Silas Willard Elementary School IL HABS NO. KX-2015-1 Page 1

Silas Willard Elementary School 495 East Fremont Street Galesburg Knox County Illinois

IL HABS NO. KX-2015-1

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Illinois Historic Preservation Agency 1 Old State Capitol Plaza Springfield, Illinois 62701

ILLINOIS HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY

SILAS WILLARD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Location: 495 East Fremont Street, Galesburg, Knox County, Illinois

Present Owner: Galesburg CUSD #205

932 Harrison Street, P.O. Box 1206, Galesburg, Knox County,

Illinois 61401

<u>Present Use</u>: Elementary School

Significance: The Silas Willard Elementary School is significant as an early

twentieth century example of a small town elementary school. In addition, the school exhibits many elements common to schools

constructed in the early to middle twentieth century.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date(s) of Construction:

Silas Willard Elementary School was constructed in 1911; the second floor was expanded in 1926. An L-shaped addition and rear gymnasium was added in 1939.

2. Architects:

Aldrich & Aldrich (1939)

3. Original and Subsequent Owners:

Galesburg Board of Education (1923)

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers:

Smirl & Gibson, Contractor (1939)

5. Original plans and construction:

The original 1.5 story Silas Willard Elementary was constructed in circa 1911.

6. Alterations and additions:

In circa 1926, the second floor was expanded and classrooms were added. In 1939 the east and north additions were constructed, as was the north boiler room.

B. Historical Context

1. Knox County and Galesburg Township:

Knox County is located in west-central Illinois, bordering Henry County to the north, Stark County to the east, Fulton County to the south, and Warren and Mercer counties to the west. The county is situated in the northern portion of the Military Tract, the wedge of land in western Illinois lying between the Illinois River and the Mississippi River and extending north to the northern borders of present-day Bureau and Henry counties. Knox County was at the time of Euro-American settlement about equally divided between timber and prairie land. While the northern tier of townships are chiefly prairie-covered, the southeastern portion of the county, along Spoon River, is predominantly timbered. Occupying the highest elevations between the Illinois and Mississippi rivers, the county is well drained principally by Spoon River and its many tributaries. As elsewhere in Illinois, the early pioneers avoided the open prairies, which were considered illsuited to agriculture. The first settlements were made instead around timbered groves that provided fuel, building material, game, and shelter for livestock, and where the underlying soils were more easily worked than those of the prairie.² Only after the development of the self-scouring plow, first widely available in the 1840s, were government lands in the open prairies widely settled and fully utilized.³ ⁴

The Military Tract was surveyed and opened for settlement by 1816. However, much of this land had been patented by the federal government, in quarter sections, to soldier veterans of the War of 1812. Most of these "patented" tracts were initially settled upon by Upland Southerners and other migrants who squatted on the land

¹ Charles C. Chapman & Co. *History of Knox County, Illinois*. Chicago, 1878. Internet Archive (11/2015)

² John Mack Faragher, *Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), 62-64.

³ Chapman. History of Knox County, Illinois.

⁴ Ibid.

hoping for eventual ownership, or for profits by selling their improvements to the patentees or their assignees. The first known settlers in Knox County were Daniel and Alexander Robertson. The Robertsons were natives of Scotland who grew up in New York State. In 1820 the family migrated to southern Illinois and settled in Madison County. In 1827-28 they traveled north on the Galena Trail with a team of oxen and 80 head of hogs and settled on a claim in Section 15 of Henderson Township, just north of present-day Galesburg. Unable to obtain legal ownership of the land, the Robertsons were forced to remove their homestead northeast to Section 11. Others soon joined the Robertsons in Henderson Township including Richard Mathews, Jacob Gum, Riggs Pennington, Stephen Osborn, Thomas Sheldon, and many others. In 1829 Elizabeth Owen and her son and two daughters settled in Haw Creek Township, and in 1830 Fraker's Grove in the northeast portion of the county was settled by the Fraker, Owen, and Fitch families. The first school in Knox County opened at Cherry Grove, in present-day Cedar Township, in 1832.⁵

When the State of Illinois was formed in 1818, the land that would become Knox County was part of Madison County. In 1821 the land was included in the newly formed Pike County, which encompassed the entire Military Tract. In 1825 Knox and other counties were separated from Pike County and organized, with Knox County initially attached to Fulton County for judicial and recording purposes. Over the next few years the citizens of Knox County raised funds to construct a county courthouse and establish a county seat. Originally named Henderson, the county seat was established in the southwest quarter of Section 28, Township 11 North, in Range 2 East, now Knox Township. In 1831 the name of the county seat was changed to Knoxville in honor of Revolutionary War General Henry Knox. In 1837, Knox County achieved its present boundaries when Townships 12 and 13 North in Range 5 East became part of the newly formed Stark County. In 1850 Knox County adopted township organization, having previously been governed by county commissioners. Townships were formed but, due to protracted legal squabbling, township supervisors were not elected and a Board of Supervisors not established until 1853. Galesburg Township was organized to comprise all of Township 11 North, Range 1 East. The township was first settled in 1834 by Gaddial Scott and Edward Morse. In 1835 a group of reformers from New York purchased land in Galesburg Township for the purpose of establishing a colony, and a college,

⁵ Ibid.

based on Christian principles of temperance, education, abolitionism, and philanthropy. In 1836 the colony was founded by Mr. George Gale and his associates, and named Galesburg. By 1867 the growth of Galesburg justified the establishment, within the boundaries of Galesburg Township, of the City of Galesburg, the boundaries of which to this day are the boundaries of the city. In 1873, the county seat of Knox County was removed from Knoxville and established in the City of Galesburg.^{6 7}

2. City of Galesburg:

In 1834 the Reverend George Washington Gale, a Presbyterian minister in Whitesboro, Oneida County, New York, conceived the idea of establishing a western college in a town specifically colonized for that purpose. To gain support for his ideas, Gale set forth his plans in a lengthy circular espousing the necessity of converting the young to Christianity and of giving them the advantages of a liberal education. Gale's appeal to like-minded men in his New York community was enthusiastically received and by the spring of 1835 subscriptions in the amount of \$21,000 had been committed to the effort. In May 1835 a Prudential Committee was appointed consisting of George W. Gale, H. H. Kellogg, J. C. Smith, Nehemiah West, Thomas Gilbert, and Walter Webb. A purchasing committee consisting of Sylvanus Ferris, Nehemiah West, Thomas Simmons, and George W. Gale left New York in September 1835 and by November of that year had entered about 17 sections, or 10,747 acres, of land in Township 11 North, Range 1 East at the price of \$1.25 an acre. At a meeting held in Whitesboro, New York in January 1836, the subscribers named the centrally planned town "Galesburg" and the educational institution to be established "Prairie College".8

The first companies of settlers arrived from New York in the spring and fall of 1836. They were soon joined by a Vermont contingency. Because plans prohibited the erection of log structures within the town limits, they initially located at "Log City" in Henderson Grove, so named because all of the first dwellings were of log construction. In these temporary abodes in the wooded grove some 30 families, comprising 173 individuals, spent their first winter while the town was surveyed and the surrounding prairie land was broken for cultivation in

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ "The Township Officials of Illinois", accessed November 19, 2015, http://www.townships.toi.org.

⁸ Chapman, History of Knox County, Illinois.

the spring. The town plat, planned in New York, was laid out on 560 acres in the center of the purchased land by Nehemiah Losey, a surveyor and later Professor of Mathematics and Natural Science at Knox College. The original town plat was six blocks north to south by seven blocks east to west. In addition, ten-acre lots on each side of town were reserved for male and female academies, a five-acre lot was reserved for use as a cemetery, and land was set aside for a meetinghouse and a parsonage. Construction on the first frame residence occurred on Block 16 of the town plat and was begun by Phlegmon Phelps in November 1836. It was later known as Holyoke House, and was located on the north side of Main Street just east of Prairie Street. In keeping with the mission of the fledgling colony, and to discourage idleness during the first winter months, Nehemiah Losey and Lucy Gay opened a school at Log City in January 1837. Galesburg's colonists were staunch anti-slavery advocates who, in 1837, established one of the first anti-slavery societies in Illinois. Not only did residents believe that slavery was wrong, but many became actively involved in the Underground Railroad, and were willing to put themselves on the line by breaking the laws of the time. Galesburg's founder, George W. Gale, was himself indicted in 1843 for harboring runaway slaves. 9 10

In May 1837 a steam sawmill was constructed on Block 8 and several frame dwellings and commercial structures were soon completed and Chauncey S. Colton, Galesburg's first merchant, opened a general mercantile store. Wood was plentiful, and nearby deposits of clay suitable for brick making allowed the settlers to construct modest frame houses. By the fall of 1837 Galesburg had 232 inhabitants, and the surrounding land was rapidly being cleared and improved for cultivation. The relative isolation of the community necessitated the development of local resources. Early farmers began growing flaxseed, which was ground at an oil mill in town. Among other uses, flaxseed oil was used by builders as a base for white paint, making Galesburg one of the few prairie towns to have white houses. Early structures in Galesburg were modest and lacking in architectural features consistent with the sober-minded values of its founders. 11 The growth of Galesburg was slow but steady. It was incorporated as a village in 1841 and by 1850 had a population of about 882 residents. The completion of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad through

⁹ "History of Galesburg", City of Galesburg, accessed November 9, 2015, http://www.ci.galesburg.il.u/.

¹⁰ Chapman, History of Knox County, Illinois.

¹¹ Ibid.

Galesburg in 1854-55 had a profound economic and political effect on the community, which incorporated as the City of Galesburg in February 1857. The population had exploded to over 4,000 by 1856 and more than doubled to 9,230 residents by 1867. In 1873, the Knox County seat was removed from Knoxville and permanently established at Galesburg. An 1878 history of Knox County described the "salient features that combine to make (Galesburg) a most desirable place of residence. The City of Galesburg has four railway arms leading to the four points of the compass. It has excellent public schools, with six large buildings, the high school structure being one of the finest in the state; two colleges that are unsurpassed for thoroughness; a seminary for young ladies, with superior teachers in all departments; a commercial college of established reputation; with fine churches occupied by all of the leading denominations; with pleasant parks and drives; delightful residences and streets; a good article of coal gas; cheap coal, and all desirable city features". 12

Galesburg's emergence as an important regional transportation hub and center of culture and learning was accompanied by civic improvements beginning with the authorization of the Galesburg Gas Light and Coke Company in 1866. Brick street paving began in 1877, the first telephone was installed in 1880, the post office began citywide mail delivery and public streetcar transportation was introduced in 1883, and construction began on the Knox County Courthouse in 1885. In 1905 the City Council authorized the issuance of bonds to purchase land and construct a City Hall, a Police Station and a Fire Station. Today the City of Galesburg is a home rule municipality and has operated under the Council-Manager form of government since 1956. The City Council is comprised of seven Council members and a Mayor. The Council members are elected, for four-year staggered terms, from defined wards. All city residents elect the mayor for a four-year term.¹³

3. Silas Willard:

Much of the credit for Galesburg's growth and prosperity during the 1850s and 1860s was due to the visionary thinking and financial investments of the city's prominent business and merchant class, including, among others, Chauncey S. Colton, W. Selden Gale, James Bunce, and Silas Willard. These civic leaders recognized the

¹² Ibid.

¹³ "History of Galesburg".

importance of bringing rail transportation to Galesburg to ensure its future economic prosperity. In 1851 these men, representing Galesburg, together with Lt. Governor William McMurtry, helped organize the Central Military Tract Railroad Company, in which Silas Willard purchased 107 shares of capital stock. In 1852 they secured permission to construct a railroad from Galesburg to Mendota on the Chicago & Rock Island Railroad, thereby establishing an independent direct route to Chicago. When the last \$50,000 needed to establish the connection was lacking, C. S. Colton and Silas Willard, the principal promoters of the enterprise, each raised half of the required sum and floated the enterprise for several years before any profits were realized. This was the beginning of the organization of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad, or the CB&Q. 14

Silas Willard, though not a founding father, promoted the welfare of Galesburg and its citizens through many generous contributions during his all-too brief career. Silas Willard was born in Barre, Vermont in 1814. In 1834, at the age of twenty, he came west on the Erie Canal and worked his trade as a harness maker first in Alton, and then Jacksonville, Illinois, before purchasing 80 acres in Tazewell County in 1837 and establishing a mercantile business in the town of Washington. In 1841 he married Cordelia Chambers, whose father, Matthew Chambers, was a prominent merchant in Galesburg. Chambers had been among the original Vermont settlers to the colony, and was a noted anti-slavery activist. In 1849 the Willard family moved to Galesburg, where Silas continued his mercantile business with great success, eventually joining his father-in-law in the business of general merchandise and real estate. Soon after his arrival, Willard used his own money from the mercantile business to establish Galesburg's first flouring mill. Similarly, as stated above, he was instrumental in bringing the railroad to Galesburg in 1854-55, putting up \$25,000 of his own money to help finance the endeavor and to ensure its success. He subsequently served as a trustee of the CB&Q Railroad as well as of Knox College. Silas and Cordelia had six children, of whom four survived to adulthood and earned degrees from Knox College. In 1856 Mr. Willard commissioned the construction of a large Italianate residence for his family that still stands at 501 East Losey Street. The Willard home reflected the economic vitality of Galesburg in the late 1850s. Unfortunately, and at a great loss to the community, Silas Willard died of tuberculosis in 1857, at the age of

¹⁴ Chapman, History of Knox County, Illinois.

forty-three. Always an advocate of free public schools, Willard stipulated in his will that \$20,000 from his estate, to be matched by \$30,000 from public funds, be applied to the endowment of a union graded school in Galesburg to educate "all the children of all the people". 15 16

4. Education in Galesburg:

With the goal of bringing a liberal education to the prairies, the founders of the Galesburg colony, who were Presbyterians and Congregationalists by denomination, requested and received a charter for the Knox Manual Labor College in 1837. Due to financial problems, however, only two college buildings, East Brick and West Brick, had been constructed by 1845. In 1856, Peoria architect Charles Ulrichson was commissioned to construct a large academy building in the Collegiate Gothic style that became known as Old Main. As the town was originally platted, Knox College campus buildings were a short distance from the central business district, and the Manual Labor Farms were situated on the outskirts of the city. However the manual labor portion of the education was eventually dropped and the farms were annexed to the city as residential areas. The fifth Lincoln-Douglas debate was held on the Knox College campus at Old Main. This is the only remaining site where the debates took place and has been designated a National Historic Landmark. 17 As the Knox Manual Labor College was not originally co-educational, the Knox Female Seminary was established in 1841. In 1856, a large residence, called Whiting Hall, was constructed on the northeast edge of Knox College. Knox Female Seminary was incorporated into Knox College when it became coeducational in 1870.¹⁸

Galesburg's developing reputation as a center of enlightened, Christian-based education on the Illinois prairie attracted other Christian denominations. In 1851, the Universalist Church was granted a charter by the Illinois General Assembly to establish Galesburg's second prairie college, the Illinois Liberal Institute. Opening its doors in 1852, the Institute was coeducational from its inception, but in 1855

¹⁵ Munsell Publishing Co. "History and Biographies of Galesburg". *Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois*. Chicago, 1899. Genealogy Trails (November 10, 2015).

¹⁶ George C. Rand & Avery, *Discourse at the Funeral of Mr. Silas Willard by J. Blanchard, President of Knox College* (Boston: Press of George C. Rand & Avery, 1858).

¹⁷ Carley R. Robison, *Galesburg, Illinois in Vintage Postcards* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2000).

¹⁸ Patty Mosher, *Images of America: Galesburg* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2015).

the main building burned to the ground. In 1856 the Institute received a generous gift from Illinois farmer and businessman Benjamin Lombard and construction began on a new main building. In recognition of Lombard's contributions, the Institute's charter name was changed to Lombard University. In 1865 Lombard obtained taxexempt status and became a church supported university. Several additional buildings were constructed in the 1870s and 1880s, but the university continued to struggle with periods of low enrollment and financial instability. In 1881 a theology department was established with an endowment of \$20,000 from Dr. W. H. Ryder, and in 1890 the department became the Ryder Divinity School. The next year a change in the name of the institution to Lombard College was followed by a period of growth and relative prosperity. The renowned poet and Galesburg native, Carl Sandburg, attended Lombard College from 1899 to 1902, but did not graduate. By 1911, however, continuing enrollment and financial problems prompted discussions of an eventual merger between Lombard College and Knox College. Following the graduation of the class of 1930, Lombard College closed its doors and many of the remaining students finished their degrees at Knox College. In addition, Knox College adopted all 7,500 Lombard College alumni and their academic records. In 1931 the Galesburg School District #205 established Lombard Junior High School, now the Lombard Middle School, in the former Lombard College academic building and campus. ¹⁹ ²⁰The Western Business Institute was founded as the Western Business College in 1860 by Professor H. E. Hayes.²¹ In 1890 it became Brown's Business College, one of twenty such schools owned and operated by George W. Brown to teach professional skills in Indiana, Illinois, and Iowa. Brown's Business College occupied the upper floor of a building at the corner of Cherry and Simmons Streets. The school was a fixture in Galesburg until 1967, teaching office skills, sign lettering, bookkeeping, and advertising. It was the college designed to complete "Galesburg's educational ladder". When Carl Sandburg College opened as a community college in 1967, it used the Brown's Business School building, located at 119 South Cherry Street, for some of its classes.²²

¹⁹ "Honoring Lombard College", Knox College, accessed November 24, 2015, https://www.knox.edu.

²⁰ "Lombard College Timeline", Knox College, accessed November 24, 2015, https://www.knox.edu.

²¹ Chapman, History of Knox County, Illinois.

²² Ibid.

²³ Robison, *Vintage Postcards*.

²⁴ Thomson, F.D. "Galesburg Public Schools". 1899. USGennet (November 25, 2014).

The first school in the Galesburg colony was established and taught by Nehemiah Losey and Lucy Gay at Log City during the winter of 1837. In the fall of 1838, as the Galesburg town plat was being developed, the Knox Academy building opened on the corner of Main and Cherry streets on the public square. The school was co-educational and was intended to function as a public college-preparatory school. The next year, in 1839, the first public school was built on the northeast corner of the public square by Chauncey S. Colton and was taught by Eli Farnham. Over the next decade seven more public schools, essentially one-room schoolhouses, were built, each comprising an autonomous school district. In 1855 George Churchill, long-time principal of Knox Academy and a promoter of academic excellence, returned from Europe where he had studied the Prussian school system. He advocated for the importance of "graded union schools" for the 800 school-age children then in Galesburg. Many citizens negatively viewed the idea of free schools as charitable institutions and feared that better public schools would undermine the importance of Knox Academy. In 1858 a committee of fifteen, under the chairmanship of Churchill, began work to establish a free graded school system. The eight school districts were incorporated into one, under the administration of a board of directors composed of George Churchill, A. B. Campbell, and J. H. Knapp. An act to that effect was passed by the state legislature in 1859 but was not accepted by the City of Galesburg until 1861, when a Board of Education, composed of one member from each of the city's six wards, was elected. 25 26

The Board of Education devised a plan by which small school buildings of four classrooms each would be built in the six wards (the Fourth Ward school had six rooms), with pupils transferring to a large central school building upon completion of the fifth grade. The construction of the large central school, called the High School, later the Churchill School, was an ambitious undertaking requiring an ever expanding budget that nevertheless succeeded in establishing the common public schools as one of the most important institutions of the city. The process of choosing a location for the central high school involved an offer from Mrs. Silas (Cordelia) Willard to donate to the Board all the land she owned opposite the Willard house and fronting on Main and Chambers streets. This offer was accepted but subsequently several adjacent lots more centrally located near Broad

²⁶ Thomson. "Galesburg Public Schools".

²⁵ William Lucas Steele. *Galesburg Public Schools, Their History and Work, 1861-1911*. Board of Education, 1911. Internet Archive (November 25, 2015).

and Simmons streets, just south of the public square and north of the Knox College campus, were acquired for that purpose. The location of the High School was to play a large part in determining the sites for the Post Office and the Public Library. From 1862 until 1874 the Board of Education was mostly composed of male faculty or administrators of Knox and Lombard Colleges. Galesburg's devotion to quality education was later exemplified by the formation in 1890 of the Galesburg Free Kindergarten Association. Teachers were instructed in the "Froebel Method", developed by Friedrich Wilhelm Froebel, who established the very first Kindergarten program in Germany in 1837. Froebel's approach centered on the importance of play, games, and toys in the intellectual, spiritual, and social development of children aged four to six that was meant to serve as a transition between home and school, infancy and childhood. 27 28 29

By the mid-1880s, it became apparent that population increases were creating overcrowded conditions in the ward schools but especially in the central High School. The building was designed to accommodate the high school pupils of the city, the children above second grade who lived in central Galesburg, as well as the overflow from the ward schools. Overcrowding reached a crisis in 1887 when each of its twelve rooms held between sixty and sixty-five pupils. After much study and community discussion, bonds were issued in the amount of \$25,000 to construct a new high school building on the corner of Broad and Simmons streets that would accommodate Galesburg's high school and Central Primary school students. The old high school building would become the grammar school for the entire city and the intermediate school for the Central Primary district. The architect employed for the new building was J. W. Ross of Davenport, Iowa, and the construction was contracted to A. P. Anderson. The new High School employed, for the first time, a departmental system of instruction, with teachers devoting themselves to particular disciplines.^{30 31}

No sooner had the new building opened in September 1888 than the same level of overcrowding became apparent in several of the ward

²⁷ *History of Knox County, Illinois*. The S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, Chicago, 1912. USGennet (November 25, 2014).

²⁸ "Historical Foundations of Early Childhood Education". 2015. Weebly (December 9, 2015).

²⁹ Steele. Galesburg Public Schools.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Thomson. "Galesburg Public Schools".

schools. Thus began a period of new construction, renovations, and additions throughout the school district that would continue through the 1890s and into the early 1900s. In addition, as the ward schools no longer corresponded with altered district boundaries, they were renamed, beginning with the Lincoln School, designed as J. W. Ross, and opened in January 1890. The Third Ward School was remodeled in 1890 and named the Hitchcock School in honor of Henry Hitchcock, superintendent of the CB&Q Railroad. In 1893, Galesburg architect Norman K. Aldrich designed and oversaw construction on a five-room addition to the building. The Fourth Ward School, renamed the Weston School in honor of Dr. James P. Weston, President of Lombard College, was remodeled in 1895 with Galesburg architect William Wolf commissioned as architect and superintendent of construction, but the contract eventually was awarded to A. C. Johnson. The old High School building, renamed the Grammar School in 1888, was in 1896 renamed the Churchill School in honor of Professor George Churchill. The Fifth Ward School was renamed the Cooke School in honor of M. D. Cooke, the Sixth Ward School was renamed the Bateman School for Newton Bateman, and the Seventh Ward School was renamed the Douglas School in honor of Stephen A. Douglas. Additions and upgrades were made to the Bateman School in 1899, the Lincoln School in 1901, and the Douglas School in 1902. William Wolf designed the plans and supervised construction on these projects, as well as on the completely new Central Primary School in 1904.32

In 1904, the new High School building, constructed in 1888 on the corner of South Broad and West Thompkins streets, was totally destroyed by fire. The Galesburg Board of Education believed that high school served an essential function as a college preparatory institution, and the community responded by voting to raise \$100,000 in bonds to construct a state of the art facility in the same location as the 1888 structure. This time the commission was awarded not to Norman K. Aldrich or to William Wolf, but to the third prominent Galesburg architect of the period, J. Grant Beadle. The 1904 high school building was described at the time as the finest in the State of Illinois and a model of modern education principles. The new High School building opened on Lincoln's birthday. February 12, 1906. Unfortunately, sixty years later, this second building also succumbed to a fire. ³³ ³⁴ By 1910 the three schools in the north part of town were

³² Steele. Galesburg Public Schools.

³³ Ibid.

experiencing overcrowding and the decision was made to construct a new four-room building on the northwest corner of Farnham and Summit Streets. Prior to construction, two Board members accompanied the chosen architect, Norman K. Aldrich, to Oak Park to study schoolhouses recently designed in a new style of architecture. The result of this trip was the Farnham School, constructed in 1910-1911 in an entirely different style from other schools in Galesburg. It was named for the first public school teacher in Galesburg, Eli Farnham. Also in 1910, a separate manual training building, designed by J. Grant Beadle, was constructed adjacent to the High School building. Other important district-wide upgrades during this period included modernized heating, plumbing and ventilation systems.³⁵

5. Silas Willard School:

In the wake of the construction of the Farnham School in 1910-11, the Northside Improvement Association called upon the Galesburg school board to consider erecting a second new school building to help alleviate continued overcrowding of educational facilities on the north side of the city. The Silas Willard School was constructed in the 400 block of East Fremont Street, just east of North Seminary Street, in 1911 and opened in the fall of 1912. The school board decided to name the new north-side school in honor of Silas Willard, a prominent businessman and civic leader in Galesburg in the 1850s. Willard had in his will established an endowment of \$20,000, to be matched by \$30,000 of public funds, for the construction of a future grade school in Galesburg.³⁶ Due to the passage of decades between Willard's death in 1857 and the construction of Silas Willard School in 1911, it is not known if any portion of the endowment was applied directly to the building named in his honor. The timing of the construction coincides with a gap in the record of school construction in Galesburg. William Lucas Steele's comprehensive Galesburg Public Schools, Their History and Work, 1861-1911, was published in 1911, and makes no mention of the planning, design, or construction of the Silas Willard School. No public records pertaining to the construction of the 1911 structure have been found in the Knox County Assessor's office or Recorder's office, the Galesburg Public Library Archives, the Knox

³⁴ Robison, *Vintage Postcards*.

³⁵ Steele. Galesburg Public Schools.

³⁶ Thomas Wilson, "Dutch and Neil Attended Storied Silas Willard School". 2014 Tracking History:

[&]quot;Dutch and Neil Attended Storied Silas Willard School". Galesburg Register-Mail, April 19, 2014.

College Archives and Special Collections, Galesburg School District #205, or the regional or state offices of the Illinois State Board of Education. The paucity of records at the local level regarding Silas Willard School may be partially explained by a devastating fire in the Public Library in 1958. Knox County Recorder's deed records for the land on which the 1911 school was built, both document dates and filing dates, are all dated 1923, twelve years after the building was constructed. No earlier transactions involving that land and the Galesburg Board of Education were found. The property is located in Barlow's Addition, Township 1 North, Range 1 East, in the Southwest 1/4 of Section 2. Lots 11, 12, and 15 were sold by James L. Hollis and wife to the Board of Education on the 25th and 26th of June, 1923 (Knox County Recorder, Grantor-Grantee Index Book 245, Pages 608, 609, 610). Lot 13 was sold by Leonard A. Larsen to the Board of Education on June 30, 1923, Lot 14 was sold by Clarence R. Peterson to the Board of Education on June 30, 1923, and Lot 16 was sold by Arnold Barber to the Board of Education on June 26, 1923 (Knox County Recorder, Grantor-Grantee Index Book 246, Pages 8, 9; Book 245, Page 610).

The Silas Willard School is notable for the fact that Ronald Reagan, Hollywood actor and 40th President of the United States, attended the school in 1917 and 1918, during parts of his First and Second Grade years. The Reagan family, consisting of father Jack, mother Nelle, and sons Neil and Ron, moved to Galesburg in 1916. They first lived in an apartment at 1260 North Kellogg Street and later moved across the street to 1219 North Kellogg Street, just a block away from Silas Willard School. Both boys attended Silas Willard for a brief period before the family moved to Monmouth, Illinois.³⁷ A school report book documenting Reagan's progress at Silas Willard School is currently housed at the Galesburg Historical Society museum. Coincidentally, the stepfather of Ronald Reagan's future second wife, Nancy Davis, lived in Galesburg and she spent many summer vacations there visiting with her grandparents.³⁸

As with the Farnham School constructed in 1910-11, the Silas Willard School was designed with four classrooms on the main floor over a raised basement level. As the student population increased in the northeast neighborhood of Galesburg, it was determined that a major

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ "Tour the Ronald Reagan Trail: Galesburg", Ronald Reagan Trail, accessed December 2015, http://www.ronaldreagantrail.com.

expansion of classroom space was needed at Silas Willard. The addition, costing \$50,000, included raising the cross-gabled roof to create more classrooms, major improvements to the plumbing system, and construction of a stairwell to the main lobby from the north side of the building. It is not known, or has not been determined, who designed these changes or carried out the construction.³⁹ By the late 1930s overcrowding in many of Galesburg's schools again became a problem. Deed records at the Knox County Recorder's office indicate that in November 1938 William Clausen sold Lots 8, 9, and 10, and Nels Anderson sold part of Lots 9 and 10 to the Board of Education (Grantor-Grantee Index Book 302, Pages 245, 262). The community approved a nearly \$425,000 bond issue in order to take advantage of a \$343,000 federal Public Works Administration grant to build additions and upgrade systems in the L. T. Stone, Weston, Douglas, Lombard, and Silas Willard schools. The federal grant money was made available through the New Deal policies instituted by the Franklin Roosevelt Administration in 1933. The New Deal consisted of various agencies designed to stimulate economic growth through the development of federally sponsored programs. The Public Works Administration was a federal public works construction agency that built large-scale public works such as dams, bridges, hospitals, and schools in hundreds of communities large and small across the country. 40 The additions and renovations to Silas Willard School included ten new classrooms, a library, a health clinic, an activity room, and a multi-purpose auditorium and gymnasium. 41 Two plaques on the hallway wall outside of the library in the 1939 addition commemorate those who contributed to its construction. One reads: "Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works, Franklin D. Roosevelt, President of the United States; Harold L. Ickes, Administrator of Public Works. Silas Willard School 1939". The second plaque names the members of the Board of Education, Galesburg School District No. 104, Knox County, Illinois, identifies the architects of the addition as Aldrich & Aldrich, and identifies the contractors as Smirl & Gibson.

After decades of mounting expenses for maintenance, renovations, and upgrades, the Galesburg CUSD #205 voted to demolish the Silas Willard School to make way for a new 18.3 million dollar state of the

³⁹ Wilson, "Dutch and Neil Attended Storied Silas Willard School".

⁴⁰ "Utilities and Infrastructure", Department of Geography, University of California-Berkeley, accessed 4 July 2014, https://livingnewdeal.berkeley.edu.

⁴¹ Wilson, "Dutch and Neil Attended Storied Silas Willard School".

art school building planned for opening in August 2016. The project is part of Operation Rebuild Achievement, the Galesburg CUSD #205 major push to upgrade facilities.

The question of who designed the original 1911 Silas Willard School and oversaw its construction remains a mystery. A brief discussion of three prominent architects who practiced in Galesburg in the late 19th and early 20th centuries may be of some benefit. William Wolf, J. Grant Beadle, and Norman K. Aldrich were responsible for the design of many important public buildings, including many of its school buildings, as well as numerous residences in the City of Galesburg from the late 1880s into the 1930s.

William Wolf began practicing architecture in Galesburg in 1887. Wolf designed the plans and supervised construction for additions and upgrades to the Bateman School in 1899, the Lincoln School in 1901, and the Douglas School in 1902. Wolf also designed the plans and supervised construction on the new Central Primary School in 1904. Other works include the Bank of Galesburg in 1887, the Auditorium in 1890, the Y.M.C.A. Building in the early 1890s, First Baptist Church in 1894, Odd Fellows Building in 1895, the Marquette Building in 1899, the Holmes Building in late 1890s, and the Galesburg City Hall in 1905. Wolf also designed at least fourteen residences in a variety of Revival styles often incorporating contemporary American style elements.

J. Grant Beadle studied architecture at the University of Illinois and began working as a draftsman and architect for William Wolf, Galesburg's first professional architect, in 1889. Beadle designed the Central Congregational Church in 1895, the Galesburg Carnegie Library in 1898, the Galesburg Club in 1901, Galesburg High School in 1904, described at the time as the finest in the State of Illinois and a model of modern education principles, the Central Fire Station in 1906, and the Hill Arcade in circa 1922, as well as numerous fine residences throughout the city.

Norman K. Aldrich attended Knox College and Northwestern University before returning to practice architecture in Galesburg from circa 1890 until his death in 1933. Local commissions included, among others, the 1893 addition to the Hitchcock School, the Farnham School in 1911, which incorporated Prairie School elements, the Methodist and Christian Churches in circa 1912, Seymour Hall at Knox College in 1919, the Bateman School in 1920, and a number of

fine residences typically reflecting variations on the Queen Anne style. 42

It should be noted that the Silas Willard School was constructed in 1911, immediately after the construction of the Farnham School, designed by Norman K. Aldrich. Photos of the original buildings show marked similarities in size, layout, and construction. It should also be noted that the 1939 addition to Silas Willard School was designed by the architectural firm of Aldrich & Aldrich, started by Norman K. Aldrich and his son, Harry Aldrich in the 1890s. Harry K. Aldrich also designed the 1937 Art Deco style Post Office on Main Street in Galesburg. While no evidence has been found to reveal the name of the architect who designed the original 1911 Silas Willard School building, it appears very likely that it was one of the three leading Galesburg architects of the period – William Wolf, J. Grant Beadle, or Norman K. Aldrich.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

The Silas Willard Elementary School is Classical Revival style school building, but was originally constructed as a Collegiate Gothic building. The original building was constructed as a one story with a basement in 1911. A second story was added in circa 1926, and then a wing was added in 1939. A new school is under construction and a portion of the original building will be used in the new structure.

The school currently serves 450 students in kindergarten through fifth grade.

B. Description of Exterior

1. School building is 22,630 square feet (excluding exterior wall)

2. Foundations:

The foundation of the Silas Willard Elementary School is brick.

⁴² Charles Kirchner & Associates, LID, Summary Report for Phase II of the Comprehensive Historic Buildings Survey of the City of Galesburg, Illinois. 2000.

3. Walls:

Silas Willard School is an L-shaped building, which includes the original southwest building and the east and northeast 1939 addition. The exterior walls of the school are red brick and approximately 12 inches thick, with limestone banding between the basement and first floor and along the roofline (there is no banding along the roofline on the north or west sides of the 1939 addition). There are limestone panels at the entrances. The building has corner pilasters and the west wall is a blind wall.

4. Structural system, framing:

Silas Willard Elementary School is built entirely of brick with exterior and interior walls that measure approximately 12 inches thick. In addition, the framing for the basement ceiling/first floor in the 1939 addition includes steel supports. No other framing or structural system was visible.

5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads:

There are sets of concrete steps outside the doors on the south and east sides, as well as a southwest entrance to the second floor of the auditorium.

6. Chimneys:

There is a square brick chimney at the northwest corner of the original building.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and Doors:

Unless otherwise noted, all exterior doors are steel. There are four main entrances. The Classical west front entrance on the original section is a portico divided into three sections. This includes one central double door and two single doors, each with a single rectangular vertical window. A second entrance is on the east side of the 1939 addition and includes a single set of double doors with rectangular vertical windows; this set of doors is framed by a wide, simple art deco limestone surround. A third set of doors also leads from the east side to the

northeast corner hallway. The fourth set of doors, leading to the auditorium on the east side, includes two with rectangular vertical windows flanked by steel framed side-light. These doors are also framed by a limestone entrance with a central peak.

In addition, there is a rear (north) door leading to the offices, as well as a second story door at the northwest corner of the auditorium that leads to the backstage area. There is also a door on the north side of the 1939 addition that accesses the basement.

b. Windows and Shutters:

Unless otherwise noted, all windows are in steel frames with concrete lintels. There are a variety of sizes and patterns, but windows are generally multi-paned. The windows have been recently replaced.

The majority of the windows on the south and east faces and portions of the north face of the building are made up of three panes; the top is blocked, the center is a fixed pane of glass, and the bottom is a hopper window (there are some exceptions that are either all blocked or not blocked at all). These are all steel framed and occur in groups of two or three, or singly. The 1939 addition also includes a rounded section with a band of windows on each floor. Additionally, there are several groups of multi-pane windows on the west side of the addition and the north side of the original building.

The hallway adjacent to the auditorium on the second floor has a large glass block window.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering:

The roof on all sections of the building is flat. The original 1911 section has a wood joist and wood deck. The roof was replaced in 2005 with a 3-ply built-up roof. The boiler room addition has unknown roof structure construction, and the roof was replaced in 2005 with a 3-ply built-up roof. The two small additions north of the original building have an unknown

structure and decking, and these roofs were replaced in 2005 with a 3-ply built-up roof. The 1939 additions, other than the unknown boiler room, have metal joists and deck. The 1939 two-story classroom roof was replaced in 1989 with 4-ply built-up roof. The 1939 roof over the gymnasium was replaced in 1994 with a 4-ply built-up roof. The 1939 addition above the boys' locker room and two east entrances to the multi-purpose room roofs had the roofs replaced in 1980 with a 3-ply built-up roof.

B. Description of Interior:

1. Floor Plans: The building is essentially divided into three sections - the original 1911 western part of the building, the eastern 1939 addition, and the northern 1939 addition.

a. First Floor:

The main entrance to the school building is located on the south side in the center of the original main building, between the basement and first floor levels. This entry leads to staircases leading to the first floor and basement. This section of the building is divided into eight rooms. Clockwise, starting in the northwest corner, these are a classroom, coat-room, office, classroom, tutoring room, reading room, classroom, and a bathroom. There is a storage area and staircase located in a small wing off the north side of the building, Heading east down the hallway into the 1939 addition, to the north are a bathroom, and two classrooms; to the south are a group of offices and a toilet, a classroom, and a second classroom with a rounded wall; these two adjacent classrooms have fireplaces along the adjoining walls. Another main entry is located at the east end of this hallway. Turning north, there are two classrooms on the east side of the corridor. There is a bathroom on the west side adjacent to the northern wing as well as a stairway and small reading room. There are a series if staircases where the eastern and northern wings meet. The north wing houses a large multi-purpose room with a stage at the southern end; the stage includes under-stage storage. The northern end includes, from west to east, a boys' locker room, a girls' locker room (both currently used for storage), a kitchen, stairs, and a vestibule and office.

b. Second Floor:

The second floor layout is very similar to that of the first floor. The west section is divided into four classrooms of more or less equal sized, each in one corner. There is a stairwell in the center of the north side and a classroom in the center of the south side. A corridor, with a central lobby, runs west to east through the center. A corridor runs east through the next wing (the east 1939 addition) and ends at the computer lab. There is a bathroom and two classrooms on the north side and two classrooms and a library with a rounded wall on the south side. Another corridor runs north to south, with two classrooms on the east side and a bathroom and stairwell at the northwest corner. The northern addition is a multi-purpose area with a stage at the southern end and a mechanical room/projection room (now used for storage) and staircase at the north end.

c Attic:

An attic crawlspace was not accessible during this survey, but there is a panel trapdoor covering in the ceiling of the east hallway on the second door.

d. Ground Floor/Basement:

There are two separate basements; one under the west and one under the east section. The basements are separated by the east wall of the original school; the windows are still intact but blocked off. The west sections have four main rooms, including a special education room, general classroom, and music and art rooms. There are many storage rooms and hallways. There is a boiler room and garage extending off the north end. The east section has a series of storage rooms and an area with a dirt floor, connected by corridors. The area under the northern section, which houses the multi-purpose areas, is exclusively crawl spaces.

2. Stairways:

There is a main staircase on the north side of the original 1911 wing of the building, leading from the first to the second floor. This staircase existed before the second floor was modified in the 1920s. There is also a set of stairs from the basement to first floor, located on the south side of this wing. A final interior staircase on the original 1911 wing leads from the northern entrance at grade level to the first floor. Another staircase between first and second floor is located at the east end of the east 1939 addition, as well as one at the northwest corner. There is a set of stairs along the north end of the north 1939 addition leading from the kitchen area to the projection room.

3. Flooring:

Basement floors are concrete slab on grade, except for some portions of the 1939 addition that have bare dirt. There is asbestos floor tile in basement classroom areas in the 1911 wing. The first and second floors of original building include wood joists and wood decking with finishes of hardwood flooring in classrooms and terrazzo in corridors, stairs, and toilet room. The 1939 addition first and second floors have open web steel joists and concrete floor slabs with predominately asbestos floor tile; corridors are reinforced concrete floor slabs (without metal joists) with terrazzo finished flooring. Loose carpet is placed on top of the tile in classrooms, except typically for one to two feet at the perimeter of the room. The multi-purpose room and stage of 1939 addition is metal joists with a wood deck and finished hardwood flooring.

4. Wall and Ceiling Finish:

Most interior walls are plaster on wood and lath on masonry and wood studs. Main corridor walls are load bearing brick masonry construction finished with plaster. Some walls in basement are unfinished. The 1939 addition corridor walls have a 6-foot high base of glazed brick. The multi-purpose room and adjoining vestibule walls have a 9-foot high base of glazed brick. The bathrooms, locker rooms and kitchen have full height glazed brick walls.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors:

Interior doors are primarily oak. Some have windows and some are solid paneled doors.

b. Windows:

Windows throughout the school are steel framed with concrete sills. Nearly all windows are multi-paned, with the numbers of panes varying depending on the location in the building (described in full in exterior description).

Doors in the 1911 wing have transoms; no transom is to ceiling level. The transom glass is fixed wire glass, except above the door to Office 112 is open mesh. The Computer Lab has a glass block wall to corridor ceiling.

6. Decorative features and trim:

The building features oak doors and door trim, with more utilitarian plastic trim elsewhere. Most classrooms have oak closet doors, and many have built-in oak shelving and/or cabinets. The most elaborate cabinets are in the Speech room; these are oak floor to ceiling cabinets with glass windows.

There is some decorative brick around the water fountains. The auditorium also displays some decorative Art Deco style brick details and Classical plaster pilasters.

In both kindergarten rooms on the first floor of the 1939 east addition there is a double sided stone fireplace on the adjoining wall.

7. Hardware:

The interior is mostly utilitarian and has few decorative features. There is some decorative brick around water fountains on the walls. Additionally, there are built in oak cabinets and bookshelves throughout the building.

8. Mechanical equipment:

a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation:

Heating is provided by a single Kewanee gas fired steam boiler. Heating system components consist of condensate pumps, boiler feed pumps, cast iron radiators, convectors, unit ventilators and air handling units. Controls are pneumatic controls and manual radiator valves. Many heating units are no longer operable and some have been removed leaving spaces without heat. Heating is distributed throughout the facility via steel steam and condensate piping. Many areas of piping look quite deteriorated, a few areas noted where previous leaks have been repaired.

In general, the building is not air-conditioned. A window air conditioner is present in the teacher's lounge, and computer lab.

Outdoor ventilation air is introduced through the unit ventilators where applicable, and operable windows in areas with only radiator heating. Unit ventilators are in disrepair and suspecting ventilation controls are not functional. Operable windows in most areas, although many original windows have been infilled, reducing the available window area for natural ventilation. Exhaust grilles are evident in restroom areas, although operational fans and systems are questionable. There are small propeller type fans in a few windows for smaller restroom areas. Gas service is located on the north side of the building, just north of the boiler room stairway.

b. Lighting:

The electrical service is rated 400A at 120,240V, 1 Phase, 3 Wire. Exit signs are self-illuminated some are with LEDs and integral battery backup.

Emergency lighting is provided with self contained, stand alone, battery units with integral heads.

Some original or mid-century light fixtures are still in use in areas of the building, specifically hallways. There is also modern fluorescent lighting.

c. Plumbing:

A newer gas fired residential style (50 gallon/40 MBH) water heater is located in the boiler room. An electric residential style (40 gallon/4500w) is located in the serving kitchen area. Water distribution piping where evident is galvanized piping that appears to be original. Plumbing fixtures are primarily flush valve operated along with various sinks and lavatories with

individual hot & cold water. Most all fixtures are original to the building and in poor condition or inoperable. Numerous locations where inoperable fixtures have been removed and rough-ins capped.

The facility is not sprinklered.

C. Site:

1. General setting and orientation:

Silas Willard Elementary School is located in Galesburg, Illinois in Barlow's Addition, Township 1 North, Range 1 East, in the Southwest 1/4 of Section 2, Knox County, Illinois. Silas Willard Elementary School faces south onto Fremont Street. The school property is bounded to the north by Fifer Street, to the east by Willard Street, to the south by Fremont Street, and to the west by a chain link fence. The property includes grassy spaces, parking lots, concrete sidewalks, and a playground.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Original Architectural Drawings:

Plans of Silas Willard Elementary School were provided by Metzer Johnson Architects, a division of Klinger, and date to May 2013. These were obtained from Klinger Associates PC, Galesburg, Illinois.

B. Early Views: Provided by Klinger Associates PC.

C. Interviews

Patty Mosher, Archivist, Galesburg Public Library, personal communications, November 2015.

Karen Peters, Galesburg Community Unit School District #205, personal communications, December 2015.

Roger Reynolds, Curator, Galesburg Historical Society, personal communications.

Carley R. Robison, Curator of Special Collections and Archives at Knox College in Galesburg,

Thomas L. Wilson, Reporter and Galesburg historian for the Galesburg Register Mail, personal communication.

D. Bibliography

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E. Supplemental Material

1. See IIIA (Sources of Information) for early views and architectural drawing credits.

PART IV. METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

A. Research Strategy:

Research undertaken to document the Silas Willard Elementary School property included archival, field, and report preparation. Archival research was undertaken prior to field investigations and included examination of local histories and records as well as known architectural documents to develop an architectural and historical context for the plant. The field investigations included photographing and documenting interior and exterior structural elements of the buildings in their present conditions, as well as preparing detailed floorplans and footprints of the buildings.

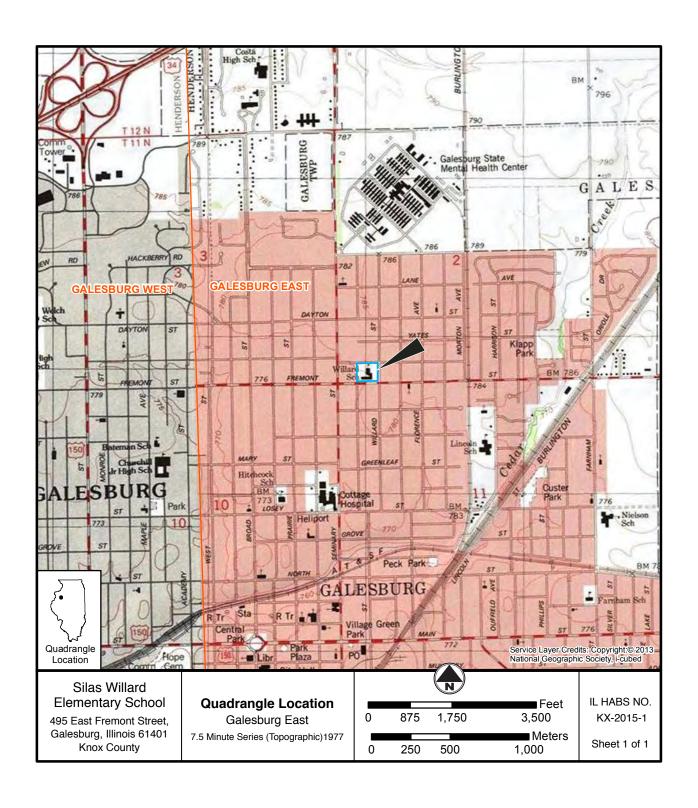
C. Actual Research Process:

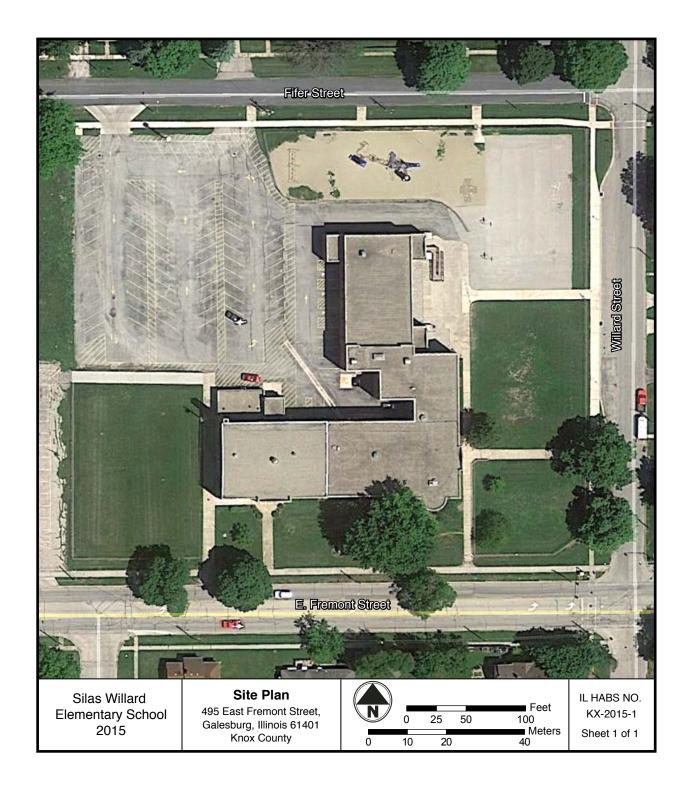
In addition to the research strategy discussed above, previous documentation of Silas Willard Elementary School was reviewed. Information and some technical description was provided by David Arbogast, architectural conservator, of Davenport IA, who began the HABS review of the building in February 2015, and is included in this document.

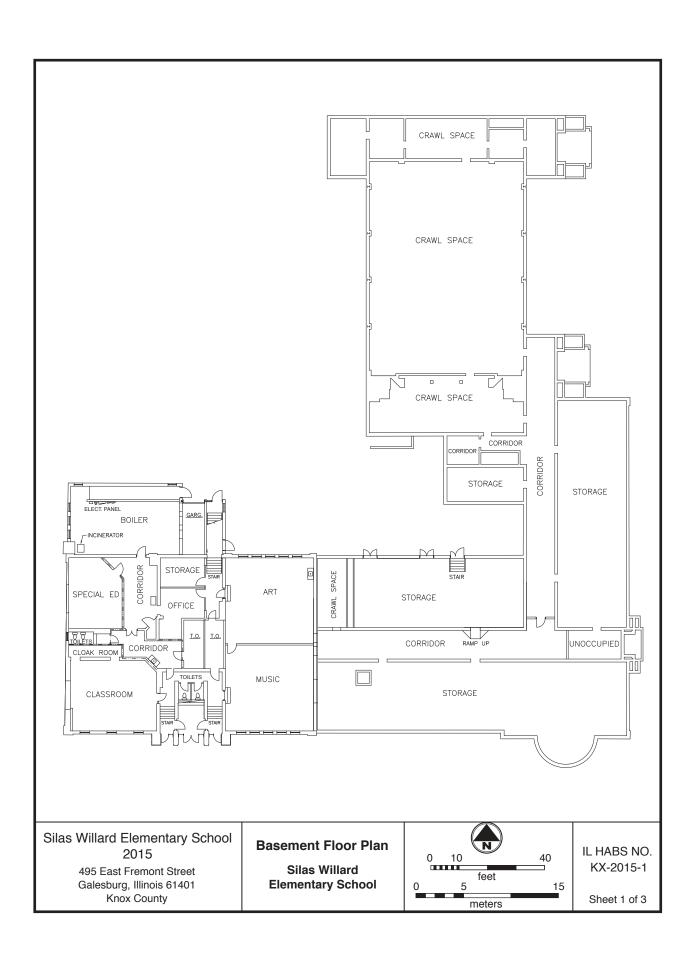
C. Research Staff

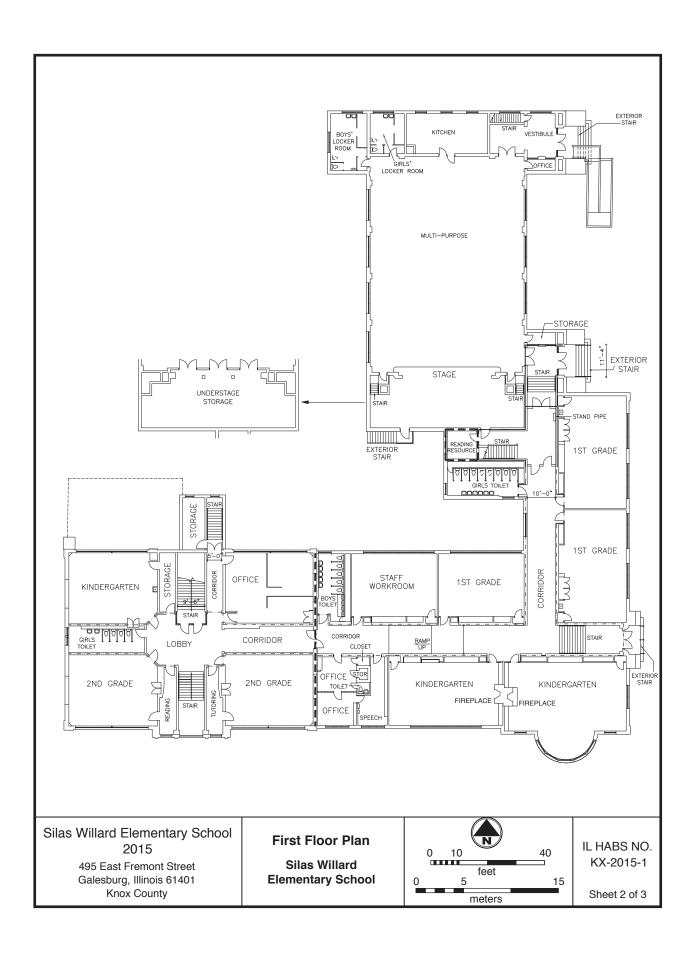
- 1. Primary Preparer: Ms. Marcy Prchal, Architectural Historian, Public Service Archaeology and Architecture Program, University of Illinois
- 2. Photographers: Ms. Marcy Prchal, Architectural Historian and Mr. Chris Flynn, Archaeologist and Archivist; Public Service Archaeology and Architecture Program, University of Illinois
- 3. Delineator: Ms. Susan Brannock-Gaul, Graphic Artist, Public Service Archaeology and Architecture Program, University of Illinois
- 4. Additional Staff: Dr. Kevin McGowan, Program Director, Public Service Archaeology and Architecture Program, University of Illinois

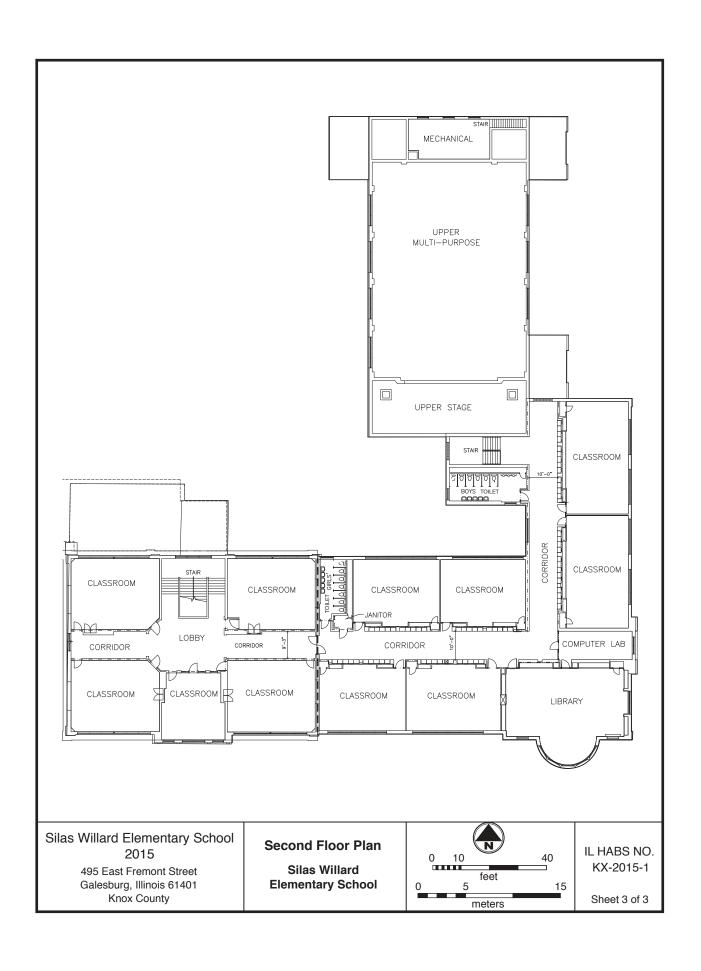
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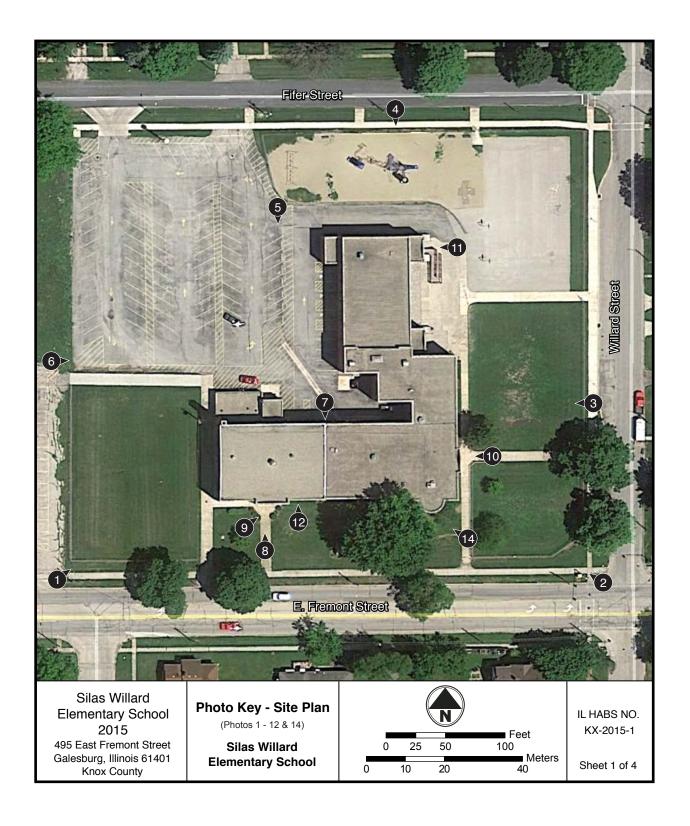
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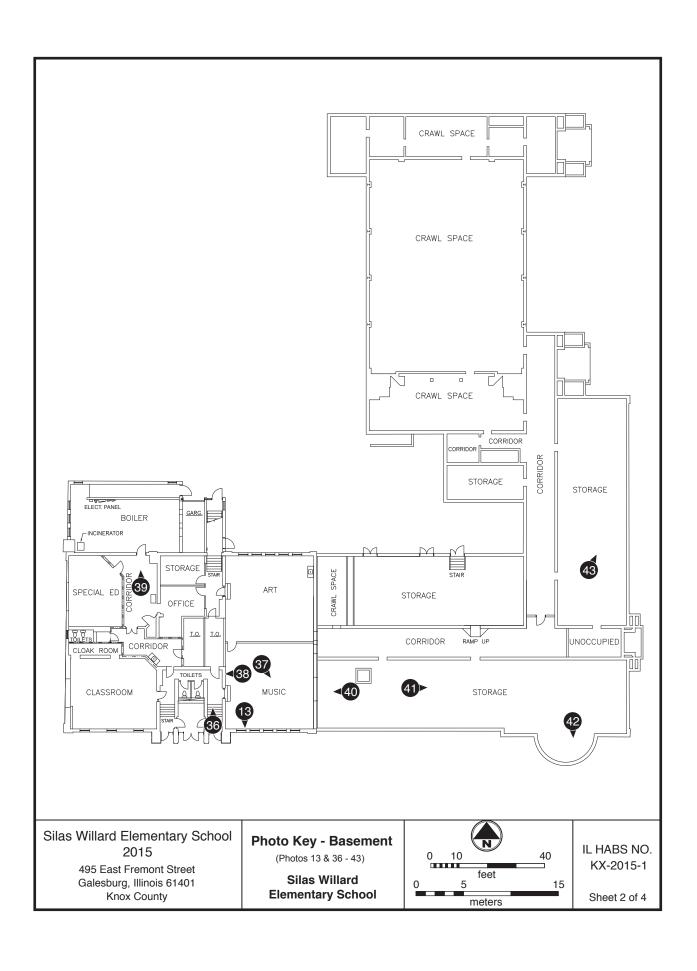
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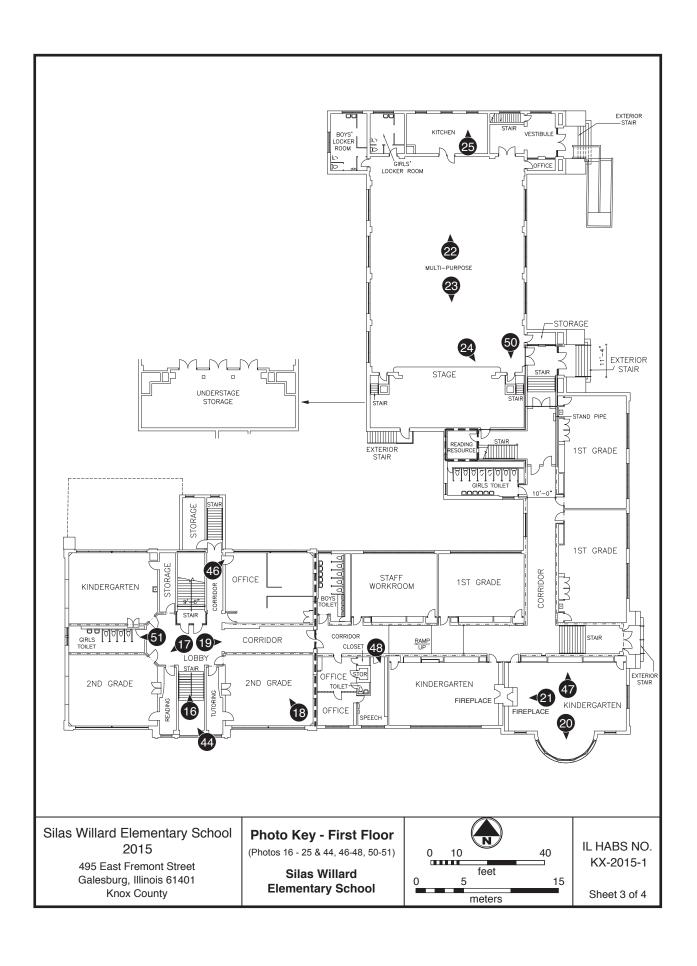
KX-2015-1.49: Marcy Prchal, 12/1/2015, facing south, Water Fountain Niche

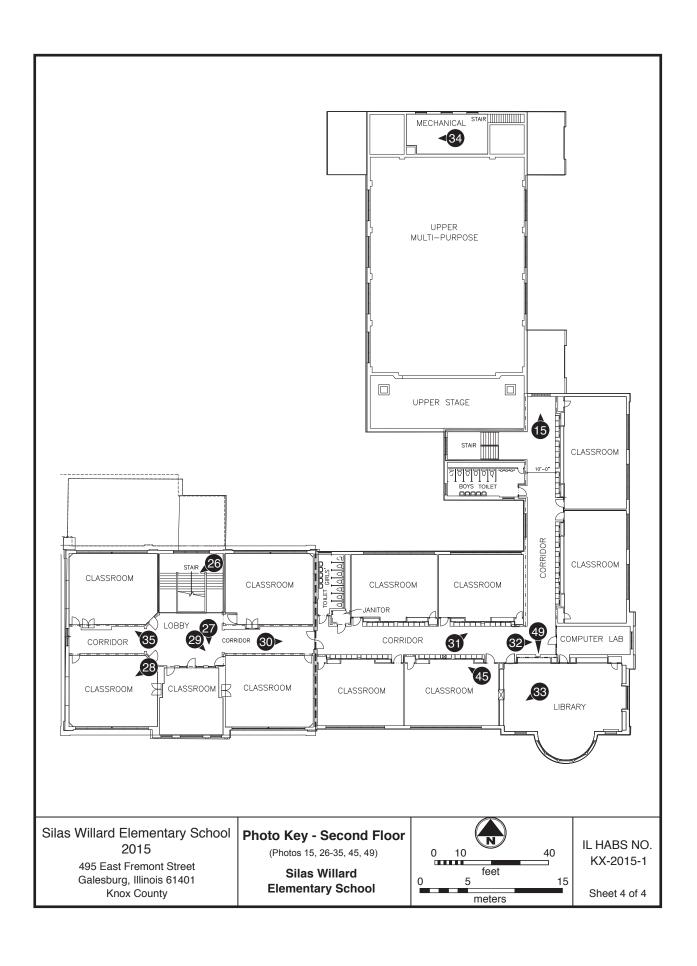
KX-2015-1.50: Marcy Prchal, 12/1/2015, facing south, Auditorium Brick Detail

KX-2015-1.51: Klinger, 2013, facing west, First Floor Bathroom







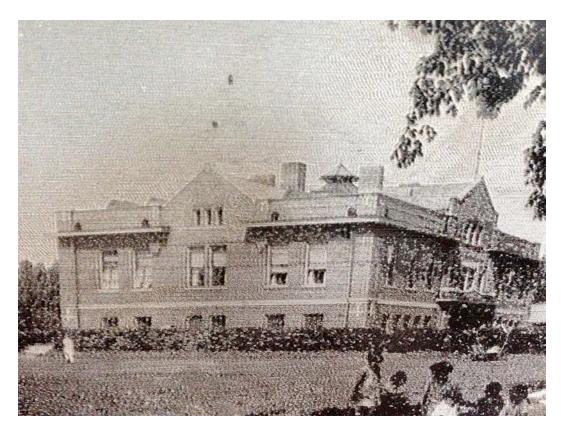


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SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

KX-2015-1.52: View of Silas Willard Elementary School, circa 1912 (Klinger & Associates, PC)

KX-2015-1.53: View of Silas Willard Elementary School, circa 1916 (Klinger & Associates, PC)



KX-2015-1.52



KX-2015-1.53



KX-2015-1.1



KX-2015-1.2



KX-2015-1.3



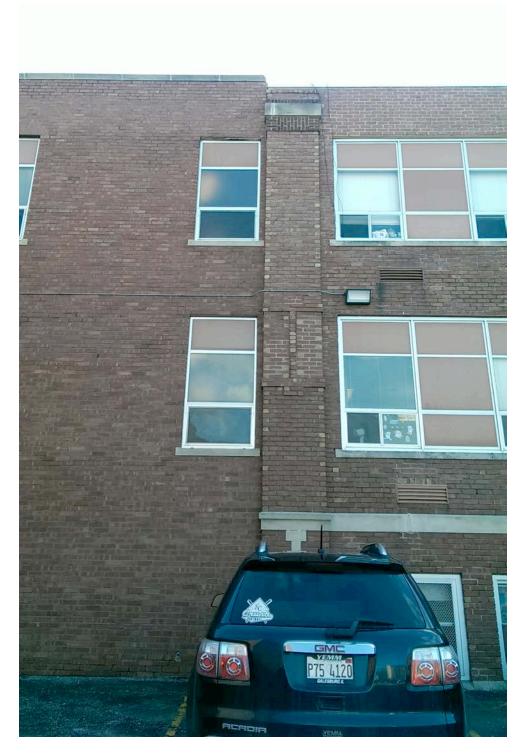
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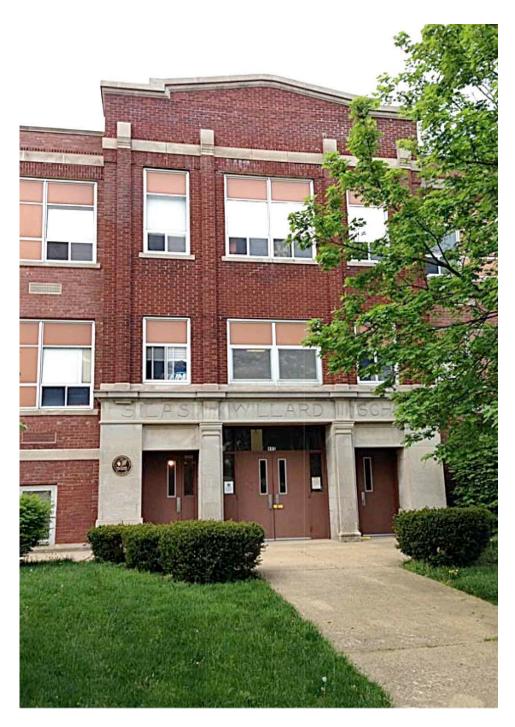
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KX-2015-1.6



KX-2015-1.7



KX-2015-1.8



KX-2015-1.9



KX-2015-1.10



KX-2015-1.11



KX-2015-1.12



KX-2015-1.13



KX-2015-1.14



KX-2015-1.15



KX-2015-1.16



KX-2015-1.17



KX-2015-1.18



KX-2015-1.19



KX-2015-1.20



KX-2015-1.21



KX-2015-1.22



KX-2015-1.23



KX-2015-1.24



KX-2015-1.25



KX-2015-1.26



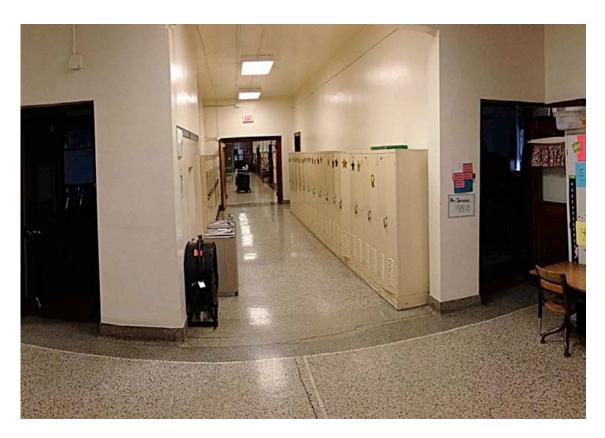
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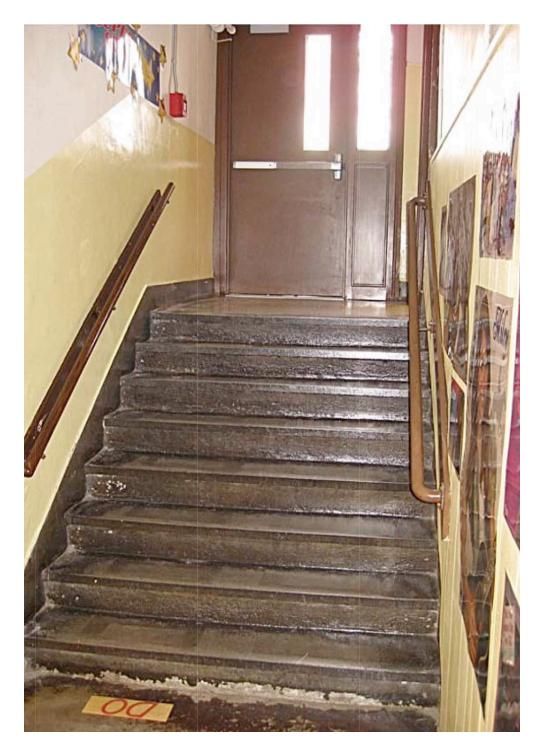
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KX-2015-1.35



KX-2015-1.36



KX-2015-1.37



KX-2015-1.38



KX-2015-1.39



KX-2015-1.40



KX-2015-1.41



KX-2015-1.42



KX-2015-1.43



KX-2015-1.44



KX-2015-1.45



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KX-2015-1.48



KX-2015-1.49



KX-2015-1.50



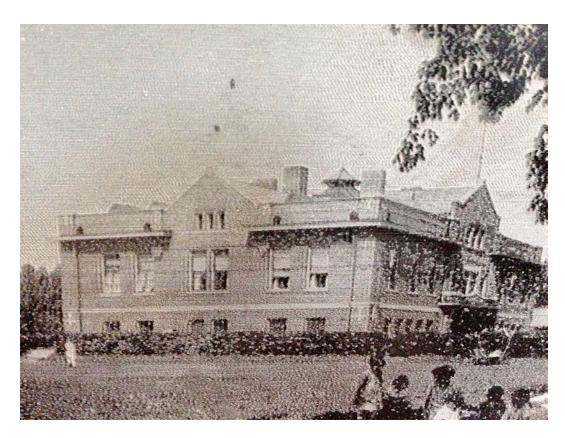
KX-2015-1.51

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SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

KX-2015-1.52: View of Silas Willard Elementary School, circa 1912 (Klinger & Associates, PC)

KX-2015-1.53: View of Silas Willard Elementary School, circa 1916 (Klinger & Associates, PC)



KX-2015-1.52



KX-2015-1.53