



United States Department of Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900A). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Roosevelt School
other names/site number

2. Location

street & number	1307 Hayes Street	N/A	not for publication
city or town	La Crosse	N/A	vicinity
state Wisconsin	code WI	county La Crosse	code 063 zip code 54603

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Danna J. Pennington
Signature of certifying official/Title

6/15/2017
Date

State Historic Preservation Office - Wisconsin
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

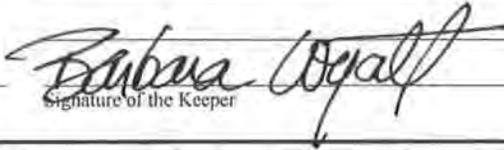
Roosevelt School
Name of Property

La Crosse
County and State

Wisconsin

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:
entered in the National Register.
____ See continuation sheet,
determined eligible for the
National Register.
____ See continuation sheet,
determined not eligible for the
National Register.
____ See continuation sheet,
removed from the National
Register.
____ other, (explain):


Signature of the Keeper

8-3-17
Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (check as many boxes as as apply)	Category of Property (Check only one box)	Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	contributing	noncontributing
public-local	district	1	0 buildings
public-State	structure	0	0 sites
public-Federal	site	0	0 structures
	object	0	0 objects
		1	0 total

Name of related multiple property listing:
(Enter "N/A" if property not part of a multiple property
listing.)
N/A

Number of contributing resources
previously listed in the National Register
0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)
EDUCATION/school

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)
VACANT

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)
foundation BRICK

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals /Spanish Colonial Revival

walls CONCRETE

roof SYNTHETICS

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for the National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1923-1938 (Criterion C)

Significant Dates

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

MERMAN, OTTO A.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Roosevelt School
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9. Major Bibliographic References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous Documentation on File (National Park Service):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 15 641612 4857220
Zone Easting Northing

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing

2 _____
Zone Easting Northing

4 _____
Zone Easting Northing

See Continuation Sheet

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	John Cramer, Senior Associate	date	June 24, 2016
organization	MacRostie Historic Advisors	telephone	(312) 786-1700
street & number	53 W. Jackson Boulevard, Suite 1323	zip code	60604
city or town	Chicago	state	WI

Roosevelt School
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La Crosse
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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional Items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name/title	Ben Marshall	date	June 24, 2016
organization	Gorman & Company	telephone	(608) 835-5534
street & number	200 North Main Street	zip code	53575
city or town	Oregon	state	WI

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects, (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Roosevelt School
La Crosse, La Crosse County, WI

Summary

The Roosevelt School is located at 1307 Hayes Street in La Crosse, Wisconsin. The building was originally constructed in 1923 with additions constructed in 1931, and 1938, all in an eclectic Spanish Colonial Revival style. The rear addition constructed in 1954 is in the Contemporary style. The gymnasium and library additions, behind the original building to the north and east, are connected by a two-story hyphen to the 1938 addition.

Site and Setting

The Roosevelt School is located in the North La Crosse neighborhood, primarily a single-family residential neighborhood approximately three miles north of downtown. The Roosevelt School occupies the northeast corner of the intersection of Hayes and Wood streets with the school's former play lots and playing fields occupying the remainder of the block. The Roosevelt School has an entrance facing Hayes Street, two entrances facing Wood Street and secondary entrances at the 1970s additions accessed from the adjacent parking lot.

Exterior

The Roosevelt School is composed of an original 1923 building (Block "A" in the chronology plan) at its south end with a progression of compatible additions constructed to the north in 1931 (Block "B"), 1938 (Block "C"), and 1954 (Block "D"). These parts combined create an inverted "T" footprint.

The original 1923 building is two stories tall with a raised basement, is basically rectangular in footprint, and of brick and reinforced concrete construction. Designed by prominent local architect Otto A. Merman, the 1923 Roosevelt School's symmetrical massing, distinctive pink-hued kellestone (oxychloride cement) cladding, spare decorative brickwork, simply detailed fenestration, and arched south and west entrances, and battered south and west entrance pavilions and east and west side walls are all typical characteristics of 1920s Spanish Colonial Revival style architecture. The foundation is of brick. The primary south elevation is symmetrically composed and three bays wide with a center entrance pavilion with a front-facing gable flanked by two classroom wings with side-facing gable roofs. A water table of red brick wraps the base of the 1923 building with pink-hued kellestone cladding above. The building's primary entrance pavilion has battered walls that taper up to roof level. The main entrance is composed of a door and window grouping trimmed in red brick with double doors flanked by two small windows and topped by a decorative terra cotta blind archway. Above the main door is a terra cotta plaque with the school's name and construction date flanked by two small brick-trimmed windows. The entrance pavilion's second floor level is composed of a terra cotta-

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trimmed double window flanked by two vertically elongated windows with terra cotta sills and headers. A circular vent in the front-facing gable is decorated in intermittent brickwork set into façade's pink kellestone cladding. The two classroom wings are regularly fenestrated at the first and second floors with groupings of one large and two small windows with terra cotta headers, brick sills, and intermittent brick ornament.

The 1923 building's battered east and west walls display similar brick water tables, kellestone cladding, and intermittent brick ornamentation. The west wall is blank with decorative brick arches and Arts & Crafts-inspired brick ornamentation. The east wall is similarly decorated with brickwork with a first floor kindergarten window bay projecting slightly from the façade.

Continuing north, the first addition (Block B) was added in 1931 to the rear of the original building. This classroom addition is three-bays-wide. Also designed by Otto A. Merman, the 1931 addition displays the same brick water table, pink-hued kellestone, and ornamental brickwork seen on the original 1923 building. The 1931 addition has a pent roof with a pitched asphalt roof at its perimeter and a flat roof at its center. The primary (west) façade displays wide first and second floor window openings and an ornate north entrance pavilion with battered walls, an entrance assembly similar to that seen on the 1923 south façade, and a tall Romanesque-inspired arched window grouping having two lower arched windows separated by a brick mullion and topped by a blind circular window of brick and kellestone.

North of the 1931 addition is a 1938 classroom addition (Block C). This addition by the architects Bovum, Schubert & Sorensen retained the general appearance of the existing building by using similar materials; the primary difference is that the second floor has three window groupings while the first floor only has two. The three-bay-wide 1938 addition created symmetry along the west wall with the 1931 entrance pavilion at its center. The 1938 addition has a pent roof matching the roof of the 1931 addition.

Again, continuing north of the 1938 addition, a one-story classroom addition was constructed in 1954 (Block D). The architect of this addition is currently not known. The 1954 addition has an L-shaped footprint and displays a mix of exterior features referencing the earlier school buildings to the south – red brick water table, pink stucco cladding, regular fenestration – and a flat roof and deep cantilevering roof eaves that defined contemporary Mid-century Modern style architecture.

North and west of the Roosevelt School's classroom building are two semi-detached additions: a two-story c.1970 gymnasium addition (Block "E") designed by an unknown architect, and a one-story, 1972 library addition (Block "F") designed by architects Hackner Schroeder Roslansky & Associates. Both buildings are clad in brown brick, have flat roofs, and are devoid of windows with the exception

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Roosevelt School
La Crosse, La Crosse County, WI

of a single window opening facing north in the northwest corner of the library, and a tall and wide window facing east in the south east corner of the library. The gymnasium has two single doors centered on its south wall, and a pair of doors facing east in the northeast corner of the addition. The library has a single door facing east, located at the northeast corner of the addition. The gymnasium and library are linked to the 1938 school building by a c.1970 hyphen clad in pink stucco containing a corridor and a two-story stair. This passageway has two entrances, one facing north and directly across from it, an entrance facing south.

Interior

Inside, the Roosevelt School retains its original spatial layout and character-defining features typical of an early-twentieth century graded school. Though constructed in several stages, the interiors of the Roosevelt School's 1923-1954 four-part classroom building are linked by first and second floor center corridors that span the full length of the building. These double-loaded corridors display similar historic terrazzo flooring, plaster walls, and plaster ceilings hidden above non-historic drop ceiling systems. The schools' corridors retain historic wood doors and door trim. The 1931 addition retains original wood and glass classroom door systems. Later additions feature carpeting and vinyl composition flooring in some locations, as well as concrete masonry unit walls and drop ceilings. Non-historic lockers line most of the school's corridors.

The original 1923 building retains an original terrazzo stair that links the building's original first and second floor corridors and four original classrooms. The first floor's east kindergarten room located on the east side of the 1923 building retains its original east window bay, though the classroom's window bench and window soffits are not original.

The 1931 and 1938 additions display similar terrazzo clad corridors and stairs. Classrooms in the 1923 building and 1931 and 1938 additions display their original spatial layouts along with plaster walls and plaster ceilings hidden above non-historic drop ceiling systems. The original 1931 stairwell located directly across on the building's northwest corner in addition to restrooms located at the southeast and southwest corners of the first and second floors, are still intact. The stairs provide direct access to the building's central west entrance. In 1938, additional classrooms were extended to the north. This addition also houses administrative offices and a service elevator on the east portion of the first floor.

The far north 1954 addition retains its original spatial layout, tile floors, and concrete masonry unit walls. This one-story addition features restrooms at the far north end of the central corridor. The corridor makes a "L" turn to the west just before reaching the end of the building and is accessed directly by an entrance at the northwest corner of the block. Two kindergarten rooms located on the east and west sides of the additions' south end, feature large coat closets and private toilet rooms

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connected to each classroom.

The c.1970 and 1972 additions connect to the 1938 portion of the building through an extended first floor corridor stretching east. The two-story c.1970 addition houses a gymnasium with restrooms and storage space on the north end. The one-story 1972 addition on the north side of the central corridor, houses a library and multi-purpose space with restrooms located in the southwest corner. A stairwell was added to the east of the 1938 addition and south the new east-west corridor connecting the main building to the two additions constructed in the 1970s. Entrances are located to the south of the c.1970 gymnasium and on the far east end of the corridor connecting the gymnasium and the library.

Integrity

Overall the Roosevelt School displays the architectural integrity that makes it a significant local example of Spanish Colonial Revival style architecture. Though the building's original exterior doors and windows have been replaced, all of the other character defining features of the building are extant; the original 1923 building and its 1931 and 1938 additions retain their characteristic two-story massing, gabled and pent roofs, brick and terra cotta work, and pink-hued kellestone exterior walls. On the interior, the building retains original spatial layouts and historic finishes including terrazzo floors, decorative stairs, wood and glass classroom door systems, and classroom built-ins. Original plaster ceilings are located above non-historic drop ceiling systems. The later additions also retain their floor plans, and architectural features and finishes.

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Roosevelt School
La Crosse, La Crosse County, WI

Summary

The Roosevelt School is locally significant under National Register Criterion C as a distinctive and well-preserved example of the Spanish Colonial Revival style, in this case applied to a school building, within the context of La Crosse. Designed by prominent La Crosse architect Otto A. Merman and completed in 1923, the Roosevelt School was expanded five times throughout its nine-decade history to meet the needs of La Crosse's growing Northside neighborhood. As it grew in size, the Roosevelt School incorporated a variety of special spaces designed to serve the needs of a wide range of pupils from kindergarten through fifth grade, reflecting the expansion of public school education in La Crosse and changing ideals surrounding American primary education. The Roosevelt School was a prominent neighborhood institution until its closing in 2013.

The original 1923 four-classroom school block and the 1931, and 1938 additions were all executed in the Spanish Colonial Revival style. The Roosevelt School's period of significance for Criterion C spans from 1923 to 1938 encompassing the building's original construction and its 1931 and 1938 Spanish Colonial Revival style additions.

History of La Crosse, Wisconsin and the North La Crosse Community

La Crosse, Wisconsin is located at the confluence of the Black, La Crosse, and Mississippi Rivers. First permanently settled by white settlers in 1841 on a bluff overlooking the Mississippi, the city was incorporated ten years later in 1851 and soon grew into the center of commerce in the western part of the state. La Crosse attracted a wave of pre-Civil War settlers, attracted by the city's Mississippi River trade, sawmills for lumber harvested from the inland Black River valley, county government seat, and government land office. Though most early visitors and settlers traveled to La Crosse by wagon, the La Crosse and Milwaukee Railroad (later the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad) completed in 1858 connected the growing community to the larger markets of Milwaukee and Chicago in the east. Additional railroad lines constructed later in the nineteenth century linked La Crosse with western cities across the Mississippi.

The North La Crosse neighborhood is located north of La Crosse's downtown on a narrow strip of land hemmed in by the Black River to the west and north, the La Crosse River and La Crosse River Marsh to the south, and the former Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad to the east. Most of La Crosse's early development was focused within its downtown business district near the city's original settlement facing the Mississippi south of the La Crosse River. Increasing commercial activity north of the La Crosse River, including lumber milling along the Black River, the 1858 completion of the La

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La Crosse, La Crosse County, WI

Crosse and Milwaukee Railroad northeast of downtown, and the 1876 completion of the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad bridge across the Black and Mississippi rivers, drew more residents to the community now known as North La Crosse. North La Crosse industrial development was focused primarily along the banks of the Black River and adjacent to railroad lines, with a commercial hub located along Copeland Street near the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad station. Single-family residences occupied the remainder of North La Crosse along gridded streets stretching north from the railroad.

Expansion across La Crosse's major industries including river trade, lumber milling, brewing, and agricultural equipment manufacturing, brought prosperity and increased the numbers of new residents to La Crosse in the first half of the twentieth century. The city's population grew from 25,000 in 1890 to nearly 29,000 in 1900, then to over 30,000 in 1910 and 1920, and a 30% increase to nearly 40,000 by 1930. This boom in the local economy and citizenry spurred the construction of thousands of new homes in both South and North La Crosse and the building of dozens of new institutional structures including hospitals, libraries, churches, and schools like the Roosevelt School to serve La Crosse's growing population.

Education in La Crosse

The design and construction of the Roosevelt School exemplified a statewide trend in the expansion and specialization of educational facilities in the early-twentieth century. Though the State of Wisconsin's 1848 constitution created a state public school system, it wasn't until the 1870s that legislation created the infrastructure to fund public schooling, and until 1879 when the Wisconsin legislature made school attendance mandatory. In the late-nineteenth century, most community schools, including those in La Crosse, combined primary and secondary grades into single school buildings, instructing children of all ages together under one roof and often within a single room. By 1900, Wisconsin's progressive educational leaders recognized the distinctly different educational and development requirements of younger and older children and the need for separate specialized public educational facilities for different age groups. The push for specialized education led first to the proliferation of separate public secondary schools. The Free High School Law passed by the Wisconsin legislature in 1875 provided state aid to fund public high schools in the state, and by 1923 over 400 local school districts in Wisconsin operated high schools separate from primary schools. Junior high schools also gained favor in the early-twentieth century, particularly in larger urban areas, as settings to bridge the students' transition between primary and secondary education.

As separate educational programs for older children grew, so did advocacy for early childhood programs intended to bring younger children into Wisconsin's public school system. In 1856, German-

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born Margarethe Meyer Schurz (1833-1876) opened the United States' first kindergarten, or "child's garden," program in her home in Watertown, Wisconsin, instructing very young children with carefully developed play-oriented pre-school activities including games and songs. Schurz and her contemporaries in American early childhood educational development inspired a movement of kindergarten programs across the country, including Wisconsin's first public kindergarten program in Manitowoc (1873), and soon kindergartens were "seen as a vital part of the public education system of progressive cities."

America's early-twentieth century education reform movement transformed not only school curriculums but also the architecture of school buildings. In marked contrast to the single-room schoolhouse of the nineteenth century, the modern school building of the twentieth century was carefully designed with the specific ages and activities of students in mind. Modern schools of the 1900s through the 1920s were located in the residential neighborhoods they served, occupying lots large enough to accommodate areas of formal landscaping and for less formal outdoor play. Schools were usually large masonry buildings of fireproof construction, designed by trained architects first in reserved Classically-inspired architectural styles and later in more eclectic styles. Inside, all modern school buildings were expected to have electricity, indoor plumbing, and, of particular importance in Wisconsin, central heating. Interior room layouts reflected the programmatic needs of the students they were built to serve. Wide corridors and stairways connected spacious classrooms well-lit and ventilated by large operable windows. Almost all primary schools like the Roosevelt School featured dedicated kindergarten classrooms for the youngest students. Larger primary and secondary schools often created separate entrances and stairways for different genders, and provided dedicated domestic science, shop, laboratory, and elocution rooms along with large multi-purpose assembly and gymnasium spaces.

The history of early-twentieth century public education in La Crosse mirrored progressive education efforts across Wisconsin and the nation. With a growing local economy came increased civic awareness, leading to the passage of the community's first zoning laws and an expansion of the community's public school system. The Roosevelt School was an important component in the culmination of this decade-long building and improvement campaign begun by the local La Crosse school district in the early 1920s. In addition to refurbishing six older La Crosse neighborhood schools with new playgrounds, new interior finishes and plumbing systems, the local school district commissioned three new public grade schools – the Hogan School (800 East Avenue South, completed 1920, extant), the Washburn School (102 North 8th Street, completed 1921, demolished), and the Roosevelt School (completed 1923) – one public junior high school, the Lincoln School (510 South 9th Street, completed 1924, extant) – and one new public high school, the Logan School (completed 1922, demolished). The city of La Crosse also completed a new facility for the local vocational school (306 North 6th Street, completed 1923, extant). All five of these important new La Crosse educational

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Roosevelt School
La Crosse, La Crosse County, WI

facilities were designed by prominent local architect Otto A. Merman. Considered against the more conventional Classical Revival style Hogan, Washburn, Lincoln, and Vocational Schools, the Roosevelt School was rare both among La Crosse's building stock and among Merman's work in its rejection of Classical-inspired brick façades and design motifs and its use of Spanish-inspired pink-hued kellestone, fanciful brick, and terra cotta ornamentation.

While the majority of La Crosse's 1920s educational improvement efforts focused on the older and denser parts of the city south of the La Crosse River, the Roosevelt School was the only new school constructed during La Crosse's 1910s and 1920s educational improvements located to serve the growing North La Crosse community. With the opening of the Roosevelt School in September 1923 and the end of the city's long school facility improvement program, the La Crosse Tribune and Leader-Press declared that "[t]he foresightedness of officials and citizens of La Crosse has earned for them the gratitude of the mothers and fathers and the boys and girls of the city." By 1928, La Crosse boasted eleven public primary schools, two public junior high schools, two public high schools, nine parochial primary schools, a parochial high school, a vocational school, and a state teachers college.

This wave of construction activity reflects the population growth during the 1920s. Between the 1920 and 1930 censuses, La Crosse had a rate of growth of slightly over 30 percent. As was common in many communities, the expansion of existing schools was a relatively affordable way to accommodate more students. Expansion of existing schools also reinforced school districts' interests in keeping up with educational best practices and accommodating specialized spaces for instruction. Another jump in population in the decade of the 1940s had a domino effect at the school creating space deficiencies. These pressures were relieved when the 1954 addition was completed, only to have a similar pattern repeated with the completion of a 1970-1972 library and gymnasium addition. Changes in technology, curriculum and expectations for educational best practices drove changes to the Roosevelt School. By continuing to expand the facilities of the school, the school district was able to accommodate new courses, expansion of curriculum, and provide modern facilities for specialized spaces such as a gymnasium and library.

Today, the population in La Crosse is approximately 52,440 and the decades of the 1980s through 2010s saw either small increases, or in some decades, a decline in overall population. These trends affected the demand for space in the schools, eliminating the need for further expansion and indeed eventually forcing the contraction of the number of schools needed throughout the community. One result was the closure of the Roosevelt School in 2013.

History of the Roosevelt School

The Roosevelt School was completed in 1923 on the site of the earlier 1891 Seventh District North

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Roosevelt School
La Crosse, La Crosse County, WI

Branch School, which burned in 1922. Named for the recently deceased American president Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919), the new four-classroom Roosevelt School was designed by prominent La Crosse architect Otto A. Merman and was constructed by contractors Peter Nelson and Son.

Though still under construction, the Roosevelt School opened on Tuesday, September 4, 1923. The new school was intended to house kindergarten, first grade, and second grade classrooms, but with portions of the new building still unready for students, initially only a single first grade class was housed in the building; Roosevelt kindergarten and second grade pupils remained temporarily at the nearby Franklin School until transferred to new Roosevelt classrooms as they were completed in the fall of 1923. Sited on a corner in a growing North La Crosse residential neighborhood, the new Roosevelt School with its prominent Hayes Street entrance soon became a distinctive local landmark. Though small in size, the original 1923 Roosevelt School was lauded in the La Crosse Tribune and Leader Press for its Spanish-inspired pink-hued kellestone façade and red tile roof (now replaced), its modern plumbing system, and up-to-date interiors with terrazzo corridor flooring and built-in classroom wardrobes, pinning boards, and slate chalkboards. Boys' and girls' restrooms were located in a small north wing. The top of the building's single stair housed a small office for the school's principal. Safety within the new fireproof schoolhouse was reinforced with the installation of an innovative exterior "Slide Kelly" circular sliding fire escape system which "carries pupils from the second floor to the outside and rear of the building; this fire escape system was removed before the 1931 addition was constructed. A new playlot was constructed north of the school (the Roosevelt School's playing fields eventually expanded to incorporate a full city block).

With growing demand for primary schooling in the North La Crosse community, the Roosevelt School was expanded in 1931 with an addition at the rear (north) of the original 1923 school building. The addition was designed by Otto A. Merman, architect of the original building, and was completed in 1931 at a cost of approximately \$40,000. The new addition matched the Spanish Colonial-inspired massing, materials, and ornamentation of the original building. The addition included an ornate new west entrance along Wood Street, a new northwest stair, four new classrooms with built-in wardrobes and chalkboards, a new library, updated first floor boys' and girls' restrooms, and a new teachers' restroom. Along with new mechanical spaces, the 1931 addition basement housed a new community room that doubled as a local voting station complete with a private voting booth.

The Roosevelt School was expanded again in 1938 with the construction of an addition to the north of the 1931 addition. Architects Bovum, Schubert & Sorensen again matched the massing and materials of the new addition with the older facilities to the south. The new addition included a new north (now missing), four large and three small classrooms, new restrooms, and a new north stair (sing).

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The Roosevelt School's 1938 north entrance and stair were removed in 1954 with the construction of a new one-story ground level addition by an unknown architect. The Mid-century Modern style 1954 addition was clad in pink stucco to match the earlier school buildings and included a new west entrance facing Wood Street and four new classrooms. A new stair and gymnasium wing were constructed in 1970 just east of the 1938 addition. In 1972, a new library addition was constructed east of the 1954 addition and was designed by architects Hackner Schroeder Roslansky & Associates. The construction of the gymnasium and library provided important specialized spaces reflecting the importance of, and responding to, the educational needs of the students. Gymnasiums and libraries had long become mainstays in primary schools and the size of these additions reflects their standing in the overall school curriculum.

Over its ninety-year life as a North La Crosse neighborhood school, the Roosevelt School expanded its programming to include instruction for preschoolers through fifth graders with an annual attendance of approximately 275 students and a staff of approximately 45 teachers and administrators. The building was expanded to allow additional room when student attendance numbers rose, provided specialized spaces for new educational opportunities and provided facilities in keeping with current educational best practice standards. The school evolved to meet the changing needs of the community and embodies the educational standards and curriculum of the twentieth century. The Roosevelt School closed its doors in 2013 and is currently vacant.

Criterion C: the Spanish Colonial Revival Style

The Roosevelt School is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places as a good and intact example of the Spanish Colonial Revival style in La Crosse, an uncommon style in this community.

Characteristics of the style

The Spanish Colonial Revival style is characterized by a low pitched roof with little or no eave overhang; red tile roofs with heavy brackets; flat, stucco wall surfaces, broken by arcading and terra cotta, plaster, or tile ornamentation, or brick walls which sometimes remain unplastered. The style can have either simple or dramatically carved doors, and windows can be singular or grouped, often arched. Large focal windows are common. Doors and windows have adjacent spiral columns, pilasters, carved stonework, or patterned tiles; and, one or more prominent arches placed above the door or principal window is also typical. Further exterior ornament may include shaped gables, wrought iron grill work, decorative window grilles, balustrades on cantilevered balconies, arcaded walkways, and round or square towers. Specific motifs are wide ranging, subject to the individual preferences of the architect or client.

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Roosevelt School
La Crosse, La Crosse County, WI

Origins of the style

According to *A Field Guide to American Houses*, the origins of the style can be traced to the Panama-California Exposition, held in San Diego in 1915, as it was here that,

“... imitation of more elaborate Spanish prototypes received wide attention. The exposition was designed by Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, who had previously authored a detailed study of Spanish Colonial architecture. Goodhue wanted to go beyond the then prevalent Mission interpretations and emphasize the richness of Spanish precedents found throughout Latin America. Inspired by the wide publicity given the exposition, other fashionable architects soon began to look directly to Spain for source material. There they found a still longer and richer sequence of architectural traditions which became melded into a style that they continued to call the Spanish Colonial Revival. An eclectic popular American design aesthetic from approximately 1915 to 1940, the Spanish Colonial Revival was prominently used on commercial, residential, and institutional buildings and borrowed features of Spanish Renaissance, Spanish Colonial, Mediterranean, Romanesque, Byzantine, Mission, Arts & Crafts, and Prairie School architecture. The style reached its apex during the 1920s and early 1930s and passed rapidly from favor during the 1940s.”¹

Roosevelt School and the Spanish Colonial Revival Style

The Roosevelt School's original 1923 block along with its 1931 and 1938 additions display formal and decorative features typical of the Spanish Colonial Revival style. In *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin*, the Architecture sub-unit describes the common characteristics of the Spanish Colonial Revival style and asserts that, “... many of the best designs of the period are not historically “correct” copies of a mannerism but are the architect's creative interpretation of the style.” This is certainly the case with the Roosevelt School. This building has many of the characteristics of the Spanish Colonial Revival style such as the low pitched roof with shallow overhang; flat, stuccoed walls broken by tile ornamentation; large focal windows on the primary and secondary street facades; tall, paired arched windows, as well as prominent arches above doors and windows. Blank arches, battered walls, and brick window mullions which seem to approximate a stylized, but restrained, interpretation of the characteristic spiral columns - all reflect the creative interpretation of the style. The most striking characteristic is the distinctive, pink kellestone wall surfaces.

¹ McAlester. *A Field Guide to American Houses*, pg. 418.

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The Spanish Colonial Revival style in Wisconsin and La Crosse

Although nationally the Spanish Colonial Revival style was popular during the first half of the twentieth century, the style is relatively unusual in Wisconsin. Perhaps because the style is evocative of a sun-splashed Mediterranean climate, and certainly influenced by the strong historical association with early Spanish settlement, the style was more popular in California, southwestern, and southeastern coastal states. In Wisconsin the style seems almost whimsical, a stylistic challenge in defiance against the cold climate and long winters. In La Crosse occurrences of the style stand out, in part due to their rarity. Residential applications of the style can be found in La Crosse's early- to mid-twentieth century neighborhoods, particularly in the *23rd and 24th Streets National Register Historic District*. Prominent residential examples include the John Bayer House (1127 Cass Street, 1925), and the Guy and Eloda Beach Residence (205 N. Losey Boulevard, 1926). In La Crosse there are currently no buildings individually listed in the National Register for their Spanish Colonial Revival design. An evaluation of surveyed buildings in La Crosse show that only two other Spanish Colonial Revival style buildings (aside from the Roosevelt School) have been evaluated as individually eligible: the City Bath House, and the William and Clarissa Kroner House.

Comparable Spanish Colonial Revival Style Buildings in La Crosse

There are two other Spanish Colonial Revival style buildings potentially individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The City Bath House was designed by Otto Merman and is located on the beach of Pettibone Park. While the Bath House is of the Spanish Colonial Revival style, it is more restrained in design, having stuccoed walls and a tall arched entrance with ceramic tiles but having little of the terra cotta, tile, spiral columns and pilasters, or any of the more exuberant features of the style. In fact, the potential eligibility of the Bath House is under Criterion A, due to its association with Pettibone Park and community recreation.

The pink stucco-clad William and Clarissa Kroner House (131 South Losey Boulevard, 1929) also designed by Merman, is an excellent residential example of the style incorporating stucco walls, shaped gables and arches, wrought iron grill work, decorative window grilles, and paired and tall-arched windows.

The Roosevelt School compares favorably to these other examples and when compared to the City Bath House, the school's design is a better representation of the style, exhibiting more of the character defining features. The Roosevelt School has very good integrity and stands out as one of the best examples of the style, and is the best non-residential example of the style in La Crosse.

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Section 8 Page 9Roosevelt School
La Crosse, La Crosse County, WI

Architect Otto A. Merman (1890-1935)

Otto A. Merman, architect of the Roosevelt School, was a prominent La Crosse-based architect best known for his Prairie-inspired residential designs of the 1910s and 20s. A La Crosse native, Merman apprenticed as a teenager with Parkinson & Dockendorff, a prolific La Crosse architecture partnership known for its central Wisconsin graded school commissions. In 1912, the twenty-two year old Merman joined the office of La Crosse architect Percy Dwight Bentley (1885-1968), later becoming a partner in the firm of Bentley & Merman. Bentley left La Crosse for a new partnership in Saint Paul, Minnesota in 1921, leaving Merman in sole control of the firm. For the next fourteen years, Merman intermittently operated as an architect and partner in Merman & Skogstad when working with architect Herman W. Skogstad (d. 1929) and under his own name until his death in 1935 at the age of forty-five.

Otto A. Merman's career was sustained by a long string of single-family house commissions, primarily by wealthy clients in residential neighborhoods ringing the La Crosse's riverfront downtown commercial district. Working first alongside Percy Dwight Bentley, then alone and with Skogstad, Merman's large home designs predominantly followed the aesthetic principles of the Prairie School of architecture. Developed by a group of Chicago-based architects, including most notably Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959), the Prairie School was popular across America but primarily in the American Midwest between approximately 1890 and 1920. Merman's use of typical Prairie School features – simple geometric building massing with low hipped roofs, ample use of stucco and wood cladding and art glass, deep cantilevering roof eaves, and open interior plans – are best displayed in his designs for the Henry Salzer House (1634 King Street, with Bentley, completed 1912, extant), the Mary and Daniel MacMillan House (1222 Cass Street, with Bentley, completed 1914, extant), the Emil T. Mueller House (128 South 14th Street, with Bentley, completed 1914, extant), and the Frank & Lucinda Schwalbe House (223 South 17th Street, completed 1921, extant). Otto A. Merman's residential work alone, with Bentley, and with Skogstad constitute a large number of contributing buildings within La Crosse's Cass and King Street Residential Historic District (NR #97001410, designated 1997).

In addition to ongoing residential work, the 1920s brought the now independent Otto A. Merman a string of school commissions in La Crosse. Merman's designs for three large public grade and junior high schools – the Hogan School (800 East Avenue South, completed 1920, extant), the Washburn School (102 North 8th Street and the Lincoln School (510 South 9th Street, completed 1924, extant) – in addition to two other 1920s La Crosse school designs – the La Crosse Vocational School and Addition (304 North 6th Street, completed 1923 and 1929, extant) and the St. John the Baptist School (818 St. James Street, completed 1928, demolished) followed the more conventional tenets of Classical Revivalism. Merman's designs for the smaller Roosevelt School (completed 1923 with a Merman-designed addition in 1931) displayed his creative versatility, borrowing heavily from the less rigid

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Roosevelt School
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architectural language of the Spanish Colonial Revival style.

Best known for his home and school works, Merman was also a leading designer of municipal, institutional, and commercial buildings in La Crosse, including the Georgian Revival style La Crosse Hospital (1707 Main Street, completed 1914, extant), the Renaissance Revival style Lutheran Hospital Nurses Home (1912 South Avenue, completed 1923, extant), the Gothic Revival style English Lutheran Church (1601 Cass Street, completed 1925, extant but heavily altered), the Spanish Colonial Revival style City Bath House on Barron Island in Pettibone Park (completed 1925, extant), the Avalon Ballroom (206 Copeland Avenue, completed 1927, extant but heavily altered), and the Tudor Revival style North Branch Library in the North La Crosse neighborhood (1522 Kane Street, designed in 1923 but not completed until 1942, extant).

Conclusion

The Roosevelt School is locally significant under National Register Criterion C as a good example of the Spanish Colonial Revival style, in this case applied to a school building in La Crosse. The pink-hued kellestone is striking and the building displays a number of important character defining characteristics typical of twentieth century Spanish Colonial Revival style architecture. When compared to other buildings of the same style in La Crosse, the Roosevelt School stands out as one of the best examples in the community. With its original spatial layout including corridors, classrooms, stairs, and kindergarten room remaining intact, the Roosevelt School's original 1923 building, along with its 1931, 1938, 1954, and 1970s additions, is notable for its long history of primary education. The building served for over ninety years as a North La Crosse neighborhood school, expanding its programming and its facilities to include instruction for preschoolers through fifth graders to meet the growing demand for primary schooling.

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Roosevelt School
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La Crosse, La Crosse County, WI

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Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1936.

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Roosevelt School
La Crosse, La Crosse County, WI

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary is the entire parcel associated with Roosevelt School and the address 1307 Hayes Street, which is bounded by Palace St. to the north, Loomis St. to the east, Hayes St. to the south, and Wood St. to the west. Based on Sanborn maps, this appears to correspond to the historic boundary of the school. The building is primarily situated on the southwest portion of the lot with Roosevelt Park to the northeast.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries encompass the entire parcel of land historically and currently associated with the Roosevelt School building in La Crosse, La Crosse County, WI.

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Section photos Page 1

Roosevelt School
La Crosse, La Crosse County, WI

Name of Property: Roosevelt School

City or Vicinity: La Crosse

County: La Crosse

State: Wisconsin

Photographer: John Cramer

Date Photographed: November 4th, 2014

Location of Original Digital Files: State Historic Preservation Office, Wisconsin Historical Society,
Madison, WI

Description of Photograph(s) and Number:

1 of 13: 1923 building- south elevation, looking north.

2 of 13: West elevation, looking southeast at original 1923 building at right, 1931 addition at center,
and 1938 addition at left.

3 of 13: West elevation, looking east at 1931 west (primary) entrance.

4 of 13: East elevation, looking west at original 1923 building (bay window at left), 1931 addition at
center, and c. 1970 addition at far right.

5 of 13: North elevation, looking south at 1954 addition at right and 1972 addition at left.

6 of 13: 1954 addition, looking southeast.

7 of 13: 1970 addition, north elevation, looking south.

8 of 13: 1972 addition, east elevation, looking west.

9 of 13: Original 1923 building, first floor entrance hall, looking north.

10 of 13: Original 1923 building, first floor entrance hall, looking south.

11 of 13: 1931 building corridor.

12 of 13: c1970 addition, gymnasium.

13 of 13: 1972 addition, library.

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List of Figures:

- Figure 1:** Sanborn Fire Insurance Map c. 1940-1954, showing Roosevelt School with its original 1923 school building to the south, 1931 addition at center (incorrectly labeled as "Built 1923") and 19 addition to the north (incorrectly labeled as "Built 1939")
- Figure 2:** Building construction chronology plan
- Figure 3:** Roosevelt School's original 1923 building, 1972 (Wisconsin Historical Society)
- Figure 4:** Roosevelt School's original 1923 building (right) and 1931 and 1938 additions (left), c. 1975 (Wisconsin Historical Society)
- Figure 5:** 1931 addition west elevation drawing by architect Otto A. Merman (private archives)
- Figure 6:** 1931 addition 1st floor plan drawing by architect Otto A. Merman, showing original 1923 1st floor plan at bottom (private archives)
- Figure 7:** 1938 addition west elevation drawing by architects Bovum, Schubert & Sorensen (private archives)
- Figure 8:** 1938 addition 1st floor plan drawing by architects Bovum, Schubert & Sorensen, showing the 1923 building and 1931 addition 1st floor plans at right (private archives)
- Figure 9:** Current lower level plan.
- Figure 10:** Current first floor plan.
- Figure 11:** Current second floor plan.

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Roosevelt School
La Crosse, La Crosse County, WI

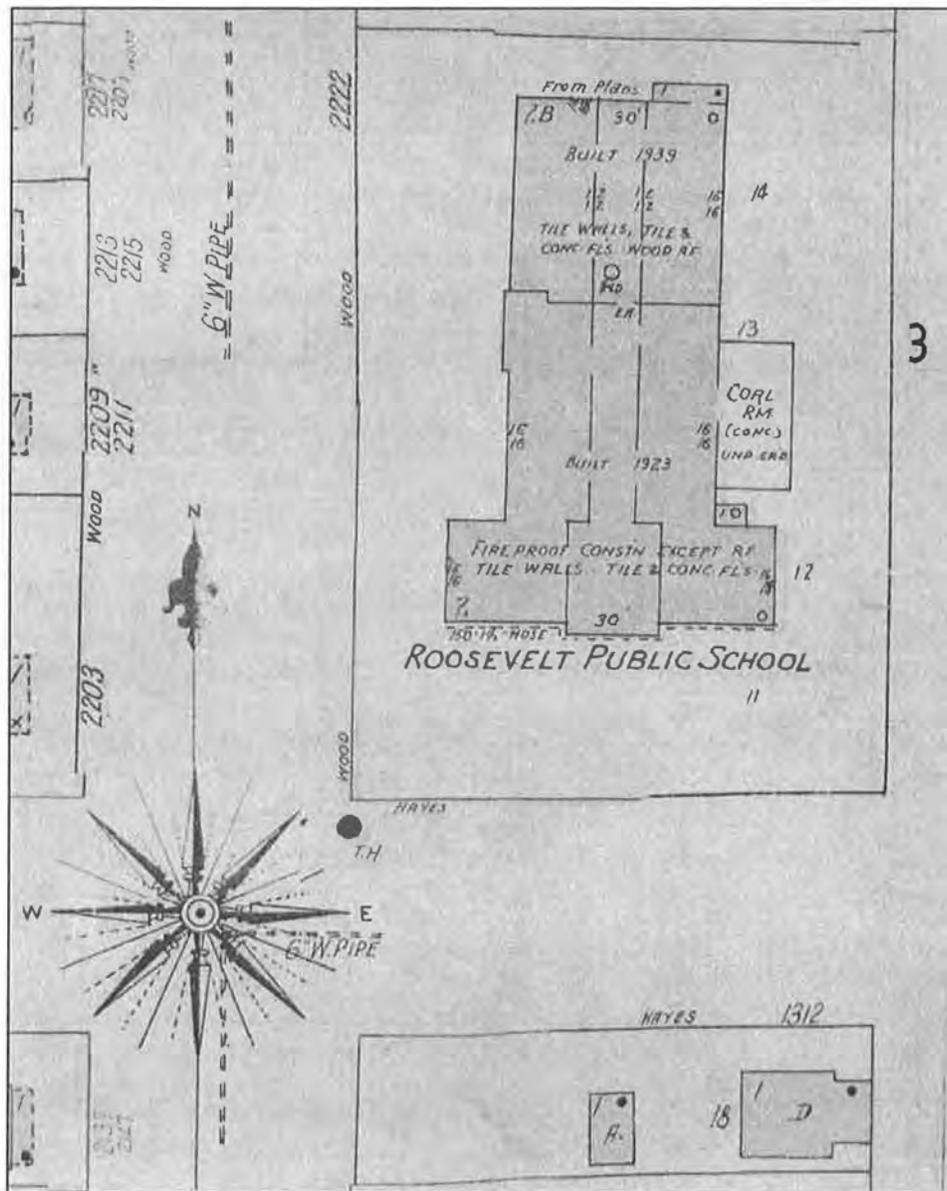


Figure 1: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map c. 1940-1954, showing Roosevelt School with its original 1923 school building to the south, 1931 addition at center (incorrectly labeled as “Built 1923”) and addition to the north (incorrectly labeled as “Built 1939”).

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La Crosse, La Crosse County, WI

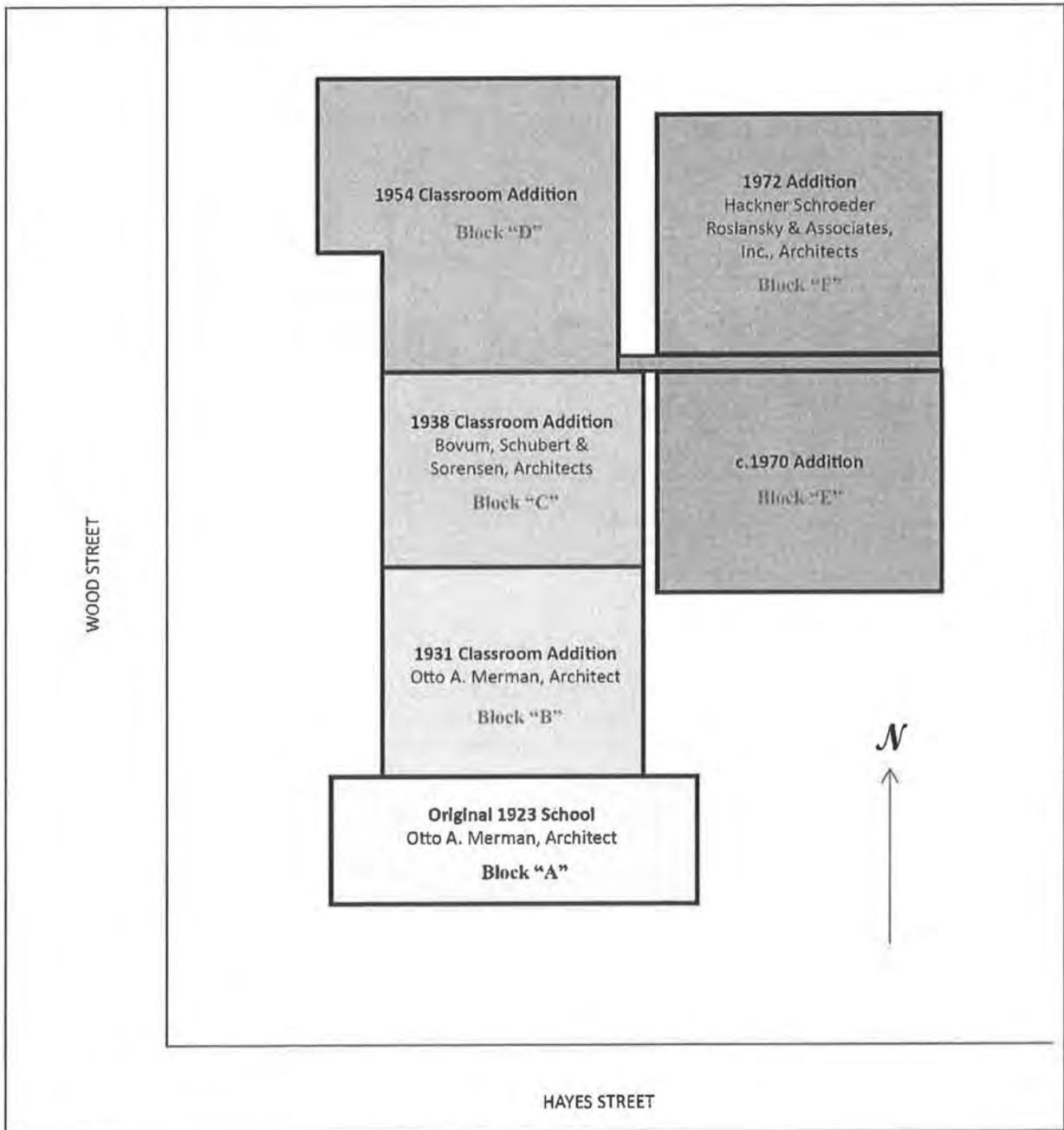


Figure 2: Building construction chronology plan.

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Roosevelt School
La Crosse, La Crosse County, WI



Figure 3: Roosevelt School's original 1923 building, 1972 (Wisconsin Historical Society).

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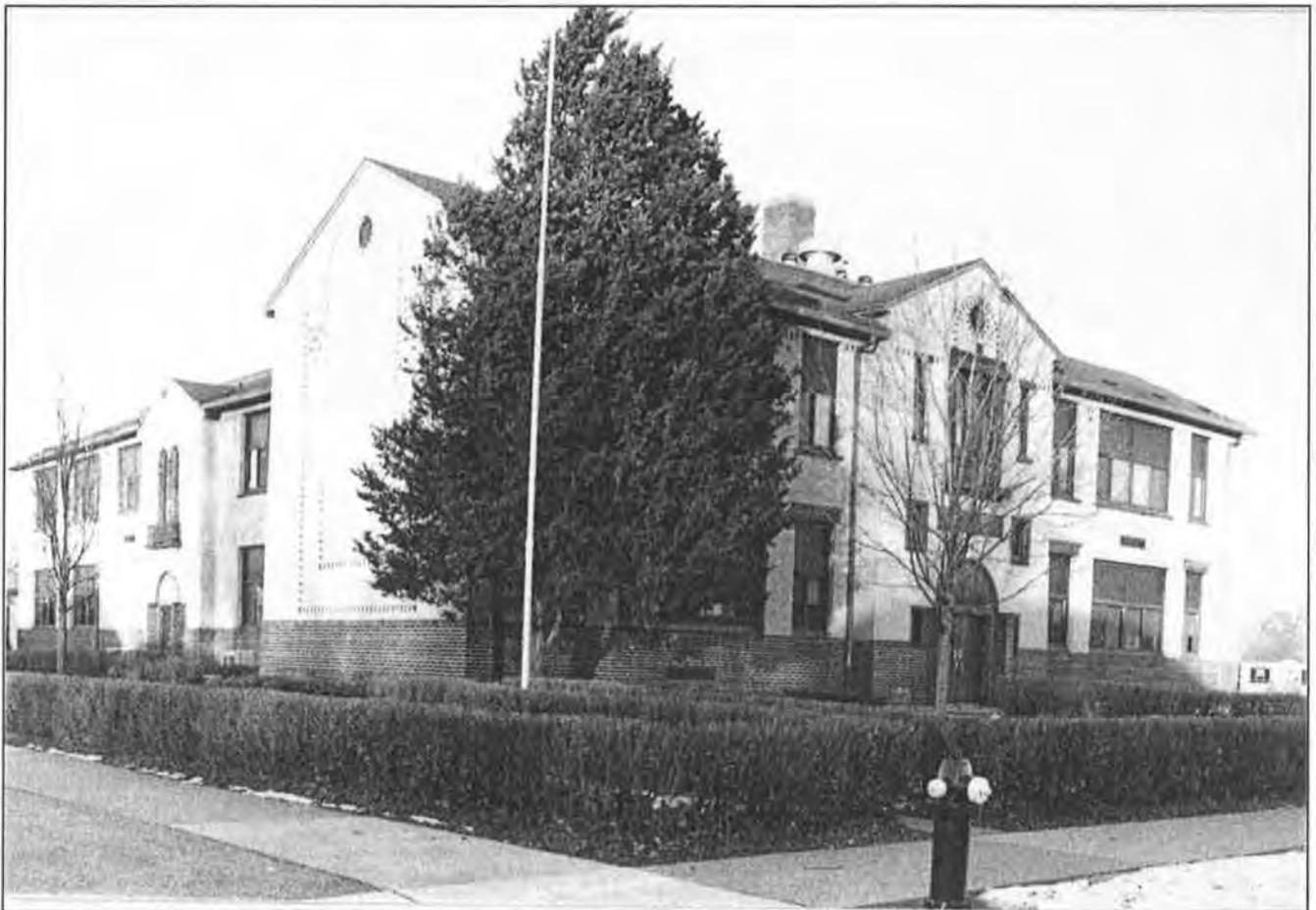


Figure 4: Roosevelt School's original 1923 building (right) and 1931 and 1938 additions (left), c. 1975 (Wisconsin Historical Society).

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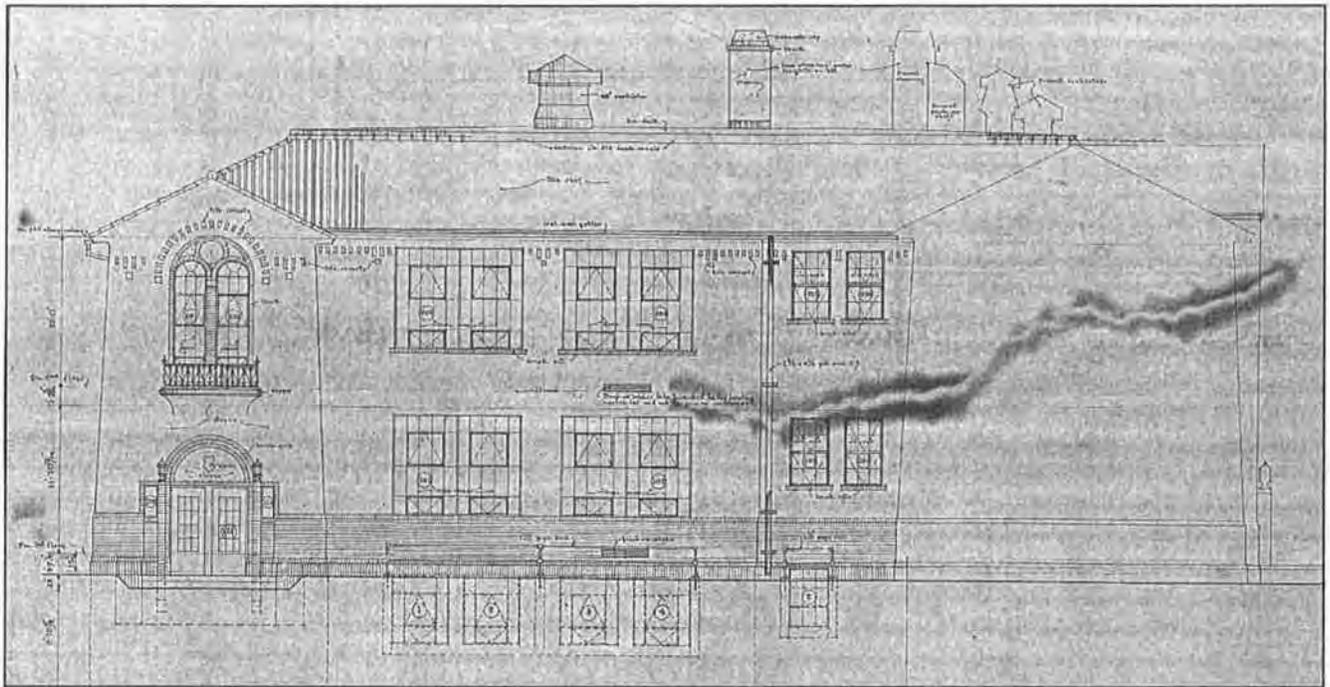


Figure 5: 1931 addition west elevation drawing by architect Otto A. Merman (private archives).

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Roosevelt School
La Crosse, La Crosse County, WI

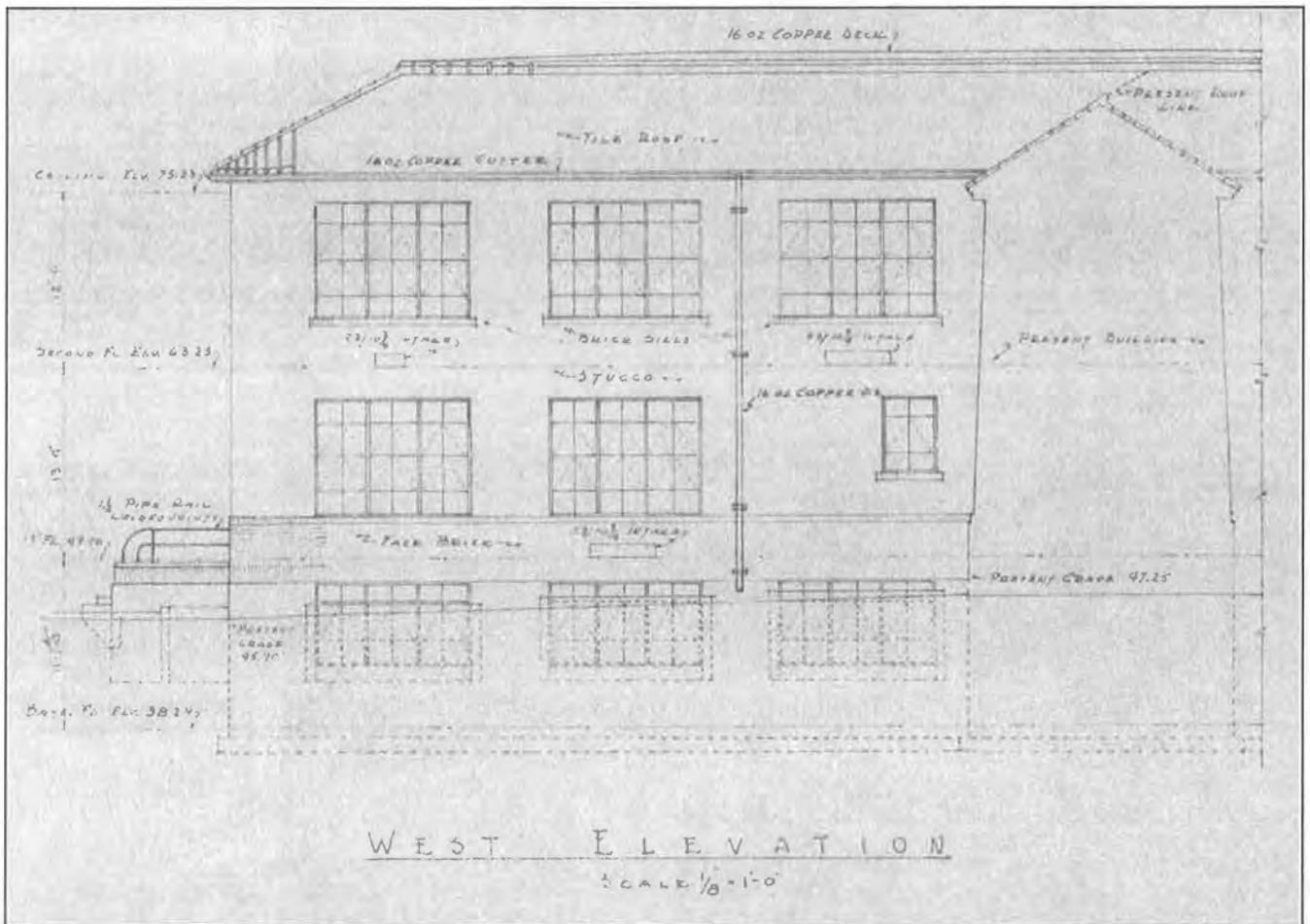


Figure 7: 1938 addition west elevation drawing by architects Bovum, Schubert & Sorensen (private archives).

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Roosevelt School
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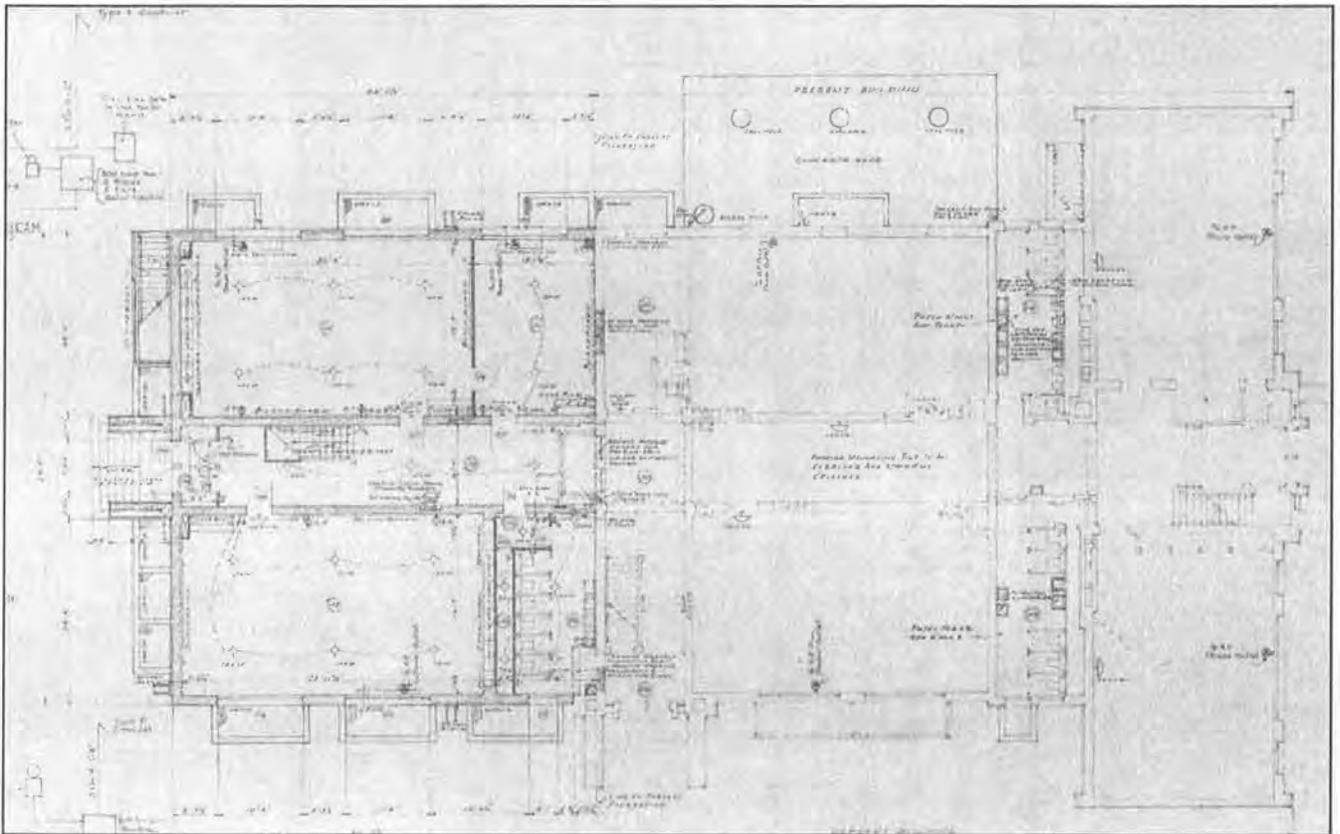


Figure 8: 1938 addition 1st floor plan drawing by architects Bovum, Schubert & Sorensen, showing the 1923 building and 1931 addition 1st floor plans at right (private archives).

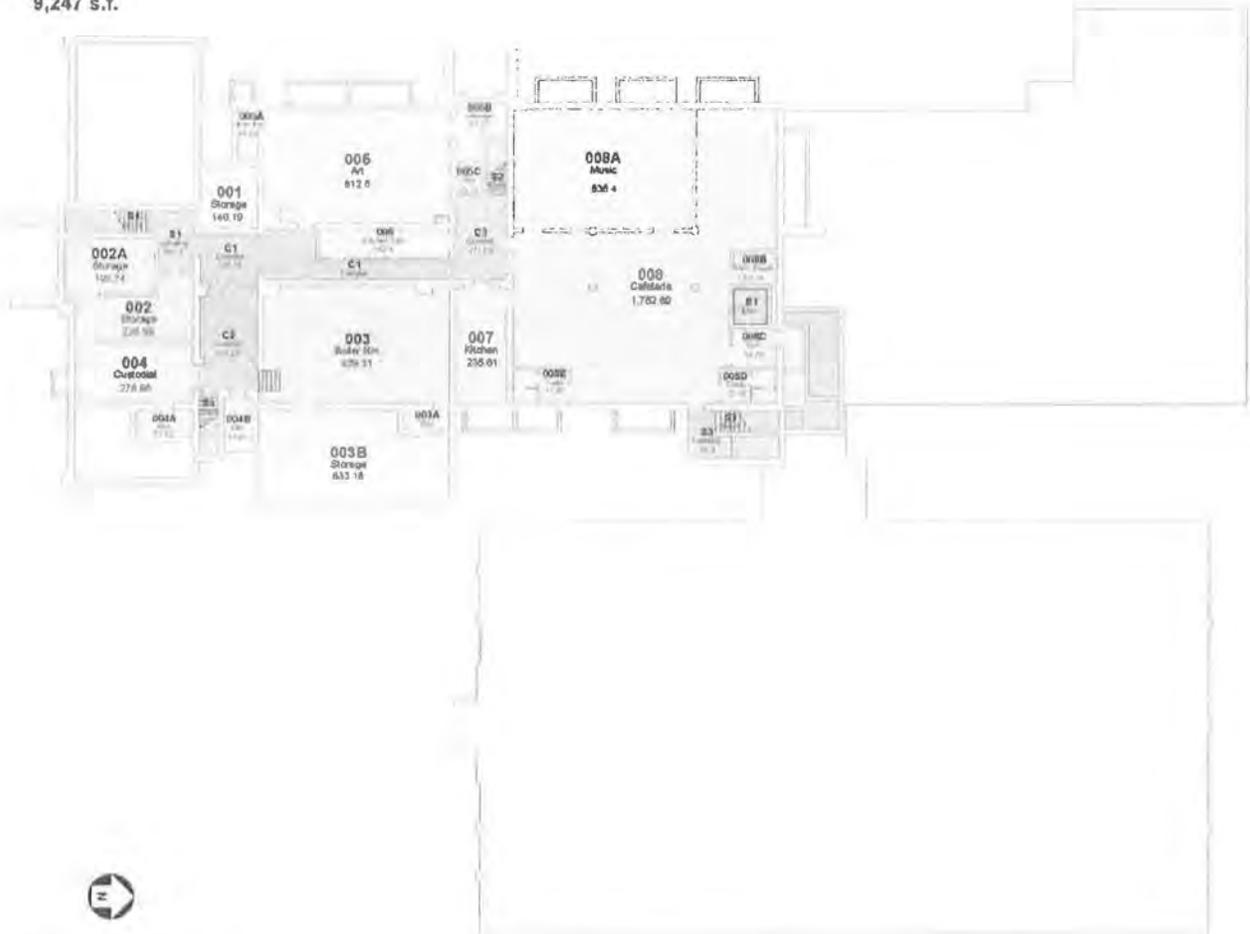
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Roosevelt School
La Crosse, La Crosse County, WI

Basement
9,247 s.f.



Scale: NTS

Figure 9: Current lower level plan.

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Roosevelt School
La Crosse, La Crosse County, WI

1st Floor



Scale: NTS

Figure 10: Current first floor plan.

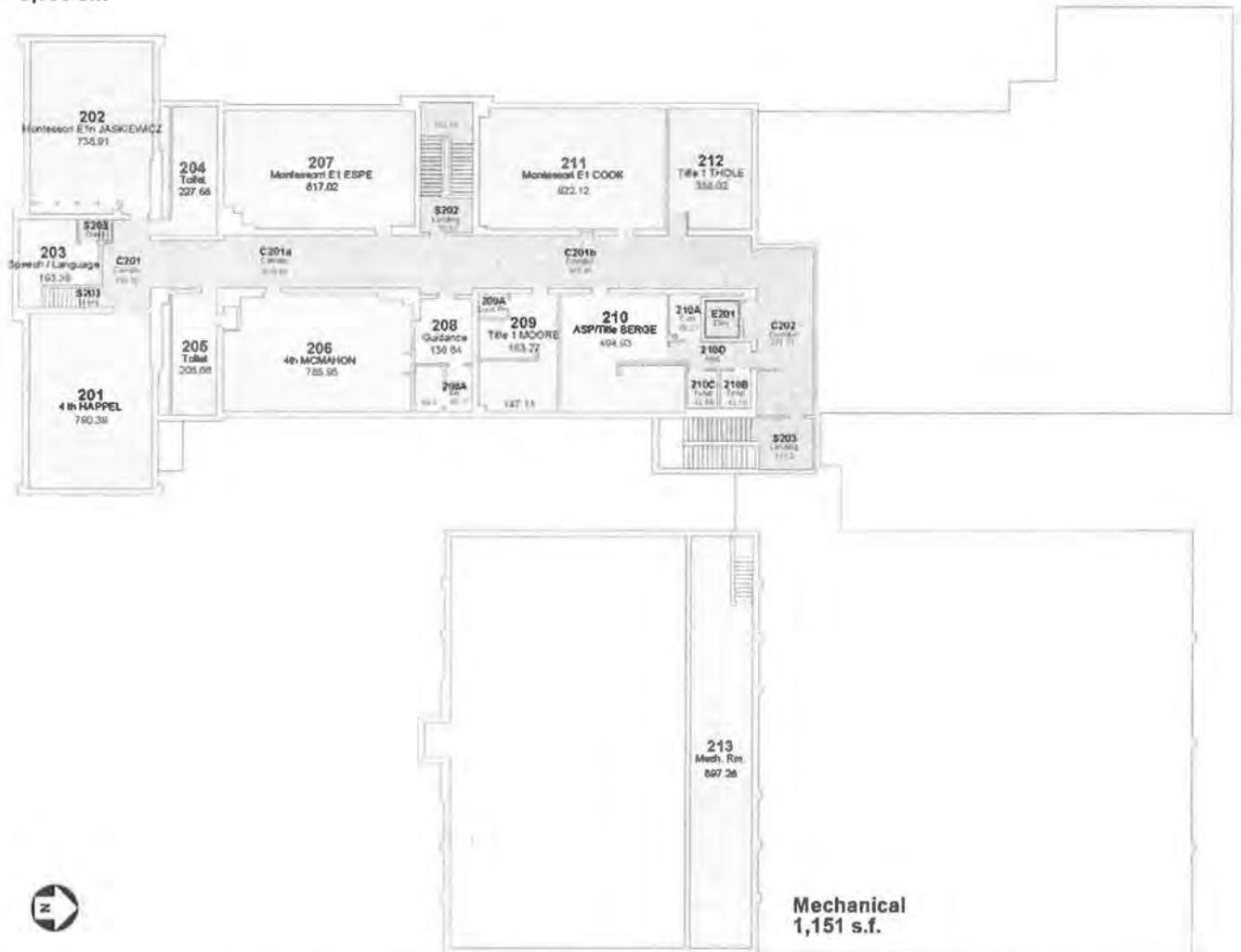
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Roosevelt School
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**2nd Floor
9,980 s.f.**



Scale: NTS
Figure 11: Current second floor plan.



THE USE OF TOBACCO PRODUCTS ON SCHOOL PROPERTY IS NOT PERMITTED

1307





ROOSEVELT ELEMENTARY



ROOSEVELT ELEMENTARY



The left side of the building features a gabled roof with a decorative circular window at the peak. Below the gable is a bay window with a dark green frame. The wall is light-colored with decorative red brick patterns, including a vertical line and cross-like motifs. A brick base runs along the bottom of this section.

The right side of the building is a long, two-story structure with a flat roof. It has a brick chimney and a brick base. The facade is light-colored with several rectangular windows. A central door is visible on the ground floor. The roofline is decorated with small red brick accents.











Coulee Montessori



"The child is both the hope
and promise for mankind"







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