

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 Old Lace School

other names/site number Old Lace Schoolhouse and Museum

Name of Multiple Property Listing N/A

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

2. Location

street & number 7422 Cass Avenue

☐ not for publication

city or town Darien

☐ vicinity

state Illinois

county DuPage

zip code 60561

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

Old Lace School

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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	0	buildings
0	0	site
0	0	structure
0	0	object
1	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Education - School

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Culture/Museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Late 19th and Early 20th Century American
Movements/Craftsman

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Wood

roof: Asphalt

other:

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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

Old Lace School is in the City of Darien of DuPage County in Illinois. It was constructed in 1925 as a one-room schoolhouse to replace a previously burned-down school adjacent to this building. It is situated in its original location on the property of an active school complex on the major arterial intersection of 75th Street and South Cass Avenue, which is kitty-corner from the main city center. The one-story, wood-framed, Craftsman Style bungalow has a nearly square footprint and rests on a concrete block foundation. It has a moderately pitched hipped roof with wide eaves and exposed rafters. The property has undergone minimal changes since its construction and has sufficient integrity for listing in the National Register.

Narrative Description

Old Lace School resides on the southeast corner of the grounds of the Lace Elementary School. The building is immediately fronted by South Cass Ave. to the east and 75th Street to the south, both four-lane thoroughfares separated from the building with public sidewalks and lawns with parkway trees. The main/front façade faces east, and the building perimeter is surrounded by landscaped beds, lawns, and concrete walking paths. At the southeast corner of the school is a bench, a flagpole, and a plaque commemorating the school. There are a few mature trees on the property, but most landscaping consists of ornamental trees and shrubs around the foundation and pathways. Two painted wood signs on square posts for the Historical Society are located on the east and south sides of the lawn facing Cass Avenue and 75th Street. The landscaping and other amenities are from outside of the period of significance and are non-contributing features.

The one-story building is roughly square in plan, approximately 35ft wide (north-to-south) and 37ft deep (east-to-west). The wood framing is set upon a raised pedestal of broken ashlar-faced concrete masonry unit foundation with a natural finish, which is exposed approximately 3ft above the surrounding grade on all four sides. The exterior walls are covered with white, horizontal clapboard siding and a series of trimmed openings. A strong horizontal band of trim separates an upper and lower section of siding, in line with and creating window headers, and wrapping around all sides. The hipped roof provides a deep overhang, roughly 30 inches. The squarish nature of the building brings all four roof hips up to a very slight ridge, running east-to-west, with otherwise no other defining features. The roofing has been replaced over the years and is now a modern architectural-style asphalt tab roof shingle with white aluminum gutters, downspouts, soffit and fascia. There is one clay-brick chimney on the north side which presumably exhausted an original wood-burning stove inside, which has since been replaced with a modern forced- air furnace unit.

The front, east-facing elevation has a recessed front porch, approximately 4ft deep and comprising the middle third of the wall face. This porch provides cover for the original main entrance door and two flanking windows, with the clapboard siding continuing into and through this recessed niche. The wood porch decking remains, but the stairs have been replaced with composite decking and railings. There are six risers coming down from the porch, and the stairs are the entire width of the porch opening.

Additionally, a rear stoop provides a second entrance door off the north side of the building, situated along the far west edge of that wall, with a set of concrete stairs and painted steel railings that spill out

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toward the west, down to a concrete walk leading to an adjacent asphalt parking lot used by visitors to the museum. Presumably added at a later time, this is now the primary entrance. Also, this stoop covers a stair underneath leading out from the basement below, with a cellar-style hatch door on the ground at the north side.

Aside from the main porch recess with its front door and windows, there are two other windows on the east, or front, elevation. All of these windows are 4-over-1-lite hung windows with wood upper and lower sashes. There is a similar window on the north side, which is inside a closet on the interior. The west elevation is the largest window-to-wall ratio of them all, comprising six large windows with mullions in between and a 10-over-1 lite pattern of hung windows with upper and lower sashes. These windows light the main classroom. This elevation also has two smaller metal hopper windows in the foundation, for the basement. The south elevation is devoid of any windows on the siding wall, except for two more basement hopper windows in the foundation wall. All of the windows in the clapboard siding are trimmed with a 1x4 wood surround and a slight sill, which has been painted a gray color to provide contrast with the white siding. The aforementioned header trim band is white but is interrupted only by the large 6-mulled windows on the west elevation that have the 1x4 at the top.

The interior of the schoolhouse comprises a very simple, yet symmetrical layout. The central front door from the recessed porch on the east side opens into a small vestibule, giving way to another door that opens into the main classroom. The classroom dominates the building floor plan, situated completely along the rear, west-facing wall of windows and makes up approximately three-quarters of the entire square footage. The room has a large original blackboard on the south wall. There is an exterior door on the north wall in the west corner, leading onto the exterior concrete stoop. Flanking each side of the vestibule is an original wardrobe room, i.e. a coat closet, each of which originally led into a small restroom with a sink and a toilet. The toilet room at the north of the vestibule/porch was removed and is currently used as museum exhibit space but was once used as a holding cell when the building was used as a Sheriff's office. The wardrobe room at the north of the vestibule is currently used museum exhibit space, and the wardrobe room south of the vestibule is currently used as office storage for the Darien Historical Society. The original restroom south of the vestibule/porch remains in use as a restroom. Just off the classroom in the northeast corner is an original teacher's closet, which is still used today as a closet for files storage. In the southeast corner of the classroom is the entrance to a staircase leading to the basement. The basement is used for additional exhibit space, storage, and utilities.

Old Lace school has sufficient integrity for listing in the National Register, having experienced only minor alterations since its original construction in 1925. Such alterations were made to address basic maintenance issues. At some time, the front door was replaced. The front stairs were recently replaced with composite material. The steps leading to the back entrance are not likely original. On the interior, the room configurations and materials have been retained. None of the changes made over time have adversely impacted the property's integrity and the building maintains its original materials, floorplan, and features that identify its historic use as a schoolhouse.

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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

1925

Significant Dates

1925

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation (if applicable)

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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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).

Old Lace School is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Place under Criterion C, for Architecture, as an important example of a one-room schoolhouse, built according to specifications for Standard Schools established by the State of Illinois. The period of significance is 1925, the year it was constructed. The school has sufficient integrity for listing in the National Register.

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

The general context is from Big Woods School National Register nomination form.

The Beginning of Public Education in Illinois

The first legislation to address public education in Illinois occurred with the passing of the bill, "An Act Providing for the Establishment of Free Schools" in 1825. The law required townships of fifteen families or more to provide free schools for at least three months and allowed for property taxes to be collected to pay for public schools. The concept was groundbreaking at the time, but using tax dollars for free education proved to be controversial, and that portion was stricken from the law the following year.¹

Despite this setback, support of public schools continued throughout the Midwest. There was a growing sentiment that free education was necessary in a democratic society:

Quite a number of property owners and business men were incensed that any man's property should be taxed to educate another man's children.... Yet in spite of all these objections, more and more men were won over to the philosophy that democracy for all men necessitated education for all. The changing attitudes were a result to a large extent of organized groups, able leaders, and influential newspapers and periodicals."²

The Illinois legislature responded by passing the Educational Law of 1841, "... which created township trustees to oversee all property in the township including Section 16; allowed associations of inhabitants to acquire land, build schools, and appoint three of their own trustees to run the schools; and appoint County School Commissioners to sell school lands and apply their sale and township funds for the support of schools."³ The Educational Law of 1845 added financial support for public education by letting Illinoisans tax themselves – if two-thirds of the school district's legal voters approved -- and gave the Secretary of State the ability to administer schools.⁴

Nearly thirty years after the Free School Law was gutted, Illinois established a public education system with the passage of the Education Act of 1855. In 1870, under a new state constitution, the Illinois General Assembly became responsible for ensuring children with a proper education. The constitution also established local school boards. In 1883, the Compulsory Schools Attendance Law passed, which

¹ Robert G. Bone, "Education in Illinois Before 1857." Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, Volume L, No. 2, Summer 1957, pp. 124 -- 125

² Ibid, p. 128.

³ National Register of Historic Places: Butler School, Oak Brook, DuPage County, Illinois. Reference number 03000355, p.8.

⁴ Ibid, p. 8.

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required children aged 8 through 14 to attend school for a minimum of 12 weeks per year. Although the law passed, it was not adhered to until after World War II.⁵

One-Room Schoolhouses in Illinois

The most common type of school in the 1800s was the one-room schoolhouse. Having one room allowed the teacher to instruct students in different levels while keeping an eye on the others. Some believed there were also educational benefits to having a single classroom:

One student reported that one-room schools provided “the almost unlimited opportunity for the gifted pupil to advance.” By having the chance to hear older students recite (after their own assignment was completed), it was not uncommon for children in the fifth or sixth grade (and sometimes even younger) to have mastered everything presented to the seventh and eighth grades. At a much more sophisticated level, this is one of the advantages expressed by exponents of the open-plan school of the 1960s.⁶

While Americans tend to sentimentalize one-room schoolhouses of the nineteenth century, the reality was less appealing, for “...back in their heyday, they were often dirty, noisy, and ill-suited to the process of education.”⁷ Illinois children were entitled to a free education, but there were no laws governing the condition of their schools. Francis G. Blair, who served as the State Superintendent of Public Instruction from 1906 into the 1930s, sought to change that.⁸ In 1908, Blair wrote a letter to district school directors, in which he criticized those who allowed the schools to be in such a deplorable state:

Your homes are furnished with modern conveniences, your farms supplied with modern machines and appliances. Are you still asking the teacher to cultivate the ground of your children's minds with a pedagogical diamond plow and harvests their intellectual crops with a reaping hook? Or, is your school supplied with modern apparatus, with the best books and with the suitable seats and desk? Is it properly heated, lighted and ventilated? Are its walls decorated and hung with good pictures? Has it a library? In short, is it a decent, wholesome, comfortable place for your children to live and work in for five days of each week for more than six months of each year? If it is, may the blessings of all the gods of childhood and education rest upon you. But, if the building, fence and out-houses are old, disreputable and unsightly; if they are a menace to the health, the decency and the morals of your children; if the shades are torn or missing, the desks antiquated, broken, carved, and unfit; if the heating is bad and the ventilation, worse; if the whole thing is a cheerless, repulsive, old shell, upon you and you alone must rest the blame. And there is nothing side of high heaven that can deliver you in that day of judgment when you must stand and give account of your stewardship and show why, knowingly or ignorantly, you deprived the children of their legal and just rights⁹ (Pruitt 1908: 1).

⁵ Illinois Education Timeline. http://www.isbe.net/news/2004/Illinois_education_timeline.pdf -Archived at https://web.archive.org/web/20040728050005if_/http://isbe.net:80/news/2004/Illinois_education_timeline.pdf

⁶ Ben E. Graves, *School Ways: The Planning and Design of America's Schools*. (New York: McGraw -- Hill, Inc., 1993), p. 22.

⁷ Ibid, p.22.

⁸ National Register of Historic Places: East Waterford School, Lewistown, Fulton County, Illinois. Reference number 09000897, p. 13.

⁹ Edgar C. Pruitt, ed. *Sangamon School Interests*. Superintendent of County Schools. Springfield, December 6, 1908 (12), p. 1.

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Blair created a series of requirements for what a "Standard School" would need. The standards, which were enacted in the Sanitation Law of 1915, gave Blair, as the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the responsibility to "...prepare with the advice of the State Board of Health, the State Architect and the State Fire Marshall, for school directors and boards of education specifications for the minimum requirements for the heating, ventilation, lighting, seating, water supply, toilets, and safety against fire which will conserve the health and safety of the children attending the public schools."¹⁰

Schools built after the law was passed had to meet the minimum standards. School districts had until the school year commenced in 1917 to bring existing schools into compliance; those who did not would not receive their state disbursements until the schools were brought to code.¹¹ In most cases the school districts were able to meet the requirements of the law by updating the existing school buildings; new schools were constructed to take the place of schools that were outdated or in serious disrepair.¹² The State Superintendent of Public Instruction's Office's circular, *One Room and Consolidated Country Schools of Illinois*, was one of several sources that offered plans and specifications of modern one-room schools. In addition to the school room, which was to measure 32' x 23' 6", the plan called for a vestibule, separate coatrooms for girls' and boys,' a library and study, and a fuel room. Schools with basements were to have poured concrete floors and big open areas for children to play in. The plans were drawn up by an architect with the help of educators familiar with rural schools. Careful attention was paid to every detail -- the floorplan, the desk placement, the color of paint, etc. -- to create an environment most conducive to educating and disciplining children:

The lighting, cloak rooms, fuel room, porch and entry, heating, ventilation, and seating should be strictly followed. Some have made the mistake of changing the lighting, putting windows in front of the seated children. This is highly detrimental to the eyesight of the children and does no good whatsoever. Some have thought to improve the plan by placing doors from the entry to the cloakrooms. This makes proper conduct on the part of the children much more difficult and gives the teacher much more trouble.¹³

To ensure that the conditions of the 1915 law were met, school districts with a population of less than 100,000 whether building new or remodeling existing schools, were required to send plans and specifications for heating, ventilation, to the County Superintendent of Schools for approval.¹⁴

Old Lace School Building Type

The design of the Old Lace School is important for it reflects the requirements for a Standard School outlined in the 1916 circular *One Room and Consolidated Country Schools of Illinois*. In addition to listing the new requirements for schools and offering plans and specifications, the circular included detailed suggestions:

THE YARD (p. 9)

The playground should and should not be less than one-half acre. It should consist principally of an open level space. The trees and shrubbery should be around the border of the lot....There should be a concrete walk from the school house door to

¹⁰ Francis G. Blair, *The One-Room and Consolidated Country Schools of Illinois*, Circular No.100, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Springfield, 1916, p. 4.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 57.

¹² East Waterford School, p. 13.

¹³ Blair, p. 21.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 59.

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the gate and to the well....

PLAN FOR A GOOD ONE-ROOM SCHOOL HOUSE (p. 21)

The vestibule is intended for entrance only....Double-doors should be placed both inside and out and the upper half of both sets should be of glass, that the teacher may see what is going on in the vestibule.

THE COAT ROOMS (p. 22)

Separate coat rooms for boys and girls are essential.... Above the door there should be a transom which should be open at all times and the door should not reach the floor within four inches. This will insure heating and ventilation of the coat rooms. No entrance should be placed between the vestibule and the coat rooms. The only entrance to the coat rooms should be in view of the teacher. This arrangement greatly lessens the difficulty in discipline.

INDOOR TOILETS FOR ONE-ROOM SCHOOLS (p. 77)

There are many objections to toilets separate from the school building, even when the best provisions are made for decency and health. The antiseptic or chemical tank which provides for drainage, makes it possible to remove all these objections.

When a new house is built, room for toilets may be provided connecting with the cloak rooms....The cost will not be materially more than it is for building two outhouses and concrete walks to them.

WHEN FACING THE HOUSE IN A DIFFERENT DIRECTION (p. 23)

It may face south, east or west, but preferably not north.

THE FUEL ROOM (p. 23)

It is a great hardship for women teachers to have to carry coal from a distant part of the yard. When building a new house the cost of this room is much less than a separate coal house and the convenience of it is worth much.

THE SCHOOL ROOM (p. 23)

The school room is 23 by 31 feet and the ceiling is 13 feet high. It will seat comfortably forty-five pupils. The floor plan shows thirty desks and five backs, seating thirty pupils. Two more rows may be placed in the rear and one in front, making forty-five desks. Every door is within plain view of the teacher, as is the play ground [sic] at the rear of the building.

TINTING THE WALLS (p. 23)

The walls of a school room should be tinted so as to afford the children the best light and in such colors as are the most restful to the eyes. To tint all the surfaces, ceiling and walls the same color is always bad, especially if the color is dark. It makes the room look like a cave. Paper should not be placed on new walls. It will not stay on and is insanitary... The proper colors can easily be obtained. Two schemes are recommended, one in green and one in tan. The wainscoting should be a chocolate

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brown, the walls up to the border should be a light green, no darker than a robin's egg. The border and ceiling should be a cream color.

THE LIGHTING (pp. 25 – 27)

When possible the light should come from the north or east....All windows (except north windows) should be provided with heavy white or light yellow tint shades. Light should never be admitted in front of the children. Even one window is very injurious.

REQUIREMENTS FOR LIGHTING (p. 71)

No. 17. – There shall be no windows in the wall which the seated school children face. The walls shall be a soft light tint, gray, tan, or green. The ceiling shall be in a very light tint. No. 18. - In New Buildings – In school buildings hereafter erected the windows shall be at the left of the seated pupils.

Old Lace School met the requirements in the circular for its setting, as shown in a 1939 aerial photograph of the school (Figure 5). There is plenty of space for a playground. The school faces east and appears to have walkways leading up to the entrance on both 75th Street and Cass Avenue. Shrubs and trees are along the east, west, and north boundary of the school lot.

While school does not have double doors in the vestibule, the original door opening onto the classroom is intact and has glazing in the upper that that would give the teacher to have a clear view of the entry hall. The doors leading from the classroom into the wardrobes (boys' and girls' coatrooms) also had glazing on the upper half.

While indoor plumbing was recommended, the 1916 circular does not contain a floorplan with toilets. One does appear in the circular from 1932, *The Rural One-teacher Schools of Illinois: Buildings And Equipment, Standardization, Daily Program, Demonstration School*, and the layout is nearly identical to that of Old Lace School (Figure 1). The boys' and girls' bathrooms are accessed from the boys' and girls' coatrooms and are on opposite sides of the classroom. The desks were arranged according to the plan and the seating arrangement shows that the children were facing the north wall, which lacks windows. The larger windows on the west wall are to the left of the students.

Although the basement of the Old Lace School has been remodeled with paneled walls, drop ceilings, the layout is similar to that in the circular, with the utility and mechanical rooms on one side leaving a large open space for play (Figure 2).

Decline of the One-room Schoolhouse

One-room schoolhouses continued to be common in Illinois through much of the first half of the twentieth century. By 1942, Illinois had 12,000 school districts – the largest number in the country. But the number of students was declining. The average classroom in Illinois' one-room schools was twelve students – one-third the size it was in 1900.¹⁵ Educators tended to favor consolidated schools over the traditional one-room school. In 1915, Professor Newell D. Gilbert of Northern Illinois State Normal School, advocated the benefits of school

¹⁵ Illinois Education Timeline.

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consolidation in his dedication speech for the Kishwaukee consolidated school in DeKalb:

Personally, I regard the consolidated school as second to no other advance step in the evolution of American education; also I regard it as nearer of effective realization than any other movement of equal importance. I do not believe you farmers are holding a place of political and social influence, nearly commensurate with your numbers, your wealth, your intelligence, or your force of character. So far as this may be true, it comes, I believe, from living rather isolated, being educated in isolated one-room schools, so that the farmer has thought too much in individual, rather than social terms.¹⁶

While educators touted the benefits of consolidation, there was no public funding available to pay for children's transportation to school. Poor roads in many areas were also a concern.¹⁷ Finally, beginning in the mid-to-late 1940s, Illinois enacted laws to reduce the number of school districts which sped up school consolidation:

Consolidation had been a topic of discussion for several decades, but it wasn't until 1945 and 1947 that legislation was passed allowing the consolidation of these schools into larger districts. The next fifteen years were marked by rapid consolidation, particularly during the 1950s. By 1963, the number of school districts had been reduced to 1,430.¹⁸

The one-room schools once prevalent in DuPage County began to disappear. In 1870 there were eighty-five such schools in use.¹⁹ In 1923, there were 47 one-room schoolhouses in DuPage County; by 1929 the number was reduced to 39. During the 1930s there was little change presumably due to the Depression, but by 1941 there were no one-room schools in York Township or District 78 (Naperville). In 1947, the number was 24, with Addison Township reporting no more one-room schools. In 1948, the total was 21 and by 1952 only 12 left. By 1956 only three schools -- Waubonsie, McAuley, and Big Woods -- remained open.²⁰

There are three other rural, one-room schoolhouses in DuPage County listed in the National Register of Historic Places: Churchville School (ca. 1846) in Addison Township (near Bensenville) and McAuley School (1913), in Winfield Township (near West Chicago), and Big Woods School (1918) in Winfield Township. Churchville School is a good example of the schoolhouses commonly found in the Midwest during the mid to late 1800s. The wood-frame gable-front school has characteristics of the Greek Revival style. Later alterations -- such as the windows -- show that the school was modified to comply with the Standard School design regulations.

McAuley School is a wood-frame gable-front building that resembles a bungalow -- a property type common during the time of its construction. While the school was built before the 1915 Sanitation Law, the school closely resembles "A Less Expensive School House," a model provided in the 1906, 1909, and 1916 circulars published by the Illinois Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. As

¹⁶ Blair, p.53.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 55.

¹⁸ East Waterford School, p. 14.

¹⁹ The DuPage County Historical Society Portfolio, 1958 Number 3, p. 1.

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such, the school district did not need to modify the building to meet the requirements of the new law.²⁰ McAuley School, the last functioning one- room schoolhouse in the state, closed in 1992.

Big Woods School is a red brick, one-room schoolhouse with a red tile roof in was built in 1917-1918 in the Craftsman style in what is now the City of Aurora, Illinois. The school was a high-quality version of the “modern” one-room schoolhouse and was probably among the earliest schools in the county to be built as a Standard School.

Old Lace School retains those characteristics that identify it as a one-room schoolhouse built to meet the specifications for rural schools as required by the State of Illinois. The school is important for its design reflects the priorities established by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to ensure the health and safety of schoolchildren. It compares favorably to Big Woods School and McAuley School, which were also constructed to meet those requirements.

History of Old Lace School

In 1925 when the Old Lace School was built, the one- room schoolhouse was still the most common educational institution in rural Illinois. Of the 10,123 one-room schools only 1151 of those were state standard schools.²¹ There were few consolidated schools in Illinois as there were no laws requiring Illinoisans to pay to transport children to public schools.²²

The original Lace School was a small, gabled roof structure that was built during the late 19th Century. (Figure 7). It was located on the northwest corner of 75th Street and Cass Avenue in the Lace community and was the first school in District 61. The district received a land grant from the State of Illinois to acquire the land for the construction of the school.

One of the former teachers, Frances Morgan Eichhorst, provided her recollections of her time at the school, where she taught from 1914 to 1916, before she was married. She graduated from high school, took a test to become a certified teacher, and was hired – never having attended college. Because she did not live in Lace, she would hire a rig at the livery for \$1 to take her to school on Monday and stay with a family in Lace during the week, paying them \$14 a month for room and board. Her salary was \$35 a month.

According to Mrs. Eichhorst, the interior of the school was a very “humble” building. All it had in it was a teacher’s desk, desks at which 2 students sat, a cupboard, a blackboard and a stove in the corner. She taught reading, arithmetic, geography, history, penmanship, and spelling. In addition to her teaching responsibilities, she also had janitorial responsibilities which included washing the floor. On cold days, the first thing she did each day was build a fire. She had difficulty getting it started because paper wasn’t readily available. She had to haul coal into the building from an outside storage area. Before she left each day, she had to sweep the floor. The most children she can recall having at one time was twelve. Students came to school at 9 o’clock and stayed until 4 o’clock. Books were a “very meager substance.”

²⁰ McAuley School District #27. National Register of Historic Places, West Chicago, DuPage County, Illinois. Reference Number 82004890.

²¹ Illinois. Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Annual Statistical Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. [Springfield],p. 9

²² Illinois. Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Annual Statistical Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. [Springfield],p. 9

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When the school burned in 1924 of unknown causes, the current one-room schoolhouse was built the following year on the same site, complete with a cellar and an outhouse. Indoor plumbing was still a luxury, and the area did not have the infrastructure to support it. This school filled all the classroom needs of the Lace Community until after World War II, when the availability of automobiles and improved roads made moving out of the city to the suburbs desirable.

Grace Book Stover who taught at Lace School from 1933 to 1940 recalled that she had to bank the coal furnace every night for the morning's heat. Students had to share in the work by dusting, cleaning blackboards and erasers, and toting in water from the well. Stover's salary was \$100 a month. During heavy snows, students were brought to school by horse-drawn sleighs.

The population growth of the area impacted the school district. The enrollment in Lace School was 56 students in 1949-50. A referendum led to the hiring of a second teacher instead of building an addition onto Lace School. The school day was divided into two shifts of four hours each. Each teacher taught four grade levels. However, it soon became apparent that another school was needed to meet the needs of a growing population.

Marion Hills School was built in 1951. In 1957, a new Lace School was built just northwest of one-room Lace School. The new Lace School and Marion Hills School together became known as Lace-Marion Hills School. This marked the first time in the district's history that each grade had its own classroom and teacher. Over time, the one-room became known as "Old Lace." For a while the building was used as a place for District 61 band to practice.

The city of Darien incorporated in 1969. After incorporation, the Darien Lions Club used the building to store its athletic equipment. Then, since School District 61 was no longer using "Old Lace" as a classroom, the new city adopted it as Darien's first city hall. The police department shared a portion of the building. A protective screen was put on the window of a small room that was used as a temporary jail until those arrested could be picked up by the DuPage County sheriff. In 1972, when the city hall and the police station relocated, "Old Lace" was left empty.

The Darien Historical Society

In 1974 the Darien Historical Society was established with the goal to acquire and restore Old Lace School. In 1974 The Darien Citizens Advisory Committee voted unanimously to recommend to the Darien School District 61 Board that Old Lace School be transformed into a historical museum and landmark. On July 4, 1976, the deed to Old Lace School was presented to the president of the Historical Society by the President of the Darien District 61 Board of Education. The mayor unveiled a bronze plaque attached to the building from the citizens of Darien commemorating the dedication.

Once the historical society took over Old Lace School, their attention turned to restoration of the building. Funds for the restoration were raised through the generous support of several civic organizations. The Darien Bicentennial Commission took on the restoration as a New Horizons '76 project. A \$1,000 matching grant was received from the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration for the restoration work.

In 1977, the Historical Society organized Operation Bookworm, a book sale to raise funds to further the interior restoration of Old Lace School. Used books, both hard cover and paperback, along with hobby magazines were collected and sold at a Book Fair. Collection bins were available at the Darien Bank and in District 61 schools. A second Operation Bookworm book sale was held in 1978. The Historical Society also held a Handcrafted Potpourri Raffle to raise funds for the restoration.

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In 1978, Darien's Supervisor of Public Works and Project Director LaMar Rodgers organized several "stripping parties" to peel off years of paint from the interior walls, strip down the woodwork around window and doors and patch plaster to get the walls ready to be repainted. Many volunteers took part in these "stripping parties." The Hinsdale South High School Key Club volunteered their participation in these also.

The interior restoration included replastering, repainting, refinishing the wooden floor and scraping the blackboards to reveal the original slate. The indoor plumbing was updated, and all the wood doors were replaced. The Rotary club helped by patching-up the roof and rebuilding the chimney. The Darien Woman's Club pledged to donate \$200 a year for the next 10 years. The club also helped with the exterior landscaping and the construction of a flagstone sidewalk around the building.

On Saturday, July 5, 1980, a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony was held officially opening Old Lace Schoolhouse and Museum. Former teacher Grace Book Stover attended the ceremony.

Conclusion

Old Lace School is a good candidate for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Throughout the years it has adapted to a handful of uses from a Schoolhouse to City Hall with police holding cell and its current use as a civic structure. Great effort has been made to allow the building to retain its original character, size, and materiality, and it remains a highly functional structure.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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Blair, Francis G. The One-Room and Consolidated County Schools of Illinois. Circular No. 97, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Springfield, 1916.

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National Register of Historic Places: Big Woods School, Aurora, DuPage County, Illinois. Reference number 16000197

National Register of Historic Places: Butler School, Oak Brook, DuPage County, Illinois. Reference number 03000355.

National Register of Historic Places: East Waterford School, Lewistown, Fulton County, Illinois. Reference number 09000897.

Pruitt, Edgar C., ed. *Sangamon School Interests*. Superintendent of County Schools. Springfield, December 6, 1908 (12).

W.W. Hixson & Co., Rockford, Illinois. (Circa late 1920s or 1930s). DuPage County plat map, circa late 1920s or 1930s [Complete DuPage County plat map including townships and sections, circa late 1920s or 1930s.]. Retrieved 2025-08-29, from <http://www.idaillinois.org/digital/collection/p16614coll53/id/7396>

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 Less than one

(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	<u>41.752203°</u> Latitude	<u>-87.974233°</u> Longitude	3	_____ Latitude	_____ Longitude
2	_____ Latitude	_____ Longitude	4	_____ Latitude	_____ Longitude

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

Old Lace Schoolhouse sits on the property of Darien School District 61 on the corner of Cass and 75th streets. The boundary is 75th street on the south, the entrance off of 75th Street on the west, the entrance off of Cass Street on the north, and Cass Street on the east.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary includes the schoolhouse and the area immediately surrounding it.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	<u>Dean Rodkin</u>	date	<u>10/31/2025</u>
organization	<u>Darien Historical Society</u>	telephone	_____
street & number	<u>7422 Cass Avenue</u>	email	<u>dean.rodkin@comcast.net</u>
city or town	<u>Darien</u>	state	<u>IL</u> zip code <u>60561</u>

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).

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GIS Location Map



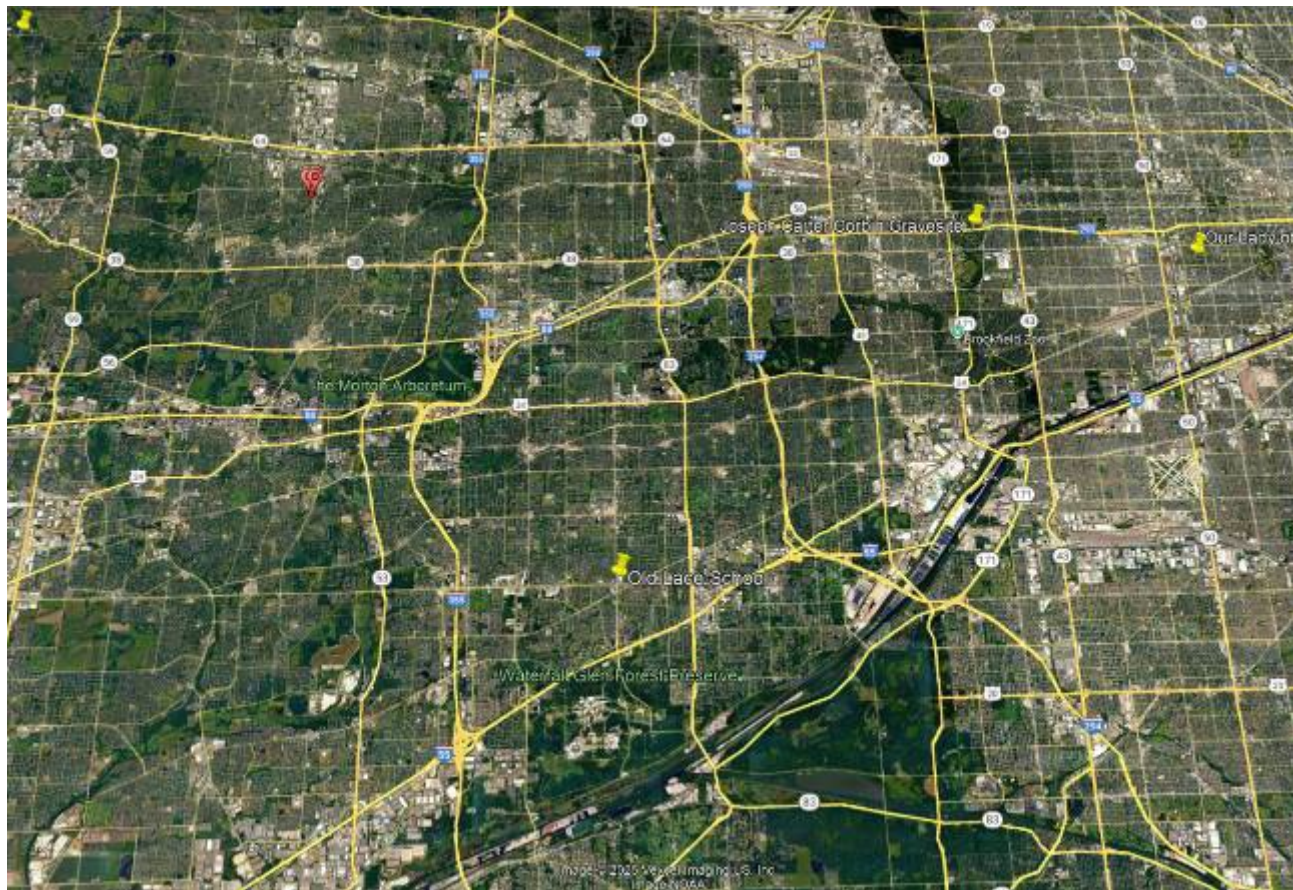
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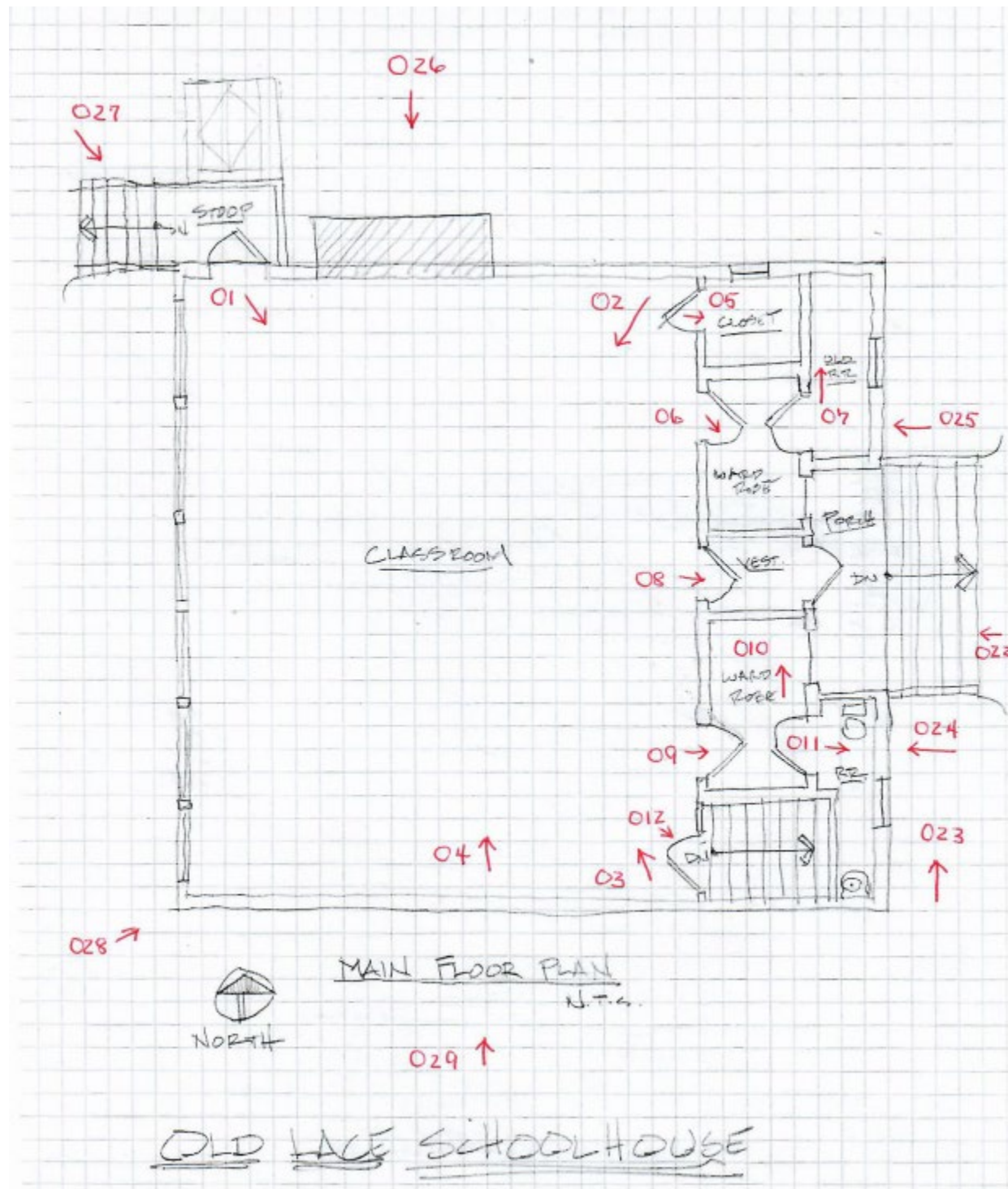
Local Location Map



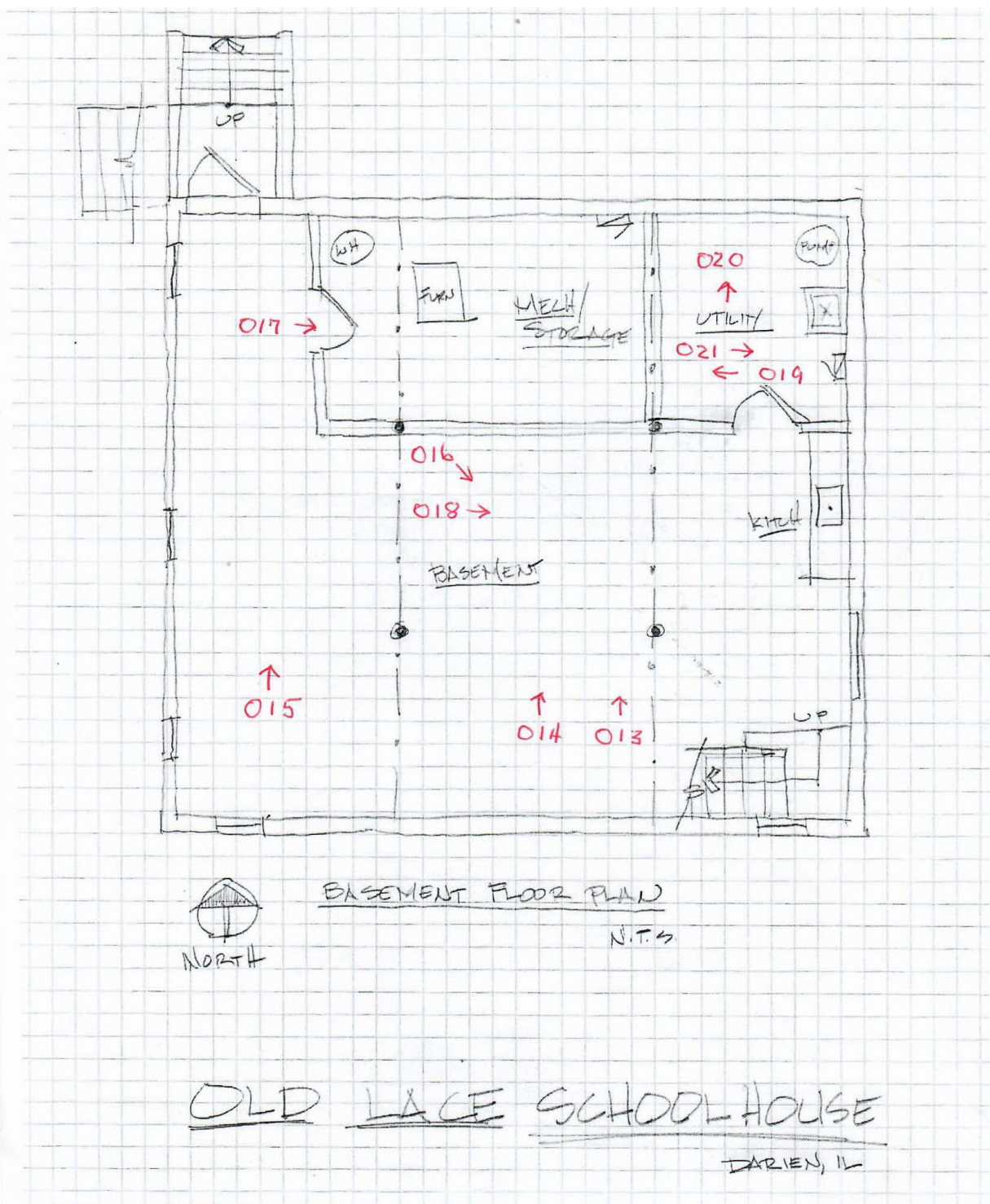
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Floor Plans – First Floor



DuPage County, Illinois
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01



02



03



04



05



06



07



08



09



010



011



012



013



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019



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021



022



024



023



025



026



027



028



029

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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.

Photo Log

Name of Property:	<u>Old Lace School</u>		
City or Vicinity:	<u>Darien</u>		
County:	<u>DuPage</u>	State:	<u>IL</u>
Photographer:	<u></u>		
Date Photographed:	<u></u>		

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

Photo 1 of XX:

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.

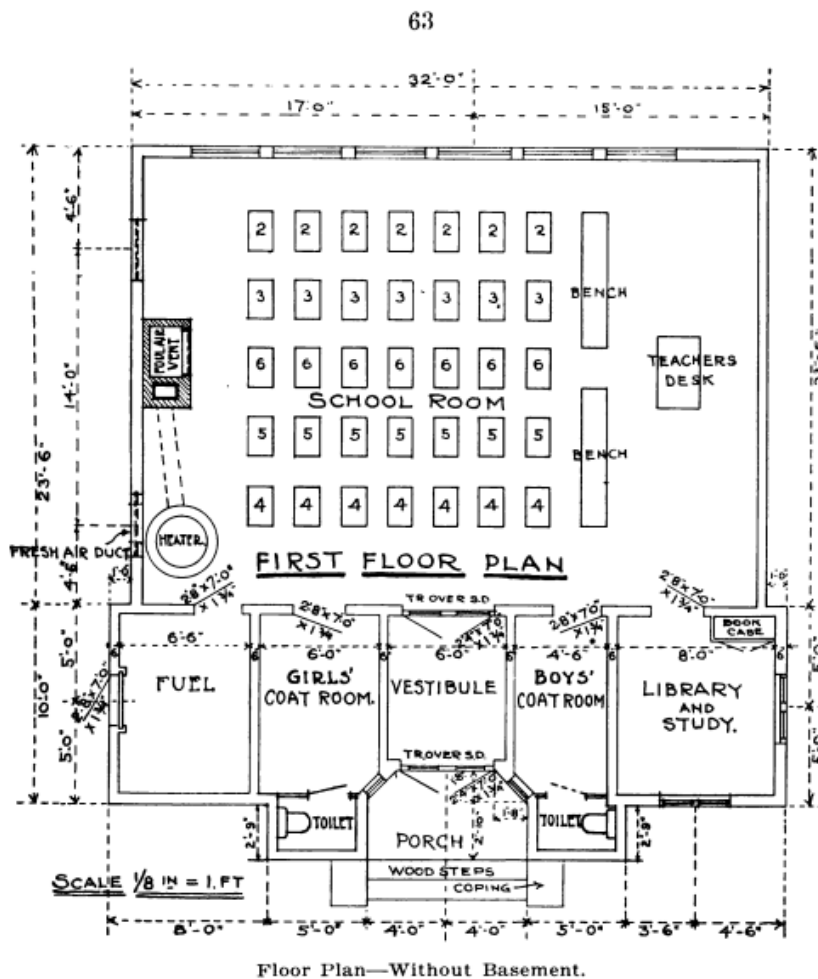
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List of Figures

(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 documents should be inserted with the top toward the top of the page.)

Figure 1: Plan for a Good One-Room Schoolhouse – the Classroom

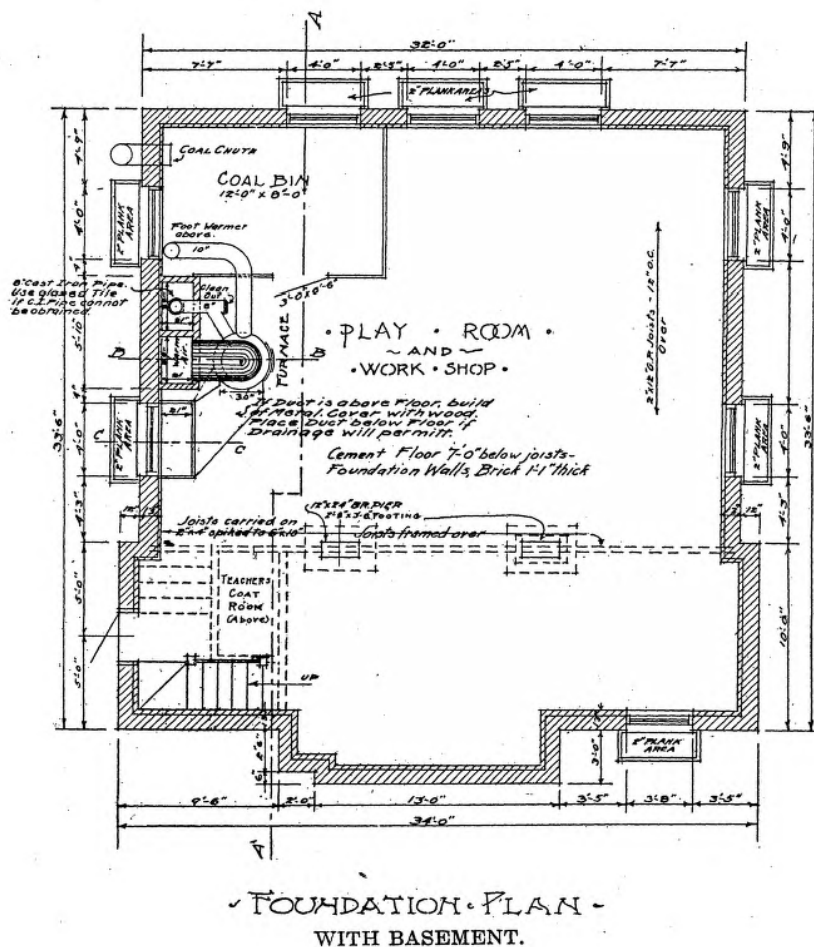


Illinois. Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, J. E. W. Miller, Charles Holiday Watts, and T. Arthur Simpson. The Rural One-teacher Schools of Illinois: Buildings And Equipment, Standardization, Daily Program, Demonstration Schools ... [Springfield]: [Schnepp & Barnes, printers], 1932.

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Figure 2: Plan for a Good One-Room Schoolhouse – the Basement

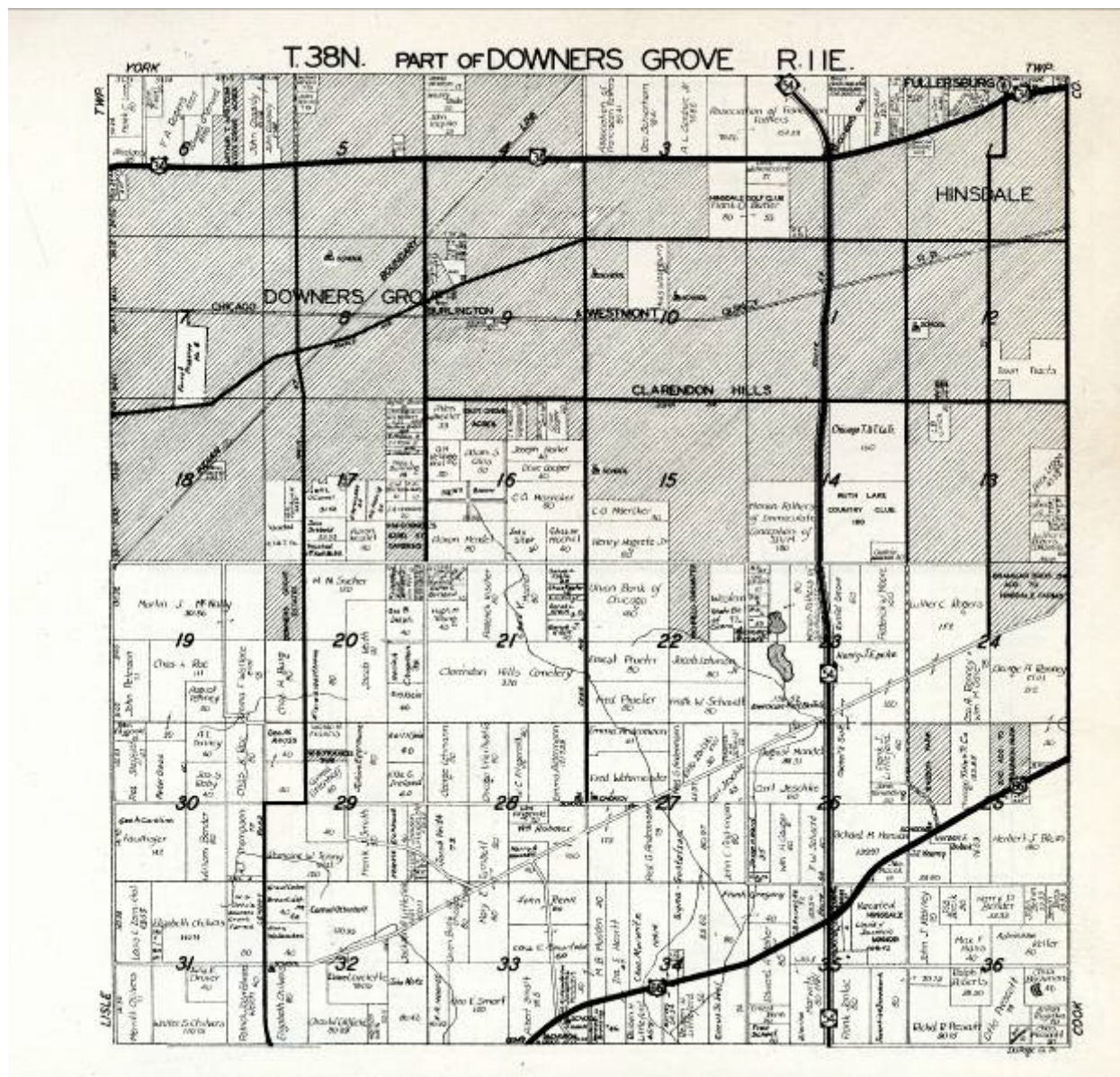


Blair, Francis G. The One-Room and Consolidated Country Schools of Illinois. Circular No. 100, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Springfield, 1916, p. 28.

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Figure 3: Plat map of Downers Grove North, showing schoolhouses in sections 8, 10, 12, 15, 28, 32, and 33. Old Lace School is in Section 28.

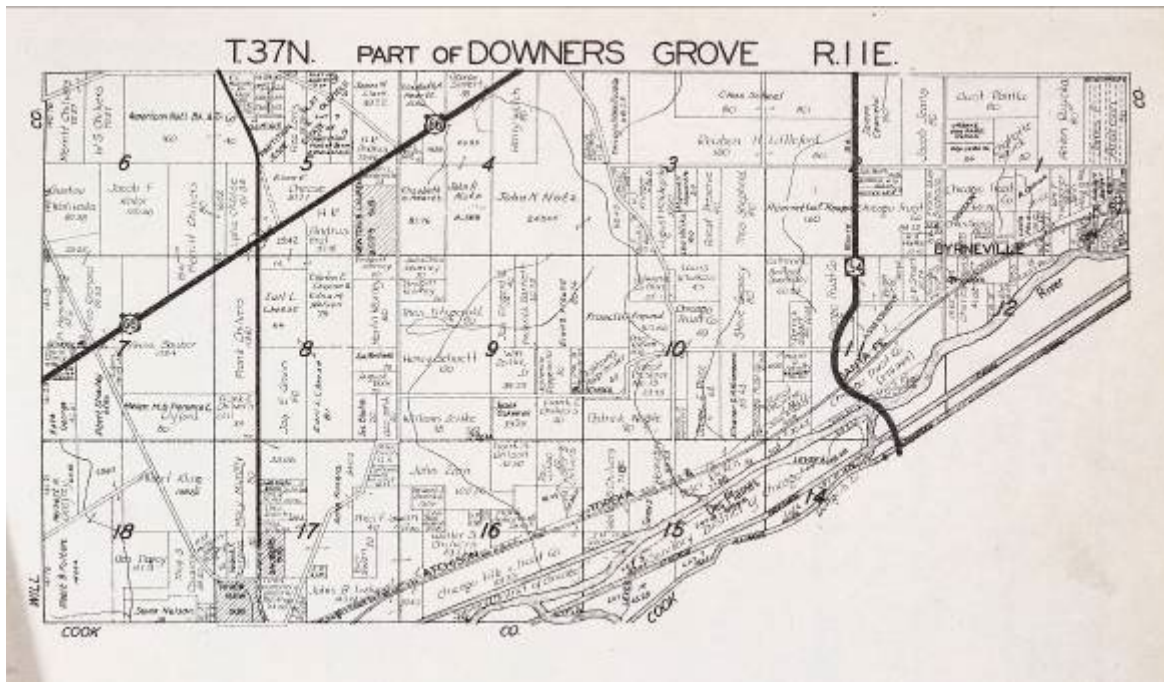


W.W. Hixson & Co., Rockford, Illinois. (Circa late 1920s or 1930s). DuPage County plat map, circa late 1920s or 1930s.

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Figure 4: Plat map of Downers Grove South, showing schoolhouses in sections 7, 9, and 12.



W.W. Hixson & Co., Rockford, Illinois. (Circa late 1920s or 1930s). DuPage County plat map, circa late 1920s or 1930s.

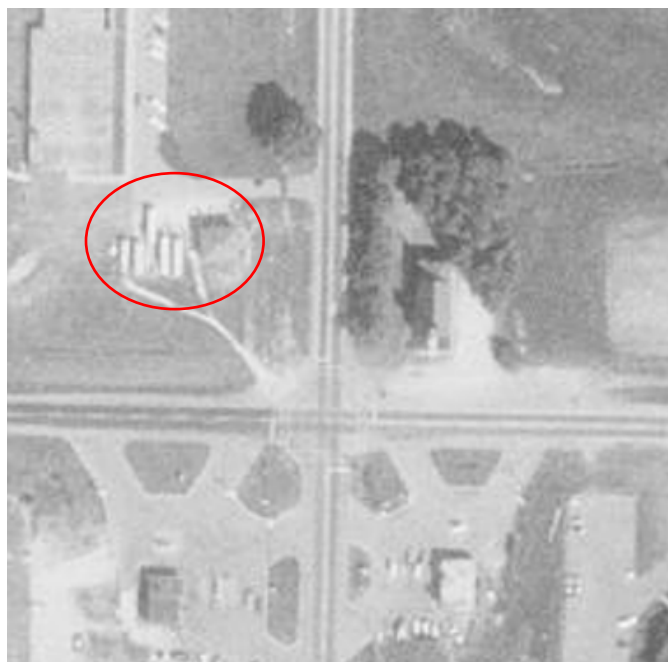
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Figure 5: 1939 Aerial of Old Lace School, circled in red.



Figure 6: 1967 Aerial of Old Lace School, circled in red.



Illinois Historical Aerial Photography Archive. Illinois Geospatial Clearinghouse Data. Illinois State Geological Survey, Prairie Research Institute, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

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Figure 6: The first Lace School.



Figure 7: Teacher Grace Smart with Her Students.



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Figure 8: Interior, first Lace School.



Figure 9: Old Lace School, built 1925.



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Figure 10: Old Lace School



Figure 11: Old Lace School



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Figure 12: First through Eighth Grade Students 1934.



Figure 13: Old Lace School Students 1938



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Figures 14 and 15: Old Lace School Students, 1940



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Figure 16: Lace School as Darien City Hall 1960.



Figure 17: Old Lace Schoolhouse and Museum – Opening Day, July 5, 1980.

