

HISTORIC ILLINOIS BUILDINGS SURVEY

LONGFELLOW SCHOOL

HIBS DU-2022-1

- Location: Longfellow School is located at 1435 Prairie Avenue in Downers Grove, Illinois. The building is situated on Lots 48, 49, 50, 71, 72, 73, 74 in Branigar Brothers' Wooded Homesites, a Subdivision in Section 7, Township 38 North, Range 11, East of the Third Principal Meridian, and Section 12, Township 38 North, Range 10, East of the Third Principal Meridian in DuPage County, Illinois.
- USGS Quadrangle: DuPage
- Present Owner: McNaughton Development
- Present Use: Vacant
- Significance: Longfellow School and its twin, Whittier School, were built in 1928 to alleviate overcrowding at the earlier Lincoln and Washington Schools in Downers Grove. Both one-story, flat-roofed buildings were sheathed in multi-colored face brick and originally featured extensive stone ornament at the parapet level. They were designed by the J.C. Llewellyn Company, a prominent, Chicago-based firm that specialized in school designs. Longfellow School featured a large gymnasium, kindergarten, four large classrooms, two smaller workspaces, a principal's office, a nurse's office, and two public bathrooms upon completion. It was expanded in 1951 with a south addition that had two large workshops. Longfellow School was closed in 1978 due to declining enrollment and it was subsequently repurposed to serve as instructional materials center for District 58.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

- A. Physical History
1. Dates of construction
1928 with 1951 addition
 2. Architect
J.C. Llewellyn Company

3. Original and subsequent owners

The parcel upon which Longfellow School is situated was originally part of a 700-acre tract of land purchased in 1872 by the Linden Association, which was headed by General Arthur C. Ducat.¹ This land was purchased by the Marshall Field Estate in 1892. Branigar Brothers, a Chicago-based real estate firm, purchased this acreage from the Marshall Field Estate in 1920, for residential development.² Downers Grove School District 58 purchased the three-acre parcel at 1435 Prairie Avenue from Branigar Brothers in the mid-1920s.³

4. Original plans and construction

Longfellow School was built in 1928 as a one-story, flat-roofed building with a tall brick chimney and a rectangular footprint that measured 102'-0" (east-west) and 83'-0" (north-south). Its loadbearing, concrete block walls were sheathed in multi-colored face brick and had parapets detailed with stone ornament and coping. The center of its front façade had a five-sided window bay. The school had a total of four entrances—located at each end its east and west corridors—that featured wood double-doors topped by transoms, with eight lights in each leaf. Fenestration was compromised of tall windows, each with eight lights, that were arranged alone, in pairs, groups of three, and in horizontal bands. The floor plan had double-loaded east and west corridors that were connected by a double-load north corridor. Spaces included a kindergarten, principal's office, nurse's office, gymnasium, four large classrooms, two workspaces, and two public bathrooms. Interior walls and ceilings were covered with plaster.

5. Alterations and additions

The rectangular building received a one-story south addition measuring 62'-0" (east-west) by 42'-0" (north-south) in 1951, which housed two large workshops and a smaller room that was likely used as a general-purpose workspace. Exterior changes over the years have included the replacement of original doors and windows as well as all original stone ornament/coping in the parapet, which has been rebuilt with brick and metal coping. Interior alterations have included the installation of non-original flooring (mainly vinyl tiles and wall-to-wall carpeting) as well as acoustical tile ceiling systems

¹ Rufus Blanchard, *History of DuPage County, Illinois* (Chicago: O.L. Baskin & Co., Historical Publishers, 1882) 204.

² Montrew Dunham and Pauline Wandschneider, *Downers Grove 1832 to 1982* (Published by the Heritage Festival Task Force of Downers Grove, 1982) 114; "Marshall Field Estate Opened to Purchasers," *Downers Grove Reporter* (August 20, 1920); "Branigar Bros. Company," *Downers Grove Reporter* (September 20, 1920).

³ "Call Election on Building of Grade Schools," *Downers Grove Reporter* (January 13, 1928).

and fluorescent lighting. The original floorplan has remained largely unaltered.

B. Historical Context

1. Overview History of Downers Grove

Downers Grove is a village located about 20 miles southwest of Chicago's central business district known as the Loop. The sprawling community is situated in the southeastern corner of DuPage County, mainly in Downers Grove Township, although its boundaries also extend into adjacent Lisle, York, and Milton townships. It is bordered by the communities of Westmont on the east, Lisle on the west, Lombard on the north, and Woodridge and Darien on the south.

Downers Grove is named for Pierce Downer (1782-1863), who arrived in the area from Jefferson County New York in 1832, staking his claim to a 160-acre tract of timberland and prairie for which he paid the government \$1.25 an acre. Downer settled near the present-day northwest corner of Downers Grove near Ogden Avenue, which was then an Indian trail. Over the years, Downer transformed his property into a successful dairy farm, which encompassed much of the later E.H. Prince Subdivision. Other pioneers were attracted to the high, well-drained grove as its timber provided wood for fuel and building materials, while the surrounding prairie was suitable for cultivation.⁴

The first plat of Downers Grove was made on September 26, 1864, in anticipation of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad (now the Burlington Northern) from Chicago to Aurora, which was completed that year.⁵ A fledgling commercial district emerged on Union Street (now Main Street) near the railroad tracks. Downers Grove was officially incorporated as a Village in 1873 and the first Village Hall was built four years later.⁶ Residents were natives of New England and New York, as well as immigrants from England, Ireland, and Germany. Early residential development was located south of the tracks and included three small residential subdivisions by 1874, as shown in a map of that year.⁷

In about 1872, a group of Chicago businessmen headed by General Arthur C. Ducat formed the Linden Heights Association, which purchased 800 acres of land within the heavily wooded grove west of Main Street. By the early 1880s

⁴ C.W. Richmond and H.F. Vallette, *A History of the County of DuPage, Illinois* (Chicago: Steam Presses of Scripps, Bross and Spears, 1857) 175. Blanchard, 203.

⁵ Blanchard, 205.

⁶ Richard A. Thompson (Ed.). *DuPage Roots* (DuPage County Historical Society, 1985) 146.

⁷ *Combination Atlas Map of DuPage County, Illinois* (Elgin, Illinois: Thompson Brothers and Burr, 1874).

the property was “being laid off in streets with artistic curves, rustic parks and lawns, for elegant residences.”⁸ However, the property—which encompassed the present-day Maple Grove Forest Preserve, Avery Coonley School campus, Gilbert Park, and the Denburn Woods subdivision—remained undeveloped during the nineteenth century.

The population of Downers Grove was 586 in 1880 and it doubled from 960 to 2,102 between 1890 and 1900.⁹ The most significant development to occur during the 1890s was the expansion of the village north of the tracks, due in large part to the establishment of the 225-acre E.H. Prince and Company Subdivision. Downers Grove saw its ethnic mix change in the late nineteenth century with the arrival of Eastern European immigrants. A large Polish settlement called Gostyn developed along Fairview Avenue, near the eastern periphery of the village.¹⁰

The population of Downers Grove grew from 2,103 to 3,543 between 1900 and 1920, as new housing slowly began to spread outside previously settled areas.¹¹ The village became a major location for mail-order housing sold by Sears, Roebuck & Company and others in the early twentieth century, thanks to its location on the railroad line.

The 1920s was a period of prosperity in which over 5,000 new residents increased the population to 8,977 by decade’s end.¹² The real estate market was booming as new subdivisions were established, including “Branigar Brothers Wooded Homesites,” which was located on the northwest side of the village on land previously owned by the Marshall Field Estate. During the 1920s, this 600-acre tract was subdivided into home sites ranging from 60-foot lots to an acre of ground.¹³ Longfellow School was built in 1928 on a three-acre parcel fronting Prairie Avenue to serve the families of this fast-growing area of the village.

Notable buildings erected in downtown Downers Grove during the 1920s included Alamo Theater, a new Post Office, a Masonic Temple, and the Tivoli Theater. The construction boom of the 1920s led the Downers Grove Village Council to adopt its first zoning ordinance on April 16, 1923 to guide future growth. It was “designed to protect the residence districts of the community

⁸ Blanchard, 204.

⁹ U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1880, 1890, 1900.

¹⁰ Thompson, 146.

¹¹ U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1900, 1920.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ “Marshall Field Estate Opened to Purchasers,” *Downers Grove Reporter* (August 20, 1920); “Branigar Bros. Company,” *Downers Grove Reporter* (September 20, 1920).

from the encroachments of business and manufacturing establishments and thus keep up their value as residence property.”¹⁴ The ordinance was developed by the zoning commission under supervision of nationally prominent city planning consultant Jacob L. Crane Jr. and divided the Village into various land-use districts.

The population of Downers Grove nearly doubled from 11,865 to 21,154 between 1950 and 1960 and then doubled again over the next twenty years, rising to 42,560 by 1980.¹⁵ Annexations of unincorporated areas for the creation of subdivisions—particularly north of Ogden Avenue and south of 63rd Street—consumed the productive farms that still surrounded much of the Village as late as the 1940s and involved the installation of streets, water mains, and sewers. In the process, the Village boundaries were expanded to eventually encompass thirteen square miles.

Downers Grove also experienced phenomenal business and light industrial growth in the post-World War II era due to its strategic location near the intersection of the East-West Tollway (I-88) and the North-South Tollway (I-355), as well as its location near I-55 to the south and the Tri-State Tollway (I-294) to the east. The Ellsworth Business Park and the Oak Grove Business Park provide for light manufacturing and serve as warehouse/distribution centers. The Butterfield/Finley district includes several hotels, a shopping center, and office complexes that are home to many large corporations. Shopping areas and strip malls are strung out along Ogden Avenue and Butterfield Road.¹⁶

Continued residential construction has kept pace with retail and business developments since the 1980s, with increased numbers of apartment and condominium buildings. New cul-de-sacs with single-family houses are located near the outer edges of the Village. Downers Grove currently has nearly 50,000 residents.

2. History of Public Schools in Downers Grove and Longfellow School

The history of public schools in Downers Grove dates to the winter 1836, when Israel Blodgett built a lean-to against his log cabin to house a school that would provide an education for his own children and others in the vicinity. They were taught by Hiram Stillson, who had attended Oberlin College. Other early schools were kept in private houses and expenses were paid entirely by

¹⁴ “Zoning Ordinance Passed by Council,” *Downers Grove Reporter* (April 27, 1923); “Glen Ellyn and Downers Grove Adopt Zoning,” *Chicago Tribune* (April 22, 1923).

¹⁵ U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1950, 1960, 1980.

¹⁶ Chicago Fact Book Consortium, *Local Community Fact Book, Chicago Metropolitan Area, 1990* (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1995) 245.

subscription, with each pioneer giving what he could out of his income. Such schools came under the supervision of DuPage County Commissioners in 1839.¹⁷

Downers Grove became a recognized Illinois school district, known as District 2, in 1846. A one-room frame school was built on Maple Avenue, near present-day Dunham Road, in that year. This building served the village until 1867, when a two-room brick school was erected at 935 Maple Avenue. This building received a two-room brick addition in 1877 due to growing enrollment. Within five years, the “four commodious rooms” of the school were “full to their utmost capacity.” The “South Side School” (later renamed Lincoln School) originally had a ten-year course of instruction, which included two years of high school.¹⁸

Downers Grove residents voted in 1890 to organize a Board of Education, after which time a site was purchased at the northeast corner of Washington and Prairie streets where the two-room brick Washington Elementary School (originally called North Side School) was built in 1891 and received a two-room addition two years later. In 1900, the two-story Lincoln Elementary School was built at 935 Maple Avenue in front of the four-room South Side School that dated from the 1867-77 period. The older rear building was replaced in 1913 by a large, two-story addition that was used to house the community’s high school, which included a gymnasium and assembly hall.¹⁹

In 1902, Downers Grove schools became part of District 58, which was created during a local Board of Education meeting on April 19 of that year. District 58 also included high school grade levels, but those were spun off in 1923 to create Community High School District 99.²⁰

Exploding population growth in Downers Grove during the 1920s prompted District 58 to hold a special election on January 21, 1928, asking voters to authorize a bond issue of \$160,000 for the construction of two grade school buildings. They were to be sited on separate three-acre parcels that the Board purchased several years earlier. One was located at 1435 Prairie Avenue, on the northwest side of town, and the other was at 536 Hill Street, on the southeast side. One contemporary writer noted that, “This will enable the smaller children of those districts to attend school without the long walks with

¹⁷ Blanchard, 208-209.

¹⁸ Blanchard, 209.

¹⁹ Dunham and Wandschneider, 216.

²⁰ “Grade schools to celebrate 100 years,” *The Downers Grove Reporter* (April 17, 2002).

which they are now faced in going to their classes at the North and South side public schools.”²¹

At the same election, High School District 99 asked voters to approve a bond issue of \$125,000 to furnish a Community High School.²²

Voters of the two Downers Grove school districts voted overwhelmingly to approve both bond issues which were intended to provide the community with all the space needed for both the grade and high schools. District 58 planned to build two six-room schools with the intention of providing additions as needed. One writer discussed those plans following bond approval:

One of the sites for the grade buildings is in Prairie Avenue between Montgomery and Seeley streets and the other is at the corner of Hill and Grand avenues. Each site contains a little less than three acres which will allow for playground space, and each is ideally situated to care for the children of the vicinity.

The building of these two additional grade schools and the completion of the high school in Grant Street will give to this community a system of schools second to none in the county. It is the understanding that the new schools will be used entirely for the lower grades and that the present high school in Maple Avenue will be a junior high school or at least be used almost entirely for the upper grades of the elementary school.

The past five or six years has seen the schools grow in enrollment until Library Hall, the Masonic Temple and part of the Baptist Church were pressed into service to accommodate the children. In the high school, classes have been held in the halls and all of the rooms are crowded beyond their capacity.²³

District 58 selected the J.C. Llewellyn Company of Chicago to design twin grade schools on the two sites previously purchased on the northwest and southeast sides of the village. A February 1928 article in the *Downers Grove Reporter* noted that, “The board members are anxious that construction of the schools be started as quickly as possible so that they may be ready for the opening of the fall term this year. They are in hopes that the school can be ready to cut down the long distances which many of the children are now forced to travel to attend their grades.”²⁴

Early plans for the grade schools called for the construction of six-room buildings “with the further possibility that gymnasium and assembly hall space may be provided in each building.” Several members of the grade school board

²¹ “Vote Tomorrow on Settling of School Problem,” *Downers Grove Reporter* (January 20, 1928).

²² “Call Election on Building of Grade Schools,” *Downers Grove Reporter* (January 13, 1928); “Vote Tomorrow on Settling of School Problem,” *Downers Grove Reporter* (January 20, 1928).

²³ “Voters Approve Bond Issues For Local Schools,” *Downers Grove Reporter* (January 27, 1928).

²⁴ “School Board Meets with Architects on Grade School Plans,” *Downers Grove Reporter* (February 3, 1928).

were “anxious that these features be included,” or alternately that space be left for the addition of these rooms if they couldn’t be added at once.²⁵

Longfellow School at 1435 Prairie Avenue and Whittier School at 536 Hill Street immediately alleviated the overcrowding at the existing Lincoln and Washington Schools upon their completion in 1928. Each of the one-story, flat-roofed buildings accommodated a large gymnasium, kindergarten, four large classrooms, two smaller workspaces, a principal’s office, a nurse’s office, and two public bathrooms. The twin schools were sheathed in multi-colored face brick and had parapets detailed with stone ornament and coping. Each had a five-sided bay window in the center of its front façade that illuminated the kindergarten and was flanked by the two main entrances.

Downers Grove North High School (originally called Community High School; 4436 Main St.) was also completed in 1928 and received large new additions in the 1930s. Downers Grove experienced rapid residential growth starting in the 1940s, which accelerated in the immediate post-World War II era and overtaxed the local school system. District 58 was forced to rent space in churches and gymnasiums in existing schools were converted to classrooms. The crisis was alleviated by a multi-million-dollar school expansion plan that began in 1950 when voters approved a \$1.6 million bond issue. Between 1950 and 1970, Downers Grove built nine elementary schools, two junior high schools (now middle schools), one new high school, and created additions to those buildings and to the older existing schools.²⁶

Elementary schools built during the 1950s included Highland (3935 Highland Ave.), Hillcrest (1435 Jefferson Ave.), Pierce Downer (1435 Grant St.), Lester (311 Lincoln Ave.), and Fairmount (6036 Blodgett Ave.). These schools were expanded with additions less than a decade after their completion, as Downers Grove continued to experience phenomenal residential growth. For example, Pierce Downer School had seven classrooms upon its completion in 1952. A large addition built just seven years later featured seven additional classrooms, a gymnasium, and a teacher’s lounge. A 1967 addition included a library, two rooms used for tutoring and speech therapy, a nurse’s office, and an instrumental music room.²⁷

Mid-century elementary school buildings in Downers Grove—like the earlier Longfellow and Whittier Schools—were one-story, flat-roofed designs. Unlike those earlier schools, however, they eschewed exterior ornament and were

²⁵ “Local Schools Bonds Bought by Spears & Co.,” *Downers Grove Reporter* (February 17, 1928).

²⁶ “District 58 – a heritage of good education,” *Our Schools* (Summer 1982).

²⁷ “Longfellow-Pierce Downer,” *Downers Grove Reporter* (September 27, 1967).

more Modernistic in appearance. Lester School was designed in 1956 by the J.C. Llewellyn Co., the same firm that designed **Longfellow** and Whitter Schools in 1928. It was described upon completion as a “low, one-story red brick building of contemporary design.” The same writer noted that the school, which accommodated kindergarten through sixth grade, “is particularly inviting for beginning youngsters with its pleasant kindergarten room featured by an attractive semi-circular bay. It has its own wardrobe facilities and fluorescent lighting is used throughout. Ceilings are treated acoustically, and asphalt tile covers the floors.”²⁸

Washington School received a new gymnasium wing and a kindergarten wing in 1951, the year that Longfellow and Whittier Schools were also expanded with new wings. The addition at the south end of **Longfellow School** featured two large workshops.²⁹

The 1950s also saw the construction of Herrick Junior High (4435 Middaugh Ave.) and O’Neill Junior High (635 59th Street). During the 1960s, Kingsley (6509 Powell St.), Indian Trail (6235 Stonewall Ave.), Belle Aire (3935 Belle Aire Lane), and El Sierra (6835 Fairmount Ave.) elementary schools were built. The local population explosion also necessitated the construction of a second high school—Downers Grove South (1436 Norfolk)—which was built in 1964 and expanded with a three-story addition five years later.³⁰

Longfellow and Pierce Downer Schools served the same attendance area on the village’s northwest side. Kindergarten through second grade classes were held at **Longfellow**, while third through fifth grade classes were held at Pierce Downer. The total teacher staff numbered 17 for both schools in 1967.³¹

Three of the oldest elementary schools in Downers Grove were converted to new uses in the 1970s. Lincoln Elementary School at 935 Maple Street was closed in 1974 and subsequently purchased by the Downers Grove Park District, which converted it to a community center.³² Washington School was closed in 1979 and used as a special educational cooperative until 1988, when it was purchased by the Park District with the intention of using it to accommodate increasing demand for more park facilities. It was demolished in 2003, following the opening of a new Recreation Center the previous year.³³

²⁸ “Newest Downers Grove School is fine example of latest architecture,” *Downers Grove Reporter*, n.d.

²⁹ “Village Grade Schools to be Dedicated Nov 8,” *Downers Grove Reporter* (November 12, 1953).

³⁰ “District 58 – a heritage of good education,” *Our Schools* (Summer 1982); Dunham and Wandschneider, 216.

³¹ “Longfellow-Pierce Downer,” *Downers Grove Reporter* (September 27, 1967).

³² Dunham and Wandschneider, 217.

³³ “Old Washington School ready for park programs,” *Suburban Life* (May 21, 1988); “Historic building to be demolished,” *Downers Grove Reporter* (July 18, 2003).

District 58 voted to close **Longfellow School** in the spring of 1978 due to declining enrollment and to save money. The last day of school was June 9, 1978.³⁴ The building was rented by Life in the Spirit Mission in October 1978. This was the umbrella organization of Fair Center Christian Academy, which occupied the building starting in January 1979, with classes for students from third through tenth grades.³⁵ In 1982, District 58 repurposed the building as the Longfellow-Instructional Materials Center, used to process and store a wide array of curriculum, instructional, and library materials, such as textbooks, professional journals, films, tape recordings, and records.³⁶

In May 2021, District 58 approved a resolution to sell Longfellow Center.³⁷ The building was sold later that year to McNaughton Development, which intends to raze the building and construct single-family houses on its site. Today, Longfellow’s twin—the 1928 Whittier School—is the oldest extant school building in Downers Grove that is still in use.

3. J. C. Llewellyn Company, Architect

Longfellow School was designed by the J.C. Llewellyn Company, which specialized in school design, especially high schools. 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 1877.³⁸

Joseph Llewellyn married Emma Piatt on May 17, 1883.³⁹ She also graduated from the University of Illinois in 1877.⁴⁰ The couple had four children: Ralph Corson (b. 1884), Clarinne (b. 1886), Ruth (b. 1889), and Vida (b. 1892). Llewellyn moved to LaGrange, Illinois, with his family in the early 1890s and resided in that suburb for the rest of his life in a house at 324 Sixth Avenue.⁴¹

³⁴ *Downers Grove Reporter* (June 14, 1978).

³⁵ “Academy teaches discipline, authority,” *Downers Grove Reporter* (1979).

“Academy teaches discipline, authority,” *Downers Grove Reporter* (1979).

³⁶ “Longfellow is site of materials center,” *In Your Schools* (March 24, 1982); “District 58 – a heritage of good education,” *Our Schools*, Summer 1982.

³⁷ “Downers Grove residents seek historic designation to former school,” *Daily Herald* (September 23, 2021).

³⁸ A.N. Marquis. *The Book of Chicagoans* (Chicago: A.N. Marquis Company, 1917) 420.

³⁹ Illinois, U.S., County Marriage Records, 1800-1940.

⁴⁰ *Illinois Alumni News*, Volume 3, 1909: 48.

⁴¹ U.S. Census for Population and Housing, 1900.

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 1877-79.⁴² 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 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 1897.⁴³ Llewellyn worked independently until 1907, when he and his son, Ralph, established the J.C. Llewellyn Company with offices at 38 S. Dearborn Street. Like his father, Ralph studied architecture at the University of Illinois, and he graduated in 1906.⁴⁴

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 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).⁴⁵

Starting in the early 1900s, Llewellyn increasingly obtained commissions in other Midwestern states, notably in Michigan, Indiana, and Wisconsin. His work also began to focus on industrial buildings, including large factories and complexes for clients that included the Cracker Jack Company, Advanced Rumely Thresher Company, and the N.K. Fairbanks Company in Chicago. One of his more prominent projects was the design of a large industrial housing development in Hammond, Indiana, for the Standard Steel Car Company.⁴⁶

Both individually, and with his firm, Llewellyn also received commissions that included banks, hotels, and school buildings. He designed approximately 50 schools in the early twentieth century, of which 28 were high schools, and 19

⁴² *Proceedings of the Fifty-second Annual Convention of the American Institute of Architects* (Washington, D.C.: AIA, 1919) 59.

⁴³ A.N. Marquis. *The Book of Chicagoans* (Chicago: A.N. Marquis Company, 1917) 420.

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

⁴⁵ J.C. Llewellyn and Associates Records, 1894-1985, Finding Aid, Art Institute of Chicago Archives, Research Center.

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

were in Illinois.⁴⁷ In Downers Grove, his school projects included an addition to Lincoln School (1914) and the design of Longfellow and Whittier Elementary Schools (1928).

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

Prominent professionally during his long and successful career, Llewellyn served terms 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.

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

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, Art Institute of Chicago Archives, Research Center.

the happy blending of the artistic and the practical and thus accords with the ideals and life of the American public.⁴⁹

Joseph 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 company 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*.

After Joseph C. Llewellyn’s death in 1932, his son Ralph continued the firm under the same name. J.C. Llewellyn and Company was active through the 1970s, when it was merged with the firm Gordon W. Warren and Associates.⁵⁰

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

This one-story, flat-roofed school building has a rectangular footprint with a projecting south wing. Its loadbearing, concrete block walls have parapets with metal coping and are sheathed in multi-colored face brick. There are a total of six entrances, two of which are on the front façade, flanking the five-sided central window bay. Metal-framed windows are arranged alone, in pairs, groups of three, and in horizontal bands. Each window opening features a vertical strip of four panes: the bottom pane is movable while the other three panes are fixed. The floor plan has double-loaded east and west corridors that are connected by a double-load north corridor. Spaces include a former kindergarten, gymnasium, four large classrooms, and two workshops in the south wing. Interior walls are covered with plaster, ceilings have acoustical tile systems, and floors are covered with vinyl tiles or wall-to-wall carpeting.

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, Art Institute of Chicago Archives, Research Center.

B. Description of Exterior

1. Over-all dimensions

The building is 16'-7" in height. The original block measures about 102'-0" (east-west) and 83'-0" (north-south). The south wing measures about 62'-0" (east-west) and 42'-0" (north-south).

2. Foundation

The building has a concrete foundation.

3. Walls

The walls of the building have a concrete water table, are sheathed with multi-colored face brick laid in a running bond, and feature parapets with metal coping. A concrete sill course wraps around the front (north) and side (east and west) facades, which also feature brick piers and rowlock window surrounds.

4. Structural system

The building and its 1951 addition both have loadbearing concrete block exterior walls and concrete block partition walls.

5. Openings

a. Doorways and doors

The front (north) façade has two metal-framed glass doors with sidelights, each of which has a tall transom and concrete surround. The south façade of the main block has a pair of metal doors with a transom that has been infilled with a synthetic material. The east façade of the addition has a single metal door. The south façade of the addition has a pair of metal doors with narrow sidelights and a transom that has been infilled with a synthetic material, as well as a single metal door that opens onto a workshop.

b. Windows

Metal-framed windows are arranged alone, in pairs, groups of three, and in horizontal bands. Each window opening features a vertical strip of four panes: the bottom pane is movable while the other three panes are fixed.

6. Roof

a. Shape, covering

The building has a composition covered flat roof with a tall brick chimney.

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor plans

The floor plan has double-loaded east and west corridors that are connected by a double-load north corridor. At the center of the building are a large gymnasium as well as the kindergarten, which is flanked by the principal's office and nurse's office. The east and west sides of the original block are identical, each of which includes two large classrooms, a workspace room, and a public washroom. The south addition has a workspace room and two large workshops.

2. Stairways

The west corridor opens onto a concrete stairway with metal treads and metal newell posts/pipe railings.

3. Flooring

The building's concrete flooring is primarily covered with vinyl tiles of varying colors. Exceptions are the kindergarten and one of the west classrooms (wall-to-wall carpeting), the two bathrooms (ceramic tile flooring), and the gymnasium, where a synthetic material has been placed over the original maple flooring.

4. Wall and ceiling finish

Concrete block partition walls are finished in plaster. The lower portion of the gymnasium walls are sheathed in brown brick. Rooms in the south addition feature exposed concrete block walls. Walls of the two public washrooms are covered with ceramic tiles. Ceilings are covered with acoustical tile systems.

5. Openings

a. Doorways and doors

The interior retains many original multi-light wood doors with multi-light wood transoms, which feature wire glass. Doorways have wood frames. There are also a few hollow wood doors.

6. Decorative features and trim

The corridors and classrooms have wood baseboard molding. Some of the classrooms retain original chalkboards as well as built-in closets which have wood surrounds.

7. Mechanical equipment

a. Heating

A basement boiler provided steam heat to the radiators of the building.

b. Lighting

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

c. Plumbing

The building has two public bathrooms: one each for girls and boys. The girls' washroom has four toilets separated by metal stalls and two sinks. The boys' washroom has two toilets separated by metal stalls, two urinals, and two sinks. The workspace room in the south addition has a sink and an adjacent private washroom with toilet and sink. The nurse's office has a private washroom with toilet and sink.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation

The building is situated on a rectangular corner parcel that is about three acres in size with frontages of 400 feet on Prairie Avenue on the north, and 360 feet on Montgomery and Seeley Streets on the east and west, respectively.⁵¹ The south lot line abuts residential parcels with single-family houses.

The north-facing Longfellow School is set back about 70 feet from Prairie Avenue and its two front entrances are approached from that street via asphalt walkways. Asphalt-paved parking lots are situated on the west and south sides of the building. The remainder of the parcel is covered with grass and features numerous mature trees.

The property is situated within the Branigar Brothers Wooded Homesites Subdivision, a residential neighborhood in the northwest corner of Downers Grove that is comprised of single-family houses constructed in the late 1920s in a variety of historical revival styles. Prairie Avenue runs in an east-west direction and is a two-lane, asphalt-paved, residential street with concrete curbs and sidewalks, and overhead streetlights.

⁵¹ Dimensions obtained from: Civil and Environmental Consultants, Alta/NSPS Land Title Survey, June 21, 2021.

2. Historic landscape design

The school's three-acre parcel was originally covered with grass and features an abundance of trees. Some of the grassy lawn to the south and west of the building was replaced post-1950 by asphalt paved parking lots that were accessed from Montgomery and Seeley streets and connected by a driveway.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural Drawing

J.C. Llewellyn Company, Chicago. First Floor Plan of Longfellow School, 1928.

B. Bibliography

1. Primary and Unpublished Source Information

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- “Village Grade Schools to be Dedicated Nov 8,” *Downers Grove Reporter*, November 12, 1953.
- “Vote Tomorrow on Settling of School Problem,” *Downers Grove Reporter*, January 20, 1928.
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2. Secondary and published sources

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- Dunham, Montrew. *Downers Grove Revisited*. Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia, 2003.
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- Thompson, Richard A. (Ed.). *DuPage Roots*. DuPage County Historical Society, 1985.
- 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 58 in Downers Grove may have archival materials on Longfellow School and/or Board of Education minutes from 1928 that presumably would include discussions regarding the construction of this school. However, repeated attempts to contact officials at District 58 via phone and email to ask whether such materials exist, and if so, could be reviewed, received no response.

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. This collection includes architectural drawings for Whittier School in Downers Grove but not for Longfellow School.

D. Sketch Plans

A sketch plan for Longfellow School is attached to this report.

E. Supplemental Material

A site plan, current sketch floor plan, original first floor plan, historic and current photographs of Longfellow 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, in order to develop a thorough history of Longfellow School, placing the building within the context of Downers Grove and its public schools, 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 both the Downers Grove Public Library and the Downers Grove Museum. General history books and Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps were reviewed at the Public Library.

Issues of the *Downers Grove Reporter* are digitized from the 1890s through 1922 and were searched for information pertaining to the history of the Village and its public schools. Issues of this newspaper available on microfiche at the library were searched for the year 1928 for information pertaining to the construction of Longfellow School. A Freedom of Information Act request was emailed to the Village of Downers Grove, requesting a copy of all historic (pre-1972) building permits for Longfellow School. However, none were found.

The Downers Grove Museum has folders containing newspaper articles on District 58 and its schools, all of which were reviewed. However, they contained little information on Longfellow. The museum did have an original photograph and floor plan of the school, which are attached to the end of this report.

Repeated attempts to contact individuals at District 58 to inquire about any archival materials that they may have on file related to Longfellow School were unsuccessful.

The newspapers.com database was reviewed for information pertaining to the history of Downers Grove and the work of architect Joseph C. Llewellyn. The J.C. Llewellyn and Associates Records on file at the Art Institute of Chicago do not contain drawings or photographs of Longfellow School.

C. Archives and Repositories Used

Downers Grove Public Library in Downers Grove, Illinois
Downers Grove Museum in Downers Grove, 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

Lucas Howser developed the sketch floor plan for this building using CAD. He also produced the site plan.

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).

INDEX TO BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPHS

Leslie Schwartz, photographer, February 2022

DU-2022-1	North and west facades, looking southeast.
DU-2022-2	North (front) façade, looking southeast.
DU-2022-3	North (front) façade entrance, looking south.
DU-2022-4	East (left) and north facades, looking southwest.
DU-2022-5	East facades, looking west.
DU-2022-6	Chimney, looking northwest.
DU-2022-7	West façade, looking northeast.
DU-2022-8	Original kindergarten.
DU-2022-9	Typical classroom.
DU-2022-10	Classroom doors with transom.
DU-2022-11	Original gymnasium.
DU-2022-12	East corridor, view toward gymnasium.
DU-2022-13	Original classroom chalkboard with wood trim,
DU-2022-14	West corridor, looking north.



HIBS DU-2022-1



HIBS DU-2022-2



HIBS DU-2022-3



HIBS DU-2022-4



HIBS DU-2022-5



HIBS DU-2022-6



HIBS DU-2022-7



HIBS DU-2022-8



HIBS DU-2022-9



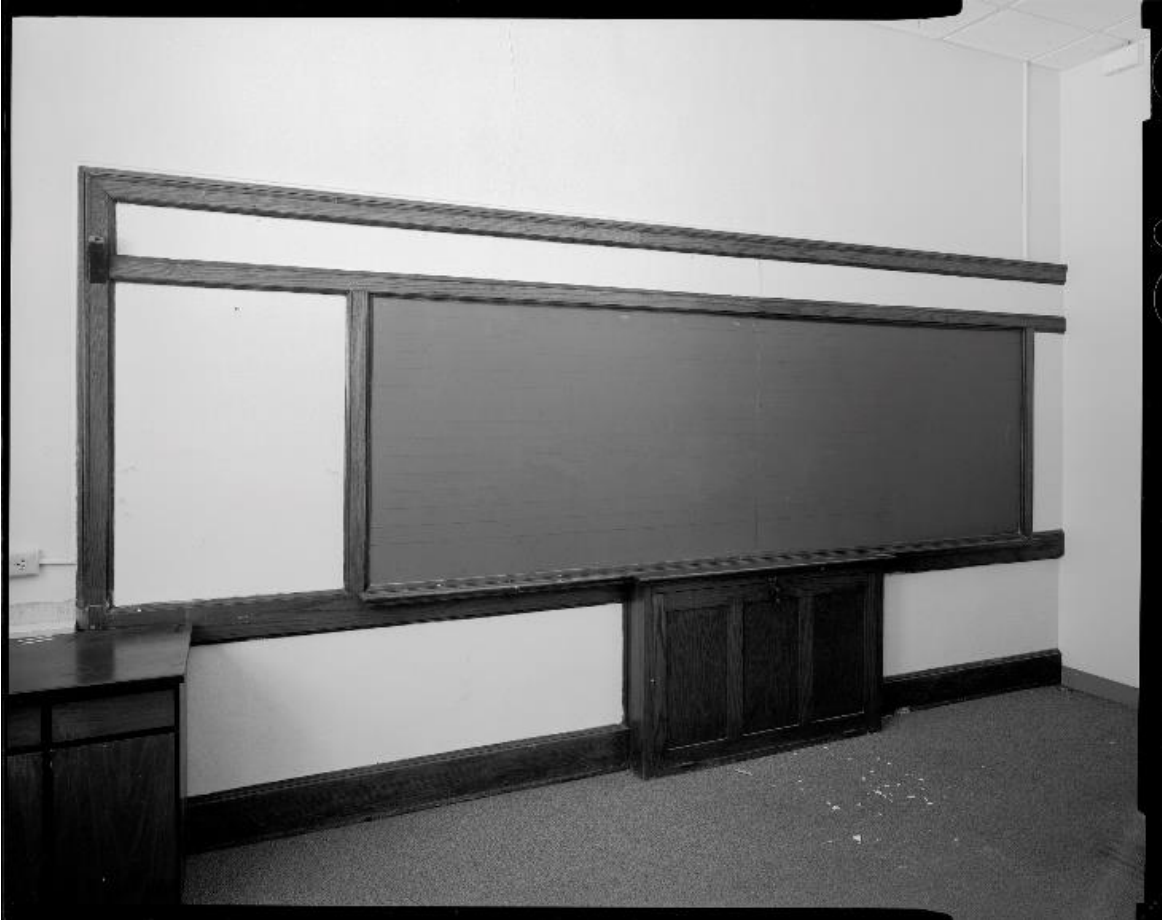
HIBS DU-2022-10



HIBS DU-2022-11



HIBS DU-2022-12



HIBS DU-2022-13



HIBS DU-2022-14



Figure 1: Site Plan of Longfellow School, drawn by Lucas Howser, March 2022.

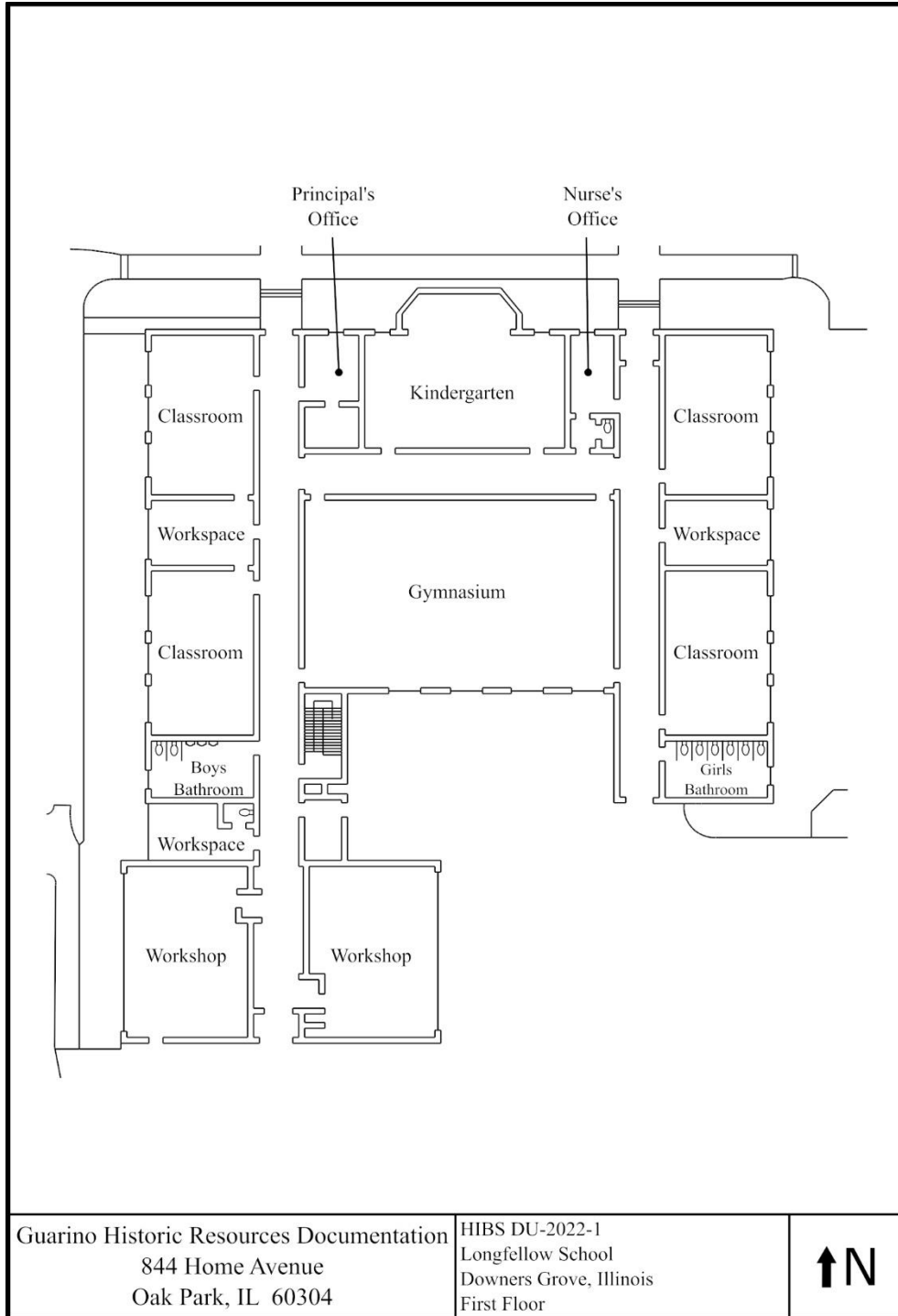


Figure 2: First Floor Plan of Longfellow School showing original uses of the various rooms.
Plan drawn by Lucas Howser, March 2022.

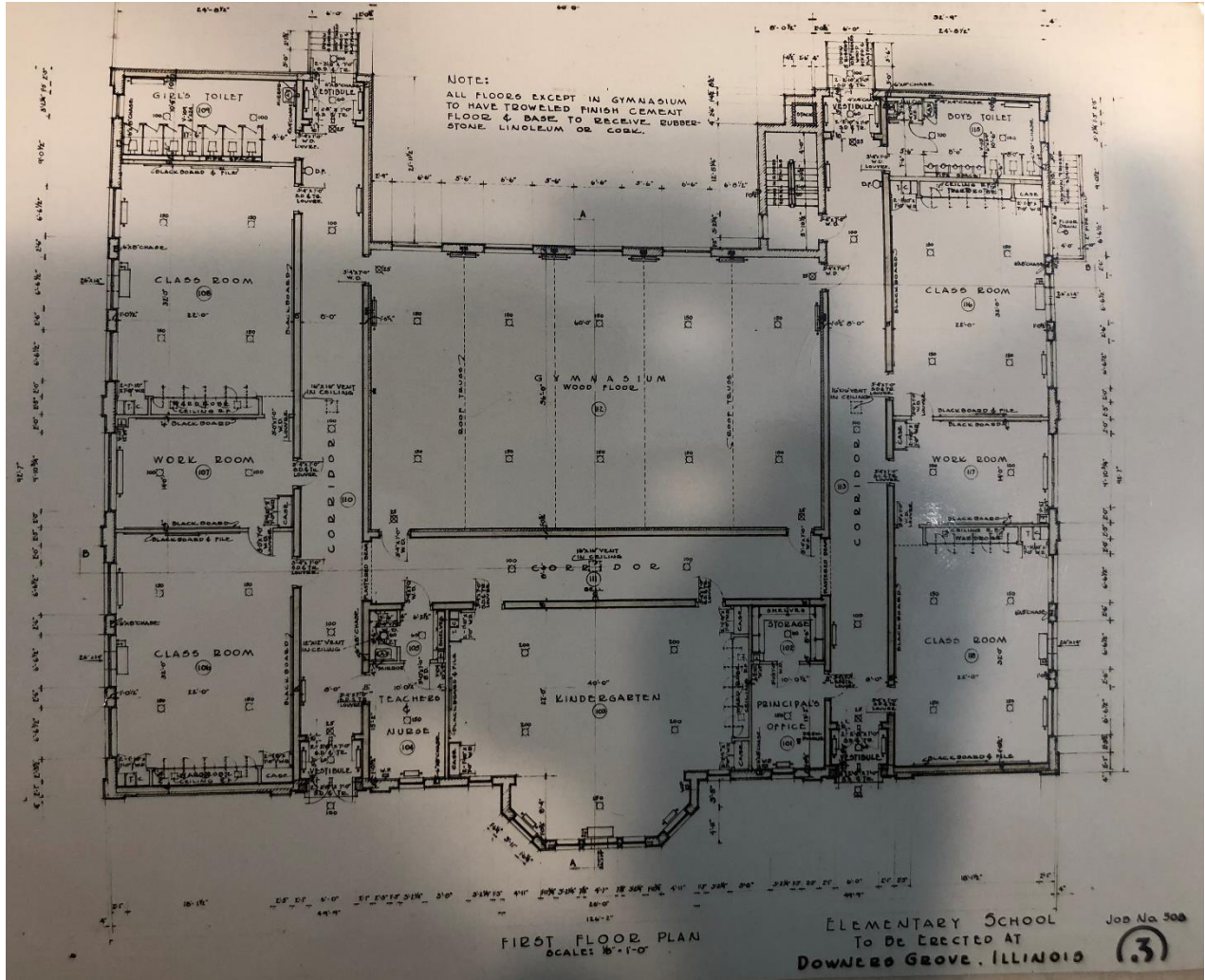


Figure 3: J.C. Llewellyn & Company, First Floor Plan for Longfellow School, 1928.
Courtesy of the Downers Grove Museum.

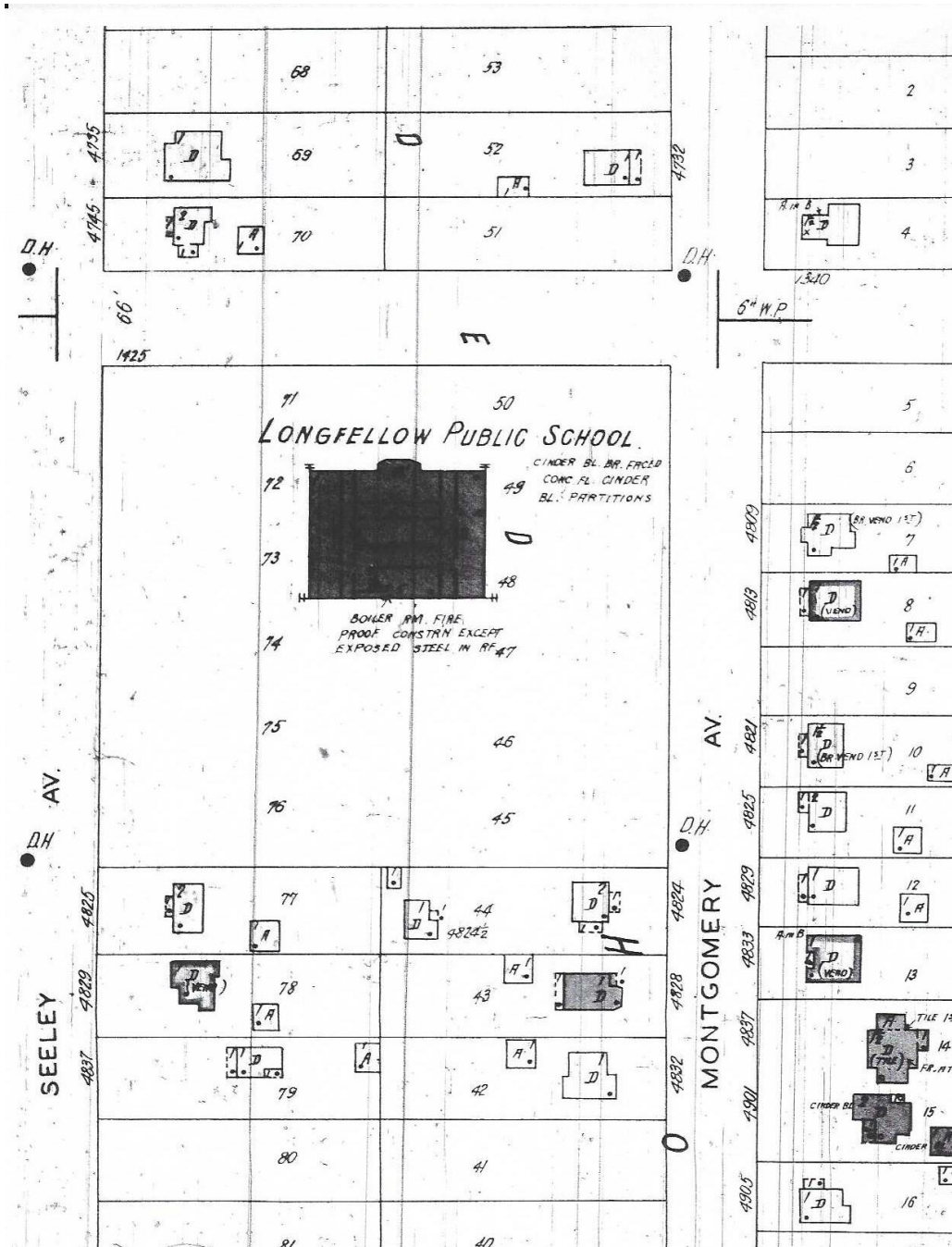


Figure 4: The neighborhood of Longfellow School, as it appeared in 1933.
Source: Sanborn Map Company. *Downers Grove, DuPage County, Illinois*. New York: Sanborn Map Company, March 1933.



Figure 5: View of Longfellow School upon completion, looking southeast.
Photograph by Chicago Architectural Photographing Company,
Courtesy of the Downers Grove Museum.



Figure 6: Undated view of Longfellow School's front (north) façade, looking southeast.
Courtesy of the Downers Grove Museum.



Figure 7: Undated view of Longfellow School, looking southeast.
Courtesy of the Downers Grove Museum.



Figure 8: Undated view of Longfellow School, looking southwest.
Courtesy of the Downers Grove Museum.



Figure 9: View looking southwest.



Figure 10: View looking southeast.



Figure 11: View looking northwest.



Figure 12: View looking northeast.



Figure 13: East corridor, looking northeast.



Figure 14: Girl's bathroom at the southeast corner of the school.



Figure 15: Classroom near the southeast corner of the school with original wood-trimmed chalkboard and cabinet.



Figure 16: Gymnasium, looking southwest.



Figure 17: Gymnasium, looking east.



Figure 18: Original maple flooring in gymnasium.



Figure 19: Workspace between the two classrooms on the east corridor.



Figure 20: Classroom at the northeast corner of the school.



Figure 21: East corridor, looking southeast.



Figure 22: Nurse's room, looking southeast towards north corridor and gymnasium.



Figure 23: North corridor, looking west.



Figure 24: Kindergarten, looking northwest.



Figure 25: Kindergarten, looking southwest.



Figure 26: Kindergarten, looking northeast.



Figure 27: West corridor, looking north.



Figure 28: Principal's Office, looking southwest towards storage room and west corridor.



Figure 29: West corridor, looking south.



Figure 30: Classroom at the northwest corner of school, looking northeast.



Figure 31: Workspace between the two classrooms along the west corridor.



Figure 32: Classroom near the southwest corner of the school, looking northeast.



Figure 33: Classroom near the southwest corner of school, looking southeast.



Figure 34: Staircase to basement boiler room.



Figure 35: Boys' bathroom near the southwest corner of the school.



Figure 36: Workspace in the south addition.



Figure 37: Vestibule in the south addition.



Figure 38: Workshop on the west side of the south addition.



Figure 39: Workshop on the east side of the south addition.



Figure 40: West corridor, looking north.