

United States Department of the 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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name James H. Bowen High School

other names/site number _____

Name of Multiple Property Listing N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

street & number 2710 E. 89th Street

☐ not for publication

city or town Chicago

☐ vicinity

state Illinois

county Cook

zip code 60617

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance: ___ national ___ statewide ___ local

Applicable National Register Criteria: ___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D

Signature of certifying official/Title: Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

Date

Illinois Department of Natural Resources - SHPO

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. 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 the Keeper

Date of Action

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

☐	private
☒	public - Local
☐	public - State
☐	public - Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

☒	building(s)
☐	district
☐	site
☐	structure
☐	object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing
1	buildings
	site
	structure
	object
1	Total

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.)

EDUCATION: school

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY

AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Prairie School

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Brick

roof: Asphalt

other: Terra Cotta

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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity).

Summary Paragraph

James H. Bowen High School is located at 2710 E. 89th Street in the South Chicago community area in Chicago, approximately 10 miles south of the Loop. The building occupies a large parcel east of South Chicago Avenue and the adjacent Chicago Skyway (Interstate 90), and directly north of Bessemer Park. The original school building, located at the southwest corner of the lot, was designed by prominent Chicago architect Dwight H. Perkins and completed in 1910. The building is four-and-one-half stories tall at its center section, with a complex roofline consisting of a side-gable main roof that extends east-west across the façade and obscures a flat roof at the north end of the center block. Two projecting pavilions flank the center entrance bay on the front (south) façade of the building, and more substantial rear wings extend from the north elevation on either side of the building's auditorium. The building is clad in red-orange and red-brown brick with simple red-orange and red-brown terra-cotta detailing and is regularly fenestrated with double-hung replacement windows.

The original 1910 school building was expanded in 1940 and 1969. The 1940 addition, designed by John C. Christensen, is a three-story structure that was designed to complement Perkin's original design. In 1969, the school was enlarged again – a two-story classroom building was constructed directly east of the original school building, and a new gymnasium and auto repair shop were built on the north and east sides of the 1940 addition. Although these post-World War II additions are substantial, both the classroom and gymnasium buildings are minimally connected to the 1910 building and 1940 addition via one-story hyphens.

Narrative Description

Site and Setting

James H. Bowen High School sits on a nine-acre parcel that occupies two full city blocks. The lot is bounded by 89th Street on the south, Muskegon Avenue on the east, 88th Street on the north, and Marquette Avenue on the west. Manistee Avenue originally ran through the center of the parcel – this street was truncated when the east addition to the school was built in 1969, and the north end of this street now serves as an entrance road to the school property. The area immediately surrounding the school is residential in character, with modest single-family and two- and three-flats lining the streets to the east, west, and north. Bessemer Park, established in 1904 and named after Henry Bessemer, the inventor of the Bessemer method of steel production, is located south of the school across 89th Street. Approximately two blocks west of the school are South Chicago Avenue, train tracks that serve Amtrack's Lake Shore Limited line between Chicago and New York (formerly owned by the Lake Shore & Michigan Southern Railroad and the Pittsburg, Fort Wayne & Chicago Railroad), and the Chicago Skyway (I-90), all of which run southeast-northwest and divide the residential neighborhood around the school.

The original 1910 school building occupies the southwest corner of the lot. The center entrance of the building is set back approximately 140 feet from 89th Street and connected to the sidewalk by two long concrete walkways divided by a narrow strip of low plantings. The 1969 classroom addition, located directly east of the 1910 building, sits approximately 100 feet from 89th Street and 125 feet from Muskegon Avenue and is connected to the original building's east elevation via a two-story hyphen. Wide concrete walkways run north from 89th Street to the hyphen and to the main entrance to the addition at the east end of its north elevation, and narrow diagonal and orthogonal walkways lead to additional entrances to the addition on its east elevation.

The 1940 addition extends north from the north-east wing of the original 1910 building, and its west elevation is built to the lot line along Marquette Avenue. The addition is three stories, with a flat roof and red-brown and red-orange brick exterior. The 1969 gymnasium addition connects to the north elevation of the 1940 addition via a one-story hyphen and is

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located at the northwest corner of lot, and the 1969 auto repair shop addition extends from the east elevation of the 1940 addition.

Mature trees are located along the perimeter of the school lot and are clustered around the front façade of the 1910 school building and 1969 addition. Grass lawns cover the area directly in front of these buildings and the entire east end of the parcel. The lawns fronting the 1910 school building and 1969 classroom addition are enclosed with low, non-historic metal fencing. Behind the school are two surface parking lots at the north-center and northeast corners of the lot, which are accessed via Manistee Avenue, which runs between the two lots and terminates just north of the hyphen connecting the 1910 school building and 1969 classroom addition.

Exterior

Original School Building (1910)

The original school building, designed by Dwight Perkins and completed in 1910, features a modified E-shaped plan composed of eight distinct sections – a center, four-and-one-half-story section that contains the building’s main entrance; two three-and-one-half-story wings that extend east and west from the center section; two three-and-one-half-story wings that extend north from the rear elevations of the east and west wings; the rear auditorium block located directly north of the center section; and two one-story sections flanking the auditorium block that originally housed two blast furnaces, a foundry, and a forge room. The center section and the four wings are all topped with steeply-pitched gable roofs clad in red asphalt shingles, with overhanging eaves and rakes and exposed rafter tails, all clad in copper. The attic level of the center section, which originally housed the school’s cafeteria, rises above the roof of the east and west wings, and the exposed walls below the gables contain windows fronted by geometric ornamental grilles. The roofs of the north end of the center section and east and west wings are flat and hidden behind the ridgelines of the gable roofs. The north slopes of the roofs at the center section and the east and west wings contain original skylights, as do the inner-facing slopes of the north wings.

Principal (South) Façade

The principal façade of the building encompasses the south elevations of the center entrance section and the east and west wings. The façade features a red-brown terra-cotta water table at its base and is clad in red-brown brick at the first story and red-orange brick at the upper stories. This section is 13 bays wide and features two three-and-one-half-story pylons that flank the building’s one-story main entrance bay. The building’s recessed main entrance is located between these pylons and is flanked by octagonal columns and window bays. The entrance opening is deeply recessed within the center of this bay and is flanked by octagonal columns with flared capitals. Three doorways at the entrance contain non-historic double-leaf metal doors, with multi-light transom windows above, and the original brick name plate with terra-cotta lettering that reads “James H. Bowen Public High School” extends along the top of the entrance bay. The center entrance section is regularly fenestrated above the first story, with historic window openings between the pylons divided by a series of projecting brick piers and recessed brick and terra-cotta spandrel panels. Window openings on the south wall of each pylon above the first story are deeply recessed and fronted by a pair of slender terra-cotta columns.

The south elevations of the east and west wings are identical. The first story of each wing is clad in red-brown brick and regularly fenestrated with window openings set above the red-brown terra-cotta water table. A projecting red-brown terra-cotta belt course divides the first story from the upper two stories, which feature a grid-like fenestration pattern like that seen on the upper stories of the center entrance section. A three-and-one-half-story projecting pavilion marks the east end of the east wing and the west end of the west wing. Each pavilion is topped with a steeply-pitched gable roof and features prominent corner piers of red-orange brick that terminate just below the roofline. The overall fenestration pattern on the walls of each pavilion matches that of the rest of the façade; echoing the corner piers, the slender brick piers dividing the windows on the south wall of each pavilion extend above the second story to flank a single window opening placed just below the gable peak and terminate below the roofline.

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Windows on the façade are non-historic double-hung aluminum replacement windows. These windows are historically compatible, and feature 6/3 and 3/3 sash configurations that reference the original window configurations.

West and East Elevations

The west elevation of the 1910 school building exhibits the same red-brown and red-orange brick cladding, simple terra-cotta detailing, and fenestration patterns seen on the front façade. The gabled west end of the building's west wing forms the south end of the elevation and houses a ground-level entrance flanked by single window-openings, which have been bricked in. The paired recessed entry openings feature double-leaf metal doors with raised panels and three-light glazed openings; the original ivory terra-cotta name plate reading "Bowen Public High School" sits above the doors. The west elevation of the building's north-west wing extends north of this entrance and features a series of grouped window openings on the first story and regular window openings framed by projecting brick piers and recessed brick and terra-cotta spandrels. Windows on this elevation are historically compatible 6/3 and 3/3 double-hung aluminum replacement windows; the window openings in the east three bays above the ground-floor entrance at the second and third stories are infilled with brick. The east elevation of the 1910 building is nearly identical to the west elevation. The east entrance to the building, originally located on the east wall of the building's east wing near the south end of this elevation, has been obscured by the two-story hyphen that connects the 1910 building to the 1969 east classroom addition.

Rear Elevations

The rear, north-facing elevations of the central entrance section and east and west wings are partially obscured by the central auditorium block and flanking one-story, flat-roof blocks containing the blast furnaces. The auditorium dome rises to the third story of the center section's north elevation. The arched lunette windows at the base of the dome are intact, and the pyramidal apex and pendentives of the dome, as well as the half-dome that marks the auditorium's proscenium, are clad in sheet metal. The north elevations of the auditorium and blast-furnace blocks are clad in red-brown brick. The upper elevations of the center section and wings surrounding the auditorium and blast-furnace blocks are simply treated, and feature red-orange brick cladding and original window openings filled with 6/6 aluminum double-hung windows. The center section rises to four stories at this elevation; two of the window openings at the fourth story have been enlarged to fit exits that are connected to metal exterior fire stairs.

While the original north end of the building's north-west wing has been subsumed by the 1940 addition, the north end of the north-east wing remains intact, and features projecting corner piers that terminate below the roofline. The second and third stories of the north wall of this wing are unfenestrated.

1940 Gymnasium/Pool Addition

The three-story gymnasium and pool addition to Bowen High School, designed by John C. Christensen and completed in 1940, extends north from the north-west wing of the 1910 building along Marquette Avenue. The addition is roughly rectangular in plan and features a flat roof ringed by a terra-cotta-capped brick parapet. The west elevation of the addition was designed to complement Perkin's design for the original school building, with a red-brown terra cotta water table, red-brown brick cladding on its first story, and red-orange brick on its upper stories. A slightly recessed entrance bay marks the south end of the elevation – the entrance opening, which is recessed and centered on the ground floor of the bay, contains three single-leaf doors with glazed upper panels, with square three-light transoms above. The original terra-cotta sign, which reads "Bowen Public High School," is centered above the entrance opening. The upper stories of the entrance addition bear a similar design to the pylons flanking the main entrance on the south façade, with window openings set behind engaged terra cotta columns.

The west elevation north of the entrance bay features a red-brown brick first story with regular window openings that have been bricked in. A projecting red-brown terra-cotta belt course separates the first story from the upper stories, which are regularly fenestrated with non-historic aluminum double-hung windows in original openings. The four center bays of this section of the elevation, which mark the location of offices, contain four regularly-spaced aluminum double-hung

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windows at the second and third stories. The 16 bays flanking this center section of the elevation mark the location of the original boys' and girls' gymnasiums, and each bay contains a tall, narrow aluminum double-hung window topped by a multi-light aluminum transom. A red-orange terra cotta belt course extends across the entire elevation above the third story.

The south elevation of the addition continues the exterior cladding and fenestration pattern seen at the north end of the west elevation. The first story of the elevation is obscured at its east end by a hyphen addition that connects to the 1969 gymnasium addition at the northwest corner of the school lot. The east and south elevations of the addition are more utilitarian and feature fewer window openings than the west and south elevations.

The one-story manual training room, also completed in 1940, is located between the rear auditorium and the north-east wing of the 1910 school building. The addition features a flat roof with terra-cotta capped parapet wall. The exposed north elevation of the addition is clad in red brick and features regularly-spaced double-hung windows.

1969 Classroom Addition

The two-story classroom addition, designed by McPherson, Warner & Brecha and completed in 1969, is located directly east of the original 1910 school building and occupies the southeast corner of the school lot. The Midcentury Modern structure is roughly T-shaped, with a flat main roof obscured from public view by a faux mansard roof clad in metal. The exterior walls of the building are clad in red brick in running bond.

The south elevation of the addition faces 89th Street and contains the main entrance to the structure. The center section of the elevation projects out, and the recessed east and west ends of the elevation flanking this center section are unfenestrated. The entrance to the building is two bays wide and framed by slender brick piers. Double-leaf metal doors are recessed within each bay at the ground floor, and a series of recessed single-light aluminum windows fill the bays above the doors. The elevation west of the main entrance features a curtain wall consisting of aluminum windows and solid spandrel panels recessed behind slender brick piers that extend to the eaves of the mansard roof. The east and north elevations are similar to the principal south-facing elevation, with aluminum curtain walls with recessed spandrel panels and projecting brick piers; a secondary entrance at the east end of the north elevation features a similar design to the main entrance on the south elevation.

The west elevation of the addition faces the original 1910 school building and is largely unfenestrated. A two-story hyphen connects the addition to the 1910 building at this elevation.

1969 Gymnasium and Auto Repair Shop Additions

The 1969 gymnasium addition is similar in design to the east classroom addition, with a roughly rectangular massing, red brick exterior, and flat roof concealed behind a metal-clad faux mansard. The addition is unfenestrated; a recessed brick channel runs along the top of each elevation below the roofline and connects to slender recessed corners and vertical channels regularly spaced along all elevations of the addition. Street entrances to the addition are located at the east and west ends of the north elevation and are fitted with double-leaf solid metal doors.

A one-story hyphen with flat roof at the southeast corner of the gym addition connects it to the 1940 addition to the south, as well as to the one-story auto shop addition. A set of three double-leaf doors framed by projecting brick piers marks the east wall of the hyphen, providing access to the school from the northwest parking lot.

The auto shop addition is a one-story utilitarian structure with a bow-truss roof and red brick exterior walls. The east, north and south elevations are regularly fenestrated with groupings of four-light aluminum windows. Single-leaf metal doors topped with single-light transoms on the north and south elevations provide exterior access, and a garage opening with overhead door is located at the west end of the north elevation.

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Interior

1910 School Building

The interior of the 1910 building houses a variety of specialized spaces on the first floor and general classrooms on the upper floors, arranged along central corridors. Four original cast-iron staircases—two center stairs that flank the assembly hall, one at the east end of the main corridor and one at the west end—provide access to the upper floors. Although the functions of some spaces, particularly on the first floor, have changed since 1910, the overall floor plan and many of the original interior features and finishes remain intact.

First Floor

The first floor of the 1910 building houses offices, student gathering spaces, and specialized classrooms arranged along a central double-loaded corridor that extends from the east to the west stairs, with secondary corridors extending north from the two central stairs and through the east and west wings. The corridors throughout the first floor feature non-historic acoustic panel ceilings and non-historic vinyl tile flooring over the original terrazzo flooring. Doors along these corridors are a mixture of original wood paneled doors and non-historic replacement doors.

The main (south) entrance to the building opens into a narrow vestibule with plaster walls and ceilings and mosaic tile floor. Non-historic double doors with original arched transoms on the north wall of the vestibule open into a rectangular entrance lobby, which features original earth-toned tile flooring, walls clad in Tennessee marble, and a barrel-vaulted plaster ceiling. Non-historic doors in original openings are located near the center of the east and west lobby walls. The west door leads to the main offices and conference room. Although these spaces have been reconfigured and feature non-historic vinyl tile flooring and suspended acoustic panel ceilings, some original painted trim and historic doors remain. Directly east of the entrance lobby, original science laboratories have been converted into offices, with non-historic drywall partitions, vinyl flooring, and suspended acoustic panel ceilings. The interior of the east and west pavilions at the southeast and southwest corners house classrooms on the first floor; the southwest classroom has been converted into a faculty lunchroom. Both rooms have non-historic vinyl tile flooring and suspended acoustic panel ceilings but retain original wood trim on the walls.

Directly north of the entrance lobby is the original double-height assembly hall, which features a large stage at the north end and a balcony at the south end. The balcony and stage are framed by dramatic round-arched openings, which are mirrored on the east and west walls by round-arched recesses that frame round-arched window openings. The walls below these arches are clad in green glazed brick with decorative panels of brown glazed brick. The domed ceiling of the assembly hall features a decorative skylight, which has been infilled with solid panels but retains its original architectural detailing. The main level of the auditorium features original raked seating over concrete floors, with carpet along the aisles. The stage retains its original hardwood flooring. The balcony level also retains its original raked seating and hardwood flooring.

The first floor of the north-east wing, north of the central corridor, originally housed a large woodworking shop. This wing has been partitioned into a ceramics lab, industrial arts classroom, and wood shop, but each space retains original concrete floors, glazed brick walls, and plaster ceilings.

The first floor of the north-west wing, north of the central corridor, originally housed a double-height gymnasium with an upper level running track. At some point, most likely after the 1940 gymnasium/pool addition was completed, this space was converted into a lunchroom, with serving rooms to the east in the former foundry and mechanical rooms between the west wing and the assembly hall. The running track in the gymnasium was removed and the upper portion of the gym now serves as classrooms on the second floor. The lunchroom and serving rooms feature original glazed brick walls (partially covered with non-historic metal wainscot panels), non-historic vinyl floors, and non-historic dropped acoustic panel ceilings.

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Second Floor

The second floor of the 1910 building primarily houses general classrooms arranged along a C-shaped corridor. The corridor features non-historic acoustic panel ceilings and non-historic vinyl tile flooring over the original terrazzo flooring. Doors along these corridors are a mixture of original wood paneled doors and non-historic replacement doors.

The original study room, located south of the assembly hall, now serves as the school library and features carpet flooring and acoustic tile ceilings. The original library and reading room directly east of the auditorium have been converted into classrooms. In general, the classrooms on the second floor retain their original hardwood floors, chalkboards, wood wall trim, and some original built-in cabinetry. Ceilings throughout the classrooms are non-historic dropped acoustic panel ceilings.

Third Floor

The third floor of the 1910 building houses primarily general classrooms arranged along a C-shaped corridor. The corridor features non-historic acoustic panel ceilings and non-historic vinyl tile flooring over the original terrazzo flooring. Doors along these corridors are a mixture of original wood paneled doors and non-historic replacement doors.

In general, the classrooms on the second floor retain their original hardwood floors, chalkboards, wood wall trim, and some original built-in cabinetry. Ceilings throughout the classrooms are non-historic dropped acoustic panel ceilings.

Fourth Floor

The fourth floor of the 1910 building was originally dedicated to arts instruction, with a large open drawing room at the center, flanked by drawing rooms and general classrooms north and south accessed by a central corridor. At some time after 1910, the open drawing rooms were partitioned into smaller spaces and the corridor was extended the entire width of the floor. The corridor features non-historic vinyl tile and dropped acoustic panel ceilings. Despite the changes in plan, the classrooms retain original wood floors, copious built in cabinetry, and original skylights.

Fifth Floor

The fifth floor of the 1910 building, between the two center stairs, originally housed the school's lunchroom and now serves as a study hall and workout room. The floor plan of this floor is largely intact, and the open space retains original wood flooring, wood wall trim, and a large skylight.

Basement Level

The basement level of the 1910 school building was not accessible

1940 Gymnasium/Pool Addition

The 1940 addition to Bowen School houses a swimming pool, locker rooms, and mechanical rooms on the first floor, two double-height gymnasiums and mechanical rooms on the second floor, and a dedicated band room on the third floor. The corridors on all floors feature non-historic vinyl tile flooring over the original terrazzo floor and dropped acoustic panel ceilings. Doors are largely non-historic, but many retain original multi-light wood transoms. The upper floors are accessed by a painted metal stair, similar to the stairs in the original building, located at the southwest corner of the addition.

First Floor

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The swimming pool on the first floor of the 1940 addition retains its original tile walls and tile flooring. The ceilings are concealed spline acoustic tile. The pool itself features original tiling and ladders.

Second Floor

The two gymnasiums on the second floor of the 1940 addition feature original glazed brick walls, wood flooring, and flat plaster ceilings.

Third Floor

The band practice room on the third floor of the 1940 addition retains original wood flooring, built-in wood cabinetry, and simple wood wall trim. The ceilings are dropped acoustical panel ceilings.

1969 Classroom Addition

The interior of the 1969 classroom addition, which is now operated separately from Bowen High School as the Noble-Baker College Preparatory High School, was not accessible at the time this nomination was prepared. The description below is based on floor plans of the addition provided to the authors by the Bowen High School Alumni Association.

First Floor

The first floor of the 1969 addition contains a central core with offices, a library, and a large lecture room. This core is ringed by an O-shaped double-loaded corridor, which also provides access to the classrooms that line the perimeter walls of the first floor.

Second Floor

The second floor of the 1969 addition is similar to the first floor. A central core houses lecture halls, reading rooms, and a library. An O-shaped corridor around the central core also provides access to classrooms that line the perimeter walls.

1969 Gymnasium and Auto Repair Shop Additions

The interior of the 1969 gymnasium addition features strip wood flooring, painted cinder block walls, and exposed ceiling structure with exposed mechanicals. The auto shop is utilitarian, with painted brick walls, concrete floor, and exposed wood frame ceiling structure.

Alterations & Integrity

The Bowen High School retains sufficient integrity to convey its historical significance under Criterion C as an important prototype for the modern high school designed by architect Dwight H. Perkins. The exterior of the original 1910 building retains its original location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. Exterior alterations to the original building are primarily limited to replacement of exterior doors and replacement of original windows with historically compatible aluminum replacement windows. The contributing 1940 addition, designed by John C. Christensen at the rear of the original building, is a three-story brick structure that complements Perkin's original design.

Although additions were constructed to the Bowen High School in 1969, these additions (the gymnasium addition to the north and the classroom addition to the east) are minimally and sensitively connected to retain the overall form and structure of original 1910 building and its contributing 1940 addition.

On the interior, the original plan of the 1910 building and 1940 addition remains largely intact, and the primary interior spaces—the entrance lobby, assembly hall, and gymnasiums—retain their historic volume and finishes. The original stairs

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and corridors are intact, and historic finishes in the corridors, although concealed behind non-historic finishes, remain intact. Most of the classrooms retain distinctive historic features such as wood flooring, chalkboards, built-ins, skylights, glazed brick walls, and wood trim.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1910-1940

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation (if applicable)

Architect/Builder

Dwight H. Perkins

John C. Christensen (1940 addition)

McPherson, Warner & Brecha (1969 additions)

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations).

James H. Bowen High School, located at 2710 E. 89th Street in the South Chicago community area, is locally significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as one of only two extant examples of a prototype for the modern early 20th-century high school developed by Dwight Heald Perkins, who served as Chief Architect for Chicago's Board of Education from 1905 to 1910. Perkins, who was widely regarded as one of the leading school architects in America in the early 20th century, developed the prototype between 1907 and 1908. Two high school buildings in Chicago—Bowen High School and Carl Schurz High School at 2601 N. Milwaukee—were built from Perkins' prototype, and both were completed in 1910. This Bowen/Schurz prototype was the first complete expression of the modern high school in Chicago, combining earlier innovations that had been implemented piecemeal in previous school buildings into a single design. In this design, Perkins fully addressed both the need for specialized spaces to support Chicago's expanding and increasingly differentiated public high school curriculum, as well as regulations around fire-safety, health, and hygiene.

Bowen High School is also significant as a rare example of a school building that combines design elements of the Chicago School and the Prairie Style, two architectural styles that originated in Chicago. The banks of windows along the school's primary elevations, articulated by projecting vertical brick piers and brick and terra cotta spandrel panels, recall the Chicago-School commercial and office designs of Louis Sullivan and other Chicago-School architects, while the gabled roofs with deeply overhanging eaves, horizontal massing, projecting piers and pylons, and warm brick exterior show the influence of the Prairie School. The building's lack of elaborate ornamentation, driven at least in part by budget concerns, stands in stark contrast to the Classical-Revival school designs that were popular in Chicago and other cities in the early 20th century, and Perkins' stripped down, ahistorical design seems to announce the building's modern interior programming.

James H. Bowen High School was expanded twice to meet the demands of rising enrollments. The first expansion occurred in 1940, when a three-story addition containing two gymnasiums, a swimming pool, and a band room were built at the northwest corner of the building. A small one-story manual training room was also added to the rear of the building at that time. School Board architect John C. Christensen's design for the additions, while varying slightly from the 1910 school building, are sympathetic to Perkins' original design, and both the gymnasium addition and the manual training room addition represent the continued refinement of the early 20th century high school building.

The school was again expanded in 1969 with a two-story east classroom addition and a northwest gymnasium addition, which were connected to the 1910 school building and 1940 gym addition with hyphens. Designed by McPherson, Warner & Brecha, these Mid-Century Modern additions reflect the significant changes to school design that began in the post-World War II period and are more clearly differentiated from Perkins' original school building.

The period of significance for the building in 1910-1940. The period of significance begins with the completion of Perkins' design for the original high school building and ends with the completion of Christensen's gymnasium and manual training additions, which are considered contributing additions. The 1969 additions, which fall outside of the period of significance and represent changes in the design of high school buildings during the post-World War II period, are non-contributing.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

Development of the South Chicago Community and the Establishment of South Shore High School

James H. Bowen High School at 2710 E. 89th Street is located at the western edge of the South Chicago Community Area on Chicago's southeast side. The area that is now South Chicago was used as a hunting ground for the Pottawatomí Indians through the early 19th century. In the early 1830s, speculators began buying up property around the Calumet River in anticipation of a possible connection to shipping routes via the Illinois & Michigan Canal, and by the mid-1850s there were over 100 new settlers in the region. When the route for the I & M Canal was located away from the Calumet,

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development in the area slowed dramatically, and South Chicago (then known as the town of Ainsworth) remained sparsely populated through the mid-1860s, although a station along the newly-established Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railroad opened in the town in 1857.¹

Early industrial development began in the area with the opening of the Northwest Fertilizing Company in 1867, which attracted Irish and Swedish settlers. In March of that year, the nearby Village of Hyde Park extended its boundary south to 89th Street to encompass the small settlement around Ainsworth. Additional rail lines through the area encouraged further settlement, and in 1874 the Ainsworth train station was renamed South Chicago.²

In 1871, Congress appropriated funds to deepen the Calumet River and improve the port at Lake Michigan, and in 1873 South Chicago was made a port of entry. The new port attracted a variety of industries away from central Chicago in the years following the Great Fire of 1871, and new residents moved into the area to work in its iron and steel works and its lumber and grist mills.

Businessman and industrialist James H. Bowen (1822-1881) was instrumental in establishing South Chicago and the surrounding neighborhoods as an industrial hub in the late 19th century. Bowen was born in New York in 1822 and came to Chicago in 1857, where he opened a dry goods store with his brothers James, George, and Chauncey.³ By the mid-1860s, Bowen Brothers had become one of the most successful mercantile operations in the city. During the Civil War, Bowen served as a member of the Union Defense Committee, which sent the first regiments to the conflict from Illinois, and was later appointed as staff to Governor Richard J. Oglesby.⁴

Bowen was among the first businessmen to heavily invest in the area, establishing the Calumet and the Chicago Canal and Dock Company in 1869 to operate a canal and develop a working port on the Calumet River. As industries and workers flocked to South Chicago, the company subdivided 6,000 acres of its holdings for residential and commercial development, forming the new Town of South Chicago on the site in 1874.⁵

South Chicago continued to grow through the 1870s and 1880s as Swedish, Scottish, Welsh, and German immigrants moved into the area. A commercial center developed at Commercial Avenue and 92nd Street near the newly-opened South Works of the North Chicago Rolling Mill Company in the early 1880s, and at the end of the decade the company (which was then known as the Illinois Steel Company) constructed a massive new steel mill, helping to establish South Chicago as a center of steel production.

In 1889, South Chicago was annexed to the City of Chicago as part of Hyde Park, and the establishment of suburban rail lines and opening of through streets helped to connect the neighborhood to downtown Chicago. By 1890, the area boasted a population of nearly 25,000, nearly half of which were immigrants. Through the turn of the 20th century, Polish, Slovenian, Croatian, Lithuanian, and other Eastern European workers replaced the original Swedish and German workers in the neighborhood's burgeoning steel mills, and by the First World War Mexican immigrants began settling in the area south of 78th Street.

Because of the poor quality of the land surrounding the steel mills and the economic precarity of the mill workers, the neighborhoods in South Chicago were known in the early 20th century for substandard housing conditions. The frame houses built in these neighborhoods were largely exempted from Chicago's stringent fire codes, and drainage problems led to high rates of disease. In a report prepared by the Chicago City Homes Association in 1901, the three neighborhoods surrounding the steel works in South Chicago known as "the Bush," "Millgate," and "South Works" were noted as having among the most "abominable" housing in the city. Despite these hardships, workers continued to settle in South Chicago for steady employment in the steel mills, and by 1930 its population had ballooned to over 56,000 residents.⁶

¹ *Local Community Fact Book: Chicago Metropolitan Area*. Chicago, IL: Chicago Review Press, 1984, 123.

² *Ibid.*

³ Josiah Seymour Currey, *Chicago: It's History and Its Builders*, Volume 4 (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1912), 184-185.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 185.

⁵ *Local Community Fact Book*, 123.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 125.

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The Bowen School and South Chicago High School

In 1876, South Chicago constructed the Bowen School – named for James Bowen, who was considered “the Father of South Chicago” – to serve the growing number of families moving to the area. The school, which was located at the northwest corner of 93rd Street and Houston Avenue, was a handsome brick structure with Second Empire and Romanesque detailing and operated solely as a primary school through the early 1880s. In 1882, the school opened South Chicago High School in its top floor, and appointed J. B. Strasburger as principal.⁷ The operation of high school departments within primary schools was a common practice in and around Chicago in the late 19th century and was often implemented in areas as a cost-effective solution to rapidly expanding enrollment.

In the years following Hyde Park Township’s annexation to Chicago, the city’s Board of Education began to advocate for the consolidation of high schools like South Chicago, arguing that it would be more cost efficient to close the smaller high schools operating in primary school buildings and expand the existing free-standing high schools to accommodate more students. In an article on high school consolidation in the March 23, 1896 edition of the *Chicago Tribune*, the board’s finance director stated plainly that the current system was unworkable:

Every little suburb the city has annexed has brought its high school with it. But this is no reason why they should all be retained and supported, when it is found they are too numerous and too costly. Our high schools are costing too much money, and the reason is these small ones are almost doubly as costly as the large one. To educate one pupil for one year costs \$40 in the Hyde Park and \$41 in the West Division, or the Northwest Division, but it costs \$69 in the South Chicago and \$72 in the Jefferson.⁸

South Chicago residents bristled at the proposed closure of their only high school. Principal Charles Parker claimed “We have 70,000 people in South Chicago, and the population is growing at the rate of 10,000 a year. . . . The attendance at our high school is increasing rapidly, and in a year or two more will be 1,000. To take it away from us would not only be an injury to the cause of education, but a wrong to our people.”⁹ In response to the Board of Education’s consolidation plan, the community organized a committee to appeal to the board to construct a dedicated building for the high school. Although the board summarily rejected their request, citing a lack of funding for new high school construction, the consolidation plan did not move forward, and South Chicago High School continued to operate out of Bowen School.

Planning and Construction of James H. Bowen High School

In its 1898 Annual Report, the Chicago Board of Education admitted the need for new high school buildings to accommodate the growing number of older students in the city’s public education system, but the continuing aftershocks of the 1893 financial panic and rising labor unrest curtailed the board’s efforts to construct new high schools. A. F. Nightingale, Assistant Superintendent of High Schools, wrote ruefully, “It is perhaps useless to urge a willing Board of Education to do what they cannot see their way clear to accomplish. I cannot believe there is any concerted disposition to curtail the usefulness of the high schools. I am forced to the conclusion that the objection to more high schools and more buildings is purely a financial one.”¹⁰ In his report to the board, Nightingale listed several high schools that needed new or expanded facilities, including South Chicago.

Demand for new school buildings only increased in Chicago through the turn of the 20th century, as the city’s population continued to rise. Progress on new construction was further hampered in 1904 and 1905 by new regulations on fire prevention put in place after the Iroquois Theatre Fire of 1903, which required the Board to rework finished plans for several school buildings.¹¹

⁷ “South Chicago,” *Chicago Tribune*, September 4, 1882, 8.

⁸ “To Consolidate High Schools,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 23, 1895, 12.

⁹ “Want New High School Building,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 29, 1896, 7.

¹⁰ *Forty-Fourth Annual Report of the Board of Education for the Year Ending Jun 24, 1898* (Chicago: John F. Higgins Print, 1898), 75.

¹¹ *Fiftieth Annual Report of the Board of Education for the Year Ending June 30, 1904* (Chicago: The Board of Education, 1905), 12-13.

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On March 29, 1906, just over ten years after the community's appeal to the Board of Education for a dedicated building for South Shore High School, *The Inter Ocean* reported that appropriations had been made for a new high school building in South Chicago, to be named after James H. Bowen.¹² In May of that year, the city purchased a site for the school at the northwest corner of 89th Street and Marquette Avenue for \$2,600 from the Calumet and Chicago Canal and Dock Company.¹³ The new site was located directly across 89th Street from Bessemer Park, a 23-acre public park that had been completed in 1904. The parcel for Bowen High School was one of 22 the Board of Education acquired that year for new school buildings; an additional 37 sites were also purchased for additions to existing schools. In his report to the Board of Education for the year ending June 30, 1906, architect Dwight H. Perkins listed the new Bowen High School among 16 new school buildings that had been authorized by the board during that year, including one other high school in Irving Park.¹⁴

Planning for the new school began immediately. An article in the May 15, 1906 edition of the *Chicago Tribune* announced that Perkins had "completed rough drawings yesterday, and before the final plans are drawn teachers and principals from all the high schools will be called into conference."¹⁵ The paper called Bowen's new building a "model high school," with a large ground-floor assembly hall, two-story gymnasium with running track, the largest cafeteria ever built in a Chicago school, and dedicated restrooms for teachers. Principal Charles Parker lobbied to have a bowling alley included in the basement of the building, arguing that "The use of a bowling alley will give them splendid exercise, and it will keep the boys away from the saloons, where they are now compelled to go to bowl."¹⁶

Although initial plans for the new Bowen High School were published in 1906 and 1907, by 1908 Perkins had scrapped the original design for the building, opting instead to design the school based on a prototype he had developed for the new Carl Schurz High School on the city's northwest side. The design included a substantial first-floor auditorium, a two-story gymnasium with suspended running track, and a large lunchroom on the top floor. In addition to classrooms and laboratories, the building would also include spaces dedicated to manual, domestic, and vocational training, including a forge and foundry, woodworking shop, sewing room, and domestic sciences room with kitchen and model dining room. Restroom facilities would be provided for both boys and girls at each level, and separate lavatories and a reception room would be included for faculty.

Construction began on the new Bowen High School in late 1908 and was substantially completed by the end of the following year. Six-hundred students began attending classes in the building in January 1910, although some of the manual training rooms were not fitted out with machinery until later that year.¹⁷ On June 7, 1911, a dedication ceremony was held in the school's auditorium, with Board of Education Superintendent Ella Flagg Young making the dedicatory speech.¹⁸

The Evolution of the High School in Chicago, 1856-1910

The "model design" of the James H. Bowen High School bore little resemblance to the high school buildings first constructed in Chicago in the mid-to-late 19th century. Beginning in the 1880s, the high school as a distinct building type evolved from a relatively straightforward collection of identical classrooms to a complex structure housing highly specialized spaces tailored to an increasingly sophisticated and multi-faceted curriculum by the 1910s. This evolution gained speed around the turn of the 20th century, as Progressive reformers advocated for school buildings that would improve students' health and wellbeing, and the business community pushed for manual and vocational programming that would prepare students for an increasingly industrialized and corporatized job market.

¹² "Appropriations are Made," *The Inter Ocean*, March 29, 1906, 9.

¹³ *The Inter Ocean*, May 27, 1906, 22.

¹⁴ *Fifty-Second Annual Report of the Chicago Board of Education for the Year Ending June 30, 1906* (Chicago: The Board of Education, 1907), 17.

¹⁵ "Plan Model High School," *Chicago Tribune*, May 15, 1906, 9.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Chicago Tribune*, January 18, 1910, 1; "Teachers Will Be Notified Today of School Opening," *The Inter Ocean*, September 3, 1910, 10.

¹⁸ "Dedicates \$450,000 School," *Chicago Tribune*, June 8, 1911, 3.

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Early High Schools in Chicago

Public secondary education in Chicago was virtually nonexistent through the 1830s and 1840s, although the 1837 state law authorizing the city's charter had allowed for the creation of a high school as part of its public education system. While the city operated a number of public primary schools during this period, most older children entered the work force in their teens if not earlier, and those students who aimed to go to college attended one of several private or parochial high schools in the city. Chicago High School, the city's first secondary school, opened in 1856 near the intersection of Monroe and Halsted Streets. The school offered three distinct courses of study – the “Classical Course,” which focused on Latin and Greek and was reserved for college-bound students; the “English Course,” which included Latin instruction along with a broader range of subjects, including English literature, astronomy, logic, and civics; and the “Normal Course,” which trained future teachers.¹⁹ Regardless of their course of study, students in Chicago High School and other mid-19th-century secondary schools received instruction that adhered to prevailing theories around education in America, which focused on building knowledge and “mental discipline” through rote memorization and recitation.²⁰

The building for Chicago High School, designed by local architects John M. Van Osdel and Frederick Baumann, was a typical example of a 19th-century secondary school building. The three-story structure was rectangular in plan, with exterior walls of Joliet-Lemont limestone. The arrangement of space on the interior exhibited none of the programmatic variety of the early 20th century high school. Although various courses of study were offered, all classes were taught in the same manner, which allowed for identical classrooms containing only desks for the students and the teacher, windows for natural light and ventilation, blackboards, and a wardrobe to hold students' belongings. The first floor and second floors of Chicago High School each contained four identical classrooms connected via landings from a center staircase. The third floor housed an additional two classrooms, as well as a modest assembly hall. This plan, known colloquially as the “stuffed box” or “egg-crate,” featured no internal corridors.

Chicago High School accommodated 169 students in its first year of operation, and by the mid-1860s the number of students had more than doubled.²¹ To alleviate overcrowding in the city's only high school, the Chicago Board of Education established “branch” high school programs in existing grammar schools throughout the city in the late 1860s and 1870s. In 1880, the board moved to close Chicago High School and funnel students into one of three new division high schools – North, South, and West – each of which offered the same three-year Classical Course. Although rising enrollments required that these new schools be substantially larger than Chicago High School, the essential programming of these new schools did not diverge significantly from the original high school. The North Division High School at 160 W. Wendell Street, designed by Julius Ender and erected in 1883, featured a principal's office, teachers' dressing rooms, a small library, and a laboratory, in addition to 14 classrooms and third-floor assembly hall. James Willett's design for the South Division High School, completed the following year, contained a dedicated German classroom. Both buildings also featured more elaborate exterior designs than previous public schools, with Classical, Italianate, and Romanesque Revival elements.²²

Expanding Enrollment and Curriculum in the Late 19th Century High School

The 1880s marked the beginning of a sea change in secondary education, both in Chicago and in other urban centers across the United States. This change was triggered by the passage of compulsory education and child labor laws, as well as rapidly rising urban populations and the influx of immigrants to Chicago and other cities, which led to increased enrollment across urban school systems. The Illinois General Assembly passed its first child labor law in 1877 and instituted its first compulsory education law in 1883, which required all children between the ages of eight and 14 to attend school for at least 12 weeks each year unless excused by the Board of Education. These laws were initially not enforced with any regularity, and critics warned they would “close down manufacturing plants and make children idle and

¹⁹ Mary J. Herrick, *The Chicago Schools: A Social and Political History* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1971), 32, 42.

²⁰ Dale Allen Gyure, “The Transformation of the Schoolhouse: American Secondary School Architecture and Educational Reform, 1880-1920,” (PhD diss. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia, 2001), 173-174.

²¹ Herrick, 41.

²² Bauer Latoza Studio, “Chicago Public School Buildings, Pre-1940 Context Statement,” Report prepared for the City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development (n.d.), 11-14.

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vicious.”²³ Later amendments to both laws further encouraged broader attendance in Chicago’s high schools, and other states enacted similar laws during this period. By 1920, nationwide high school enrollment had grown from just over 200,000 to over 1.8 million in 1920, and the number of public high schools rose from 2,526 to 14,526.²⁴

This movement toward more universal enrollment led to an identity crisis for the urban secondary school, which had historically been tailored to prepare a small number of middle- and upper-class students for college. Many of the students now attending high schools lacked the interest or financial means to pursue higher education, and the classical curriculum offered by most high schools in the late 19th century seemed ill-fitted to the growing number of working-class children now entering the system. Progressive-Era reformers, many of whom had fought for the extension of child labor and compulsory education laws, pushed local school boards to expand the existing curriculum to offer vocational and manual training programs that would prepare students “for an adult life in the new industrial society.”²⁵ Joining them in this push were leading businessmen and industrialists, who envisioned a steady stream of trained workers who would help them increase production and profits in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

Manual training had first been introduced into the Chicago public school system in 1876, when the Board of Education instituted a program of “sloyd,” the Swedish word for woodworking, for truant boys.²⁶ By the 1880s, there was a small but growing faction of educators and civic leaders in the city, inspired by the success of manual training schools in Germany and other European countries, that supported introducing more specialized technical education to meet the growing demand for skilled manual labor. In 1886, a one-year course in manual training and woodworking was offered at North Division High School, and the program was extended in 1887. Chicago’s business community, frustrated by the Board of Education’s reluctance to fully embrace manual training in the public schools, set up a private school in the late 1880s – among members of the schools’ board were Marshall Field, John Crerar, and Richard T. Crane.²⁷ Using the curriculum of the private training school as a model, the Board of Education opened the English and Manual Training High School in an existing factory building in 1890, and offered a three-year course through the school.²⁸

Not content to limit the new program to high school students, Richard Crane agitated to expand manual training instruction into the grammar schools, arguing that students should be given manual instruction at a younger age, given that many did not continue to high school. In 1892, Crane “offered to furnish tools, benches, materials and teachers at his own expense to give instruction in woodworking to as many boys in the 7th and 8th grades as could be accommodated.”²⁹ The Board repurposed basement rooms in the Tilden Elementary School for the program and later expanded into three other elementary schools.

Beginning in the late 1890s, vocational training was expanded to female students in Chicago public schools, with the object of making them “efficient homemakers or competent secretaries, maids, cooks, or seamstresses.”³⁰ Using donated funds, in 1898 the Board of Education set up cooking and sewing classes in the basement of the Hammond Elementary School and a housekeeping class at the Kozminski School.³¹ These domestic science courses were brought to the high schools by the turn of the 20th century. In addition to domestic arts classes, clerical courses were part of a broader effort by the Board of Education to provide commercial training for students to prepare those not bound for college to enter the lower rungs of the expanding white-collar work force. Beginning in 1901, Chicago public high schools offered courses in commercial law, commercial geography, and accounting, as well as stenography and typewriting, which were geared towards female students.³²

²³ Herrick, 63.

²⁴ “The Transformation of the School House,” 39.

²⁵ David Nasaw, *Schooled by Order: A Social History of Public Schooling in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 100.

²⁶ Herrick, 59.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ “Chicago Public School Buildings, Pre-1940 Context Statement,” 28.

²⁹ John Howatt, *Notes on the First One Hundred Years of Chicago School History* (Chicago: John Howatt, 1940), 29.

³⁰ “The Transformation of the School House,” 188.

³¹ Board of Education Annual Report 1898, 56.

³² *Forty-Ninth Annual Report of the Board of Education for the Year Ending June 30, 1903* (Chicago: The Board of Education, 1904), 15.

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More traditional educators in Chicago and throughout the country conveyed skepticism about the move toward “practical education.” Chicago Board of Education Superintendent George Howland expressed dismay when Greek was dropped from the city’s classical high school curriculum in the mid-1880s and championed the liberal-arts-based curriculum previously offered as “a poor man’s college” that benefited the college-bound and non-college bound alike.³³ Howland summarized his views in his annual report to the board in 1891:

The prime purpose of the High School is to prepare those who can go no farther, for the business of life, and to open up those who would go farther the several avenues of scientific and literary culture which they may hereafter desire to follow. But the High School has another purpose affecting not so many pupils, but its influence is hardly less important—the fitting of boys and girls for college. For a High School to number among its graduates those who have completed with honor a college course, and are to be among the prominent and influential citizens of our city is no small thing, and is one of the most important factors in the usefulness of the High School.³⁴

Howland’s views were supported at the national level in an 1893 report produced by the National Education Association’s Committee on Secondary School Studies, known as the “Committee of Ten.” In their report, the committee recommended four appropriate courses of study for high schools—Classical, Latin-Scientific, Modern Languages, and English—and made no mention of vocational or manual training courses. The report also dismissed the idea of creating special courses for students who did not plan on pursuing college degrees, arguing that “training for higher education and training for ‘life’ should be identical.”³⁵

This ambivalence surrounding the introduction of “practical education” was reflected in the changes made to the curriculum in Chicago’s public high schools through the late 19th and early 20th century. After essentially eliminating the traditional classical curriculum deemed necessary for higher education in the mid-1880s, the Board reinstated the uniform four-year curriculum in the mid-1890s. Electives were added to the curriculum in 1900, only to be removed in 1905. In 1910, the board again expanded the curriculum, introducing nine vocational courses—including business, manual training, household arts, and architectural—that remained in place through the 1930s.³⁶

This expansion of the curriculum through the late 19th and early 20th centuries was reflected in the design of high schools in Chicago during this period. North-West Division High School, designed by John Flanders and completed in 1892, was the first school building to include biology and chemistry laboratories. Flanders’ design for Hyde Park High School at 5631 S. Kimbark Avenue, completed in 1894, also contained several laboratories, as well as a dedicated library and art room. Through the late 19th century, manual training in Chicago high schools was taught as a separate program from the liberal arts courses, and manual training classes were largely sequestered within the English and Manual Training High School, which contained dedicated shop rooms for various trades. In 1903, the board replaced the English and Manual Training High School with a new purpose-built structure designed by William Mundie. The new high school, named for Richard T. Crane, contained a machine shop, wood-working shop, foundry, machinery shop, and electric shop, as well as a large laboratory and classrooms. The first high school in the city to feature combined academic and manual training spaces was Wendell Phillips High School at 244 E. Pershing Road, which was completed in 1904. Also designed by Mundie, the building was designed to accommodate a new two-year manual training program for high school students.³⁷

The increasing acceptance of vocational training as part of a well-rounded education among educators led the Board of Education to consider adding manual and domestic arts courses as part of the general curriculum for all high school students. In his 1906 report to the board, Superintendent Edwin G. Cooley expressed his expectation that “in time, a year or two of manual training will be given in every public high school in the city, and a year or two of domestic science for the girls.”³⁸ Cooley elaborated on the plan:

³³ Herrick, 59.

³⁴ *Thirty-Seventh Annual Report of the Board of Education for the Year Ending June 30, 1891* (Chicago: Hack & Anderson, 1892), 39-40.

³⁵ “The Transformation of the School House,” 175.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 179.

³⁷ “Chicago Public School Buildings, Pre-1940 Context Statement,” 28.

³⁸ *Fifty-Second Annual Report of the Board of Education for the Year Ending June 30, 1906* (Chicago: Board of Education of the City of Chicago, 1907), 126

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Under such an arrangement a pupil can postpone until the close of his first year in high school the decision as to his course of study. After a year of high school manual training, as one of the subjects of his course, he will be in a better position to know whether a manual training high school or a regular high school will best suit his needs. If he decides on a manual training course, he can start in such a school at the beginning of his second year, and be on equal terms with those who entered a manual training high school on graduation from the elementary school.³⁹

To accommodate these classes, additions to high school buildings and all new high school buildings were to be equipped with specialized classrooms and shop rooms.

Health, Safety, and Community in Public Schools in the 19th and Early 20th Century

As high school buildings in Chicago transformed to hold increasingly specialized and differentiated educational spaces through the turn of the 20th century, other changes were also made to their design that reflect the growing interest in the health and safety of students, as well as efforts to expand the building's usefulness to the broader community. Physical education programs introduced during the late 19th century required dedicated gymnasiums and expanded outdoor space, while a growing emphasis on hygiene and fire safety led to changes in building materials and layout.

Physical Education and the Gymnasium

Although informal physical activities were conducted at Chicago's public schools in the mid-19th century, no formal program of physical education was implemented until the mid-1880s, and dedicated spaces for physical education and activity were absent until the early 1890s. Board of Education records indicate that, as early as the late 1850s, at least some of the city's educators understood the value of physical education for their students. In his 1859 report to the board, Chicago High School principal Charles A. Dupree reported that "During the year, the boys of the school erected, at their own expense, a gymnasium at the cost of upwards of \$100."⁴⁰ Dupree expressed dismay that the city's school system did not provide physical education instruction or facilities:

Our public schools provide, with commendable efficiency, for the development of intellect, and with considerable and increasing success for a suitable cultivation of the moral nature, but physical education is almost entirely neglected, and is left to accident, and to occasional theoretical instruction in Hygiene. . . . No one can enter our public schoolrooms without being painfully impressed by the sight of the bent forms and the feeble and prematurely aged appearance of the children. These results are often attributed to excessive study, and may occasionally result, indirectly, from that cause. In the High School all reasonable precautions have been employed to guard against such results. But the feeble constitutions and the frequent sickness of school-children are not local misfortunes, but are topics for comment and regret in all the cities of the country. It seems to me that the evil can be removed only by establishing in our schools suitable instruction and opportunity for the development of the physical nature of the children.⁴¹

Despite Duprees' plea to the Board, Chicago's public school system remained without physical education until 1885, when the Board of Education employed a teacher of "Physical Culture" to lead exercises for students at four grammar schools. This small experiment proved successful—the program was expanded to all grammar schools the following year, and by 1890 physical education had been extended to the primary grades and high schools⁴² Physical education teachers generally followed a program of gymnastics developed by the German Turnvereins, and exercises were conducted in classrooms, hallways, or assembly rooms.

In 1892, Chicago's public school system constructed its first school gymnasium in the new North-West Division High School. Although gymnasiums had been placed in some earlier American high schools – including Henry Hobson

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ *Sixth Annual Report of the Board of Education for the Year Ending February 1, 1860* (Chicago: Press & Tribune Book and Job Printing Office, 1860), 52.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² *Thirty-Second Annual Report of the Board of Education for the Year Ending June 30, 1886* (Chicago: George K. Hazlitt & Co., 1887), 56; *Thirty-Fifth Annual Report of the Board of Education for the Year Ending June 30, 1889* (Chicago: Hack & Anderson, 1890), 52.

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Richardson's Worcester High School in Massachusetts (1869) and the Boston Latin and English High School (1877) designed by George A. Clough—they remained a rarity through the 1880s. North-West's gymnasium was unusually large for the period, and located in the basement of the building, which was typical in the late 19th century. A gymnasium was also included in the new building for the North Division High School in 1902. For existing high schools, the Board of Education either constructed gymnasium additions or outfitted assembly halls with equipment – in the mid-1890s, the Joseph Medill School received a gymnasium addition, and “apparatus for heavy gymnastics” were added to the assembly hall of Lake High School.⁴³ By 1904, thirteen of the city's eighteen high schools had gymnasiums, and the following year, the Board recommended the installation of gymnasiums in all schools that had assembly halls.⁴⁴

In addition to providing physical education to students, public school systems in Chicago and other cities also turned their attention to creating a healthier, safer environment for children by designing buildings with improved light, ventilation, and fire safety. Technical advances in heating systems and fireproofing, as well as a reconsideration of interior layouts and circulation patterns in school buildings, helped to transform the typical high school building into “a palace of health” by the early 20th century.⁴⁵

Lighting and Ventilation in School Buildings

Although Chicago's public schools were built with at least some electric service beginning in the 1890s, most schools through the turn of the 20th century relied largely on natural light to illuminate classrooms and other spaces, and natural light remained an important factor in the design of school buildings even after the widespread introduction of electric lighting in the 1910s and 1920s. Reports of increased rates of myopia in school-age children in the 19th century led to a quest to optimize lighting in school buildings that continued for decades, with a focus on preventing eye strain from inadequate or misdirected lighting.

In the 1850s, architects and educators began to advocate for more natural light in classrooms, specifying that windows on opposite walls of classrooms or directly facing students should be avoided to prevent cross-light or glare, and that natural light would ideally be concentrated behind the left shoulder of the student. The 1875 Annual Report for Chicago's Board of Education indicates that the board was following this advice—the Committee on Buildings and Grounds reported that the newly-completed Throop School featured “five school rooms on each floor, so arranged as to admit the principal light at the left side of the pupils.”⁴⁶ Plans for the school show classrooms fitted with rows of regularly-spaced windows along the exterior walls perpendicular to student desks, and a smaller number of windows on the exterior walls behind the students.

By the turn of the 20th century, the practice of placing banks of windows along the left wall of classrooms had become standard. Architects also experimented with varying window configurations, classroom sizes and desk orientations in order to achieve optimal lighting. Edmund Wheelwright, who served as Boston City Architect from 1891 to 1895 and wrote extensively on school design, led the way in offering a more scientific approach to lighting in American school buildings and pioneered many of the lighting standards that were adopted throughout the country. Wheelwright recommended following the German model of building narrower classrooms to prevent inadequate lighting near interior walls. He also advised installing double-sash windows placed three feet from the floor and carried up to six inches below the ceiling; transoms were not recommended, “as the transom bar cuts off most valuable light.”⁴⁷

Concerns over lighting also influenced the orientation and plan of school buildings during this period. Dwight Perkins argued that buildings oriented with their principal elevations facing east or west provided the best lighting conditions in classrooms, although other designers preferred a north-south orientation. In high schools, the rectangular “stuffed box”

⁴³ *Forty-First Annual Report of the Board of Education for the Year Ending June 28, 1895* (Chicago: The J. M. W. Jones Stationary and Printing Co., 1895), 146-147.

⁴⁴ *The Transformation of the School House*, 145; Jennifer Louise Gray, “Ready for Experiment: Dwight Perkins and Progressive Architectures in Chicago, 1893-1918” (PhD diss. New York: Columbia University, 2011), 271.

⁴⁵ G. Stanley Hall, “The Health of School Children as Affected by School Buildings,” *Journal of the Proceedings and Addresses of the National Educational Association* (1892) (New York: National Educational Association, 1893): 683. Quoted in “The Transformation of the School House,” 114.

⁴⁶ *Twenty-Fifth Annual Report of the Board of Education for the Year Ending July 31, 1879* (Chicago: Clark & Edwards, 1880), 43.

⁴⁷ Edmund M. Wheelwright, “The American Schoolhouse I,” *The Brickbuilder*, Vol. VI, No. 11 (November 1897), 6-9.

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plan of the mid-19th century was gradually replaced with more complex O, U, and E-shaped plans with light-wells or narrow wings, allowing interior spaces to be more easily illuminated. Interior spaces without windows were lit through skylights, and corner rooms lit from opposing windows were reserved for work shops or secondary spaces like bathrooms, where the lack of unilateral lighting posed less of an issue.

Along with lighting, major improvements in ventilation and temperature control in school buildings beginning around the turn of the 20th century also improved student wellbeing during school hours. While concerns about proper ventilation in schools were expressed by educators in earlier decades, precipitously-rising enrollment rates and chronic overcrowding brought these issues to the fore. Changes in fenestration and plan that improved lighting conditions in Chicago public school designs of the early 20th century had the added benefit of improving ventilation – the top and bottom sash of double-hung windows could be opened simultaneously to bring fresh air into the room, and more complex plans with narrow wings and light wells eliminated the deeply-recessed interior spaces of mid-19th century schoolhouses. In the early 20th century, the introduction of increasingly sophisticated mechanical ventilation systems in public schools in Chicago and other major urban centers helped to significantly improve indoor air quality and temperature control. These systems also had an impact on the overall design of school buildings, requiring an intricate system of ducts, flues, pipes, and machinery.

Fire Safety

Fire was an ever-present threat to school buildings in the 19th century, but no specific measures were taken in Chicago to codify fire safety and prevention into its public schools until after the turn of the 20th century. When the city's school buildings came under the purview of the Commissioner of Buildings in 1898, Board of Education architect Normand Patton implemented some fire prevention measures in new school buildings, mainly through the judicious use of fire-resistant materials, but the board considered fully fire-proofing all school buildings extravagant, particularly given the sheer number of new buildings needed to relieve overcrowding in the current system.

The 1903 Iroquois Theatre Fire, which killed 602 people, forced the Board of Education to increase fireproofing measures in all its schools. In 1904, Board of Education President Clayton Mark announced that "All school buildings in the future over two stories in height are to be constructed entirely of fire-proof material. . . . All assembly halls are to be on the ground floor, and all buildings are to be provided with fire escapes and fire alarm boxes, and the pupils thoroughly trained in fire drills."⁴⁸ Mark also noted that, due to these new regulations, "The board of education was compelled to overhaul a large number of its old buildings. . . . Almost the entire force of the architect's office was put at work trying to properly safeguard the lives of the children of the city."⁴⁹

Aside from fire-proof materials, this new focus on fire protection was reflected in other elements of Chicago schools built in the early 20th century, including an increased number of exterior exit doors and staircases and wider corridors, which allowed for quicker egress in the event of an emergency.

Community Activities in Public Schools

Throughout much of the 19th century, high schools in Chicago and other cities were reserved almost solely for the use of college-bound students and teachers during the school day. However, the role of schools in the city began to shift around the turn of the century. As enrollment increased and diversified, educators expanded the mission of the public school from strict academic instruction to preparing students to be good workers and citizens. The introduction of evening classes in Chicago in the late 1880s also opened the possibility of using school buildings outside of school hours, while the social programs of Progressive Era settlement houses inspired reformers to push for public school buildings to serve the broader community.

The impetus to open the public school outside of regular school hours began with the establishment of evening classes for public school students in 1882. This program aimed to attract working students who were unable to attend school during the day, but its beginnings were not auspicious. Board of Education President Norman Bridge wrote in his report to the

⁴⁸ Board of Education Annual Report, 1904, 18.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

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board in 1883 that “the benefit of the Evening Schools is great to the pupils who attend them continuously; unfortunately only a small proportion of them do this. . . . Pupils early tire of adding—as many of them must—an evening of school to a day of labor.”⁵⁰ Bridge concluded that, given the costs associated with running the program, “it ought to be discontinued.”⁵¹ Despite Bridge’s recommendation, the evening school continued operation, and by 1900 classes were being offered at 31 elementary schools and all seven of the city’s high schools. Nearly 200 students attended the evening school at South Chicago High School between November 1899 and March 1900.⁵²

In 1896, the Board of Education took the first step to opening public school buildings in Chicago to the larger community, hosting a series of lectures in six schools throughout the city, including two high schools. Funded through the William H. Ryder Fund, the lectures were given by University of Chicago faculty, members of Hull House and staff at the Art Institute of Chicago, among others. Topics ranged from “The Russian Peasant and Count Tolstoi,” presented by Hull House founder Jane Addams, to a lecture on Greek Art by sculptor Loreda Taft. In his report on the lecture series, Board of Education Superintendent Albert Lane proclaimed that “The school house may be made a place where parents may gather to consider some questions relating to education, to discuss some of the great social questions which pertain to the welfare of their own neighborhoods and of the whole city.” He cited settlement houses like Hull House as a model:

The social settlements which have been established in various sections of the city have accomplished so much in interesting the people in their localities that it may be well asserted that in nearly every school sub-district much can be done by lecturers and entertainments to help the people to a better understanding of their social relations, to lead them to appreciate the benefits of social life, and to develop a better understanding of their rights, duties, and privileges as parents and citizens.⁵³

The lecture series was a rousing success, with a combined attendance of over 60,000.⁵⁴ A report published by the Educational Commission, which was appointed by Mayor Carter Harrison in 1898, encouraged the Board of Education to “make an appropriation. . .for experimental work” in expanding programming for the community during the following school year.”⁵⁵ In a similar vein, the commission also recommended that the board institute specialized coursework for “the adult population of the community who, for one reason or another may have been compelled to leave school at an early age.” This participant in the evening school needed “a new kind of training, a new kind of education, which may be obtained from lectures upon the various branches of literature, art, science, given by men expert in knowledge and expert in power of expression and presentation.”⁵⁶

Despite this promising start, progress was slow on expanding programming for the broader community in Chicago’s public schools through the first decade of the 20th century. Following publication of the Educational Commission’s report—called the “Harper Report” for commission head Dr. William R. Harper—the *Chicago Tribune* threw its support for the use of schools as “social centers.” In a 1901 editorial, the paper urged the Board of Education to use its facilities “to maintain successful boys’ clubs. . .and thus take from the street during certain evenings many boys whose street experience is too extensive. Afternoon sewing classes for girls would also be popular.”⁵⁷ The League of Cook County Clubs, the American League for Civic Improvement, the Merchants’ Club, and other local organizations also threw their support behind school social centers, but by 1902 the Board of education had expanded the use of school buildings only to teachers’ or alumni activities, student performances, or to groups whose programs demonstrated a “distinctive educational value.”⁵⁸ Board of Education records show, however, that the board did expand activities in its evening schools in the first decade of the 20th century, including special classes for foreign students, and courses in sewing, cooking, manual

⁵⁰ *Twenty-Ninth Annual Report of the Board of Education for the Year Ending June 30, 1883* (Chicago: Jameson & Morse, 1884), 35.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Forty-Sixth Annual Report of the Board of Education for the Year Ending June 30, 1900* (Chicago: Mack & Anderson, 1901), 185-186.

⁵³ *Forty-Second Annual Report of the Board of Education for the Year Ending June 26, 1896* (Chicago: The J. M. W. Jones Stationary and Printing Co., 1896). 69-70.

⁵⁴ *Report of the Educational Commission of the City of Chicago* (Chicago: The Lakeside Press, 1899), 151.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 150.

⁵⁷ “Schools as Social Centers,” *Chicago Tribune*, November 10, 1901, 12.

⁵⁸ “Club League Plans Work,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 17, 1901, 3; *Chicago Tribune*, September 22, 1901, 6; “Think Governor Hurts Charity,” *Chicago Tribune*, November 12, 1901, 1; “The Transformation of the School House,” 249.

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training, and stenography and typewriting.⁵⁹ After continual pressure, the board finally changed its restrictive policy around the use of school buildings by outside organizations, opening nine public schools for broader community activities during the 1910-11 school year.⁶⁰ By that time, push for school social centers had become an organized movement—school social centers had opened in over 70 cities by 1913, and 17 states had passed legislation authorizing the use of public school buildings for social centers by 1914.⁶¹

The influence of the social center movement can be seen in the designs of several Chicago high schools after 1900, including James H. Bowen High School. The movement of assembly halls in high schools to the first floor had begun in the 1890s – the first ground-floor assembly hall built in Chicago was in William Mundie’s Edward Waller High School in 1898. The Board of Education’s decision to require first-floor assembly halls in all new school buildings 1904 was largely motivated by demands for increased fire-safety; however, Board President Clayton Mark also pointed out in his report to the Board that “The placing of the assembly halls on the first floor is not only a measure of safety, but will be a great advantage to the residents of the neighborhood who may desire to use them for neighborhood purposes.”⁶² In his design for Bowen and Schurz high schools, Dwight Perkins placed the auditoriums directly across from the main entrances to the buildings, providing easy access for community members. Perkins also placed the gymnasium in Bowen in the north-west wing of the building, which was accessible from the boys’ entrance along Marquette Avenue.

Dwight H. Perkins and the Modern High School Building in the Early 20th Century

While some of the improvements in the high school as a building type are reflected in the designs of architects working for the Chicago Board of Education from the 1890s through 1905, Dwight Heald Perkins (1867-1941) was the first Board Architect to fully respond to the expansion and differentiation of the city’s high school curriculum and concerns about health, hygiene, and fire safety, creating a truly modern high school prototype that would remain the standard in Chicago through the mid-20th century. Perkins, who served as Chief Architect for the Board of Education from 1905 to 1910, is widely recognized as one of the preeminent school architects of the early 20th century and designed over 40 public school buildings and additions in his 5-year tenure, including James. H. Bowen High School.

Perkins was born in Memphis, Tennessee in 1867, and moved to Chicago with his family as a young boy. His father died from complications from a stroke soon after, and Perkins’ mother struggled to make ends meet. Leaving school at age 12, Perkins took on a series of jobs before obtaining a position as office boy in the architectural offices of Wheelock & Clay.⁶³ At 18, Perkins enrolled as an architecture student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and after graduating in 1887 remained at the school for one year as an instructor. In 1888, Perkins returned to Chicago, entering the firm of Burnham & Root. Perkins advanced quickly within the firm and was appointed office manager while Burnham worked in organizing and designing the fairgrounds for the 1893 Columbian Exposition.

Perkins started his own firm in 1894. His first commission, passed on to him by Daniel Burnham, was to design a new office building for the Steinway Piano Company at 63 E. Van Buren Street in Chicago (demolished).⁶⁴ When the building was completed in 1896, he took over the eleventh floor and attic level for his office, and rented space on both floors to several of his architect friends over the next few years, including Irving and Allen Pond, Robert Spencer, Myron Hunt, Walter Burley Griffin, his cousin Marion Mahoney, and Frank Lloyd Wright.⁶⁵

During his time at Steinway Hall, Perkins designed several buildings that reflected his dedication to architecture that served a civic and social purpose. His progressive views on architecture were informed by his mother, Marion Perkins, who was an associate of Jane Addams and was involved in work in the city’s settlement houses.⁶⁶ Perkins designed

⁵⁹ Board of Education Annual Report, 1906, 182.

⁶⁰ “The Transformation of the School House,” 249.

⁶¹ Ibid, 246.

⁶² Board of Education Annual Report, 1904, p. 18.

⁶³ Donna Rae Nelson, Ph.D., “School Architecture in Chicago During the Progressive Era: The Career of Dwight H. Perkins,” (Ph.D. diss. Chicago: Loyola University, 1988), 28.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 33.

⁶⁵ National Register of Historic Places, Carl Schurz High School, Chicago, Cook County, Illinois, Reference #11000031, 18.

⁶⁶ “Chicago Public School Buildings, Pre-1940 Context Statement,” 74.

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settlement houses for both the University of Chicago and Northwestern University and was a founding member of the Chicago Arts and Crafts Society at Hull House.

In 1902, Perkins joined with landscape architect Jens Jensen to prepare a report on Chicago's park system and make recommendations on improving it. Jensen conducted a thorough survey of existing and proposed park lands in Chicago, and Perkins authored the final report, published in 1905 as the *Report of the Special Park Commission to the City Council of Chicago on the Subject of a Metropolitan Park System*. In the report, Perkins and Jensen urged the city to undertake substantial expansion of the city's existing park system, particularly within working-class industrial areas and outlying neighborhoods where park land was scarcest. In addition to expanding the existing system of parks and boulevards, Perkins' plan envisioned a collection of small neighborhood parks and playgrounds that would provide much-needed green space, as well as recreation centers that would serve the social and civic needs of each community. Perkins' highly detailed maps created for the report showed these proposed parks and playgrounds together with existing settlement houses and public schools, illustrating his vision of "a city organized by redundant types of civic centers that arguably reduced crime, disease, and delinquency."⁶⁷

Perkins' strong sense of civic responsibility made him well-suited for the position of Chief Architect for the Chicago Board of Education, and he applied after being encouraged by members of the City Club of Chicago, a prominent local progressive organization whose members included Jane Addams and Louis Sullivan.⁶⁸ At the time that he accepted the job, the Board of Education had recently undergone a series of operational and administrative changes initiated by Progressive board members appointed by Mayor Edward Dunne, which bureaucratized the public school system and gave the Board more control over school building in Chicago.⁶⁹ Under this new system, Perkins was the first Board architect to take a competitive civil service examination and beat out six other candidates for the position. Rather than work on commission as past school architects had done, Perkins was given a fixed salary of \$8,000 per year, and his appointment was limited to five years. Although he was allowed to continue his architectural practice with John Hamilton through his tenure, the Board of Education required that Perkins attend every Board meeting and work at its offices at least two hours every day. As Chief Architect, he managed an architectural department of 250 employees, as well as scores of maintenance workers who were responsible for repairing and maintaining all existing school buildings.⁷⁰

Facing a perennially overcrowded and underfunded school system that required new buildings to meet an increasing number of construction standards and an evolving curriculum, Perkins developed a series of standardized plans for elementary schools that featured fireproof construction, standard classrooms, a first-floor assembly hall, a gymnasium, and manual and domestic training rooms in the basement. For his design for Bernard Moos Elementary School in 1907, Perkins added a library and kindergarten to the first floor, and expansive playground facilities.⁷¹ Perkins also inaugurated a system of "tower toilets," in his design for Moos, which consisted of bathrooms on every floor that were stacked vertically, replacing the standard single set of lavatories that had been installed in earlier elementary schools. Tower toilets were already in use in other cities like New York and became standard in Chicago public schools after Moos was constructed.⁷² In designing Grover Cleveland Elementary School (completed in 1910), Perkins placed the tower toilets and staircases at the corners of the building, allowing classrooms along the elevations to receive unilateral light.⁷³ To ensure adequate natural lighting in the classrooms, Perkins placed a series of closely-spaced "factory-like windows" on the primary elevations, divided by projecting vertical piers—this rhythmic fenestration pattern was repeated on many of Perkins' school buildings, and was likely inspired by the designs of Chicago-School architect Louis Sullivan.

While his early designs for elementary schools featured stylized or simplified elements of historical styles, budget constraints forced Perkins to economize, and many of his later elementary schools are strikingly modern, with earth-toned brick and terra cotta exterior walls marked by restrained detailing. His design for Lyman Trumbull Elementary School

⁶⁷ "Ready for Experiment," 124-125.

⁶⁸ "The Transformation of the School House," 95.

⁶⁹ "Ready for Experiment," 301.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 261-262.

⁷¹ "The Transformation of the School House," 73-74.

⁷² "Ready for Experiment," 274.

⁷³ Ibid, 276.

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(completed 1908) represented a dramatic departure from the classically-inspired school designs of previous decades, and featured a severe, box-like massing and exterior walls patterned with striking horizontal bands of light and dark buff brick. *The Architectural Record* hailed the buildings as “the most successful of all Mr. Perkins’ designs.”⁷⁴

The first high school that Dwight Perkins designed for the Chicago Board of Education was Lane Technical High School (completed 1908, demolished c. 1930). Perkin’s design for the school, which was meant to serve as a model for future technical schools in the city, featured an E-shaped plan with a central bay containing the auditorium gymnasium and lunch room. Flanking this bay were two L-shaped wings that held classrooms and workshops. The exterior of the building exhibited stylized classical elements; above the first story, which featured banded brick rustication, each bay was filled with ribbon windows and separated by brick piers.

The two high schools that Perkins designed toward the end of his tenure as Chief Architect—Carl Schurz High School at 3601 N. Milwaukee Avenue and James H. Bowen High School—represented the culmination of Perkins’ work for the Chicago Board of Education. When completed in 1910, the two high schools were nearly identical in their exterior design and interior layout, although the wings on either side of the center entrance bay at Bowen High School were marked by projecting pavilions, and Perkins employed more differentiated tones in the exterior brickwork on Schurz High School.

Perkins’ initial design for Bowen was conceived in 1906. A rendering of the proposed building, which was published in *The Inland Architect and News Record* in November 1906 and *The American School Board Journal* in February 1907, shows a boxy rectangular structure with a three-part ground-floor entrance. The upper walls above the ground floor are filled with Perkins’ “factory-like windows” recessed behind slender vertical piers and divided on each story by geometric spandrel panels. The top of the building is capped by a projecting cornice that also appears to have geometric detailing. By 1907, Perkins had abandoned this design and instead chose to use the design for Schurz High School as a prototype for Bowen. Today, Schurz High School is widely regarded as Perkins’ “masterpiece,” and Bowen High School has received little attention in the scholarly record. This may be due to the nature of later additions on each of the buildings—while the extensive additions to Schurz were built within just 14 years after the original 1910 building and closely follow its design, the 1969 east classroom and gymnasium additions to Bowen reflect the tenets of post-WWII school design and stand in contrast to the original structure. Although these additions are stylistically distinct, their connection to the 1910 building is minimal, and the 1940 addition by Board architect John C. Christensen is sympathetically designed and reflects the continued refinement of the high school as a building type.

Although his work as Chief Architect was widely praised by architects and educators, during the final years of his tenure Perkins developed an adversarial relationship with Alfred R. Urion, who had been appointed President of Chicago’s Board of Education in 1907. Urion’s appointment came after Edward Dunne lost his reelection campaign to Fred Busse, who reorganized the school board and reversed many of the progressive reforms that had been put into place during Dunne’s term.⁷⁵ In February of 1910, Urion accused Perkins of “insubordination, incompetency and extravagance” and demanded his resignation. Perkins refused, and the subsequent hearings were widely followed in the press. Although educational specialists and prominent architects—including William B. Ittner, a nationally-recognized leader in school design—testified on behalf of Perkins, the Board found Perkins guilty and fired him on May 1, 1910.⁷⁶

After his termination, Perkins returned to private practice. In 1911, Perkins and Hamilton were joined by partner William Fellows, and the firm of Perkins, Fellows and Hamilton went on to design schools throughout the country, as well as many park projects in Lincoln Park, including the North Pond Refectory (1913) and the Lion House at the Lincoln Park Zoo (1912), reflecting Perkins’ continued interest in the city’s public parks. Perkins retired in the mid-1930s and died in 1941 while traveling in New Mexico.

⁷⁴ Peter B. Wight, “Public School Architecture in Chicago: The Work of Dwight H. Perkins,” *The Architectural Record*, Vol. 27, (June 1910), 7.

⁷⁵ “Ready for Experiment,” 302.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 302-303.

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Architecture of James H. Bowen High School

1910 School Building

James H. Bowen High School is significant as one of only two extant high school buildings designed by Dwight Perkins. Both the Bowen High School and Carl Schurz High School (listed to the National Register of Historic Places in 2011) were built according to a prototype developed by Perkins toward the end of his tenure as Chief Architect for Chicago's Board of Education. This Bowen/Schurz prototype was the first complete expression of the modern high school in the city, combining earlier innovations that had been implemented piecemeal in previous school buildings into a single design. In his design, Perkins fully addressed both the need for specialized spaces to support Chicago's expanding and increasingly differentiated high school curriculum, as well as regulations around fire-safety, health, and hygiene. Perkins' design for the exterior of this prototype was also innovative, and combined elements of the Chicago School and the Prairie Style. The lack of elaborate ornamentation, driven by budget concerns, resulted in a stripped-down, ahistorical style that seemed to announce the building's modern interior programming and stood in stark contrast to the Classical Revival-style school designs that were popular in the early 20th century.

Bowen High School was among the first high school buildings in Chicago to house such a broad array of specialized spaces and reflects the increasing variety of courses offered to high school students in the early 20th century. The building was designed to facilitate academic coursework, as well as manual, domestic, and commercial training programs. Workshops and other manual training spaces requiring heavy machinery, including the forge room, foundry, woodworking shop, and woodworking shop, were located toward the rear of the building on the ground floor. Classrooms and laboratories were concentrated on the second and third floors. Drawing rooms, a printing and bookbinding room, and a clay modeling room lined the south end of the fourth floor under the main roof. In addition to these spaces, the building also contained a dedicated commercial department on the third floor, and a study room, library, and reading room on the second floor.

Many of the specialized classrooms in the building were thoughtfully designed. The sewing room on the third floor included a connected fitting and locker room, and the domestic science room on the same floor included a full kitchen, pantry, and model dining room. The photography lab and dark room, which did not require windows, were placed on either side of the central staircases above the balcony level of the auditorium. The drawing rooms, bookbinding room, and clay modeling room on the fourth floor were illuminated by operable, angled skylights, and skylights were also used to light the forge room and foundry.

Bowen also reflects the broad array of design modifications and technologies used in the modern high school to improve the health and safety of students. The building's modified E-shaped plan allowed for abundant natural light and ventilation, and the strategically placed banks of windows supplied unilateral light to the classrooms. The stacked "tower toilets" at the southwest and southeast corners of the building provided ample lavatory facilities for male and female students. The building's four staircases and wide-double-loaded corridor allowed students to easily circulate through the building between classes, also helped to expedite evacuation in the event of a fire or other emergency. The auditorium was also placed on the first floor as a fire safety measure, but its location directly across the center corridor from the main entrance also facilitated its use for community activities, and the handsome lobby with barrel-vaulted ceiling still serves as a welcoming space for those entering the building.

Although a small number of rooms have been combined or reconfigured, the original plan of the 1910 Bowen High School building is largely intact, with the exception of the original gymnasium in the north-west wing, which was converted into classrooms when the 1940 gymnasium and pool addition was constructed. The 1910 building retains its original entrance lobby, main corridor, and staircases, and many classrooms still retain their original built-ins and blackboard frames.

The exterior of Bowen High School exhibits the influence of the Chicago School and the Prairie School, two architectural styles that originated in Chicago and were rarely used for institutional buildings. Perkins was no doubt inspired by Louis

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Sullivan and other Chicago-School architects, whose tall commercial and office buildings artfully expressed their underlying structure through large windows placed within a frame of spandrels and piers. The fenestration pattern on the major elevations of the original Bowen High Schools building, with windows recessed behind slender, vertical brick piers and separated on each floor by terra cotta and brick spandrel panels, recall the rhythmic pattern of Chicago-School curtain walls, and the strong lines of the projecting piers give a vertical emphasis that counteracts the horizontality of the building's massing.

While the expanses of windows were borrowed from the Chicago School, other elements of the design are clearly drawn from the Prairie School. Perkins had been exposed to the work of Prairie School architects Frank Lloyd Wright, Myron Hunt, Walter Burley Griffin, and Marion Mahoney Griffin during his time at Steinway Hall, which had served as a kind of incubator for the Prairie Style around the turn of the 20th century. Through the work of these architects, the Prairie Style emerged as America's first indigenous style, which eschewed historicism and embraced natural materials, horizontality, and geometric or Sullivan-esque ornament.

Bowen High School exhibits several design elements that are characteristic of the Prairie Style. Although five stories tall at its highest point, the building's sprawling massing lends a feeling of horizontality, and its multi-gable roofline features deeply overhanging eaves that are a hallmark of Prairie-style residential buildings. The projecting brick piers on the south faces of the pavilions and the pylons flanking the center entrance bay are similar to elements on Wright's designs for Unity Temple and the Larkin Building, and the geometric metal grilles covering the window openings on the gable walls of the fifth story recall Wright's geometric art-glass windows. The exterior of the building is clad in richly-hued red-brown and red-orange brick and terra cotta, and the subtle variation between the first-story base and upper stories provides additional visual interest.

1940 Gymnasium Addition

The three-story north-west addition to the original Bowen High School building, completed in 1940, was designed by John C. Christensen, who served as Chicago Board of Education Architect from 1921 to 1959. The addition, with its separate boys' and girls' gymnasiums, locker rooms, and pool, reflects the continued evolution of the modern high school through the early 20th century after Perkin's departure. In 1910, the Board of Education Superintendent Ella Flagg Young recommended that physical education periods be extended for high-school boys and girls and asserted that "there should be in each high school building two gymnasiums—one for boys and one for girls." Young also recommended that "every high school be equipped with a swimming pool."⁷⁷ New high school buildings completed after 1910, including Senn High School (1912) and Hyde Park High School (1912), were constructed with two gymnasiums, and additions containing dual gymnasiums and swimming pools were planned for all existing high schools, including Bowen. Plans for Bowen's gymnasium addition were finalized in early 1939, and the structure was completed in mid-1940.

Christensen's design for the addition, while not exactly replicating the 1910 school building, is sympathetic to the original design, repeating multi-toned brick and terra-cotta exterior and fenestration pattern. The addition's entrance bay, located at its south end, also matched the original west entrance of the 1910 building, with three sets of recessed windows at each story above the ground floor entrance separated by monumental engaged columns. The interior of the addition is intact, with no alterations to the plan and few material alterations. The first floor houses the swimming pool and girls' and boys' locker rooms. Two double-height gymnasiums occupy the second and third floors—the larger boys' gymnasium is located at the northwest corner of the addition, and the girls' gym is located directly north of the entrance bay along the west end of the addition. A series of small offices divide the two gyms on the second and third floors. The third floor of the addition also contains a large band room, located directly across the corridor from the girls' gym.

In addition to the three-story gymnasium and pool expansion, a one-story addition was constructed directly north of the foundry room east of the auditorium to house a manual training room. This small addition was completed at the same time as the gymnasium addition.

⁷⁷ Board of Education Annual Report, 1909-1910, p. 92.

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With the new gym addition, the 1910 building's original gymnasium in the north-west wing became redundant. The space occupied the old gym was converted into a lunchroom on the first floor, and four classrooms on the second floor. The additional classroom space was desperately needed – the population of South Chicago had surged through the 1920s, and by the early 1930s the school was operating well beyond capacity. To relieve overcrowding at Bowen and other high schools, the city converted all junior high schools in the public school system to high schools, and temporary classrooms were constructed behind the school to house the extra students before the addition was completed.⁷⁸ The construction of additional high schools, including the Chicago Vocational School in 1938 and South Shore High School in 1940, also helped to alleviate overcrowding in existing high schools in the city's southeast side.

The 1940 addition to Bowen High School falls within the period of significance and is considered a contributing addition. The addition represents the continuing refinement of the early 20th-century high school building within the prototype first established by Dwight Perkins in the first decade of the century, and its design is compatible with the original 1910 school building. The one-story manual training room addition at the rear of the building, completed concurrently with the gymnasium addition, is also considered a contributing addition.

1969 East Classroom, Gymnasium, and Auto Shop Additions

Although the population in South Chicago declined from an all-time high of just over 56,000 in 1930 in the decades following World War II, exploding birth rates in the post-war period strained public school systems throughout the country, and Chicago's Board of Education embarked on a massive building campaign to expand its capacity and accommodate rising enrollment through the 1950s and 1960s. In 1967, the Board announced that it would build a \$2 million addition to Bowen High School, which at that time was operating at over double its capacity and was among the most overcrowded schools in the city.⁷⁹ That same year, the Board acquired all 48 parcels on the block directly east of the existing school building between Manistee and Muskegon avenues through eminent domain and commissioned McPherson, Warner & Brejcha, an architectural firm based in Homewood, Illinois, to design a new two-story classroom addition and gymnasium addition for the school, which would provide space for 1,200 additional students.⁸⁰ Work began on the additions in early 1968 and was completed in March 1969.

The two-story east classroom addition and the northwest gymnasium addition reflect changes to school design that began in the post-WWII period. Buildings continued to be equipped with specialized classrooms, but manual training programs during this period shifted, evolving away from courses like metal work to electronics and auto repair. Language laboratories with audio equipment and television and radio studios reflected changes in technology. Libraries and gymnasiums expanded, as did the amount of space given over to administrative offices and lecture and study halls. Schools built in the 1960s were often equipped with HVAC systems, reducing the need for operable windows. In contrast to the historically-inspired designs of the pre-war period, most post-war schools in Chicago and throughout the country featured Mid-Century Modern designs, which helped to control costs.

Bowen High School's east classroom addition is typical of school additions constructed in Chicago in the 1960s. The exterior, while subtly referencing the original 1910 school building, is clearly differentiated from the original design. The building features a central core containing a two-story library, lecture rooms, and offices. Classrooms are arranged along the exterior walls of the building and separated from the central core by a series of double-loaded corridors. The two-story gymnasium addition, which extends north from the 1940 addition, is unfenestrated, and contains a large double-height space with bleachers along the north and south walls. The one-story auto shop addition east of the 1940 addition reflects the changes in manual training that occurred in high schools during the post-war period.

The 1969 additions are outside of the period of significance and are considered non-contributing additions.

⁷⁸ Proceedings of the City Council of Chicago, February 1, 1933, 3354.

⁷⁹ "School Board Calls Vote on Tax Increase," *Chicago Tribune*, January 4, 1967, 6.

⁸⁰ "Cuter Vote Postponed Two Weeks," *The Daily Calumet*, March 9, 1967, 1; "Board Gets Two School Plans," *Chicago Tribune*, June 13, 1967, 44.

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James H. Bowen High School

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

☐ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other

Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 11 acres

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage; enter "Less than one" if the acreage is .99 or less)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1 41.734129

Latitude

-87.557558

Longitude

3 _____

Latitude

Longitude

2 _____

Latitude

Longitude

4 _____

Latitude

Longitude

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The property is bounded on the north by East 88th Street, on the east by South Muskegon Avenue, on the south by East 89th Street, and on the west by South Marquette Avenue.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary encompasses the entire property that was historically associated with Bowen High School.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Lara Ramsey and Emily Ramsey

date 11/30/2025

organization Ramsey Historic Consultants, Inc.

telephone 312-613-1039

street & number 1105 W. Chicago Avenue, Suite 201

email lara@ramseyhcinc.com

city or town Chicago

state IL

zip code 60647

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **GIS Location Map (Google Earth or BING)**
- **Local Location Map**
- **Site Plan**
- **Floor Plans (As Applicable)**
- **Photo Location Map** (Include for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map and insert immediately after the photo log and before the list of figures).

James H. Bowen High School

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Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 pixels, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Name of Property: Bowen High School

City or Vicinity: Chicago

County: Cook **State:** IL

Photographer: Lara and Emily Ramsey

Date Photographed: 10/17/2025 and 11/16/2026

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photo 1 of 32: South elevation, looking north

Photo 2 of 32: South elevation, center entrance bay, looking north

Photo 3 of 32: South elevation, looking north to west end wing

Photo 4 of 32: South elevation, looking northwest to east end wing and connector to 1969 classroom addition

Photo 5 of 32: West elevation, looking northeast

Photo 6 of 32: West elevation, detail of upper floors and roofline at entrance

Photo 7 of 32: West elevation, looking north

Photo 8 of 32: West elevation, 1940 addition, looking northeast

Photo 9 of 32: West elevation, 1940 addition, looking east to entrance

Photo 10 of 32: Looking east between 1940 addition (right) and 1969 gymnasium addition (left)

Photo 11 of 32: North elevation of 1969 gymnasium addition, looking southwest

Photo 12 of 32: East elevation of main building and 1940 addition, looking west

Photo 13 of 32: North elevation of main building, looking southwest

Photo 14 of 32: North and east elevations of 1969 classroom addition, looking southwest

Photo 15 of 32: South elevation of 1969 classroom addition, looking northeast

Photo 16 of 32: First floor, main entrance lobby, looking south

Photo 17 of 32: First floor, typical corridor, looking east

Photo 18 of 32: First floor, office, looking west to 1975 mural by Vincent Mendoza

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- Photo 19 of 32:** First floor, assembly hall, looking south
- Photo 20 of 32:** Assembly hall, looking north from balcony
- Photo 21 of 32:** First floor, lunch room, looking north
- Photo 22 of 32:** First floor, swimming pool, looking east
- Photo 23 of 32:** 1969 gymnasium, looking northwest
- Photo 24 of 32:** Second floor gymnasium, looking northwest
- Photo 25 of 32:** Second floor corridor, looking west
- Photo 26 of 32:** Second floor, typical classroom
- Photo 27 of 32:** Second floor, typical stair
- Photo 28 of 32:** Second floor, gymnasium, looking west
- Photo 29 of 32:** Third floor corridor, looking south
- Photo 30 of 32:** Third floor, band room, looking northeast
- Photo 31 of 32:** Fourth floor corridor, looking east
- Photo 32 of 32:** Fifth floor, looking south

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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List of Figures

(Resize, compact, and paste images of maps and historic documents in this section. Place captions, with figure numbers above each image. Orient maps so that north is at the top of the page, all document should be inserted with the top toward the top of the page.)

- Figure 1.** Location map
- Figure 2.** Google Earth GIS Map
- Figure 3.** Exterior Photo Key
- Figure 4.** First Floor Plan and Photo Key
- Figure 5.** Second Floor Plan and Photo Key
- Figure 6.** Third Floor Plan and Photo Key
- Figure 7.** Fourth and Fifth Floor Plan and Photo Key
- Figure 8.** Sanborn Fire Insurance Map 1950, showing Bowen High School
- Figure 9.** Rendering of Bowen High School (American School Board Journal, Vol 41, Issue 2)
- Figure 10.** Bowen High School under Construction, 1910 (Southeast Chicago Archive and Storytelling Project)
- Figure 11.** Portrait of Dwight H. Perkins, architect of Bowen High School (Wikipedia)
- Figure 12.** Bowen High School shortly after completion (1910)
- Figure 13.** Original elevation drawings of Bowen High School (Chicago Public Schools)

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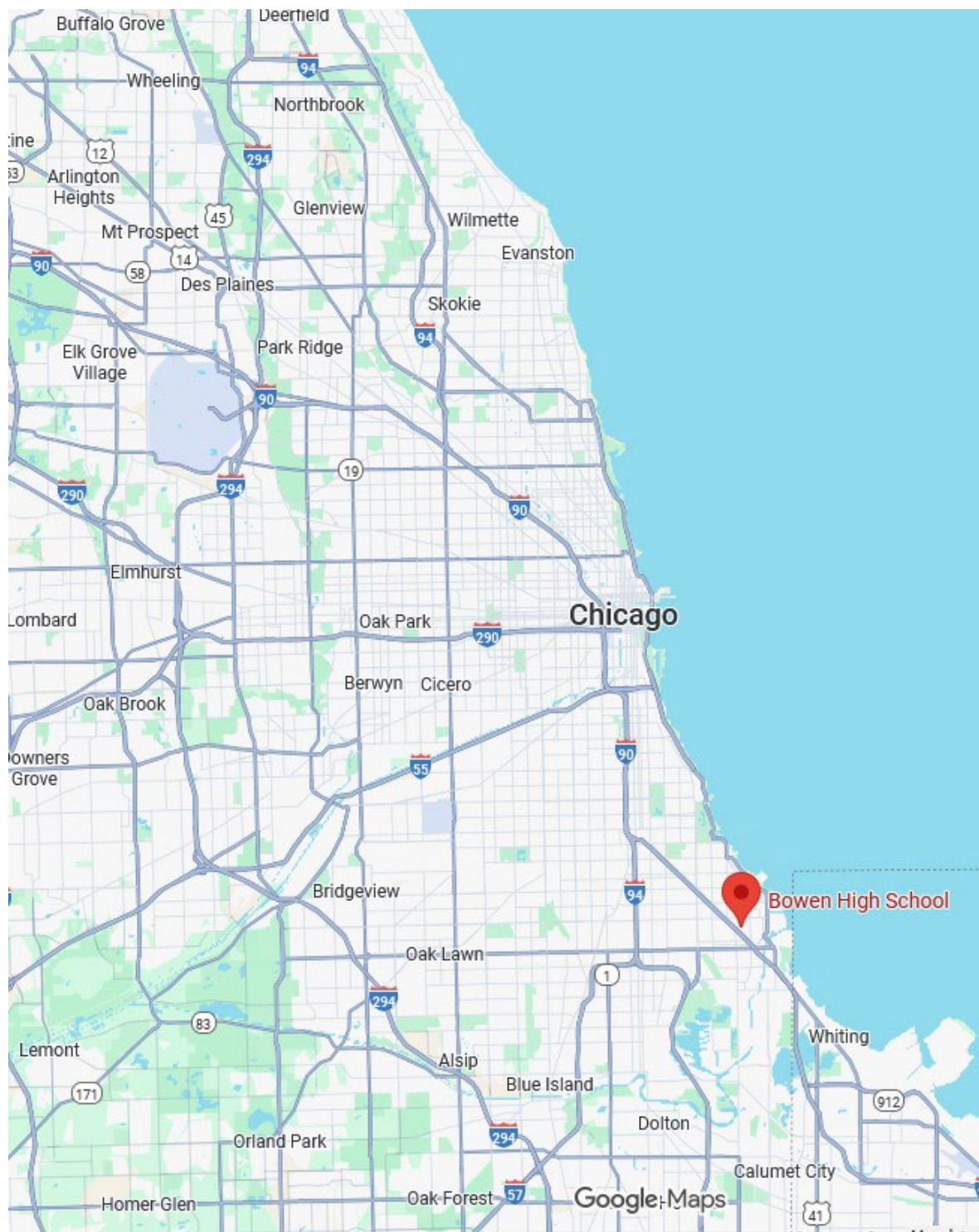
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Figure 1: Bowen High School - Location Map



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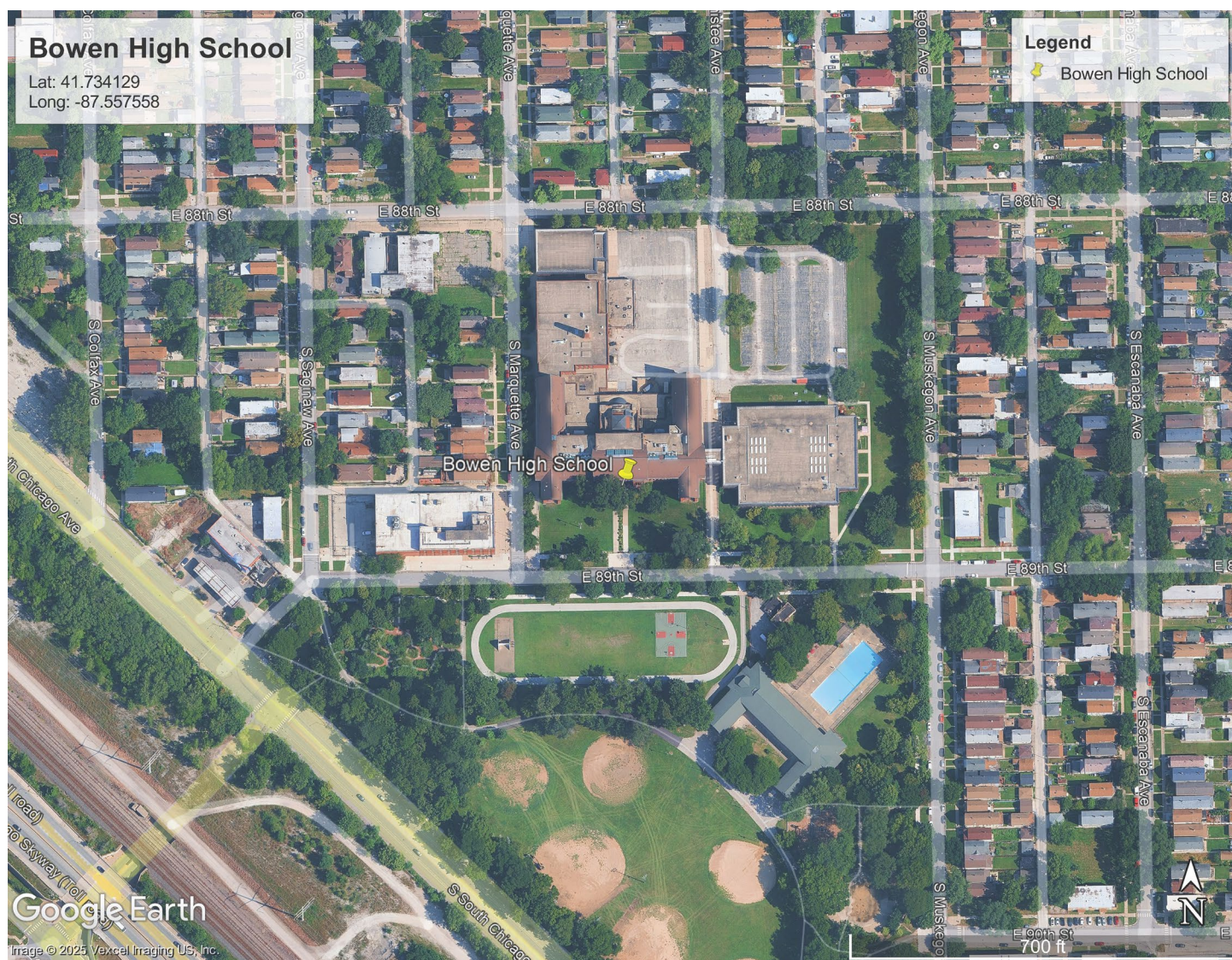
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Figure 2: Bowen High School – Google Earth GIS Map



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Figure 3: Bowen High School – Exterior Photo Key



RAMSEY HISTORIC CONSULTANTS, INC.

Bowen High School
2710 E. 89th Street
Chicago, Illinois

National Register of Historic Places Nomination
Exterior Photo Key

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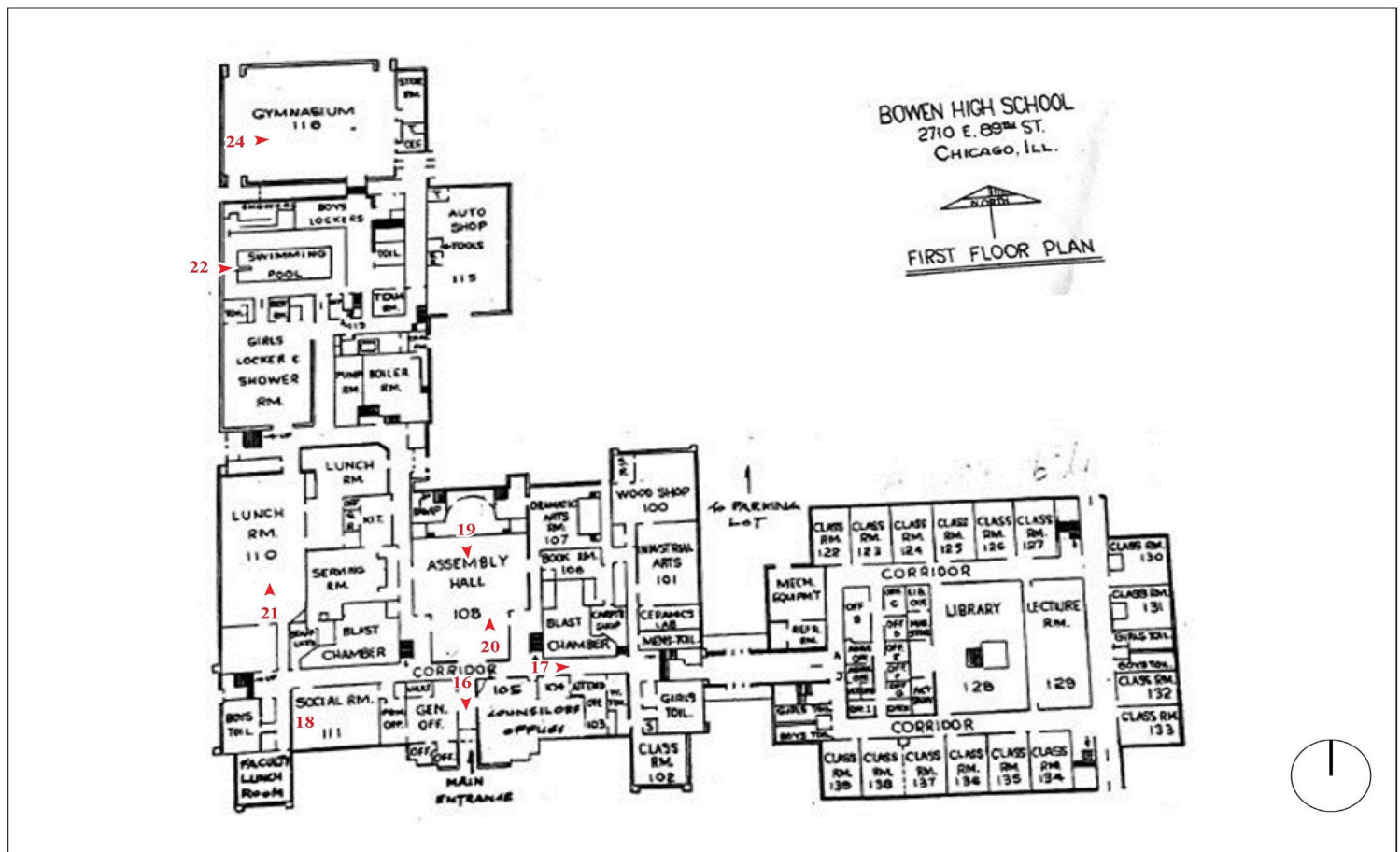
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Figure 4: Bowen High School – First Floor Photo Key



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First Floor Photo Key

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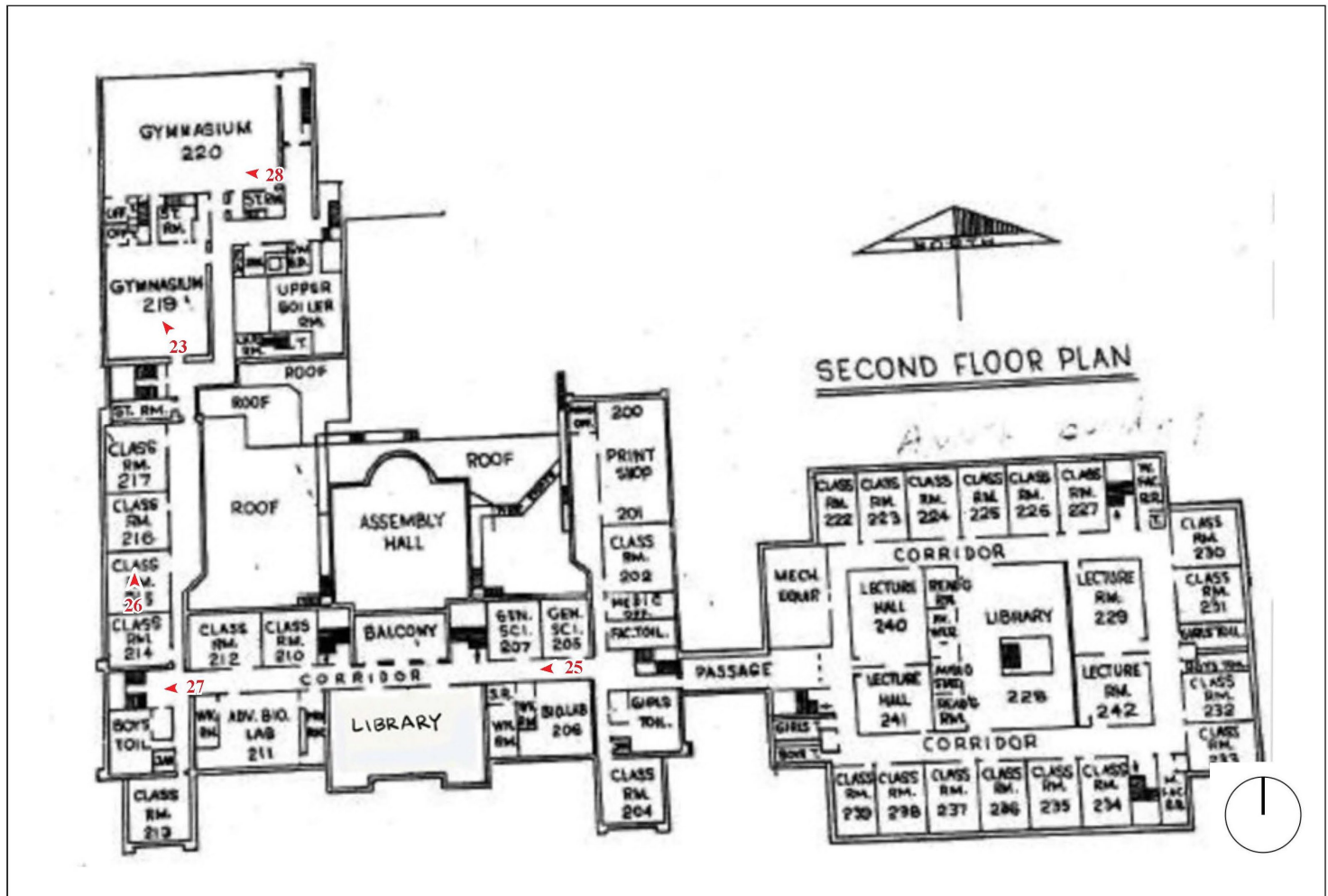
Cook County, Illinois

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Figure 5: Bowen High School – Second Floor Photo Key



RAMSEY HISTORIC CONSULTANTS, INC.

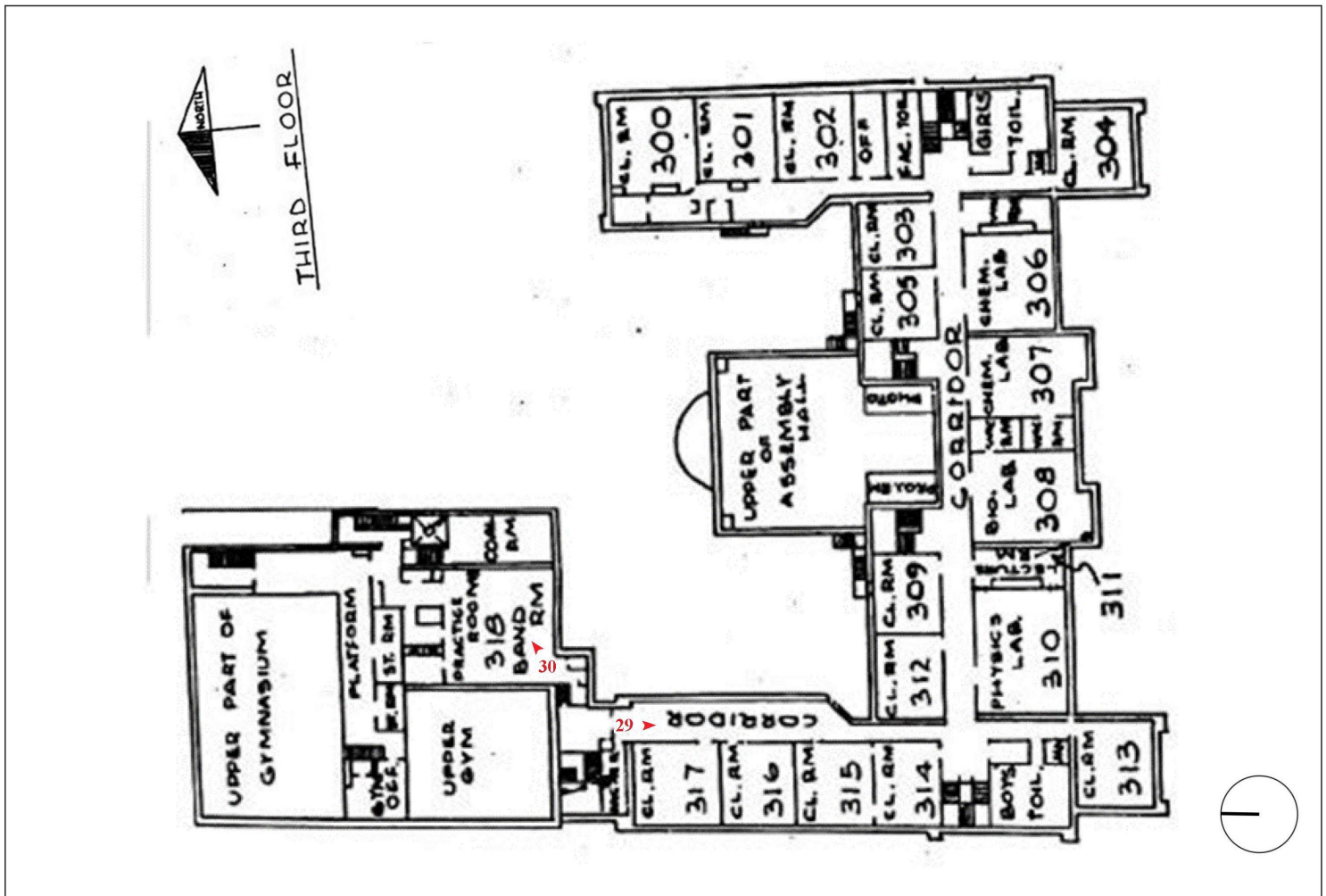
Bowen High School
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National Register Nomination
Second Floor Photo Key

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Figure 6: Bowen High School – Third Floor Photo Key



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National Register Nomination
Third Floor Photo Key

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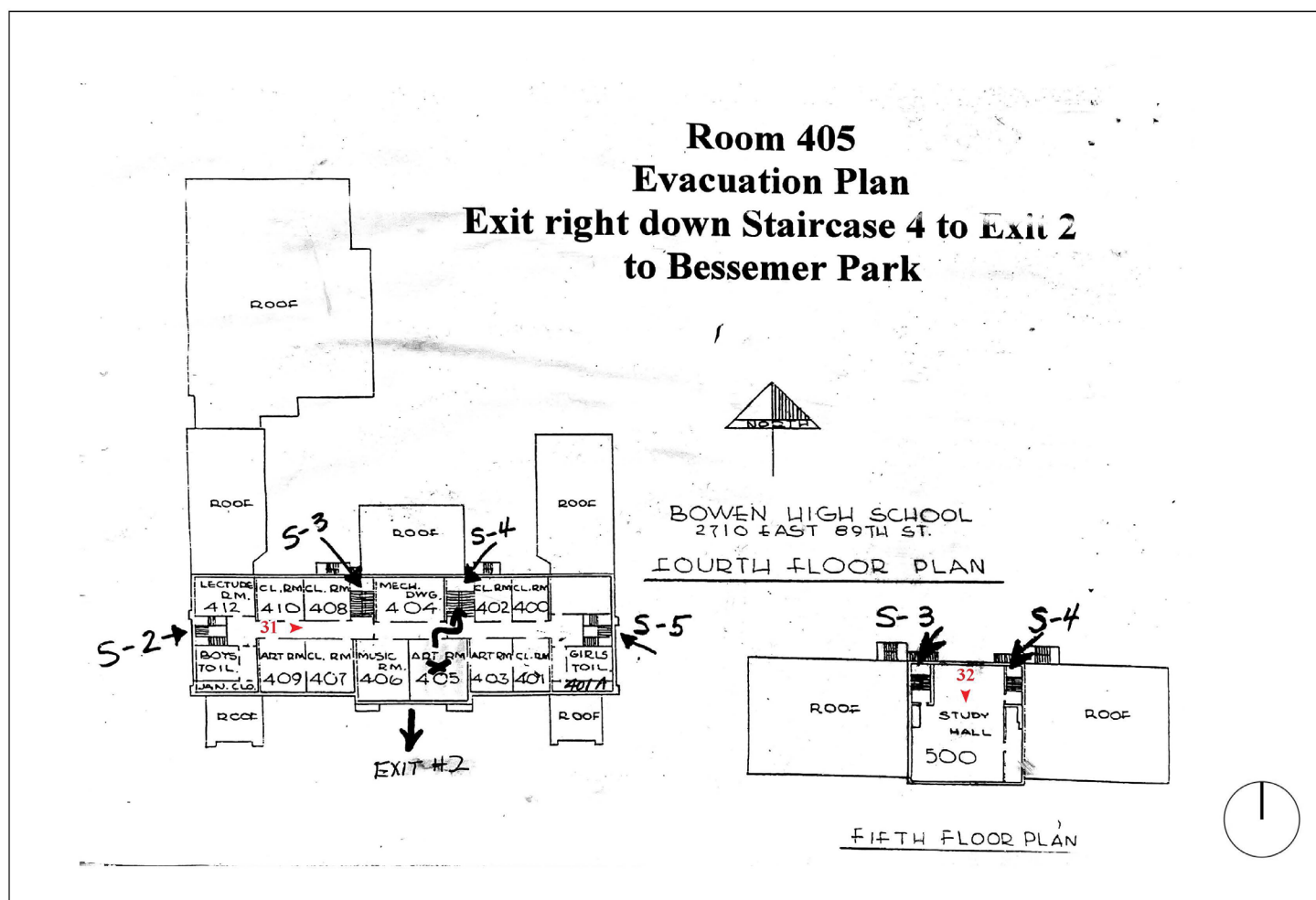
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Figure 7: Bowen High School – Fourth and Fifth Floor Photo Key



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Fourth Floor Photo Key

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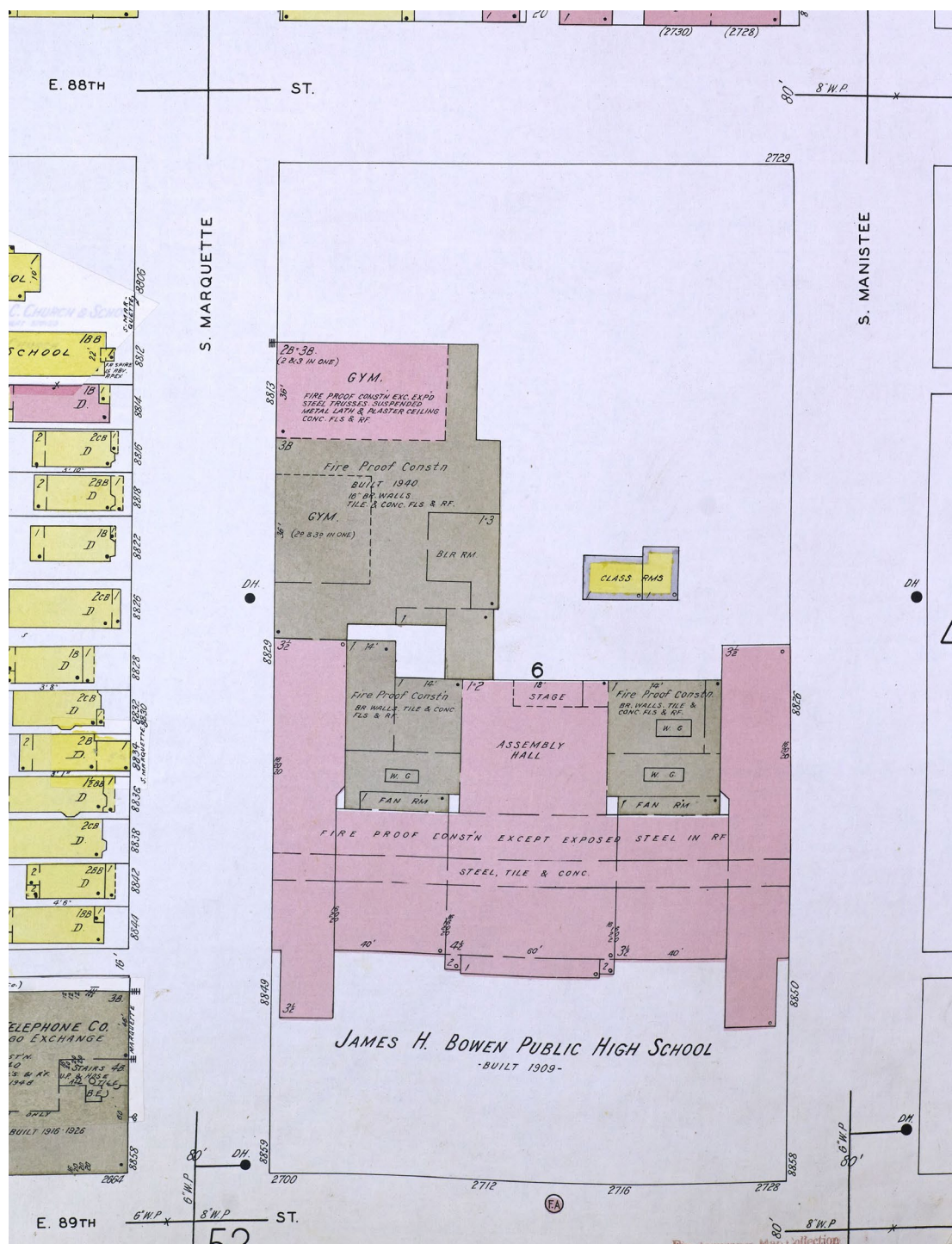
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Figure 8: Bowen High School – 1950 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map



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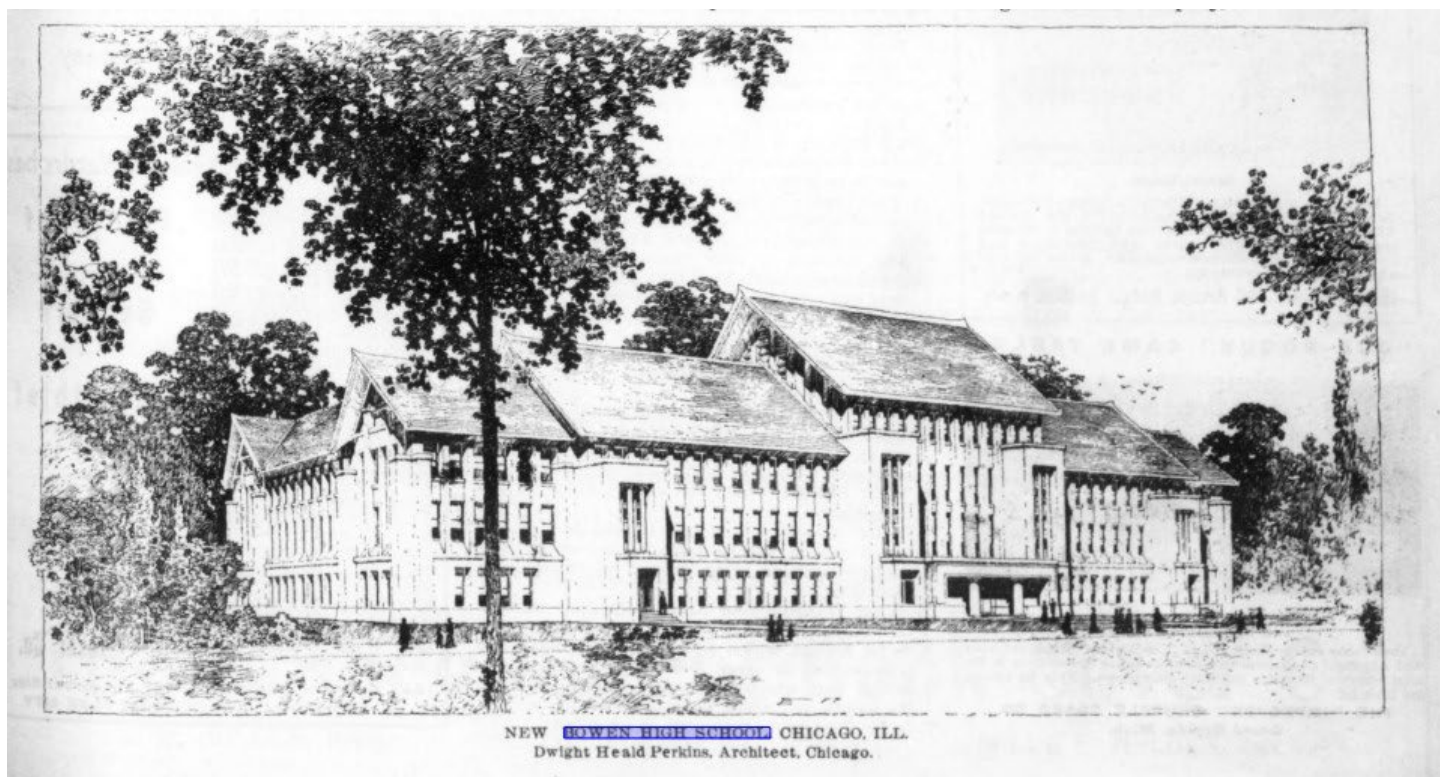
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Figure 9: Rendering of Bowen High School, American School Board Journal, Vol 41, Issue 2



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Figure 10: Bowen High School under Construction, 1910 (Southeast Chicago Archive and Storytelling Project)



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Figure 11: Portrait of Dwight H. Perkins, architect of Bowen High School (The Brickbuilder, Vol. 24, No. 6, June 1915)



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Figure 12: Bowen High School shortly after completion (1910)



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Figure 13: Original elevation drawings of Bowen High School (Chicago Public Schools)



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0001. South elevation, looking north



0002. South elevation, center entrance bay, looking north

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0003. South elevation, looking north to west end wing



0004. South elevation, looking northwest to east end wing and connector to 1969 addition

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0005. West elevation, looking northeast



0006. West elevation, detail of upper floors and roofline at entrance

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0007. West elevation, looking north



0008. West elevation of 1940 addition, looking northeast

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0009. West elevation of 1940 addition, looking east to entrance

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0010. Looking east between 1940 addition (right) and 1969 gymnasium addition (left)



0011. North elevation of 1969 gymnasium addition, looking southwest

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0012. East elevation of main building and 1940 addition, looking west



0013. North elevation of main building, looking southwest

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0014. North and east elevations of 1969 classroom addition, looking southwest



0015. South elevation of 1969 classroom addition, looking northeast

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0016. First floor, main entrance lobby, looking south

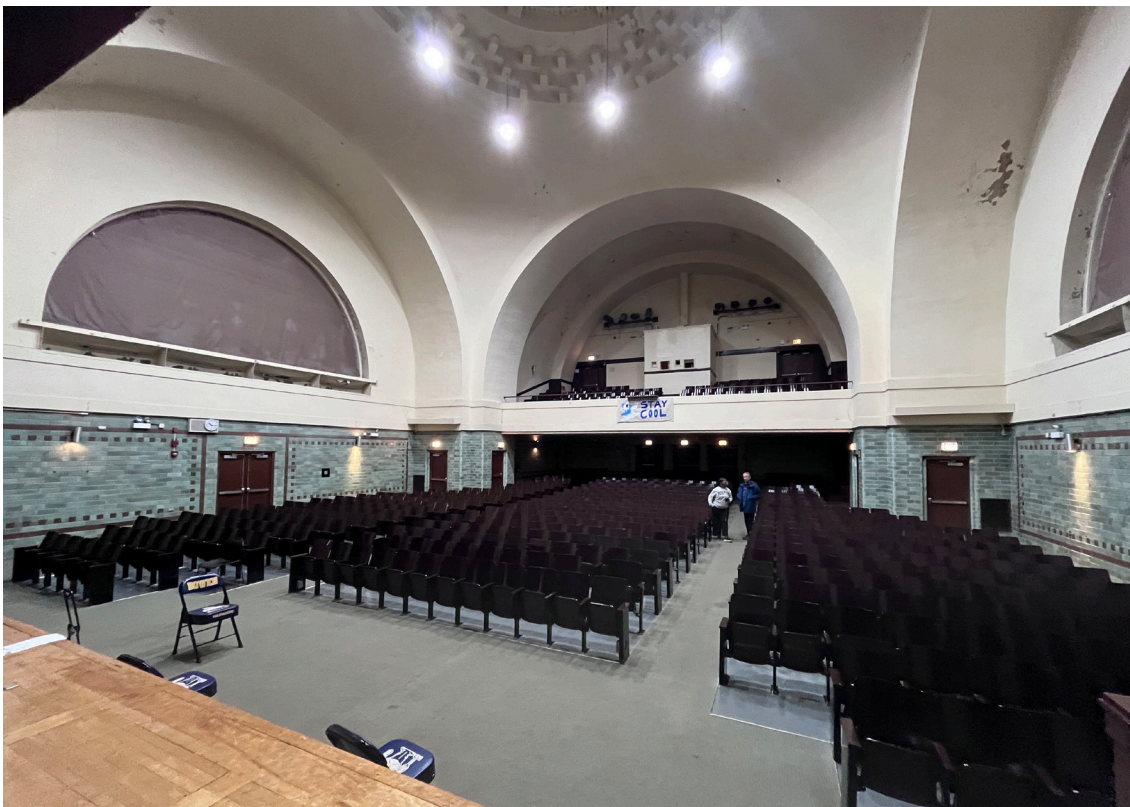


0017. First floor, typical corridor, looking east

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0018. First floor, office, looking west to 1975 mural by Vincent Mendoza



0019. First floor, auditorium, looking south

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0020. First floor, auditorium, looking north from balcony



0021. First floor, lunch room, looking north

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0022. First floor, swimming pool, looking east



0023. First floor, gymnasium, looking northwest

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0024. 1969 gymnasium, looking northwest



0025. Second floor corridor, looking west

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0026. Second floor, typical classroom



0027. Second floor, typical stair

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0028. Second floor, gymnasium, looking west

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0029. Third floor corridor, looking south



0030. Third floor, band room, looking northeast

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0031. Fourth floor corridor, looking east



0032. Fifth floor, looking south