

HISTORIC ILLINOIS BUILDING SURVEY

HIBS No. CK-2026-1

GIRLS' GYMNASIUM AT OAK PARK AND RIVER FOREST HIGH SCHOOL

<u>Location:</u>	The Girls' Gymnasium at Oak Park and River Forest High School (OPRFHS) was situated at the southeast corner of this building, which is located at 201 N. Scoville Street in Oak Park, Illinois.
<u>USGS Quadrangle:</u>	Cook
<u>Present Owner:</u>	Oak Park and River Forest High School District 200
<u>Present Use:</u>	Demolished ¹
<u>Significance:</u>	Oak Park and River Forest High School has been at the forefront of providing modern athletic facilities for girls that were on par with those provided for boys throughout its history. This was evidenced by the construction of a standalone Girls' Gymnasium Building in 1927-28 as part of the expansion of the school's athletic facilities, which included a separate Fieldhouse for boys. The athletic building for girls was endowed with beauty as well as state-of-the art facilities. The interior included a pool, which was a rarity at the time, and the walls of its surrounding space were graced by 15 tall relief sculptures of Classically-inspired nymphs that were imported from France. The two-story Girls' Gymnasium was designed by Childs and Smith (Frank A. Childs and William Jones Smith), a Chicago firm that specialized in educational buildings that included Hatch (1922) and Horace Mann (1927) Elementary Schools in Oak Park. Expansion of the Girls' Gymnasium Building with a third-story addition in 1957-58 (Shaw, Metz & Dolie), and the construction of a three-story north addition that connected it to the main high school building in 1967-68 (Everett I. Brown Company), provided more gymnasium spaces of varying sizes as well as a dance studio that coincided with the growth of athletic opportunities for female students, which by the 1970s included interscholastic teams in a wide variety of sports.

¹ The Girls' Gymnasium was demolished in 2024. As a result, all information related to its appearance was ascertained from a review of photographs and contemporary descriptions rather than through first-hand observation.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Dates of construction

1927-28 (original building)
1957-58 (third story addition over east side of building)
1967-68 (three-story addition at north end of the building)

2. Architects

Childs and Smith (original building)
Shaw, Metz & Dolio (1957-58 addition)
Everett I. Brown Company (1967-68 addition)

3. Original Appearance

The Girls' Gymnasium Building was completed in 1928 as a two-story standalone building that measured 171'-0" (north-south) and 125'-0" (east-west), was sheathed with both tan face brick (lower portion) and light orange face brick (upper portion) and had a flat roof. Its front (Scoville Avenue) and south (alley) facades featured a series of two-story, round-arch, multi-paned windows. The main entrance at the north end of the Scoville Avenue façade had a pair of glazed wood double doors with sidelights that were topped by a decorative grille and flanked by a pair of ornamental light sconces. A pair of stone medallions featuring the OPRF High School crest were situated on the wall above the entrance bay.

The main entrance opened onto a rectilinear lobby with terrazzo flooring and walls finished with tan glazed brick. At the west end of the lobby was a wide staircase with metal balustrades and newell posts. Adjacent to the south wall of the lobby were three small offices, two small storage rooms for gymnasium apparatus, and a coat room. A short, north-south corridor linked the lobby with the main gymnasium at the southeast corner of the building, which was two stories in height and measured 80 by 60 feet. The gymnasium had brick walls, maple flooring, and a balcony that extended across the full length of its north wall.

A large, two-story room at the southwest corner of the building housed the girls' swimming pool, which measured 40 by 75 feet and had blue and white mosaic tiles flooring. The pool room had a balcony along its east wall with a seating capacity of 180 that could be accessed by a stairway at its southeast corner. The pool director's office was in the northeast corner of this room, the walls of which were finished with tan glazed brick and graced by 15 low-relief panels representing Classical nymphs that were copies of work by Jean

Goujon, a sixteenth-century French sculptor. The ceilings of both the gymnasium and the pool room were spanned by steel beams and finished with acoustical tiles comprised of “an inch of balsam wool held in place by perforated aluminum plates” that were intended to prevent echoes and reverberations.²

The first floor of the Girls' Gymnasium Building also featured two large locker rooms—originally referred to as “dressing rooms”—flanking a shower room, all of which opened onto each other and were adjacent to the pool room's north wall. The locker rooms on both the first and second floors had individual dressing spaces, each with a hair dryer and a locker for students to store their possessions while in the pool.

The second-floor plan of the Girls' Gymnasium Building featured a central stair hall with a north-south corridor. This corridor opened onto an east gymnasium with maple flooring measuring 30 by 45 feet; the balconies that overlooked the first-floor pool room and the gymnasium; a locker room; a shower room; a classroom measuring 25 by 45 feet; and a toilet room.

4. Alterations and additions

The east side of the Girls Gymnasium Building received a third story addition in 1957-58 and was expanded about 12 feet northward at that time. The addition was sheathed in light orange face brick that matched the brick on the original building, featured a series of tall, rectangular window openings on all three sides, and had a flat roof. It featured a new classroom and toilet room to the north of the first-floor lobby; expanded the existing second-story gymnasium northward; and featured two new gymnasiums on the third floor. The Girls' Gymnasium Building was internally linked to the Boys' Fieldhouse around this time, when a two-story addition featuring storage rooms and locker rooms was constructed in the courtyard between the two buildings.

The Girls' Gymnasium became the southeast wing of the high school in 1967-68 when it received a three-story north addition that was internally connected on all three floors to the main building. The addition was comprised of a two-story gymnasium on the first floor and a third-floor gymnasium directly above, both of which had maple flooring and concrete block walls.

The Girls' Gymnasium experience various alterations through the years. Original glass panes in all the building's tall window openings were replaced with a combination of glass block and sliding glass windows at unknown

² “Dedication of Physical Education Buildings, Oak Park and River Forest Township High School, Oak Park, Illinois, March 10, 1929.”

date(s). The original glazed wood entrance doors were replaced by two pairs of metal glazed doors. The maple flooring in the first-floor southeast gymnasium was later covered with vinyl tiles and its original balcony replaced by an office and shower room. The configuration of the shower and locker rooms have changed somewhat over the years and toilet rooms have been installed within them.

B. Historical Context:

1. Oak Park and River Forest High School: Chronology of Construction

Oak Park and River Forest (OPFH) High School was erected over a 65-year period that extended from 1905 until the late 1960s, during which time the original building received numerous additions and its campus was enlarged to its present-day four-block size, encompassing the area between Lake Street, Erie Street, Scoville Avenue and Linden Street. Agitation for a new building was spurred by overcrowding at the three-story brick Oak Park Township High School building located at the southwest corner of Lake Street and East Avenue, which was built in 1891 and designed by Thomas & Rapp of Chicago in the Romanesque Revival style.³

The original four-story section of OPRF High School was erected from 1905-07 on the south two-thirds of the block bounded by Ontario Street, Erie Street, Scoville Avenue and East Avenue, the purchase of which was authorized by a referendum held on December 3, 1904. The commission was awarded to the architecture firm Patton & Spencer of Chicago, whose partners—Normand S. Patton and Robert C. Spencer—were residents of Oak Park and River Forest, respectively. The main entrance of the south-facing building was on the second story of the front (Ontario Street) façade and accessed via a pair of stone staircases that led to a projecting vestibule.⁴

OPRF High School's Italian Renaissance-inspired style featured round-arched windows on the fourth floor and a low, hip roof with overhanging eaves covered with red clay tiles. Full-height brick pilasters divided the building's facades into symmetrical bays featuring paired windows. This design aesthetic was emulated in subsequent additions to the school. A four-story west wing was built in 1909, creating a U-shaped footprint. It was designed by Patton and Miller, successors to the firm Patton and Spencer. A 1910 addition in the center of the north façade housed an auditorium with a horseshoe balcony that

³ *Oak Park and River Forest High School: 1873-1976* (Oak Park, Illinois: Osla Graphics, 1976) 12.

⁴ *Ibid*:13-14.

seated a total of about 1,200 people, somewhat more than the school's enrollment in that year.⁵

OPRF High School erected a three-story standalone building facing Erie Street, just north of the main building, in 1913. Two single-family houses facing East Avenue were demolished to make way for the new building, which was designed by Oak Park architect Eben E. Roberts to house a girls' gymnasium (first floor, west side), a two-story boys' gymnasium with steel truss ceiling that was encircled by a balcony-level running track (floors two and three, east side), as well as locker and shower facilities, manual training shops, and additional classrooms.⁶

The OPRF High School campus expanded westward in 1915 with the purchase of the undeveloped block bounded by Ontario Street, East Avenue, Linden Avenue and Lake Street for use as a football field that received a stadium designed by famed landscape architect Jens Jensen the following year. The Jensen stadium seated about 1,000 people and consisted of concrete seats built into a twelve-foot-high earthen embankment, according to an article in the March 4, 1916, issue of the *Oak Leaves*.

The high school building received a new four-story east wing in 1920 designed by architects Holmes & Flinn, the north section of which featured a 484-seat recital hall with a stage, balcony, and dressing rooms. A rapid increase in enrollment during the 1920s—which mirrored the concurrent population growth of Oak Park and River Forest during that decade—spurred the construction of a four-story, L-shaped addition in 1924 that wrapped around the west and north sides of the school. The northwest addition featured additional classrooms and study halls, a freight elevator, new basement mechanicals, and a third story bridge linking the main high school building to the Erie Street building.⁷

The high school's northwest addition was designed by Perkins, Fellows & Hamilton, the firm that also designed a new brick football stadium for the high school in 1924, which replaced the Jensen stadium but incorporated within its main entry gate the tunnel entry arch designed by E.E. Roberts for the earlier structure.⁸ The football team was a great source of community pride in the early 1920s due to the success of its teams, and plans for the new stadium

⁵ Ibid: 15-16.

⁶ Ibid: 17.

⁷ Ibid: 19-20.

⁸ *Oak Leaves*, July 19, 1924.

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enjoyed widespread local support. In less than two months, students raised \$100,000 for the stadium's construction.⁹

OPRF High School erected new physical education facilities in 1927-28 at the south end of its campus designed by the architecture firm Childs & Smith: a massive Boys' Fieldhouse with a swimming pool wing and an adjacent Girls' Gymnasium Building, which also included a swimming pool. The Boys' Fieldhouse faced East Avenue toward the football field, while the Girls' Gymnasium faced Scoville Avenue. Both facilities were standalone buildings separated by a courtyard and were connected to the main building by a tunnel that was built in 1930. The Boy's Fieldhouse measured 240 by 128 feet, was encircled by a running track, and featured a basketball court on its north end, a 1,200-seat balcony, and a steel truss ceiling with skylight. Upon completion of the Fieldhouse, the boys' gymnasium in the 1913 Erie Street Building was repurposed as a lunchroom. The girls' gymnasium on the first floor of the Erie Street Building continued in use to supplement the facilities in the new Girls' Gymnasium Building.¹⁰

The 1950 Sanborn Fire Insurance map shows that the Erie Street Building was connected to the main high school building on all three floors by that time. The swimming pool wing of the Boys' Fieldhouse received a second story addition in 1953. A third-floor addition with two new gymnasiums was built along the east side of the Girls' Gymnasium Building in 1957-58. The addition was designed by Shaw, Metz & Dolio, the same firm hired to undertake the interior reconstruction of the high school's north wing (original Erie Street Building) in 1958-59, thanks to a \$2 million bond issue that was approved by the voters on November 2, 1957.¹¹ Work included the removal of the boys' and girls' gymnasiums, installation of a modern cafeteria and kitchen, and the construction of a library, new industrial arts rooms and classrooms. Existing wood beams were replaced by steel and concrete beams.¹²

OPRF High School undertook a \$9 million expansion and remodeling program between 1966-68 that was designed by the Everett I. Brown Company, an Indianapolis-based architecture and engineering firm. The

⁹ *Oak Parker*, September 5, 1924.

¹⁰ "Dedication of Physical Education Buildings, Oak Park and River Forest Township High School, Oak Park, Illinois, March 10, 1929."

¹¹ OPRF High School signed a contract with Shaw, Metz & Dolio for both projects on 31 May 1956, according to the OPRF High School Board of Education Minute, 28 July 1958.

¹² *Tabula*, Oak Park and River Forest High School, 1959; "Oak Park High Bond Issue To Be Voted On," *Chicago Tribune* (27 October 1957); "District Sells \$2,000,000 In School Bonds," *Chicago Tribune* (9 March 1958).

project centerpiece was the construction of a large three-story addition that connected the main building with its physical education facilities at the south end of its campus. The addition included a 1,700-seat auditorium with stage, a two-story student center that also served as a lobby for the auditorium and featured a mezzanine, a little theater, a 714-seat south cafeteria and a 434-seat north cafeteria, all on the first floor, as well as 54 new classrooms, seven offices for deans, and two large group instruction centers on the upper floors.¹³

The Girls' Gymnasium Building was internally connected to, and became the southeast wing of, the main high school building in the late 1960s when it was expanded northward with the construction of a two-story gymnasium and a third-story dance studio. The Fieldhouse and the Girls' Gymnasium Building were internally connected during this decade, when a two-story addition with a weight room and additional storage and locker rooms was installed in the courtyard that formerly separated the two facilities.

The block bounded by Ontario Street, East Avenue, Linden Avenue, and Erie Street was acquired by the high school in the 1960s as its residential parcels became available for purchase, and it was developed with a baseball field and tennis courts. A two-block segment of East Avenue was closed to create a pedestrian mall between the school and its outdoor athletic facilities. OPRF High School's four-block campus was finally completed in 1974, thanks to the acquisition of two apartment buildings situated between Lake Street and the physical education buildings, which were replaced by a new playing field the following year.¹⁴

A \$42.2 million renovation undertaken in 2020-23 included the construction of a two-story Student Resource Center on the west side of OPRF High School as well as the replacement of the south cafeteria, the addition of 15 classrooms, and the renovation of 65 classrooms and many other spaces. The Girls' Gymnasium Building that comprised the southeast wing of the high school was razed in 2024. It was replaced by a new addition, completed in 2026, that includes a pool with balcony, a multi-purpose competition gymnasium, classrooms and offices for the physical education department, a dance room, yoga room, and a weight room.¹⁵

¹³ "Dedication of Oak Park and River Forest High School New Addition, November 8-9, 1968."

¹⁴ *Annual Report*. Oak Park and River Forest High School, 1968; "Dedication of Oak Park and River Forest High School New Addition, November 8-9, 1968."; *Oak Park and River Forest High School: 1873-1976* (Oak Park, Illinois: Osla Graphics, 1976).

¹⁵ "Major Projects Summary," in: <https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1768598058/oprfhsorg/yc2lnhktmudc8xnmi5li/FacilitiesProjectsSummary.pdf> (Accessed April 29, 2026).

2. Girls' Gymnasium Building: Construction and Enlargement

Construction of the Girls' Gymnasium Building and the adjacent Boys' Field House at the south end of the OPRF High School campus in the late 1920s was spurred by the inadequacy of the existing physical education facilities to meet the needs of its rapidly expanding student population. When the girls' and boys' gymnasiums opened in the school's newly constructed Erie Street Building in 1913, enrollment stood at 1,070. By 1927, enrollment had tripled to about 3,000, reflecting the dramatic population growth of both villages. Oak Park's population expanded from 19,444 to 63,982 between 1910 and 1930, while the population of River Forest grew from 2,456 to 8,829 during the same period. OPRF High School also included students from west suburban Elmwood Park and River Grove prior to the 1950s, when both communities built their own high schools (Elmwood Park High School and Leyden Township High School) and withdrew from the district.

Planning for the construction of new physical education facilities began in the mid-1920s, when OPRF High School officials predicted that enrollment would eventually increase to 5,000 or more students. Such growth in the study body could not be accommodated by the existing boys' and girls' gymnasiums in the school's 1913 Erie Street Building, which had only enough space to accommodate half the student body in 1925. As a result, only 50 percent of the school's female students were enrolled in the Girls' Physical Education Department in 1925.¹⁶ This situation was recognized as unacceptable as the standard at the time was daily physical education instruction for all four years.

The Building and Grounds Committee of the high school's Board of Education passed a motion on 2 March 1925 to enter into a contract with the Chicago firm Childs & Smith (Frank A. Childs and William Jones Smith) as architects for the new athletic facilities, a project originally estimated to cost \$500,000. Payment to Childs & Smith was specified as a fee not more than six percent of the cost of construction.¹⁷

School Principal M.R. (Marion Ross) McDaniel was actively involved in planning the new athletic facilities, as was Marjorie Hull, who served as the Head of Girls Physical Education from 1915-27, and several members of the OPRF High School Board of Education's Building and Grounds Committee. Their aim was to create modern facilities where a variety of activities could be conducted simultaneously and could be expanded in the future should the need arise.

¹⁶ OPRF High School Board of Education Minutes, 3 November 1925: 91.

¹⁷ OPRF High School Board of Education Minutes, 2 March 1925: 131.

OPRF High School officials sought information from other educational institutions over the course of two years to develop the plan that was eventually adopted. Their research included site visits to various universities and high schools and discussions with educators, architects and authorities in the field of physical training. For example, on 2 March 1925, Majorie Hull gave a detailed report to the Board of Education of her trip to Madison, Wisconsin, where she visited the gymnasiums at the University of Wisconsin and East Madison High School.¹⁸ Officials determined that the latest trend at the college/university level was away from the traditional gymnasium in favor of the construction of field houses that included the usual gymnasium in addition to many other facilities for training.¹⁹

The Board of Education's Building and Grounds Committee spent much of 1926 and early 1927 reviewing, commenting on, and amending plans created by Childs & Smith for the high school's new athletic facilities, and approving bids from contractors and subcontractors. Committee meetings were sometimes attended by architect Frank A. Childs to present sketches of the firm's various schemes, which were reworked continuously during this period.

George Harvey Jones, President of the OPRF High School's Board of Education, released a statement on 21 May 1927, publicly announcing the final approved plans for the new physical education buildings, which consisted of a fieldhouse for boys and a gymnasium for girls, each with its own pool. Jones stressed the urgent need for additional training facilities, noting that at present "a large number of students must forego the regular, frequent, physical training which is a desirable part of high school work."²⁰ The concept was unique, as multi-use field houses were a rarity in high schools nationwide at that time, as were separate physical education buildings featuring pools for boys and girls. Jones emphasized the novelty of the project at the high school level:

While few or no high schools have yet adopted this modern system, which universities are putting into practice, its advantages are so apparent and our high school's prestige in this field is so great that we felt our students deserved the best that could be provided. Accordingly, we have planned this unique development for the Oak Park and River Forest Township high school.²¹

¹⁸ OPRF High School Board of Education Minutes, 25 March 1926: 133.

¹⁹ "High Field House," *Oak Leaves* (21 May 1927).

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

An article in the *Chicago Tribune* underscored the novelty of the proposed athletic complex, noting that once complete, OPRF High School would have “physical training equipment comparable to most of our big colleges and probably unequaled by any high school in the world.”²² The Girls’ Gymnasium and the Boys’ Fieldhouse were intended as standalone buildings separated by a courtyard, with the former facing Scoville Avenue and the latter facing East Avenue toward the football stadium, at the south end of the OPRF High School campus. The site was separated from the main high school building by Ontario Street and several residential parcels, three of which then featured houses.

Architect Frank A. Childs gave a slide presentation on the final adopted designs of the fieldhouse and girls’ gymnasium at a public meeting of the Board of Education held 18 May 1927. He considered the plans to be “far in advance of the most modern planning of this type of buildings” and showed through plans and drawings how the buildings could be connected to future academic additions.²³ The new facilities were intended to “ensure opportunity for each student to enjoy daily physical training throughout the entire four-year course,” according to board President Jones, who also noted:

The buildings when completed will make it possible for 300 boys and 300 girls to take their training at the same time. This unique program will offer a great variety of facilities suitable for every age and condition. They not only will serve the present needs, but by adding planning units as required, will be adequate even when our maximum attendance is reached.²⁴

The Board of Education entered a contract with Duffin Iron Works for steel construction of the new athletic buildings on 9 June 1927. The General Contract for the project was awarded to H.D. Moreland Company on 20 October 1927 and work on the athletic complex began the following month. The general contract included masonry and carpentry work, roofing, painting, hardware, and terrazzo.²⁵ The Girls’ Gymnasium and the Boys’ Fieldhouse were completed in early 1929 at a cost of \$735,000 for both facilities. They were officially dedicated during a public open house held on 10 March 1929.

The two-story Girls’ Gymnasium Building was sheathed with tan and light orange face brick, and had a series of multi-paned, round-arch windows along its front (Scoville Avenue) and alley facades. The interior featured a large

²² “Oak Park High Boys and Girls to Have Gyms,” *Chicago Tribune* (6 November 1927).

²³ OPRF High School Board of Education Minutes, 19 May 1927: 87.

²⁴ “High Field House,” *Oak Leaves* (21 May 1927).

²⁵ OPRF High School Board of Education Minutes, 20 October 1927: 51.

gymnasium and a pool room in its southeast and southwest corners respectively. The gymnasium measured 80 by 60 feet, had a balcony across its north wall, and was intended for gymnastics, games and apparatus work. Fifteen tall, low-relief panels representing Classical nymphs that were copies of work by Jean Goujon, a sixteenth-century French sculptor, graced three walls of the pool room, which had a 180-seat balcony along its east wall.²⁶ The pool itself measured 40 by 75 feet and its flooring was covered with blue and white mosaic tiles. Both the gymnasium and the pool room had acoustical tile ceilings that were comprised of "an inch of balsam wool held in place by perforated aluminum plates to prevent echoes and reverberations."²⁷

The Girl's Gymnasium Building also contained three large dressing rooms, two on the first floor and one on the second floor, as well as one large shower room on each level that included individual stalls and towel areas. Each of the individual dressing spaces included a hair dryer and a locker. The second floor also featured a room used for dance classes (labeled "Special Exercise Room" on the floor plan) and a classroom intended for lectures on health topics.

The 1929 issue of the *Tabula*, the high school's annual yearbook, provided a description of the Girls' Gymnasium Building:

As we entered the new girls' gymnasium we realized that such a building was really beyond comparison. The combination of beauty and utility surpassed our most ambitious expectations. Every space available had its use and was provided with light and comfort. The entrance leads toward the stairway which divides at the first landing. We ascended the steps to the north and entered a light, cheerful room in which the corrective classes meet. At the other end of the hall is the room for the dancing classes.

Downstairs we entered a room that was filled with all the luxuries that delight a girl. Lovely mirrors above miniature washbowls satisfied her craving for a well-dressed appearance. As she must dress in a few moments, she is grateful for the automatic hair driers which dry her hair at the same time that she dresses. Each girl has an individual dressing room and her own locker. After the crowded conditions of the former years, such conditions are ideal.

The gym occupies the entire southeast corner of the main floor. The equipment is complete for basketball, baseball, and other indoor sports. On the north side of the room is a balcony, which will take care of the

²⁶ "Oak Park High Shows Gyms to Visitors Today," *Chicago Tribune* (10 March 1929).

²⁷ "Dedication of Physical Education Buildings, Oak Park and River Forest Township High School, Oak Park, Illinois, March 10, 1929."

spectators. Large windows on the east and south sides furnish plenty of light and air. The five day gym classes certainly are well accommodated.

The pride of every girl is the swimming pool. To dive into its blue-green waters and to swim is, in the opinion of many, the most ideal way of spending a gym period. The lovely nymphs in the panels seem envious of such pleasure for they in their graceful positions are never to be permitted such enjoyment.

The ceiling has been so constructed that the sounds are deadened, yet the room is never quiet when the pool is being used. The balcony on the east side permits visitors to enjoy the pool without being showered. Life preserves are ready for immediate use, but each girl is already protected by another girl whom she selects as her 'buddy' lifeguards are present in each group also. The swimming instructor is present either in her office from where she has complete view of the pool, or near the pool itself. Swimming is new to girls' gymnastic curriculum, but it is proving to be one of the most popular sports.²⁸

A contemporary description of the Girl's Gymnasium Building was also provided in the 1929 dedication booklet for the new physical education buildings:

Every girl in the high school has the opportunity to swim at least once each week, and many are in the pool three times. Careful inspection for cleanliness and the requirement for each girl to wear rubber shoes in the shower rooms assure everyone of a perfect sanitary condition. About 400 girls use the pool each day.

In the swimming dressing room small box lockers are installed in which the girls may place all valuable articles. In each dressing room there is an individual hair dryer. In the gymnasium dressing room, each girl has her own locker in her dressing room booth. Forty-four individual showers between the two dressing rooms make it possible for both the swimming and gymnasium classes to get their showers from the same central control. Convenient clothes chutes to the laundry room help to facilitate the disposal of used towels and suits.

On the second floor, girls who have faulty posture habits or structural disability work in the remedial gymnastic room. There are 350 girls in this group. In each class period information is given to about 60 girls on health topics. Each one is attempting to solve her own health problem and to learn more about the general care of the body.

²⁸ *Tabula*. Oak Park and River Forest High School, 1929.

The 1929 dedication booklet also emphasized the health precautions taken in both the girls' and boys' pools:

Every possible precaution is taken to protect and develop the health of the pupils. The water in both pools, for example, is circulated through filters, the total amount passing through every twelve hours. It is further purified with chlorine gas by means of automatic chlorinators. Fresh water is continually being added, causing an overflow of surface water. The walls and bottom of the pools are regularly cleaned with vacuum cleaners. Daily bacterial tests of the water are made by the Health Department and in our own laboratories. A clean towel is furnished each pupil after the daily shower which is required after exercise on the floor or before entering the pool. For the towel service a uniform fee of one dollar per semester is charged which covers only about one-half of the actual cost. This fee will approximately cover the cost when the installation of our own laundry is completed.²⁹

The main gymnasium in the new Girls' Gymnasium Building, though large, was insufficient to accommodate all female students in the high school upon its completion. As a result, the old girls' gymnasium in the school's 1913 Erie Street Building continued in use for the next quarter century. In 1956, agitation to reconstruct and modernize the interior of the Erie Street Building—which by then was connected to, and comprised the north wing of, the high school—included plans to remove the old girls' gymnasium. This project spurred school officials to construct a third-story addition to the Girls' Gymnasium Building and finally bring all girls' physical education facilities together under the same roof.³⁰

The *Trapeze*, the high school's student newspaper, published a drawing on 11 October 1956 of the Girls' Gymnasium Building with the proposed third story addition and provided a description of the plans:

By the 1950s the girls' old gym in the main building had been inadequate for many years due to poor lighting, poor ventilation, poor locker facilities and no shower facilities. The plan is to construct a new gym on the third floor of the present girls' building to take the place of this old gym. (A third gym will be constructed on the third floor of the girls' building.) This is an additional station, making three gyms available for girls' activities.

²⁹ “Dedication of Physical Education Buildings, Oak Park and River Forest Township High School, Oak Park, Illinois, March 10, 1929.”

³⁰ “Vote Yes! For the High School Bond Issue, Saturday November 3rd. 1956.”

On the first floor a classroom and a restroom will be built at the north end of the main lobby. The restroom on the first floor will eliminate having to climb to the second floor. On the second floor the posture gym will be extended over the near classroom. This room will be used as the dance studio and corrective exercise room. The old health education room will be converted into a locker room for the second and third floor gyms. This locker room will use the existing shower room on the second floor. Third floor will consist of one large gym, one small gym, and an office for teachers.³¹

The *Chicago Tribune* announced in February 1957 that the OPRF High School Board of Education was “going ahead with plans to complete the Girls’ Gymnasium with funds from current income” prior to securing bond money to rebuild the north wing.³² The Chicago architecture firm Shaw, Metz & Dolio was hired to design the third story addition, work on which began in May 1927 and was completed in early 1958.³³ The addition, which spanned the east side of the building, was sheathed in light orange face brick that matched the brick on the original building, featured a series of tall, rectangular window openings on all three sides, and had a flat roof. It included a new classroom and restroom to the north of the first-floor lobby; expanded the existing second-floor gymnasium northward; and had two new gymnasiums on the third floor.

The Girls’ Gymnasium Building became the southeast wing of ORRF High School in 1967-68 when it received a three-story north addition that was internally connected on all three floors to the main building. The addition, designed by the Everett I. Brown Company of Indianapolis, featured a two-story gymnasium on the first floor and a third-floor gymnasium directly above, which was intended as a dance studio.³⁴

Although the high school undertook minor renovations to both its pools over the years, they needed major repairs by 2022. Their basement walls and floors suffered from water leakage, corrosion, cracks and efflorescence from the constant presence of moisture, although the west (boys’) pool appeared to be in far worse condition than the east (girls’) pool. The west pool was closed, and the east pool was subsequently used by all students.³⁵

³¹ “Building Addition to Girls’ Gym Would Look Like This,” *The Trapeze* (11 October 1956).

³² “Plan 2nd Vote on Rebuilding Oak Park High,” *Chicago Tribune* (14 February 1957).

³³ Shaw, Metz & Dolio was identified as the architect of the addition in the OPRF Board of Education Minutes, dated 21 March 1957. “Oak Park High Bond Issue To Be Voted On,” *Chicago Tribune* (27 October 1957).

³⁴ Dedication of Oak Park and River Forest High School New Addition, November 8-9, 1968.

³⁵ “OPRF shuts down one of its aging pools,” *Wednesday Journal* (8 March 2022).

OPRF High School's entire southeast wing—which constituted the original Girls' Gymnasium Building—was razed in 2024 to make way for a new physical education facility with a larger pool as part of the second phase of the Imagine OPRF capital improvement plan. The bas-relief sculptures and some of the decorative tile from the east (girls') pool were salvaged and preserved, and some of them are slated for installation in the new building once it is completed in 2026.

3. Physical Education and the Girls' Gymnasium Building

OPRF High School was in the forefront of providing modern athletic facilities for girls that were on par with those provided boys over the years. Course offerings in the Girls' Physical Education Department evolved from an early focus on non-competitive physical activities to a wide range of sports that grew in correlation with the expansion of the Girls' Gymnasium Building in 1958 and 1968.

Activities like gymnastics and calisthenics were becoming an essential part of school curricula in the early twentieth century, emphasizing the importance of health and fitness as part of a well-rounded education for young women. The girls' gymnasium in the high school's 1913 Erie Street Building measured 80 by 56 feet in size, accommodated up to 80 students, and had a full-width balcony. It was innovative for its provision of a basketball court, which provided an activity traditionally associated with male students. The space also included a variety of modern apparatus, described in the *Tabula*:

Pipe beams along the ceiling support various attachments such as rope ladders, swings and flying rings...Girls are not attracted by a straight smooth climbing pole, yet they must learn to climb. So the gymnasium is equipped with some "coaxing" devices. The first of these is called a ball rope with maple knobs to assist the goal—the lofty top. This end achieved, she confronts the next stage in the art of climbing, a robe with knots at twelve-inch intervals...There is a balance swing or teeter-ladder, very tempting to those who naturally shun overhead apparatus, because it does not take one so very far from earth and affords promise of a safe and timely return.

Three Swedish booms, for turning and jumping purposes, are adjustable, and when not in use are swung back to the wall like a gate. Twenty-six stall bars, each three feet wide, and a series of maple bars, occupy the entire east wall of the gymnasium. Six pairs of flying rings of adjustable length, with such trapeze attachments as swings and flying bars, hang suspended from the pipe beams.

The basketball floor is of regulation length. The back stops being made of glass, the view from the gallery is not obstructed....After the gymnasium class or the basketball game is finished, with the accommodation of 356 lockers, 64 dressing rooms, and 9 showers, there will not be the crowding and pushing there was formerly in the old building.³⁶

When OPRF High School planned to expand their athletic facilities in the late 1920s, it is notable that they provided a separate, modern building with a pool for the Girls' Physical Education Department, rather than simply assigning the old boys' gymnasium in the Erie Street Building to the female students. Space and its use was historically a problem in many coeducational settings for female athletic staff and their students who were often deemed less worthy (than males) of using top-notch athletic facilities.³⁷

OPRF High School was also ahead of its time for including a pool in the new Girls' Gymnasium Building, at a time when pools at coeducational high schools were a rarity, much less the provision of two pools for separate use by girls and boys. Care was taken to endow the new building for girls with beauty as well as state-of-the-art facilities. The walls of the space that housed the pool were graced by 15 tall, relief sculptures of Classically-inspired nymphs that were imported from France. This space—and the building's main gymnasium—featured two-story windows that provided an abundance of light and air as well as full-width balconies used as spectator seating or by students unable to participate in physical activities during gym periods.

Florence Griffin Martin became the successor to Marjorie Hull as head of the Girls' Physical Education Department in 1927, assisted by several female staff members.³⁸ The department offered a robust program of gymnastics, dancing, tennis, and field hockey as well as other sports traditionally associated with boys, such as basketball and baseball. Activities were divided between the new building and the old gymnasium in the Erie Street Building, as well as some off-campus sites that included facilities with tennis courts and public golf courses.

About 400 girls used the pool each day and the department offered classes for beginners and advanced swimmers as well as diving classes. The swimming department separated the girls into three groups distinguished by the color of their caps. "White caps for girls who have passed their Junior Red Cross

³⁶ *Tabula*. Oak Park and River Forest High School, 1913.

³⁷ Rita Liberti, "Gendering the Gym": A History of Women in Physical Education, *Kinesiology Review* (Vol. 6, 2017) 160.

³⁸ OPRF High School Board of Education Minutes, 20 October 1927: 47.

lifesaving tests; red caps for those who have passed the deep-water tests; and black caps for beginners make it possible to keep each girl in her proper group,” according to a contemporary observer.³⁹ A synchronized swim team was established upon completion of the Girls’ Gymnasium Building, which was called the Water Nymphs in its early years.

In the absence of interscholastic competition for girls at OPRF High School prior to the 1970s, female students could participate in recreational intramural sports activities as well as special events or tournaments that were sometimes held in association with other schools. For example, in 1929 ten schools participated in a new event, in which every girl was allowed 24 trials to make baskets from eight different positions, including around 50 girls from OPRF. On 18 May 1929, nine schools that included OPRF sent sixteen girls to a meet, where they were divided into four teams that played against each other. The *Tabula* noted that the meet “was the first of its kind and showed that the girls were as good sports when playing for a team as when supporting a school.”⁴⁰

Expansion of the Girls’ Gymnasium Building with a third story addition in 1958, and the construction of a three-story north addition that connected it to the main high school building in 1968, provided more gymnasium spaces of varying sizes as well as a dance studio that coincided with the growth of athletic opportunities for female students. By the early 1960s, all high school girls were given physical fitness tests, the results of which allowed them to be placed in classes with other girls of comparable skills. A 1962 booklet published by OPRF High School titled, *The Quest for Excellence, 1957-1962: A Report from Oak Park and River Forest High School*, described activities then provided by the Girls’ Physical Education Department:

According to the findings of their physical examinations, girls are placed in one of four categories. First, there is an unrestricted physical education program of both gym and swimming. Most students take this program for four years. Second, there is a modified physical program which may mean no swimming for some, swimming only for others, or in some cases, a lighter program of all activities. Third, for those who temporarily can take no physical education, there is the class aid program in which the student learns the rules, the scoring and the officiating of a sport without actively participating. Finally, those who, in their doctors’ opinion will benefit more by lying down for a period, are put into rest.

³⁹ “Dedication of Physical Education Buildings, Oak Park and River Forest Township High School, Oak Park, Illinois, March 10, 1929.”

⁴⁰ *Tabula*. Oak Park and River Forest High School, 1929.

A girl must in four years fulfill certain requirements to give her a well-rounded program. She must pass a deep-water test in order to be graduated; she must take one quarter of swimming each year; in four years she must have had two quarters of dance, one quarter of tennis, at least one team sport, and one individual sport. In addition, all freshmen are required to have six weeks of health education, and all sophomores must take eight weeks of driver education and six weeks of posture. Beyond these requirements, the girls are free to elect the physical education activities of their choice.

With a physical education staff of nine members, and a physical education plant including three gymnasiums, a pool, a dance studio and a classroom, Oak Park and River Forest High School is able to offer a yearly program of physical education activities to meet the needs of every girl. During the first semester there are two eight-week quarters. In the first, or fall, quarter, classes are offered in hockey, tennis, archery, apparatus, lifesaving, and driver education. The second quarter gives the student a choice of volleyball, badminton, posture, folk and square dance, beginning swimming and driver education.

During the second semester, there are three terms. Girls may choose three activities from the following: basketball, posture, modern dance, synchronized swimming, volleyball, speedaway, softball, advanced tennis, advanced apparatus, intermediate swimming, softball, archery, golf, and table tennis.⁴¹

A vital part of OPRF High School's athletic activities for girls was the recreational intramural program that took place after school hours. Interclass tournaments were held in all team sports and in such individual sports as badminton, tennis, archery and bowling. Girls were encouraged to participate in activities which they were unable to select during the gym classes. Girls' tennis and archery teams participated in an interscholastic program starting in the 1950s, as did the girls' swim team. An interscholastic badminton team was established in the 1960s.

School-sponsored teams for girls were established for a wider variety of sports in the 1970s, concurrent with the inception of a girls' division of the Suburban League. Girls subsequently competed against other schools in swimming, tennis, gymnastics, basketball, track and field, hockey, badminton and softball. Prior to that time, OPRF High School was one of the few high schools that encouraged girls' competition with other schools, often through independent leagues, thanks to advocacy of its female physical education instructors and department

⁴¹ *The Quest for Excellence, 1957-1962: A Report from Oak Park and River Forest High School, 1962: 49.*

heads.⁴² The inception of interscholastic teams, both varsity and junior varsity, allowed OPRF High School's female athletes to compete at a higher level than previously provided by intramural sports.

Oak Park and River Forest High School maintained separate physical education departments for boys and girls until the 1970s when the two combined into one department. This unification was likely due to the 1972 federal passage of Title IX, which sought to equalize women's access to educational opportunities of all sorts, including sports. The Fieldhouse and the Girls' Gymnasium were later used by both male and female students. OPRH High School's Physical Education Department continued to provide female students with a diverse program of activities during gym class, as well as opportunities to participate in wide-ranging intramural and interscholastic teams, over the ensuing decades.

4. Childs and Smith, Architects

The Girls' Gymnasium Wing of Oak Park and River Forest High School was designed by Childs & Smith, a Chicago-based, full-service firm with a national practice that specialized in educational buildings. The firm was established in 1912 by partners Frank A. Childs (1875-1965) and William Jones Smith (1881-1958) and remained in operation for over fifty years. Childs & Smith, which was staffed by over 100 employees in the early 1950s, also received commissions for office buildings, banks, and a variety of other building types.

Frank A. Childs was born in Evanston, Illinois, and he graduated from Evanston Township High School in 1892. He studied at the Armour Institute of Technology in Chicago and later worked for architect James Gamble Rogers in New York (1902-05), at the Atelier Umbdenstock in Paris, France (1905-07), and for architect L.B. Dutton in San Francisco (1907-09). William Jones Smith was born in Philadelphia and attended that city's public high school. He received a B.S. in Architecture in 1903 from the University of Pennsylvania and spent the next four years at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, from which he graduated with an Architecture degree in 1907, and then worked for architect Cass Gilbert in New York (1907-09). The two men joined the Chicago office of Holabird & Roche in 1909, leaving in 1912 to establish their partnership.⁴³

⁴² *Oak Park and River Forest High School: 1873-1976* (Oak Park, Illinois: Osla Graphics, 1976) 115.

⁴³ *American Architects Directory* (New York: R.R. Bowker, 1956) 521; *American Architects Directory* (New York: R.R. Bowker, 1962) 116; "Plan Services for Architect Frank A. Childs," *Chicago Tribune* (27 January 1965); American Institute of Architects. Questionnaire for Architects' Foster and/or Register of Architects Qualified for Federal Public Works, May 1, 1946.

Childs & Smith designed dozens of school buildings (mainly elementary schools and high schools) and school additions throughout their partnership. They received numerous commissions during the building booms of the 1920s and the 1950s from over 20 municipalities in Illinois and other Midwestern cities and villages, including Michigan, Iowa and Wisconsin. School buildings designed by the firm during the 1920s typically had dark brick walls, limestone trim featuring Tudor and/or Gothic Revival style ornamentation, large expanses of windows, and gymnasiums that were sometimes combined with auditoriums. Most were two- to three-stories in height and some of their school designs featured central entrance towers.

In Oak Park, Illinois, the firm designed Hatch (1922) and Horace Mann (1927) Elementary Schools, as well as gymnasium/fieldhouse wings to Oak Park and River Forest High School (1928). Other representative school projects by the firm in Illinois during the 1920s include: Cossitt Avenue Elementary School in LaGrange (1923); Madison (1925) and Monroe (1928) Elementary Schools in Hinsdale; and LaSalle-Peru High School in LaSalle. The firm also designed Haven (1927) and Nichols (1929) Elementary Schools in Evanston, the latter of which was a Venetian Gothic Revival style edifice with a tower based on the campanile in St. Mark's Square in Venice, Italy.⁴⁴

School buildings designed by Childs & Smith in the 1920s and 1930s outside Illinois include Sheboygan (Wisconsin) High School (early 1920s); Mack Elementary School (1921) in Ann Arbor, Michigan; and Jackson (Michigan) High School (1927). John Edwards High School in Port Edwards, Wisconsin (1933) was an unusual Colonial Revival style school by the firm, featuring a Classical entrance pavilion and a cupola. Willard D. Purdy Junior High School in Marshfield, Wisconsin (1920), a Gothic Revival style edifice, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places for Architecture. Childs & Smith also designed six elementary schools in the late-1930s for the Davenport (Iowa) Board of Education (Monroe, Lincoln, Madison, Washington, Jefferson and McKinley) that were funded in part through the Public Works Administration.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ "Oak Park's Newest and Finest Grammar School," *Chicago Tribune* (17 December 1922); "Horace Mann School, Oak Park," *Chicago Tribune* (24 April 1927); "Field House and Gym Ready for Oak Park H.S.," *Chicago Tribune* (12 August 1928); "La Grange Grammar School to Have Swimming Pool," *Chicago Tribune* (3 December 1922); "Many Features in New Evanston Grade School," *Chicago Tribune* (8 May 1927); American Institute of Architects, Questionnaire for Architects Qualified for Federal Public Works, May 1, 1946.

⁴⁵ "Childs and Smith to Make Plans," *The Sheboygan Telegram* (Sheboygan, Wisconsin) (17 March 1920); "Childs and Smith." In: <https://sah-archipedia.org/Architects/Childs-and-Smith>; Rebecca Bernstein, "Willard D. Purdy Junior High School," National Register of Historic Places nomination, 6 March 1992; "New High School Ready for Dedication," *The Daily Tribune* (Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin) (19 January 1933); "Davenport School Expansion Program Reduced; Employ Architectural Firm," *The Daily Times* (Davenport, Iowa) (11 July 1938).

Childs & Smith's school buildings of the post-World War II era had a Contemporary appearance. They were generally one- to two-stories in height with flat roofs and overhanging eaves, lacking in applied ornamentation, and some were partially sheathed with stone veneer. In Illinois, the firm designed elementary school buildings in Batavia, Kankakee, Freeport, Aurora, Wilmette, Lake Forest, Highland Park, Flossmoor, Granite City, Lansing and Des Plaines during the 1950s, as well as Libertyville-Fremont High School in Libertyville, Illinois (1953). Outside Illinois, the firm designed schools in the 1950s for the school systems of Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin; Webster Groves, Missouri; and Manitowoc, Wisconsin, among others.⁴⁶

Childs & Smith designed many headquarters buildings for leading insurance companies in the Midwest and on the East Coast, as well as banks and courthouses in styles that included the Classical Revival and Art Deco (1920s and 1930s) and Contemporary (1940s and 1950s). One such project—the Hardware Mutual Insurance Building in Stevens Point, Wisconsin (1922)—is listed on the National Register for Architecture. The stately, stone-clad building features a full-height colonnade, entablature, and other Classical style ornamentation. Other representative projects include the American Bankers Insurance Company in Chicago (Wabash Avenue and Ohio Streets, 1928; demolished); Lumbermen's Mutual Insurance Company in Mansfield, Ohio (1952); Utica Mutual Insurance Company in New Hartford, New York (1953); MFA Mutual Insurance Company in Columbia, Missouri (1954); and the Federal Life Insurance Company in Chicago (6100 N. Cicero Avenue; 1955).⁴⁷

Childs & Smith served as associated architects with Frank D. Chase, Inc. on the design of the Campana Manufacturing Building in Batavia, Illinois (1937), a windowless Art Moderne style edifice with continuous bands of stone and glass block that received an award from the Pittsburgh Glass Institution. Another unique Art Moderne edifice by the firm is the Valentine Boys and Girls Club of Chicago at 3400 S. Emerald Avenue in Chicago (1938), the entrance to which is flanked by replicas of Alaskan Coastal Indian totem poles and is topped by a terra cotta overhang suggesting a cliff cave entrance. The versatile firm also designed the Alonzo Mather Home for Aged Ladies in Evanston, Illinois (1952; demolished); the Rock County Jail in Janesville, Wisconsin (1950; demolished); Westlake Hospital in Melrose Park, Illinois

⁴⁶ American Institute of Architects, Architects' Roster Questionnaire, April 23, 1953; "New Batavia School Has Capacity of 300," *Chicago Tribune* (9 February 1958).

⁴⁷ "Real Estate News," *Chicago Tribune* (8 May 1921); "A Bit of Fine Architecture in Hoosierland," *Chicago Tribune* (5 September 1927); "Builders Push Work on Two Twelve-Story Edifices," *Chicago Tribune* (23 December 1928); "MFA Mutual Starts Plans for New Home," *The Cabool Enterprise* (Cabool, Missouri) (18 November 1954); "Future Home of Federal Life Insurance Company," *Chicago Tribune* (10 November 1955); American Institute of Architects, Architects' Roster Questionnaire, April 23, 1953.

(1954); and the Marathon County Court House in Wausau, Wisconsin (1954).⁴⁸

Childs & Smith initially maintained an office at the Steinway Hall Building at 122 S. Michigan Avenue in Chicago, relocating in 1924 to the new Central Life Building at Michigan Avenue and Superior Street, where it occupied the entire tenth floor. The firm later moved to the building at 430 N. Michigan (demolished), relocating to the Civic Opera Building at 20 N. Wacker Drive in 1947. In 1953, Childs & Smith had a yearly volume of between \$20 million to \$30 million in business and a staff of 107 people. The firm offered consulting and site planning services and had separate departments for architectural and interior design and for its roster of licensed structural engineers; heating and ventilating engineers; electrical engineers; and plumbing and sanitary engineers.⁴⁹

William Jones Smith married Mary Van Horne on June 30, 1914, and the couple had three sons: William (b. 1919), Van Horne (b. 12921), and Sidney (b. 1924). Smith lived in Winnetka, and Frank Childs lived in Evanston, throughout the nearly fifty-year period that they were in business together. William Jones Smith temporarily moved to Washington D.C. during World War II when he served as supervising architect for the Pentagon Building in Arlington, Virginia (1941-42) and as Principal Construction Engineer for the War Department (1942-43). Both William Jones Smith and Frank Childs were named fellows of the American Institute of Architects: Smith in 1935 and Childs in 1955.⁵⁰

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION:

A. General Statement

The Girls' Gymnasium at the southeast corner of OPRF High School was erected in 1927-28 as a two-story standalone building facing Scoville Avenue. It was internally connected to the field house and the main school building in the 1950s and 1960s, respectively, through the construction of additions and was later referred to as the "Southeast Wing." Its pool became known as the "East Pool" rather than the "Girl's Pool" post-2000 when it was used by both girls and boys.

⁴⁸ "Start Work on \$600,000 Suburban Beauty Products Plant," *Chicago Tribune* (17 May 1936); "Contracts Let for Home for Aged Women," *Chicago Tribune* (19 February 1950); American Institute of Architects, Architects' Roster Questionnaire, April 23, 1953.

⁴⁹ "News of the Architects," *Chicago Tribune* (2 March 1924); "News of the Architects," *Chicago Tribune* (20 April 1947).

⁵⁰ American Institute of Architects. Questionnaire for Architects' Qualified for Federal Public Works, May 1, 1946; "De Golyer and Smith Made Fellows of Architect Group," *Chicago Tribune* (9 June 1935); "Plan Services for Architect Frank A. Childs," *Chicago Tribune* (27 January 1965).

The building was demolished in 2024 and thus this architectural description is gleaned from a review of floor plans, historic photographs, and photographs taken in 2024 that were either provided by Oak Park and River Forest High School or viewed in Google Maps.

B. Narrative Description of the Exterior

The Girls' Gymnasium measured approximately 224'-0" (north-south) and 125'-0" (east-west) and had an L-shaped footprint and a flat roof. The east side and north sides of this wing were three stories in height, while the remainder of the building was two stories in height.

The front (Scoville Avenue) and south (alley) facades of the Girls' Gymnasium were sheathed with tan face brick (lower portion) and light orange face brick (upper portion). Fenestration featured a series of two-story, round-arch window openings, portions of which were infilled with strips of four single-pane, sliding glass windows, glass blocks, and/or tan face brick. The third story of both facades featured a series of tall, rectangular window openings, each of which was infilled with a strip of four single-pane, sliding-glass windows across the bottom and glass blocks above.

The Scoville Avenue façade had a main entrance at the north end of its main block with two pairs of glazed metal doors topped by a metal, flat-roof canopy. A secondary entrance with a pair of metal doors was situated at the center of the south (alley) façade. A stone plaque next to the main entrance was inscribed with the words "OAK PARK AND RIVER FOREST HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS GYMNASIUM." Front façade detailing included two stone medallions featuring the school crest on the wall above the entrance bay and scrolled keystones above two of the round-arch window openings. The Scoville Avenue façade of the 1967-68 north addition was sheathed with light orange face brick and was windowless.

The north façade of the main block had three tall, rectangular window openings on both the first and third floors, and those on the first floor were two stories in height. All windows were infilled with strips of four single-pane, sliding glass windows and glass blocks.

C. Narrative Description of Interior:

The basement plan of the Girls' Gymnasium had a laundry room, several small storage rooms, and three stairways leading to the first floor; the remainder of the space beneath the building was unexcavated. The Scoville Avenue entrance opened onto a rectilinear lobby with a wide staircase at its west end that served as the building's primary source of circulation. The lobby was flanked by a classroom and various small offices, storage rooms and two toilet rooms. The southeast and northwest corners of the first floor each featured a two-story

gymnasium, while a two-story pool room with swimming pool was at the southwest corner of the first-floor plan. A staircase at the southeast corner of the pool room led to a balcony with spectator seating that spanned the east wall of this space. Two large locker rooms, two toilet rooms, and a laundry room were situated between the pool room and the northwest gymnasium. A north-south corridor connected to the main school building.

The first-floor lobby had terrazzo flooring, its walls were finished with light brown glazed brick, and its ceiling was covered with acoustical tiles. The staircase at its west end had metal balustrades and newell posts, and its treads and risers were covered with terrazzo. The two-story southeast gymnasium had brick walls, and its original maple flooring was covered with what appeared to be linoleum tiles. The ceiling was covered with acoustical tiles, spanned by steel beams, and had fluorescent lighting fixtures. The walls of the two-story pool room were sheathed with tan colored glazed brick and were graced by 15 tall stone panels representing Classical nymphs in low-relief. The flooring of the pool room was covered with ceramic tiles, and its ceiling was spanned by steel beams and covered with acoustical tiles. The floor of the pool was covered with white mosaic tiles with thick stripes formed by blue mosaic tiles. The two-story northwest gymnasium on the first floor had maple flooring, concrete block walls, and ceilings covered with acoustical tiles with fluorescent light fixtures.

The second-floor plan featured an east gymnasium, locker rooms, storage room and toilet rooms flanking the central stair hall, which had a north-south corridor that connected to the main building. The east gymnasium on this floor had linoleum tile flooring, walls covered with drywall, and a ceiling spanned by steel beams and covered with acoustical tiles.

The third-floor plan featured three gymnasiums—two on its east side and one on its north side—several small toilet rooms, storage rooms and offices, and a stair hall with a north-south corridor that linked to the main building. All three gymnasiums had maple flooring and ceilings covered with acoustical tiles. The two east gymnasiums had brick walls, while the north gymnasium had concrete block walls.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation:

The OPRF High School campus is situated on a four-block site bounded by Scoville Avenue on the east, Linden Avenue on the west, Erie Street on the north, and Lake Street on the south. A north-south pedestrian mall extends through the center of the campus. The west half of the campus is devoted to sports facilities, including a brick stadium along Lake Street, a football field,

running track, and tennis courts. The high school encompasses the east half of the property, from Erie Street south to the alley, with the Girls' Gymnasium at its southeast corner facing Scoville Avenue. The school's two-story concrete parking garage is situated between the alley and Lake Street, on the east side of the campus.

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B. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated

The OPRF High School archive is housed at the Oak Park and River Forest History Museum. It includes an abundance of materials for researchers wanting to dig more deeply into the history of the Girls' and Boys' Physical Education Departments, the Boys' Fieldhouse and Pool, and on the overall history and construction of the school.

A good source of additional information on the work of Childs & Smith is the Hedrich Blessing collection on file at the Chicago History Museum, which

includes photographs of 81 buildings designed by the firm from the 1940s through the 1960s, including many of their school projects.

C. Sketch Plans

Floor plans for the Girls' Gymnasium Building by FGM Architects from 2022 are on pages 30-33 of this report.

D. Supplemental Material

Exterior and interior color photographs of the Girls' Gymnasium Building are on pages 34-47 of this report. As the building was demolished prior to the start of the HIBS recordation project, the exterior photographs are from Google Maps, captured in April 2024, while most interior photographs were supplied by Oak Park and River Forest High School and taken in 2024 unless otherwise noted.

The color photographs are followed by historic materials related to the Girls' Gymnasium Building, including original floor plans, a Sanborn Fire Insurance Map showing its footprint in 1950, and historic exterior and interior photographs that were originally published in the *Tabula* for varying years or in the 1929 dedication brochure for this building.

PART IV. METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

A. Research Strategy

The research strategy was to review a variety of primary and secondary sources, including, but not limited to, local history books, OPRF High School Board of Education minutes, newspaper articles, floor plans, OPRF High School yearbooks, and historic photos, to develop a thorough history of the Girls' Gymnasium within the context of athletic facilities at Oak Park and River Forest High School, and also to develop an essay on the practice of the building's architect, Childs & Smith.

B. Actual Research Process

Research was undertaken at the Oak Park and River Forest History Museum, which houses the OPRF High School Archive. Materials reviewed included historic scrapbooks, dedication brochures for the original building and its 1968 addition, annual reports, contemporary articles published in the *Oak Leaves*, and Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. Original floor plans of the building were found in the 1929 dedication brochure for the Girls' Gymnasium, which also included historic photographs and a contemporary description, as did the 1929 issue of the *Tabula*.

A book titled, *Oak Park and River Forest High School: 1873-1976* (Oak Park, Illinois: Osla Graphics, 1976) was helpful in ascertaining the chronology of construction for the high school and its physical education buildings, as were Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for 1908, 1930, and 1950. A booklet titled, *The Quest for Excellence, 1957-1962: A Report from Oak Park and River Forest High School* (1962) provided a good description of activities of the Girls' Physical Education Department at that time.

The OPRF High School yearbook, called the Tabula, was reviewed for varying years for information related to the construction of the Girls' Gymnasium, its additions, and activities of the Girls' Physical Education Department. The OPRF High School Board of Education minutes, which are housed in a vault at OPRF High School, were reviewed for the years 1925-28 and 1956-58. This resource proved especially helpful in providing detailed information about the construction of the original building and its 1957-58 addition.

The Newspapers.com database was extensively searched for articles pertaining to the new physical education buildings built at OPRF High School in the late 1920s, and the work of Childs & Smith. An extensive list of Childs & Smith-designed buildings that were photographed by Hedrich Blessing, which is on file at the Chicago History Museum, was reviewed. Although the Girls' Gymnasium Building is not included, this list was useful in identifying other projects by this firm.

C. Archives and Repositories Used

Oak Park and River Forest High School Archive at the Oak Park and River Forest History Museum; Board of Education Minutes on file at Oak Park and River Forest High School; and Oak Park Public Library.

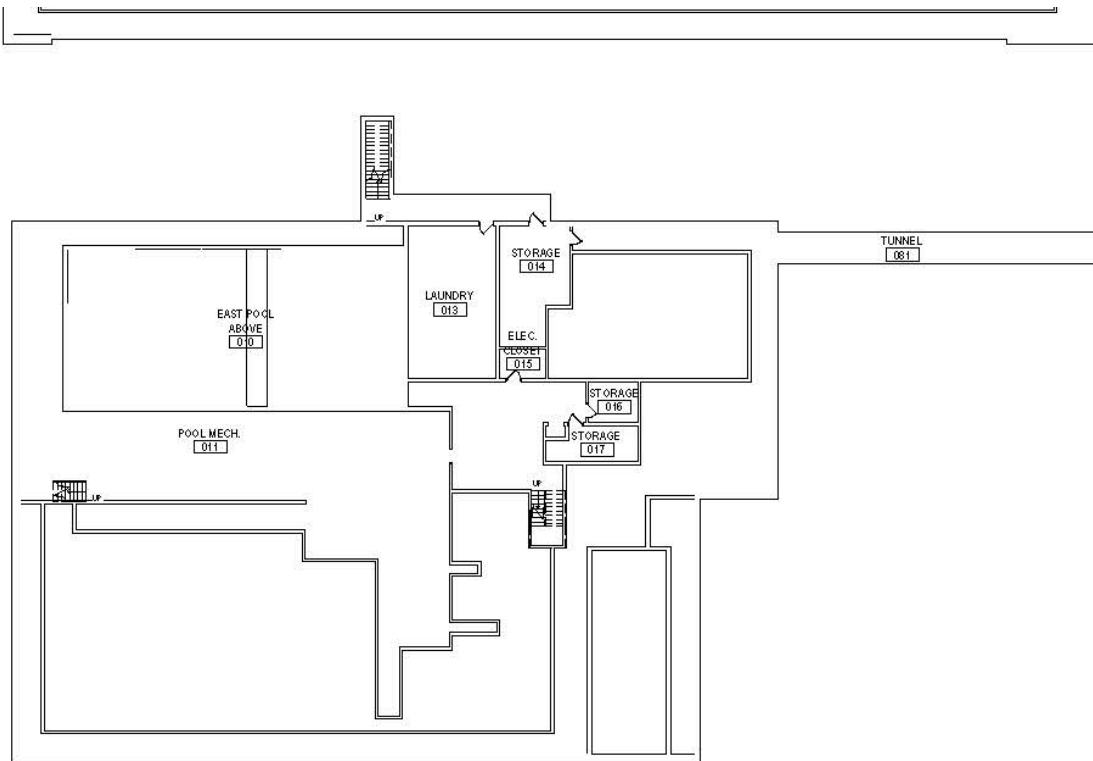
D. Preparer

1. Historian: All aspects of this project were undertaken by Jean L. Guarino, Ph.D., Oak Park, Illinois.

PART V. PROJECT INFORMATION

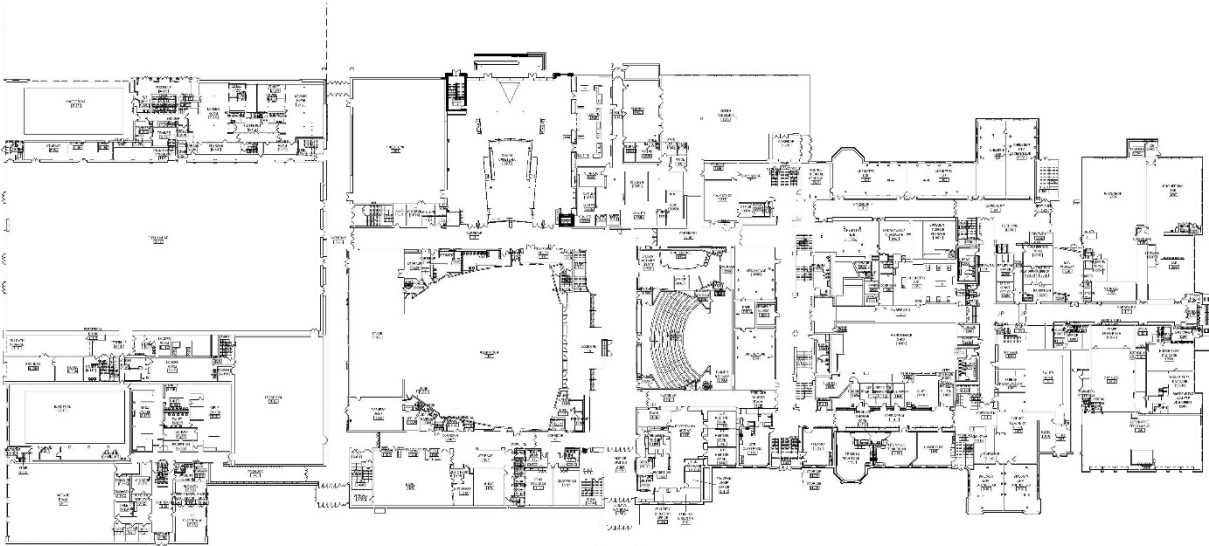
This HIBS documentation project was undertaken to mitigate the adverse effects of a project by Oak Park and River Forest High School District 200 on cultural resources within the project area. The terms of the mitigation were agreed upon and executed to ensure compliance with the Illinois State Agency Historic Resources Preservation Act (20 ILCS 3420).

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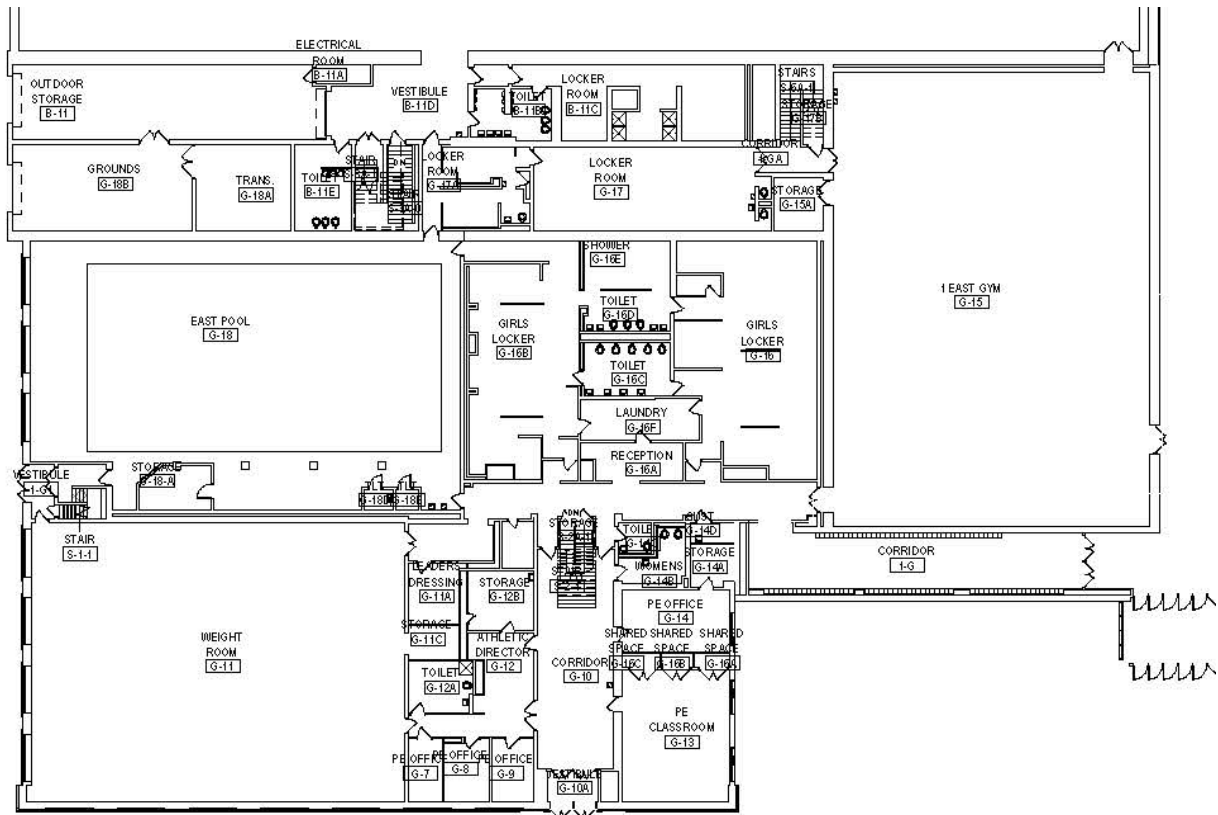


FGM Architects. Girls' Gymnasium Building – Basement Floor Plan, 2022.

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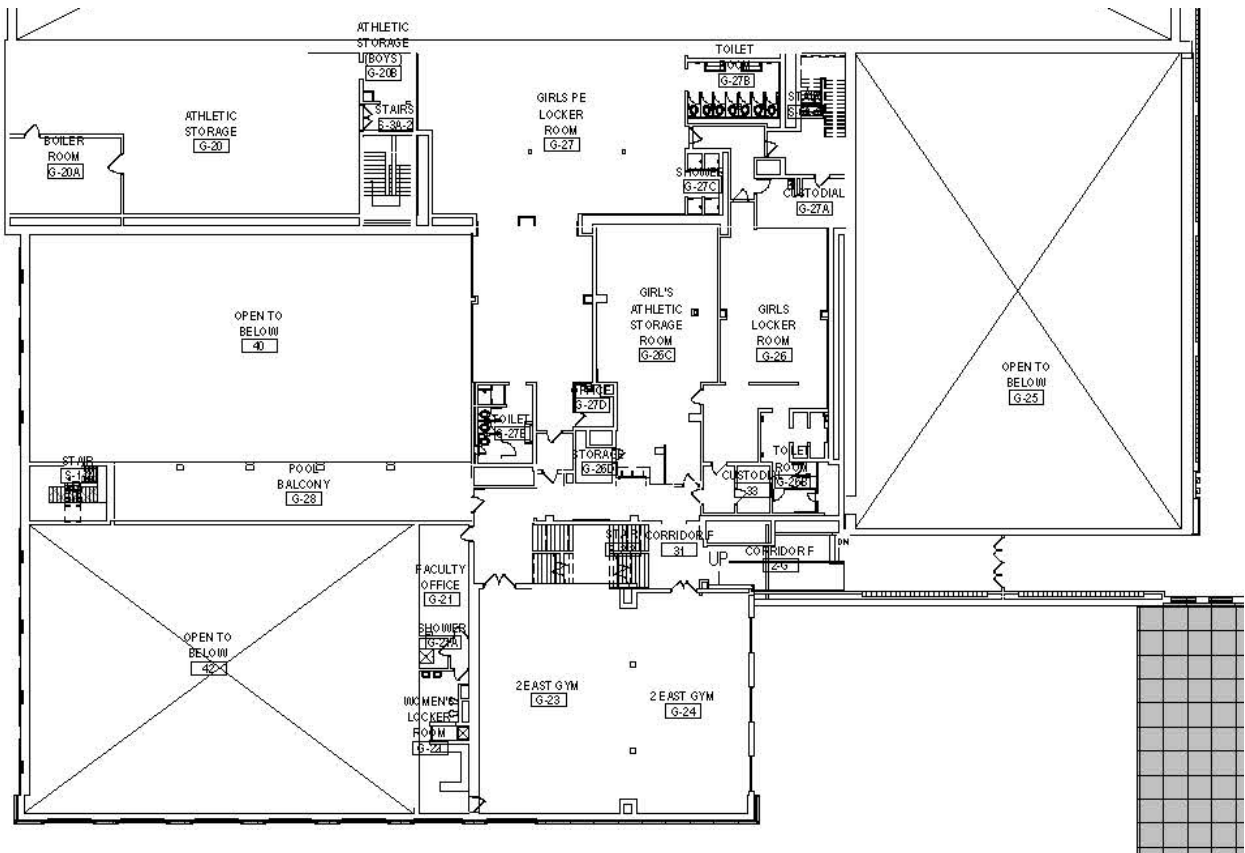


FGM Architects. Oak Park and River Forest High School – First Floor Plan, 2022. The Girls' Gymnasium is in the southeast corner.



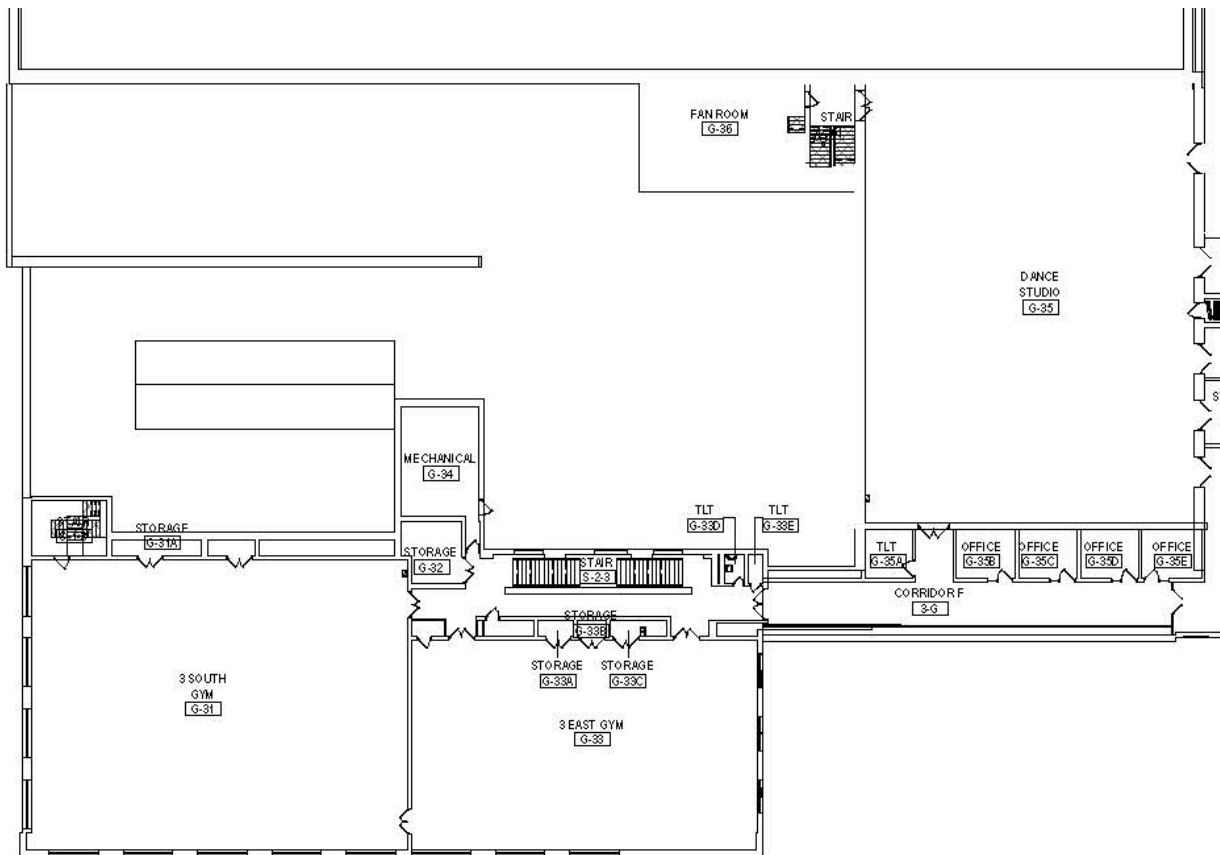
FGM Architects. Girls' Gymnasium Building – First Floor Plan, 2022.

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FGM Architects. Girls' Gymnasium Building – Second Floor Plan, 2022.

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FGM Architects. Girls' Gymnasium Building – Third Floor Plan, 2022.

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Photograph 1: Girls' Gymnasium Building, view northwest. Source: Google Maps.



Photograph 2: Girls' Gymnasium Building, view southwest. Source: Google Maps.

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Photograph 3: Scoville Avenue entrance to Girls' Gymnasium Building, view west.
Source: Google Maps.

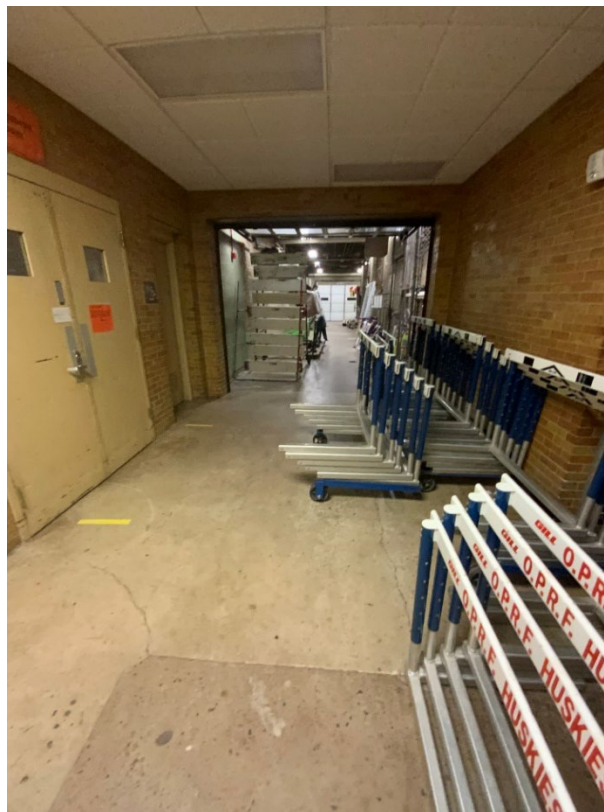


Photograph 4: Girls' Gymnasium Building, view southwest. Source: Google Maps.

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Photograph 5: Girls' Gymnasium Building, view southwest showing the windowless 1967-68 addition on the right. Source: Google Maps.



Photograph 6: Basement.

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Photograph 7: Main Staircase in the Entrance Hall.



Photograph 8: First Floor Toilet Room.

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Photograph 9: Girls pool, view southwest.

Source: <https://www.oakpark.com/2011/01/06/pools-open-at-oprf/>.



Photograph 10: Girls' pool, view southwest.

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=841502157993244&set=pcb.841502264659900>.

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Photograph 11: Girl's pool, view southwest.



Photograph 12: Girls' pool, view southeast toward balcony along its east wall.

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Photograph 13: Girls' pool, view northwest.

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=841502144659912&set=pcb.841502264659900>.



Photograph 14: Three of the relief panels depicting Classical nymphs that once graced the walls of the pool room in the Girls' Gymnasium Building.

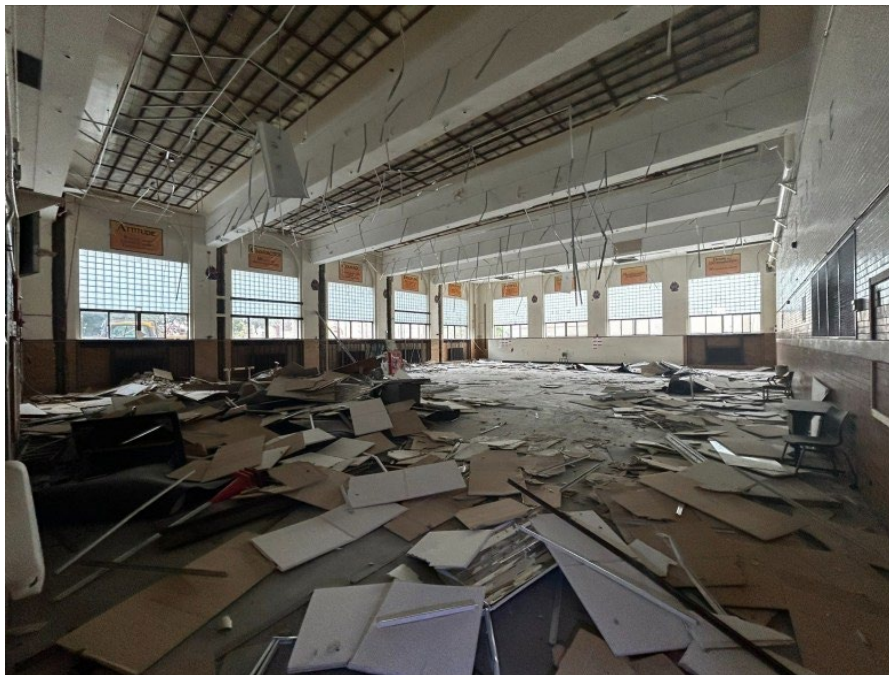


Photograph 15: Removal of bas-relief panel on the wall of the Girls' pool room, prior to the demolition of the Girls' Gymnasium Building.

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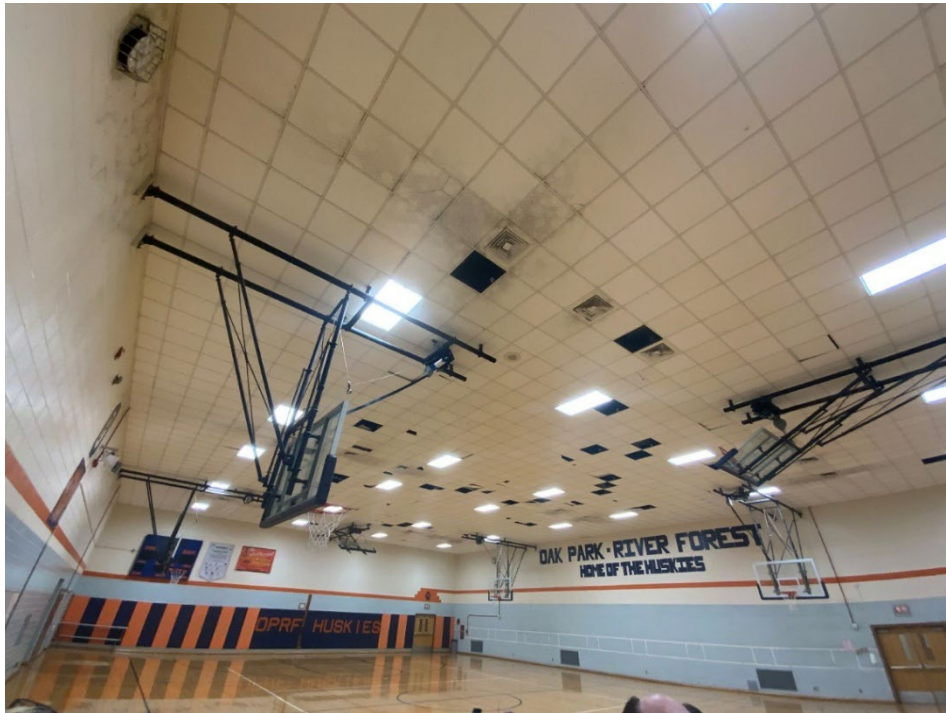


Photograph 16: Two-story, first floor southeast gymnasium, view southeast. This is the building's original gymnasium, which was later transformed into a weight room.



Photograph 17: Two-story, first floor southeast gymnasium during demolition, view southeast.
Source: <https://www.oakpark.com/2024/08/02/oprf-project-2-construction-is-on-schedule/>

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Photograph 18: Two-story, first floor north gymnasium, part of the 1967-68 addition, view northwest.



Photograph 19: Second floor gymnasium in the northeast corner of the building, view northeast.

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Photograph 20: Second floor gymnasium in the northeast corner of the building, view north.



Photograph 21: Stairways to third floor.

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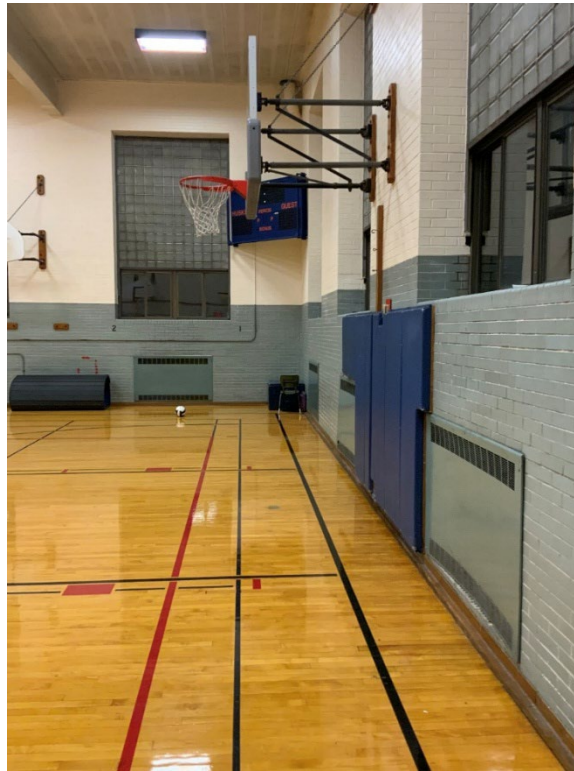


Photograph 22: Third floor northeast gymnasium, part of the 1957-58 addition, view north.



Photograph 23: Third floor southeast gymnasium, part of the 1957-58 addition, view south.

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Photograph 24: Third floor southeast gymnasium, part of the 1957-58 addition, view east.



Photograph 25: Third floor north gymnasium, part of the 1967-68 addition, view southwest.

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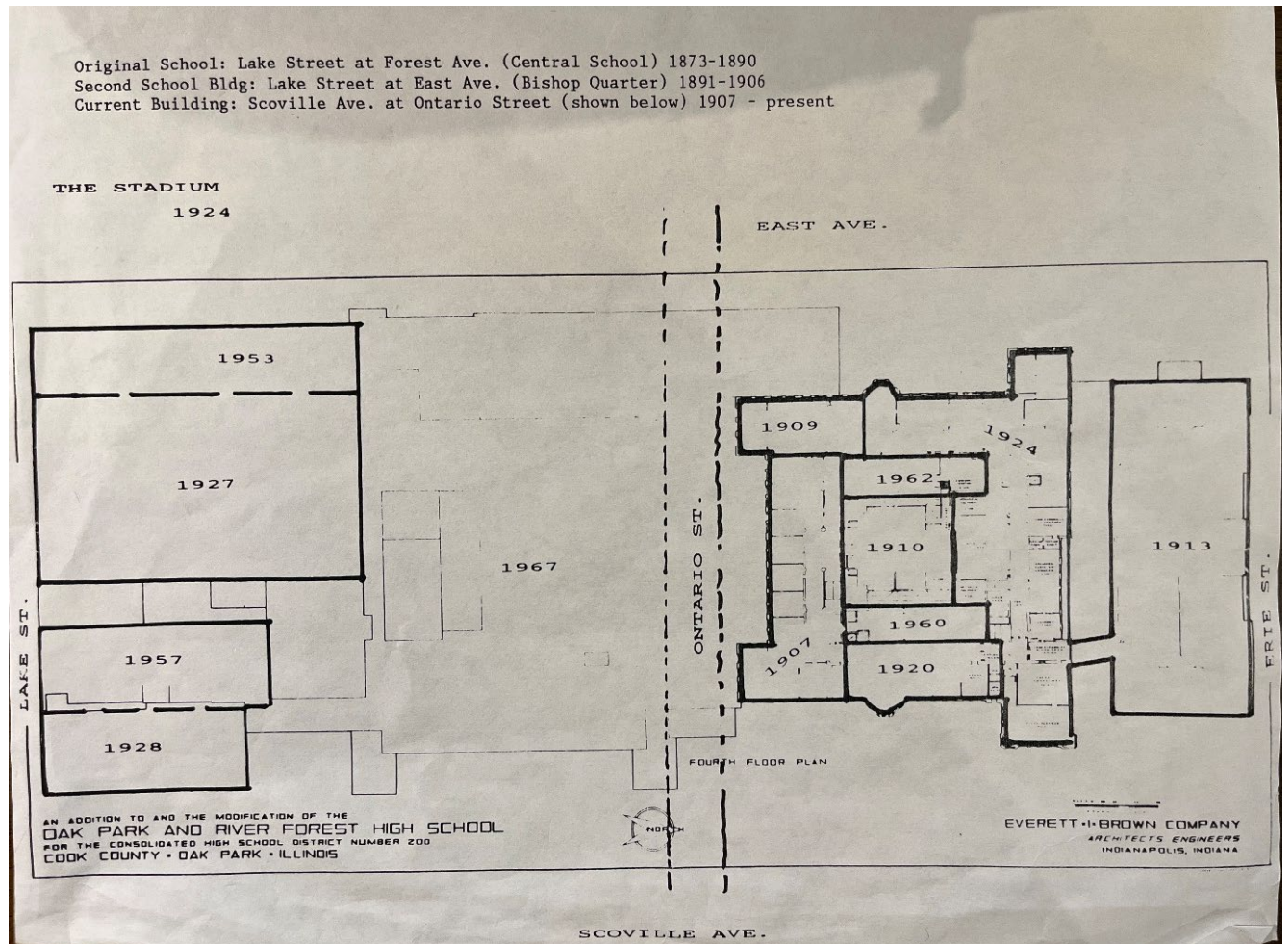


Figure 1: Site plan showing the various additions to Oak Park and River Forest High School.
Drawn by Everett I. Brown Company, 1968.

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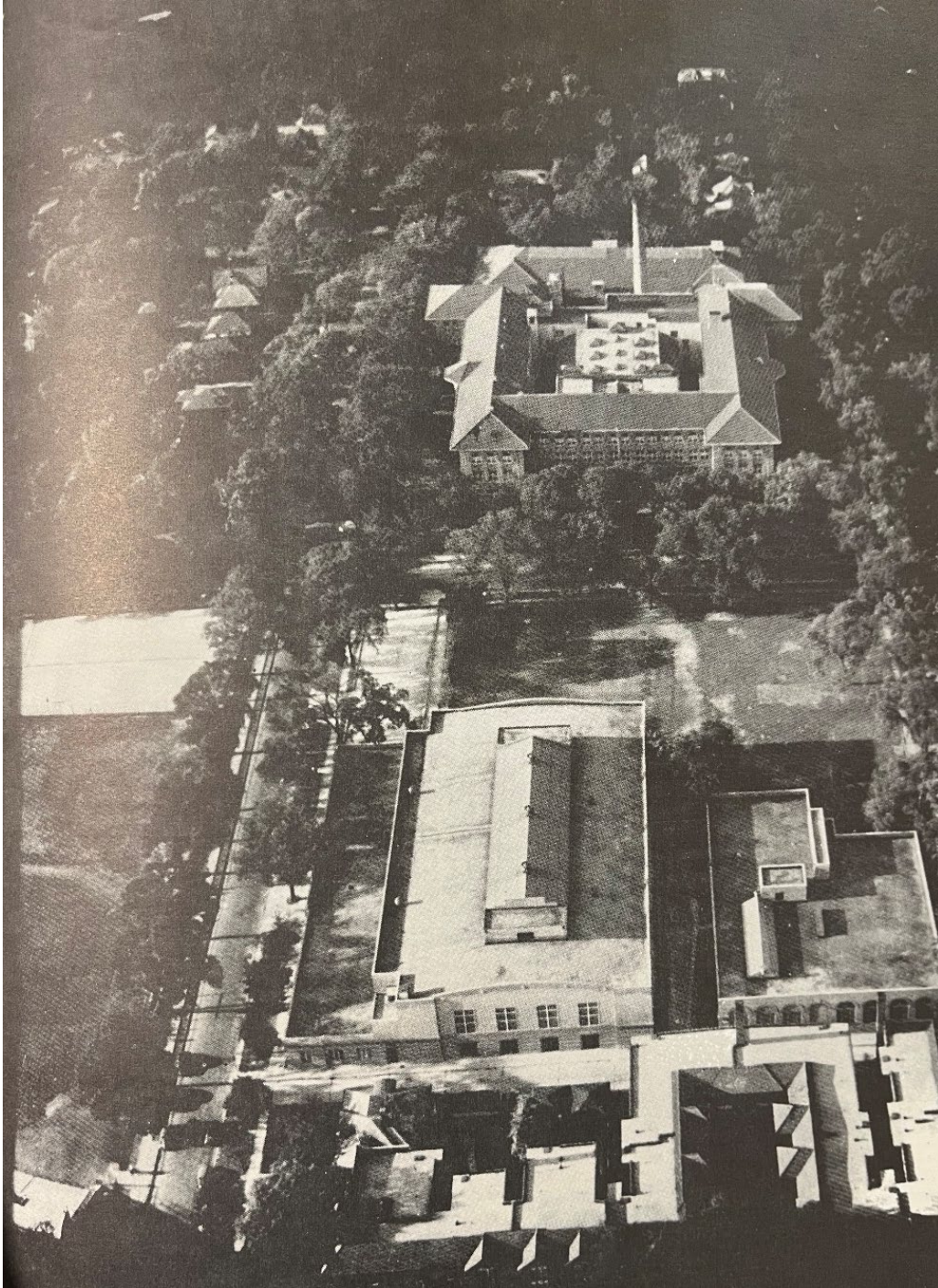


Figure 2: Aerial photograph of Oak Park and River Forest High School showing the Girls' Gymnasium in the lower right, prior to the construction of the 1957-58 third story addition. Source: *Oak Park and River Forest High School: 1873-1976*. Oak Park, Illinois: Oscla Graphics, 1976.

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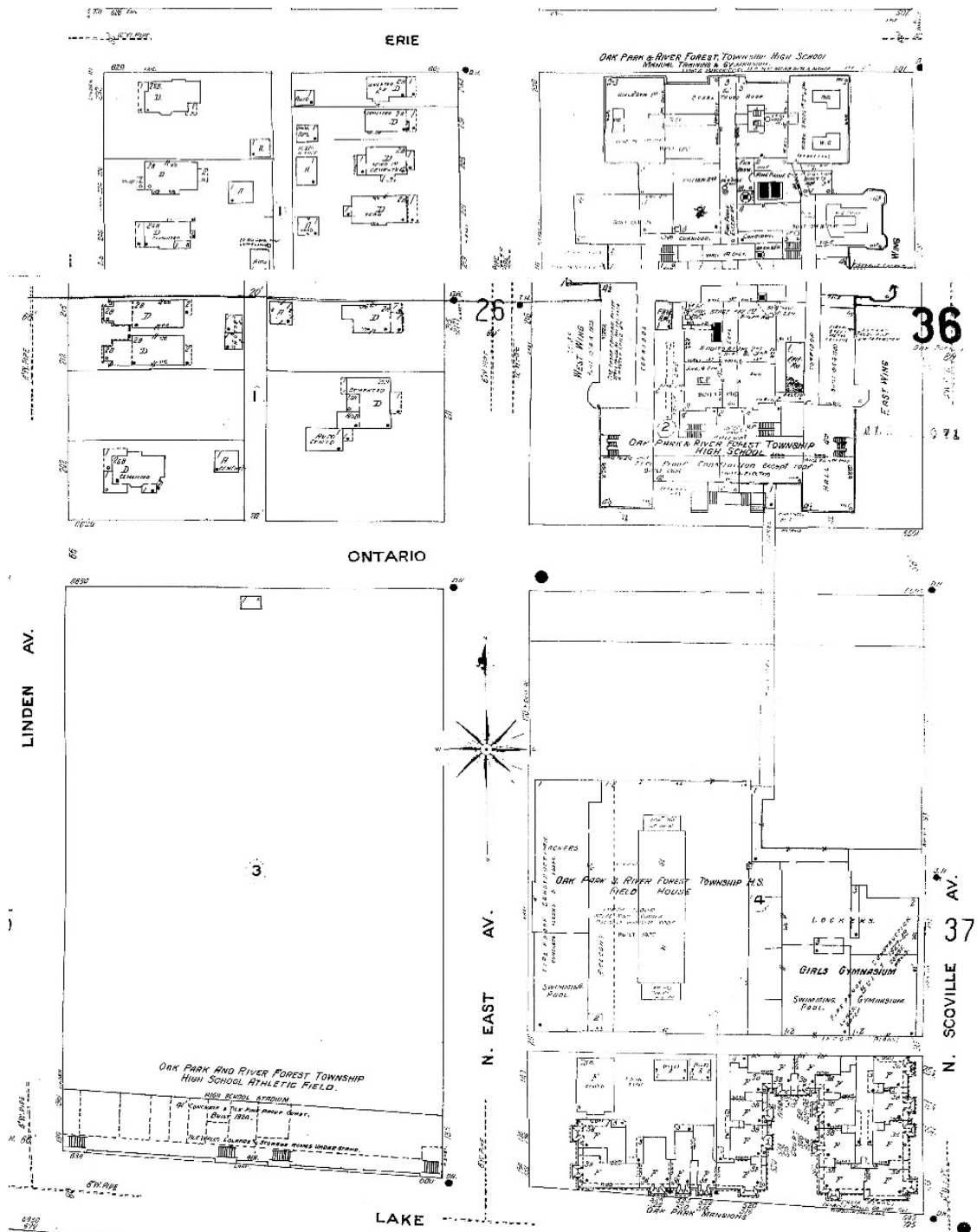


Figure 3: Sanborn Map showing the footprints of the main OPRF High School Building and the 1928 physical education buildings in 1950, before they were connected by the 1967-68 addition. Source: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map for Oak Park, Illinois, 1950.

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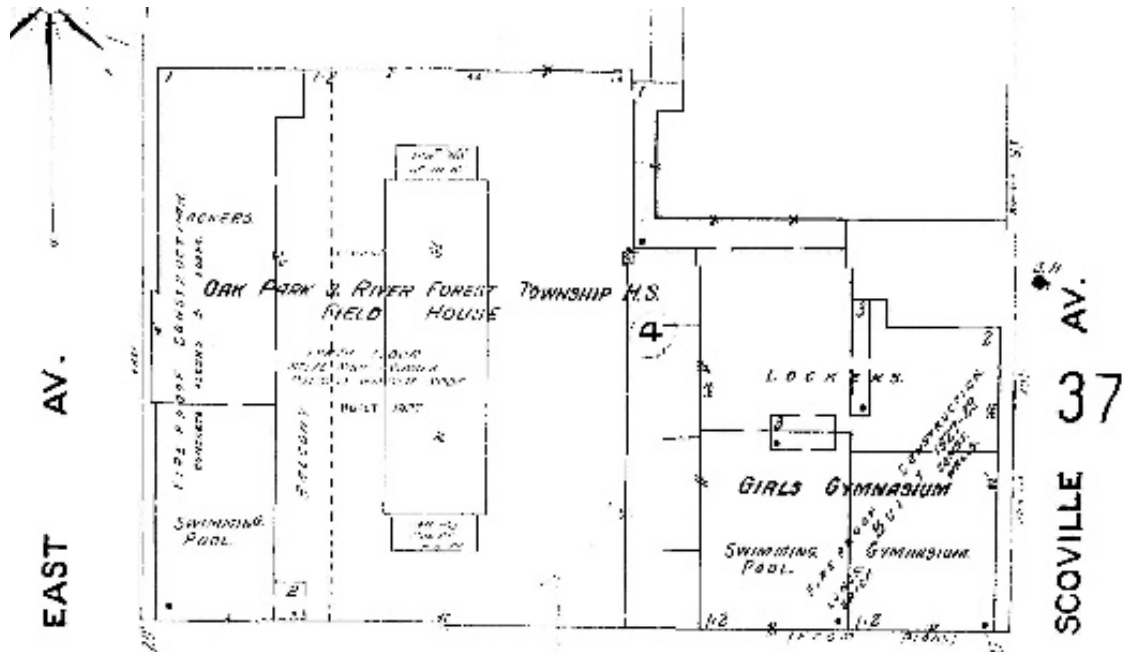


Figure 4: Detail of 1950 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map showing the footprint of the Girls' Gymnasium Building.



Figure 5: Exterior of the Girls' Gymnasium Building, 1929. Source: "Dedication of Physical Education Buildings, Oak Park and River Forest Township High School, Oak Park, Illinois, March 10, 1929."



Figure 6: Scoville Avenue entrance to the Girls' Gymnasium Building, 1929.
Source: *Tabula*. Oak Park and River Forest High School, 1929.



Figure 7: Scoville Avenue façade of the Girls' Gymnasium Building, view north, 1929.
Source: *Tabula*. Oak Park and River Forest High School, 1929.

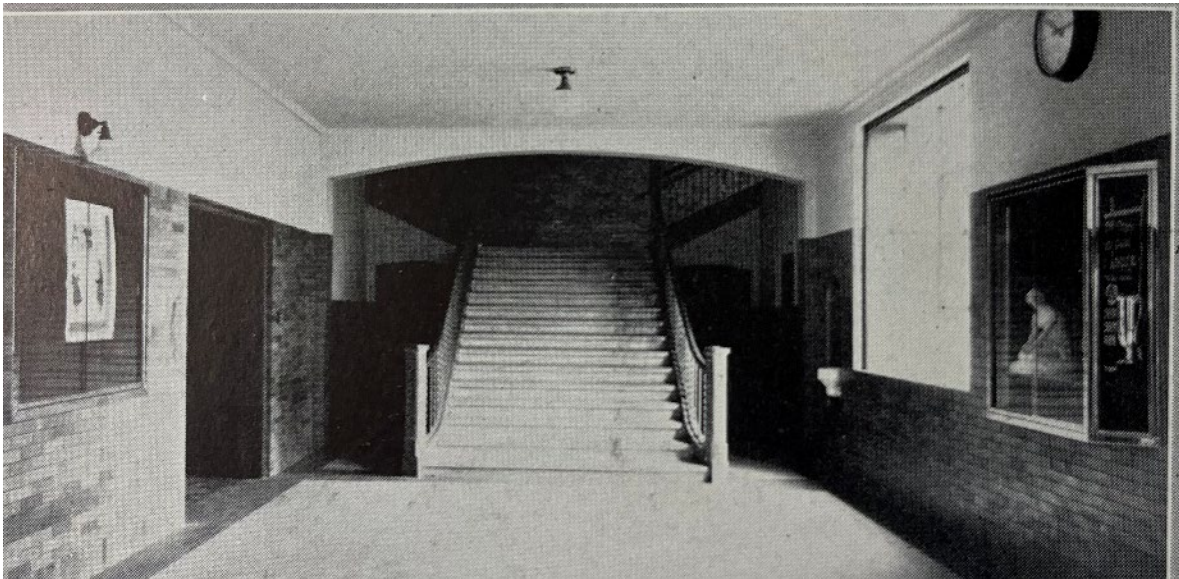


Figure 8: Reception Hall and Staircase to second floor, 1929. Note the exterior window on the right, which became a doorway to a classroom during the 1957-58 addition.
Source: *Tabula*. Oak Park and River Forest High School, 1929.

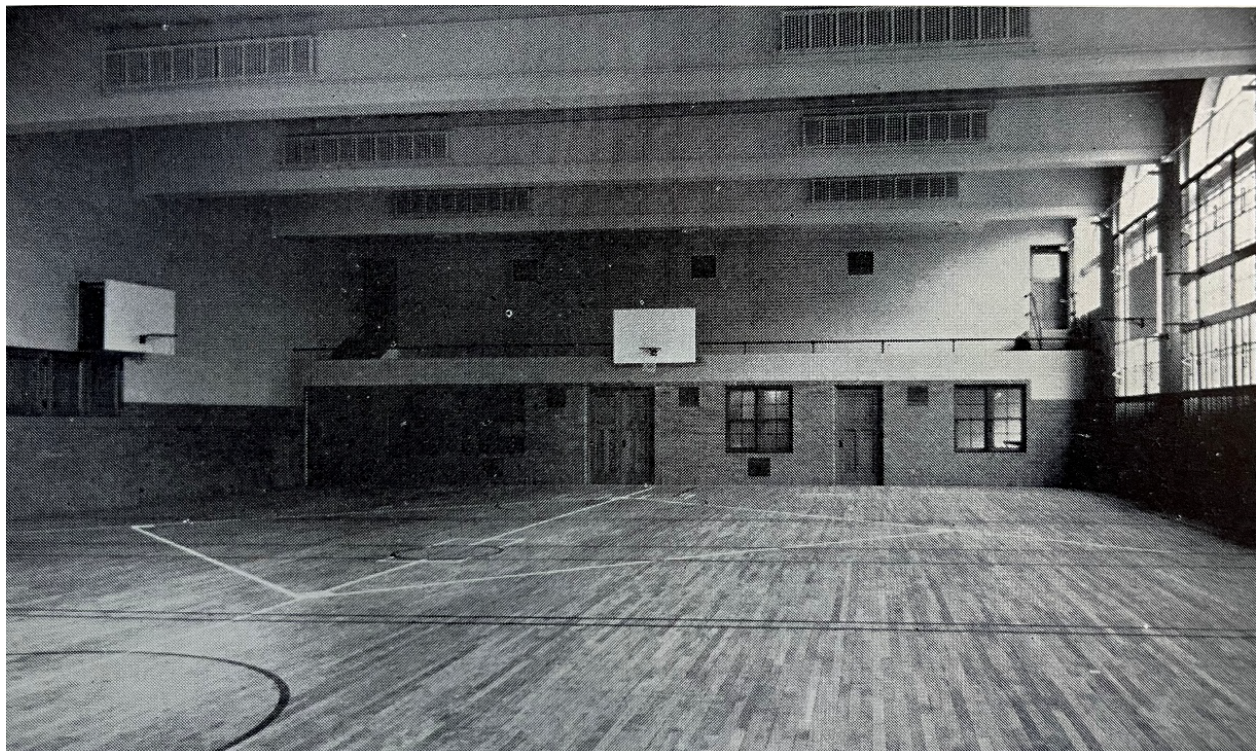


Figure 9: Original gymnasium at the southeast corner of the building, first floor, showing balcony along the north wall, view north. Source: *Tabula*. Oak Park and River Forest High School, 1929.



Figure 10: Pool in Girls' Gymnasium. Source: *Tabula*. Oak Park and River Forest High School, 1929.

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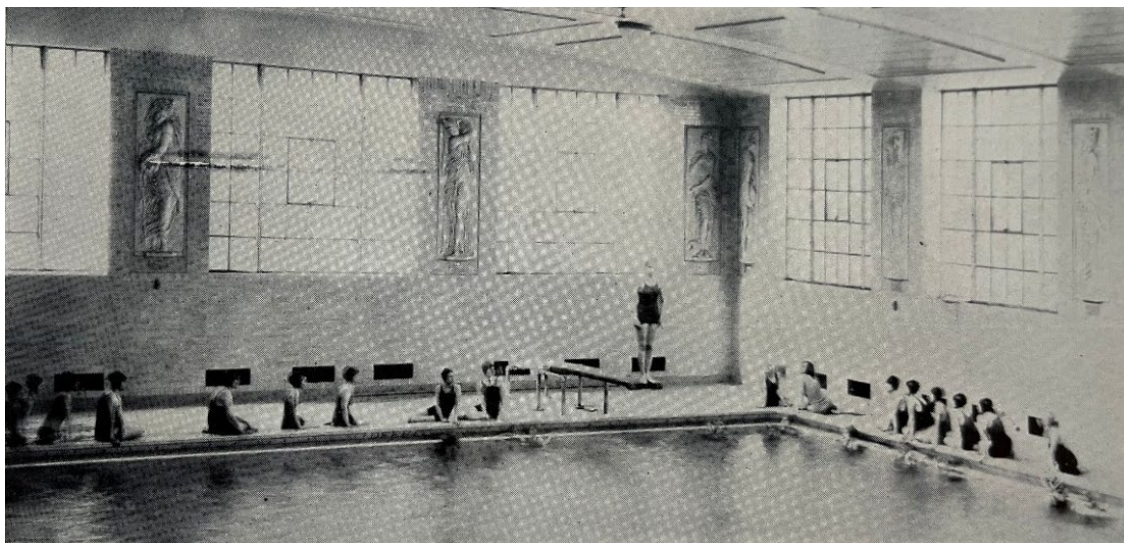


Figure 11: Pool in Girls' Gymnasium. Source: *Tabula*. Oak Park and River Forest High School, 1929.

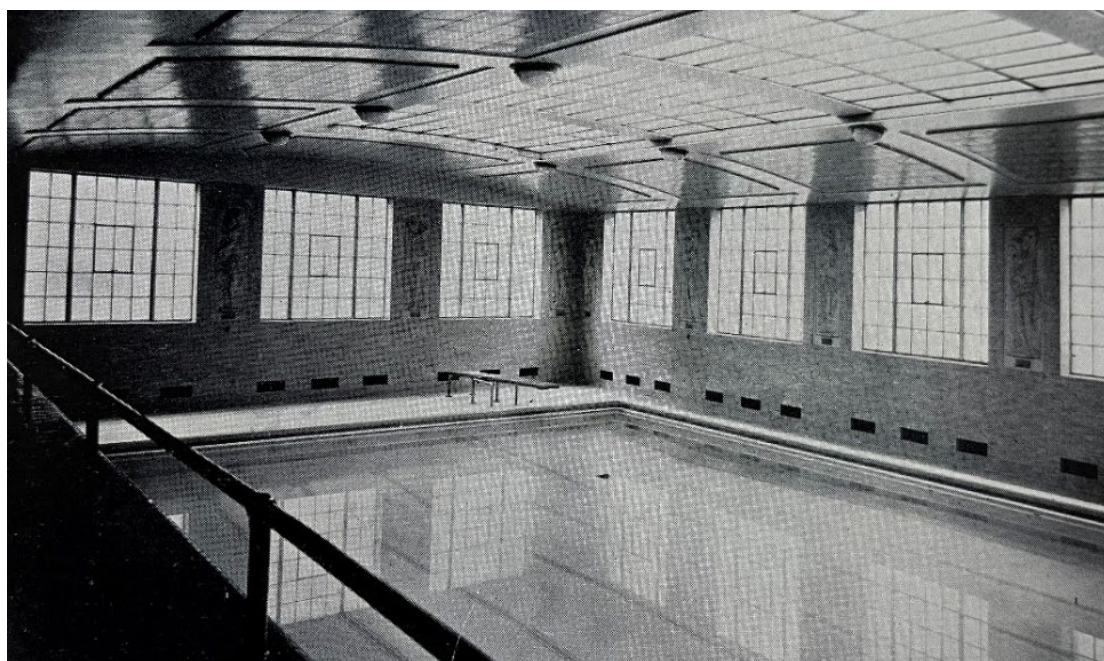
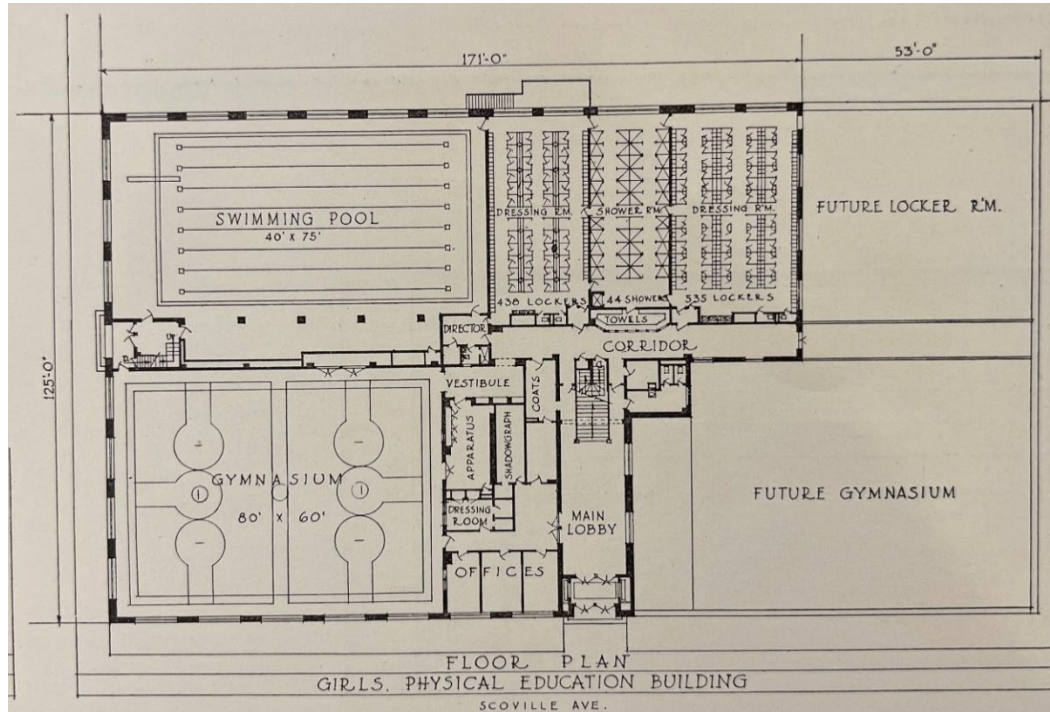


Figure 12: Pool in Girls' Gymnasium. Source: *Tabula*. Oak Park and River Forest High School, 1929.

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Figures 13 (above) and 14 (below): Girls' Gymnasium Building, first and second floor plans.
Source: "Dedication of Physical Education Buildings, Oak Park and River Forest Township High School, Oak Park, Illinois, March 10, 1929."

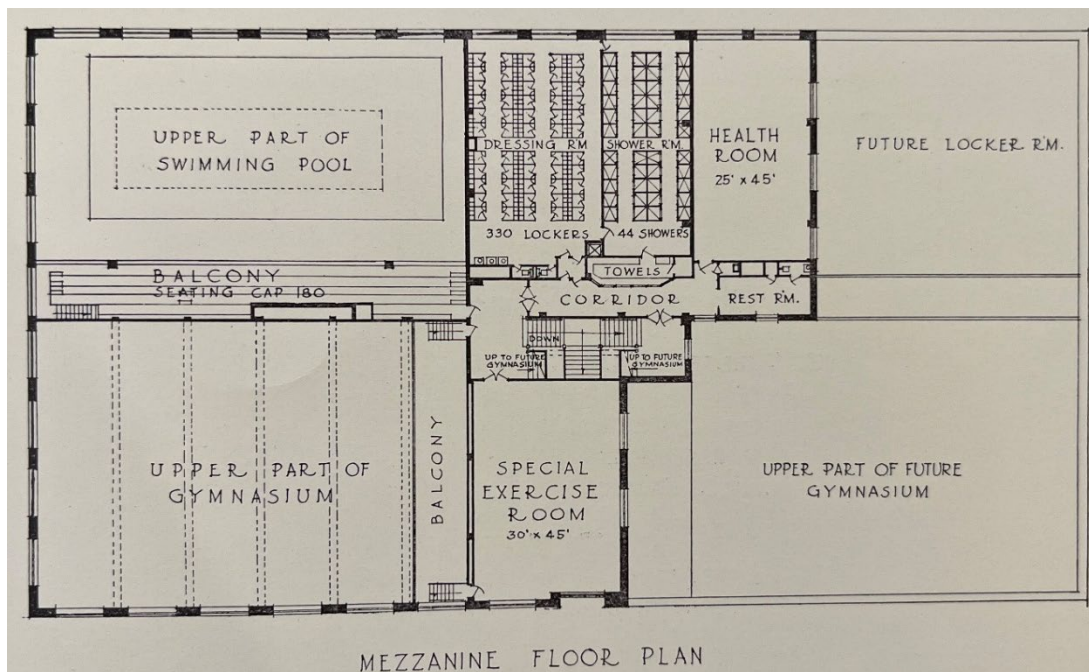




Figure 15: Scoville Avenue façade of Girls' Gymnasium Building.
Source: "Pictures and Facts: Oak Park and River Forest High School, November 1957."

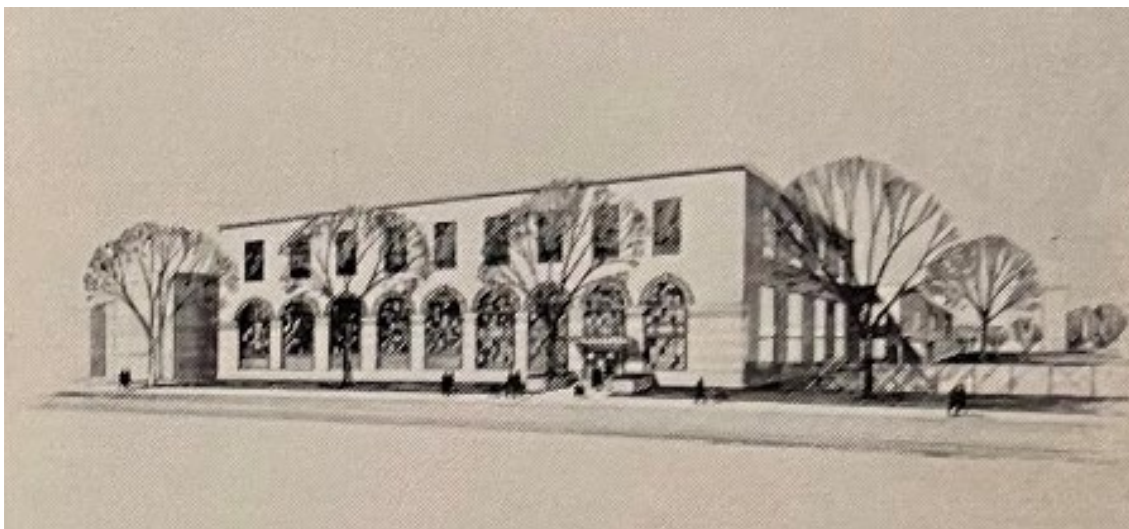


Figure 16: Rendering of the Girls' Gymnasium Building with its new third floor addition, 1958.
Source: *Tabula*. Oak Park and River Forest High School, 1958.



Figure 17: Girls' Gymnasium Building with its second story addition, 1958, view south.
Tabula. Oak Park and River Forest High School, 1958.

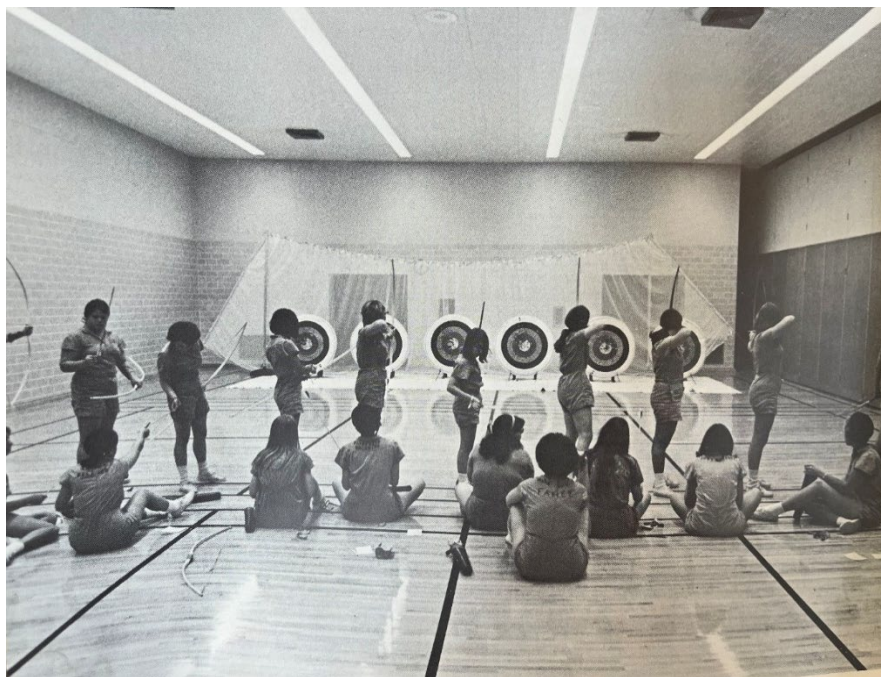


Figure 18: First floor north gymnasium that was part of the 1967-68 addition, view east.
Source: "Dedication of Oak Park and River Forest High School New Addition," November 8-9, 1968.