1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: **FRANKLIN SCHOOL**

Other Name/Site Number: **Franklin, Benjamin, Schoolhouse**

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 925 13th Street, NW Not for publication: N/A

City/Town: Washington Vicinity: N/A

State: D.C. County: N/A Code: 001 Zip Code: 20005

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property		Category of Property	
Private:	___	Building(s):	X
Public-Local:	___	District:	___
Public-State:	X	Site:	___
Public-Federal:	___	Structure:	___
		Object:	___

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
_____	_____	Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 1

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: N/A

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.

Signature of Certifying Official Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

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
___ Determined eligible for the National Register
___ Determined not eligible for the National Register
___ Removed from the National Register
___ Other (explain):

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic:	EDUCATION	Sub:	school
Current:	EDUCATION	Sub:	education-related

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: RENAISSANCE REVIVAL

MATERIALS:

Foundation:	BRICK
Walls:	BRICK
Roof:	SLATE
Other:	STONE/limestone
	TERRA COTTA
	METAL/iron, cast iron

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The Franklin School Building stands at the S.E. corner of Thirteenth and K Streets, N.W., facing west toward Franklin Square, four blocks from the White House in the national capital. It was designed by German-American architect Adolf Cluss of the architectural firm of Cluss and Kammerhueber in the winter of 1864-65 as the Civil War drew to a close. Construction began under post-war conditions of seemingly insurmountable difficulty in the fall of 1865 with George M. Downing selected as builder. Work was continued by architect Cluss after Downing's death in December 1868, and completed with J. G. Naylor as builder in September 1869. Cluss described the building's style as "Modern Renaissance" and linked it aesthetically with the brick architecture of the *Cinque Cento* in Lombardy. The design of Franklin School exemplifies the *Rumbogenstil* aesthetic heritage brought to this country by German political emigrants after 1848 and should not be confused with the French Second Empire style of the same period.

Franklin School is approximately 148 feet long on its principal facade on Thirteenth Street facing Franklin Square and 79 feet wide on its K Street facade. It is bounded on the south by an alley. An eastern rear yard, 148' x 32', runs from K Street to this alley. A brick wall extends from the northeast corner of the building to the rear property line, enclosing the rear yard from K Street. This wall is surmounted by a wrought iron fence embellished with distinctive distinctive eagle and star detail. The brick masonry structure is solidly built upon bluestone foundations. Sited on high ground in the vicinity of springs, subjected repeatedly in recent years to the severe physical stress imposed by heavy vehicular traffic and the construction of many new maximum envelop high-rise buildings in its immediate vicinity, this massive building remains structurally sound and uncompromised. Although much of the original exterior detail was lost over the years, it was substantially restored with painstaking accuracy in 1992, under a grant from the Sigal/Zuckerman Company with Oehrlein & Associates as architects. The major alteration to the original appearance of the Franklin School lies in the realignment of the entrance stairs so that they are parallel instead of perpendicular to the facade. This change was necessitated by the widening of Thirteenth Street in 1928.

The facade composition of Franklin School is bilaterally symmetrical, three stories high with an English basement accommodating the steep grade of Thirteenth Street. A dominant 78' high, mansard-roofed, five-bay central pavilion is flanked by 66' high, flat-roofed, two-bay wings to the north and south. Rising 112 feet in height above the southwest corner of the building, projecting octagonal bell-towers crowned with finely-detailed cupolas frame and emphatically present the central pavilion. Projecting octagonal towers are present at the four outermost corners of the lower, flanking wings. This cluster of six towers, one of the dominant design features of the building, houses the ventilating flues. Six chimneys with decorative corbelled brick chimney pots rise above the mansard roof, three to the north and three to the south. All six towers are crowned with high domed painted metal roofs and terminate in flame-like gold-leafed finials. The chimney roofs are similarly finished with painted metal roofs and gold-leafed finials. The mansard roof crowning the center pavilion is covered with green and blue slate laid in geometrical patterns typical of the period. An intermediate decorative dormer, tripartite with broken pediment surmounted by a colossal bust of Benjamin Franklin. Cast iron cresting crowns the mansard roof.

Franklin School is essentially two schools in one--originally planned with separate accommodation for girls and boys, with separate entrances for each. The following description of exterior facade detail is largely excerpted from architectural historian Nancy C. Taylor's 1969 National Register nomination. On either side of the central pavilion a low flight of steps leads up to an ornate cast iron entrance arch with columns supporting a round-headed decorative arch. Brick piers running through three stories define the window and entrance bays. Decorative string courses form a continuum with the window sills and separate all three floors. The horizontal is further emphasized by white stone band courses (four on the first and second stories and five on the third) which run between the windows and under the string courses at 5-foot intervals.

First and second floor windows are 4-1/2' wide x 9' high with round-headed arches and 16/12 light double-hung wooden sash. The upper sash muntins are arched and have irregular ornaments above each pair of arched upper lights. Projecting round-arched brick cornices and [cast iron] hood-moulds cap the windows. The five third-floor central pavilion windows (5' wide x 14' high) were essentially 4/4 light double-hung wooden sash with arched upper sash muntins surmounted by circular tracery. These windows are crowned by segmental-arched brick cornices and hood-moulds. Third floor windows on the side wings are 16/12 light double-hung wooden sash with arched upper sash muntins and flat lintels

without iron ornaments. Above the third-floor windows is a decorative belt composed of one corbeled brick course, three flat rows, and three more corbeled courses. In the frieze course above are the words FRANKLIN SCHOOL. The elaborate cornice is of numerous heavily corbeled brick and iron arches. The 6 bay north and south facades of the school are similar in design to the front but with the windows arranged in two groups of three.

The design of the building is based upon a system of three structural bays linked internally by two separate stair and corridor units running west to east (front to rear). There are no lateral corridors. Interior as well as exterior brick masonry structural walls of the north and south classroom units are approximately 2' at grade, providing a stable and fireproof vertical classroom envelop. The non-structural decorative pressed brick facades on thirteenth and K streets add an additional 4" at the west and north. The interior structural walls of the central classroom unit are 1 3/4' at grade, also providing, with lessened structural requirements, a stable and fireproof vertical classroom envelop. Within all individual classrooms the cloakroom partitions are also of brick masonry construction, arched to accommodate the teacher's alcove and stacked so that each supported the one above. The corridor and stair units are constructed with floors supported by plastered segmental brick arches sprung between rolled iron beams. This is a method of fireproof construction typically used by Cluss. Marble corridor floors and cast iron staircases contributed to the fireproof construction, as did slate and metal roofs.

The design of the school included modern water-closets placed in a separate structure against the east playground wall with access directly from each of the two rear stairhall entrances. The girls' playground was to the north of the corridors; the boys', to the south. A janitor's yard and water closets were located similarly between the two corridors with access from the central janitor's hall. With the exception of the north wall, none of these elements remain. A small and secluded urban park was created as part of the 1990 exterior restoration/rehabilitation of the building, providing a valuable, sensitively conceived transition between the Franklin School and the adjacent office building.

The basement originally contained two 67 by 34 foot playrooms, each located directly below the classrooms in the north and south structural bays. The one on the north was for girls and the one on the south for boys. Since there were no cloakrooms, the playrooms were bounded on all sides by the walls of the structural bays. At the mid-point of each room a brick masonry partitioning wall with a broad segmentally arched opening tentatively divided the playrooms in half and supported the partitioning walls above. It is probable that these upper walls were similarly arched to deflect the weight of the partitions above into the perimeter bearing walls. In addition, the architect's plans show four columns in each playroom along an east-west axis. There were no exterior entrances in either of these playground rooms. Entrance to each playroom was through a wide segmentally arched door in the stairhall.

Little decorative detail was used in these basement playrooms. The windows in all cases have splayed segmentally arched masonry jambs in one with the masonry walls. They are plastered and finished with a corner bead. This treatment was also used on the central masonry arch in each room. Bullnose wooden stools at each window remain. The entrance doors have interior moulded wooden jambs, segmentally arched with tripartite transoms remaining. Double entrance doors have been removed. A small paneled door at the base of the north tower is of interest. Three windows have been remodeled as doors in the north playroom; two, in the south playroom.

The central structural bay was divided into janitor's rooms. The janitor's entrance was from the center bay of the Thirteenth Street facade. It was approached through an areaway with stairs down from the south side of the areaway. This was the only original entrance to the basement from outside the school grounds. A long narrow hallway leads from this west entrance to the janitor's yard entrance at the rear of the building. A broad central cross hall runs from north to south, giving access to the stair halls and the boiler rooms originally located under the main entrance halls and probably furnishing a work space for the janitor. There are four janitor's rooms including two closets opening directly onto both of these halls.

The doors to the janitor's rooms are narrow paneled wooden doors with tripartite segmentally arched transoms and moulded wooden jambs similar to those used at the entrances to the play rooms. The windows are similar to those described in the play rooms. The areaway at the front of the building was filled when Thirteenth Street was widened, and the janitor's entrance was remodeled as a window. The janitor's yard door has also been remodeled as a window. The height of the two Thirteenth Street windows was also raised when the grade was changed. Partitions within the janitor's rooms have either been removed or altered. The doors remain in generally good condition. The vault space, originally used as coal cellars, is now used for storage.

The architect described the design of the school rooms as follows:

> Six school-rooms are provided [on the first story], each being 27 by 34 feet in size, 15 feet high in the clear, and have large cloak-rooms in the best position. Each school-room is lighted by five semicircular windows, 4 1/2 feet wide by 9 feet high, is wainscoated with oiled yellow-pine boards up to window sills. A strip of hard black plastering for blackboards extends all around the walls, for a height of 4 feet above the wainscoting. The rest of the height of the side walls and the ceiling have a sand finish, which is tinted in distemper, in colors congenial to the eye. Rebatted strips of pine form the lower mouldings of light stucco cornices, and furnish conveniences for hanging up maps. The teacher's desk and platform are placed in front of a niche--a plan introduced with success in point of economy of space, accoustics, and beauty, in the new public school house on Capitol Hill. The rooms are neatly and tastefully furnished, according to the single desk system, with 60 desks for each room. The cloak-rooms contain closets for the accommodation of teachers, a double clothes-hook for each pupil, galvanized basins with Potomac water, and a sufficient quantity of shelving for lunch baskets. The second story is of the same height, has the same subdivisions as the first and, in addition, two smaller rooms above the entrances for libraries, use of Trustees, and so on. The two central rooms are so arranged in both stories that they can be singly or together appropriated to either the male or female department by opening or closing one or the other of two communicating doors.[1]

Two classrooms were originally contained within each structural bay. Each was entered through a cloakroom rather than directly from the hall. In the central bay the cloakrooms were back to back with doors in both of the main halls. This ingenious arrangement allowed these classrooms to be assigned to either the boys' or the girls' school, according to demand, simply by opening and closing cloakroom doors. The same very tall and elegant doors, transoms and mouldings were used both at the entrances to the cloakrooms from the main hall and at the entrances from the cloakrooms to the classrooms. The transoms pivoted to allow circulation of air. The doors were fitted with closing mechanisms to secure each classroom from the main halls. Even today the beauty of sight lines through these multiple transoms can be appreciated. Within the classrooms maximum fenestration is achieved. The rooms are very light, spacious and airy. The mouldings of the window jambs are similar to those of the doors, though larger in scale. A bullnose moulding integral with the window stools forms a chair rail.

In the 125 years since Franklin School was first occupied, many alterations have occurred in the

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[1] *Dedication of the Franklin School Building* (Washington, D. C.: Chronicle Print, 1869), p. 30.

classrooms. The earliest were very minor and involved the normal adjustment of the building to its intended use. An oiled yellow pine picture moulding was added at a more convenient height than that of the picture moulding which Cluss had designed integral with the plaster cornice. This picture mould had a typical configuration and remains around the perimeter of most classrooms. On both the first and second floors doors similar to the original entrance doors were cut through the center of the cloakroom party walls to facilitate direct access between the central bay classrooms. This probably occurred when the school was no longer separated by sex. Another alteration was the installation of a typical high oiled pine wainscot with a simplified cap directly over or in place of the original low wainscot in the cloakrooms. The original base was typically covered or removed and no new base was added with this wainscot. Small display shelves supported by brackets were added at blackboard moulding height in the classrooms. Paint analysis demonstrates that these were added after 1879, while the Frances Johnston photographs c. 1899 show them in full use as teaching aids. Another useful addition was installation of wooden trays for chalk and erasers directly onto the bullnose chair rail at the bottom of the blackboards. As early as 1871, Cluss' description of Seaton School refers to such a convenience and it may be assumed that there must have been an almost immediate addition of chalk trays at Franklin.

In the beginning the building was treated with great respect as alterations were made to accommodate new educational uses. New doors and mouldings replicated the original. Even graining was reproduced. As time went on, and the building was increasingly occupied by the Board of Education for office rather than school use, more devastating alterations occurred. All of the teacher's alcoves were removed together with complete or partial removal of most cloakroom walls. All blackboards were either painted over or removed. Connecting doors were cut through party walls between classrooms. Some were finished with mouldings replicating the profile of original door mouldings. Some were more haphazard. New partitioning was introduced which soon completely disregarded the architectural character and integrity of the building. Wires, cables, pipes and other accompaniments of modernization were installed with complete disrespect and destructive effect on the original fabric, as were many cost-efficient repairs and ill-advised attempts to meet new occupancy code standards. In spite of all this, a surprising amount of original fabric has been preserved simply by being left in place or covered over. Plans are now being finalized for the restoration / rehabilitation of the building's interior for use as the Administrative Headquarters of the Board of Education.

Cluss provided two small rooms on the second floor over the main entrances to the building. One of these was intended as a library and the other as an office. At the dedication of the building the representative of the building committee reminded those gathered that the construction of Franklin School had greatly increased real estate values in the neighborhood rather than lowering them as had originally been feared. He entreated the school's former enemies to become friends and repay the school for this good fortune through "...a liberal subscription toward filling the now empty shelves of our spacious and attractive library."[2] Unanticipated in the building program, the appointment that year of a Superintendent of Schools with offices for himself and the Board of Trustees in Franklin must have caused some rethinking of the space allocation. It is probable that the Superintendent was installed in the south office on the second floor. The west center classroom on this floor has been altered with care, replicating original detail. Probably this was the first administrative expansion in the building.

At the turn of the century the residential neighborhood and resultant school use of the building declined. The teachers and students of the normal school prepared for the long-awaited move to a new building of their own, while the administrative space requirements of the new Board of Education increased. A suite of rooms at the south end of the building on the second floor adjacent to the Superintendent's Office was fashionably remodelled to address these changes. Blackboards, cloakroom walls, and other original classroom detail were removed. Pressed metal ceilings of particularly fine detail were installed. An elegantly designed arched communicating door was installed between the two classrooms, and a door replicating original detail was installed between the southwest classroom and the office. These rooms served an official use, probably as the meeting room of the Board of Education. They may have been used by the National Education Association. Pressed metal was used extensively at the turn of the century and well into the twentieth century. It was ornamental, fire-resistant, lightweight and inexpensive. It was particularly useful for remodeling. Pressed metal encloses the cloakroom beam exposed when the walls were removed. The new column rests upon the pressed metal. These rooms, including the pressed metal ceilings and other details of the alteration, are

[2] *Dedication*...p. 12.

of historic interest.

The architect describes the third story as follows:

> The third story contains the two grammar schools, each 54 by 34 feet, with large cloak-rooms attached, and separate retiring-rooms for teachers; also, a recitation room, from which the principal in charge of the building can communicate with all the school-rooms and the janitor by means of speaking tubes and bells. The main hall is centrally situated, 48 feet by 66 feet in size, and 34 feet high, surmounting the ends of the building. This plan of construction, while affording increased facilities for side light and ventilation, contributes highly to the architectural effect. The hall is lighted in front by five windows of 5 feet wide and 14 feet high, and ten smaller windows surmounting laterally the roofs of wings. Three wide semi-circular entrance doors, crowned by tasty cast-iron transoms, open from it. This spacious hall is chastely frescoed, and has, besides, a paneled ceiling, embellished by bold stucco cornices. It is furnished with settees, having mechanical contrivances for raising the seats, so as to permit setting them close without obstructing the ingress and egress of the pupils. The hall seats 1,000 children. The recitation-room is in the rear of the hall; above it there is another large room and a music-gallery, to be used on festive occasions in connection with the hall.[3]

The recitation-room in the rear of the hall is of the same height as the other class rooms; above it there is another room of the same size, and a music-gallery, 24 by 7 feet, to be used on festive occasions in connection with the hall[4]

[3] *Dedication*...pp. 30-31.

[4] *Twenty-second Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of the Public Schools of the City of Washington* (Washington, D.C. McGill & Witherow, Printers and Stereotypers, 1866), p. 31.

The two grammar school rooms and Great Hall on the third floor have been substantially altered. The original ceilings and cornices have been demolished and the ceilings lowered in all three rooms. In the grammar school rooms the original cloakrooms, including teacher's alcove and other minor walls, have almost entirely been demolished, new walls have been added, and new doors cut. The cloakroom entrances, originally up a separate flight of stairs from the landings of the main stairs between the second and third floors, have been demolished and sealed over, creating niches for water coolers. Columns which originally stood at the mid-point of each long wall in both classrooms, visually breaking up the very large space, have been removed. These columns appear in one of the circa 1899 Frances B. Johnston photographs of the normal school.

As early as 1878 the decision was made to alter the Great Hall, giving up the assembly room to accommodate a trial of the new academy system of teaching without the need to construct a new building. The paneled ceiling and stuccoed cornice were demolished. A new ceiling was hung from the original timber framing of the roof, lowering the ceiling of the Great Hall to 11' below its original level. This new structure was floored over on top to provide attic storage space. The clerestory, music-gallery arch, and upper partition of the fresco were left behind in the new attic space, where they remain today, relatively unchanged. The framing for the ceiling can still be seen in the remaining attic structural timbers. The marks left by the lath and changes in level are clearly visible as well as the mortise joints where secondary framing/moulding were attached. There is a very clear line below the framing and above the fresco which indicates the exact width of the stuccoed cornice.

The proportions and lighting of the magnificent Great Hall were forever altered; its architectural integrity destroyed along with its original use. Portions of the original fresco have been uncovered and recorded as part of the 1993 historic structures report. This fresco is an important part of the architectural concept for the building. Cluss used the fresco to impart distinctive architectural character to the considerable expanse of solid wall at either side of the Great Hall. Here the presence of the grammar school rooms ruled out any relieving openings below the clerestory. On the west wall he used the tall, decorative, and segmentally arched windows which still exist. Paint analysis has shown that the rough sand-finished walls of the Great Hall imitated the color and texture of sandstone. Upon this surface architectural detail was painted. At the upper level, now unfortunately contained in the attic, hood moulds similar to those on the exterior of the building were painted in a subdued *grisaille* manner outlining the clerestory windows. This arched detail continued in an unbroken line around all four walls of the room just below the cornice.

A similar, large scale round-arched detail was created in the room below embracing the west wall windows and east wall doors and continuing as *trompe-l'oile* fenestration along the solid north and south walls. This detail is similar in form and moulding to the three entrance doors on the east wall. The fresco continues down to the very broad baseboard, so it is clear that there was originally no wainscot in this room. Above this arcade detail a *trompe-l'oile* moulded frieze with beveled panels and alternating red and blue star motif occurs. A bold plaster cornice, similar in profile to the classroom cornices, was added below the dropped ceiling on the north and south walls. The east wall composition, centered upon the platform and music-gallery, was the focus of the Great Hall. The platform was low and elliptically curved like the teachers' platforms in the classrooms. Double bi-fold doors opened directly onto the platform from the platform of the recitation room beyond. A beaded segmentally arched opening to the music-gallery reached high into, and opened up on the east wall, the space occupied on the north and south walls by the clerestory windows. When the ceiling was lowered a proscenium feature was created as focal point of the east wall composition. Large scale cast iron columns of composite Victorian design supported the proscenium arch as well as the beams of the lowered ceiling.

The recitation room, located at the rear of the Great Hall, was originally the heart of the building, the domain of the principal. It was provided with speaking tubes which allowed communication of the principal with all of the classrooms and the janitor. It was also provided with a platform which served both for formal recitations and for access to the platform of the Great Hall beyond. Gas sconces were located at either side of the communicating platform doors here as well as in the Great Hall, indicating that the room was also used for evening programs. It probably served as a backstage area for the presentation of the cantatas which the students publicly performed here and in other locations throughout the city. Like the Great Hall, it was directly accessible to the public from the grand entrance stairs. The large cloakrooms of the grammar school rooms were also accessible here from the stair hall and were doubtless used on public occasions for those who attended events in both rooms. When the normal school was instituted in 1873, this room and the room above were remodeled for the

use of the new teachers-in-training. Blackboards and other classroom detail were added and the platform removed. The normal school classes were much-photographed in this room by Frances Johnston.

The architect described the then technologically advanced heating and ventilating system as follows:

> The method adopted for heating the building is low-pressure steam, so as to avoid all possibility of danger; the boilers, two in number, being placed one under each stairway, and so connected that either one or both can be used, as may be required. The maximum pressure to which the apparatus is limited is ten pounds per square inch. At this limit sufficient mechanical power is obtained when applied to the draft regulator to check the draft, and consequently the fire and further increase of steam; or if more steam is used, so that the force falls below the pressure required, the draft door again opens, and the fire and steam increase at the point at which the closing of the draft and the pressure of the steam are fixed. The radiators used are the vertical tube coils, placed in fireproof brick chambers. They reduce the friction offered to the free passage of the steam and back flow of the condensed water to a minimum. Fresh cold air from without is introduced to the coils by brick ducts carried under the corridors, with lateral branches leading to each coil-chamber; these ducts being large enough to provide pure air in sufficient quantities to replace that in the whole building once in every twenty minutes. The air-valves to each stack of coils are placed in the boiler- rooms, convenient to the person in charge, and out of the reach of the pupils. The ventilation is secured by closing the top of the four corner towers, by opening foul-air registers into them from the floors and ceilings of the school-rooms, and connecting them with large brick ducts below the basement floors, leading to the higher central towers in front. These latter towers are open at the top, heated in winter by steam coils placed within, and in summer by gas heaters; thereby rarefying the air and producing an *ascending* current, which is drawn by the *descending* current in the four corner towers, and passed off with sufficient rapidity to insure the perfect ventilation of the entire building.[5]

The heating and ventilating system is now completely outmoded. The boilers have been changed several times. The oldest, dating from 1900, remains in its original location under the south entrance stair. The original coil cabinets with the original iron doors bearing the contractor's name, "Thomas C. Basshor & Co., Baltimore, Maryland," are still in place. A number of beautiful and historical floor and wall grills are still to be found throughout the building. The original brick ducts and flues also appear to be in place, offering possible sites for concealing new wires and cables or for reuse as ducts.

[5] *Dedication*...pp. 31-32.

Neighborhood Context

Franklin Square was originally designated City Square 249 and intended to be sold as building lots rather than developed as a park. It is the only downtown park not adjacent to one of the L'Enfant avenues. The 4.8 acre parcel was the site of several springs. The federal government purchased it in 1832 to supply water for the White House, Treasury, and other government buildings. A brick aqueduct and wooden piping were exposed when the streets around the Square were widened in 1928. The Department of the Interior filled and graded the Square, now known as Reservation 9, in 1853 but left it otherwise unimproved. At the beginning of the Civil War the street on the south side of the Square was solidly built-up with substantial residences while only scattered development had occurred on the other sides of the square. The streets were unpaved, with flagstone crossings. In 1864 Franklin Square was landscaped according to a plan of Commissioner of Public Buildings Benjamin B. French, Jr. An asymmetrical picturesque design was adopted similar to that then in place on the Mall. It should be noted that French was one of those working to improve the Washington public schools. He had participated in the dedication of the Wallach School, presenting the keys of the building to Mayor Wallach on behalf of the building committee.

The building committee for Franklin School chose a site fronting on Franklin Square in a location that was then developing as one of the most prestigious residential neighborhoods in the city. One of the earliest houses (1856), at 1301 K Street, belonged to Washington merchant L. S. Lindsay. During the Civil War it was leased to the Mexican Legation. Supreme Court Justice Noah H. Swayne built the adjacent house in 1860 and lived there for many years. Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton resided at 1323 K Street, N.W., on the north side of the square; Ohio Senator John Sherman, brother of General William Tecumseh Sherman, at 1321 K Street. Poet Walt Whitman wrote in an 1863 letter to his mother of the visits of President Abraham Lincoln to the neighborhood, lightly guarded by cavalrymen, conferring with Secretary Stanton in his open carriage standing in K Street. At times during these visits Lincoln was observed watching baseball games played by troops encamped in the Square. Many wealthy and influential citizens lived in the Franklin School neighborhood in the second half of the nineteenth century. President James A. Garfield resided at the northeast corner of Thirteenth and I Streets while a member of Congress and until he became President. His children attended Franklin School, as did the children of Presidents Andrew Johnson and Chester A. Arthur. Commodore A. S. Wadsworth lived at 1201 K Street and was visited there by poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:
Nationally: X Statewide:_ Locally:_

Applicable National Register Criteria: A X B_ C_ D_

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A_ B_ C_ D_ E_ F_ G_

NHL Criteria: 1,4

NHL Theme(s)[1987]: XXVII Education
B. Elementary, Intermediate, Secondary Education
1. Development of the System

XVI Architecture
G. Renaissance Revival

New themes [1994]: III Expressing Cultural Values
1. Educational and intellectual currents

Areas of Significance: Education, Architecture

Period(s) of Significance: 1869-1925

Significant Dates:

1869	Dedication
1869	Zalmon P. Richards appointed first Superintendent of Schools with offices in Franklin
1870	American Association of School Administrators, founded in 1865 as the National Association of School Superintendents, held one of first national meetings in Great Hall of Franklin
1873	"Medal of Progress in Education and Architecture," International Exhibition, Vienna, Austria
1873	First normal school in the District of Columbia
1876	Honors, Centennial Exposition, Philadelphia
1876	First high school classes in the District of Columbia
1878	Honors, International Exposition, Paris, France
1880	Alexander Graham Bell successfully tests photophone--first "wireless" message over a beam of light & basis of modern fiber optics
1925	Administrative Headquarters of the Board of Education

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Architect: Adolf Cluss, FAIA (1825-1905)
Builder: George M. Downing, J.G. Naylor

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

The Franklin School was the flagship building of a group of seven modern urban public school buildings constructed between 1862 and 1875 to house, for the first time, a comprehensive system of free universal public education in the capital of the Republic. It was hoped that this new public school system would serve as a model for the nation as the need to provide equal educational opportunities for all Americans was finally recognized as essential to the survival of a democratic society. For women and African Americans, this ideal of universal public education was accompanied by a policy of separation of students both by sex and by race. The school was named for Benjamin Franklin who had clearly understood and advocated the absolute necessity of universal public education for the success of the young nation.

This program of excellence in public education attracted attention internationally. Adolph Cluss' architectural designs were awarded a medal at the 1873 International Exhibition in Vienna for progress in education and architecture, an award at the 1876 Centenorial in Philadelphia, and honors at the International Exposition in Paris in 1878. Of the seven District schools designed by Cluss, only Sumner and Franklin survive. The dual purpose of quality education and esthetics for the elevation of public taste and advanced knowledge was used as a model in both Europe and the United States.

Franklin School was intended to draw the attention and solicit the support of Congress, the nation, and the extended community to the public schools of the national capital. To this end, particular care was taken in planning its location and design. Franklin was meant to rival new federal government buildings such as the nearby White House and Department of the Treasury Building and to be a landmark in the rapidly developing city. This was accomplished by a talented architect through the innovative architectural use of inexpensive brick in the *Rundbogenstil* manner. The most elaborate detail was concentrated at the top of the building where it could be widely observed from other points in the city.

Franklin School served as a laboratory in which the present public school program was first developed, including the concept of grading and curriculum, vocational education, high school, and professional training and standards for teachers. The first superintendent of schools, Zalmon P. Richards, was housed in Franklin where he could participate directly and effectively in the development of teaching programs. The school interacted prominently with the extended community, including the Smithsonian Institution and the new Corcoran School of Art, through public lectures, musical programs and exhibition of student art work.

Although the ideal of universal public education was accompanied in these early schools by the separation of students both by sex and by race, the innovative programs developed at Franklin benefited all and were implemented at approximately the same time for both white and African American students of both sexes. The Charles Sumner School was designed by Cluss as part of this initial group of architecturally innovative urban public schools. Dedicated in 1872, it became the flagship school for African American students, functioning in the same manner as Franklin in what was perceived as a separate but equal school system.

A new building type, the multi-class urban public school, was needed to house the new school system. The architect chosen for this task was German-born Adolf Cluss who had emigrated to this country seeking political asylum and a new life after the failure of the 1848 revolution in Germany. Cluss, together with the Board of Trustees, developed a prototypical design for a multi-class urban public school building for the District of Columbia. His ideas came to their fullest expression in Franklin School, the flagship building of the group of seven schools which he designed for the Board during the 1860's and 1870's. Until approximately the turn of the century, when educational philosophies began to change, all new public school buildings in the District of Columbia were based upon Cluss' prototypical design.

Franklin School is a fine example of the *Rundbogenstil* aesthetic heritage which the German '48ers brought to this country. Disdaining the excesses of the Baroque, Cluss described the building's style as "Modern Renaissance" and linked it aesthetically with the brick architecture of the *Cinque Cento* in Lombardy. In the design of Franklin School, Renaissance purity of line and proportion and structural integrity are combined with the most modern technology to create a new architecture for a new era. Decorative detail is restrained and purposeful. The modern heating and ventilating system is expressed

on the exterior through the prominent, symmetrically grouped octagonal central bell-towers and corner towers, becoming the defining design feature of the building. As Cluss comments, "...architecture itself constitutes the decoration of architecture..."[1] Each architectural element grows from and complements the whole.

A structural system of round-arched brick masonry interior supporting walls relates to the round-arched fenestration. The finish plaster in the Great Hall is mixed with sand to simulate stone and is decorated with frescoed round-arched architectural detail reflecting that of the exterior. The fresco decoration is painted in the Renaissance manner with a light source at the existing windows. This Modern Renaissance aesthetic with its origins in German *Rundbogenstil* is very different from that of the French Second Empire style of same period. The architectural contribution of the mid-century German political emigrants has profoundly influenced American culture. It is only now beginning to receive the scholarly attention which it deserves.

A NEW ERA FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE CAPITAL OF THE REPUBLIC

Free public schools were organized in Washington City in 1805. The Board of Trustees, headed by President Thomas Jefferson, met in the Supreme Court room of the U. S. Capitol, planning a system of primary, secondary and college courses of public education. The idealistic intention of these early schools was to extend the benefits of education to those who could not afford private education. The schools actually established were considered "pauper schools." Later, when more affluent students were allowed to attend, they were charged accordingly and a stigma attached to those who could not pay. These schools were poorly regarded and poorly housed in makeshift and inappropriate single rooms. As late as 1864 it was not unusual for two or three classes under two or three teachers to be conducted simultaneously in one room with no access to a separate recitation room.

The census of 1840 reported a white school-age population of 5390 children with 4401 not attending school at all and only 213 attending public schools. In 1845, under the leadership of Mayor Seaton, the school system was reorganized into four districts with a twelve member Board of Trustees representing students in each district as well as the whole. Tuition for paying students was first reduced and then abolished. Every white male citizen was taxed one dollar for support of the schools, providing much-needed revenue. In 1858 the municipal charter was amended to allow taxation of all assessable property to fund the reorganized free public school system. A school census in this year determined that 2400 of the 10,697 school age children in the city attended public school. A simple two-room school was eventually erected in each of the districts. Some advances were made in school furniture, textbooks and other improvements.

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[1] *Dedication of the Franklin School Building* (Washington, D. C.: Chronicle Print, 1869), p. 29.

As the Civil War began, the Board of Trustees, under the leadership of Mayor Richard Wallach, renewed their efforts to establish an adequate free public school system. They adopted as their motto "Schools for all; good enough for the richest; cheap enough for the poorest..."[2] Mayor Wallach applied himself directly to the construction of school buildings which would not only address the city's long-term needs but would provide an educational model for the country. His efforts were spurred on by the abolition of slavery here on April 16, 1862, opening the way for the public education of African Americans.

On October 18, 1862, the City Council enacted legislation which appropriated funds and created a joint committee of both city and school officials charged with selection of a site and construction of the first multi-class urban public school building. Earlier schools had been constructed on the model of the one or two room rural school or had been located in inappropriate quarters, such as stables and church basements, which had been erected for very different purposes.
After a study of school buildings erected in other cities, the building committee adopted a plan by which several classes of pupils could be brought together in a single building with shared organization and facilities such as play and assembly rooms. In such a building pupils could be classified and educated more effectively and economically than was possible in the existing dispersed and autonomous one and two room structures. One such building was to be erected in a central location in each school district with smaller primary school buildings located directly within specific residential neighborhoods. The third district was selected for construction of the first building. Square 901, fronting on Pennsylvania Avenue between Seventh and Eighth Streets, S.E., was purchased from Georgetown College. The architectural firm of Cluss & Kammerhueber, who had made a study of the best school architecture here and abroad, was selected to prepare plans and superintend the construction of the Wallach School. Here Cluss first developed and tested his innovative ideas for the design of a multi-class urban public school building--ideas which would later come to fruition in his design for the Franklin School building.

The work on the building began in May 1863 and, surmounting the extreme difficulties imposed by an on-going state of war, was completed in June 1864. Called the Wallach School, it was dedicated on July 4, 1864. At the dedication Mayor Wallach declared:

> This symmetrical and beautiful structure, this new feature in our city...the beginning of a benefit to posterity and the commencement of a new era of school-house architecture in our midst, is a guaranty that a plan of buildings will for the future be adopted better adapted in interior arrangements for the purposes intended, and in external appearance and architectural beauty and proportions ranking among the noble public edifices which meet the view on every hand, worthy of the city which bears so revered a name, the political capital of the country...On this, the natal day of our country...it cannot but be a proud reflection that in these times of national trouble and distress, when the strife of faction shakes and threatens the Government, that we are able to rear in the metropolis of the Union this monument to our city's honor, and to assure the country that whatever else we may be compelled to neglect or forego, our public schools will be the last to lose the fostering care of...the people of Washington.[3]

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[2] Wilson, J. Ormand. "Eighty Years of the Public Schools of Washington: 1805 to 1885," *Records of the Columbia Historical Society*, Vol. 1 (Washington: published by the Society, 1895), p.136.

[3] *Twentieth Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of the Public Schools of the City of Washington* (Washington, D. C. McGill & Witherow, Printers and Stereotypers, 1864), p. 54-55.

FRANKLIN SCHOOL BUILDING CONSTRUCTION HISTORY

Enabling Legislation. On January 2, 1864, while the Wallach School was still under construction, the City Council, pursuant to the School-House Act of October 18, 1862, passed a joint resolution providing for construction in the First School District of a second modern multi-class school building and appointing a building committee. On March 12, 1864, the Council reaffirmed their decision, assigning the entire school building fund appropriation to the construction of Franklin School. A second joint resolution, approved November 23, 1866, authorized the mayor and the building committee to borrow money to complete the building.

The Building Committee. As with the Wallach School, a building committee composed of both city and school officials was appointed with sole authority to select and purchase a site, adopt a plan, and erect a building. The committee included the mayor, two aldermen, two councilmen and four school trustees. J. Ormand Wilson, a member of the Board of Trustees from the First School District served as chairman. Wilson had long fought to improve the public schools and had served on the building committee for the Wallach School. After his resignation from the Board of Trustees in June 1868 he was succeeded as chairman by J. S. Brown, also a member of the Board of Trustees from the First School District.

Land Acquisition. Franklin School was planned from the beginning as a model school which would command the attention of Congress and the country and which would be the architectural equal of the buildings being erected in the city by the federal government. The site was selected with care at a high point in a fashionable downtown residential neighborhood near the White House. Its purchase at a reasonable price was difficult. Wilson succinctly describes the process as follows:

> In getting possession of the most central and eligible site for the Franklin school, many obstacles were encountered. The property belonged to minor heirs, whose guardian must give consent, an order from the court must be obtained, the sale must be made by auction, and the strenuous opposition of influential neighbors must be outflanked; but nevertheless the ground, containing 14,945 1/2 square feet, was purchased by the corporation at the rate of $1.26 a square foot, and cost $20,272.01.[4]

Selection of an Architect. Once the purchase of the site was completed the building committee advertised for design proposals. Messrs. Seybert of Philadelphia, Z. Richards, and Adolf Cluss of Washington responded. One of Cluss' plans was selected by unanimous vote of the committee on December 29, 1864. Cluss had made a special study of schools here and abroad. He had designed and superintended the construction of the recently completed and much-admired Wallach School in the Third School District and had gained the confidence of the committee through his skill and resourcefulness in that difficult work. Cluss quickly prepared drawings and specifications for the project.

Contracting. As the Civil War came to an end, the City encountered financial difficulties. The mayor's office did not advertise the work until October 13, 1865. Even then the request for proposals only addressed the "Evacuation and Bluestone work, for the Brick work and Stone Sills, for the Frames and for the Iron work necessary to put up the foundation and basement walls of a new Public School Building...The bids may be for the whole work, or separate for the different branches..."[5] Inflation combined with post-war shortages and the resultant high cost of materials and labor to threaten more than doubled construction costs. The committee hoped to ride the situation out, anticipating in vain that the economy would soon stabilize and construction costs return to pre-war levels. They therefore contracted

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[4] *Wilson*, p. 25.

[5] *The Washington Star*, October 21, 1865.

with a fixed price list arranged to be paid at completion to take advantage of possible falling prices. George M. Downing was the low bidder in the contracting process and was selected to perform all branches of work except the iron work. William M. Ellis & Post, as low bidders, were selected for the iron work.

Construction. The initial contract provided only for excavation, laying the foundations and completing the basement story walls. Inflation worsened rather than subsiding. When the bluestone foundations were completed, the City was unable to make payment. The work was delayed for nearly two years, resuming in the summer of 1867. When the basement story was completed in September 1867, the committee contracted further with Downing to close-in the building. He continued the work through the 1868 building season. When the City was unable to make payment for work or materials above the first floor window sills, Downing once again stopped work. The completed shell of the building was left unroofed and unprotected at the onset of winter. Downing died unexpectedly in December 1868. The architect, Adolf Cluss, requested and was granted authority to protect the work against winter damage. In January 1869, the committee contracted with J. G. Naylor to finish the building. The heating and ventilating contract was awarded separately to Thomas C. Basshor & Co. of Baltimore. Both completed their work satisfactorily and on schedule by September 1869.

Costs. The actual cost of Franklin School had far exceeded the estimated cost. Post-war inflation together with shortages of materials and labor had taken a heavy toll. Alderman W. H. Chase, presenting the keys of the school to the City on behalf of the building committee proudly noted:

> The building contains 15,000 cubic feet of bluestone work, over 1,500,000 bricks, 100 tons of cast and wrought iron, (besides the heating apparatus,) and 7,000 square feet of glass. Thesefacts, and the fire proof features of this magnificent building, will set at rest any ungenerous comparisons about the cost of the structure, which, including all incidental expenses--furniture,bells, flagged sidewalks, and superintendence--will not exceed $185,000.[6]

Wilson later commented:

> The contracts for the building were given out by piecemeal and with numerous delays, so that four years following the close of the civil war were consumed in its erection, and the currency had become so depreciated that in 1864 $1 in gold sold for $2.85 in currency, and the expense of building under the circumstances was more than twice as great as it would be today. The cost of the building was $187,229.71.[7]

The final cost break-down was as follows:

Cost of lot	$ 20,272.01
Cost of building	176,053.28
Cost of heating	11,176.43
Cost of furniture	8,724.31
Total cost	$216,428.03

Dedication. Franklin School was dedicated with elaborate ceremony before students, educators and dignitaries in the Great Hall of the building on October 2, 1869. Prayers were offered, a choir of fifty students sang, poetry written especially for the dedication was said, lofty and inspiring speeches were delivered. The building committee presented the keys to the building to the acting mayor and he presented them to the Board of Trustees. It was a day of proud celebration for the city. In April 1866, a Boston educational commission had

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[6] *Dedication...*p. 7.

[7] Wilson, p. 25.

stopped in Washington while on a nationwide inspection tour of new urban school buildings. They reported that the "Wallach school was in external architecture the most attractive school visited, while the Franklin school (not then finished) in its size, plan, etc., promises to be unsurpassed in the country."[8] Franklin School was indeed a model school building, perhaps the finest in the nation. Its superb design and innovative features symbolized all that the Board of Trustees and others had fought for over the years. Its prominent location ensured that the Public Schools would have a visual presence equal to any other branch of either the city or federal government. Perhaps most of all, it represented the triumph over seemingly insurmountable difficulties of a visionary, resourceful and persistent building committee, architect, and other construction professionals.

On the day before the dedication the architect, Adolf Cluss, conducted a tour of the building for officials and press. It began in the Great Hall with a demonstration of the speed--five minutes--with which students could be summoned from their classes by means of a system of speaking tubes. After enjoying a vocal concert by the students, the invited guests inspected the building thoroughly and expressed their approval of the work. One of the reporters observed that "The house is now entirely completed, and is certainly one of the finest structures for school purposes in the country."[9] Leaving Franklin, Cluss and a member of the Board of Trustees visited, by way of contrast, a nearby older school of the kind Franklin was designed to replace. Urging its immediate removal he described the school as follows:

> The room occupied by the school is in an old brick originally built for a stable, subsequently used by the Artist Stone as his workshop, and then again used as a stable, after which it was taken by the board of trustees and fitted up for school purposes. It is situated in the rear of New York avenue, between Thirteenth and Fourteenth streets, opens on an alley surrounded by stables and outbuildings. The room is small, badly lighted and ventilated, and can only be reached by a dilapidated board walk from New York avenue. We trust that immediate action will be taken for the removal, as it is not only a disgrace to the school system, but dangerous to the health both of the teacher and scholars.[10]

ANALYSIS OF CLUSS' SCHOOL DESIGN

When Adolf Cluss was selected in 1862 to design the Wallach School he was relatively unknown as an architect. Born in Heilbronn, Wurtemburg, Germany, he was educated as an architect and engineer. Finding his first employment as assistant engineer on the construction of the railroad between Mainz and Mannheim on the Rhine he became acquainted with the difficult conditions endured by the workers there. His revolutionary zeal awakened, he became a member of the League of Communists, secretary of the Workers' Educational Associations in Mainz, and a close associate of Marx and Engels. Emigrating to this country in 1848, he continued his revolutionary work, serving as chief liaison between Marx in London and the exiled '48ers in the United States. By 1858 he had completely ended his association with Marx and Engels. During this period he worked as an engineer in the Coast and Geodetic Survey and at the Washington Navy Yard and as an architect under Ammi B. Young in the office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury.

Cluss was superbly trained through his education in Germany in the 1840s and through his work with Young. His revolutionary idealism meshed well with the idealism of the educators and public officials here who sought his help in creating a free urban public school system worthy of the capital of the Republic. As the Civil War began, Cluss went to work

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[8] Wilson, p. 23.

[9] *Daily National Intelligencer and Washington Express*, October 1, 1869.

[10] *Ibid.*

with Admiral Dahlgren at the Washington Navy Yard. While in this position he entered into private architectural practice with Joseph Wildrich von Kammerhueber. Wallach School was the new firm's first major commission, and the first of seven schools which Cluss was to design and build for the City. These included Wallach School (1864), Franklin School (1869), Sumner School (1871), Seaton School (1871), Cranch School (1871), Jefferson School (1872), and Curtis School (1875). These schools were the nucleus of the Board of Trustees' plan to erect modern school houses in each school district to create a system of free public schools in Washington which would be unsurpassed in the nation. Each of these schools had its own purpose and character, but each shared Cluss' innovative design features for multi-class urban public schools. This was a new building type utilizing new materials and methods of construction. All were designed as well with aesthetic considerations foremost to inspire students, dignify the educational profession, elevate the free public schools to a position of prominence and respect in the community, and provide a model to the nation.

The precursor to the new schools was typically a one-room structure in which the teacher was in full control of her class without any significant outside intervention from the Board of Trustees or the public. In the design of Franklin the physical autonomy of the early schools is apparently continued. The classrooms are self-contained. They are entered only through a cloakroom and not casually open to public view as are contemporary classrooms where classes can be directly viewed from corridors. The boys are decisively separated from the girls with separate entrances and stairhalls. There are no corridors between the two schools. If crossing between them, one passes through a cloakroom only and then through a locked door. The only mingling allowed was in the common assembly room on the third floor where close supervision was presumed. It would be possible to view the design of Franklin as vertical stacks of one room classrooms joined to achieve certain mutual benefits. This must have eased the transition of both teachers and students into what was to become the modern public school system, and it must have been helpful to the educators who worked step by step to create the system as they dealt with the difficult issues of classification, curriculum, textbooks, and teacher preparation.

For Cluss the isolation of classrooms was the answer to certain design problems. Sound transmission between the classrooms and the halls was minimized. Classes were provided with a learning environment in which outside distractions were eliminated as far as possible. A centrally located semicircular teacher's niche with raised platform was built into each cloakroom wall facing the classroom. Acoustics were also improved by this arrangement, with the niche acting as a sounding board. The raised platform allowed clear sightlines between students and teacher and reinforced the dignity and authority of the teacher, while creating an interesting design feature. The classrooms were large and rectangular with high ceilings and extraordinarily large areas of glass. They were designed to allow sixty students to sit facing the teacher with maximum light entering from the side and rear. Picture mouldings and blackboards were present on all walls. Ease of care was ensured by use of an oil finished wainscot. Window sills were integrated with the chair rail at the top of the wainscot. Plaster was sand-finished and confined to the walls above the blackboards, out of the children's reach where it could be easily maintained by periodic repainting. Providing entrance of the students through cloakrooms ensured that clutter and damp clothing would remain in the cloakroom, preserving the orderliness of the classroom.

The classrooms each provided a unique learning environment in an aesthetically pleasing setting. The lofty proportions of the rooms, the careful choice of congenial colors, the views through a progression of transoms and over the park, the beautifully grained finishes and the simple elegance of design present in mouldings, doors and windows all contributed to this effect. The educators hoped to instill an understanding and appreciation of beauty indirectly by exposing all students to such a setting in their daily workplace and creating a sense that this beauty was for all citizens, not just the privileged classes. At the dedication it was grandly observed:

> The beautiful in nature and art begets beautiful thoughts, and beautiful thoughts always lead to good and noble deeds. Then let us rear in each school district of our city such educational structures as, while they shall furnish room and shelter for our children, shall also furnish lessons of beauty and truth in nature and art; and then we will, in the spirit of the English poet, exclaim; "Oh! for the comming of that glorious time when, prizing knowledge as its noblesyt wealth and best protection, this great Republic, while exacting allegiance, shall admit an obligation on its part to secure to every child within its jurisdiction a practical education."[11]

The beauty of the building was more obviously in evidence in the marble floors and ornate cast iron stair railings of the entrance halls, the frescoed walls, panelled ceiling and richly designed music-gallery of the lofty Great Hall. Like the exterior towers, cupolas, brickwork and other fine detail, these elements were designed to impress the general public and the government as well as the students.

Cluss, to avert criticism by the parsimonious, carefully stressed the restraint and utility of his design for Franklin:

> Unity of idea has been combined in its facades with a variety of line and proportion, while a wise sobriety is observed in the use of modest, severe, and delicate ornaments, coupled with a scrupulous care to apply them only where the style calls for them, so as to attain that seemly comeliness, that elegant exterior, which is powerful to diffuse good taste among the people at large, but pre-eminently among the growing generation. The expense incurred in decoration exceeds but little the cost of ordinary bricks...architecture itself constitutes the decoration of the architecture; although there are also a few minute carvings, not discernable from a distance.[12]

Fireproofing, heating and ventilating were of foremost concern both to Cluss and to his clients. Cluss used the latest fireproof construction techniques in building Franklin. Both structural and partition walls were of hard-burnt brick. The halls were as fireproof as it was possible to make them. Their structure was of segmental brick arches sprung between rolled iron beams and plastered. Entrance stairs at both front and rear were massive blocks of bluestone. Floors were covered with marble and tiles. There was no wainscot or other easily flammable material in the halls. The flammable accouterments of education, as well as the possessions of the students were kept within the classrooms and brick bearing walls 2' wide contained them, keeping the halls safe. The classrooms led directly onto the stairhalls. The stairs were cast iron and led directly to the rear yard with the final flight built of bluestone. The roofs were covered with metal and slate. Although the boilers were located under the front stairs, they were separated from them by the bluestone stairs and by enclosure in fireproof brick chambers from the stairhalls.

Heating and ventilating were also carefully thought out. Cluss designed the heating and ventilating system and worked closely with the contractor to perfect it. The low-pressure steam heating conveyed through an innovative system of arched brick ducts and flues required a resident janitor for its operation, but combined maximum safety with the most efficient heating then available. The system, together with Cluss' arrangements for water-closets, received considerable notice when exhibited later at the international expositions.

Adolf Cluss went on to become one of the most prolific and successful architects in Washington during the Civil War and Reconstruction, designing much of the private and public construction in the city during this period of unprecedented growth and modernization. His clients included the Smithsonian Institution, the federal government, the city government, private individuals and developers, churches and fraternal organizations. He served as engineer-member of the Board of Public Works under Alexander Shepherd building streets and sewers and other needed civic improvements. He counted Presidents

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[11] *Dedication...*p. 7.

[12] *Dedication...*pp. 28-29.

Grant and Garfield, General Sherman, Admiral Dahlgren, Joseph Henry, and many other prominent Americans as his personal friends. He was elected a fellow of the American Institute of Architects in 1866 and played an important role in that organization's affairs. At the time of his death on July 24, 1905, he was remembered as a "strong, conservative member and genial friend."[13]

BUILDING HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

Public Reaction. The building committee concealed their intentions from the neighboring property owners when they began negotiations to purchase the Franklin School site. They expected bitter opposition from these affluent and influential citizens. The latter feared a drop in property values as well as creation of a noisy nuisance if the school were built in their neighborhood. The purchase was eventually made with full disclosure of intent and in spite of this opposition, which, as expected, was very fierce. As construction proceeded along the difficult course described earlier, a new form of opposition surfaced. Many felt that the building was too elegant and too expensive to be used as a public school and demanded that it be sold to the federal government to house the State Department or other appropriate agency. At the dedication the representative of the building committee noted:

> The scene is now happily changed; our former enemies have become our friends; and many; of those who opposed the erection of the building in all its stages have, since its completion, placed their children within its walls. It is further apparent that real estate situated in this vicinity has, since the erection of the building, increased in value more than fifty per cent. About twenty first class houses have been erected under its very shadow, while in its immediate vicinity similar buildings have been commenced, the aggregate cost of which will amount to half a million dollars.[14]

Franklin School was immediately successful, creating an entirely new perception of public schools and their significance to the future of the nation. The building became the symbol of the fulfillment of the Board of Trustees' vision of a free public school system in which equality of educational opportunity would be the foundation of a truly democratic society in which barriers of class, wealth, and sex would at last be overcome. The Charles Sumner School, designed by Cluss as part of this prototypical group of seven schools, extended free public education to African Americans in separate but equal facilities. In reply to those critics who felt that the Franklin School building was too fine for a public school house Alderman Chase commented:

> Ah! sir, I hope the time may never come when we would make less beautiful and attractive the places where our children are to receive an education, where lasting impressions are to be made upon the young mind, than we would the offices of State...It has been well said by an eminent thinker, 'Show me the churches and school houses of a nation, and I will tell you what is its civilization and enlightenment.'[15]

Demand for attendance at Franklin School exceeded the available space from the very beginning. Pupils came from all classes of white society and from neighborhoods throughout the city. The prominent location and distinguished architecture of the building made it a landmark in the vernacular sense, a site acclaimed by visitors to the nation's capital. General Francis A. Walker, who lived nearby, commented that whenever he passed that noble American public schoolhouse he turned to look and felt like lifting his hat in

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[13] *The Western Architect*, Vol. 4 (December 1905), p. 11.

[14] *Dedication...*p. 12.

[15] *Dedication...*p. 7.

token of respect.[16] In 1871, Sir Stafford Henry Northcote, member of the American and British Joint High Commission to arbitrate the Alabama Claims and other questions in dispute between the two countries, lived near Franklin School and passed it every day. Wilson recounts:

> As he was about to leave the city, in June,...[Northcote] addressed a note to the superintendent, saying he had so highly enjoyed the singing of the children in that school, as their sweet young voices had reached him through the open windows, that he desired to visit the school, hear them sing again before his departure, and personally thank them for the greatest pleasure he had experienced during his stay in Washington, and accordingly he spent a morning in visiting those schools.[17]

The diaries of James A. Garfield, in the years before he became President, recount activities at Franklin where his children were students. These diaries give an interesting glimpse of life in Washington during the early years of Franklin and the place of Franklin in the social life of the community.

National and International Recognition. The great interest generated by the completion of the Wallach and Franklin School buildings continued as the Sumner, Seaton, Jefferson, Cranch and Curtis school buildings were dedicated. In 1873 the Board of Trustees, for the first time, participated in an international exposition. A model of Franklin School, together with plans and photographs of Seaton, Wallach, Jefferson, and other buildings was sent to the World's Exposition in Vienna as part of an American educational exhibit. The exhibit also included samples of student work.

The model, which was built to scale in one-story sections, cost $1000 to construct and excited considerable interest. The official report of the exposition comments: "The exact center of the entire educational court was occupied by a large, elegantly finished model of the Franklin school-building at Washington, by far the finest thing of its kind in the whole exhibition."[18] It was disassembled and carefully examined. Drawings of the exterior were made by educators from all over Europe. Superintendent J. O. Wilson accepted a "Medal for Progress" in education and school architecture that was awarded the school.

This international recognition of the work of the Board of Trustees was richly deserved. At last the public schools of Washington were perceived as a model for the nation and as an equal of European schools. Similar prize-winning exhibitions were made at the international expositions in Philadelphia in 1876, in Paris in 1878 and in New Orleans in 1884. In Paris the success of the exhibit was such that the French government requested it be placed in the pedagogical museum in the Palais Bourbon.

Urban Public School Building. The new school buildings were designed to accommodate a new concept for the universal free public education of urban children. The independent poorly housed one-room charity school would be replaced by modern multi-classroom schools free to all. Classes would be graded, teachers would be professionally trained and adequately paid, resources would be shared, and a superintendent appointed by the Board of Trustees would provide central administration of the system. There would be a high school and a normal school as well as special training and other activities. Although African American children would be educated separately, it was envisioned that their education

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[16] Hine, H.O., " Public Education in the District of Columbia--1805 to 1928," in Proctor, John Clagget, ed. *Washington Past and Present*, Vol. I Ch. XXXIX (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., Inc., 1930), p 430.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 431.

[18] *Twentieth Annual Report of the Board of Trustees...*, p. 13; Wilson, p.41.

would be comparable in every way. The Charles Sumner School, included in this initial group of schools, was to provide a model for the education of African Americans. The remaining discussion of the significance of Franklin School refers specifically to its role in the development of an educational program for white students.

Franklin School was the center of the new public school system and the proving ground for these revolutionary educational concepts. A system of separating students by sex and classifying students into primary, secondary, intermediate and grammar classes was in place in 1869 when Franklin School was dedicated. The 1870-71 annual report recognized that this classification was arbitrary and ineffective, and that there was no clear progression in course of study or use of textbooks and other learning aids. It was suggested that the four classes be divided into nine and the curriculum uniformly regulated throughout the school system. Franklin School, housing multiple classes under one roof, where both students and curriculum could be closely supervised, provided the perfect laboratory for educators to address these problems.

Offices of the Superintendent and the Board of Trustees. In 1869 the office of Superintendent of Schools was created. Zalmon P. Richards, then a member of the Board of Aldermen, was appointed by the Mayor. The following year he was replaced by James Ormand Wilson. Wilson had been a member of the Board of Trustees and a staunch advocate of public school reform in the years leading up to the construction of Franklin School. He had served as chairman of the building committee and played a major role in the successful completion of the project. He served as Superintendent until 1885, guiding the school system through its formative years. From the beginning, the office of the Superintendent of Schools and the Board of Trustees was located at Franklin School. From this vantage point in the system's model school, the changes in classification and curriculum, training of teachers and introduction of new programs could be closely and effectively observed.

Normal School. Professional training for teachers was seen as a primary objective in the reform of the public school system. In 1863 Zalmon Richards organized a teachers' institute. Public school teachers were required to attend on Saturdays, hearing lectures by leading educators. This was an important step since most teachers were graduates of the old schools, without even a secondary education. On June 23, 1873, the Board of Trustees was authorized by act of the Legislative Assembly to establish a school for the professional training of teachers. The curriculum was one year in length and the students were expected to help support the program by teaching.

The school opened with twenty students on September 1, 1873. Miss Lucilla E. Smith was appointed as principal and served in that position until her retirement in 1885. It was installed on the top floors of the Franklin School in the old recitation room and above in a classroom remodelled from the choir room. The school received much public attention. The first commencement ceremonies were held at the Lincoln Hall, with Governor Alexander Shepherd, U. S. Commissioner of Education General John Eaton, Jr., and Superintendent Wilson officiating. The hall was filled to overflowing with interested citizens. In 1875, Secretary of the Smithsonian, Joseph Henry addressed the graduates. In 1881, a few days before his assassination, President Garfield presented the diplomas. In 1883 President Chester A. Arthur officiated.

The student teachers did their practice teaching in Franklin and other schools. The location of the normal school in the Franklin model school allowed close coordination between the school, the Superintendent, the Board of Trustees, and the students as the modern free public school system was developed. Between 1899 and 1901 Frances B. Johnston photographed the students of the District of Columbia public schools at work in their classes and on field trips throughout the city. Although the locations of the photographs are unidentified, those of the normal school and some of the classes were clearly made in Franklin. These are the

only known photographs of the building's original interior. The normal school remained at Franklin through 1913 when the new James Ormond Wilson Teachers' College at Eleventh and Harvard Streets, N.W., was completed.

High School. In 1858 a law was enacted providing for a free public high school to be established in Washington by 1861. The onset of the Civil War and lingering public opposition prevented the establishment of such a school. In 1876 the Board of Trustees took steps to overcome public prejudice and provide the much-needed high school. All interested and qualified eighth grade girls were placed in a high school curriculum at Franklin School. The school, designated an advanced grammar school, was perceived, innocuously, as part of the normal school preparation. A similar school was established for boys in the following year. In 1879 the curriculum was lengthened to two years. In 1880 these curriculums were at last designated as high schools. Congress appropriated money for a high school building in 1881. This building, old Central High School, was completed in 1882 and the high school classes consolidated there.

Innovative Educational Programs. Over the years most of the innovative educational programs of the District of Columbia Public Schools were developed and demonstrated at Franklin School. Music, drawing and penmanship became an important part of the curriculum for all students. Technical/vocational training classes were first introduced here. The business high school was located here in 1891 and instruction in speech correction and lip-reading was given in 1926 to 1927. The Adult Education Center was housed from 1969 to 1990.

Community Resource. Franklin has always functioned as a community resource both through its programs and through special events. In the early years concerts and lectures were held in the Great Hall. The students of music instructor Joseph H. Daniel performed frequently in concerts at the Smithsonian Institution, theatres, schools, churches and other public places. In March 1870 the American Association of School Administrators, founded in 1865 as the National Association of School Superintendents, held one of its first national meetings in the Great Hall of Franklin. Exhibits of prize-winning student work also were held there. An account of the 1878 exhibition notes a distinguished prize committee for the annual drawing competition, including Mr. McLeod, curator of the Corcoran Gallery of Art; Vinnie Ream, noted sculptor; Mrs. Fassett, artist; Adolf Cluss, architect of Franklin; and Lieutenant Hoxie, U. S. Army. Mr. McLeod addressed the large audience on the history, present condition, and future career of usefulness of the Corcoran Gallery of Art. Prizes included three gold medals, one copy of Prang's *Parallels of Historical Ornament*, one course of lessons in model and cast drawing, and one course of lessons in mechanical drawing. The exhibit remained in place for a day and a half and during this period was viewed by thousands of visitors. Other prizes established in the early years for public school students by interested members of the community included the Kendall scholarship in Columbian College, the King scholarship in Dickinson College, scholarships in the Washington Business College, prizes given by Henry C. Spencer of the Washington Business College for penmanship, and eight silver medals given by Adolf Cluss for the best scholars in the second classes of German.

Alexander Graham Bell. In December 1879, Alexander Graham Bell rented a house at 904 Fourteenth Street and a laboratory at 1325 L Street, N.W., in the Franklin School neighborhood. Here, with his assistant Charles Sumner Tainter, he conducted experiments in his laboratory on the photophone, an invention for transmission of sound by light waves. After his first success on February 19, 1880, he wrote to his father:

> I have heard articulate speech produced by sunlight! I have heard a ray of the sun laugh and cough and sing!...I have been able to hear a shadow, and I have even perceived by ear the passage of a cloud across the sun's disk. Can imagination picture what the future of this invention is to be!...We may talk by light to any visible distance without any conducting wire...In warfare the electric communications of an army could neither be cut nor tapped. On the ocean

> communication may be carried on...between vessels...and light-houses may be identified by the sound of their lights. In general science, discoveries will be made by the Photophone that are undreamed of just now...The twinkling stars may yet be recognized by characteristic sounds, and storms and sun-spots be detected in the sun.[19]

Finally, after receiving permission from the Board of Trustees, he tested the new invention from the top of Franklin School on April 1, 1880. Transmitting a message 213 meters to a window of the L Street laboratory, Tainter spoke from Franklin to Bell in the laboratory saying, "Mr. Bell, if you hear what I say, come to the window and wave your hat." Later he observed "It is unnecessary to say, that I waved with vigor, and with an enthusiasm which comes to a man not often in a lifetime...Such moments are worth a lifetime to live for."[20] Bell's design of the photophone marked the beginning of lightwave communications, although no practical result could be had until the more recent invention of the laser, ultra-transparent glass fibers, and much of modern electronics.

Administrative Headquarters of the Board of Education. In 1900 the old Board of Trustees was replaced by the Board of Education. After the normal school moved out of Franklin in 1913 the building was increasingly occupied with the administrative offices of the Board of Education. By 1920 the following offices were located at Franklin in addition to the Board and the Superintendent: (1) Director of Intermediate Instruction, (2) Supervisor of Manual Training, (3) Office of Statistics and Publications, (4) Office of Finance and Accounting, (5) Clerk in Charge of the Child Labor Law, (6) Attendance Officer, (7) Superintendent of Janitors, and the (8) Medical Inspection Service. The night school and the Franklin atypical and special ungraded school remained there. In 1925 the building was discontinued as a school and renamed the Franklin Administration Building. The Board of Education occupied Franklin exclusively as its Administrative Headquarters between 1928 and 1968.

Preservation History. By 1968 the Board of Education was considering the sale of Franklin to raise funds for the construction of a much larger administration building. Its venerable old flagship building faced demolition. As public protest mounted, the American Association of School Administrators organized a group of preservation-minded individuals and organizations to find the means to preserve the building. Included in the District of Columbia's Inventory of Historic Sites since November 11, 1964, Franklin School Building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places April 11, 1973. By unanimous vote on March 16, 1977, the Board of Education included among its continuing policy directions the preservation of historic buildings and sites under the jurisdiction and control of the Board. Adolf Cluss' Sumner and Franklin Schools were specifically targeted by the Board for preservation and restoration. Funded by a generous public service grant from the Sigal/Zuckerman Company of nearly three million dollars, work commenced in September 1990 to restore the exterior of Franklin. This work was concluded in April 1992. The Board of Education is now beginning to rehabilitate the interior of the building for use as its administrative headquarters. This will return the building to its original purpose as the flagship building of the public schools in the national capital.

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[19] Bruce, Robert V. *Bell* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1973), p. 33.

[20] Bruce, p. 338.

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ARCHIVAL SOURCES

The Archives of the District of Columbia

The Archives of the Smithsonian Institution

The Charles Sumner School Museum and Archives

The Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Frances B. Johnston Collection

The Martin Luther King Library, Washingtoniana Room

The Washington Historical Society

The Volta Bureau

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

___ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
X Previously Listed in the National Register.
___ Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
___ Designated a National Historic Landmark.
___ Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #
___ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

X State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State Agency
___ Federal Agency
___ Local Government
___ University
X Other (Specify Repository):

Charles Sumner School Museum and Archives

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: Less than 1 acre

UTM References:

	Zone	Northing	Easting
A	18	324000	4307670

Verbal Boundary Description:

Square 285, lot 808 at the southeast corner intersection of Thirteenth and K Streets in the northwest quadrant of the District of Columbia.

Boundary Justification:

Entire original building site.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: Tanya Edwards Beauchamp, Architectural Historian
930 Leigh Mill Road
Great Falls, Virginia 22066
Telephone: (703) 759-3796
Date: 12/31/94

Edited by: Carolyn Pitts
National Historic Landmarks Survey
National Park Service
P.O. Box 37127, Suite 310
Washington, DC 20013-7127
Telephone: 202/343-8166

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