrooms.

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The outside corners of the bays are enriched by cast concrete consoles capped with urns, forming the base for curved buttresses that sweep up the auditorium's facade, ending with a tile coping just under the main roof. A round louvered wooden vent is centered in the gable head above the central entry. Two small one-story gabled bays project from either side elevation of the auditorium just behind the facade, acting as exits. single windows in these features are covered with ornamental metal grilles.

One-story closed aisles run along the side elevations between the projecting exits and the two-story cross-axial stage area to the rear (SW) of the auditorium. These aisles are treated as blind arcades with small fixed multi-paned wood windows centered in each slightly recessed arch. The second story side walls are characterized by tall rectangular window openings between slightly projecting buttresses. The windows are large fixed nine light wood sash, subdivided into modular units, three high and two wide. Four of the original five bays where these windows appear were plastered over in 1970 as part of a fire safety program. Because of the extensive landscaping, the change does not detract from the overall quality of the building's form and mass. Round window openings appear on either end gable wall of the stage area, similar to the one found on the facade. The medium pitched cross-gabled main roof of the auditorium is original, covered with Spanish tile. The remaining window openings are also original.

The 1928-29 one-story wood framed music building retained the same basic rectangular plan, and repeated the cross-gable form of the auditorium stage at the SW end of the addition. The stucco exterior wall cladding easily united the newer construction with the earlier building. The Brewster Ave. side elevation ( NW), continues the blind arcade of the auditorium, with paired, rather than single windows in the recessed arches. The larger cross-gabled orchestra room has a slightly projecting central bay with a large, arched focal window, framed behind cast cement pilasters with portrait busts in relief of famous composers. The simple window hood that springs from these pilasters is scored to suggest voussoirs. The window itself is fixed multi-pane metal sash. Flanking pairs of tall rectangular wood windows seperated by single cast concrete columns symmetrically balance the focal window. Slightly raised stucco quoins define the edges of this feature. The access door is on the rear of the addition.

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The SE side elevation is characterized by a row of tall, eight light triple-hung wood sash windows. these appear on the orchestra room end gable as a single block in a 1/2/1 pattern.

The round opening, found under the principal end gables of the auditorium, appears above this window set. The medium pitched cross-gabled roofs are covered in a reddish composition shingle.

### **3. Girls Gymnasium ( 1928-29, alterations 1970)**

The Girls Gymnasium is located at the southern edge of the main campus complex. It is a two-story concrete block building, rectangular in plan with one-story wood framed wings wrapping around the gym enclosure on two sides. The building rests on a concrete foundation. The exterior wall cladding is stucco. The roof of the main gym is cross-gabled, with the side gabled facade facing NW. This elevation is characterized by a broad expanse of tiered metal awning windows in four banks of three windows each. These are original to the 1928-29 period of construction. A one-story wood framed arcaded entry with a flat roof projects from the gym's offset first floor entry. Fenestration along the NE side elevation is original with pairs of two tiered metal awning windows high in the wall, separated by simple buttresses. The window in the cross-gable end wall on this elevation is similar to those found on the facade. A round louvered vent, like those on the auditorium and music building is found in the gable head.

The flat roofed one-story wood framed wings along the SE and SW elevations of the main gym house the girls athletic department offices, changing areas, showers and bathroom facilities. The first floor windows along these elevations were changed to aluminum sash in 1961. Other changes include the plastering over of the second story gym windows along the SW side elevation in 1970. The outlines of the paired window forms can be clearly seen between the buttresses along this elevation, but the larger window opening in the end gable wall is no longer visible. Only a round louvered vent remains in the gable head. The original Spanish tile roof was recovered in a reddish composition shingle in 1980, and small shed dormered roof skylights on the gym were replaced by stack type vents.

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Despite these modifications there has been no change in the basic form or mass of the building, which is viewed at a distance, across open playing fields from public streets.

**4. Cafeteria (1928-29, minor alterations 1970)**

The Cafeteria and boiler room is a one-story wood framed building irregular in plan resting on a concrete foundation. Its flat roof with narrow coping is covered in tar and gravel. The chief character defining feature of the building is the open arcaded walkway that wraps around three of its sides. The flat roof of this stuccoed wood frame arcade is slightly lower than the cafeteria roof and connects it with the 1928-29 U addition of the main school building to the NW, the girls gym to the SE, and the main school building to the NE. Fenestration is irregular, the original individual wood sash windows were replaced with aluminum awning type in 1961. Some minor inside alterations were made following an interior fire in 1970.

**5. Machine Shop (1932 with Wood Shop addition, 1940)**

The Machine Shop is one-story, I shaped in plan, and constructed of reinforced concrete on a concrete foundation. The exterior wall cladding is stucco. The hipped roof is supported on an open steel truss. The roof covering is a composition shingle. Fenestration is symmetrical, with fifteen single metal industrial sash windows wrapping around the short stem of the I at the NE facade, in groups of three. The long stem of the I is characterized by ribbon windows of the same type, separated by simple concrete buttresses. Round clay tile vents flush with the wall, reminiscent of southwestern canals, are found above these windows.

The 1940 Wood shop addition to the rear of the machine shop is one-story, wood framed and rectangular in plan, resting on a concrete foundation. The exterior stucco finish matches that of the machine shop, as do the metal industrial sash ribbon windows that make up its fenestration. A side approach, concrete ramp, covered with a flat wooden roof carried on steel posts is found along the SE elevation of the woodshop.

**6. Brewster Avenue Gate (1924)**

The original Brewster Avenue Gate is composed of four, square stuccoed concrete posts with simple capitals. The two taller posts that frame the driveway are mounted with large, bronze sconces carrying torch like lights. These posts also support a simple double iron grille gate. The lower outer posts frame flanking pedestrian walkways. There have been no changes to this feature.

**7. El Camino Real Entrance (1941, restored 1991)**

In 1940 the original 1924 Spanish Colonial Revival style pedestrian gate at El Camino Real was demolished in a realignment of Broadway. The new entry, designed by the San Francisco architectural firm of Blanchard and Maher, used a high, stuccoed concrete wall for part of the entry, reflecting the character of the original school construction. It included pedestrian pass throughs facing each street, then curved inward toward a wider, central entry with double iron gates, similar to those found on Brewster Avenue. The curved wall carried the school's name in large, flush mounted metal letters. This feature was fronted by wooden pergolas, supported on pairs of dark stained round wooden posts. The open central entry was covered by a narrow side gabled tiled roof, carried on traditional Japanese wood brackets, supported by wooden posts. The entry was restored in 1991 with funding from the school's alumni association.

**Interiors**

Because of the continuous use of Sequoia high school as a secondary educational institution from 1923 to the present, there have been continuing changes to the interiors of the school. These have come in response to technical advances in classroom lighting and instructional equipment, legislative requirements for the protection of life safety and the necessity to adjust to an expanding student population.

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While the general layout of the classroom spaces in the main school building appear to be essentially the same as when constructed, new and larger lockers line the hall corridors. Acoustical ceiling tile and lighting grids have altered the look of the auditorium. The interior of the cafeteria has undergone a series of remodels for more efficiency. The original interior paint finishes have also changed over time.

The only noteworthy interior feature identified is the wooden roof truss system employed in the girls gym. Here, a series of five heavy wood scissors trusses, carried on cast concrete brackets, support the roof on exposed purlins. The vertical members of the trusses are ornately carved, with turned drop pendants below the lower chord. Unfortunately it was impossible to photograph this feature as the trusses and roof surface are both painted a dark brown.

### **Noncontributing Buildings**

#### **8. Auto Shop (1948)**

The Auto Shop is a one-story, wood framed and rectangular in plan, resting on a concrete foundation. The exterior stucco finish matches that of the wood shop and machine shop, as do the metal industrial sash ribbon windows that make up its fenestration. Its flat roof is covered with tar and gravel.

#### **9. Boys Gymnasium (1958)**

A two-story concrete block gymnasium rectangular in plan, resting on a concrete slab foundation. Block concrete piers around the building's perimeter help support a wide overhanging flat roof covered with tar and gravel. Wide recessed entries appear on the NW and SE side elevations towards the NE. Fenestration is irregular with metal casement sash in ribbon bands on the NW side elevation.



**10. Lenkurt Science Lab (1958)**

A one-story concrete block science building rectangular in plan, resting on a concrete foundation. A wide, stuccoed roof parapet conceals the mechanical equipment for the science labs conducted inside. The parapet overhangs the NW and SE side elevations supporting Brise soleil that shade the continuous ribbon band of industrial casement sash between concrete block piers.

**11. Swimming Pool (1960, repaired in 1989)**

A concrete swimming pool and deck constructed in 1960 to replace an original pool built in 1928-29. The pool was repaired and resurfaced in 1989 and metal bleachers were erected.

**Athletic Fields and Related Features**

The athletic fields and playing courts at Sequoia High School generally remain in the same physical locations where they were originally sited. The 1924 football field and running track have always been in the eastern quarter of the campus, near the intersection of El Camino Real and James Avenue. Baseball, hockey and other field sports have been played at the SW end of the campus, along Elwood Street. However, over time these facilities have been modified and altered to meet the requirements of expanding enrollments.

The football field and track were rebuilt in 1953 and new metal bleachers added. More bleachers were built in 1958. The new tennis courts constructed along James Ave. in 1943 were re-built in 1988-89. The baseball diamond, Basketball and volleyball courts immediatly SW of the girls gym, all built in 1943 were refurbished and resurfaced in 1993. Because of the numerous changes and modifications to these features, none are being counted as contributors for the purpose of this nomination.

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Sequoia Union High School is significant at the local level under Criterion A, as the first secondary school in San Mateo County, and for its innovative educational programs in Redwood City from 1923 to 1945. Sequoia is also significant at the state level under Criterion B, for the contributions of its long time music director Otis M. Carrington in the field of operatic music for children. The property is significant at the local level under Criterion C, as the first, and only remaining example of the Spanish Colonial Revival-style in a major public building in the community of Redwood City.

Sequoia Union High School was the first secondary educational institution established in the region between San Francisco and the city of Santa Clara. Opened September 16, 1895, it was created as a preparatory school for Stanford University. Redwood City was chosen as the location for the new high school, and the name Sequoia was selected as representative of the entire district.

With the addition of two new elementary schools in Redwood City by the end of WWI, it was clear that expansion of the high school would soon be needed. An opportunity to realize the goal of a new high school campus presented itself in the summer of 1920. At Sequoia's annual commencement exercise on June 24th, the *Redwood City Standard* reported that "In his address, Roy W. Cloud, Superintendent of Schools of San Mateo County made a strong appeal to the people of Redwood City to acquire the property on the west side of the state highway in this city, to be used as a memorial park and also as a new high school site". Cloud noted that the forty acre parcel contained beautifully improved grounds, and that the owner was willing to sell for \$80,000, provided the property was to be used for municipal or educational purposes.

The proposed Sequoia High School campus had originally been a part of the large Las Pulgas Rancho granted to the heirs of Jose Dario Arguello by the Mexican government in 1835. The Board of Land Commissioners, established by the United States government after California was admitted to statehood in 1850, confirmed the Arguello's title to the rancho in 1853.

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During the confirmation process the Arguello's sold a 2,200 acre parcel to one of the three land commissioners, William Carey Jones. Jones in turn sold the property to San Mateo County lawmaker Horace Hawes in 1857. Hawes constructed an elegant, well landscaped estate he called "Redwood Farm" along the old county road on the forty acres site of the future high school. In 1880 Hawes widow sold the farm to Moses Hopkins, brother of Mark Hopkins, who raised and bred blooded horses.

On July 2, 1902 cement magnate William J. Dingee purchased the Hopkins estate, remodeling the house and outbuildings and transforming the grounds into "Dingee Park". He converted a rockery at the rear of the house into a scene with cascades and fountains with a rustic summer house built in its midst. This natural feature would be translated, over time, into Sequoia High School's "Japanese Tea Garden". Dingee began to subdivide the property in 1908, laying out streets and town lots allowing Redwood City to grow westward. His own forty acre family estate was designated as a "proposed hotel site". A failed attempt to corner the cement market bankrupted Dingee. In 1909 ownership of the property passed to noted San Francisco architect Albert Pissis and his wife Georgia. It was Georgia Pissis, who offered to sell the land for municipal use in 1920.

Redwood City rapidly prepared and passed school bond issues for the purchase of the property and construction of the new facilities for Sequoia. In 1921 the high school district board of trustees hired a new principal, Arnold Clarence Argo. Argo had taught school for some time in the Pacific northwest and been an elementary school principal before attending Stanford University, where he received his master's degree in education just prior to being hired as both principal and district superintendant. He brought to Sequoia a much wider view of education than his predecessors.

## **EDUCATION**

A.C. Argo's contribution, and that of the faculty he hired between 1923 and 1945 was not only a modern physical plant for Sequoia High School but also the expansion of the institution's educational scope.

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Chief among his innovations was to make the student body collectively responsible for the general care of the new campus. In order to teach co-operation and to gain knowledge and skills supplementing those learned in the classroom a strong student activity program was carried on. This included the establishment of a modern student commissioner form of government in 1924, with a student court, to promote improved human relations.

The school maintained a functional curriculum, adjusted to the basic needs and abilities of the students. While there was a continuing emphasis on college preparation, strong programs were offered in the fine and practical arts, and a comprehensive and effective adult education program was developed. On the practical side a formal gardening and elementary horticulture class used the new campus with its extensive native and exotic plantings as a field laboratory, while helping maintain the grounds. There were occupational outcomes involved since there was a big cut-flower industry in San Mateo County as well as a number of large estates requiring gardeners.

On the academic side, the English department, as an example, concentrated on the development of communication skills. Its journalism program produced consistent national award winning publications including the school newspaper, the *Sequoia Times*. During the 1930s and 1940s, under the aegis of Stanford University, the high school participated in nation-wide educational studies that undertook innovations in curriculum and instruction. One such program, initiated at Sequoia, was titled Social Living. About twenty high schools throughout the country took part. A single instructor remained with the same group of ninth and tenth grade students over a two year period, also acting as their guidance counselor. The course content was an interdisciplinary approach to English and history.

Because of the commitment of the community through a strong school board, a participatory and enthusiastic student body, a functional and innovative curriculum, and a well trained and devoted faculty, Sequoia Union High School was consistently ranked as one of the top two secondary schools in the State of California during the period of significance, 1923-1945.

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**OTIS M. CARRINGTON (1884-1964)**

Among the many well trained faculty members who have taught at Sequoia Union High School over the years, the name of Otis M. Carrington stands out particularly. He joined the teaching staff in 1907 as the art and music instructor, and went on to head the music department he developed at the school, teaching an unprecedented forty three years.

Mr. Carrington is best remembered as one of the world's foremost composers of operettas for children. In 1912 Carrington felt his students were ready to perform an operetta. While there was a large body of musical literature to choose from, all of it was written for professional singers, and not for the voices of school children. Unable to find an appropriate composition, that year Mr. Carrington wrote his own, "The Windmills of Holland". It was the first of more than forty operettas to come from his hand, and led American music critics like Harold Rogers of the *Christian Science Monitor* to call him "the leader of the operatic field of educational music".

Otis Carrington understood the limitations of young singers and always worked within those limitations. Between 1923 and 1945 Student productions of his operettas were standard fare at Sequoia High and at Redwood City elementary schools. Sequoia was the testing ground for his work. Many of the characters in his musical pieces were named after his students. Such productions helped the composer/libretist work out necessary changes prior to formal publication. He and B.E. Myers, an instructor in the commercial arts department at Sequoia, published and distributed the work as Meyers & Carrington, School Operettas, with Carrington doing the art work for the cover designs.

Popular titles created during the period of significance included "In Grand Old Swtzerland", "Bits of Blarney", "The Dizzy Baton" and "Polished Pebbles". The success of these children's operettas is evidenced by their over twenty five thousand presentations worldwide. The majority of composer/libretist's children's operatic work was created between 1923 and 1945 at Sequoia High School, as an integral part of Carrington's productive teaching career.

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Otis M. Carrington was the only California composer to make such a significant contribution to the art form of operatic music for children, qualifying his accomplishment for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the state level under Criterion B.

### **ARCHITECTURE**

Sequoia union High School derives its significance under Criterion C as the first and only remaining example of the Spanish Colonial Revival-style in a major public building in the community of Redwood City. The physical plant has been somewhat modified over time, due in part to changing state school construction regulations. The contributing school buildings in their park like campus setting retain sufficient integrity to afford a very strong sense of time and place, as well as feeling and association. Any student who attended Sequoia High School from the 1920s through the 1940s would easily recognize the campus today.

By the beginning of the 1920s, the Spanish Colonial Revival style, introduced by Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue at the 1915 Panama-California Exposition in San Diego, was becoming one of the most popular architectural forms in California. It was seen everywhere, in residential, commercial and public building construction. Aside from being at the height of fashion, the modern material components of the mode, reinforced concrete for walls and clay tile for roofing, offered a high degree of fire and seismic safety. The characteristic asymmetry of the style made it especially suitable for the design of schools with their varied programmatic requirements. Such was the case with Sequoia High School which used a unit plan form of construction.

Most high schools in the early 1920s were constructed with classrooms, auditorium and gymnasium in one building. Sequoia's innovative design separated these functions into three units, (buildings) interconnected by arcaded walkways. Architect Alfred I. Coffey noted, "In this way a play, a basketball game, and night school can be going on at the same time, one not interfering with the other".

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Coffey selected the unit plan for Sequoia to accommodate growth of the initial student population of about 475 (1924), to a projected maximum capacity of 2,000. The design allowed for the addition of wings to the main school building without extensive disruption of classes. Modern conveniences found in the \$500,000 physical plant included telephones and loud speakers in each classroom and an electrically operated clock and bell system. There was even a hot air dryer in the gym for students after their showers.

Both Carl Werner (1875-1943) and Alfred I. Coffey (1866-1931) are credited with the 1923 Spanish Colonial Revival design of Sequoia Union High School. While no specific records exist as to the delegation of responsibilities, it can be surmised from their respective backgrounds that Mr. Werner's hand can be best recognized in the general aesthetic appearance of the building complex, while Mr. Coffey concentrated his skills on the programmatic layout. What is clear, from the record, is that there was considerable interchange between the high school's administrative and academic staff and the architects on the school's functional requirements. The use of double walls in the music building to muffle the sound of voices and instruments is a case in point.

At the time of Sequoia's construction, Carl Werner was engaged in a major project designing new temples for the Masonic Order in Northern and Central California. The majority of these building designs were of classical derivation with a leaning toward the Italian and Spanish Renaissance. An illustration of the Santa Barbara Masonic Temple in the June 1923 issue of *The Architect and Engineer* shows an ornate entry portal that was probably the model for the Sequoia auditorium. Werner, whose early career included the design for a number of Nob Hill residences in San Francisco, also designed Lowell High School in that city, and Alameda High School in his east bay hometown.

Alfred I. Coffey was the designer of the original Sequoia High School building in 1904. Mr. Coffey made his home in Redwood City, and practiced in San Francisco where, between 1910-1912 he was city architect.

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He was most well known for his school and hospital designs, which included McKinley Grammar School, and the St. Francis Hospital on Bush St. in San Francisco. It was Coffey who drew all of the 1928-29 additions to Sequoia, including the machine shop building. His work on this initial expansion of the campus was extremely sympathetic to the original design. Coffey died in 1931, and another San Francisco firm, Blanchard and Maher assumed architectural responsibility for the high school.

It is difficult to compare the design qualities of Sequoia High School with other secondary schools of the period in Redwood City, as the next high school in that community wasn't constructed until 1948.

The same is true for San Mateo County in general, as San Mateo Union High School, founded in 1902, was built in the Academic Gothic mode.

In 1923 Sequoia was the first major public building in Redwood City to employ the Spanish colonial revival style. As such it directly influenced the design of the few institutional buildings constructed in the general area of the campus, west of El Camino Real. The most obvious is the Spanish Colonial Revival design of the 1925 First United Methodist Church, immediately adjacent to the campus on the NW, at the intersection of Brewster Ave. and Broadway. The grammar school and auditorium of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Catholic Church, a few blocks west of the school, built in 1932 is also reflective of Sequoia's stylistic influence. The First United Methodist Church, while still basically intact as constructed in 1925, has suffered from deferred maintenance over the past few years, while Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Catholic Church has undergone a number of remodelings and a major addition that have diminished the original character defining features of the 1932 building complex.

Sequoia Union High School with its stuccoed wall surfaces, red tile and composition roofs and tower, tall arched windows and massive wooden doors articulated by decorative elements drawn from the vocabulary of Spanish architecture, in its landscaped setting of mature trees and shrubbery, is the best example of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture in a public building in Redwood City.



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In spite of the changes over time described below, architectural historian David Gebhard's published comment that "the plant looks almost as though it had been here for centuries" still rings true.

As a product of the Field Act in the mid 1930s, and subsequent school safety legislation, some of Sequoia's original historic fabric has been removed or covered over, particularly the clay tile roofs on the main school building and the girls gym. Interior spaces throughout the campus have been modified over time and subdivided with separation walls for fire protection. In spite of these changes, and the out of character 1958 replacement for the original boys gym, Sequoia High school still retains much of its integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and feeling and association. Viewed from adjacent public streets the setting, form and mass of the main campus appear much as they did during the period of significance 1923-1945.

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100 Years." Education in California.

Jones, F.W., "Some Recent Work of Carl Werner, Architect." The Architect  
And Engineer. #3 (June, 1923).

Krantz, E.C., Transcript from a talk presented to the Exchange Club of  
Redwood City. Located in the Redwood City Public Library. N/D.

Original plans and drawings for Sequoia Union High School 1923-1991.  
Located in the Office of Maintenance and Operations of the Sequoia  
High School District, 480 James St., Redwood City.

Sanborn Company, Sanborn Insurance Maps. Redwood City, CA Sheet 19,  
1919-1968. Hartford, Conn.

**Interviews August-September, 1993 by Kent L. Seavey**

John Carrington, son of Otis M. Carrington.

Patrick Keller, Architect who worked on Sequoia with firm of Blanchard and  
Maher in 1940s. Mr. Keller also restored the Broadway & El Camino  
Real gate in 1990.

Francis Hutchinson, former principal at Sequoia (1970s), who was a student  
at the high school in the 1930s.

Carol Wright, oldest daughter of Otis M. Carrington.

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Acreage of Property:

UTM References: Zone    Easting    Northing

1.	105675004148860	2.	105677404148880	3.	105679004148700
4.	105677404148520	5.	105676204148560	6.	105675004148440
7.	105673004148760				

Verbal Boundry Description:

Sequoia High School is located at 1201 Brewster Avenue, Redwood City, California. It sits on 34.516 acres of its original 39.516 site bound by El Camino Real on the northeast, Elwood Street on the southwest, Brewster Avenue and Broadway on the nothwest and James Avenue on the southeast. The northeastern boundry of the nominated site is El Camino Real, the southeastern is James , and the southwestern is Elwood Street. The northwestern boundry is Brewster Avenue, which intersects Broadway toward the northern quarter of the campus. The boundry excludes the 5 acre parcel of the Sequoia High School District Offices at the southern corner of the campus on James, between Duane and Elwood Streets.

Boundry Justification:

The boundries of the National Register nomination for Sequoia Union High School, described above, are based on the street boundries of the original estate site sold by Mrs. Albert Pissis for the school complex. However, due to the development of 5 acres in the southern corner of the property for the Sequoia High School District offices, the southern boundry line has been drawn along the fenceline that separates the school campus from the 1958 district office complex. The nominated property is identified as Assessor's Parcel Number 052-201-010.

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( Except where noted the information for items 1 through 5 are the same for  
all photographs listed.)

- #1 1. Sequoia Union High School  
2. 1201 Brewster Ave., Redwood City, CA 94063  
3. unknown  
4. 1943  
5. Redwood City Public Library, Redwood City, CA  
6. Looking in a southerly direction at the Camino Real & Broadway  
entrance gate to the high school from the NE side of El Camino  
Real. Note park like setting.  
7. Photograph #1 of 24.
- #2 3. Kent L. Seavey  
4. 1993  
6. Looking in a southerly direction from the NE side of El Camino  
Real at the same view as photo #1.  
7. Photograph #2 of 24.
- #3 3. unknown  
4. 1930  
6. Looking NE from above Elwood St. in an aerial view of the  
campus. Note second floor window treatment of girls gym  
at right center.  
7. Photograph #3 of 24.
- #4 3. Kent L. Seavey  
4. 1993  
6. Looking in a northerly direction from the SW playing fields  
toward the main campus. Note second floor window treatment  
of girls gym at right center.  
7. Photograph #4 of 24.

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- #5    3.    unknown  
      4.    Ca. 1925  
      6.    Looking SW toward the NE facade of the main school building.  
          Note figures in right foreground on cement benches from  
          period of Dingee/Pissis ownership.  
      7.    Photograph #5 of 24.
- #6    3.    Kent L. Seavey  
      4.    1993  
      6.    Looking westerly toward the NE facade of the main school  
          building. Note window and roof changes from photo #5.  
      7.    Photograph #6 of 24.
- #7    6.    Looking SW toward the NE facing classroom wing extending to  
          the right of the main school building entry.  
      7.    Photograph #7 of 24.
- #8.    6.    Looking NE toward the original NW classroom wing of the main  
          school building. Note the projecting second story bays that  
          articulate the long wall expanse.  
      7.    Photograph #8 of 24.
- #9    3.    unknown  
      4.    Ca.1928  
      6.    Looking in a northerly direction from an arcaded pass through  
          along the SW side of the main campus toward the "Japanese  
          Tea Garden". In 1970s the oak tree seen at right split and  
          destroyed the pre 1906 wooden structure at the center.  
      7.    Photograph #9 of 24.
- #10    3.    Kent L. Seavey  
      4.    1993  
      6.    Same view as photograph #9. Wall at left is part of 1928-29  
          classroom wing addition. Note brise-soleil on windows to right.  
      7.    Photograph #10 of 24.

National Register of Historic Places  
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Section number Photographs Page 3 Sequoia High School, San Mateo Co., CA

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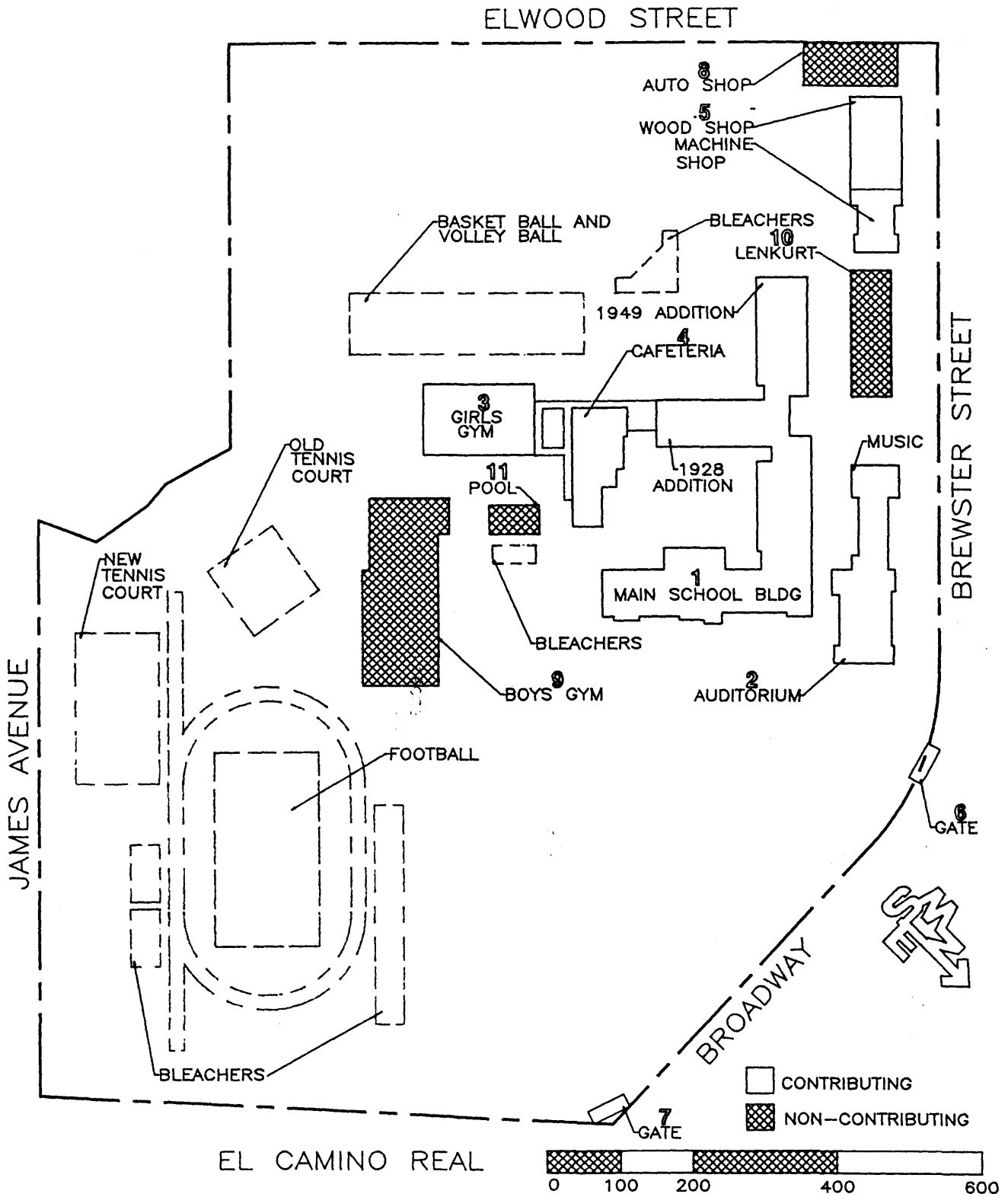
- #11 6. Looking north toward the SW facing 1939 library addition to the main school building. Note wood detailing used to unify design with features then existing in the "Japanese Tea Garden".  
7. Photograph #11 of 24.
- #12 6. Looking SW toward the 1949 commercial arts addition, extending SW from the rear of the main school buildings NW wing.  
7. Photograph #12 of 24.
- #13. 6. Looking NW toward the SE side elevation of the auditorium from the front lawn of the main school building. Note massive eucalyptus tree masking some second story window infill.  
7. Photograph #13 of 24.
- #14 6. Looking westerly at NE facade of auditorium.  
7. Photograph #14 of 24.
- #15 6. Looking in an easterly direction toward the focal window on the 1928-29 music building addition to the rear of the auditorium from the Brewster St. side of the campus.  
7. Photograph #15 of 24.
- #16 6. Looking east toward the NW facade and SW side elevation of the 1928-29 girls gym from basketball courts along SW side of campus. Note window infill along second floor of side elevation.  
7. Photograph #16 of 24.
- #17 6. Looking SW towards the NE side elevation of the girls gym from an open courtyard. Stack type vents replaced shed roof skylights in 1980s. Original tile roof replaced with reddish composition shingle at the same time.  
7. Photograph #17 of 24.

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Section number Photographs Page 4 Sequoia High School, San Mateo Co., CA  
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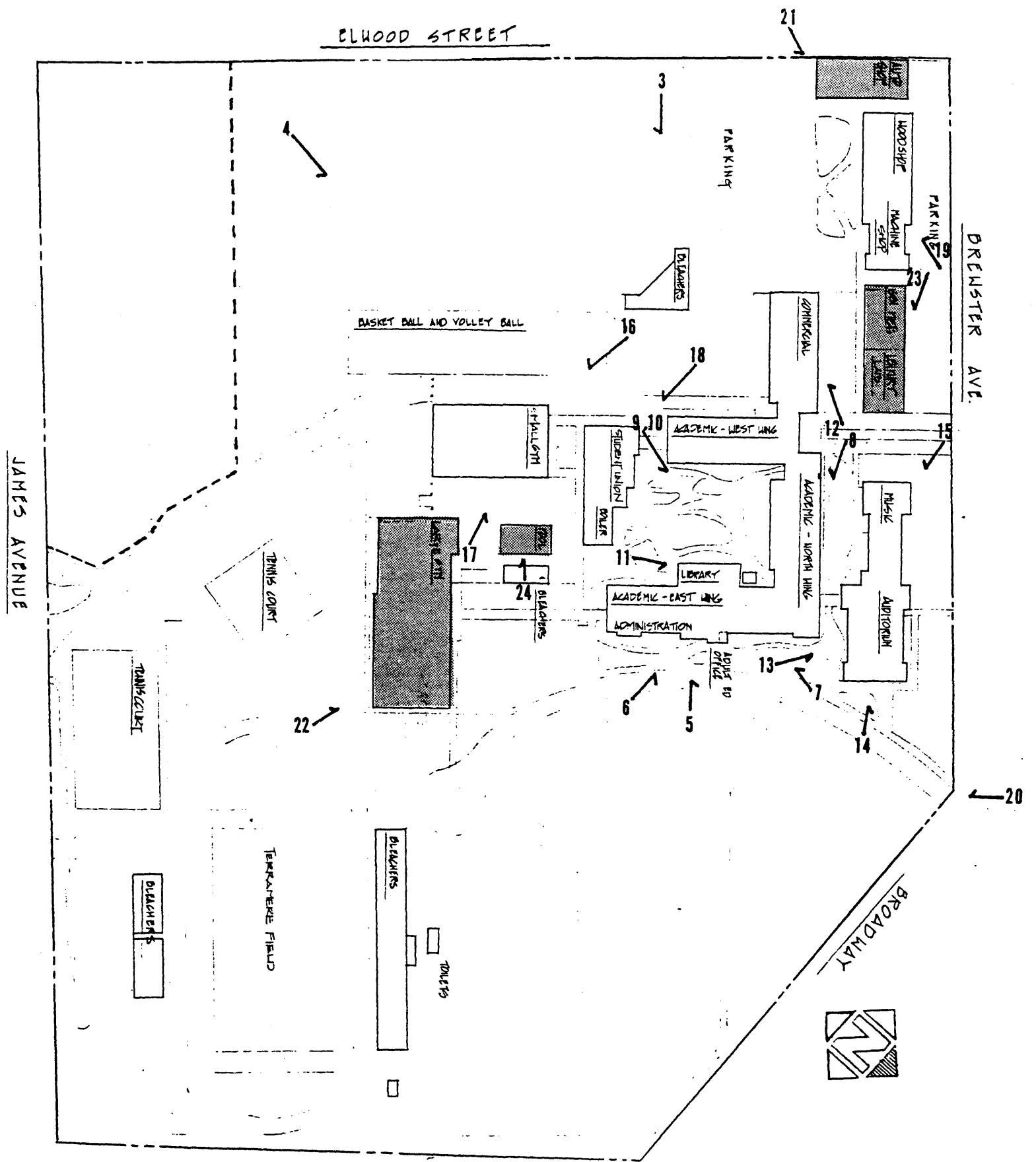
- #18 6. Looking east toward the NW rear, and SW side elevations of the 1928-29 cafeteria and boiler room building. The side elevation is to the right. Note arcade connection to girls gym.  
7. Photograph #18 of 24.
- #19 6. Looking SW at the NW side elevation of the 1932 machine shop building from faculty parking lot. 1940 wood shop addition is visible to right.  
7. Photograph #19 of 24.
- #20 6. Looking east at the NW facing main school entrance from Brewster Avenue.  
7. Photograph #20 of 24.
- #21 6. Looking north from Elwood St. at the SE side, and SW rear elevations of the noncontributing 1948 auto shop building. Note compatible design relationship with other shop buildings.  
7. Photograph #21 of 24.
- #22 6. Looking NW at the SE rear and NE side elevations of the non-contributing 1958 boys gym.  
7. Photograph # 22 of 24.
- #23 6. Looking east at the NW side and SE rear elevations of the non-contributing 1958 Lenkurt Lab building. View from faculty parking lot along Brewster Avenue. Music building is to the left, behind screen of trees. Corner of machine shop shows to the right.  
7. Photograph #23 of 24.
- #24 6. Looking SW at the 1960 swimming pool from the pool bleachers on the NE side.  
7. Photograph #24 of 24.





SEQUOIA UNION HIGH SCHOOL, REDWOOD CITY, CA  
 SKETCH MAP - 1994

San Mateo County



EL CAMINO REAL

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**SEQUOIA UNION HIGH SCHOOL, REDWOOD CITY, CA**  
**PHOTOGRAPHIC KEY**  
 San Mateo County