WASHINGTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL 3 Sage Drive Monticello Piatt County Illinois

HABS No. IL-1245

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY National Park Service U.S. Department of Interior 1849 C Street, NW Washington, DC 20240

ILLINOIS HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

WASHINGTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

HABS No. IL-1245

Location:		3 Sage Drive, Monticello, Piatt County, Illinois 61856 The building is located at latitude: 40.018432, longitude: - 88.573515. This point was obtained on March 27, 2021 using Google Earth (WGS84). There is no restriction on its release to the public.
Present Owner:		Monticello Community Unit School District #25 2 Sage Drive, Monticello, Piatt County, Illinois 61856
Present Use:		Elementary School
Significance:		Washington School is an example of a late nineteenth century Renaissance Revival educational building.
Historians:		Marcy Prchal and Christopher Flynn, Public Service Archaeology & Architecture Program, April 2021.
	1.	Research Strategy: Research undertaken to document Washington School included archival, field, and report preparation. Archival research was undertaken prior to field investigations and included examination of local histories and records as well as known architectural documents to develop an architectural and historical context for the building and grounds. The field investigations included photographing and documenting interior and exterior structural elements of the building in its present conditions, as well as preparing detailed floor plans and footprints of the building.
	2.	Actual Research Process: Actual research included archival, field, and report preparation. In addition, information regarding the history of Washington School was provided by personal communications, the Monticello Public Library, the McLean County Museum of History, and the archives at the Piatt County Republican; this information included newspaper articles, historical documentation, and other secondary sources
Project Information:		The demolition of Washington School was reviewed by the Illinois State Historic Preservation Office under the Illinois State Agency Historic Preservation Act (20 ILCS 3420). The production of this report serves as mitigation for the adverse effect of demolition of

the structure located at property at 3 Sage Drive, Monticello, Piatt County, Illinois 61856.

Marcy Prchal conducted historical research and compiled this report, Christopher Flynn conducted field work and historical research, Susan Brannock-Gaul drafted the graphics, and Dr. Kevin McGowan served as Principal Investigator for the Public Service Archaeology & Architecture Program, Department of Anthropology, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

Ben Halpern, independent professional photographer, took the black and white photography.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

- 1. Date(s) of Construction: 1893-1894.
- 2. Architects: Reeves and Baillee, Peoria, Illinois.
- Original and Subsequent Owners: Mrs. Bryden "Blocks 11, 13, and 14 of M. J. Platt's South Addition to Monticello" (Land only) sold to School District in 1894 (M. J. Bryden's School Addition to Monticello).

4. Contractors:

Winn & Johnson, Galesburg – general contractors Lodge & Company, Monticello – brick supplier Coe & McMillen, Monticello – heating and ventilating Harris & Ridgley, Monticello – tin and galvanized iron N.H. Hart & Company, Monticello – lumber C.W. Keeler, Monticello – painting Carson & Company, Danville – plumbing W.A. Olstead, Chicago - blackboards

- **5.** Original plans and construction: Three-level brick building with tower, constructed 1894. Originally Monticello Township High School. Renamed Washington in 1923.
- 6. Alterations and additions: In 1958, new classrooms were added. During the winter of 1961-1962 the pitched bell tower above the front elevation, which would have required expensive repairs, was removed; the original wood windows throughout the building were replaced with aluminum hopper and block glass

windows; a multi-purpose stage was removed from the 2nd floor southwest auditorium room; the existing handbell fire alarm system was replaced by a central fire alarm system; and an exterior escape slide from the third story in the rear of the building was replaced with a metal exterior staircase. More changes were made in 1966, including enclosing the north and south stair towers, adding two rooms in the two-story entries, replacing original wood doors with automatic smoke doors, and replacing flammable wood and fiber board with water proof and fire-resistant materials.

B. Historical Context

1. Piatt County, Monticello Township, and the City of Monticello:

Piatt County is located in east-central Illinois, bordered on the north by McLean and DeWitt counties, on the east by Champaign and Douglas counties, on the south by Moultrie County, and on the west by Macon and DeWitt counties. Piatt County lies in the heart of central Illinois' Grand Prairie region. The surface of the county is somewhat rolling in the northern portions, more level in the south, with perhaps a higher proportion of timbered land than found in many neighboring counties, due in part to the extensive Sangamon River system that drains the central portion of the county from northeast to southwest. Tributaries to the Sangamon include Madden and Goose creeks from the north and west, and Camp Creek from the northeast. Several smaller streams drain south into the Okaw River in Moultrie County, and to the southeast into the Kaskaskia River in Douglas County.¹ Along these waters and timbered bottoms and bluffs lived the Kickapoo and Potawatomi, in camps and villages known well to the first generation of Euro-American settlers in the region.²

The earliest Euro-American settlers in Piatt County had southern origins but many of them step-migrated their way to Illinois. George Hayworth, who is credited with building the first dwelling in the county, was a Quaker from Tennessee who arrived in Illinois in 1822. James Martin, who built the second dwelling in Piatt County in 1822, was a native of Kentucky who lived in Ohio and Indiana before migrating into Illinois. The Henline family left Kentucky for Ohio before settling in Illinois in 1824. The York family moved from North Carolina to Kentucky and then to Illinois. Surnames of some of the other early settlers include Carver, Cordell, Daggott, Fry, Furnace, Holliday, and Varner. James A. Piatt, whom the county was named after, his wife Jemima, and their six children migrated from

¹ DeLorme, *Atlas and Gazetteer of Illinois* (Yarmouth, 2010), 53, 63.; Piatt, Emma C., *History of Piatt County* (Chicago: Shepard & Johnston, Printers, 1883), 93-95, <u>https://archive.org</u>.

² Piatt County Historical and Genealogical Society, *County History*, accessed 8 March 2019, <u>https://www.piatthistory.org</u>.

Ohio to Indiana and then to Piatt County, Illinois in 1829. All but a handful of settlements made in Piatt County before 1830 were located south or east of the Sangamon River. In the minds of those who endured it, the winter of 1830-31, known as the "deep snow", marked the end of the pioneer settlement period. During the 1830s and 1840s settlements increased rapidly in the region. Among those who settled in Piatt County between 1830 and 1840 were Abraham Marquiss, William Barnes, John and Richard Madden, Samuel Olney, Joseph Mallory, and many others. Most of the early settlers in the county were nativeborn Americans, but by the 1850s and 1860s an increased number of immigrants from England, Ireland and Germany made their way to Piatt County.³

When Macon County was organized in 1829, it included what is now Piatt County. By 1837 residents of the future county, citing the distance and inconvenience of traveling to Decatur, Illinois to conduct their affairs, began to agitate for the formation of a separate county. The new county was to be formed from portions of Macon, DeWitt, and Champaign counties, and petitions were circulated to that effect in those regions. James and John Piatt were dispatched to Macon County in what is now the southern part of Piatt County and met with great success. The petition circulated in western Champaign County was met with little enthusiasm and that part of the plan was soon abandoned. On 27 January 1841 the Illinois State Legislature passed a bill to create the new county, to be called Piatt, for pioneer settler James Piatt's efforts in the process. Monticello, which had been laid out and named in 1837, was chosen as the county seat. For voting purposes, the county was divided into three voting precincts: Monticello, Sangamon and Okaw. The first county elections were held in Monticello in April 1841 and John Hughes, W. Bailey and E. Peck were elected County Commissioners. Joseph King was elected Circuit Clerk, James Raber was elected Judge and John Piatt was elected Sheriff. In 1843 George Patterson was appointed County Assessor and Edward Ater was appointed County Collector. The first county courthouse, a one-story frame building, was constructed in 1843 on the present courthouse site by Judge Ricket.⁴ The 1850s was a period of growth and more widespread settlement in Piatt County. Improved regional transportation brought many new settlers, and the population of Piatt County increased four-fold between 1850 and 1860. During the 1850s future President Abraham Lincoln practiced law in the Eighth Judicial Circuit Court of Illinois, of which Piatt County was a part. In July of 1858 actions taken by Lincoln in Piatt County played a significant role in the planning of what became known as the Lincoln-Douglas debates.⁵ In January 1860, the county voted to adopt township

³ Piatt, Emma C., *History of Piatt County*; McIntosh, Charles, *Past and Present of Piatt County, Illinois* (Chicago: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1903), 10-12, accessed 8 March 2019, <u>https://archive.org</u>.

⁴ McIntosh, Charles, Past and Present of Piatt County, Illinois, 14-15.

⁵ Piatt, Emma C., *History of Piatt County*, 145.

organization, and the following eight civil townships were created: Blue Ridge, Goose Creek, Sangamon, Monticello, Liberty, Bement, Cerro Gordo, and Douglas. At the first session of the board of supervisors the name of Liberty Township was changed to Willow Creek and the name of Douglas Township was changed to Unity.⁶

Rail transportation first reached Piatt County in 1856, when the main line of the Wabash was completed east and west through Cerro Gordo and Bement townships. The present towns of Cerro Gordo and Bement were founded on the rail line as stations where goods and materials were shipped in and local agricultural products could be shipped out to distant markets. The consolidated Big Four Railroad was completed in 1867 through Blue Ridge Township in the north, and in 1870 the Monticello Railroad was completed between Champaign and Monticello. This line was expanded west and eventually became part of the Illinois Central Railroad. In 1873, the Chicago division of the Wabash, also known as the Chicago & Paducah, was completed north and south, and the Indiana, Decatur & Western Railroad was completed east and west through the county. Another large infra-structure improvement was made in the 1880s to help remedy regular flooding in the southeastern portion of the county. A branch of the Okaw, or Kaskaskia, River known as the Lake Fork meandered sluggishly through nearly level farmland and in the rainy season would overflow its banks and inundate great swaths of land. In 1882 the Special Drainage District of the Counties of Piatt, Champaign and Douglas was formed, and a plan was devised to dredge and ditch the Lake Fork and create lateral drainage ditches south into Moultrie County. The major project was completed in 1887 greatly increasing the productivity and value of farmland in the southern townships of Piatt County.⁷

Allerton Park, located along the Sangamon River in Willow Branch Township, holds a special place in Piatt County history. In the late 1800s, Samuel Allerton, a wealthy agriculturalist, stock raiser and investor, purchased thousands of acres of land in central Illinois to develop stock farms. In 1897 Samuel's son, Robert, took over management of his father's 12,000 acres near Monticello and began to develop it into an estate commonly known in the day as "The Farms". Robert built the Allerton mansion in 1900 and surrounded it with formal gardens, which became his private retreat. The Farms was developed into a state-of-the-art model of production farming that attracted agricultural experts from around the world to study its techniques. In 1946 Robert Allerton officially gifted the mansion and grounds, plus an additional 3,600 acres of farmland, to the University of Illinois "to be used by the University as an education and research center, as a forest and wild-life and plant-life reserve, as an example of landscape gardening, and as a

⁶ McIntosh, Charles, Past and Present of Piatt County, Illinois, 16-18.

⁷ Ibid, 21-22.

public park".⁸ The Allerton mansion and the bulk of the estate are open to the public as a park and retreat center. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2007 (NRHP #07000701) and recently was named one of the Seven Wonders of Illinois.⁹

Monticello Township lies in east-central Piatt County bordered on the south by Bement Township, on the west by Willow Branch Township, on the north by Goose Creek and Sangamon townships, and on the east by Champaign County. The civil township constitutes congressional Township 18 North in Range 6 East and the west two tiers of Range 5 East.¹⁰ A swath of land in the township is gently rolling where a ridge crosses diagonally from the south to the northeast. The entire western, northern and northeastern portions drain into the Sangamon River, which crosses the northwest corner of the township, and which is bordered by a generous belt of timber. The balance of the township is covered by fine tillable prairie soils which, in the southeastern sections, were in early settlement days seasonally flooded by the meandering Lake Fork of the Okaw River. The first settlers of Monticello Township were many of the first settlers of Piatt County. In 1822 George Hayworth arrived from Tennessee with a colony of Quakers and settled near the Sangamon River in present-day Monticello Township. James Martin and his nephew John arrived from Kentucky later that year and settled just southwest of Hayward. Along with Martin came Mrs. Furnace, her son Samuel, and daughter Nancy. The Hayworths, Daggotts, Martins and other early settlers in the county all located in the northwestern part of the township close to the Sangamon River and on or near land now occupied by present-day Monticello. Monticello Township was organized when Piatt County adopted a township form of government in 1860. By the 1870s two rail lines passed through a portion of Monticello Township. The Champaign & Decatur railroad entered the township from the north, turned west within the city limits of Monticello, and exited to the west. The Chicago & Paducah line passed north and south through the township, intersecting with the Champaign & Decatur at the rail depot in Monticello. A combined gristmill and sawmill operated on the Sangamon for many years, but outside of Monticello the township was wholly given over to agricultural production.¹¹

The present City of Monticello occupies land near the center of Piatt County where the earliest settlements of the township and the county were made in the 1820s. For many years the closest center of trade and commerce was about thirty miles downriver at Decatur, in Macon County. In 1837, Abraham Marquiss,

⁸ "History of Allerton Park", University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, accessed 19 April 2019, <u>https://allerton.illinois.edu</u>.

⁹ Piatt County Historical and Genealogical Society, *County History*.

¹⁰ DeLorme, Atlas and Gazetteer of Illinois (Yarmouth 2010), 53, 63.

¹¹ Piatt, Emma C., History of Piatt County, 237-238.

William Barnes, Major McReynolds and James A. Piatt formed a joint stock company and laid out a portion of the present city of Monticello, on land owned by James A. Piatt. It was platted by Piatt, surveyed by a Mr. McClelland, and named by Major McReynolds after the home of Thomas Jefferson. The town plat of Monticello was recorded on 1 July 1837, making it the oldest town in Piatt County. A small storehouse and related structures marked the new town site until 1839, when dwellings were constructed by Nicholas Devore and James Outten, a small blacksmith shop was erected, and a log structure operated as a hotel was built by Jonathan Tenbrooke. In 1841 Daniel Stickel opened the first regular store on the south side of the present courthouse square. The first physician in the community was Dr. King, and J. C. Johnson opened and operated the first drug store and post office.¹²

Monticello was incorporated as a City in 1872. Elections were held in December 1872 and Daniel Stickel was elected mayor. William T. Foster, B. B. Jones, E. G. Knight, J. A. Hill, John Keenan and James M. Holmes were elected aldermen, William D. Schultz was elected clerk, and J. T. Van Gundy was elected treasurer. The Monticello Light and Power Company was organized in 1891 and a brick power house began operating in 1892. In 1893 Monticello was divided into three wards for the administration of public affairs. Shortly thereafter, the city water works system was installed and a municipal fire company was organized. The Monticello Town Hall, designed by Urbana architect Rudolph Z. Gill, was constructed in 1896. That same year Gill was contracted to design the Allerton Library building, which also housed the Monticello Opera House. The library opened in 1897 and was named for Agnes C. (Mrs. Samuel) Allerton, who provided the impetus for the project, and donated furnishings and 2,500 books for the collections.¹³ Agricultural interests and industry played a vital role in Monticello's economy. In July 1903, following a meeting of area farmers in the Monticello Town Hall, the Farmers' Grain Company was formed to construct a modern grain elevator to replace earlier elevators that had burned down. Harrington Brothers, manufacturers of buggies and wagons, served the community from 1900 into the 1920s. The Pepsin Syrup Company was organized in Monticello in 1893 for the manufacture and sale of Dr. Caldwell's Syrup Pepsin. Dr. W. B. Caldwell came to practice medicine in Cisco, Illinois in 1875. Ten years later he moved his practice to Monticello, Illinois. While in Monticello he developed Caldwell's Syrup of Pepsin, which became Monticello's leading industry for many years.¹⁴ The Pepsin Syrup Company was organized by Dr. Caldwell, C. H. Ridgely, and Harry H. Crae, who secured a controlling interest in

¹² McIntosh, Charles, Past and Present of Piatt County, Illinois, 38-39.

¹³ Adams, Brian, *Joseph William Royer, Urbana's Architect* (Urbana: John Forman, Editor and Publisher, 2011), 34, 122; McIntosh, Charles, *Past and Present of Piatt County, Illinois*, 38-39.

¹⁴ Piatt, Emma C., History of Piatt County, 242-244.

1909 when he sold out to Allen F. Moore and A. C. Thompson. The remedy, which reportedly contained exotic ingredients from Egypt and China, became very popular in Illinois and was sold widely across the country.¹⁵

As the governmental seat of Piatt County, Monticello was laid out with a public square in the center of which was constructed the first Piatt County courthouse, a one-story frame building, in 1843. This structure was replaced in 1858 by a larger two-story brick edifice with a cupola that was demolished in a storm in 1871 and never rebuilt. In 1902 the county board decided to replace the two-story brick building with a much larger courthouse structure, with costs not to exceed \$75,000. The board supervisors surveyed other county seats to determine what improvements and conveniences were needed as well as the most appropriate architectural style for the purposes of the structure. In March 1903 the county board approved plans drawn up by Urbana based architect Joseph W. Royer and the architect was instructed to prepare plans and specifications. When Royer's plans for a structure in the Classical Revival style were completed, the construction contract was awarded in July 1903 to H. B. Walters of Danville for \$75,000, with the stipulation that the building be completed by 15 July 1904. The old courthouse was sold at public auction in May 1903, the building was removed in August, and the cornerstone of the new building was laid by the Masonic fraternity with imposing ceremonies on 22 September 1903.¹⁶ As Monticello prospered it attracted more wealth. A concentration of lavish historic homes along State Street in Monticello became known as "Millionaires Row" and in 1998 was listed on the National Register of Historic Places as the North State Street Historic District (NRHP #98001045).¹⁷

3. Early Schools in Monticello Township:

The first school in Monticello Township was a log structure erected on the Sangamon River bank above the river bridge west of Monticello. The teachers in this school were James Outten and George A. Patterson. The Stringtown schoolhouse, the last of the log schoolhouses of the county, was situated in the western part of Monticello Township. Other schools built in the township prior to 1920 included Dighton, Prairie Chapel, Ridge, Haneline, Independent, New York, Casner, Anderson and Dublin.¹⁸ The first school opened in Monticello proper was

¹⁶ Ibid, 38.; Bateman, Newton and Paul Selby, Editors, *Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois and History of Piatt County* (Chicago: Munsell Publishing Company, 1917), 692-693, accessed March 2019, https://archive.org; . Shonkwiler, Francis, Editor, *History of Piatt County* (Chicago: Munsell Publishing Company, 1917), accessed March 2019, https://archive.org; . Shonkwiler, Francis, Editor, *History of Piatt County* (Chicago: Munsell Publishing Company, 1917), accessed March 2019, https://archive.org; . Shonkwiler, Francis, Editor, *History of Piatt County* (Chicago: Munsell Publishing Company, 1917), accessed March 2019, https://archive.org.

¹⁵ McIntosh, Charles, Past and Present of Piatt County, Illinois, 45.

 ¹⁷ "National Register of Historic Places", National Park Service, accessed 19 April 2019, <u>http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/</u>; Piatt County Historical and Genealogical Society, *County History*.
 ¹⁸ Piatt, Emma C., *History of Piatt County*, 161-162.

taught by George A. Patterson in the 1843 courthouse. The first schoolhouse in Monticello was built by Esquire A. J. Wiley and others on a lot donated by Esquire Wiley. Thomas Milligan, later the Piatt County School Commissioner, was one of the early teachers of this school, as were David Longnecker and Andrew McKinney. A brick schoolhouse was built in 1857-58 where Isaiah Stickle was one of the first teachers. The building consisted of two rooms below and one above, besides the cloakrooms. The school bell was set on a platform elevated on high posts until a proper belfry was constructed a few years later. In 1869 the upper room was divided, giving four rooms, but the building was torn down in 1903. The high school was formed in 1877 with Mr. P. T. Nichols and Mary L. Reed as teachers. In December of that year Miss Reed resigned her position to become the County School Superintendent and was replaced by Amelia E. Sanford. The first class, composed of five girls, graduated in 1878. The class of 1879 consisted of four girls and two boys; the class of 1880, of six girls and one boy; the class of 1881, of eleven girls and one boy; and the class of 1882, of seven girls and two boys.¹⁹ In 1894 a new large and spacious ten-room high school building was constructed eight blocks south of Courthouse Square, on the southern edge of the residential district. It was at the time one of the most substantial buildings in the county, erected at a cost of \$22,000. It was heated by steam and had a modern ventilation system and indoor plumbing.²⁰

3. Old Washington School:

The education of its youth has played a major role in the development and identity of the City of Monticello, the county seat of Piatt County, Illinois. The first school in Piatt County was opened in a log structure just west of Monticello in 1837-1838. The first school in Monticello proper operated in the original county courthouse from 1843 to 1846. The first actual schoolhouse in Monticello was built on a lot near the courthouse square donated by Esquire A. J. Wiley. In 1857-1858 a three-room brick schoolhouse, known as the South School, was built on the south edge of town. In 1869 the upper room was divided making four classrooms plus a first-floor cloak room. In 1877 a two-story four-classroom frame structure, called North School, was built at a cost of \$3,875 to serve as Monticello's first high school. Where disagreements arose between the advocates of a general education and the town's populous they often centered around issues of expense and cost effectiveness. The need to expand and improve educational facilities and the funding necessary to realize those goals became, by the 1880s, subjects of much debate surrounding proposals to construct a large, modern, stateof-the-art community high school facility that would incorporate those elements

¹⁹ McIntosh, Charles, Past and Present of Piatt County, Illinois, 27, 31-32.

²⁰ Ibid.; Bateman, Newton and Paul Selby, Editors, *Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois and History of Piatt County* (1917) 670; *Francis, Editor, History of Piatt County*.

believed to be most conducive to the welfare and learning potential of students. Enrollment in all Monticello schools had increased to 428 students by 1885, and classroom space was sorely lacking. Nevertheless, an 1889 bond issue to raise funds for a new school building was defeated 193 to 126 following the publication of the following editorial in the *Monticello Bulletin*:

"A school house is the worst possible investment this town can make. It will not add a single dollar to the tax duplicate. It will stifle every proposed improvement for five to ten years longer. It will not, beyond the item of its construction, employ a single person. Your children will not learn one iota more or faster. It will stop building, frighten away capital and keep present taxpayers in the soup, or out of the courts. Its erection is a mere matter of convenience, not a necessity at all. Vote against the school house scheme. Turn out and kill it. It will give Monticello another twenty-year setback".²¹

School Superintendent J. H. Martin countered that perspective by pointing out that if all students currently enrolled in the Grammar department attended school at the same time, there would not be enough room for them all. Martin supported secondary education and advocated for the continuance of reading and spelling in high school as necessary preparation for admission to college.²² Finally, in 1893, Monticello citizens voted to spend \$14,000 for a new high school building which would also house some of the more numerous grade school students. The school board received open bids for the bonds on January 25, 1894, and on February 1st the Piatt County Republican reported that "the school district will have fully \$20,000 to begin the new school-house with. The bond issue is \$14,000, the premium \$400, accrued interest (6%) about \$200, and the special 2 percent levy now being paid will produce about \$5,500". The bonds were purchased by J. N. Dighton for the First National Bank of Chicago.²³ Controversy beset the project from the beginning. When it was announced that the new building was to be erected on a site east of the South School, on the southern edge of the residential district, many school patrons felt strongly that it should be built closer to the central business district. However, the southern location, with its potential for campus expansion, prevailed in the end. The next controversy was over the school board directors' decision to purchase first grade brick from a local kiln at \$8.00 per thousand when kiln-run bricks could be purchased elsewhere for \$7.50 per thousand. The directors justified the additional expenditure, arguing that by using

²¹ Morgan, Jessie Borror, *The Good Life in Piatt County: A History of Piatt County, Illinois* (Moline: Desaulniers, 1968), 137-141.

²² Ibid.

²³ *Piatt County Republican* (Monticello), 1894. Accessed 26 April – 18 June 2019. https://www.monticellolibrary.org.

the first-grade brick the new building would probably hold up for at least 40 or 50 years.²⁴

Weekly issues of the Piatt County Republican between January and December 1894 provided a running account of the process, and progress, of the school construction project.²⁵ On January 18th the Piatt County Republican reported that 300,000 bricks costing \$8.00 per 1,000, and 200 yards of sand, purchased from W. F. Lodge & Company, a Monticello brick and tile factory, had been delivered to the construction site. Details of the purchase had been worked out at a special board meeting on January 8th including hard sand brick would be used for the exterior and for the inside course of the outside walls, medium sand brick would be used for the inside or partition walls, and both hand-made and machine-made brick would be used for the foundation. On January 25 it was reported that "the town was full of architects on Monday the 22nd and Tuesday the 23rd presenting to the board of education plans for the new school building". The order of the plan presenters was determined by lot, as follows: 1. School House Construction Company, Peoria; 2. J. H. Randell, St. Louis; 3. J. C. Llewellyn, Chicago; 4. W. H. Reeves, Peoria; 5. K. S. Stevens (sp), Urbana; 6. J. F. McCoy of Danville; and 7. G. L. Miller of Bloomington. On Tuesday January 23, the board selected three architects whose plans should receive further consideration. They were W. H. Reeves, J. F. McCoy, and J. C. Llewellyn. By the end of that day the six-member board gave five votes to W. H. Reeves of Peoria, and one vote to J. C. Llewellyn of Chicago, and the contract was awarded to the firm of Reeves & Baillie, Architects, of Peoria. A primary concern for the new school building was heating and ventilation, and the related issue of indoor sanitary facilities. An editorial in the January 25th Piatt County Republican highlighted "the importance of a good ventilation system, which cannot be added later" and went on to say:

"The board must insist that no plan is perfect or worthy of consideration that does not attend to the subject of heating and ventilation. See that the pupils have plenty of fresh air properly heated in the winter time, and plenty of light. Another important matter is the water closet facilities. Great care should be taken in selecting a good dry closet or a ventilated flash closet and discard the outbuildings entirely as they are a disgrace to any locality".²⁶

Having examined all the proposals, and in collaboration with Mr. Reeves, the board agreed upon a basic plan for the new school building. As reported on January 25th, the building would have an exterior dimension of 73 feet by 78 feet, classrooms measuring 28 feet by 28 feet each, a high school room with seating for

²⁴ Ibid.; Morgan, Jessie Borror, The Good Life in Piatt County: A History of Piatt County, Illinois, 137-141.

²⁵ Piatt County Republican (Monticello), 1894.

²⁶ Ibid.

ninety pupils, eight cloak rooms, and two recitation or office rooms, one measuring 11 feet by 16 feet, and the other 16 feet by 20 feet. The basement would be used for the steam boiling plant and fuel and have separate play rooms and water closets for the boys and girls. The basement ceiling would be 10 feet high and the other ceilings would be 13 feet high. The building "will have a slate roof and be modern in all respects. The estimated cost is \$18,000".²⁷

On March 12, 1894 a measure to purchase three blocks east and south of the proposed school site, which measured 210 feet by 310 feet, passed 298 votes for to 122 against. The land in question, "Blocks 11, 13, and 14 of M. J. Platt's South Addition to Monticello", were owned by a Mrs. Bryden, who offered to sell them at below market price. Despite vocal opposition to the plan, those in favor argued that the purchase of additional lots surrounding the school site, at the south edge of the residential district, would create a school campus of about six acres which would be "to the credit of the school district and a benefit to the city as much as electric lights or water works". The Plat of M. J. Bryden's School Addition to Monticello was approved on March 29 and placed on record with the City Clerk.²⁸ The paper also reported in March that "A large perspective view of our new school building may be seen in the front window of the post office bookstore. It is a fine-looking building. Architect Reeves of Peoria was in town last week and left complete specifications for the new school building. They comprise many pages of closely written manuscript". It is not known if the perspective view or the specifications manuscript have survived, but they have not been located.

The firm of Reeves & Baillie, Architects, was founded in 1893 by William H. Reeves and John M. Baillie, in Peoria, Illinois. William Hawks Reeves (1866-1924) was born in Bloomington, Illinois in 1866 and studied architecture at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. From the beginning of his professional career in 1888, William Reeves made a special study of schoolhouse planning. In 1889 he moved to Peoria and began working for Warren H. Milner as a draftsman. From 1890 to 1892 he partnered with Joseph Wechselberger in the firm of Wechselberger & Reeves. In 1893 he formed a new partnership with John M. Baillie as the firm of Reeves & Baillie, Architects.²⁹ John McLennon Baillie (1866-1930) was born in Detroit in 1866. In 1881, at the age of sixteen, he began apprenticeships with some of the leading architects in Detroit and Chicago. Following the death of his first wife, Helen Thompson, in 1891, Baillie moved to Peoria, Illinois and two years later entered into partnership with William H. Reeves. Establishing their studios and office in the Jefferson Building in

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ McLean County Museum of History. "Old McLean County Courthouse," Accessed June 6, 2019. <u>http://mcmhqr-arch.weebly.com</u>.

downtown Peoria, Reeves & Baillie refined their schoolhouse designs, developing plans and specifications for school buildings in numerous cities in Illinois, including Henry, Wenona, Tremont, Kankakee, Gilman, Monticello, Peoria, Greenville, Fairbury, Bloomington, Saybrook, Canton, Lexington, Lewiston, Bradford, and many others.³⁰ The *American School Board Journal*, Volume XI, No. 4, 1896, profiled Reeves & Baillie as specialists in the "Art of school house architecture" and went on to say:

"The specialty of school house design, beyond the primary economic factor, must address other considerations such as the advantageous arrangement of the structure, its interior division of space as well as its exterior architecture. A modern school house should be planned by an architect who makes school houses a special study. Some general rules must be observed. The modern school house must provide for wide halls and stair cases, ventilated cloak rooms, an economical heating system, perfect ventilation, ample and correct lighting, ready access to all classrooms, convenient exits, sanitary closets and serviceable blackboards. A system of heat regulation must be provided. Venetian blinds; building-wide electric program clock system. A recitation or assembly room in every building having four or more classrooms". ³¹

The profile went on to say that "some of the most important educational structures have been entrusted to their (Reeves & Baillie) care. This reputation was gained by quiet and conscientious application to their profession and a strict observance of well-defined principles in school house construction". The same issue featured a perspective drawing of a Reeves & Baillie designed school building in Saybrook, Illinois, a photo of the Reeves & Baillie designed high school in Gilman, Illinois, and a perspective drawing of Bloomington High School, designed by Reeves & Baillie in 1897 and destroyed by fire in 1930, with a detailed description of the school building's layout and features, as well as interior and exterior finishes.³²

Reeves & Baillie did not confine their activities to the design of school buildings. In Peoria the firm designed the Peoria City Hall (1897), the Spalding Institute (1898), the First Church of Christ Scientist (1899), and the Peoria State Hospital (1899-1910).³³ Considered masters of the modern renaissance and classic styles, Reeves and Baillie left a mark of originality in their designs, completing

 ³⁰ American School Board Journal, Volume 11, Number 4, April 1896. Google Books edition.
 ³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ The Art Institute of Chicago, "Ryerson & Burnham Archives, Archival Image & Media Collection," Accessed May-June 2019. <u>https://digital-libraries.saic.edu</u>; National Park Service, "National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, Peoria State Hospital Historic District", Accessed June 6, 2019. <u>https://npgallery.nps.gov</u>.

numerous residences and buildings in William Reeves' home town of Bloomington, Illinois. In 1900, a fire in downtown Bloomington damaged the interior and exterior of the 1868 McLean County Courthouse. William Reeves began plans for a new building designed in a variation of the Italian Renaissance Revival style. The cornerstone was laid in 1901 and the building was completed by Reeves & Baillie in 1903. The building continues to anchor downtown Bloomington and now serves as home to the McLean County Museum.³⁴ As was the case with the Monticello High School, William Reeves was often the public face of Reeves & Baillie, and Reeves pursued interests outside the firm's practice as well. He served on the board of the State Board of Examiners of Architects from 1897 to 1903 and was Vice-President and Superintendent of the Phoenix Iron Company and the Phoenix Bridge Company, both headquartered in Philadelphia.³⁵ In 1905 Reeves re-designed William R. Norton's 1903 plans for the Carnegie endowed Phoenix Public Library. Placed in the center of a verdant park and designed in a Beaux-Arts style, the library embodied the ideas and aspirations of the City Beautiful movement, which shaped Phoenix as it did major American metropolises in the first decade of the twentieth century.³⁶ The partnership of Reeves & Baillie, however, continued into the 1920s. The office of Reeves & Baillie, Architects and Superintendents, was listed at 1203-1206 Jefferson Building in a 1913 Peoria City Directory.³⁷ Struggling with cerebral palsy, Reeves was forced to retire and died in 1924. John M. Baillie died in Peoria in 1930.³⁸

In March 1894, the Monticello School Board established a building committee consisting of W. F. Stevenson, C. J. Bear, and W. E. Smith. In addition to the architectural firm of Reeves & Baillie, the committee awarded contracts to: Winn & Johnson, Galesburg, general contractors; Coe & McMillan, Monticello, heating and ventilating; Carson & Company, Danville, plumbing; and W. A. Olstead, Chicago, blackboards.³⁹ In April the Republican Journal reported that architect William Reeves and General Contractor Johnson were in Monticello to oversee the beginning of construction, and that Johnson would remain to superintend the work. It was the intention of the various contractors to employ local labor and trades people to fill the numerous jobs in the various lines of work. Architect William Reeves was expected to return from Peoria to supervise the construction

³⁴ "Old McLean County Courthouse."

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ McMahon, Heather N, "Carnegie Center", in *The Society of Architectural Historians Archipedia*. 2019. Accessed June 3, 2019. <u>https://sah-archipedia.org</u>.

³⁷ Franks Peoria City Directory 1913-1914, Vol. XXXI. Peoria: Franks Peoria City Directory Co. Accessed June 10, 2019. <u>https://www.ancestry.com</u>.

³⁸ "Old McLean County Courthouse.".

³⁹ Piatt County Republican (Monticello), 1894.

after excavation of the foundation was completed.⁴⁰ In May it was reported that the stone foundation, utilizing twenty rail cars of Kankakee limestone, would be completed before the end of the month. N. H. Hart & Company, a Monticello lumber company, was awarded the contract to supply the lumber, lime, and cement, employing local labor and trades people for the framing, plastering, and masonry work. The boiler for the school was unloaded on May 15th, and a 4" water main was being laid along Englewood Avenue from the southern extension of the new school building.⁴¹

Progress reports fell off in June but on July 5, 1894, the Republican Journal reported that work on the school house was progressing very slowly, and that it would not be possible to complete the building by the contract date. At that point part of the walls had been constructed up to the base of the second story, and by July 26th the second-floor joists were being laid down and fitted into the top of the walls. Two more contracts had been awarded to Monticello businesses: Harris & Ridgley for the tin and galvanized iron work, and C. W. Keeler for the painting. Great progress appears to have been made in late July – early August as it was reported on August 16th that the slate roofing was being laid down. On September 13th the Journal Republican ran a photo of the new school house, signed Reeves & Baillie, Architects, and listed the courses of study for the first four years. By October the community appeared to take much pride in their new school, proposing in editorials that a proper dedication should be organized by the high school alumni. On November 22, the paper reported that the new school building was completed and accepted by the board, and that the formal dedication ceremonies and banquet would take place on Friday, November 30, 1894.⁴²

On December 6, 1894, a *Piatt County Republican* article titled "A Temple of Learning", heralded the opening of "A modern School House with all the latest Improvements" and "A Grand Edifice – The Pride of the County Capital". The article reported on the dedication of the new high school and gave a detailed overview of the building's construction and modern features:

"Monticello dedicated her new school house on last Friday (November 30th) with grand style. The crowd taxed the capacity of the rooms and spacious halls...The dedication address was delivered by State Superintendent Rash... The music was furnished by Tatman's Band and singing by the scholars". "The house thus so admirably dedicated is in every respect a modern school building, with plain exterior but with an interior very attractive and well adapted to its requirements. ... it is about 80 feet square and is 78 feet to the top of the tower. Built of brick,

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Piatt County Republican (Monticello), 1894.

with slate roof, it stands (in spacious grounds) at the head of Charter Street in the south part of the city and presents a massive and imposing appearance. It contains seven school rooms, 28 feet square, a high school room 28 by 42 feet; a principal's office and a recitation room, each school room having a commodious cloak room attached. The basement contains play rooms, separate water closets for boys and girls, boiler-rooms and fresh air chambers. The combined heating and ventilation system is distributed by indirect steam, each room having its own ventilation flue. For use in severe weather, direct radiators are also employed in each room and in the corridors. The finish throughout is a southern pine, natural finish, and all the rooms are well lighted."

"The building is fitted throughout with electric call-bells and all the rooms have electric lights. The plumbing is also very complete; for fire protection a 3-inch standpipe extends directly from the city mains to the third story, with $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch hose on each floor. Drinking fountains are placed in the center of the rotunda on each floor and sinks and water-closets are placed in the basement."

"The cost of the building when complete will approximate \$20,000 and is considered an excellent house for the money, the close times having enabled the board of education to make very advantageous contracts. New seats and desks will soon be put in, the windows hung with venetian blinds and in about two weeks the school will occupy the new house."

"Prof. H. J. Barton of University of Illinois spoke of the relation which the High School bears to the University and the necessity of completing the high school course before applying for admission to any university. John M. Holmes spoke of the High School library and how a well-equipped library had come to be recognized as necessary equipment for not only every high school but for schools of every grade. Finally, A. B. Martin discussed the merits of the Public School-System, stating that during the last few years it had grown from a conglomeration to a system, and that from it came the only hope for the stability of our nation."⁴³

Monticello school enrollment continued to increase, and by 1917 the district decided to add more classroom space to the 1894 building, which was then called Monticello Township High School. These additions were essentially Quonsett buildings dubbed "the sheepsheds" because they resembled farm out-buildings. The sheepsheds were later used as a gymnasium until Moore Memorial gymnasium was constructed in 1926. The 1917 classroom additions proved to be inadequate and a new \$300,000 brick building was constructed to house the Monticello Community High School, which opened in 1923. At that time the

⁴³ "A Temple of Learning". *Piatt County Republican* (Monticello), December 6, 1894. Accessed June 6, 2019. <u>https://www.monticellolibrary.org</u>.

1894 Monticello Township High School building became Washington Elementary Grade School.⁴⁴

By the late 1950s the Monticello School District recognized that the elementary school facilities needed to be upgraded and modernized. In 1958 a modern elementary school building was constructed immediately adjacent to the Washington School, as it was named, and the 1894 building, newly dubbed Old Washington School, was closed and remained closed for four years between 1958 and 1962. In 1958, the same year that Old Washington was closed, a tragic fire struck Our Lady of the Angels Catholic school in Chicago, resulting in the deaths of ninety-two students and three nuns. Dozens more suffered serious injuries while escaping the burning building. The Our Lady of the Angels School fire is widely credited with bringing overdue attention to fire safety concerns that existed in U.S. school buildings during the 1950s. Investigations into the fire revealed that inadequate fire protection and safety systems within the school contributed to the loss of life. The findings resulted in a major overhaul of existing fire safety codes and standards for schools, outlined in the Life Safety Code originally developed by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) in 1913 and revised every three years.⁴⁵ One year after the Chicago school fire, the NFPA conducted a survey that showed 68 percent of all U.S. communities had made physical improvements of some kind toward school safety.⁴⁶

In the fall of 1961, the Monticello school district decided to make some upgrades to the Old Washington building and re-open it as an elementary school. Prior to the closing of the 1894 high school building, a centralized bell and clock system and wiring for the intercom from the office to the classrooms had been installed. During the winter of 1961-1962 the pitched bell tower above the front elevation, which would have required expensive repairs, was removed; the original wood windows throughout the building were replaced with aluminum hopper and block glass windows; a multi-purpose stage was removed from the 2nd floor southwest auditorium room; the existing handbell fire alarm system was replaced by a central fire alarm system; and an exterior escape slide from the third story in the rear of the building was replaced with a metal exterior staircase. Elementary grade school classes began in Old Washington in the fall of 1962. In 1966, after several revisions to the Life Safety Code following the Our Lady of the Angels fire, the State of Illinois adopted compliant Health and Life Safety codes and standards, including the Illinois Building Exits Code, which called for enclosed stairways in

⁴⁴ Morgan, Jessie Borror, *The Good Life in Piatt County: A History of Piatt County, Illinois,* 137-141; Lisa Winters, personal communication; Steve Hoffman, personal communication.

⁴⁵ Fire Engineering, "Our Lady of the Angels School Fire: 50 Years Later," Accessed 10-11-June 2019. <u>https://www.fireengineering.com</u>.

⁴⁶ National Fire Protection Association. "When the Angels Came Calling." NFPA Journal (2008). <u>https://nfpa.org</u>.

all Illinois schools. Old Washington School building did not meet the enclosure requirements and underwent further renovations including enclosing the north and south stair towers, adding two rooms in the two-story entries, replacing original wood doors with automatic smoke doors, and replacing flammable wood and fiber board with water proof and fire-resistant materials.⁴⁷ The Old Washington school building continued to serve the Monticello School District as an elementary school until the end of the 2019 school year. The building is scheduled to be demolished in July 2019.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement: Washington School, located at 3 Sage Drive, is a Renaissance Revival educational building constructed in circa 1893-1894.

B. Description of Exterior

- 1. Over-all dimensions: Building footprint is approximately 5,694 square feet. It was originally 78' to top of tower.
- **2. Foundations:** The foundation is composed of machine brick and Kankakee limestone.
- **3.** Walls: Bricks are hard outside sand brick, hard sand brick for inside course of outside walls, medium sand brick for inside partition walls, and both hand and machine brick for foundation
- 4. Structural system, framing: Brick with wood frame attic.
- **5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads:** There is a metal fire escape on the east side of the building.
- 6. Chimneys: The school has three large thin rectangular chimneys.
- 7. Openings:
 - **a. Doorways and Doors:** The north and south sides (front and rear) each have a central set of double doors (the doors on the north side are blocked by the modern addition). There is also a fire escape leading from a door on the third floor, east side. The arched entry on the south side has been filled in with bricks around the double doors.

⁴⁷ Arthur Sievers, personal communication.

b. Windows and Shutters: All four sides of the building have multiple windows on all three stories. Many have been closed up with glass block or are a combination of glass block and hopper windows or vents. Some have been partially bricked closed.

Second floor windows are set into arched openings, and if they are bricked shut, the bricks are set in a decorative pattern. First floor windows are rectangular, and basement windows are set at basement level and are square.

8. Roof:

- **a.** Shape, covering: The roof is hipped with a flat top. It is composed of asphalt shingles.
- **b.** Cornice, eaves: Simple cornices with eave brackets at the main roofline and on the roofline of the tower.
- **c. Dormers, cupolas, towers:** The tower is centered at the north end; it does not project above the current roof height.

There are five gabled dormers: two on the north, and one each on the east, south, and west. The north (front) dormers have decorative gable fronts with small centered wreaths. The east, south, and west dormers are centered gables with simple tiled surfaces.

A. Description of Interior:

- 1. Floor Plans: The school has two floors, a basement, and attic. Some modifications have been made to the layout specifically to the stairwells but overall the original floorplan and classroom layouts are intact.
 - a. First Floor: The first floor consists of a central corridor and four classrooms

 one in each corner. In addition, there are miscellaneous spaces in the center of the north and south ends (currently a teacher's toilet to the north and a nurses' station to the south), made up of what was originally open space surrounding the stairs. There are four cloak rooms two each on the east and west sides. The second floor and basement are accessed via large staircases at the north and south ends.

The second floor, accessed by two staircases, also includes an open central corridor. As on the first floor, there are four corner classrooms, as well as teacher workrooms at both the north and south ends. There are two cloak rooms, both on the east side.

- **b.** Ground Floor/Basement: Main entry into the building is through the doors at the north and south ends of the basement level; the first floor is then accessed by two sets of stairs at the north and south ends. The basement consists of a central corridor. Along the east side, from north to south, are a storage room, boys' toilet, fan room, and boiler room. Along the west side are an archive/storage room, girls' toilet, fan room, and classroom.
- 2. Stairways: There are two large staircases leading from the basement, through the first floor, to the second floor. The original open plan of the staircase has been enclosed.
- 3. Flooring: Possibly asbestos tiles over wood.
- 4. Wall and Ceiling Finish: Original walls are plaster finished; newer walls around staircase are drywall. The ceiling is primarily modern acoustic tiles.

5. Openings:

- **a. Doorways and doors:** Interior classroom doors are primarily solid pine 6-panelled doors. Some have small windows. The basement corridor has modern glass doors with metal framing to shut it off from the staircases and create a classroom space.
- **b.** Windows: The majority of the windows are aluminum hopper windows. Glass block has been installed into the upper portion of most of the windows, as well as in the basement windows.
- 6. Decorative features and trim: Trim is relatively simple there are wide baseboards along most of the walls, with some middle twentieth century vinyl replacements. Door moldings are also simple wide boards with minimal embellishment.
- 7. Hardware: Original existing hardware consists of unadorned brass hinges, knobs, locks, and hooks. Some hardware has been replaced with modern versions.

8. Mechanical equipment:

a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: Indirect steam - original Kewaunee boiler still in basement but no longer in use. Building is heated with modern hot water heat with radiators in each room. Fan rooms in basement were originally fresh air chambers.

- **b.** Lighting: Lighting is modern ceiling-mounted hanging fluorescent.
- **c. Plumbing:** Plumbing is a mix of original middle twentieth century and modern. Vintage water fountains are present on each floor, including some placed into the center of the hallways. The building has two student bathrooms on the basement level the boys' bathroom has been updated but the girls' bathroom includes early twentieth-century fixtures.
- **d. Safety:** Central fire alarm system, middle twentieth century Public Address system and speakers.

B. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Washington School is located at 3 Sage Drive, Monticello, Piatt County, Illinois 61856. The building faces south towards Sage Drive and connects to the north end of a middle twentieth century addition to the school. The property is bound to the north by the addition and Sage Drive, to the east by a landscaped lawn and school building, and south and west by an asphalt parking areas and landscaped lawn.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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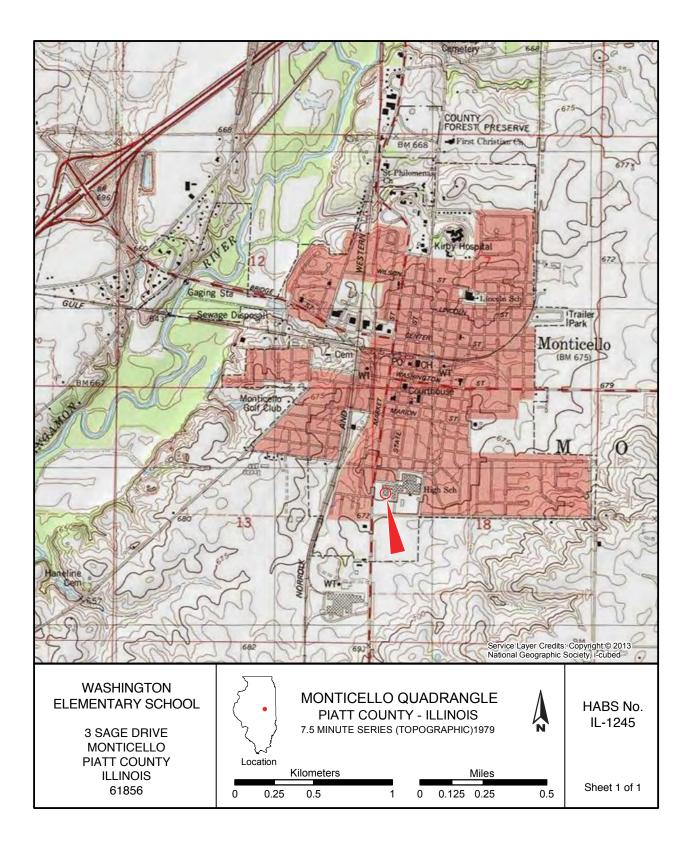
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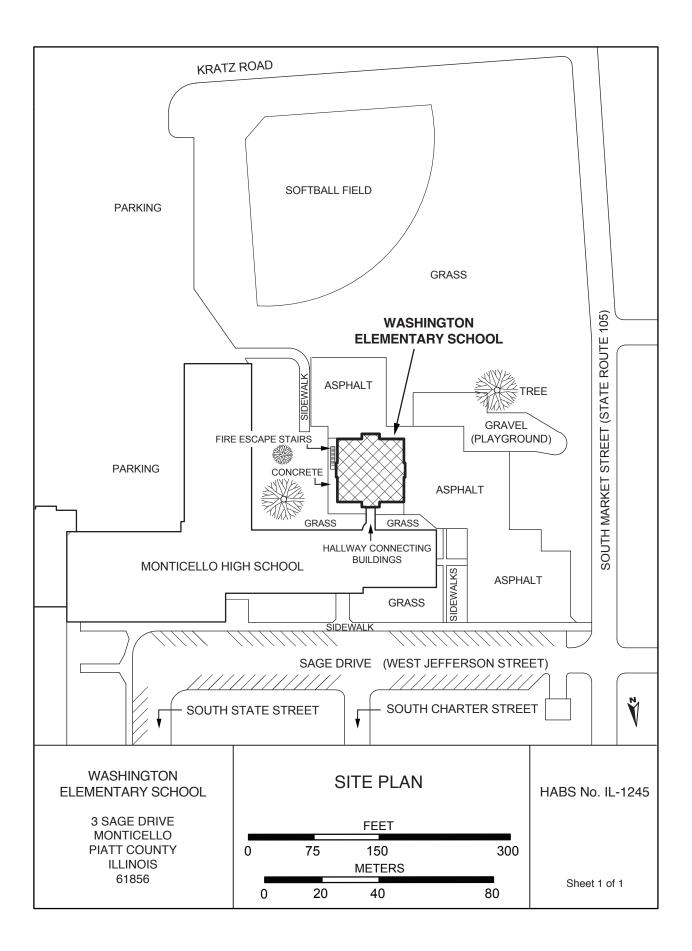
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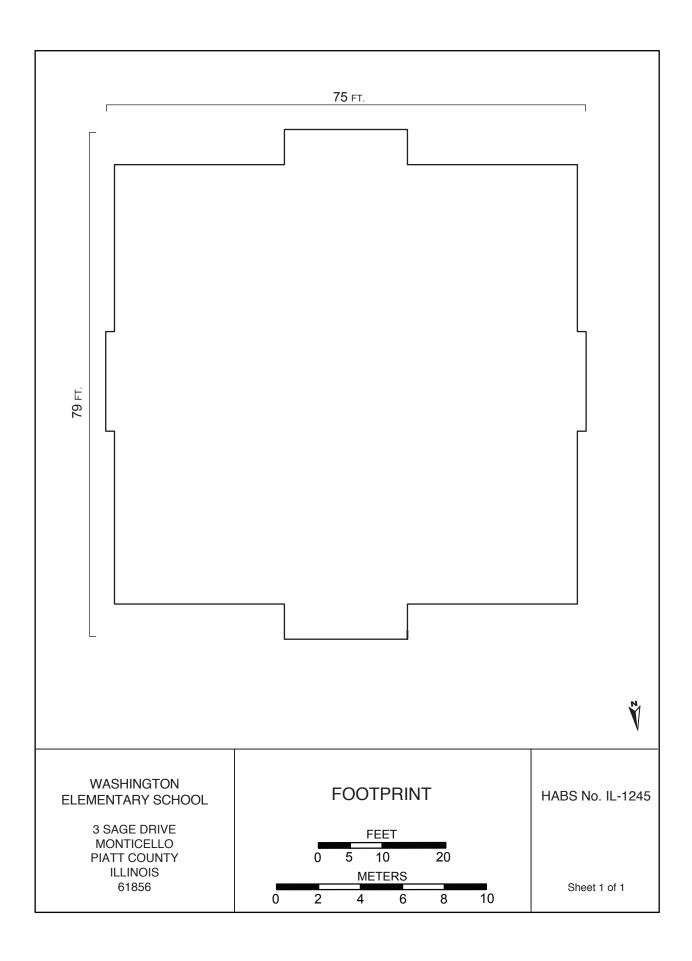
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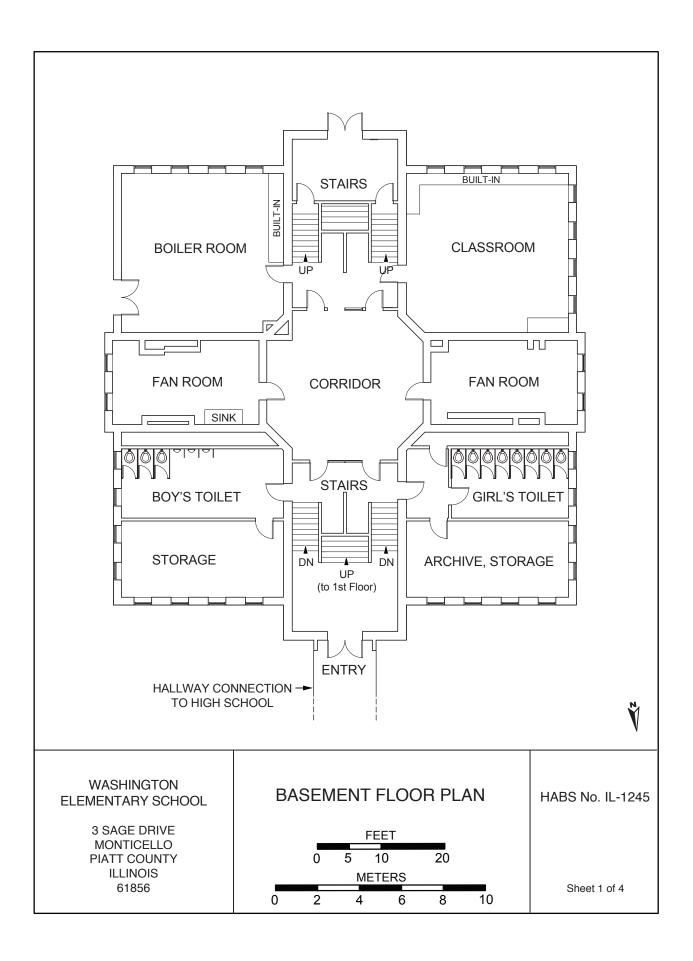
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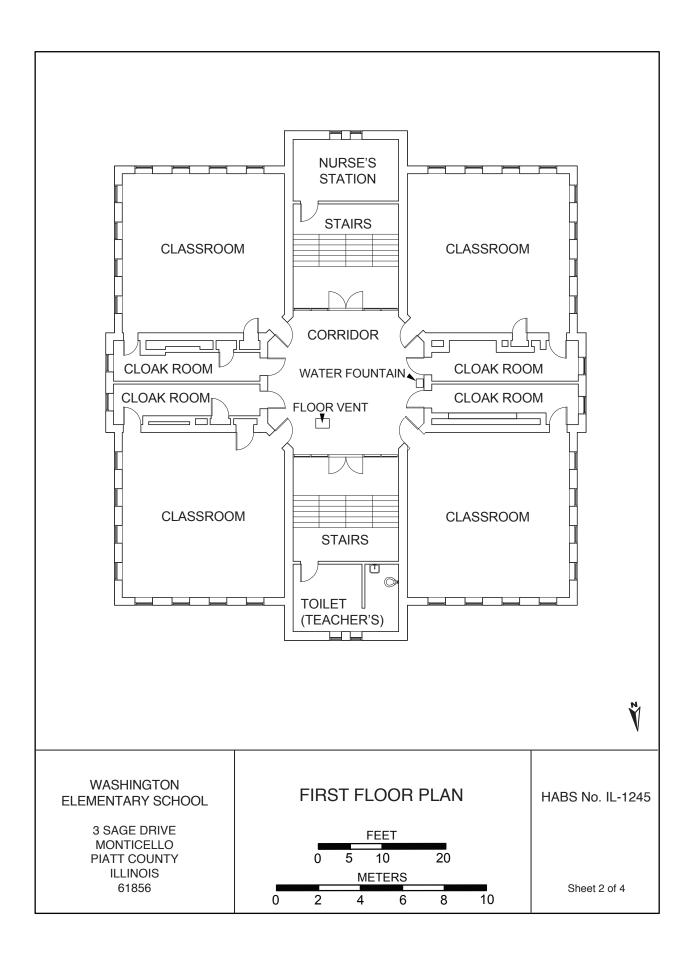
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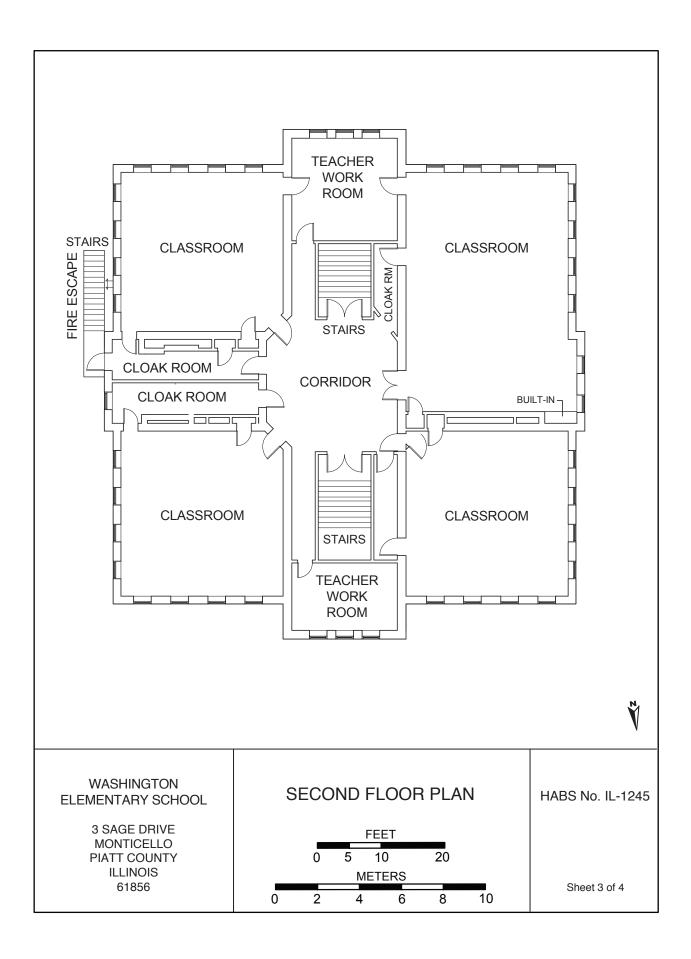


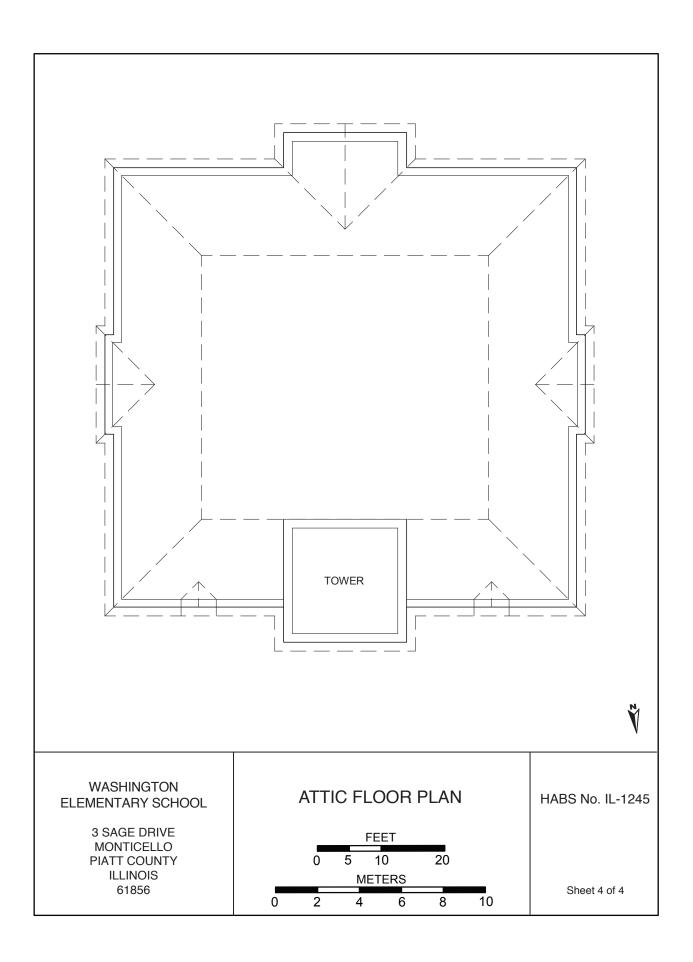












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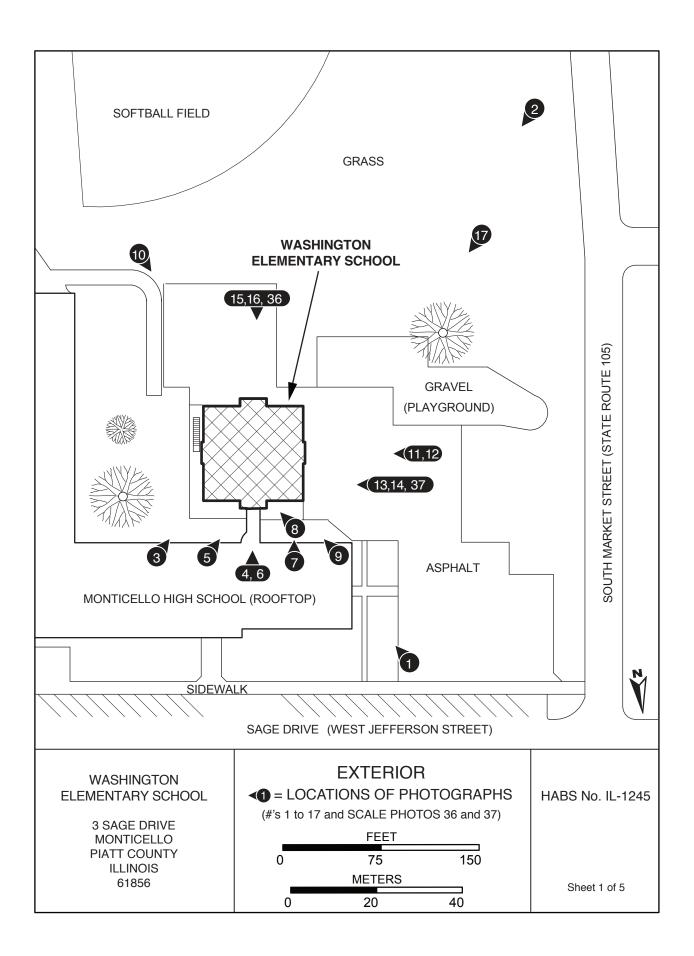
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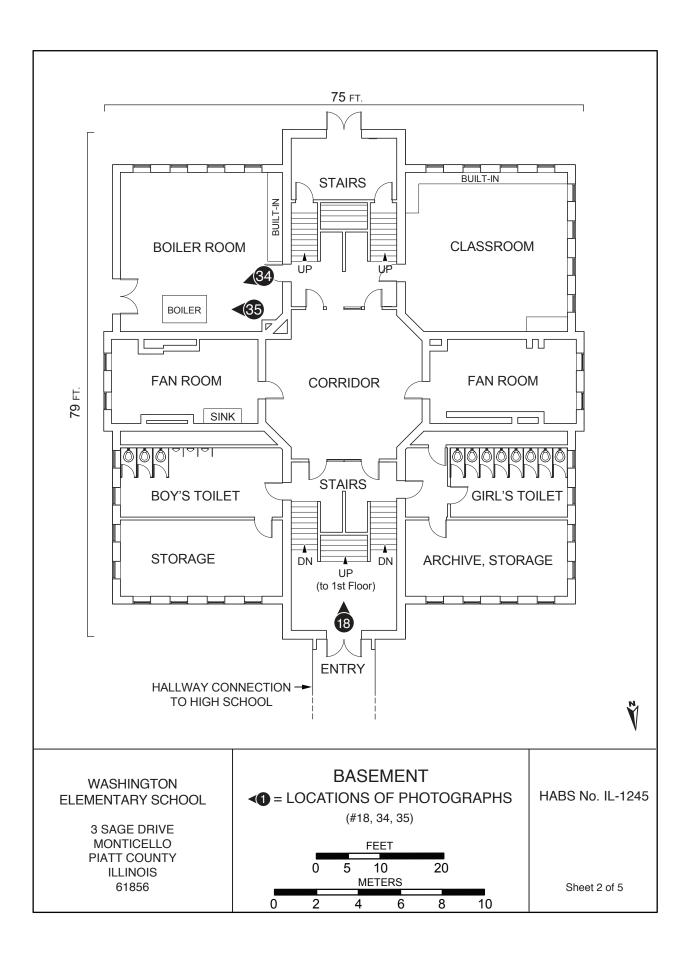
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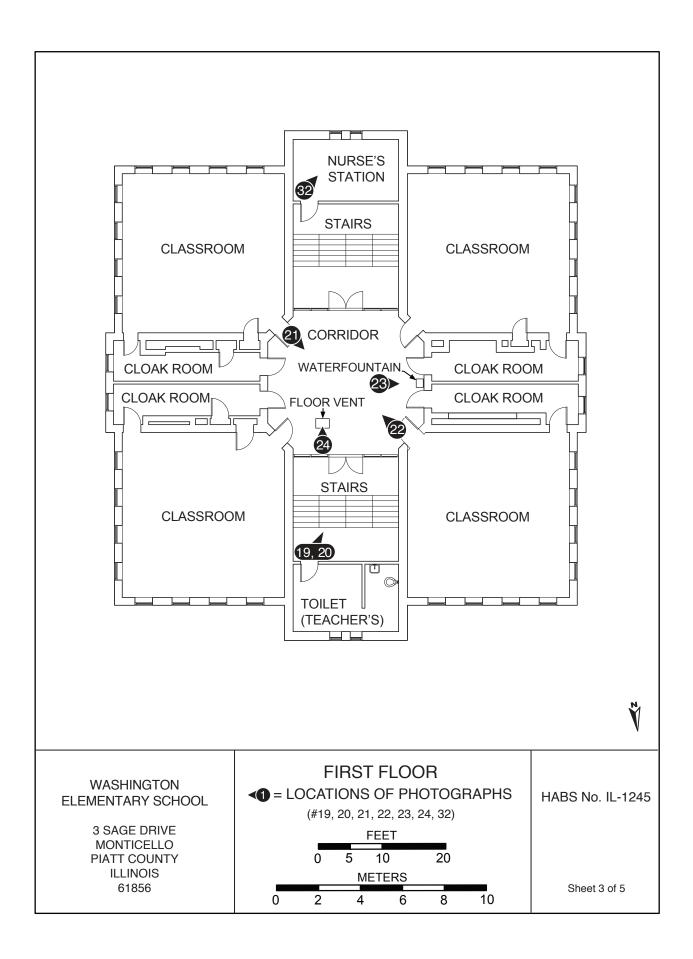
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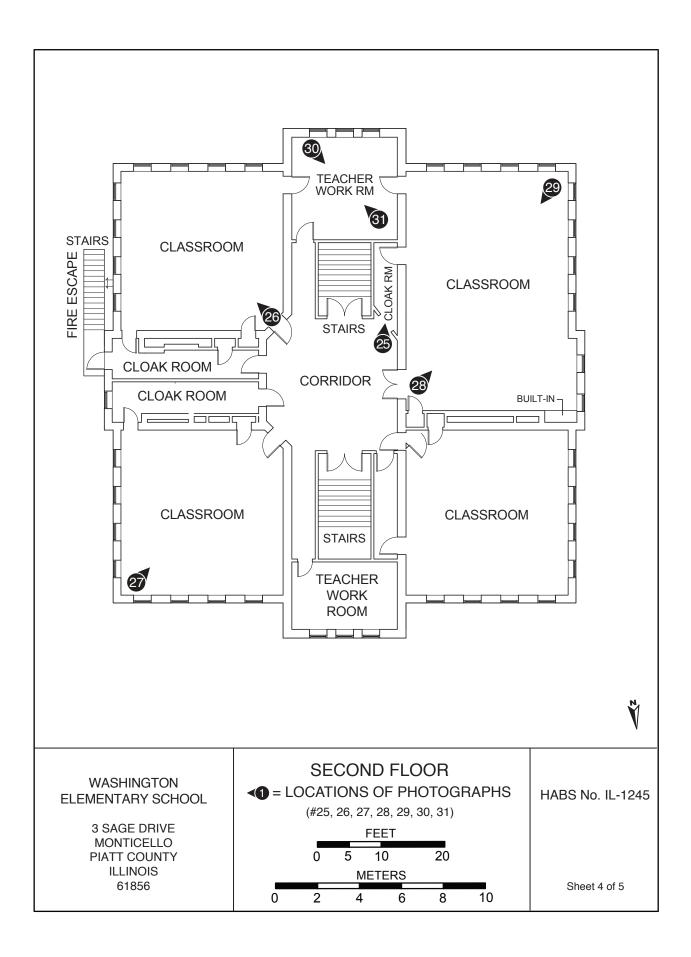
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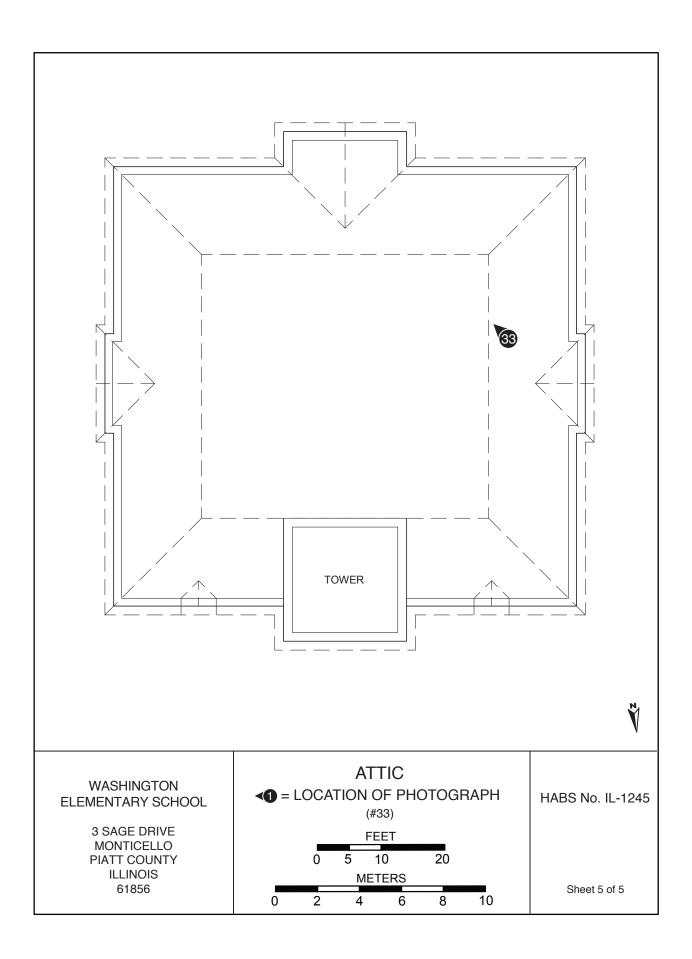
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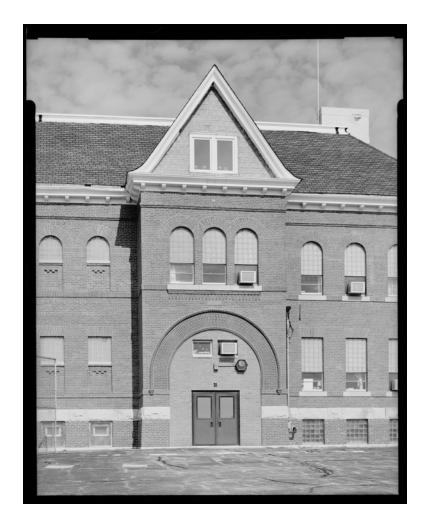
















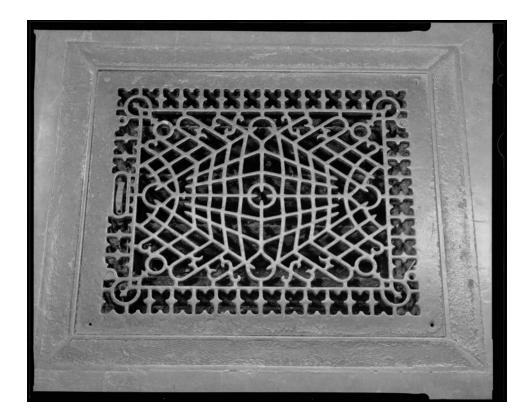




















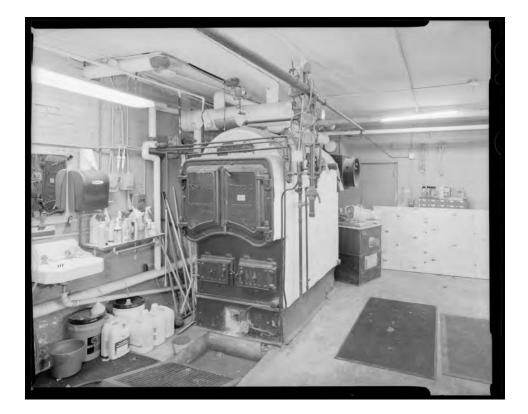




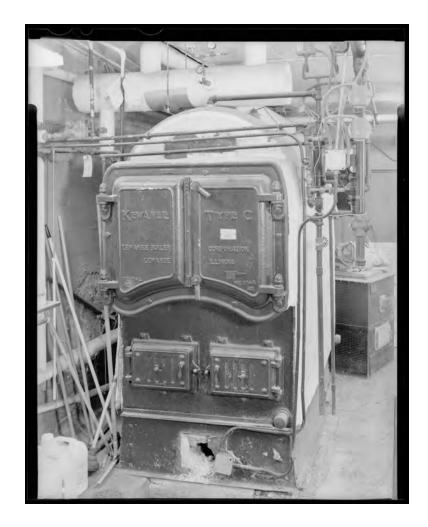








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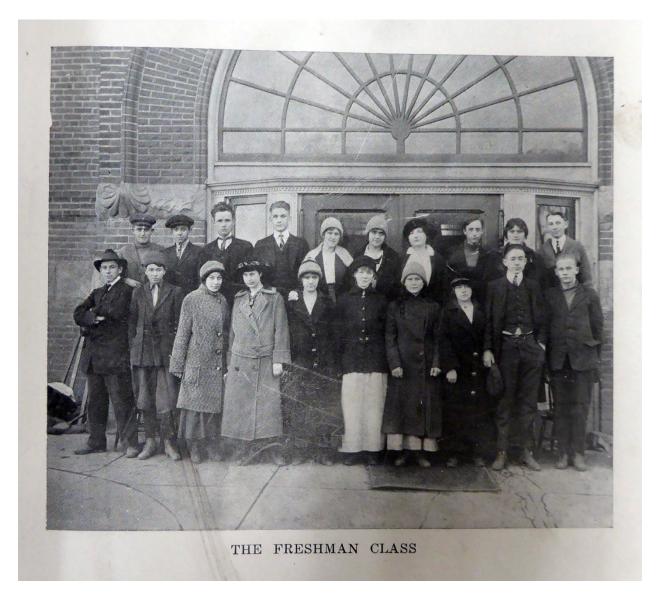


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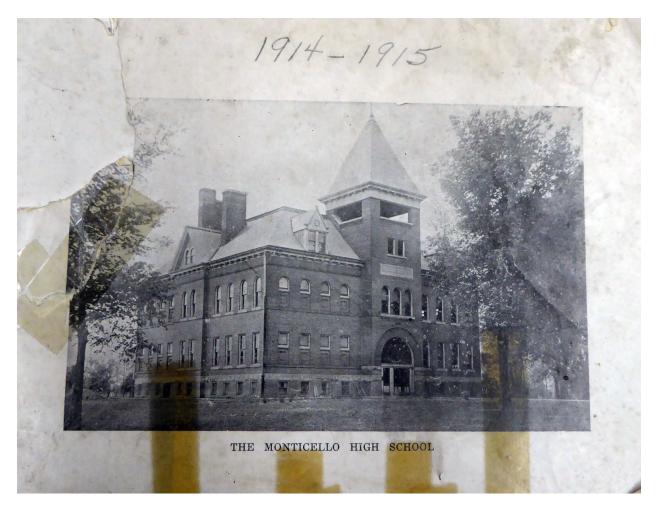


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IL-1245-42	Washington School original floor plan, provided by BLDD Architects
IL-1245-43	Architectural drawing
IL-1245-44	Facing north, south elevation with scale sticks (scale sticks are 4 feet)
IL-1245-45	Facing east, west elevation window with carpenter's right angle and scale stick (scale stick is 4 feet)

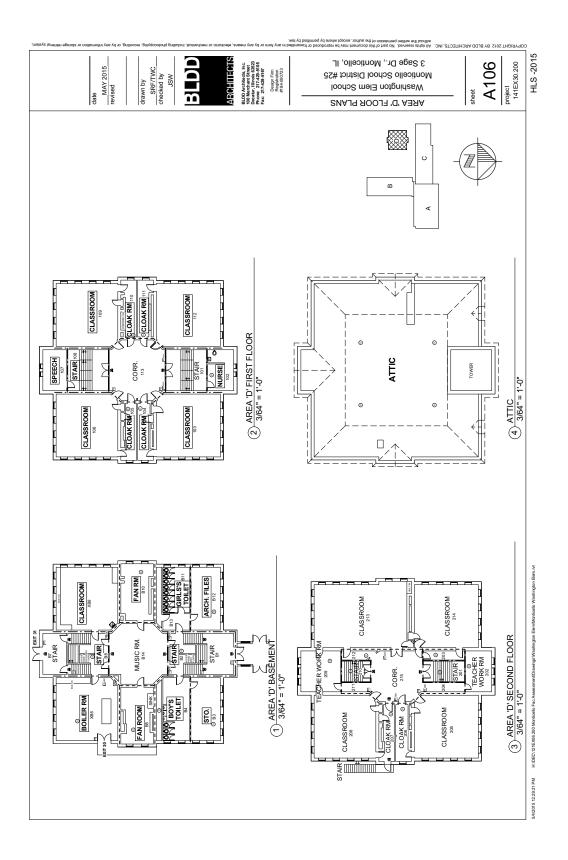








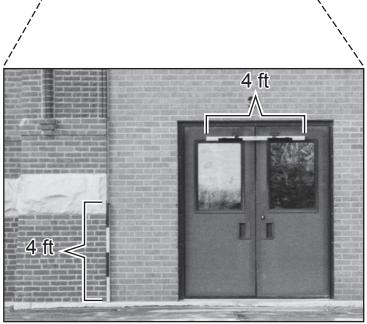
HABS No. IL-1245-41



HABS No. IL-1245-42







HABS No. IL-1245-44 SCALES

