

HISTORIC ILLINOIS BUILDINGS SURVEY

OAK AVENUE SCHOOL

HIBS CK-2023-1

Location: The Oak Avenue School building is located at 555 N. Kensington Avenue in La Grange Park, Proviso Township, Illinois. It is situated on Lots 1 through 5, inclusive and Lots 20 through 24, inclusive, in Block 6 of Small's Addition to La Grange, a Subdivision of Part of the Northeast Quarter of the Southwest Quarter of Section 33, Township 39 North, Range 12, East of the Third Principal Meridian in Cook County, Illinois.

USGS Quadrangle: Cook

Present Owner: McNaughton Development

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: Oak Avenue School was built in 1928-29 to alleviate overcrowding at the earlier Ogden Avenue Elementary School in the neighboring suburb of La Grange, both of which served School District 102. It accommodated grades six through eight and a kindergarten and was the only public school in the Village of La Grange Park until the 1950s. The two-story building was designed by local architect Joseph C. Llewellyn and his son, Ralph Llewellyn, who specialized in the design of school buildings. It is architecturally significant as an Arts and Crafts style building with Art Deco ornamentation executed in glazed terra cotta, a highly popular building material in the 1920s. Its design is representative of the "platoon" system, an educational system associated with progressive education in the early twentieth century. Oak Avenue School was closed in 1974 and converted to office use the following year by the American Nuclear Society, who has occupied the building since that time.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Dates of construction
1928-1929

2. Architect

J.C. Llewellyn & Associates (Joseph C. Llewellyn and Ralph Llewellyn)

3. Original plans and construction

Oak Avenue School was built in 1928-29 as a two-story, north-facing, gable-roofed building with a U-shaped footprint that measured about 197'-0" (east-west) and 89'-0" (north-south). Its loadbearing masonry walls were sheathed in multi-colored face brick and featured an abundance of Arts and Crafts-inspired brickwork as well as Art Deco-inspired terra cotta panels at the roofline and parapets. The original main entrance was located within a gable pavilion on the north façade that had a concrete panel inscribed with the words "Oak Avenue School" in capital letters. Its south façade had a two-story polygonal bay, while the north façades of its wings had projecting gable vestibules. The school had a total of five first-floor entrances, all of which had divided-light wood doors. Fenestration was comprised of tall, three-over-three wood windows arranged in pairs; window bays alternated with brick piers topped by triangular concrete caps.

The interior of the school featured double-loaded corridors opening onto large classrooms, east and west stairwells, an auditorium with stage in the east wing, and a gymnasium with stage in the west wing. Interior walls and ceilings were finished with plaster.

4. Alterations

Alterations mainly date to the late 1970s, when the building was converted from school to office use. Exterior changes include the replacement of all original three-over-three wood windows with one-over-one vinyl windows and the replacement of original multi-light wood double doors on the north façade's gable pavilion with single-pane fixed windows. Otherwise, the exterior of the building has very good integrity.

Interior alterations undertaken during the \$250,000 building rehabilitation in the late 1970s were extensive. Some of the original classrooms in the central block were subdivided into offices and a small kitchen was installed at the west end of its second-floor hallway. The auditorium and stage in the north half of the east wing were replaced by a large meeting room and adjacent storage room. The original offices in the south half of the east wing were combined to create a larger meeting room. The gymnasium in the west wing was converted to a storage room and its basketball nets were removed; a partition wall was installed between this space and the original gymnasium stage, which was converted to office use.

Acoustical tile ceiling systems with fluorescent lighting panels were installed throughout the building and all original suspended ceiling light fixtures were removed. Nearly all floor surfaces throughout the building were covered with wall-to-wall carpeting. All restrooms were modernized with new ceramic tile flooring and modern sinks, toilets, urinals, and metal stall partitions. All original door transoms were removed, as were the wood basement molding and cornices in most of the classrooms. All original blackboards with wood trim were removed except for one in the building's southeast corner room. Student lockers were removed from the alcoves in the first and second floor hallways, some of which were infilled with wood shelves and metal filing cabinets.

B. Historical Context

1. Overview History of La Grange Park

La Grange Park is a village located about 17 miles southwest of Chicago's central business district known as the Loop. The community is situated in Cook County, in the southern periphery of Proviso Township. It is bisected by La Grange Road (U.S. Route 45), which runs in a north-south direction, and is bordered by the Salt Creek Woods Forest Preserve on the north and west, and by the communities of Brookfield and La Grange on the east and south.

Much of the area on the west side of present-day La Grange Park (west of La Grange Road) was comprised of five large farms in the mid-nineteenth century, which were established by Henry Dieke, Henry Myer, Bill Robb, Louis Wesemann, and A.H. Kemman. Land on the east side of the future La Grange Road was low, swampy, and unsuitable for farming. Extension of the Burlington Railroad line from Chicago in 1863 spurred additional settlement, as did the Chicago Fire of 1871, which forced many homeless city residents to seek shelter in outlying communities. The original farmers began to sell tracts of their large acreage for residential development in the late nineteenth century.¹

Residents of this rural area decided to incorporate as a village in 1892 for the sole purpose of controlling the sale of alcohol within its borders, an action spurred by a resident who illegally sold alcohol out of his home and attracted rowdy customers. The name, La Grange Park, was suggested by Frank Ely, one of the original trustees. Daniel A. Lyon was the first president of the

¹ Tina Sonderby and Laura Koranda. *La Grange Park: Reflections of the Past*. 1993: 1, 47.

fledgling village, which had a population of about 300 at the time of incorporation.²

The original boundaries of La Grange Park extended from Harding to Brewster avenues from north to south, and from La Grange Road to Brainard Avenue from east to west.³ The area included both residential sections and farms, and villagers valued the area's tranquil character. No efforts were made to promote economic growth, as residents relied on neighboring La Grange for shopping, transportation, banking, entertainment, and churches. In 1900, eight years after the village's incorporation, only 730 people lived in La Grange Park, as opposed to the nearly 4,000 residents of La Grange.⁴

The 1920s was a decade of growth for La Grange Park, as its population expanded from 1,684 to 2,939 between 1920 and 1930.⁵ New residential construction, consisting of single-family homes, largely remained on the west side of La Grange Road. The houses in this section included vernacular gable-front farmhouses as well as residential styles and building types popular in the early twentieth century, including Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, American Four-Square, and Craftsman bungalows.

A handful of shops were established at the corner of Catherine and Woodlawn avenues during the 1920s, near a newly constructed Village Hall. They included a meat market, a candy shop, a drug store, and a general store.⁶ This was the only shopping area in La Grange Park for the next quarter century. Oak Avenue School opened in 1929 as the only school in the village; its elementary grade students previously attended Ogden Avenue School in La Grange. (See essay below on the history of public schools in La Grange/La Grange Park and Oak Avenue School.)

La Grange Park remained a tranquil bedroom community as late as 1940, when its population stood at 3,406.⁷ At that time, it did not have a railroad station, a church, a post office, a recognized shopping area, parks, or street signage. In 1943, a Plan Commission was established under the new village president, Walter J. Madigan. Its members recommended the creation of a park district, enlargement of the police and fire departments, and the development of a designated shopping district. These projects were completed

² *La Grange Diamond Jubilee, 1879-1954* (La Grange, Illinois, 1954) 23.

³ Ibid.

⁴ U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1900.

⁵ Ibid, 1920, 1930.

⁶ Sonderby and Koranda, 47.

⁷ U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1940.

by the 1950s, a decade that also saw the construction of a new municipal building.⁸

The most significant commercial development of the immediate post-World War II era in La Grange Park was the 1952 completion of the Village Market shopping center on La Grange Road, three blocks north of Ogden Avenue. A branch of the Charles A. Stevens department store—the flagship of which was in Chicago’s Loop—was among the 43 retail tenants housed in the \$3 million shopping center, which was built on a 12 ½ acre site. It was intended to serve as a primary shopping area for towns within a three-mile radius and its parking lots accommodated 1,049 automobiles. The Village Market’s modern design by architects Erwin H. Mittelbush and Edward M. Tourtelot Jr. received a bronze plaque award by the Chicago Association of Commerce and Industry and the Chicago Chapter of the American Institute of Architects.⁹

La Grange Park experienced phenomenal residential growth between 1950 and 1960, when its population increased from 6,176 to 13,793, and then peaked in 1970 at 15,549.¹⁰ During this period, the annexation of areas for the creation of subdivisions—especially in the generally undeveloped area east of La Grange Road—consumed the farms that still existed as late as the 1940s. In the process, the village boundaries were expanded to eventually encompass an area of about 2.2 square miles.

Although residential development in La Grange Park was primarily comprised of single-family homes, ground was broken in 1947 for the Homestead Apartments, a complex of nineteen two- and three-story red brick buildings, located east of La Grange Road, behind the Village Market. William Joern & Sons, a real estate and construction company, was the developer of both projects. Its president, Charles Joern, Sr., was a La Grange Park resident and served as developer in the late 1940s of the Robin Hood and Edgewood Park subdivisions on the east and west sides of the Village, respectively.¹¹

Typical of La Grange Park’s rapid growth in the 1950s was a tract in the northeast section of the village, bounded by 31st Street, Jackson Street, La Grange Road, and the Belt railroad tracks, which was undeveloped in 1954. Two years later, the area was 60 percent improved with homes ranging in

⁸ Sonderby and Koranda, 91.

⁹ “La Grange Park Shopping Mart is about Ready,” *Chicago Tribune* (February 3, 1952); “Stevens Will Open a New Branch Store,” *Chicago Tribune* (August 30, 1950); “Village Market is Tomorrow’s Market Today,” *Chicago Tribune* (July 6, 1952); “La Grange Park Market to be Awarded Prize,” *Chicago Tribune* (June 16, 1955).

¹⁰ U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1950, 1960, 1970.

¹¹ “Construction Starts on Initial Units of West Suburb Project,” *Chicago Tribune* (December 7, 1947); “More Costly Type Homes in 2 Projects,” *Chicago Tribune* (June 29, 1947).

price from \$20,000 to \$45,000. The vast project was instigated by Village officials who took action to clean up titles to the properties.¹² The decade of the 1950s also saw the construction of three churches within the village confines: St. Michael's Lutheran, St. Louise de Marillac, and the Village Church. In 1957 a bond issue financed the construction of a second fire station to serve the eastern section of the village.¹³

The La Grange Public Library was built on La Grange Road in 1989, north of the existing Village Market commercial district. The village also has a smaller commercial district on 31st Street. Residential development over the past half century has included both single family houses and apartment buildings, the latter of which are generally situated near La Grange Road. The village also has two large senior care facilities, Plymouth Place and Bethlehem Woods. La Grange Park features 24 acres of park land and remains primarily a residential community. In 2020 it had a population of 13,475, a decrease of 2,074 residents from its peak in 1970.¹⁴

2. History Oak Avenue School and Public Schools in La Grange Park

The first public school within the present-day boundaries of La Grange Park, called Poet's Corner School, opened in 1885 at the northwest corner of La Grange Road and 31st Street. Eight grades were taught at this frame schoolhouse, which was later moved southward to a parcel near La Grange Road and Oak Avenue in La Grange Park. Poet's Corner School closed in 1909, due to the opening of nearby Ogden Avenue Elementary School at 501 Ogden Avenue in La Grange, which served students from both the north section of La Grange as well as those in La Grange Park.¹⁵

School District 102 covered parts of La Grange, La Grange Park, and Brookfield. Population growth in the three communities during the 1920s led to overcrowding in the district's three schools: Ogden Avenue, Cossitt (115 W. Cossitt Avenue in La Grange), and Congress Park (9311 Shields Avenue in Brookfield). As a result, Cossitt School, an eight-room limestone building erected in 1890s, was replaced by the current brick building in 1921. The limestone Congress Park School, built 1899-1900, received a new wing in 1927.¹⁶

¹² "Board Takes Step to Spur Park Growth," *Suburban Life* (January 20, 1954); "Homesites Area Reflects Growth of West Suburbs," *Suburban Life* (November 18, 1956).

¹³ Sonderby and Koranda, 75, 95.

¹⁴ U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 2020.

¹⁵ Sonderby and Koranda, 75-77.

¹⁶ Mueller and Mueller, 53-54.

The school board then turned its attention to the overcrowded conditions at Ogden School. Superintendent John C. Davies noted in February 1928 that, “The last seat in the three portable wood buildings moved last fall from Congress Park to Ogden School is now occupied. About 60 pupils will be graduated in the spring but by next February at the normal rate of growth, the school enrollment will have overcrowded classrooms at Ogden School.”¹⁷

District 102 held a special election on May 26, 1928, asking voters to authorize a bond issue of \$150,000 for the construction of a new school to serve students in the northern part of the district, to relieve overcrowding at Ogden. A vacant 1.4-acre tract owned by the district on Oak Avenue, between Catherine and Kensington avenues, in La Grange Park, was considered the ideal location for the new building as it was situated at the exact center of a half-mile radius of the school attendance area. Residents voted overwhelmingly to approve the bond issue for the new school, which was intended to accommodate a maximum of 430 students in grades six through eight, plus a kindergarten. Students in the lower grades would remain at Ogden.¹⁸

J.C. Llewellyn & Associates, which had previously designed the new Cossitt School and the addition to Congress Park School, was engaged in the spring of 1928 to prepare plans for Oak Avenue School. The firm was headed by the father-son partnership of Joseph and Ralph Llewellyn, both of whom were long-time residents of La Grange.

An article in the *La Grange Citizen* included an architect’s drawing for Oak Avenue School, showing that it was placed on the north half of its tract, leaving space for intended expansion on the south side.¹⁹ One writer discussed the proposed floor plans for the building, following bond approval:

The building will be 210 feet in length along Oak Avenue, according to tentative plans, and will be 64 feet wide with two wings, about 88 feet in width, at the east and west ends.

A novel feature will be two gymnasiums, one for boys and the other for girls, which may be converted into an auditorium and stage. The boys’ gymnasium will be 40 by 50 feet while the girls’ gymnasium will be about 40 by 30 feet. The latter will be elevated in order that it can be used for a stage.

¹⁷ “New Overcrowding Confronts Schools,” *La Grange Citizen* (February 2, 1928).

¹⁸ “School Building in La Grange Park Planned for 1929,” *La Grange Citizen* (March 15, 1928); “Special Election Called May 26 on North Side School,” *La Grange Citizen* (May 17, 1928).

¹⁹ “New North Side Grammar School Authorized to Provide Facilities for 430 Boys, Girls,” *La Grange Citizen* (May 31, 1928).

The first floor will contain a large kindergarten room, and rooms for sewing, cooking, woodworking, and a small auditorium with seats for 135 persons and a small stage. This auditorium will be used for daily dramatic instruction. On the second floor will be six classrooms and art and music rooms.²⁰

Construction on Oak Avenue School began in July 1928 with completion slated for February 1, 1929, the start of the second semester.²¹ That deadline proved unattainable by the Fall of 1928 due to construction delays that included rejection by the architects of 14,000 bricks out of a consignment of 22,000 received for use in the exterior walls, because they did not conform to specifications.²²

Oak Avenue School officially opened to students on September 9, 1929. A description of the new building was provided in the *La Grange Citizen*:

This is such a beautiful building, and each room seems as if it is just about as perfect as possible. Every detail for the convenience of the teacher and the pupil has been carefully worked out and many new devices have been installed which will provide constant joy to every person at the school.

The lovely wide corridors are interesting even though the interior decorating effects have not been finished. One walks down the hall and glances into the large, bright classrooms. The school office is located near the east entrance. Opening off of the principal's office is a smaller room where the master clock with the bell system is installed. This room opens into a delightful rest room for the teachers. The nurse's room is near the east entrance at the rear of the building.

The kiddies in the kindergarten will have many lovely times in their beautiful quarters. On entering the room, the first point of interest to come to the attention is the tiled fountain. There are the tiny tables and chairs and plans have been to have a great deal of new equipment installed soon.

In every room there are large cupboards, closets, and wardrobes. In several of the rooms the doors of the wardrobes may be turned in such a manner as to form individual blackboards for the pupils and under the front blackboards there are cases for the filing of large cards and pictures. A small auditorium, with a seating capacity of about 140, has a splendid stage and complete equipment for motion pictures.

An interesting feature of the gymnasiums is the perfect adaptability for use as an assembly room seating about 400. The entire west end of the school is devoted to the gymnasium purposes. The boys' gymnasium is a large, splendidly equipped room and is joined to the smaller room used by the girls by roll-away doors. The girls' gymnasium is built on a higher level than the boys and forms

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ "North Side School Contracts are Let by Education Body," *La Grange Citizen* (July 9, 1928).

²² "Reject 14,000 Brick for Oak St. School," *La Grange Park Citizen* (October 18, 1928).

the large stage for the assembly room. Shower and locker rooms open off the gymnasiums.

Acid proof tables and equipment for special experiments have been installed in the large and bright science room. The blind corridor which at some later date will lead to a new addition on the building has been furnished with a large round table and chairs and is an interesting section of the library with its many shelves of books.

The music room is somewhat isolated from the other rooms and there the pupils may sing to their heart's content without disturbing those persons in the other classrooms.

No person could imagine a lovelier kitchen than the room in which the cooking department is installed. White woodwork and ivory walls with new and shiny stove tables, sinks and other accessories will be an incentive for many a girl to become interested in the culinary art. Off the kitchen there is a dinette where undoubtedly some folk will have the privilege of lunching, upon invitation.²³

District 102 President Fran Ault noted in his dedication address that Oak Avenue School was a “distinct contribution to the community.” He pointed out that the exterior of the building was entirely of face brick and ornamental design, that it was equipped with an oil heating system, and possessed the third finest gymnasium-auditorium in the school district, surpassed only by the new Lyons Township High School auditorium and that of Cossitt Avenue Elementary School.²⁴

The curriculum at Oak Avenue School included a focus on art, the theater, music, home arts, industrial arts, sport activities, and science. The small auditorium with a seating capacity of 140 and its stage with equipment for motion pictures served the students’ creative dramatic activities for many years. Band, orchestra, and choral music were important to the students, who performed operettas during the 1930s and 1940s. The school also featured Home Arts and Industrial Arts programs and new equipment for both was added through the years as the need arose. Trophy cases in the halls of the school evidenced the interest in a variety of sports activities. Social activities for students included sock-hops in the gymnasium and an annual Oak-Ogden Carnival.²⁵

The Student Council was organized during the 1940-41 school year and its members focused on ways to improve the school. Its initial two committees—Safety and Activities—were increased as needs demanded to include Press,

²³ “Architectural Art Displayed in New Oak Avenue School,” *La Grange Citizen* (September 12, 1929).

²⁴ “Oak Avenue School Dedicated to Public,” *La Grange Citizen* (October 3, 1929).

²⁵ *Farewell Oak School, 1930-1975*. La Grange, Illinois: School District 102, 1975.

Patrol, Audio-Visual, Service, and Host and Hostess. During World War II, the Student Council had a defense committee and classrooms strove for 100 percent participating in the buying of defense stamps. Students also sponsored Victory Gardens south of 47th Street in La Grange.²⁶

One of the most noteworthy aspects of Oak Avenue School were the artworks that came to adorn its walls over the years, thanks to its art-loving principal, Miss Nettie McKinnon, who served in this role from 1929 until her retirement in 1960. She encouraged this interest in her pupils by having each eighth-grade class take on a money-making project—typically selling magazine subscriptions—with the funds going towards the acquisition of works of art. These paintings were each class’s gift to the school. Miss McKinnon and the students (who often helped select the pieces) received guidance from district art teachers and art galleries in making purchases. The artworks—comprised of oil paintings, watercolors, etchings, and prints—were studied by the students in art classes and used as teaching tools by their instructors.²⁷

An article in the *La Grange Citizen* from 1940 discussed the class gift of that year:

Boys and girls of the eighth grade class at Oak Avenue School will soon have their picture to present as a parting gift to the school; the class gifts for the past 10 years now constitute a valuable collection of art treasures and just what type of painting the 1940s addition is to be will probably be known after the spring vacation as Miss Nettie McKinnon, the school principal, and the eighth grade room mothers are visiting art galleries and studios this week.

The art collection includes etchings and oil paintings hung on the corridors and in classrooms. During the past few months, the boys and girls of the eighth grade have been getting magazine subscriptions and the proceeds from this project are to be used for the new painting.²⁸

Oak Avenue School remained the sole elementary school in La Grange Park until the 1950s, when exploding population growth spurred the construction of two additional schools in the village: Brook Park School (1214 Raymond Avenue; built 1952) and Forest Road School (901 Forest Road; built 1953). Both schools served the northeastern section of La Grange Park, the growth of which was driven by construction of the Homestead Apartments and the Village Market Shopping Center in the late 1940s.²⁹

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ “Nettie McKinnon Art Gallery,” in: <http://www.saltcreekart.org/>.

²⁸ “Art Collection Is Object of Pride,” *La Grange Citizen* (March 28, 1940).

²⁹ Sonderby and Koranda, 82.

In 1974, District 102 purchased the original girls' school for Nazareth Academy at 325 N. Park Road in La Grange Park, renovated it, and named it Park Junior High School. The new school opened in Fall of 1975 and replaced Oak Avenue School, which was closed at the end of the 1974 school year.³⁰ The esteemed Nettie J. McKinnon Art Collection was subsequently moved to Ogden Avenue School, prior to moving to Park Junior High School in 1978, where it remains in a newly renovated gallery.³¹

The American Nuclear Society purchased Oak Avenue School \$250,000 in late 1975 for use as their national headquarters. The Society relocated to the building from Hinsdale in 1976 after receiving a special use permit from the Village of La Grange Park for office use as the building was in a residential district. The interior of the building underwent a \$250,000 interior renovation, which included the conversion of classrooms to offices and meeting rooms, transformation of the gymnasium to a storage space, and the installation of wall-to-wall carpeting and acoustical tile ceilings throughout the building. A parking lot was installed on the south side of the property for employees and visitors. The exterior of the former school building, however, remained untouched.³²

3. The Architectural Significance of Oak Avenue School

Oak Avenue School is a distinctive visual landmark in the Village of La Grange Park and a significant work of Joseph C. Llewellyn, a prominent architect who specialized in school design in the early twentieth century. The U-shaped building, built 1928-29, is architecturally significant as an Arts and Crafts style building with Art Deco ornamentation executed in glazed terra cotta, a highly popular building material in the 1920s. Its design is representative of the "platoon" system, an educational system associated with progressive education in the early twentieth century.

The Arts and Crafts movement originated in England in the mid-nineteenth century as an antidote to the dehumanizing effects of the industrial revolution. It was inspired by the ideas of English art critic John Ruskin and designer William Morris, who advocated for a revival of handcraft and individual artistic creativity in the decorative arts, as opposed to standardized, mass-

³⁰ "Weigh school purchase," *La Grange Citizen* (June 6, 1974); "Seek rezoning of old school," *La Grange Citizen* (September 24, 1975). Four elementary schools feed into Park Junior High School: Ogden Avenue School in La Grange; Cossitt School in La Grange; Forest Road Elementary School in La Grange Park; and Congress Park Elementary School in Brookfield. After graduating from Park, students typically attend Lyons Township High School in nearby La Grange or Nazareth Academy, also in La Grange.

³¹ "Nettie McKinnon Art Gallery," in: <http://www.saltcreekart.org/>.

³² "La Grange Park approves special use for former school," *La Grange Citizen* (February 18, 1976); "Empty schools no fiscal boon," *Chicago Tribune* (June 22, 1978).

produced designs. Although not all Arts and Crafts designers rejected the use of the machine, few believed in the capitalist doctrine of progress, of a future made increasingly perfect by technological advance. The work of British Arts and Crafts practitioners typically focused on the creation of decorative arts, such as the creation of fabrics, wallpaper, and furniture. British houses that had an Arts and Crafts aesthetic, such as those designed by C.F.A. Voysey, focused on the use of local materials, vernacular traditions, and often featured the use of steep gables and patterned brickwork, as well as rough cast stucco and clay tile roofs.

Arts and Crafts ideals became popular in the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, thanks to numerous international expositions at which British decorative arts were displayed. Most Arts and Crafts buildings in the United States are houses, although the style was also popular for school buildings in the early twentieth century. Arts and Crafts residential buildings often have a local flavor: the West Coast gravitated toward native stone foundations, Asian influences, and references to the Spanish missions of California, while New England embraced the Shingle Style. In the Midwest, Arts and Crafts overlaps and is integrated with Prairie Style and Bungalow architecture.

The use of steeply pitched gable roofs on Oak Avenue School is characteristic of Arts and Crafts style houses in Britain, as is the building's abundant, yet restrained, use of decorative brickwork, which is integral to the wall planes and not applied as superfluous ornament. Such brickwork exemplifies the Arts and Crafts ideals of truth to materials and simplicity of forms.

The walls of the Oak Avenue School are sheathed with multi-colored face brick of varying shades of red/brown and laid in a variety of configurations that display high quality craftsmanship and attention to detail, while creating a striking visual aesthetic. For example, basketweave pattern brickwork is found in the uppermost gable portion of east entrance pavilion, the original north entrance pavilion, and the north façade's two projecting entrance vestibules. Basketweave pattern brickwork also surrounds the building's east portal. Brick piers with triangular concrete caps alternate with the building's window bays, the spandrels of which feature decorative brickwork with a projecting rowlock pattern. The building also features rowlock window surrounds and a continuous soldier course near the roofline and vertical strips of rowlocks throughout the wall planes.

The uppermost portions of Oak Avenue School's walls/parapets feature panels of cream-colored face brick alternating with Art Deco-inspired terra cotta panels with low-relief motifs that include scrolls, vertical lines, and triangular

shapes. Art Deco was an influential design style that originated in France and flourished internationally in the period between the two World Wars. It was an eclectic style that combined exotic motifs of ancient Egyptian and Mayan civilizations with those of the Machine Age. Art Deco designers were also inspired by early twentieth century modernist art and its abstracted, geometric shapes. Art Deco was widely utilized at the 1925 Paris exposition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts and the 1933-1934 Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago, and was popular style for architecture, sculpture, decorative arts, and functional objects.

Although Art Deco is a style typically associated with skyscrapers, it was favored for a range of building types, including schools, department stores, factories, and post offices, and was considerably less common for residential buildings. One hallmark of the Art Deco style in architecture was the use of sculptural ornament in low relief with non-historical subject matter that could include stylized and abstracted forms of animals, plants, or geometric shapes (zigzags, triangles, hexagons). Such sculptural panels often featured the use of glazed terra cotta, a clay-based material used to sheath and ornament buildings that was highly popular in the 1920s and could be executed in a wide palette of colors. The finely crafted terra cotta panels that adorn the parapets of Oak Avenue School, featuring a restrained palette of sage green and cream colors, create a distinctive appearance atop the dark-colored brick walls.

Oak Avenue School was one of several schools highlighted by Joseph C. Llewellyn in an article he wrote for the January 1930 issue of *The American School Board Journal*. The article included several photographs of the building and brief text by Llewellyn, in which he stated:

The design of Oak Avenue School and its course of instruction emulates the **platoon system**. It contains offices for the principal and the nurse, a teachers' room, a small auditorium; a gymnasium for boys—40 by 60 ft.—seating 500 on occasions; a stage or girls' gymnasium—26 by 40 ft., lockers and showers for boys and girls; a kindergarten, a library; rooms for music, art, nature study, cooking, sewing, and manual training; and four standard classrooms. The building is capable of extension to double the present capacity of 450.³³

The platoon system, also known as the “Gary Plan” and the “work-study-play” plan, was an educational system established in 1907 in Gary, Indiana, by American educator William Wirt, who became superintendent of its public schools in that year. In the platoon system, students were split into platoons so

³³ Joseph C. Llewellyn, “Economy in Elementary School Buildings,” *The American School Board Journal*, Vol. 80, (January 1930) 44, 162.

that, while one group was studying core academic-related subjects (math, science, social studies, English), another platoon group was receiving art, physical education, and industrial arts courses in specially equipped facilities. Key features of the platoon-based plan were an efficient utilization of the school building and the provision of more curriculum opportunities for manual training and work.³⁴

Wirt understood a school as a playground, garden, workshop, social center, library, and academic classroom setting, all housed within one facility. As a result, he referred to its design as the “work-study-play” plan. Through that setting, students were exposed to many work-related activities, socialization experiences, and planned physical exercise, in addition to the basic academic subjects.

Educational journals from the early twentieth century featured numerous articles on the platoon system. One such article from 1926, published in *The Elementary School Journal*, noted that the platoon plan “is now in successful operation in more than six hundred schools in more than one hundred cities and towns widely distributed through thirty-three states and having a combined population of more than sixteen million people. In twenty-one cities, including Detroit and Pittsburgh, the plan has been officially adopted by the school authorities.”³⁵ The same writer discussed the operation of the system:

The general scheme of a platoon school is familiar. The pupils are divided into two alternating groups. While one group pursues its work in the “home” rooms, the members of the second group are participating in the activities of the auditorium, the gymnasium, the playground, the library, the nature laboratory, and the art, music, literature, and industrial-arts rooms.³⁶

The layout of Oak Avenue School is representative of the platoon system. The school had just four standard classrooms, which were located on the second floor. The remainder of the school featured spaces devoted to the arts as well as instruction in areas related to occupations and everyday life. For example, the first floor included a large woodworking shop with equipment used by students to create furniture and other items. (See Figures 17 and 21.) Girls learned to make clothing in the sewing room, which had sewing machines,

³⁴ For a detailed contemporary description of the platoon system, see: “Dean W.J. Bankes, “The Model Platoon School,” *The Journal of Education*, Vol. 97, January 18, 1923: 63-65.

³⁵ Charles L. Spain, “The Platoon School: Its Advantages,” *The Elementary School Journal*, Vol. 26 (June 1926) 733.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 736.

and the culinary arts were taught in the cooking room, which included kitchen equipment. (See Figures 13, 20, 22.) The school also incorporated an art room, a nature study room, a library, and a science room with acid free tables for experiments. (See Figures 14, 15, 16).

Students were exposed to fine arts through an increasingly valuable collection of paintings (oil and watercolors), etchings, and prints that adorned the school's hallways and classrooms, and were used as teaching tools by instructors. (See information on the Nettie MacKinnon Art Collection in the "History of Oak Avenue School" essay.)

Music and the performing arts also played an important role at Oak Avenue School. The north side of the east wing featured a 140-seat auditorium with stage and a projection room on the first floor, and a large music room on the second floor where the band practiced. The west wing was entirely devoted to physical education purposes, featuring a large gymnasium and a stage, which was originally used as the girls' gymnasium. The gymnasium wing could accommodate 500 people and served as an assembly space when the need arose. Together with the classrooms, these varied spaces allowed Oak Avenue School to become a center of culture and community through the years as Llewellyn intended and embodied the work-study-play plan of the progressive "platoon system."

4. J. C. Llewellyn & Associates, Architect

Oak Avenue School was designed in 1928 by J.C. Llewellyn & Associates, a Chicago-based firm that specialized in school designs and was then headed by Joseph Corson Llewellyn (1855-1932), and his son, Ralph Corson Llewellyn (1884-1970). The company was founded by Joseph Corson Llewellyn (1855-1932), a prominent Chicago architect who was born in Philadelphia, the son of David R. and Huldah (Corson) Llewellyn. The Llewellyn family moved to Sterling, Illinois, by 1870, where Joseph was educated at the public high school. He studied architecture at the University of Illinois, graduating in 1877.³⁷

Joseph Llewellyn married Emma Piatt on May 17, 1883.³⁸ She also graduated from the University of Illinois in 1877.³⁹ The couple had four children: Ralph Corson (b. 1884), Clarinne (b. 1886), Ruth (b. 1889), and Vida (b. 1892). Llewellyn moved to La Grange, Illinois, with his family in the early 1890s and

³⁷ A.N. Marquis. *The Book of Chicagoans* (Chicago: A.N. Marquis Company, 1917) 420.

³⁸ Illinois, U.S., County Marriage Records, 1800-1940.

³⁹ *Illinois Alumni News*, Volume 3, 1909: 48.

resided in that suburb for the rest of his life in a house at 324 Sixth Avenue that he designed.⁴⁰

Joseph Llewellyn remained at the University of Illinois to teach for two years after graduation, serving as instructor in mathematics and in charge of the wood working department of the Manual Training School from 1877-79.⁴¹ He then served as superintendent of the Lindell Street Railway in St. Louis from 1880 to 1886 and was engaged in various other types of work until 1893, when he established an independent architectural practice in Chicago. Several years later, he obtained one of the first hundred architectural licenses issued when the State of Illinois began regulating the profession in 1897.⁴²

A review of the finding aid for the J.C. Llewellyn & Associates Papers, on file at the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries, Art Institute of Chicago, reveals that much of Joseph C. Llewellyn's early work in the 1890s focused on residential design, with projects for houses and apartment buildings located throughout the Chicago metropolitan region. An important early work was the Agriculture Building at the University of Illinois (1901), a large-scale Classical Revival style building (now Davenport Hall).⁴³

Joseph C. Llewellyn and his son, Ralph, established a partnership in 1907 called J.C. Llewellyn & Associates with offices at 38 S. Dearborn Street. Like his father, Ralph studied architecture at the University of Illinois, and he graduated in 1906.⁴⁴ Ralph Llewellyn married Louise Tyler in 1915 and the couple had three children—Lucia (b. 1922), William (b. 1926) and Joseph P. (1927-1984)—who were raised in La Grange.⁴⁵

Starting in the early 1910s, the Llewellyn firm increasingly obtained commissions in other Midwestern states, notably in Michigan, Indiana, and Wisconsin. Projects included large factories and complexes for clients such as the Cracker Jack Company, Advanced Rumley Thresher Company, and the N.K. Fairbanks Company in Chicago. One of the firm's more prominent projects was the design of a large industrial housing development in Hammond, Indiana, for the Standard Steel Car Company. The Llewellyn firm also designed hotels and banks, including the La Grange Trust and Savings

⁴⁰ U.S. Census for Population and Housing, 1900.

⁴¹ *Proceedings of the Fifty-second Annual Convention of the American Institute of Architects* (Washington, D.C.: AIA, 1919) 59.

⁴² A.N. Marquis. *The Book of Chicagoans* (Chicago: A.N. Marquis Company, 1917) 420.

⁴³ J.C. Llewellyn and Associates Records, 1894-1985, Finding Aid, Art Institute of Chicago Archives, Research Center.

⁴⁴ *Illinois Alumni News*, Volume 3, 1909: 48.

⁴⁵ Illinois, U.S., County Marriage Records, 1800-1940. U.S. Census for Population and Housing, 1930.

Bank Building and the La Grange Safe Deposit Company Bank Building, both in La Grange, Illinois.⁴⁶

The Llewellyn firm designed approximately 50 schools in the early twentieth century, of which 28 were high schools, and 19 were in Illinois.⁴⁷ Oak Avenue School in La Grange Park was among their projects, and the firm also designed Cossitt Avenue Elementary School as well as additions/alterations to Ogden Avenue Elementary School and Lyons Township High School, all in neighboring La Grange.

Representative examples of other school projects designed by Joseph C. Llewellyn and his firm prior to his death in 1932 include: Aurora High School (1912); Naperville High School (1915); Riverside-Brookfield High School (1916); Three Rivers (Michigan) Elementary School (1918); Benton Harbor (Michigan) High School (1919); Benton Harbor (Michigan) High School (1919); York Community High School in Elmhurst (1919); Morton High School in Cicero (1920); La Crosse (Wisconsin) High School (1920); Mount Clemens (Michigan) High School (1922); Wheaton High School (1924); Brookfield School District 95 Building (1927); and C.M. Bardwell Elementary School in Aurora (1928).⁴⁸

Prominent professionally during his long and successful career, Joseph C. Llewellyn served as president of the Chicago Architectural Club and of the Architectural League of America. He became a member of the American Institute of Architects in 1908 and was elevated to Fellow status in 1919 at the organization's annual meeting when he was introduced by architect George W. Maher, who stated:

[Llewellyn's] practice as architect has been a general one, beginning with houses and gradually extending to schools, banks, manufacturing buildings and hotels. His principal practice at the present time is industrial work and schools, which have given him a wide and well-deserved reputation.

A Fellowship in the American Institute of Architects implies that one has been conspicuous in the practice of the profession of architecture, and that he is qualified, by education, design, and construction, as well as broad cultural accomplishments, to assume this title.

⁴⁶ Henry F. Withey and Elsie Rathburn Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects* (Deceased). (Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, 1970) 376-377.

⁴⁷ Mary E. Ottoson, "The Revival of a Master Architect: Joseph C. Llewellyn," Master's Thesis submitted to The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 2009, p. 14.

⁴⁸ J.C. Llewellyn and Associates Records, 1894-1985, Finding Aid.

Mr. Llewellyn has given ample proof of his loyalty to the high purposes of the Institute, and to the profession of architecture. His work reflects the happy blending of the artistic and the practical and thus accords with the ideals and life of the American public.⁴⁹

Joseph C. Llewellyn authored several articles related to school architecture that were published in national journals. These included: “The Building Question with Relation to Schools,” *School Board Journal*, Vol. 56, No. 3, March 1918: 19-20; “Economy in Elementary School Buildings,” *American School Board Journal* Vol. 80, January 1930: 39-48; and “Present Day Public School Architecture,” *American Association of School Administrators Official Report*, 1931. The work of Llewellyn and his firm was well regarded among the architectural profession and was regularly reviewed in architectural journals, such as *Architectural Record*, *Western Architect*, *Architectural Review*, and the *Chicago Architectural Club Annual*.⁵⁰

After Joseph C. Llewellyn’s death in 1932, his son, Ralph, continued the firm under the same name. Ralph’s son, Joseph P. Llewellyn, joined the firm in 1947. The firm’s work in the post-World War II period primarily focused on the design of, and additions/alterations to, elementary and high school buildings. Ralph Llewellyn died in 1970, after which time J.C. Llewellyn & Associates was merged with the firm Gordon W. Warren and Associates.⁵¹

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

This two-story, north-facing building with partial basement has a U-shaped footprint. Its central block is flanked by east and west wings, all covered with gable, clay-tiled roofs. The south façade has a two-story polygonal bay, while the north façades of the wings have projecting gable vestibules. The east façade has a gable entrance pavilion that is nearly identical to a gable pavilion on the north façade, which originally served as the school’s main entrance. However, its doors were replaced by fixed windows in the late 1970s. The five first-floor entrances retain their original divided-light wood doors. Fenestration is comprised of non-original, metal-framed, one-over-one windows, most of which are arranged in pairs. Walls are sheathed in multi-colored face brick and feature an abundance of Arts and Crafts-inspired brickwork as well as Art Deco-inspired terra cotta panels at the roofline and parapets.

⁴⁹ *Proceedings of the Fifty-second Annual Convention of the American Institute of Architects* (Washington, D.C.: AIA, 1919) 59.

⁵⁰ J.C. Llewellyn and Associates Records, 1894-1985, Finding Aid

⁵¹ Ibid.

The building was converted from school to office use in the late 1970s, after which time many of the classrooms and the auditorium were converted to and/or reconfigured as offices and meeting rooms, while the gymnasium became a storage room. However, the double-loaded plan of the central block is extant, as are the original east and west stairways. Interior walls are finished with plaster or drywall, ceilings have acoustical tile systems, and floors are covered with wall-to-wall carpeting.

B. Description of Exterior

1. Over-all dimensions

The building measures about 197'-0" (east-west) by 89'-0" (north-south).

2. Foundation

The building has a concrete foundation.

3. Structural System

The building appears to have masonry load-bearing walls.

4. Roof

a. Shape, covering

The building's central block, east and west wings, and two projecting entrance vestibules all have gable roofs covered with red clay tiles.

b. Chimney

A full-height exterior brick chimney with concrete coping and decorative brickwork in its uppermost portion is situated on the south façade of the west wing.

5. Walls

The walls of the building have a concrete water table, are sheathed with multi-colored face brick of varying shades of red/brown laid in a running bond and have parapets with concrete coping. A concrete sill course—situated between the water table and the first-floor windows—wraps around the entire building, which also features rowlock window surrounds and a continuous soldier course near the roofline and vertical strips of rowlocks.

The uppermost portions of all walls/parapets feature panels of cream-colored face brick alternating with Art Deco-inspired terra cotta panels detailed with cream/sage-green-colored motifs that include scrolls, vertical lines, and triangular shapes and are bordered by rowlocks. Arts and Crafts-inspired basketweave pattern brickwork is found in the uppermost gable portion of east

entrance pavilion, the original north entrance pavilion, and the north façade's two projecting entrance vestibules. Basketweave pattern brickwork also surrounds the east portal. Brick piers with triangular concrete caps alternate with the building's window bays, the spandrels of which feature decorative brickwork with a projecting rowlock pattern. A concrete panel in the north façade's original entrance pavilion is incised with the words "Oak Avenue School" in capital letters.

6. Openings

a. Doorways and doors

The building has six entrances: five on the first floor and one on the basement level. The north and south facades have two entrances apiece—one each on their east and west ends—and the east façade has one entrance. Four of these entrances feature original double wood doors with divided lights. The entrance on the east wing's north façade has a single wood door with divided lights. All doors on the first floor are original. There is also a metal service door at the basement level of the west wing.

b. Windows

Fenestration is comprised of metal-framed, one-over-one windows arranged in pairs, which are non-original. The gable ends of the east wing and the north gable end of the west wing each feature a bulls-eye window.

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor plans

The building's central block has double-loaded corridors on both floors. There are two stairwells: one in the center of the east wing and another at the southwest end of the central block. The former connects the first and second floors while the latter extends from the basement to the attic. The first and second floor plans are comprised of offices and meeting rooms of varying sizes. A large, two-story storage room (original gymnasium) occupies most of the west wing, and a small kitchen is situated at the west end of the second-floor hallway. Restrooms are located at the east and west ends of the central block on both floors.

2. Stairways

The building has two stairways: one in the center of the east wing and another at the southwest end of the central block. Both have metal newell posts, metal balustrades with wood hand railings, and their treads and risers are covered with carpeting. A short flight of steps ascends from the west entrance hall into an office space that originally served as the gymnasium's stage. A narrow

metal staircase situated within the northeast entrance vestibule ascends to a small space originally used as a projection room for the auditorium.

3. Flooring

The building's concrete flooring is exposed in the west stair hall and in the basement. It is primarily covered with wall-to-wall carpeting throughout the remainder of the building except for the large storage room in the west wing that originally served as the gymnasium (original maple flooring), and in the second-floor kitchen area and the rest rooms (ceramic tile flooring).

4. Wall and ceiling finish

Partition walls are finished in plaster or drywall except in the restrooms (ceramic tiles) and the attic and basement (exposed brick). The walls of the storage room in the west wing (former gymnasium) and in the hallways and stairwells feature high brick wainscoting painted white with wood coping. The wall at the east end of the second floor's central hallway features glass blocks. Ceilings are covered with acoustical tile systems.

5. Openings

a. Doorways and doors

The interior retains many original multi-light wood doors and solid wood paneled doors. Doorways have wood frames. Offices created by the subdivision of classrooms have non-original hollow wood doors.

6. Decorative features and trim

The hallways and some of the offices/meeting rooms have wood baseboard molding and wood cornices. Some of the offices and meeting rooms have closets with original built-in oak shelves, oak wall cabinets, oak wall shelving, and/or original wall thermostats. One former second-floor classroom in the southeast corner of the building retains its original chalkboard with wood surround. Walls in the hallways have alcoves that originally housed lockers or display cases. Such alcoves in the second-floor hallway have been infilled with either wood shelves or metal filing cabinets.

7. Mechanical equipment

a. Heating

A basement boiler provided steam heat to the radiators of the building, a few of which are extant. The building more recently featured gas forced air with baseboard heating units.

b. Lighting

Illumination is provided by fluorescent lighting that is either part of the acoustical tile ceiling systems or suspended from those systems.

c. Plumbing

The building has a total of five public restrooms: three on the first floor and two on the second floor, which are located at the east and west ends of the central block.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation

The north-facing building is situated on a square parcel that is 1.43 acres in size with frontages of 249'-9" on Oak Avenue on the north, and 250'-0" on Catherine and Kensington avenues on the east and west, respectively, all of which have concrete sidewalks and grass parkways.⁵² All three of these roadways are 66 foot-wide, asphalt-paved, residential streets with concrete curbs and sidewalks, and overhead streetlights. The south lot line abuts residential parcels with single-family houses.

The building's north façade is set back about 35 feet from Oak Avenue and the entrances on its east and west wings are approached from that street via concrete walkways. The east and west facades are each set back about 20 feet from Catherine and Kensington avenues, respectively. A concrete-paved parking lot accommodating 78 stalls and accessed from both Catherine and Kensington avenues via driveways is situated on the south side of the building.

The property is situated within a residential neighborhood on the south side of La Grange Park, which is comprised of single-family houses constructed in the late 1920s in a variety of historical revival styles.

2. Historic landscape design

The building's 1.43-acre parcel was originally landscaped with grass and had athletic fields on its south side. The present-day parking lot was installed in the late 1980s when the property was converted from a school to office use.

⁵² Dimensions obtained from: Cage Civil Engineering, Alta/NSPS Land Title Survey for 555 Kensington Avenue, February 1, 2022.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Architectural Drawings
J.C. Llewellyn Company, Chicago. First and Second Floor Plans of Oak Avenue School, 1928.
- B. Bibliography
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“Village Market is Tomorrow’s Market Today,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 6, 1952.

“Weigh school purchase,” *La Grange Citizen*, June 6, 1974.

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Withey, Henry F. and Elsie Rathburn Withey. *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)*. Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, 1970.

C. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated

It is possible that offices of School District 102 in La Grange may have archival materials on Oak Avenue School and/or Board of Education minutes from 1928 that presumably would include discussions regarding the construction of this school.

Detailed information on Joseph C. Llewellyn's professional career can be found in the master's thesis authored by Mary E. Ottoson, titled, "The Revival of a Master Architect: Joseph C. Llewellyn," submitted to The School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2009. A bound copy can be found in the SAIC's Flaxman Library. The papers of Llewellyn's architecture firm, J.C. Llewellyn & Associates, are on file at the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries, The Art Institute of Chicago, Accession Number 1992.5. This collection includes 61 boxes, four portfolios, five oversize portfolios, and flat file materials.

D. Sketch Plans

Current (2023) sketch floor plans are attached to this report.

E. Supplemental Material

A site plan, current sketch floor plans, original first and second floor plans, historic and current photographs of Oak Avenue School are attached to the end of this report.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

A. Research Strategy

The research strategy was to review a variety of primary and secondary sources, including books, newspaper articles, and historic photos, to develop a thorough history of Oak Avenue School, placing the building within the context of La Grange Park, as well as obtaining information on architect Joseph C. Llewellyn. Site visits to the building were planned to undertake photographic documentation for both the HIBS photographic submittal and use in developing a physical description of the building.

B. Actual Research Process

Primary and secondary source research was undertaken at La Grange Area Historical Society, the La Grange Public Library and the La Grange Park Public Library. General history books on La Grange Park history were reviewed at both libraries. The La Grange Area Historical Society has folders with extensive news clippings on Oak Avenue School from various decades, which were reviewed, as were historic exterior and interior historic photographs of the building and its original 1928 floor plans by the J.C. Llewellyn Company. This repository also has

historic photographs of other schools in the La Grange area that were designed by Llewellyn.

The newspapers.com and newsarchives.com databases were also reviewed for articles related to Oak Avenue School, La Grange Park history, and the work of architect Joseph C. Llewellyn. The finding aid for the J.C. Llewellyn and Associates Records on file at the Ryerson and Burnham Art and Architecture Archive was useful in identifying the names of other schools designed by this company in the Chicago metropolitan region. This collection contains original 1928 floor plans of Oak Avenue School and historic photographs of Lyons Township High School, which have been digitized, as have photographs and floor plans of the some of the firm's projects. These images can be seen via this link: [Search Results - Ryerson and Burnham Libraries and Archives \(oclc.org\)](#). Contemporary journal articles written by J.C. Llewellyn and published in *The American School Board Journal* were found on the HathiTrust digital archive, which was also useful in finding contemporary journal articles on the early twentieth century "platoon design" for schools.

C. Archives and Repositories Used

La Grange Public Library, La Grange, Illinois
La Grange Park Public Library, La Grange Park, Illinois
La Grange Area Historical Society, La Grange, Illinois
J.C. Llewellyn and Associates Records, 1894-1985, Art Institute of Chicago Archives, Research Center.

D. Project Team

1. Supervision

All aspects of this project were supervised and assembled by Jean L. Guarino, Ph.D., Principal of Guarino Historic Resources Documentation, Oak Park, Illinois. Dr. Guarino also served as project historian for this report and undertook digital field photography.

2. Sketch Plans

Sketch floor plans for this building were developed by McNaughton Development.

3. HIBS photographer

All black and white HIBS photography was undertaken by Leslie Schwartz, Leslie Schwartz Photography, Chicago.

This HIBS documentation project was undertaken to mitigate the adverse effects of a proposed project by McNaughton Development to raze this building and build single-family houses on its

three-acre site. The terms of the mitigation were agreed upon and executed to ensure compliance with the Illinois State Agency Historic Resources Preservation Act (20 ILCS 3420).

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Leslie Schwartz, photographer, December 2022

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| CK-2023-1.3 | East wing entrance pavilion, view west. |
| CK-2023-1.4 | East (left) and north (right) facades, view southwest. |
| CK-2023-1.5 | Original main entrance pavilion on north façade, view south. |
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CK-2023-1.2



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CK-2023-1.9



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CK-2023-1.11



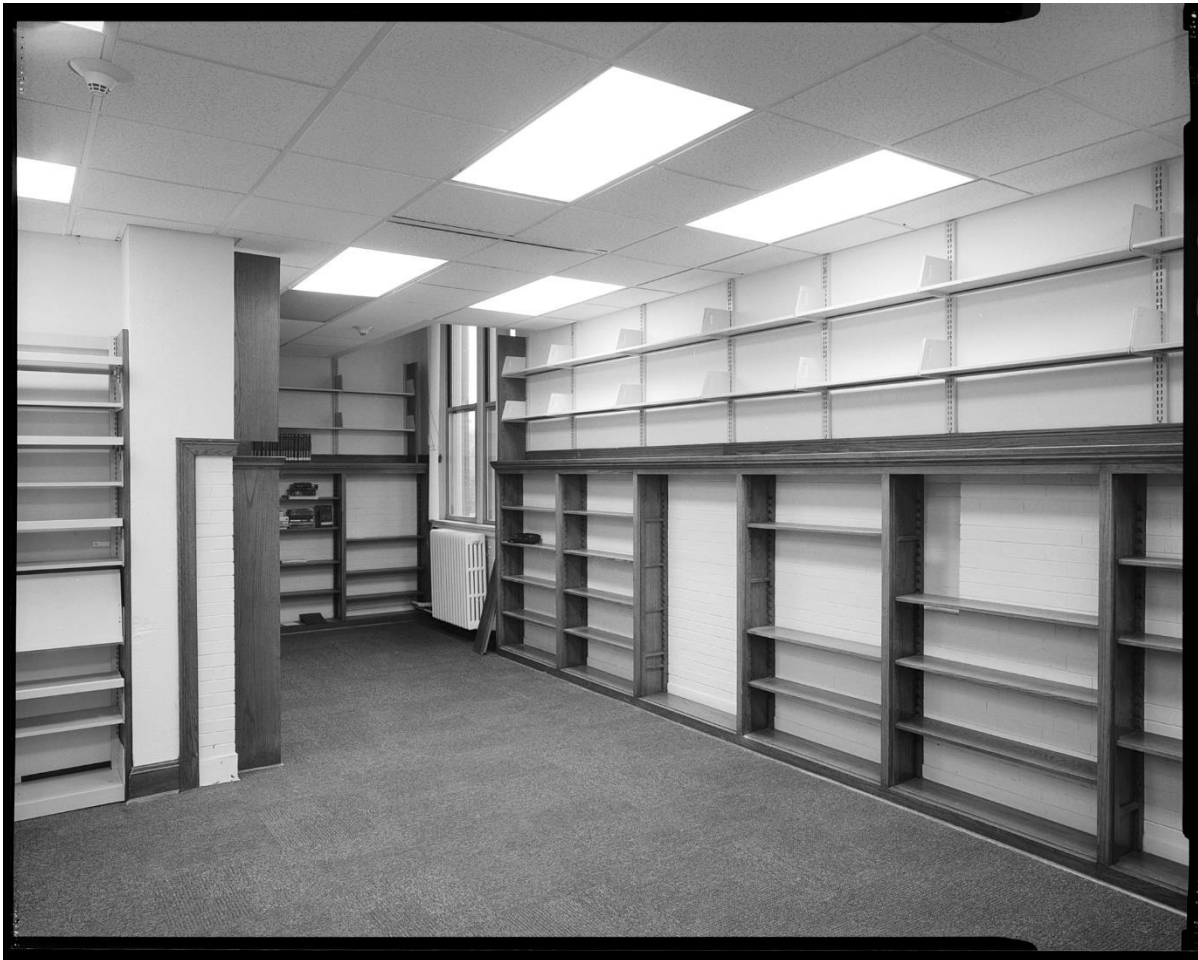
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CK-2023-1.20



CK-2023-1.21

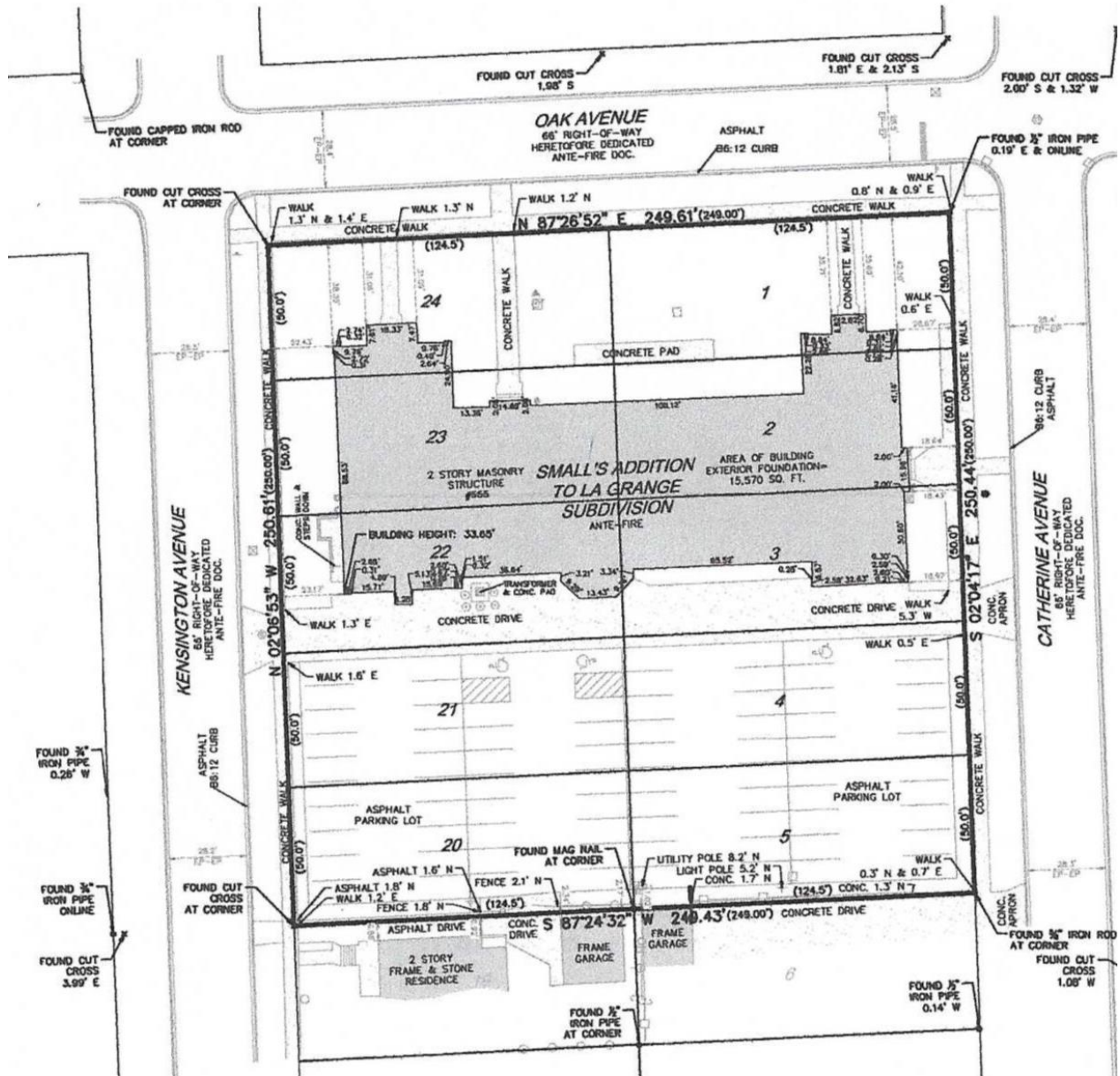


Figure 1: Site Plan of Oak Avenue School, 2023, courtesy of McNaughton Development.

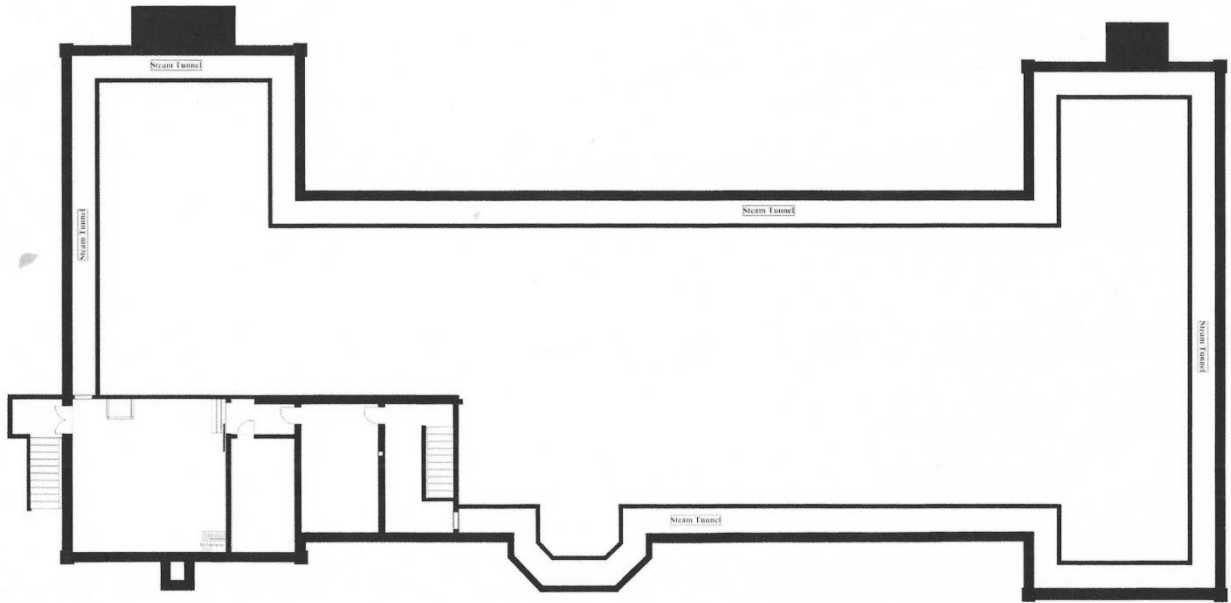


Figure 4: Basement Floor Plan of the American Nuclear Society Headquarters (former Oak Avenue School), 2023, courtesy of McNaughton Development.

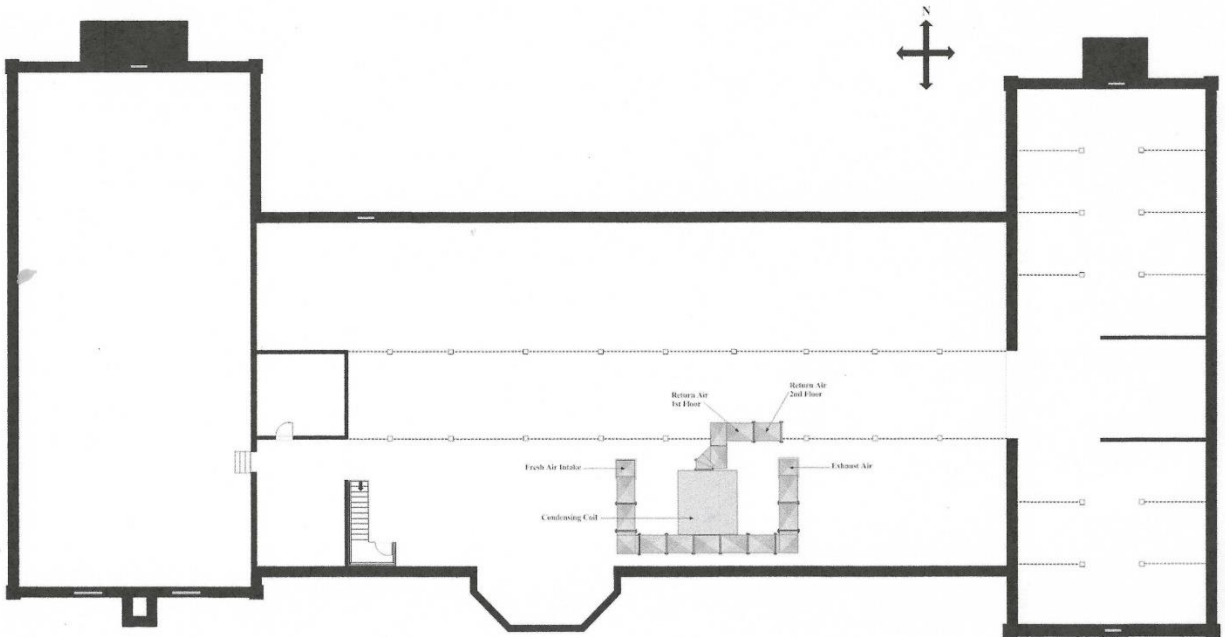


Figure 5: Attic Floor Plan of the American Nuclear Society Headquarters (former Oak Avenue School), 2023, courtesy of McNaughton Development.

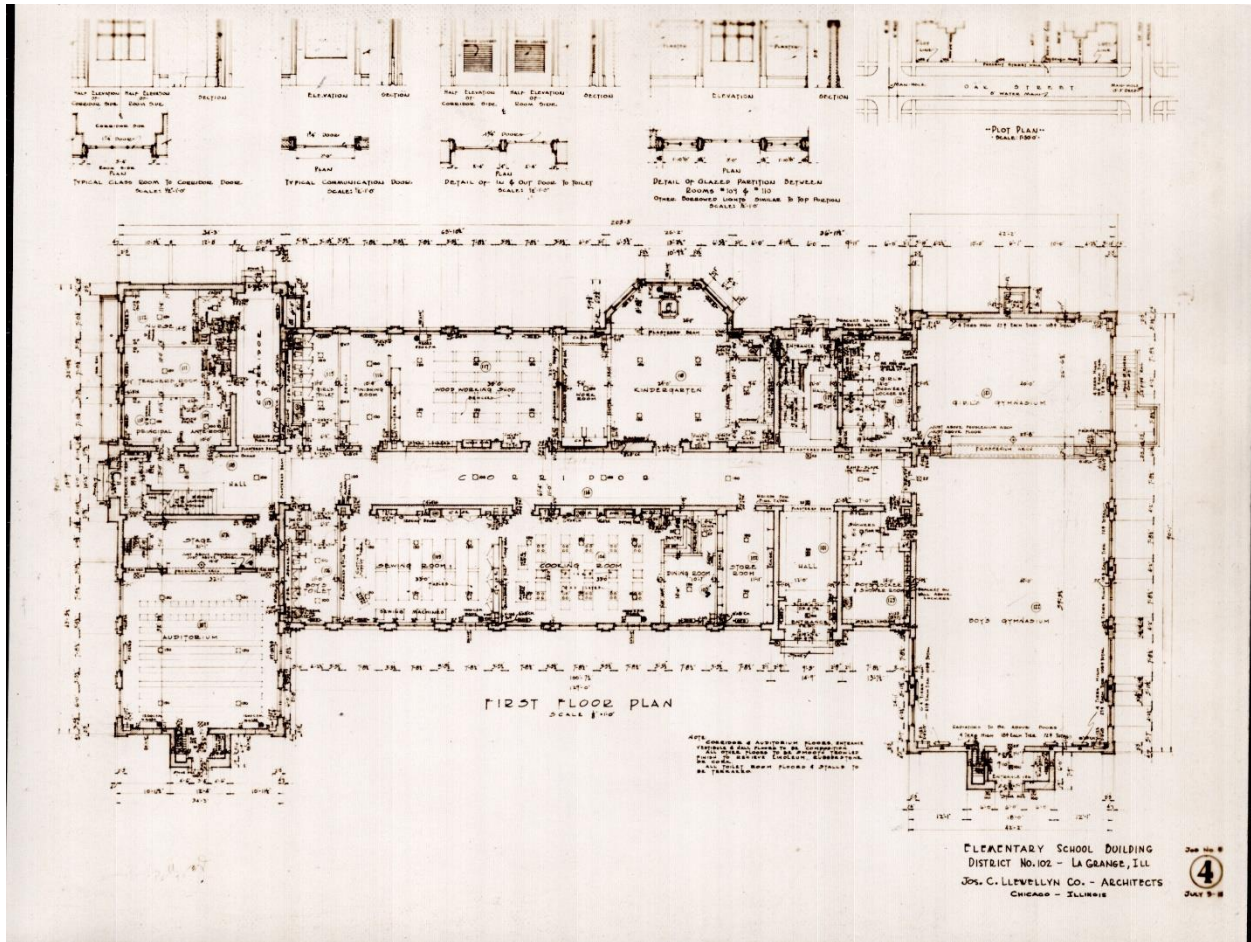


Figure 6: J.C. Llewellyn & Company, First Floor Plan of Oak Avenue School, 1928. Courtesy of the La Grange Area Historical Society.

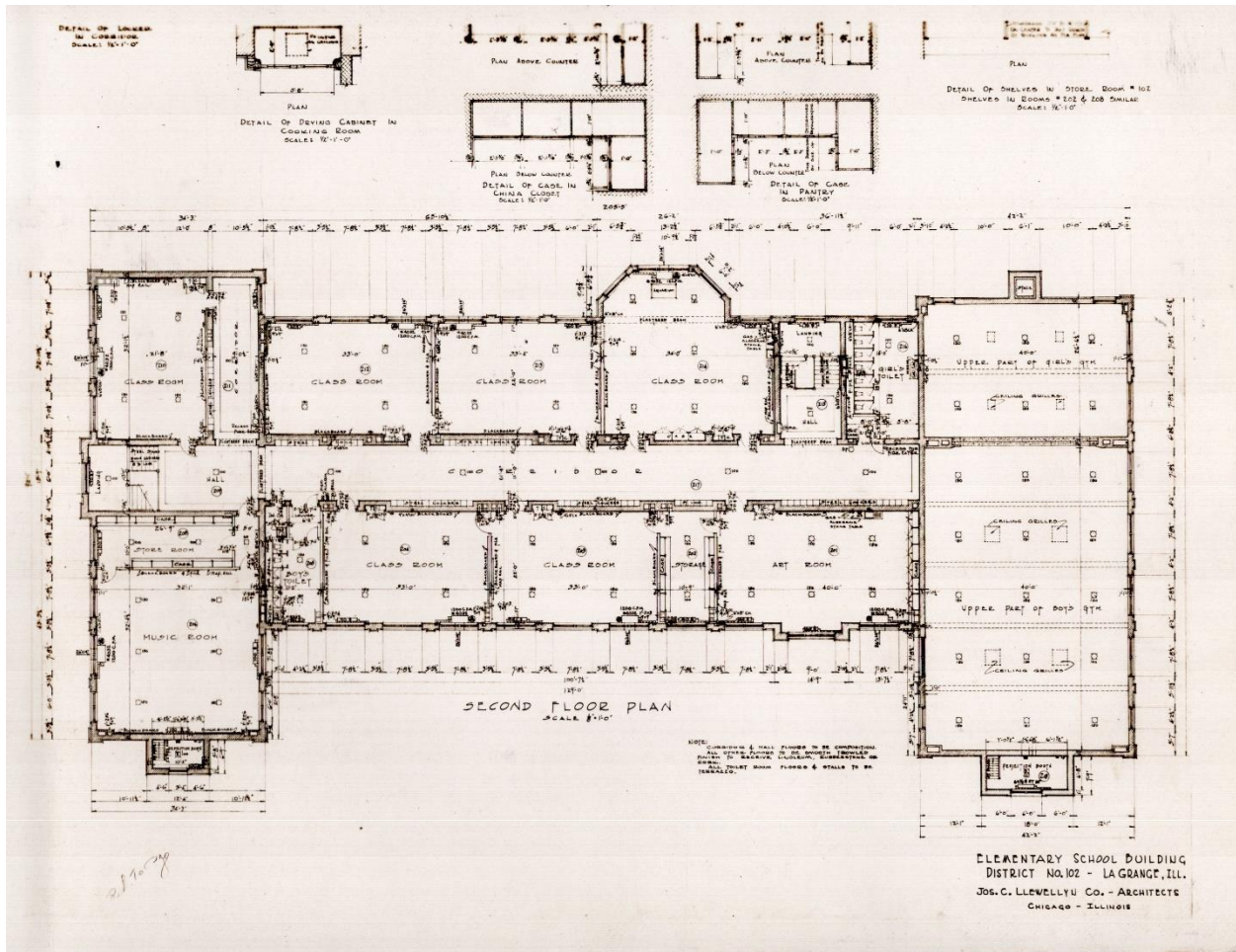


Figure 7: J.C. Llewellyn & Company, Second Floor Plan of Oak Avenue School, 1928. Courtesy of the La Grange Area Historical Society.



Figure 8: Oak Avenue School, 1930, view southwest, Chicago Architectural Photographing Company. Photo courtesy of the La Grange Area Historical Society.



Figure 9: Oak Avenue School, 1930, view southeast, Chicago Architectural Photographing Company. Photo courtesy of the La Grange Area Historical Society.



Figure 10: Original Auditorium in the north half of Oak Avenue School's east wing, 1929.
Photo courtesy of the La Grange Area Historical Society.



Figure 11: Original boys' gymnasium in the west wing of Oak Avenue School, view south toward the stage that also served as the girls' gymnasium, 1929.
Photo courtesy of the La Grange Area Historical Society.

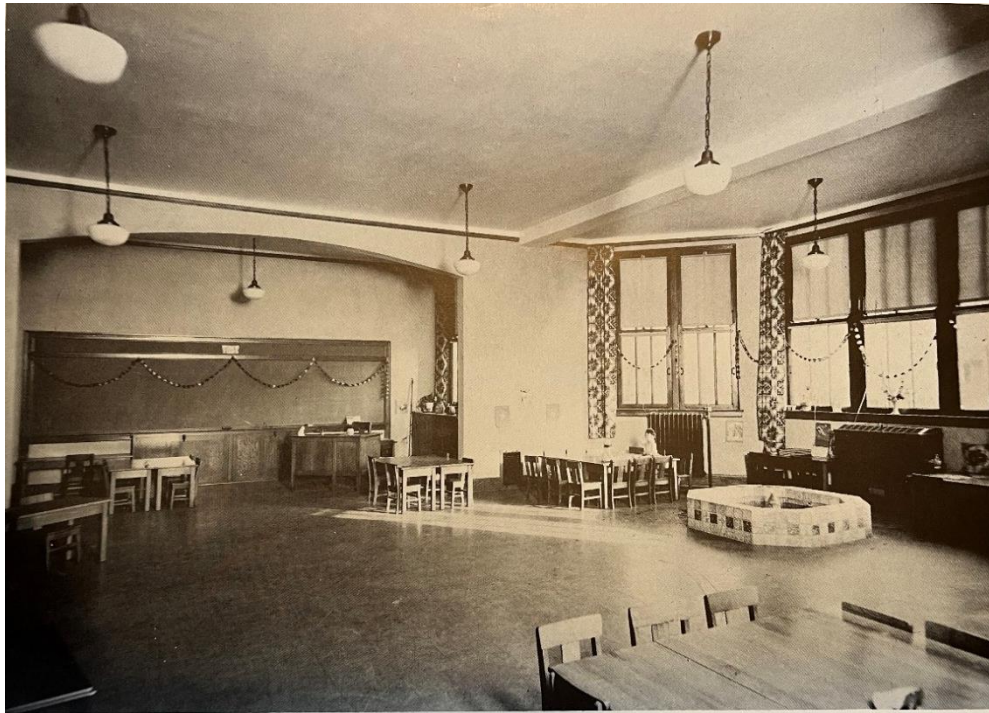


Figure 12: Original first floor kindergarten, 1929.
Photo courtesy of the La Grange Area Historical Society.



Figure 13: Original first floor cooking room, 1929.
Photo courtesy of the La Grange Area Historical Society.



Figure 14: Original first floor library, 1929.
Photo courtesy of the La Grange Area Historical Society.



Figure 15: Original nature study room, 1929.
Photo courtesy of the La Grange Area Historical Society.



Figure 16: Original art room, 1929. Photo courtesy of the La Grange Area Historical Society.



Figure 17: Original woodworking shop, 1930.
Photo courtesy of the La Grange Area Historical Society.



Figure 18: Oak Avenue School, Class of 1932.
Photo courtesy of the La Grange Area Historical Society.



Figure 19: Science Class, 1946.
Photo courtesy of the La Grange Area Historical Society.



Figure 20: Students participating in cooking class with stove in hallway, ca. 1940s.
Photo courtesy of the La Grange Area Historical Society.



Figure 21: Students showing side tables make in their woodworking class, c. 1960.
Photo courtesy of the La Grange Area Historical Society.



Figure 22: Student with sewing machine in her home arts class, 1965.
Photo courtesy of the La Grange Area Historical Society.



Figure 23: Art exhibits displayed in a hallway of Oak Avenue School, c. 1960s.
Photo courtesy of the La Grange Area Historical Society.

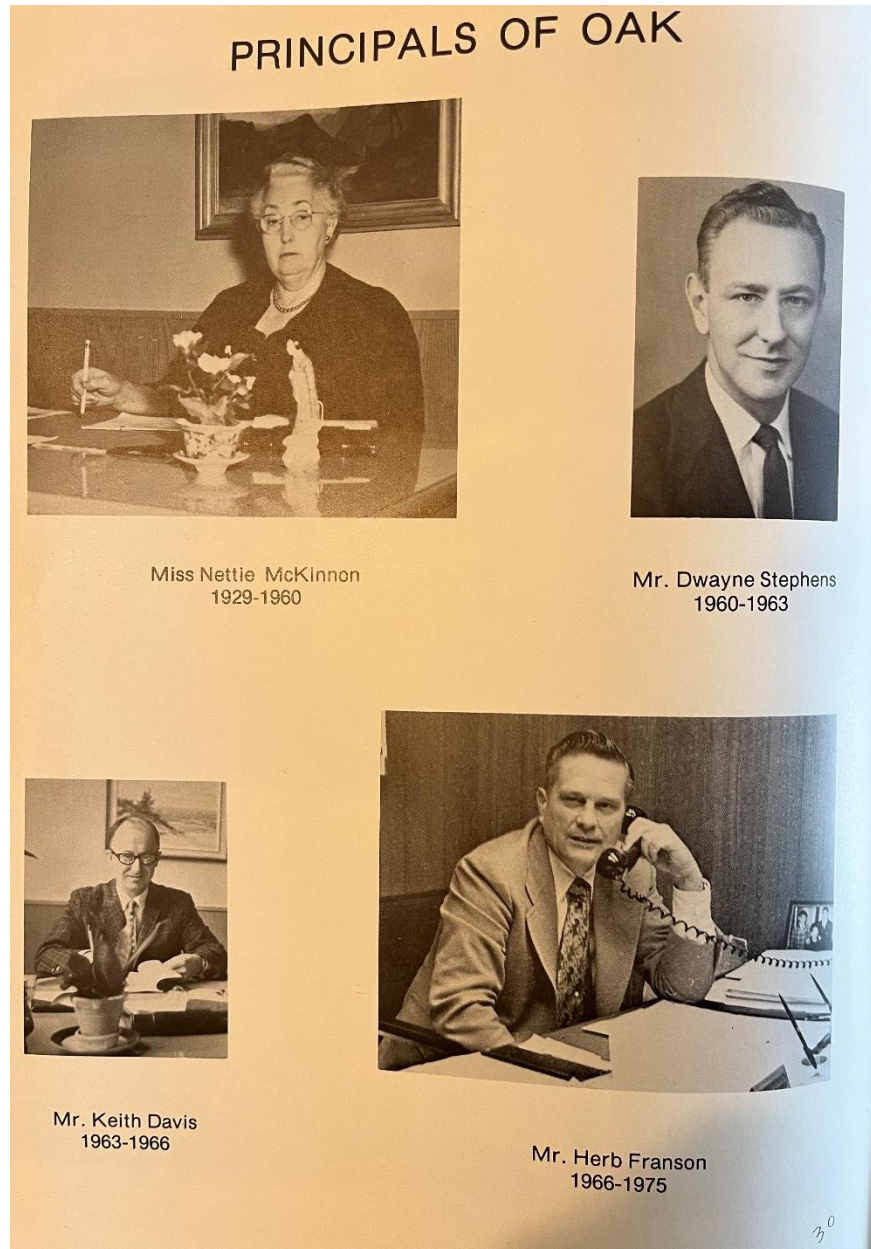


Figure 24: Principals of Oak Avenue School and the years of their tenures.
Source: *Farewell Oak School, 1930-1975*. La Grange, Illinois: School District 102, 1975.



Figure 25: Cossitt School, 1925, designed by J.C. Llewellyn & Associates.
Photo courtesy of the La Grange Area Historical Society.



Photo 1: East façade of east wing, view northwest.



Photo 2: East entrance pavilion, view west.



Photo 3: East portal with original doors, basketweave brickwork, and light sconces.



Photo 4: Upper portion of east entrance pavilion.



Photo 5: East façade, second floor detail, view west.



Photo 6: View southwest from Oak Avenue.



Photo 7: North façade of east wing with door that originally opened onto the auditorium, view south.



Photo 8: North façade, view southwest from Oak Avenue.



Photo 9: North façade with west wing on the right, view southwest.



Photo 10: North façade pavilion with “OAK AVENUE SCHOOL” inscribed in concrete spandrel panel above a group of windows that replaced an original entrance, view south.



Photo 11: Detail of decorative brickwork and terra cotta panels on the north façade of the west wing, view southwest.



Photo 12: North (left) and west (right) facades, view southeast.



Photo 13: West (left) and south (right) facades, view northeast.



Photo 14: West façade detail showing basement entrance.



Photo 15: Exterior chimney on west wing's south façade, view northwest.



Photo 16: South façade entrance, view north.



Photo 17: Terra cotta panels at parapet level of south façade, view north.



Photo 18: Detail of south façade window bays.



Photo 19: South (left) and east (right) facades, view northwest.



Photo 20: Entrance on east wing's south façade.



Photo 21: South (left) and east (right) facades, view northwest.



Photo 22: West stairwell.



Photo 23: View toward entrances to original girls' gymnasium (now office space; left) and the boys' gymnasium (right), first floor.



Photo 24: Storage room (original boys' gymnasium) in west wing.



Photo 25: Storage room (original boys' gymnasium) in west wing, view east.



Photo 26: View toward office (left) and double doors opening onto first floor hallway.



Photo 27: Double-loaded corridor on first floor, view east.



Photo 28: First floor office in original kindergarten room.



Photo 29: First floor office in original wood working room, view southwest.



Photo 30: First floor office in a portion of the original sewing room, view north.



Photo 31: First floor office in a portion of the original sewing room, view south.



Photo 32: Original thermostat in a former classroom space.



Photo 33: First floor hallway, view toward east stairwell.



Photo 34: Representative remodeled bathroom.



Photo 35: East wing corridor leading to south façade entrance, view south.



Photo 36: East wing's south entrance vestibule. The door on the left originally opened onto the waiting room for the nurse's office.



Photo 37: First floor meeting room that occupies the north half of the east wing, view northeast. This room replaced the original auditorium.



Photo 38: Original projection booth for the auditorium, which is situated above the east wing's north entrance vestibule.



Photo 39: Copy room in the east wing, view northeast. This room occupies the space that originally served as the auditorium's stage.



Photo 40: East stairwell, view southeast toward entrance toward door to a large room that was originally subdivided into three spaces: principal's office, teachers' room, and nurse's office.

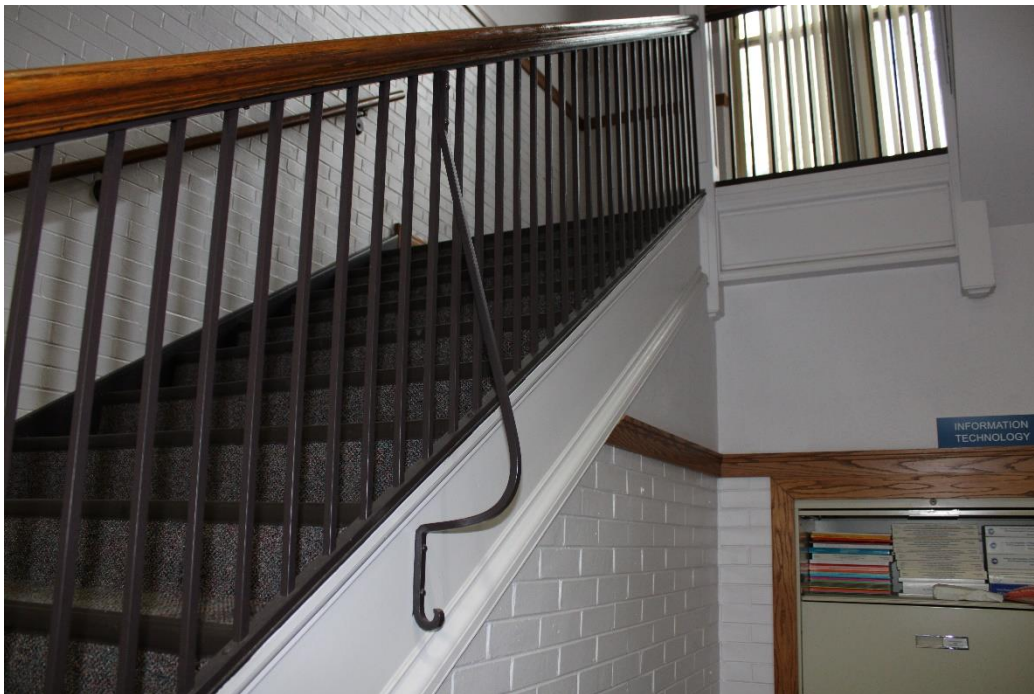


Photo 41: East stairway detail.



Photo 42: First floor space in the south half of the east wing. This space was originally subdivided into three rooms: principal's office, teachers' room, and nurse's office.



Photo 43: Second floor hallway, view east toward stairwell and glass block wall.



Photo 44: Double-loaded hallway on the second floor, view west.



Photo 45: Section of a second-floor room in the south half of the east wing, view south. This space replaced a corridor that originally led to a classroom, the door to which is shown on the left.



Photo 46: Portion of an original second-floor classroom in the south half of the east wing.



Photo 47: Large second-floor meeting room opening onto offices in the north half of the east wing. These spaces replaced the original music room.



Photo 48: Second-floor classroom converted to office space.



Photo 49: Portion of second-floor classroom converted to office space.



Photo 50: Second-floor classroom converted to office space, view east.



Photo 51: Original closet and wood doors/trim, in former second-floor classroom.



Photo 52: Second-floor classroom converted to office space.



Photo 53: Portion of original second-floor Art Room converted to office space.



Photo 54: Double-loaded hallway on the second floor, view east.



Photo 55: Door to west stairwell (left) and Women's Restroom (right), second floor.



Photo 56: West stairwell showing door to attic level.



Photo 57: Upper portion of west stairwell leading to attic.



Photo 58: Attic level above main block.



Photo 59: West wing's attic ceiling with steel trusses, view north.



Photo 60: Portion of west wing stairwell leading to basement.



Photo 61: Basement work room.



Photo 62: Basement work room.



Photo 63: Basement work room.



Photo 64: Basement furnace room.