# LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

## Theodore Roosevelt Middle School

### 460 Arguello Boulevard

**October 18, 2017**


**City and County of San Francisco**
**Edwin M. Lee, Mayor**

**Planning Department**
**John Rahaim, Director**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Article 10 landmark nomination was made possible by several individuals and organizations that deserve acknowledgement. Christopher VerPlanck and Donna Graves, the authors of this nomination, would like to thank former District 1 Supervisor Eric Mar for originally suggesting Theodore Roosevelt Middle School as a potential landmark candidate. Second, we would like to acknowledge the San Francisco Historic Preservation Fund Committee (HPFC) for funding the nomination as part of its larger project to document the legacy of the New Deal in San Francisco. In particular, we would like to acknowledge Dr. Robert Cherny, a historian and a member of the HPFC, whose interest in the New Deal made this entire project possible. In addition, we would like to thank Dr. Gray Brechin, the head of the Living New Deal project, who along with Dr. Cherny is an advisor on this project. Finally, we would like to thank the San Francisco Unified School District for its thoughtful stewardship of its many historic schools.

Cover: Roosevelt Middle School, August 2016

The Historic Preservation Commission is a seven-member body that makes recommendations to the Board of Supervisors regarding the designation of landmark buildings and districts. The regulations governing landmarks and landmark districts are found in Article 10 of the Planning Code. The HPC is staffed by the San Francisco Planning Department.

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# Theodore Roosevelt Middle School

## 460 Arguello Boulevard

**Built:** 1929-30
**Architect:** Miller & Pflueger

## OVERVIEW

Located near the northeast corner of Arguello and Geary Boulevards, Theodore Roosevelt Middle School occupies a prominent site near one of the primary "gateways" to the Richmond District. Occupying an irregular site spanning the block between Arguello Boulevard and Palm Avenue, the complex consists of three major components: the academic building, the auditorium wing, and the gymnasium wing. All three were built in 1929-30, with bond funds used to build 50 public schools in San Francisco between 1920 and 1930. Theodore Roosevelt Middle School (Roosevelt) is eligible as a San Francisco City Landmark as an excellent and well-preserved public school built during the "Golden Age" of school construction in San Francisco. Designed by master architect Timothy Pflueger of Miller & Pflueger Architects, Roosevelt is one of San Francisco's most idiosyncratic buildings due to its unique Dutch/German Expressionist styling. It is the only building in San Francisco (and possibly the United States) known to be designed in this *avant-garde* style. Theodore Roosevelt Middle School is significant for its association with master architect Timothy Pflueger, one of the most talented and influential architects to have worked in San Francisco during the first half of the twentieth century. A master of the Art Deco and Streamline Moderne styles, Pflueger's work is unparalleled in Northern California. Roosevelt is also significant for its association with high artistic values, in particular its three well-preserved New Deal murals, including a pair in the main lobby by Horatio Nelson Poole and one above the second-floor entrance to the auditorium by George Wilson Walker. Theodore Roosevelt Middle School has undergone few changes since it was completed 88 years ago–a testament to its solid construction and timeless aesthetic sensibility that continues to resonate with students and alumni to this day.

# BUILDING DESCRIPTION

## Neighborhood Context

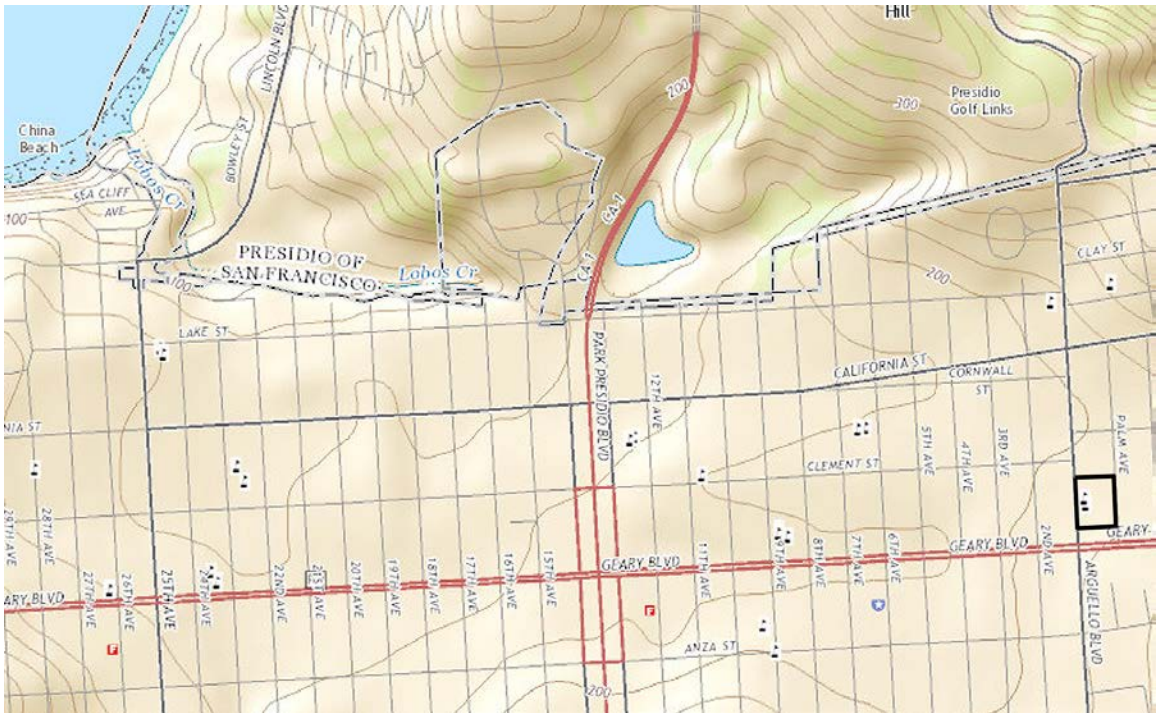



**Figure 1. USGS Map showing location of Theodore Roosevelt Middle School.**
**Source: USGS Maps; annotated by Christopher VerPlanck**



Theodore Roosevelt Middle School occupies a 94,468-sf parcel bounded by Arguello Boulevard to the west, a pair of residential properties to the north, Palm Avenue to the east, and three commercial properties facing Geary Boulevard to the south **(Figure 1)**. The property is technically located in the Jordan Park/Laurel Heights neighborhood, but Arguello Boulevard (originally 1st Avenue) is the eastern boundary of the Richmond District and Theodore Roosevelt Middle School was built to serve Richmond District children. Designed in 1928 and built in 1929-30, Theodore Roosevelt Middle School (originally Roosevelt Junior High School) replaced a Victorian-era school of the same name. Indeed, the core of the site has been continuously occupied by a public school since Lobos Avenue Primary School opened in 1877.[1]

The site is generally level, with a slight downhill grade toward the north. To the west, Theodore Roosevelt Middle School faces Arguello Boulevard, a busy thoroughfare connecting Golden Gate Park to the Presidio. From Geary Boulevard north to Clement Street, Arguello Boulevard is mainly commercial. Anchoring the northwest corner of Geary and Arguello Boulevards is a large, two-story, masonry commercial building that was originally built in 1893 as the Park & Ocean Railroad Company's Geary Street Car Barn **(Figure 2)**.[2] This building, which was later altered for commercial use, now contains an office supply store and a parking garage. Anchoring the north side of the block, at the southwest corner of Arguello Boulevard and Clement Street, is a three-story commercial building originally constructed in 1908 as a Masonic Temple. Ca. 1930, it was remodeled in the Art Deco style with several commercial

[1] San Francisco Board of Supervisors, *San Francisco Municipal Reports, 1879-1880* (San Francisco: W. M. Hinton & Co. Printers, 1880), 653.
[2] Construction dates for all properties come from the San Francisco Assessor's Property Information Map, accessed online at http://propertymap.sfplanning.org/.

storefronts facing Clement Street **(Figure 3)**. The rest of the west side of the block is occupied by residential dwellings with minimal front yard setbacks **(Figure 4)**. A broad range of architectural styles is represented on the block, ranging from a Victorian-era Italianate cottage at 415 Arguello Boulevard to a contemporary apartment complex at 421 Arguello Boulevard that was constructed in 2012 behind the masonry façade of a 1912 garage **(Figure 5)**.

**Figure 21. 3700 Geary Boulevard, built 1893; view toward northwest.**

**Figure 3. 1 Clement Street, built 1908 and remodeled ca. 1930; view toward south.**

**Figure 4. West side of the 400 block of Arguello Boulevard; view toward northwest.**

**Figure 5. 421 Arguello Boulevard, built 1912 and 2012; view toward west.**

The east side of the 400 block of Arguello Boulevard, which extends north to Euclid Avenue, is uniformly residential with the exception of Theodore Roosevelt Middle School. The dwellings are all located north of the school and include a mix of single-family dwellings, flats, and small apartment buildings **(Figure 6)**. Most are between two and four stories in height and only a few have a front yard setback. Of the 12 residential properties on the block, six were constructed in the 1910s. Most of these are designed in the Craftsman or First Bay Tradition styles.

**Figure 6. East side of 400 block of Arguello Boulevard.**

The rest were constructed between 1963 and 1973; they are mainly small apartment buildings designed in the so-called "Contractor Modern" style.[3]

South of Theodore Roosevelt Middle School, the properties on the 3600 block of Geary Boulevard include a mix of low-slung, auto-oriented commercial buildings dating to the middle of the twentieth century, as well as a much larger contemporary apartment building on the south side of the street. Directly south of the school, at the northeast corner of Geary and Arguello Boulevards, is a surface parking lot. It was previously occupied by a two-story commercial building and a gas station but the site has been vacant since the 1980s, affording an expansive view of Roosevelt from Geary Boulevard. East of the parking lot are a one-story commercial building at 3626 Geary Boulevard and a two-story commercial building at 3600-24 Geary Boulevard **(Figure 7)**. These buildings occupy the same lot and were both constructed in 1923, although both have matching Late Moderne exteriors, suggesting that they were remodeled at the same time and by the same owner, probably in the late 1940s. Across the street is a gas station at the southeast corner of Geary and Arguello Boulevards. The remainder of the block is occupied by a six-story nursing home constructed in 2011 on the site of the former Coronet Theater, at 3575 Geary Boulevard **(Figures 8-9)**.





[3] The term Contractor Modern refers to post-war buildings that superficially resemble modernist buildings, but only through the omission of ornament as a cost savings method and the use of inexpensive mass-produced building materials. Contractor Modern buildings are also typically designed by either contractors or engineers.


**Figure 7. Properties on north side of 3600 block of Geary Boulevard.**

**Figure 8. 3575 Geary Boulevard, constructed 2011; view toward southeast.**

**Figure 9. Gas station at 3675 Geary Boulevard, constructed 1988; view toward south.**



Palm Avenue forms the eastern boundary of the Roosevelt campus. In contrast to busy Geary and Arguello Boulevards, Palm Avenue is a quiet two-block long residential street with little vehicular traffic. Palm Avenue is part of a small residential tract called Jordan Park, one of San Francisco's earliest "residence parks."[4] Largely developed between 1906 and 1915, the single-family dwellings on Palm Avenue are similar to those in the rest of Jordan Park. However, unlike the rest of the neighborhood, Palm Avenue has several apartment buildings. South of Roosevelt's play yard are the previously described commercial buildings facing Geary Boulevard **(Figure 10)**. North of the play yard are several single-family dwellings and three large apartment buildings built or remodeled in the 1960s **(Figure 11)**. The most significant property is 129 Palm Avenue, a two-story Classical Revival-style dwelling built in 1913 **(Figure 12)**.

[4] Jordan Park is a small residence park developed by Joseph Leonard between 1906 and 1920. Its boundaries are Arguello Boulevard to the west, California Street to the north, Parker Avenue to the east, and Geary Boulevard to the south. The San Francisco Planning Department considers Jordan Park to be a potential historic district.

**Figure 10. West side of Palm Avenue south of Roosevelt Middle School; view toward south.**

**Figure 11. West side of Palm Avenue north of Roosevelt School; view toward south.**

**Figure 12. 129 Palm Avenue; view toward northwest.**

The east side of Palm Avenue is more consistent in terms of architecture and urban design, consisting entirely of single-family dwellings and flats designed in the Classical Revival and Craftsman styles **(Figures 13-14)**.

**Figure 13. East side of the 100 block of Palm Avenue; view toward northeast.**



**Figure 14. East side of the 100 block of Palm Avenue, looking south.**

## General Description

Theodore Roosevelt Middle School is a three-story, reinforced-concrete educational building clad in brick and capped by a combination flat and gambrel roof. The building has an irregular L-shaped footprint, with the longer north-south axis oriented parallel to Arguello Boulevard and the shorter east-west axis running parallel to Geary Boulevard **(Figure 15)**. Completed in 1930, the school is designed in the Dutch/German Expressionist style with some Art Deco detailing.[5] Artistic exterior treatments include corbelled brickwork laid in zig-zag and diaper-patterns, pressed copper and ceramic tile spandrel panels, cast stone lintels and column caps, and pre-cast concrete screens and parapets. The interior of the building contains classrooms, offices, and special-purpose rooms – all organized around double-loaded corridors on all three floor levels. A 950-seat auditorium anchors the north end of the complex and a double-height gymnasium sits at the south end. The school contains three federally funded New Deal murals – all painted in 1934 – including two in the main lobby by Horatio Nelson Poole, and a third above the entrance to the auditorium on the second floor level by George Wilson Walker. Roosevelt retains the vast majority of its original interior finishes and features, including lath and plaster walls, built-in cabinetry and transom windows, and some original wood doors. Aside from the addition of an elevator tower at the intersection of the gymnasium wing and the academic building, the construction of two enclosed emergency stairs on the north façade, and the modification of two entrance canopies on the rear (east) façade, the exterior is intact. In addition, most of the original multi-lite metal windows have been replaced –at least twice – but the most recent replacements are entirely compatible with the original design. Having recently undergone interior and exterior renovations, Theodore Roosevelt Middle School is in very good condition.





[5] Therese Poletti, *Art Deco San Francisco: The Architecture of Timothy Pflueger* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008) p. 138.

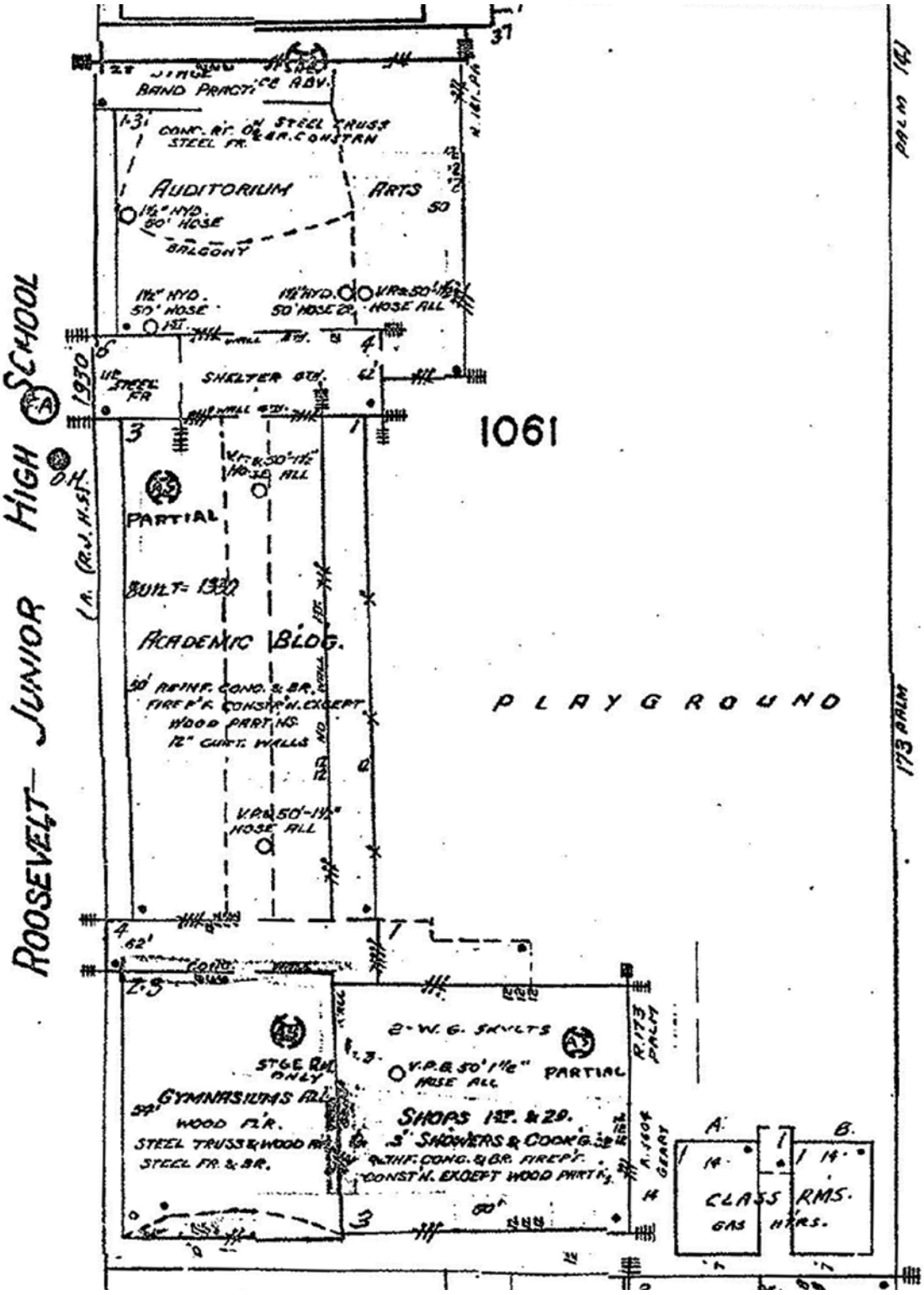



**Figure 15. Ca. 1990 Sanborn Map showing floor plan of Theodore Roosevelt Middle School.**
**Source: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map Co., San Francisco Public Library**

**Figure 16. West façade of Theodore Roosevelt Middle School; view toward northeast.**

## Primary Façade–Arguello Boulevard

The primary façade of Theodore Roosevelt Middle School faces west toward Arguello Boulevard **(Figure 16)**. The building is set back several feet from the west property line, providing space for a narrow planting strip containing grass, shrubs, and trees. The primary façade is 23 bays long and arranged in three distinct sections corresponding to each component of the complex. The first five bays to the left of the main entrance encompass the auditorium wing; the center 13 bays comprise the academic building; and the five bay, gambrel-roofed section to the right is the gymnasium wing. Two towers mark the divisions between the three sections and also the location of the two entrances on Arguello Boulevard.



The largely windowless auditorium wing is partially obscured behind a row of large untrimmed trees **(Figure 17)**. The north (left) bay, which projects slightly out beyond the rest of the west façade, is ornamented by a vertical band of diaper-patterned brickwork capped by a frieze with an embossed chevron pattern **(Figure 18)**. The remaining four bays are demarcated by engaged piers with overlapping brick joints. The piers are capped by cast stone capitals embellished with a diaper pattern **(Figure 19)**. The second bay in from the north has a four-lite window at each floor level; these windows correspond to an interior stairwell serving the backstage area of the auditorium. There is a metal service door in the third bay that also serves the backstage area **(Figure 20)**.

**Figure 17. Auditorium wing of west façade; view toward northeast.**



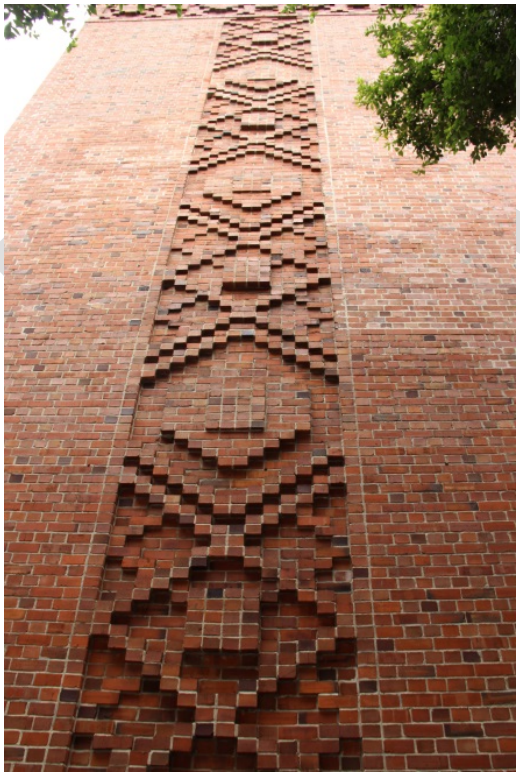


**Figure 18. Diaper-pattern brickwork on auditorium wing.**

**Figure 19. Detail of auditorium wing frieze.**

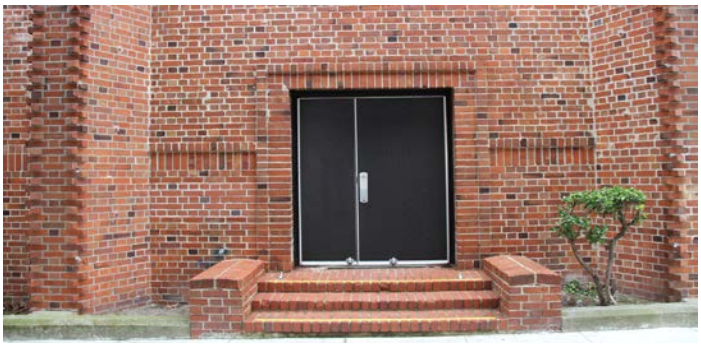


**Figure 20. Metal door on primary façade.**

**Figure 21. North tower.**

The north tower forms the sixth bay of the west façade **(Figure 21)**. The tower, which is the most visually striking part of Roosevelt's exterior, projects several feet beyond the rest of the primary façade. The main entrance is contained within an arched vestibule at the base of the tower. The entrance contains two pairs of original oak doors surmounted by multi-lite transoms **(Figure 22)**. The vestibule is surmounted by a spandrel embellished with decorative brickwork laid in a zig-zag pattern. Above this are a pair of six-lite windows at the second floor level and a pair of three-lite windows with chamfered headers at the third floor level. The windows are demarcated by a fluted copper colonnette. A pair of tiled spandrel panels separates the second and third floor levels of the tower. All four sides of the tower are embellished by diaper-patterned brickwork bracketed by plain brick piers that step backward at each corner. The tower also subtly steps inward at each floor level above the roofline, terminating with a belfry punctuated on all four sides by cast stone screens depicting an abstract geometrical pattern. The openings of the belfry have pointed arch headers. Above the openings are vertical recessed bands cut into the brickwork.



**Figure 22. Main entrance.**

The seventh through the seventeenth bays comprise the academic building. Each bay is identical, with each demarcated by engaged piers similar to those previously described on the auditorium wing, although without the cast stone capitals **(Figure 23)**. Each bay is fenestrated by a pair of six-lite, fixed-and hopper-sash windows at each floor level. Continuous fluted copper colonnettes divide the windows into two sections. Ceramic tile spandrel panels mark the divisions between the floor levels. The windows at the third floor level have cast stone lintels displaying a zig-zag pattern. The academic building is capped by a corbelled brick frieze depicting a zig-zag motif and above the frieze is a pre-cast, open-weave balustrade built to safeguard the former rooftop play area.

**Figure 23. Academic building; view toward southeast.**

The south tower, which is located in the eighteenth bay of the west façade, also projects out beyond the rest of the primary façade. As mentioned previously, the south tower marks the location of the secondary entrance on this side of the building **(Figure 24)**. The entrance, which is recessed within a deep segmental-arch vestibule at the base of the tower, contains a pair of contemporary metal doors surmounted by a non-historic transom **(Figure 25)**. There are double-hung metal windows at the second and third floor levels of the south tower, and this feature terminates with a corbelled brick frieze featuring diaper and zig-zag motifs.

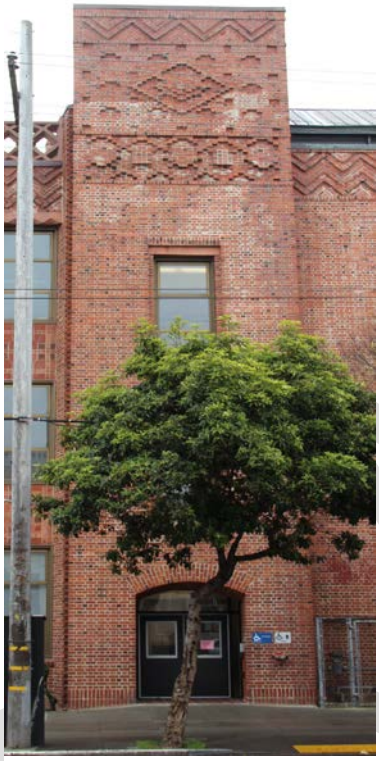


**Figure 24. South tower.**

**Figure 25. Entrance at base of south tower.**



The five bays to the right of the south tower on the west façade correspond to the gymnasium wing. This section is articulated by four piers identical to those previously described on the auditorium wing. The corner bays are blind and terminate with a brick frieze depicting a zig-zag pattern. Fenestration on the gymnasium wing consists of multi-lite fixed, awning, and hopper-sash metal windows. Similar to the academic building, the windows of the gymnasium wing are separated by fluted copper colonnettes **(Figure 26)**. Copper spandrel panels embossed with chevron patterns mark each floor level of the gymnasium wing.

**Figure 26. West façade of gymnasium wing.**

## Primary Façade–Geary Boulevard



As mentioned previously, the south façade of Theodore Roosevelt Middle School faces three commercial properties on the north side of Geary Boulevard. Nevertheless, these properties have always been occupied by low-scale development and/or parking lots, meaning that the south façade of the building has traditionally remained visible from Geary Boulevard **(Figure 27)**. The south façade, which encompasses only the gymnasium wing, is organized in two sections, with the gambrel-roofed gymnasium to the left and a flat-roofed classroom section to the right. In total, the south façade is 10 bays wide, with the gymnasium comprising three bays and the flat-roofed classroom section, seven bays. The gymnasium section is detailed very much like the rest of the gymnasium wing facing Arguello Boulevard; the only differences being that the piers on the south façade are flush and the fenestration extends all the way to the roofline. In contrast, the classroom section is detailed very much like the academic building; the only exceptions being that the spandrel panels on the south façade are brick and there is no cast stone balustrade on the roof.


**Figure 27. South façade of Theodore Roosevelt Middle School; view toward northeast.**



## Secondary Façade–Palm Avenue

The east façade of Theodore Roosevelt Middle School faces the school's paved play yard, and beyond it, Palm Avenue. Like the Arguello Boulevard façade, the east façade comprises three sections corresponding to the three major components of the building. The southernmost component is a flat-roofed classroom section that is part of the gymnasium wing. It contains the former metal/wood shop on the ground floor level (now the music room) and classrooms on the second and third floors. The central part of the east façade is the academic building; it contains the cafeteria at the first floor level and classrooms above. The northernmost section of the east facade is the auditorium wing. Similar to the west façade, tower-like elements mark the locations of the two main entrances on the rear of the building.

The left section of the east façade, which, as mentioned, comprises the classroom section of the gymnasium wing, is six bays wide **(Figure 28)**. It is detailed the same as the south façade, with pairs of six-lite metal-sash windows divided by narrow brick piers. Corbelled brick spandrel panels featuring a diaper pattern demarcate the floor levels. Two windows at the center of each floor level were infilled with concrete in 1975 to form a shear wall.

**Figure 28. East façade (south section) of Theodore Roosevelt Middle School; view toward southwest.**



The central section of the east façade is 11 bays wide **(Figure 29)**. The first floor level, which is where the cafeteria is located, projects out several feet beyond the rest of the façade. This section includes multi-lite metal windows in all bays and contemporary glazed metal doors in the third, fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth bays. Cast stone lintels cap all fenestration at the first floor level. A pre-cast, open-weave balustrade that protects a now-inaccessible balcony caps the first floor level. The second and third floor levels of the east façade match the Arguello Boulevard façade, with pairs of six-lite metal windows divided by fluted copper colonnettes and each floor level marked by tiled spandrels. A corbelled brick frieze embellished with a zig-zag motif and an open-weave cast stone balustrade, which encloses what used to be the rooftop play yard, cap the central portion of the east façade.

**Figure 29. Central section of east façade of Theodore Roosevelt Middle School; view toward west.**



The right section of the east façade, which corresponds to the auditorium wing, is seven bays wide **(Figure 30)**. The first bay projects out very slightly from the rest of the façade, and it has a four-lite window at the first floor level and six-lite windows at the second and third floor levels. This bay terminates with a corbelled brick frieze embellished with a diaper pattern. The remainder of the auditorium wing is detailed the same as the adjoining academic building, with pairs of six-lite windows divided by narrow copper colonnettes, tiled spandrels, and a corbelled brick frieze depicting a zig-zag pattern. All of the windows on the first floor level of the auditorium are protected behind metal security grilles.

**Figure 30. North section of east façade of Theodore Roosevelt Middle School; view toward west.**



Like Arguello Boulevard, the east façade has two towers marking the location of the two primary entrances on this side of the building. The south tower is partially concealed behind a stucco-clad elevator enclosure added in 1975, as well as a 1960s-era canopy that shelters the walkway leading to this entrance **(Figure 31)**. The north tower is similarly design, although not as wide as the south tower. It too is partially concealed by a 1960s-era concrete canopy at the first floor level. Both towers terminate with corbelled brick friezes composed of three bands, including a narrow diaper band, a wider band of diamonds, and an upper band embellished with a zig-zag motif. Both towers have a contemporary metal door at the first floor level and are fenestrated with four-lite windows at the second and third floor levels **(Figure 32)**.

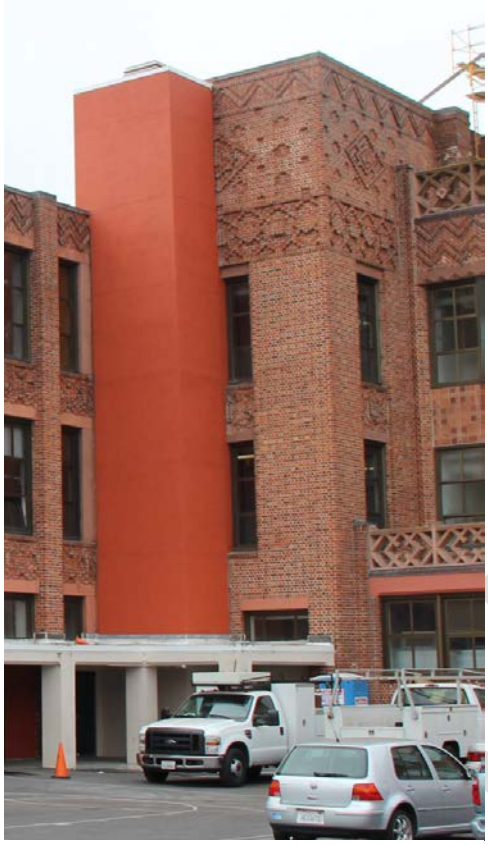


**Figure 31. South tower; view toward southwest.**

**Figure 32. North tower; view toward northwest.**



## Tertiary Façade–North Elevation

The north façade of Theodore Roosevelt Middle School is composed of two sections: the north wall of gymnasium wing and the north wall of the auditorium wing. The north wall of the gymnasium wing has contemporary metal doors in the second, third, and fifth bays, and a concrete canopy (originally brick) spanning the third through the sixth bays **(Figure 33)**. A stucco-clad elevator shaft rises above the roofline at the far right side of the wing, where it meets the academic building. Above the first floor level, the rest of the north wall of the gymnasium

**Figure 33. North façade of gymnasium wing of Theodore Roosevelt Middle School; view toward south.**

wing is identical to its east and south façades, with multi-lite metal windows in each bay divided by brick pilasters and each floor level demarcated by corbelled brick spandrel panels embellished with diaper motifs.

The north wall of the auditorium wing faces a narrow paved passageway along the north property line **(Figures 34–35)**. In contrast to the rest of the exterior, this façade is utilitarian in character because most of it is not visible from any public streets. The basement level has seven small openings that originally illuminated the basement; they are now concealed behind plywood. The first floor level has a non-historic metal pedestrian door at the left side and a large wooden freight door at the right. Two enclosed fire escapes installed in recent years are located on the north wall of the auditorium wing. Above the pedestrian door at the left side of the auditorium wing are windows that mark the landings of an interior stair. Four multi-lite windows span the width of the third floor level, where there is a classroom. The north wall of the auditorium wing terminates with a brick frieze embellished with a diaper pattern.

**Figure 34. North façade along north property line; view toward east.**

**Figure 35. North façade along north property line; view toward west.**

## Interior

Just like the exterior, the interior of Theodore Roosevelt Middle School is organized in three sections, including the 950-seat auditorium; the academic building, which contains 39 classrooms, administrative offices, a cafeteria, and the library; and the gymnasium, which contains separate boys' and girls' gyms, locker rooms, offices, and additional classrooms and special-purpose rooms. Circulation is provided on all three floor levels by a double-loaded corridor that runs north south through the center of the academic building and east west along the north side of the gymnasium wing. The building is served by two sets of stairs at each end of the academic building and additional stairs at the northeast corners of the auditorium and gymnasium wings. Although it has been recently renovated, the interior of Roosevelt retains its original floorplan and the vast majority of its original materials, finishes, and detailing.


**Figure 36. North wall of main lobby, showing one of Horatio Nelson Poole's murals.**

The hub of Theodore Roosevelt Middle School is the main lobby, which is accessed from the primary entrance by a low terrazzo stair. The lobby has a terrazzo floor and blue tiled wainscoting with a decorative nosing at the top. The upper part of the walls are finished in lath and plaster. The ceiling features painted concrete beams embellished with decorative moldings. The lobby contains two New Deal murals painted by Horatio Nelson Poole (described in depth below), as well as display cases and a receptionist's window **(Figures 36–37)**. Along the north wall of the lobby are three entrances accessing the auditorium. Each entrance contains a pair of paneled hardwood doors with brass hardware **(Figure 38)**.

**Figure 37. Main lobby; view toward west.**



**Figure 38. Doors to auditorium; view toward north.**

Adjoining the academic building to the north is the auditorium, the most architecturally significant interior space. It is composed of a large seating area with a balcony, a stage, a control room, and a backstage area **(Figure 39)**. The seating area, which accommodates 950 people, retains its original varnished plywood seating manufactured by the Heywood-Wakefield Co. **(Figure 40)** and individual metal ventilation units on the floor below each seat **(Figure 41)**. Lighting in the auditorium is provided by four suspended bronze and translucent glass Art Deco fixtures with starburst-shaped rosettes. The auditorium walls and ceilings are finished in lath and plaster and punctuated by geometric-patterned concrete vents. The perimeter of the ceiling has stepped moldings and the proscenium flanking the stage also has stepped moldings.

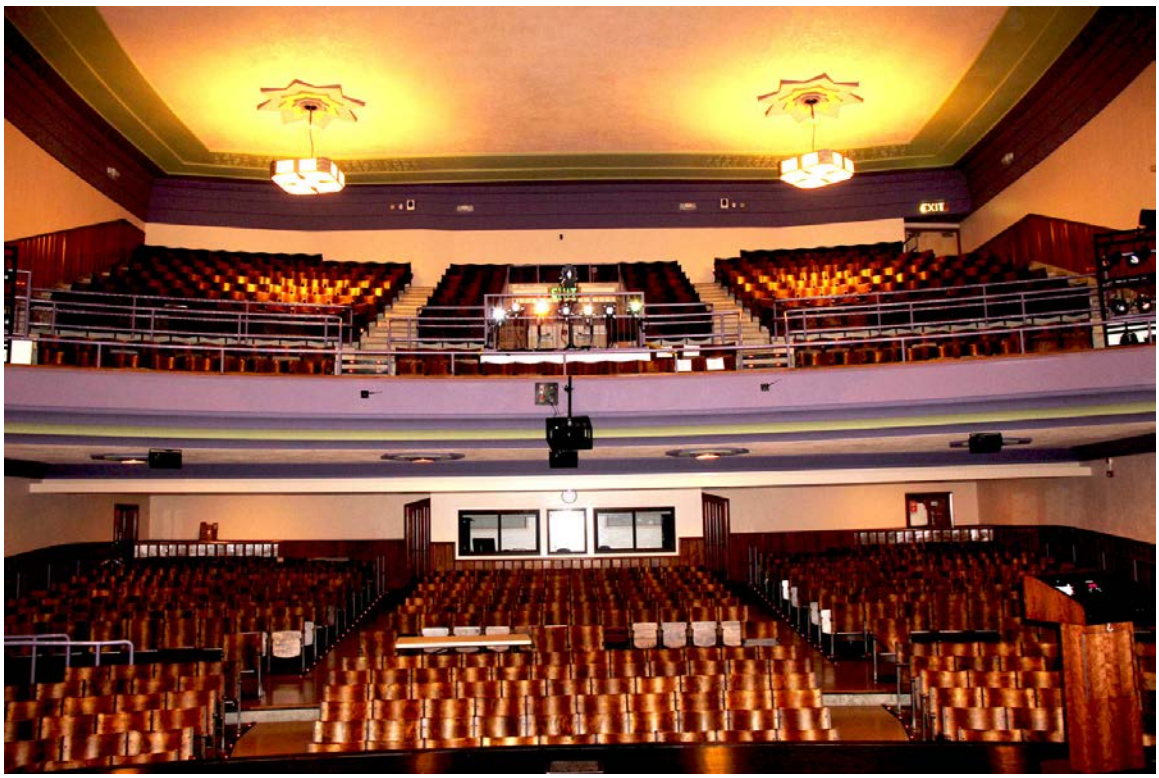



**Figure 39. Auditorium of Theodore Roosevelt Middle School; view toward south.**



**Figure 40. Detail of seating in auditorium.**

**Figure 41. Heating units beneath seats.**

Circulation within the academic building and the gymnasium wing is provided by a double-loaded, L-plan corridor on all three-floor levels. The corridors, though they retain their original floorplan and lath and

plaster walls and ceilings, have been remodeled using contemporary (but compatible) materials and features, including new metal lockers, metal and wood classroom doors, and period-appropriate resilient sheet flooring **(Figure 42)**. In contrast, the stairs retain their original features and materials, including terrazzo treads and landings, tiled risers, and lath and plaster walls and ceilings **(Figure 43).** At the first floor level, the north stair is detailed to match the main lobby, with blue tiled wainscoting and decorative bronze radiator screens **(Figure 44)**. In contrast, the south stair is more utilitarian, given that it serves the secondary entrance **(Figure 45)**. The south stair has concrete landings, risers, and treads and blue-painted walls to imitate the tile wainscoting of the north stair.

The auditorium wing also contains several classrooms, including a large classroom at the first floor level that was originally the auditorium's "green room." A concrete stair at the northeast corner of the auditorium wing provides access to the basement, where a single-loaded corridor leads to several former classrooms that are now used for storage. Above the former green room are two classrooms at the second and third floor levels, including an art studio at the third floor level that was originally a band room.

**Figure 42. Typical corridor in academic building.**

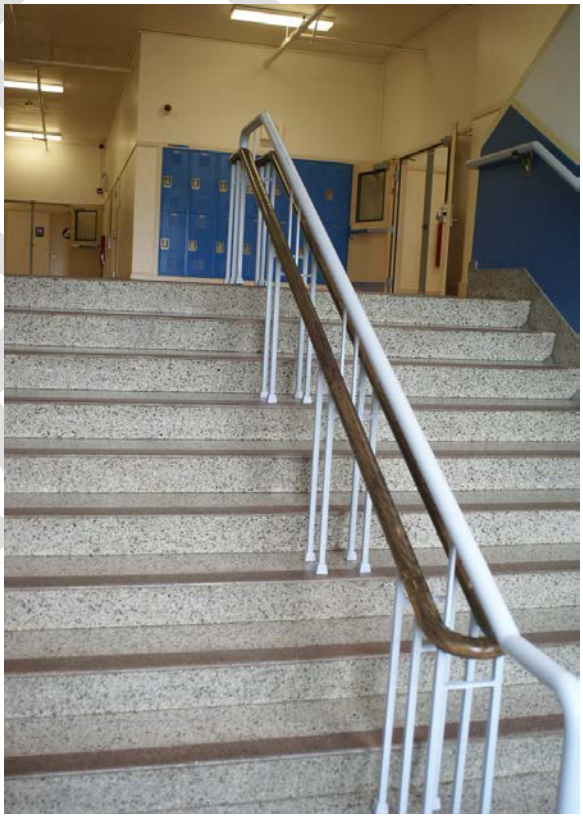


**Figure 43. North stair between first and second floor levels.**

**Figure 44. Tiled wainscoting and decorative metal radiator screen.**

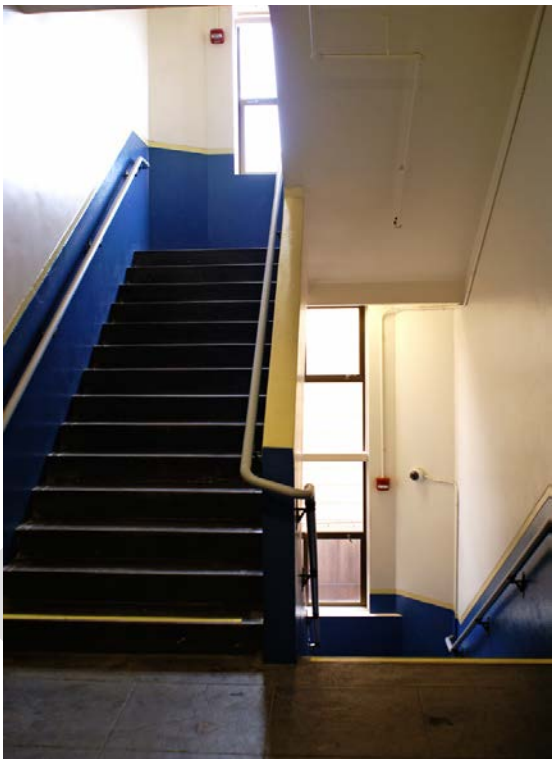


**Figure 45. South stair between second and third floor levels.**



The administration office suite at the first floor level of the academic building retains many original finishes and features, including lath and plaster walls, cabinetry, and built-in seating, counters, and desks. Original wood windows allow natural light from the offices to penetrate the corridors **(Figures 46–47)**.

**Figure 46. Original cabinetry in administration office suite.**


**Figure 47. Windows and bench in administration office suite.**



In contrast to the administration office suite, Roosevelt's 39 classrooms have been incrementally remodeled over time. The classrooms originally featured utilitarian materials and finishes appropriate to the school's original period of construction, including lath and plaster walls, resilient sheet flooring, and built-in blackboards and storage cubbies. For the most part, these materials have been replaced or updated in keeping with advances in technology and teaching pedagogy. The classrooms still retain their original lath and plaster walls, but they also have new resilient sheet flooring and acoustical tile ceilings. Of course, the original furnishings have also been replaced and there do not appear to be any classrooms that retain their original blackboards or other built-in features **(Figures 48–49)**.

**Figure 48. Typical classroom in academic building.**


**Figure 49. Typical classroom in auditorium wing.**

The academic building contains several special-purpose rooms, including the cafeteria on the first floor level and the library on the second floor level. The cafeteria, which is located at the rear of the building facing Palm Avenue and the play yard, has been remodeled several times and it retains little (if any) historic fabric **(Figure 50)**. The library has also been remodeled and it appears to retain few of its original features beyond its footprint and perhaps its lath and plaster walls. The only other notable interior space within the academic building is the entrance to the auditorium in the north lobby of the second floor level. Though the space itself is not especially notable, it contains a New Deal mural called *Education* painted in 1934 by George Wilson Walker **(Figure 51)**.


**Figure 50. Cafeteria.**

**Figure 51. North lobby on second floor of the academic building, showing a portion of George Wilson Walker's mural, *Education*.**

The southernmost part of Theodore Roosevelt Middle School is the gymnasium wing. It is accessed via the secondary entrance on Arguello Boulevard. Doors on the south wall of the lobby provide access to a double-height gymnasium – originally the boys' gymnasium – that occupies the first and second floor levels. The lower gymnasium has maple flooring, retractable bleacher seating, beadboard wainscoting, and retractable basketball hoops **(Figure 52)**. The upper gymnasium – formerly the girls' gymnasium – occupies the third floor level. It shares similar materials and features to the lower gymnasium but it also has exposed metal trusses that define the gambrel roof of the gymnasium wing **(Figure 53)**. The easternmost section of the gymnasium wing contains several classrooms, locker rooms, a computer lab, an art studio, a home economics classroom, and at the first floor level, the band room, which was originally the industrial arts shop.



Except for a portion of the gymnasium wing, the roof of Theodore Roosevelt Middle School is flat. The roof of the academic building has a pair of pavilions at either end of the former rooftop play area **(Figure 54)**. The pavilion at the north end is clad in stucco, and houses a utility room and a large classroom. The south pavilion originally contained toilet rooms and a changing area, but it is currently in use for storage.

**Figure 52. Lower gymnasium, first and second floors.**
**Source: Amanda Law**

**Figure 53. Upper gymnasium, third floor.**

**Figure 54. Rooftop play area; view toward north.**

## Additional Site Features

The only landscaped part of the Theodore Roosevelt Middle School campus is the previously described planting strip along Arguello Boulevard. The eastern part of the property is an asphalt-paved play yard which doubles as a surface parking lot **(Figure 55)**. It is painted with multiple game fields and there are several double-headed, pole-mounted basketball hoops scattered throughout the play yard. The play yard is bound by a chain link fence mounted atop a low concrete stem wall. The stem wall and fence are interrupted twice, once by a driveway that accesses the campus from Palm Avenue, and the other, a brick-clad concrete console with a flagpole mounted on it. This console, which appears to be an original feature of the campus, has a stone panel inscribed with the words "Roosevelt Junior High School" **(Figure 56).**



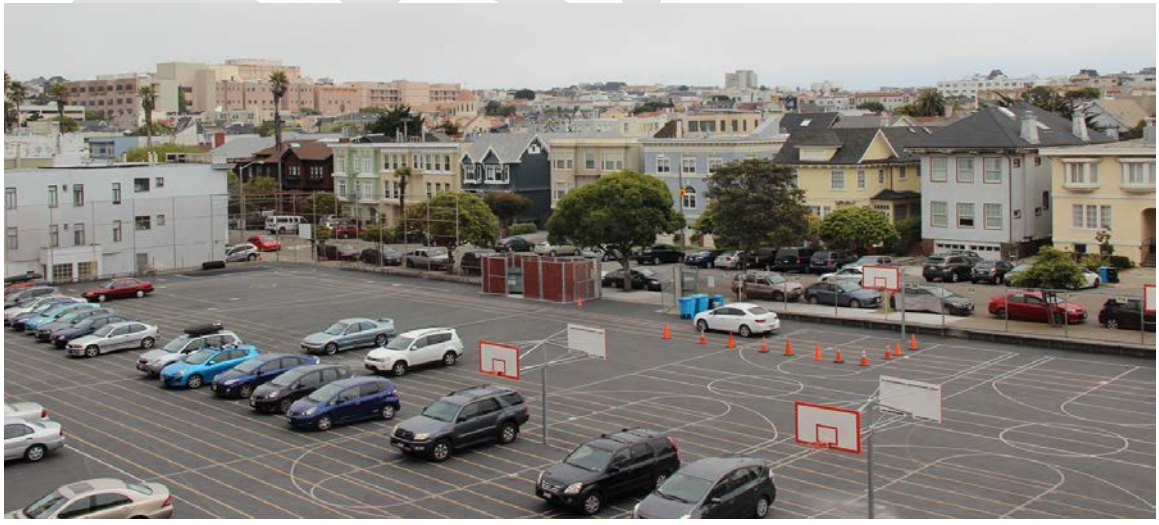


**Figure 55. Playground; view toward northeast.**


**Figure 56. Console and sign on Palm Avenue.**



There are two one-story, wood-frame, portable "bungalows" at the southeast corner of the campus. Both are clad in asbestos shingles and rustic wood siding **(Figure 57)**. These utilitarian buildings have multi-lite wood windows on their east and west façades and they are capped by low-pitched gabled roofs with exposed rafter ends. The buildings are joined by a flat-roofed breezeway at the center. Each building contains one classroom. These "temporary" buildings have been in this location since at least 1959.


**Figure 57. Temporary classrooms at southeast corner of campus; view toward southeast.**

## New Deal Artworks

**Nelson Poole's *Land* and *Harvest***

Nelson Poole's paired murals (each 5 x 20 feet) are located in the north first floor lobby and depict idealized visions of groups harvesting fruit from a tree and preparing to swim in a lake or a bay. These scenes reflect Poole's reputation in the Bay Area as a talented landscape artist. Both murals use soft, somewhat dark palettes that one reviewer at the time described as using "dominant tones of red, yellow and green in opalescent blending."[6] Poole's images are consistent with a major theme of New Deal-era artworks, which historian Barbara Melosh describes as "heroic images of ordinary lives" that depict "the strength of common men and women."[7]

**Figure 58. Nelson Poole's *Harvest*.**

**Figure 59. Detail of *Harvest.***

Scenes of people at work, whether industrial or agricultural, were a favorite subject of artwork during the Great Depression. *Harvest* depicts a group, possibly a family, of white people gathering fruit from a large tree in the center of the mural **(Figure 58)**. There are two figures at the center of the image, presumably the father and mother; the man is atop a ladder leaning over to hand a piece of fruit to the woman below who waits with a half-full basket **(Figure 59)**. To the left of this couple are three more figures, including a young woman and a boy holding long-handled pickers and another young boy resting next to a dog. A girl at right holds a fruit crate; to her left is a young man who appears to be packing fruit in another crate. To the left of the image is a small



[6] *California Art Research Vol. 11,* p. 54. The mural's colors may have darkened over time; it does not appear that they have received any restoration.

[7] Barbara Melosh, *Engendering Culture: Manhood and Womanhood in New Deal Public Art and Theater* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 111.

herd of cattle watched over by a man on a horse. At the right side of the image are a small orchard and a pair of horses drawing a cart filled with hay.

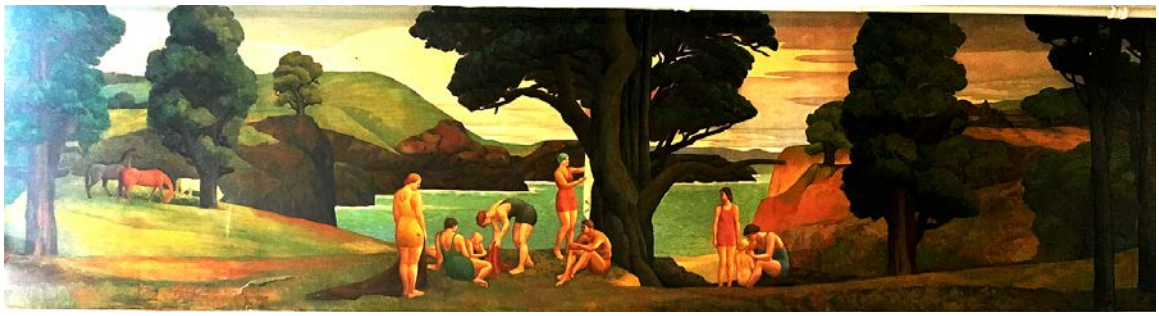


**Figure 60. Nelson Poole's *Landscape.***

Like *Harvest*, *Landscape* is a pastoral scene configured around a body of water, in this case a large pond or bay (Tomales Bay was one of Poole's favorite Bay Area landscapes) **(Figure 60)**. Unlike *Harvest*, this mural has no buildings or structures, just a cluster of people at center with a trio of horses in the background toward the left. Most of the figures are women wearing modest, singlet-style bathing suits, sitting, standing, bending, or tending to a small naked child **(Figure 61)**. The only man depicted sits against the central tree with arms crossed over his bent legs. Melosh describes how New Deal artists such as Poole depicted recreation as "earned respite" after labor, and as a counterpoint to consumer culture's commercial recreation.[8]

**Figure 61 Detail of Nelson Poole's *Landscape*.**
**Source: Amanda Law**



**George Wilson Walker's *Education***

George Wilson Walker's 5 x 25 foot mural, *Education*, is affixed to the wall above the second floor entrance to Theodore Roosevelt Middle School's auditorium. In contrast to the soft colors of Poole's murals, Walker depicts stylized figures of students in saturated colors. The left half of the image is filled with vignettes of students engaged in physical activities, including diving, dancing, boxing and basketball.

[8] Melosh, *Engendering Culture*, 185-187.

A male figure wearing a varsity athlete's sweater lounges in the foreground. A young woman's pose mirrors his, though she is reading a book. The figures behind her are engaged in various academic pursuits, including reading, peering into a microscope, and studying a model ship and a globe. While the majority of New Deal-era artworks depicted everyday people, the most prominent figure in *Education* is the central female figure, whose scale and garb indicates that she may represent a goddess of wisdom **(Figure 62)**. The semi-clad woman is seated with arms outspread, her robes revealing most of her torso and a breast. Inscribed beneath her is "Theodore Roosevelt, 1858-1919. Courage, hard work and intelligent effort are all essential to successful life."[9]


**Figure 62. Detail of George Wilson Walker's *Education*.**

Nudes are a time-honored subject in much of art history, but unclothed figures were uncommon in New Deal artworks and it is surprising to find one in an American school of that time. In her groundbreaking study of New Deal-era murals in U.S. post offices, Karal Ann Marling found that nudes represented a "miniscule" portion of murals and wrote that the subject "never failed to engender suspicion and controversy."[10] There is no indication in the historical record that this mural ever received a negative reaction from parents, school officials, or students.



[9] Roosevelt's words usually appear as "Courage, hard work, self-mastery, and intelligent effort are all essential to successful life." Theodore Roosevelt Quotes, American Museum of Natural History accessed 2 October 2016 http://www.amnh.org/theodore-roosevelt-quotes/

[10] Karal Ann Marling, *Wall to Wall America: Post Office Murals in the Great Depression* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 22.

# CONSTRUCTION HISTORY

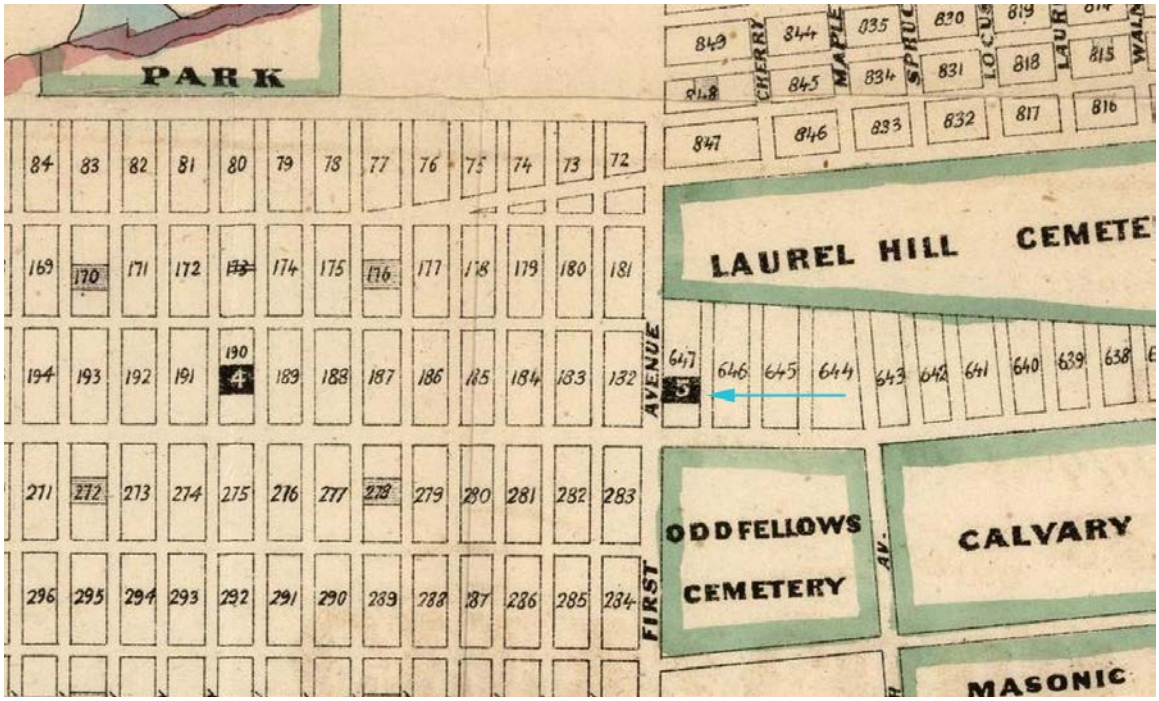



**Figure 63. 1868 Outside Lands Map showing the location of the public reservation at First Avenue and Point Lobos Road (Geary Boulevard) marked by the number 5.**
**Source: Author's Map Collection**



## Pre-construction History: 1877–1929

In 1867, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors designated a tract measuring 150 feet on First Avenue (now Arguello Boulevard) and Mears Street (now Palm Avenue) between Point Lobos Avenue (now Geary Boulevard) and Laurel Hill Cemetery (now Euclid Avenue) as a "school reservation," one of nearly 100 reservations set aside for future public use by the Outside Lands Committee. The locations of the future public school reservations were marked on the 1868 Outside Lands Map published the following year by the Committee **(Figure 63)**.[11]

Surrounded by cemeteries and small farms and ranches, the school reservation at First Avenue and Point Lobos Road remained unoccupied for approximately a decade. However, the Inner Richmond District began to develop during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, bringing children to the remote West Side neighborhood. In 1877, the Board of Education opened the Point Lobos Road Primary School on a portion of the site in September 1877.[12] Classes were held in a rented building, which was ultimately replaced with a purpose-built school in 1888. This building, designed by Thomas J. Welsh, longtime consulting architect to the Board of Education, cost $15,627.25 to build.[13] The three-story, wood-frame,

[11] San Francisco Board of Supervisors, *General Orders of the Board of Supervisors Providing Regulations for the Government of the City and County Of San Francisco* (San Francisco: The Cosmopolitan Printing Company, 1869), 123. The areas under jurisdiction of the Outside Lands Committee included all of today's Richmond and Sunset Districts, the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood, Presidio Heights, the Panhandle, Buena Vista Heights, and the southern Potrero District.
[12] *36th Report of the Superintendent of Common Schools of San Francisco for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1889* (San Francisco: W.M. Hinton and Company, Printers, 1889), 30.
[13] Ibid.

Italianate-style schoolhouse was dedicated on September 19, 1888 **(Figure 64)**. The Point Lobos Road Primary School housed grades one through six under the direction of Principal Miss E. Goldsmith.

**Figure 64. Former Point Lobos Road Primary School, ca. 1915; view toward east from Arguello Boulevard.**
**Source: San Francisco Historical Photograph Collection, San Francisco Public Library, Collection No. AAD-4634**

The earliest Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Map series (Sanborn Map) to depict the Point Lobos Road Primary School was drawn in 1889 **(Figure 65)**. The map shows the three-story, wood-frame schoolhouse facing First Avenue (now Arguello Boulevard), with a plank-covered play yard and two freestanding toilet rooms near the east side of the property. The toilet rooms were linked to the school by a canopy. Although the property went as far east as Mears Street (now Palm Avenue), a line through the property indicates that the play yard was likely fenced-in just behind the toilet rooms.

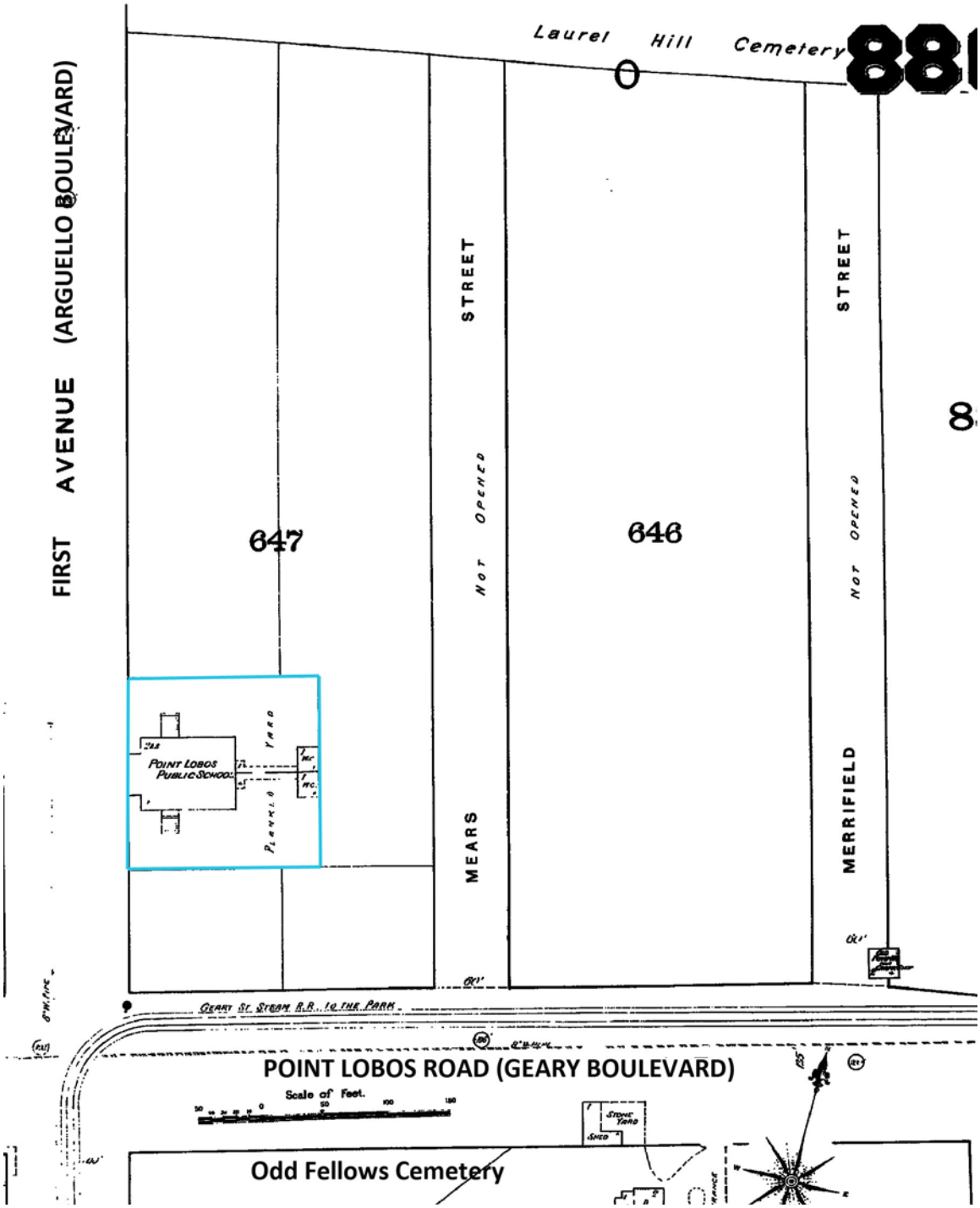



**Figure 65. 1889 Sanborn Map, showing the Point Lobos Road School in blue.**
**Source: San Francisco Public Library; annotated by Christopher VerPlanck**

Between 1877 and 1906, the Point Lobos Avenue Primary School served what was still a rural part of the city, where small poultry ranches, dairies, and isolated cottages housing cemetery workers were the dominant property types. Despite the existence of the Geary Street Steam Railroad along Point Lobos Road and its massive car barn at the northwest corner of Point Lobos Road and First Avenue, there were

only two dwellings in the immediate vicinity of the school – both on the west side of First Avenue, north of the car barn. Neither Mears Street (now Palm Avenue) nor Merrifield Street (now Jordan Avenue) were open to traffic because they ended at Laurel Hill Cemetery, one of several large cemeteries in the Lone Mountain/Inner Richmond area. Until their removal in the first half of the twentieth century, these cemeteries, including Laurel Hill, Odd Fellows, Calvary, and Masonic, hampered development in the area.

The 1900 Sanborn Maps indicate that the Point Lobos Road Primary School (renamed the Richmond School in 1891) had received a classroom wing addition on its south side **(Figure 66)**. Another change was the relocation of the two toilet rooms from the center of the lot to the east side, along Michigan (now Palm) Avenue. The canopy that linked the school to the toilet rooms was still there but it ended abruptly at the middle of the lot, meaning that it had not been lengthened to reach the relocated toilet rooms! The 1900 Sanborn Maps illustrate that the streets surrounding the Richmond School were still largely undeveloped, indicating that the Inner Richmond District remained rural. The 1905 Sanborn Maps, published only five years later, show similar conditions, though by this time the school had been renamed the Richmond Grammar School.

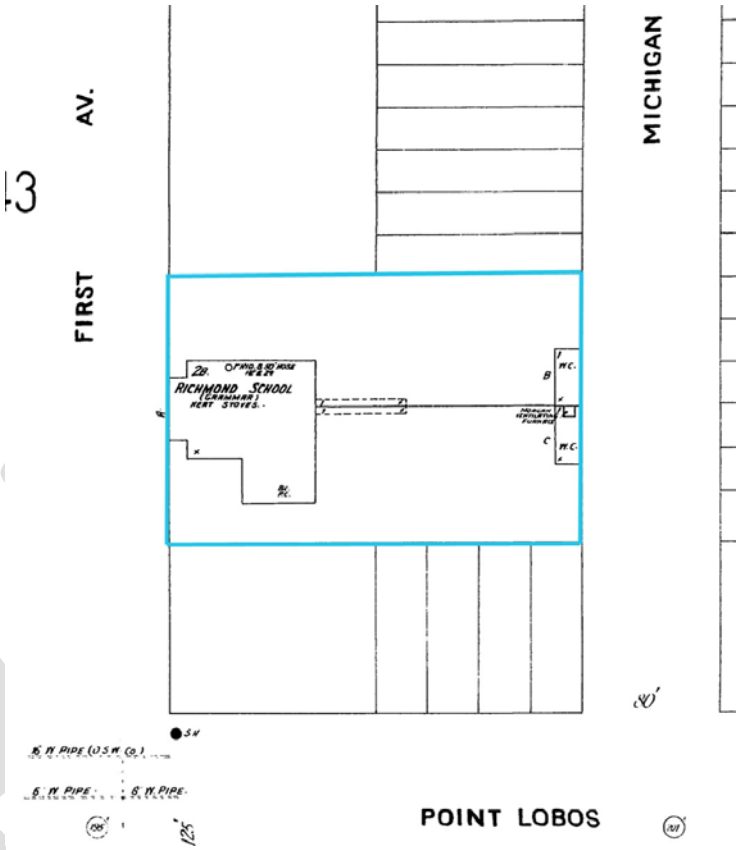



**Figure 66. 1900 Sanborn Map, showing the Richmond School campus outlined in blue.**
**Source: San Francisco Public Library; annotated by Christopher VerPlanck**

San Francisco Block Books from 1894, 1901, 1906 and 1910 indicate that the Richmond Grammar School continued to occupy the original 157' by 240' school reservation. Meanwhile, the adjoining lots that would later become part of the future Roosevelt Junior High School campus remained in private hands. In 1910, the lots north of the school along Arguello Boulevard belonged to Mary McHugh and the Eureka Beneficial Society. Meanwhile, the lots along Palm Avenue – both north and south of the existing schoolyard –belonged to the San Francisco & Suburban Home Building Society, the real estate investment firm that developed the adjoining Jordan Park residence park from 1906 onward.[14]

[14] The San Francisco Original Handy Block Book (San Francisco: Hicks-Judd Company, 1910), 598.

The 1913 Sanborn Maps show the former Richmond Grammar School, which was renamed after President Theodore Roosevelt in 1910, with several changes, including a new north wing and two smaller additions on the north and south sides of the building **(Figure 67)**. An exterior stair had also been constructed on the rear of the school, presumably to facilitate direct access from the play yard to the north and south wings. The toilet rooms were still located on the east side of the property facing Palm Avenue. Just north of them was a new two-story, wood-frame building housing the school's "Domestic Science" and "Manual Training" departments. [15] The 1913 Sanborn Maps indicate that the urbanization of the adjoining Inner Richmond and Jordan Park neighborhoods was well underway. In addition to Jordan Park, which was filling out with new single-family dwellings, on Arguello Boulevard, just north of the school, was the "French Colony," a residential compound containing 13 repurposed earthquake refugee cottages.

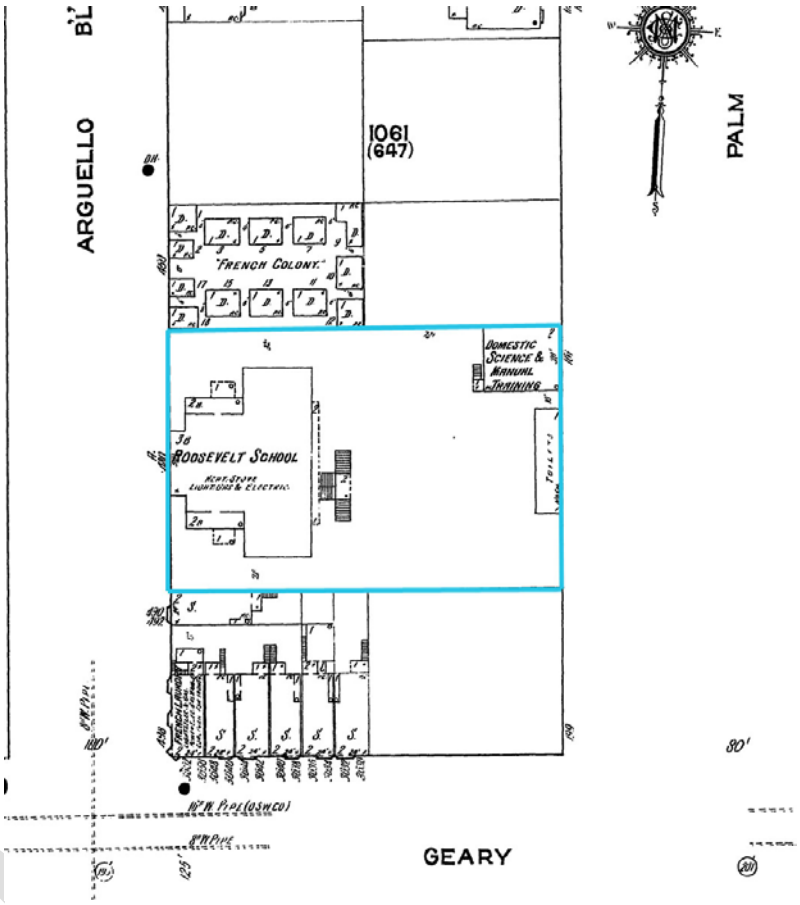



**Figure 67. 1913 Sanborn Map, showing the Roosevelt School in blue. Source: San Francisco Public Library; annotated by Christopher VerPlanck**



[15] In the early twentieth century, many school districts across the country began offering vocational programs in public schools, including "domestic science" course for girls and "industrial arts" for boys. These programs frequently required special-purpose spaces, including laboratories, kitchens, and shops that were not easy to insert into a traditional nineteenth-century schoolhouse.

## Planning, Design, and Construction of Theodore Roosevelt Middle School: 1925–1930

The election of James Rolph as Mayor in 1912 ushered in a period of vast infrastructure improvements in San Francisco. Mayor Rolph pushed for the passage of two school bonds in 1917 and 1922, with the goal of building dozens of new public schools in outlying parts of the city, as well replacing outdated and hazardous schools.[16] In December 1925, San Francisco School Superintendent Joseph Gwinn announced a $6 million campaign to erect three new junior high schools: one in the Holly Park-Fairmount District, another in the western portion of the Richmond District, and a third in the eastern Richmond District, in the "neighborhood of Roosevelt School." In fact, the plan called for transforming the "Roosevelt School building for junior high use by making repairs and adding new buildings and shops." At that point, only a fraction of San Francisco's junior high school-age students were accommodated in specialized junior high schools. [17]

Location of these new schools was a subject of debate. One critic attending the weekly building conference of the Board of Education in 1925 suggested that the Board conduct more careful research before any decision to convert Roosevelt Elementary School into a junior high began. Alfred Esberg, President of the Board of Education, countered this challenge by stating: "We have prepared maps and we have studied the situation thoroughly." He admitted that the location selected was not the "ideal" one for a junior high school, but explained that it was the most feasible site given "the high price of property and other conditions restricting the expenditure of funds."[18]

Within two years of announcing the Board of Education's ambitious plan, the retrofit and expansion of the existing Roosevelt School building seemed inadequate. Fears that wood-frame schools were firetraps had existed for years. In 1911, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported on a letter sent to the Board of Supervisors by J. C. Westenberg, Superintendent of the "Whosoever-Will Rescue Mission," pointing to the dire need for adequate fire escapes on public school buildings: "The Roosevelt school has an outside stairway, but it is built of wood, and Westenberg says it should be of iron. He says that outer stairways for schools in the East are of iron, and constructed so that children may walk out six abreast."[19] By the mid-1920s, the Roosevelt School had become a favored example of why San Francisco desperately needed new facilities for its schoolchildren.



Confirming the critics' suspicions, Roosevelt School caught fire in spring 1927. The extent of the damage is unknown but it seems to have not been enough to prevent it from being put back into use, because later that year the *San Francisco Chronicle* ran a series articles on the city's substandard public schools, including Roosevelt. A photograph of children clustered on an exterior stairway is captioned: "Roosevelt School, 50-Year-Old Fire trap Where Youngsters Get Education Start." A text box underneath the photo reads: "Little children are still housed in Roosevelt School at Arguello and Geary Street, built in 1877, attacked by fire last spring, and long since condemned."[20] By fall 1927, the *Chronicle* illustrated another article, titled: "S. F. Schools Totally Inadequate to Accommodate Increasing Role," with a photograph of Roosevelt School and a description of the building as a "three-story fire trap." The article stated that the

[16] One newspaper account describes the school as founded in 1877. "Old Wooden Shacks House 7000 Children," *San Francisco Chronicle* (September 9, 1927), p. 1.
[17] "Gwinn Urges $6,000,000 School Plan," *San Francisco Chronicle* (December 30, 1925), 10.
[18] "School Board Credit Stirs Heated Row," *San Francisco Chronicle* (December 3, 1925).
[19] "Fire Escapes Needed For School Children," *San Francisco Chronicle* (June 10, 1911), 18.
[20] "Preliminary "Economy" Budget Brings Hot Protests from Citizens," *San Francisco Chronicle* (May 20, 1927), 1.

school had been condemned by the fire marshal after the recent fire, but that the facility continued to house 179 children from first to sixth grades because there were no other classrooms available.

At the same time that San Francisco's Board of Education decried the safety of its school facilities, it argued that new schools were needed to develop the local economy, and to ensure that San Francisco's educational facilities remained on par with other California cities. As argued by one member, "Antiquated units" replaced by "new and efficient schools" would draw students from private and parochial schools and families to neighborhoods "served by a modern school."[21] Superintendent Gwinn elaborated: "Good schools create property values. They bring more homes, more business, and hence a greatly expanded tax assessment roll. This makes possible a lower tax rate. If the Board of Supervisors really want to lower the tax rate permanently, the best way to do it is to build more schools, and to provide the funds for their effective operation."[22]

Planning for a new facility at the existing Roosevelt School site presented physical limitations; adequate recreational space was a serious constraint at that location and a general concern for the Board of Education. "Our schoolchildren have to play vertically," lamented Superintendent Gwinn because "housing conditions are generally crowded in San Francisco, due to the small area of the Metropolitan district. But it is commonly acknowledged that children must have room to play."[23] Apparently, these concerns led the Board of Education to look at the feasibility of building on the Odd Fellows cemetery south of Geary Street.[24] Ultimately, the School Board chose to erect a new building at the existing location so long as additional square footage could be obtained for an expanded play yard.[25]

Beginning in 1927, the Board of Education began assembling, through outright purchase or condemnation, a larger campus for the school, including five parcels on the east side of Arguello Boulevard north of the fire-damaged school.[26] In 1928, the Board of Education hired the architectural firm of Miller & Pflueger to design the new building. Miller & Pflueger finished the plans in February 1929, and the specifications and estimates one month later. The Department of Public Works then issued requests for bids on April 3, 1929.[27] Contracts were awarded three days later, with the general construction contract going to Jacks & Irvine ($369,588), mechanical to the Scott Company ($44,130), brick and tile work to Larsen & Larsen ($51,957), and miscellaneous contracts in the amount of $15,000 going to several other firms.[28] Over the next week or two, additional contracts were let to Alta Electric Company ($26,493) for electrical and to the Scott Company ($28,337) for plumbing.[29] Construction got underway during the summer of 1929 and proceeded over the next year. Throughout construction, Roosevelt Junior High School continued to operate, most likely in temporary "bungalows" placed on the future play yard.[30]



Although the newly completed Roosevelt Junior High School was finished in time for the new class entering in September 1930, it was not formally dedicated until November 9, 1930. The ceremony, held in

[21] "S.F. Schools Totally Inadequate to Accommodate Increasing Role," *San Francisco Chronicle* (September 11, 1927), 16.
[22] "18 Antiquated School Buildings Remain in Service," *San Francisco Chronicle* (December 9, 1927), 1.
[23] Ibid.
[24] "Roosevelt School Plans Postponed," *San Francisco Chronicle* (June 27, 1927), 1.
[25] "New Junior High School Dedicated," *San Francisco Chronicle* (November 10, 1930), 10.
[26] San Francisco Assessor's Office.
[27] "Board Asks Bids in Junior High Program," *San Francisco Chronicle* (March 7, 1929), 10.
[28] "New Roosevelt School Contracts Awarded," *San Francisco Chronicle* (April 6, 1929), 4.
[29] "City to Pass on Labor Plea," *San Francisco Chronicle* (April 18, 1929), 14.
[30] It seems probable that Roosevelt Junior High was operating out of temporary buildings at this point because the old building would have had to been demolished to build its replacement. There is no evidence that Roosevelt's students were moved to any other schools during construction.

the new 950-seat auditorium, was chaired by Mrs. Ernest J. Mott, vice-president of the Board of Education. Various speakers addressed the convocation, including Superintendent Joseph M. Gwinn and Supervisor Coleman, who stood in for Mayor James Rolph. The ceremony concluded with Colonel Thomas P. Robertson, President of the Point Lobos Improvement Association, presenting the school with a large American flag.[31] Several historic photographs taken of the newly opened school ca. 1930 indicate that it looked almost exactly as it does today **(Figures 68–69)**.

In terms of the unusual design of Theodore Roosevelt Junior High, Miller & Pflueger were clearly influenced by the work of contemporary Dutch and German Brick Expressionism. The use of dark clinker brick and corbelling on Roosevelt, as well as the incorporation of zig-zag and diaper patterns in the brickwork, is entirely characteristic of a series of avant-garde buildings that had been constructed in northern Germany and The Netherlands between 1920 and 1930. Though Roosevelt's design is not based on one example, various features of the building recall specific buildings, including Das Chilehaus in Hamburg by Fritz Höger (1922-24) (See Figure 83), Reetsma Cigarette Factory in Hamburg by Fritz Höger (1923), the Hoechts Administration Building in Frankfurt by Peter Behrens (1924), Wilhelm Marx Haus in Düsseldorf by Wilhelm Kreis (1922-24), and especially the Haus Am Köllnischen Park in Berlin by Alfred Gottheiner (1933-33) (See Figure 84). The last building, which was under construction as Roosevelt was being completed in 1930, shares many specific features in common with Roosevelt, including piers with overlapping brick joints and friezes and panels embellished with corbelled brick laid in zig-zag and diaper patterns. Though Timothy Pflueger was the son of German immigrants, he had not traveled to Germany when his firm was hired to design Roosevelt, so if Haus Am Köllnischen Park was indeed an important source, Pflueger would likely have become aware of it through international architectural journals. Roosevelt's north tower may be based on Willem Dudok's Raadhuis (City Hall) in Hilversum, The Netherlands (1928-31), a very well-known building at the time.





[31] "New Junior High School Dedicated" *San Francisco Chronicle* (November 10, 1930), 10.



**Figure 68. Newly completed Roosevelt Junior High School, ca. 1930; view toward northeast from Arguello Boulevard.**
**Source: San Francisco Historical Photograph Collection, San Francisco Public Library, Image No. AAD-4639**




**Figure 69. Newly completed Roosevelt Junior High School, ca. 1930; view toward southwest from play yard. Source: San Francisco Historical Photograph Collection, San Francisco Public Library, Image No. AAD-4636**

Even with its new and much larger facility, Roosevelt Junior High School instantly faced overcrowding. Within just two months of its dedication, the *Chronicle* reported that Roosevelt had so many students transferring from Hamilton and Crocker schools that non-classroom space was being repurposed for teaching.[32] In 1937, the Board of Education addressed outdoor space constraints by securing a condemnation order for land at the rear of the site to expand the school's play yard.[33] During subsequent decades, overcrowding at Roosevelt was reported cyclically; in 1963, the *Chronicle* reported that Everett and Roosevelt Junior High Schools were the most severely overcrowded junior high schools in the district.[34] In 1974, students went on half-day schedules to accommodate nearly 1,000 new students who had temporarily transferred to Roosevelt from Presidio Junior High in the Outer Richmond District, which was undergoing a seismic retrofit.[35]

Demographic and cultural changes affected Roosevelt Junior High (and many other San Francisco schools) during the 1960s and 1970s. In the early 1970s, San Francisco's Board of Education desegregated its elementary schools under federal court order. In the ensuing years, the number of white elementary students dropped by nearly 50% as increasing numbers of white families placed their children in private and parochial schools or left the city entirely.[36] By 1973, the city's Human Rights Commission pleaded with the Board of Education to follow through on its district-wide integration commitment by addressing segregation in junior high and high schools.[37] The federal government required a plan by December 1973 or SFUSD would be in danger of losing more than $4 million in federal funding.[38] Roosevelt was among the first group of secondary schools to be "integrated" under the school district's plan, but an assessment made during the program's second year found that the number of schools meeting state racial guidelines had fallen. As described by the *San Francisco Chronicle*: "The reason for the plan's failure is that the Board of Education allowed any student affected by the plan to transfer to a school closer to home if he wished" which meant that residential patterns of segregation were echoed in schools.[39] Nearly two-thirds of the students who would have been bussed to other schools sought and received transfers, prompting the attorney for the NAACP's western regional office to call the integration plan "absolutely worthless."[40] Roosevelt was reportedly out of compliance because the school had "too many Chinese" students.[41]



Roosevelt Junior High School drew statewide attention in 1972 after teachers invited representatives from the Gay Counseling Service to speak to ninth graders in social studies classes as part of its sex education curriculum. After some students and parents complained, the school's principal, Walter Nolan, stated that the lectures were to help students understand "'social aspects' of sexual divergence from the 'norm,'" but that a handful of students had "needled" the speakers disrespectfully and that the visitors had responded with "some very explicit language."[42] Nolan publicly denounced the speakers and stated that they would not be invited back to Roosevelt.

[32] "90,000 S.F. Children Answer Call of School Bell for Spring Term," *San Francisco Chronicle* (January 6, 1931).
[33] "School Board to Probe Use of Machinery" *San Francisco Chronicle* (November 2, 1937), 28.
[34] James Benet, "S.F. Schools Act to Hire Racial Aide," *San Francisco Chronicle* (April 24, 1963), 2
[35] "Double Sessions for S.F. School," *San Francisco Chronicle,* 19 July 1974, 2.
[36] Ron Moskowitz, "Ethnic Shift in S.F. Schools," *San Francisco Chronicle* (September 7, 1973), 2.
[37] "Rights Board Issues Plea for Desegregation," *San Francisco Chronicle* (March 9, 1973), 5.
[38] "Schools Set Meeting on Integration," *San Francisco Chronicle* (November 28, 1973), 41.
[39] Ron Moskowitz, "School Integration Slips," *San Francisco Chronicle* (January 16, 1975), 2.
[40] "School Plan 'Worthless' Says NAACP," *San Francisco Chronicle* (August 22, 1974), 43.
[41] Ron Moskowitz, "School Integration Slips," *San Francisco Chronicle* (January 16, 1975), 2.
[42] "Sex Causes Hassles in Schools," *San Francisco Chronicle* (June 18, 1972), 5.

This incident, along with another in which copulation was discussed in a Marin County high school history class, reached the State Board of Education. Board member Gene Ragle, a Reagan appointee who opposed all sex education, called for the state to investigate "the injection of illegal sex instruction and perversion" into classrooms and invited citizen comment.[43] Within the next few months, only a handful of complaints came from the state's 1,138 school districts, leading the Board to recommend that better guidelines be developed for teachers of sex education.[44] It is likely that this controversy helped feed into the 1977 campaign for statewide Proposition 6 that targeted homosexual teachers. The proposition's author John Briggs was a member of the California state senate from Orange County; in June 1977, he announced from the steps of San Francisco's City Hall a state ballot initiative that would remove all gay and lesbian teachers from California's public classrooms.[45]

In 1978, Theodore Roosevelt Junior High was renamed Theodore Roosevelt Middle School. Today, Theodore Roosevelt Middle School is one of 13 dedicated middle schools in San Francisco.[46] It is also one of the city's highest-performing middle schools, serving the Richmond District and its vicinity. In terms of its demographics, the school is 51 percent Asian American, 16 percent white, 14 percent Latino, 7 percent African American, 4 percent Filipino, 2 percent two or more races, and 2 percent Pacific Islander.[47]





[43] Ibid.
[44] "A Call for More Sex Guidelines," *San Francisco Chronicle* (July 14, 1972), 51.
[45] Josh Sides, *Erotic City" Sexual Revolutions and the Making of Modern San Francisco* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 155.
[46] SFUSD. http://www.sfusd.edu/en/schools/middle-schools.html, Accessed December 19, 2016.
[47] "Roosevelt Middle School," http://www.greatschools.org/california/san-francisco/6427-Roosevelt-Middle-School/details/, Accessed December 19, 2016.

## Alteration History of Theodore Roosevelt Middle School: 1930–2017

This alteration history is based on several sources, including Sanborn Maps, aerial photographs, newspaper articles, a handful of building permit applications for Theodore Roosevelt Middle School on file at the Department of Building Inspection (DBI), a 1975 drawing set by Yull-Thorton & Levikow Architects, and a summary of recent alterations provided to us by SFUSD staff. Records of all of the documented alterations were verified in the field.

The earliest known alterations to affect Roosevelt Junior High occurred in the mid-1930s, when artists employed by the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP), a New Deal agency, painted three murals inside the academic building. These murals, completed in 1934, include George Wilson's *Education* and Horatio Nelson Poole's *Land* and *Harvest*. More information on these commissions is provided below on pages 57-58.

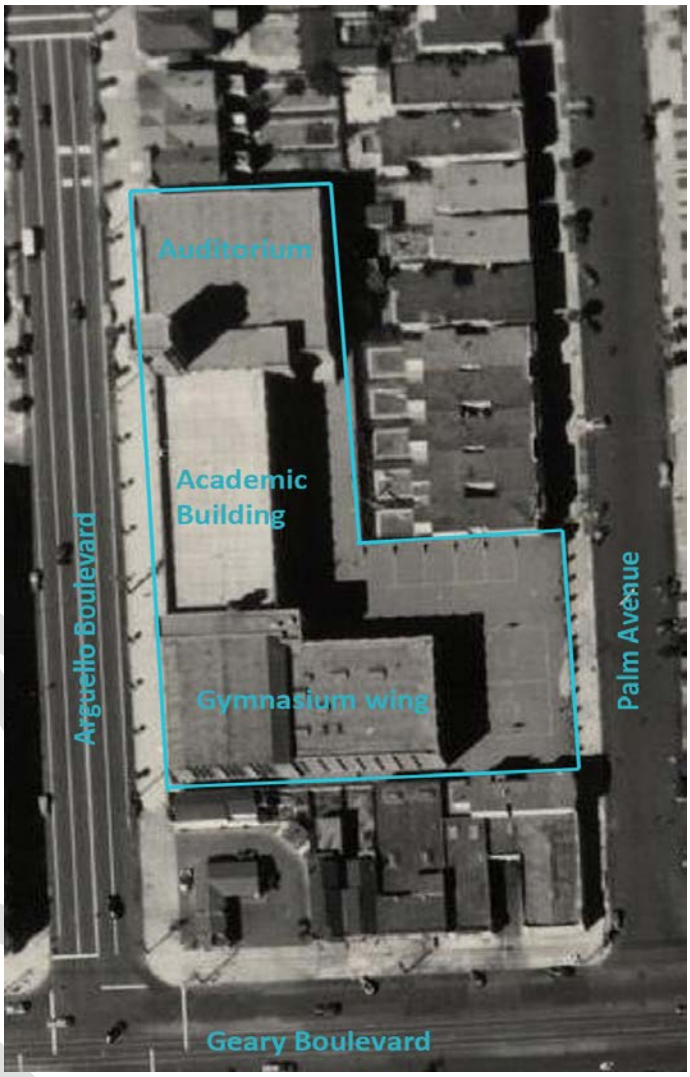



**Figure 70. 1938 aerial photograph showing Roosevelt Junior High School in blue.**
**Source: David Rumsey Map Collection**

An aerial photograph taken in 1938, eight years after Roosevelt Junior High School was completed, shows the completed complex largely as it appears today **(Figure 70)**. The aerial shows the auditorium wing and most of the academic building on the five parcels acquired by the Board of Education in 1927 north of the original school reservation. Meanwhile, the gymnasium wing and a portion of the academic building occupied the original 157' 7" x 240' school reservation. The 1938 aerial photograph indicates that all traces of the old school and its outbuildings had been removed, including the two-story vocational training building and the one-story toilet rooms. The rest of the site consisted of an asphalt-paved play yard painted with multiple game fields. In 1937, the Board of Education secured a condemnation order for one parcel on Palm Avenue to expand the play yard, but this property still appeared on the 1938 aerial, suggesting that the dwelling had not yet been vacated.[48]



[48] "School Board to Probe Use of Machinery" *San Francisco Chronicle* (November 2, 1937), 28.

The 1950 Sanborn Maps were the earliest to show Theodore Roosevelt Junior High School **(Figure 71)**. Notes on the map describe the school's physical characteristics, including its "fireproof" concrete construction and its basic layout. According to the map, the auditorium wing contained an auditorium for performing arts, as well as music and arts classrooms, suggesting that the northernmost part of the campus was reserved for the arts. The academic building at the center of the complex contained the administration office suite, the academic classrooms, the library, and the cafeteria. The basement of the academic building contained storage and mechanical spaces. Anchoring the southernmost part of the complex was the gymnasium wing, which contained the boys' and girls' gymnasiums, locker rooms, and classrooms and shops for the vocational and domestic science programs. The map indicates that the roof of the academic building was in use as an outdoor play area, with a covered shelter next to the north tower. By this time, the single-family property condemned in 1937 on Palm Avenue had been demolished or moved and replaced with three portable "bungalows." In 1958-59, seven more houses on Palm Avenue were condemned and removed in order to expand the play yard to its present extent.

There are only four permit applications on file for Theodore Roosevelt Middle School at DBI.[49] They describe a range of projects, including the relocation of portable classrooms, aka "bungalows," from the northeast corner of the site to the southeast corner in 1959, interior changes to the vocational/domestic science shops and classrooms in 1965 and 1966, and the addition of 20 sprinklers in 1996:

- July 22, 1959: Relocate portable classrooms and yard work (Building Permit #201918).
- January 8, 1965: Non-structural alterations to rehabilitate Foods Laboratory (Building Permit #276142).
- April 14, 1966: Alterations to shops, including mechanical, electrical, and miscellaneous work (Building Permit #293109).
- August 14, 1996: Add 20 sprinklers to the existing system (Building Permit #801119).

A set of architectural drawings prepared by Yull-Thorton & Levikow Architects in 1975 describes the first major renovation of Roosevelt Junior High School since its completion 45 years earlier. The project included several substantial changes to the building, including infilling two vertical banks of windows on the east façade of the gymnasium wing to install a shear wall, construction of an elevator tower at the intersection of the academic building and the gymnasium wing, resurfacing a pair of concrete entrance canopies with stucco on the east side, and the replacement of all the original windows.

SFUSD made several other changes to Theodore Roosevelt Middle School as a result of two school bonds passed in 1988 and 1994, as well as additional bonds in 2006 and 2011, which collectively provided almost $1 billion to modernize San Francisco's public schools. This work included window sash replacement and miscellaneous site improvements (1991), exterior door replacement and additional window sash replacement (1992), roof replacement (1993), exterior painting and playground and fence improvements (1995), window sash replacement and playground improvements (1997), and additional window sash replacement (1998). More recently, SFUSD has renovated all of the classrooms and corridors inside Theodore Roosevelt Middle School, including the installation of new resilient sheet flooring in classrooms and corridors, new lockers, new furnishings, new and enhanced lighting, and new kitchen and bathroom fixtures. On the exterior, all of the windows have been replaced in multiple campaigns for energy efficiency and soundproofing. The most recent alteration is the addition of two enclosed fire escapes on



[49] The state of California, and not the City and County of San Francisco, is the entity that issues building permits and oversees construction of public schools throughout the state.

the north wall of the auditorium wing in the last year or two. These two structures allow people to exit the auditorium in case of fire without having to re-enter the academic building.

The ca. 1990 Sanborn Maps, the most recent available, show few major changes to Theodore Roosevelt Middle School since 1950 **(Figure 72)**. The ca. 1990 Sanborn Maps do not show the addition of the elevator to the east façade or the construction of the shear wall on the east wall of the gymnasium wing. However, they do show the removal of the seven dwellings from along Palm Avenue in 1958-59 to expand the play yard, and the two bungalows that were relocated from the northeast to the southeast corner of the campus around the same time.

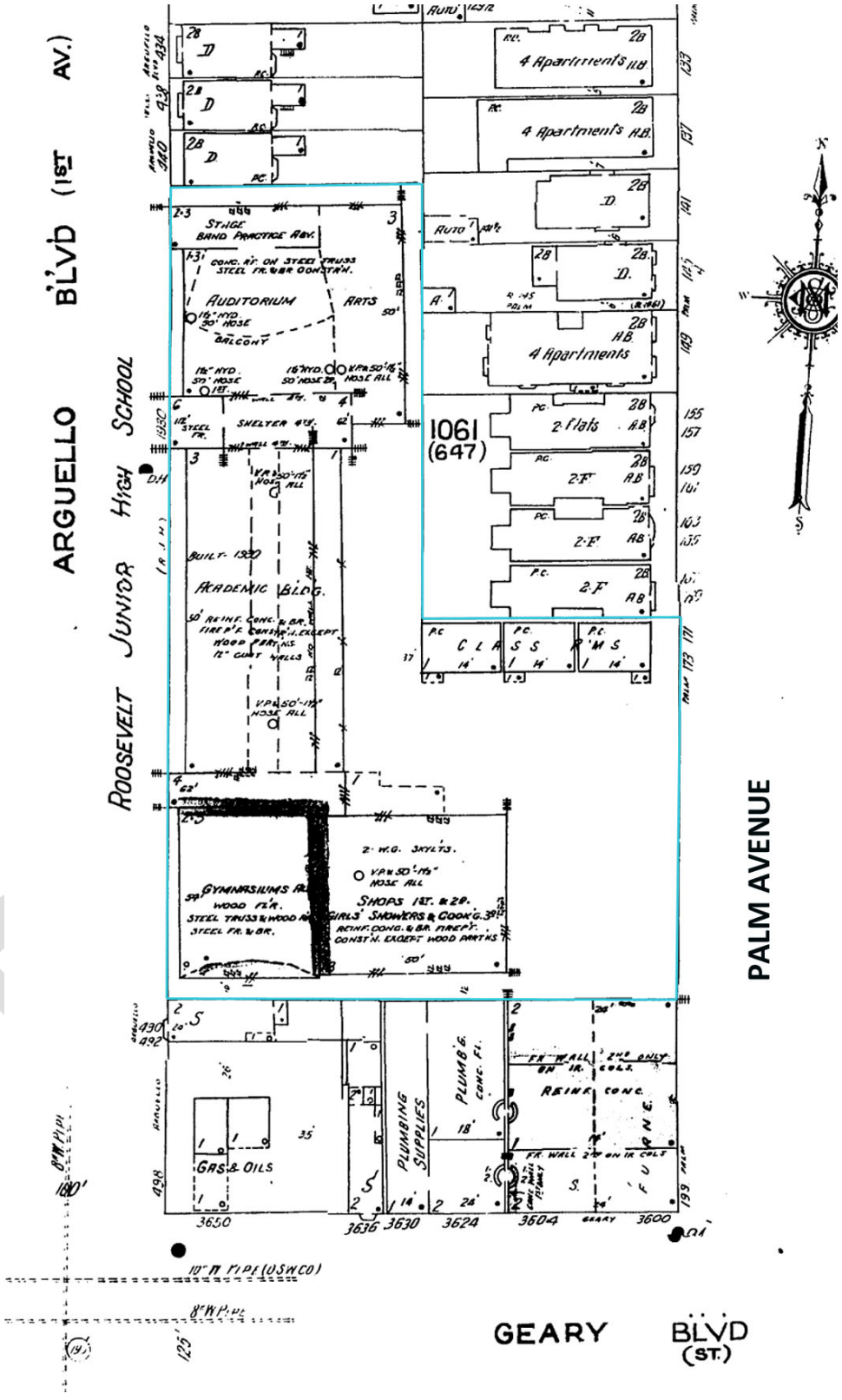



**Figure 71. 1950 Sanborn Map, showing Theodore Roosevelt Middle School in blue.**
**Source: San Francisco Public Library; annotated by Christopher VerPlanck**

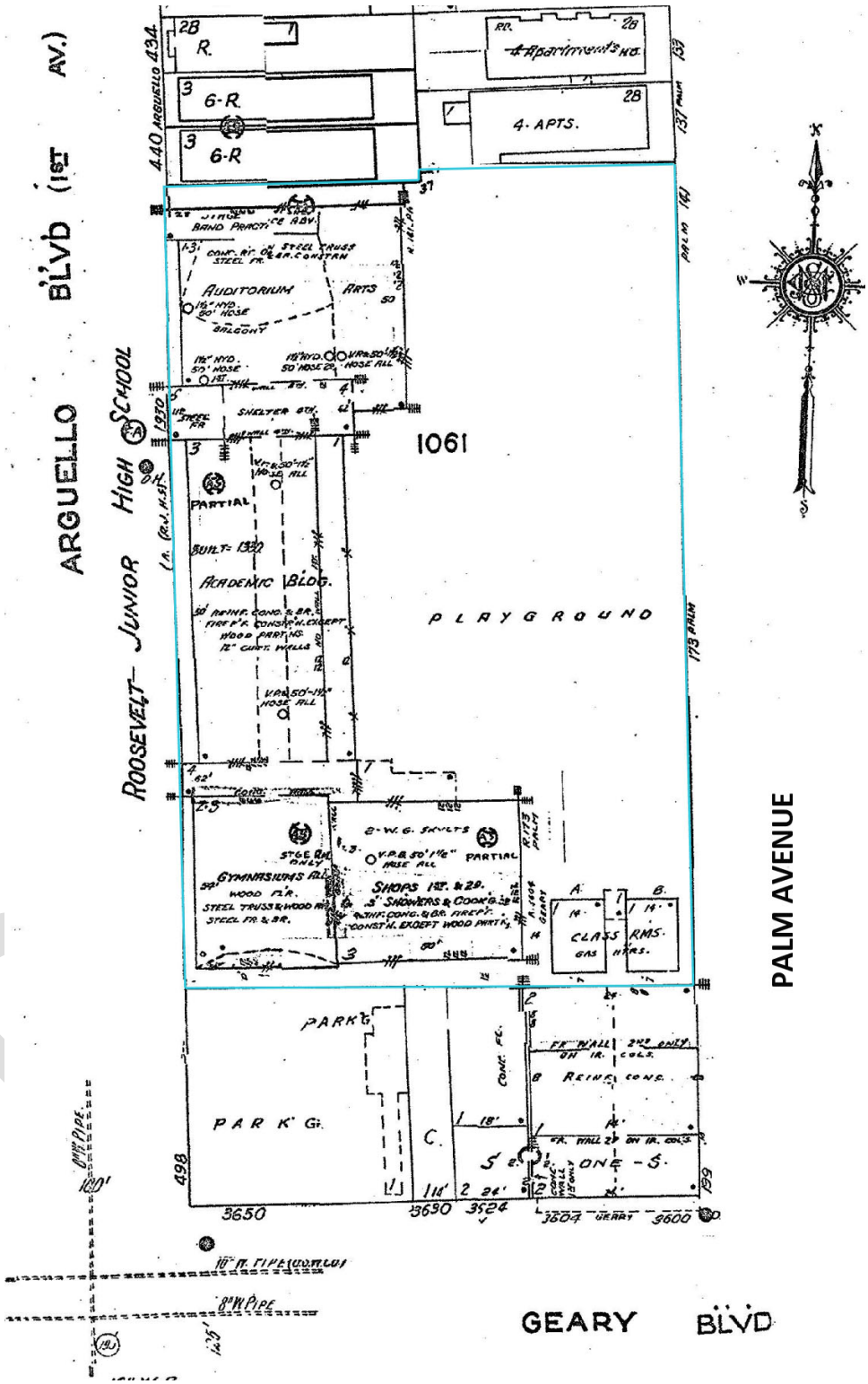



**Figure 72. Ca. 1990 Sanborn Map, showing Theodore Roosevelt Middle School in blue.**
**Source: San Francisco Public Library; annotated by Christopher VerPlanck**

## Concise History of SFUSD and School Construction: 1847–1938

Public education in San Francisco dates to 1847 when the first school opened on what is now Portsmouth Square. Three years later, the Free School Ordinance passed, allowing taxes to be levied to support public schools. The first high school was established in 1856, and the first free kindergarten in the western United States opened in San Francisco in 1878.[50] Compulsory education laws, massive immigration from outside the U.S., and internal migration from rural to urban settings led to an explosion in school enrollment in California and across the nation during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. As the school system became more elaborate and the number of students continued to grow, the teaching workforce expanded and teachers' organizations increased in number as well. By the 1910s, members of San Francisco teachers' associations were active in state and local campaigns affecting schools and child welfare alike.[51]

Educational reform efforts during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were part of the overall Progressive movement to address government corruption, as well as economic dislocation and social turbulence brought about by rapid industrialization and mass immigration. Schools were seen as vehicles for inculcating moral values, especially in foreign-born children. As San Francisco leader John Swett argued, "Nothing can Americanize these chaotic elements and breathe into them the spirit of our institutions but the public schools."[52] Statements such as these offended many members of San Francisco's large Irish, Italian, and German immigrant communities, who found more sympathetic ears in Democratic Party officials who "dominated" the Board of Education for most of the 1870s and 1890s.[53]

Progressive campaigns for educational reform included expansion and reorganization of curricula, improving teacher education, and changes in how schools and school districts were administered.[54] Assessments of San Francisco's school system in 1911 and 1917 found major deficiencies in both educational instruction and facilities.[55] These critiques fueled a "good government" campaign for School Board members and the Superintendent of Schools to be appointed rather than elected. A citywide initiative called Amendment 37 calling for these measures failed in 1918, but passed by a narrow majority of voters in 1920.[56]



Reorganizing school systems to add junior high schools was a feature of Progressive educational reform. Junior high schools were viewed as serving unique developmental needs of early adolescence. They helped prepare students for the new curricular requirements of comprehensive high schools, a trend begun earlier in the twentieth century to integrate academic curricula with commercial and vocational education. In contrast to the "common school" of the nineteenth century, these new facilities offered a diversified curriculum that attempted "to accommodate the differentiated roles that students would play

[50] "Finding Aid to the San Francisco Unified School District Records 1854-2005, Biographical/Historical Note." (San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library, 2005), 3-4.
[51] Ibid., 3.
[52] William Issel and Robert W. Cherny *San Francisco, 1865-1932: Power, Politics and Urban Development* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 102.
[53] Ibid, 104.
[54] Wayne J. Urban and Jennings L. Wagoner, Jr. *American Education: A History* (New York and London: Routledge, 2009, fourth edition), 227.
[55] Sonnier Francisco, "Historic Context Statement: Golden Age of School Construction, San Francisco, California (San Francisco Planning Department, 2009), 28.
[56] Ibid., 30.

in their later lives."[57] Junior high schools included pre-vocational studies and other training that allowed for differentiating students in terms of their backgrounds and presumed futures.[58]

Junior high schools were adopted in California starting in 1909, and by 1913, three San Francisco grammar schools had been converted to serve seventh through ninth grades with modified schedules and curriculum designed for children in early adolescence. Dr. Joseph A. Gwinn, the first Superintendent hired by a newly appointed Board of Education championed the transformation from an "8-4" system (eight years in elementary school then four in high school) to a "6-3-3" program that placed 7-9th graders in junior high and 10-12th graders in high school.[59] By 1929, the city had nine operating junior high schools and more planned; junior high schools were being added during a time of general expansion in the city school system.[60] The grade configuration of each school continued to evolve and be a focus for debate. In 1946, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that the President of the Board of Education advocated (unsuccessfully) for junior high schools to be abolished so that the District could return to the "8-4" system.[61]

The proliferation of schools in San Francisco's western neighborhoods followed logically as residential and commercial development increased in those parts of the city. San Francisco's "Outside Lands" – the area that would eventually became the Sunset and Richmond Districts, as well as Golden Gate Park – consisted of thousands of acres of sand dunes, thickets of willows, and coastal sage scrub.[62] San Francisco experienced major building booms in these areas after the 1906 Earthquake and Fire, and again during the 1920s. Infrastructural developments, such as graded streets and streetcar tunnels, as well as the mass adoption of private automobiles, spurred residential development in what had previously been the city's outlying areas.[63]



School location decisions were subject to political pressures as well as objective calculations of need.[64] Lincoln High School was erected in the Sunset District at the behest of parent and civic organizations who argued that the "fast growing region" deserved a secondary school. Superintendent Lee stated at a meeting held at Parkside School in February 1934 that "If the $3,000,000 bond issue pending with the Government and providing for the George Washington High School in the Richmond District can be approved, the Sunset will be the next thing on the expansion program."[65]

The period from World War I to World War II has been called the "Golden Age" of San Francisco school construction.[66] Approximately 50 new school buildings were erected in the 1920s and 1930s, including several built with assistance from the Public Works Administration (PWA) and the Works Progress

[57] Urban and Wagoner, Jr. *American Education: A History*, 271 and 234.
[58] Ibid., 275
[59] Francisco, 32.
[60] Lee Stephen Dolson, Jr. "The Administration of the San Francisco Public Schools, 1847 to 1947" (Berkeley: PhD Dissertation, 1965), 455.
[61] "McEnerney Suggests S.F. Abolish Junior High Schools," *San Francisco Chronicle* (March 6, 1946), 13.
[62] Mary Brown, *Sunset District Residential Builders, 1925-1950: Historic Context Statement* (San Francisco Planning Department: 2013), 19.
[63] Brown, 21.
[64] Dolson, 482-83.
[65] "Sunset Area High School Need Shown," *San Francisco Chronicle* (February 15, 1934), 19.
[66] The term appears to have first been used in "Civic Architecture: San Francisco's Public Schools," San Francisco Architectural Heritage Newsletter (1988 v. XVI, no. 3), 5. It is the title of a recent study conducted for the San Francisco Planning department by Sonnier Francisco, "Historic Context Statement: Golden Age of School Construction, San Francisco, California (San Francisco Planning Department, 2009).

Administration (WPA).[67] John Reid Jr, who served as City Architect from 1919 until 1927, designed a large number of these facilities. Other prominent Bay Area architects contributed to this body of work, including Miller & Pflueger, Bakewell & Brown, and Weeks & Day.[68]

## San Francisco School Construction Bonds: 1917–1928

San Franciscans voted four times in two decades to fund expansion of their public school district's physical plant. In November 1917, $3.5 million dollars were authorized to address overcrowding. In part, this was a long-term hangover from the devastation wrought by the 1906 Earthquake and Fire, which destroyed 29 schools. More than ten years after the tragedy, more than 170 classes were reportedly being held in "temporary shacks, lunchrooms, basements, corridors, rented rooms, stores and auditoriums."[69] In December 1917, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that the bond funds would be spent on new elementary and high schools, and on purchase of land for a school and playground.[70]

In 1922, voters were again asked to "invest in the future of the children of San Francisco" because "today's school children will be San Francisco's men and women of tomorrow."[71] Mayor James Rolph Jr. described the bond measure as an issue of equity. "Every neighborhood must be given an equal opportunity with every other neighborhood. We must not have good buildings here and poor buildings elsewhere."[72] After the overwhelmingly positive November election results, City agencies scrambled to coordinate planning and expenditure of the $12 million devoted to rehabilitating 30 schools. "The plan for the rehabilitation of the schools is the most gigantic ever attempted in San Francisco. It is comparable only to the Civic Center project," stated Rolph.[73] The bond also funded a study of educational needs based on the city's growing population so that future schools could be sited in the most appropriate locations.[74]



## Public Works of Art Project: 1933–1934

**Public Works of Art Project**

The three murals at Theodore Roosevelt Middle School were funded through the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP). PWAP was created in 1ate 1933 as part of the Civil Works Administration (CWA), an agency funded through the Federal Emergency Relief Act (FERA) of 1933. FERA was passed during the first hundred days of Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration as part of a broad-scale effort to counter the effects of the Great Depression, which had begun with the stock market crash in late 1929 and had produced wide-spread unemployment and underemployment by the time Roosevelt took office in March 1933.

FERA provided funds to states for the purpose of providing work relief to the unemployed. However, the FERA administrator, Harry Hopkins, feared that not enough was being done in time to see the unemployed through the winter of 1933-1934, so he created CWA as the first, direct federal work-relief program. Within CWA, he created PWAP for unemployed artists. PWAP was inspired at least in part by George Biddle, an independently wealthy artist and former classmate of Roosevelt, who had traveled in Mexico with Diego Rivera. Enthusiastic about the work of Mexican artists in transforming public buildings

[67] Figure for the 1920s from "Civic Architecture" San Francisco's Public Schools."
[68] "Civic Architecture."
[69] "School Bond Election to be Held Tuesday," *San Francisco Chronicle* (October 28, 1917), 8.
[70] "Board Locates First Schools to Be Erected," *San Francisco Chronicle* (December 5, 1917), 10.
[71] "Future of S.F. is at Stake at Polls Tuesday," *San Francisco Chronicle* (November 19, 1922), 10.
[72] James Rolph Jr. "Rolph Appeals to S.F. to Vote School Bonds," *San Francisco Chronicle* (November 19, 1922), 10.
[73] "First Steps Taken on Big School Plans," *San Francisco Chronicle* (November 25, 1922), 3.
[74] Ibid.

with bold murals, Biddle tried to persuade Roosevelt to promote a contemporary approach to art in public buildings. Where earlier art in federal buildings had tended to be as classical as the architecture, the subject matter for PWAP artists was specified as "The American Scene," an approach to art developed in the early 20th century by the "Ash Can School," who focused on urban scenes, and by artists in the late 1920s, notably Grant Wood and Thomas Hart Benton.

PWAP was headed by Edward Bruce, a lawyer, art collector, and painter from California, and the new agency was launched in early December with funding to expire on May 1. On December 10, Bruce asked Walter Heil, recently appointed as director of the De Young Museum, to take charge of PWAP Region 15, including northern California, and to move quickly to commission works of art and locate appropriate public buildings where art might be installed. Well connected with San Francisco civic leaders, Bruce joined with Herbert Fleishhacker, a politically well-connected banker who was on both the Art and Park Commissions, to assist Heil in selecting an executive committee and advisory committee. The executive committee consisted of Thomas Carr Howe, assistant director of the California Palace of the Legion of Honor; Harold Mack, a successful stock broker and art patron; and Charles Stafford Duncan, a prominent commercial artist. Heil and his associates then began to seek both artists and locations for art.[75]

**Theodore Roosevelt Junior High School Murals**

Murals were the most plentiful public art form commissioned under New Deal visual art programs and the medium employed by artists Horatio Nelson Poole and George Wilson Walker to enhance Theodore Roosevelt Junior High School. Over 2,250 murals were commissioned by federally-funded art projects across the U.S.[76] A flexible medium for architectural spaces, murals could be planned as part of new construction projects funded by the New Deal or as adornment to existing public buildings. Other San Francisco schools that received New Deal artworks after their completion include John Muir Elementary School and Mission High School. Many New Deal-era murals in San Francisco were created through the medium of fresco, in which ground pigments were applied to wet plaster laid directly on a wall. Frescos must be painted in sections quickly while the plaster is still wet. Poole was among the earliest San Francisco artists to try fresco painting, reportedly experimenting with the medium as early as 1926.[77] The murals at Roosevelt were created with oil painted on canvas panels that were later affixed to the walls, presumably because the Board of Education did not wish to go to the trouble of re-plastering any interior wall surfaces.



Heil's notebooks indicate that Poole probably began work about December 18. Heil's final report indicates that Poole did not complete his two murals by May 1, 1934, when PWAP funds expired, and that he was paid to complete the murals with funds from the State Emergency Relief Act (SERA). Poole was paid $635.69 from PWAP funds and $147.52 from SERA funds. Poole's assistant artist, Gerome De Hollin, was paid $331.562 from PWAP funds and $91.99 from SERA funds. Walker was paid entirely from PWAP

[75] The preceding two paragraphs are based on Robert W. Cherny, *Victor Arnautoff and the Politics of Art* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017), pp. 81-83.
[76] Melosh, 5.
[77] "Frescoes, an Old Medium Revived," *San Francisco Chronicle* (May 2, 1926), 8F. Aline Kistler, "Nelson Poole Exhibited in Painter Role," *San Francisco Chronicle* (May 12, 1929), D5. Gene Hailey editor, *California Art Research Vol. 11*, (San Francisco: Works Project Administration, 1936), 48.

funds; the San Francisco Chroncile reported on April 21 that Walker had finished. Walker was paid $356.62. The San Francisco Board of Education contributed $105 toward the total cost of the murals.[78]

## Artists' Biographies

**Horatio Nelson Poole: 1884–1947**

Horatio Nelson Poole (1884-1947), who painted the *Land* and *Harvest* murals at Roosevelt, grew up in New Jersey and Philadelphia. He left school to help support his family at age fourteen, but was later able to study at the Philadelphia School of Industrial Art and later, the prestigious Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Poole began to find work drawing cartoons for Philadelphia newspapers and then in Hawaii, where his older brother John also worked as a cartoonist. Poole joined the California Society of Etchers, which led to his relocation to San Francisco in 1921, where he began exhibiting paintings as well as prints. Poole established a studio in what is now known as the Belli Building at 728 Montgomery Street (San Francisco Landmark No. 10) but he often painted outdoors to capture the landscapes that were his preferred subjects. He taught at the California School of Fine Arts and at University of California, Berkeley. By the early 1940s, Poole was described as "among the artists of first importance in San Francisco, who were drafted to design civic art decorations as part of the extensive program of the Public Works Administration."[79] California Art Research described Poole as contributing "handsome decorations in theatres" in "smaller communities of California."[80] Poole's later commission for a mural at the Golden Gate International Exposition was described by art critic Alfred Frankenstein as being "among several of the fair's finest murals."[81] In 1953, a memorial exhibit was organized for the artist at the City of Paris Gallery at O'Farrell and Stockton Streets.[82]

**George Wilson Walker: 1883 – 1958**

George Wilson Walker (1883-1958) painted the mural *Education* at Roosevelt. The artist was born in New Hampshire and died in Los Angeles. No detailed information about Walker's life or career was found during the course of this research.[83]

**Figure 73. Drawing of Timothy Pflueger in 1936 by Peter van Valkenburg. Source: Wikimedia Commons**

## Timothy Pflueger, Architect: 1892–1946

Timothy Pflueger is one of the most remarkable architects to have worked in San Francisco **(Figure 73)**. In spite of several significant hurdles, including the Depression and World War II, Pflueger created an extensive and high-

[78] Heil's notebook and final report are part of the Heil papers at the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. There is a microfilm copy at the DeYoung Museum. See also "First Mural Completed," *San Francisco Chronicle* (April 21, 1934), p. 5.

[79] *California Art Research, Vol. 11*, 53. His studio address is mentioned in "Frescoes, an Old Medium Revived," *San Francisco Chronicle* (May 2, 1926), 8F

[80] *California Art Research Vol. 11*, 55. Most of the biographical information on Poole is drawn from this document.

[81] Alfred Frankenstein, "'X Marks the Spot'--An art critic looks at the architecture --and finds it good--and bad," *San Francisco Chronicle* (February 17, 1939).

[82] "A Handy Guide to Local Events," *San Francisco Chronicle* (March 29, 1953), 20.

[83] Biography of George Wilson Walker accessed at http://www.askart.com/artist/George_Wilson_Walker/11193148/George_Wilson_Walker.aspx

quality oeuvre during his relatively short life. Attesting to their quality and stature, dozens of Pflueger's buildings still stand throughout Northern California. Coming of age in an era dominated by the conservative aesthetic of the *École des Beaux Arts*, Timothy Pflueger defied the dominant taste of his provincial hometown and embraced a daring modernist aesthetic that incorporated influences of Chinese, Persian, Mayan, and Aztec architectural and artistic traditions. Long known as a supporter of the fine arts, Pflueger often collaborated with well-known sculptors, muralists, lighting designers, and other artisans and craftspeople, including Diego Rivera, Ralph Stackpole, and Arthur Mathews. Pflueger was also a proponent of modern technology and he embraced contemporary building materials, including aluminum, Lucite, and sheet metal, using them to make his buildings seem more richly appointed than constrained Depression-era budgets would allow.

Timothy Ludwig Pflueger was born September 26, 1892 in San Francisco. His German immigrant parents, Ottilie and August Pflueger, both arrived in San Francisco in 1890. August Pflueger was a merchant tailor and from 1904 on, the family lived above his shop at 1015 Guerrero Street in the city's Mission District. While not poor, Timothy Pflueger was raised in humble circumstances in a multi-ethnic district composed of immigrants from Ireland, Germany, Scandinavia, Italy, and France. Though frugal, religious, and of humble means, Timothy Pflueger's parents were cultured, and they did not neglect their children's education in the arts, paying for piano and drafting lessons for young Timothy. Many of his relatives lived nearby, including several tradesmen that Pflueger would work with for the rest of his life. He had comparatively little formal education, going only as far as high school. Like many boys in his circumstances, Timothy went to work as soon as he could to help his family, learning skills on the job.[84]

**Figure 74. Our Lady of the Wayside, Portola Valley, CA.**
**Source: Town of Portola Valley**

Pflueger showed an early talent in drawing and painting. He began working as a draftsman at the age of 14, when the demand for skilled renderers and delineators surged after the 1906 Earthquake and Fire. He soon began working in the offices of James Rupert "J. R." Miller and George T. Colmesnil.[85] The partners recognized that their young hire was very talented, and they

**Figure 75. Rendering of Metropolitan Life Insurance Co. building.**
**Source: SFMoMa**

[84] Therese Poletti, *Art Deco San Francisco: The*
[85] Poletti, 8.

encouraged him to join the San Francisco Architectural Club, an organization that offered night classes steeped in the methods and pedagogy of the *École des Beaux Arts*.[86] Pflueger steadily improved his skills in this nurturing environment and in 1912, at the age of 20, he was given his first solo project, a small country church in Portola Valley, California. Our Lady of the Wayside, which still stands, is designed in the Mission Revival style, incorporating features of several California missions **(Figure 74)**.[87] Miller & Colmesnil began giving Pflueger even more high-profile jobs, including the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company building (now the Ritz-Carlton Hotel), a Beaux-Arts–styled office building that still stands at the northeast corner of Stockton and Pine Streets on Nob Hill **(Figure 75)**.[88]

Miller & Colmesnil dissolved in 1913, but Pflueger continued to work as an employee of J. R. Miller for another six years, assisting him on a variety of projects. In 1917, after the U.S. entered World War I, Timothy Pflueger was drafted into the Army Corps of Engineers. He spent the war designing training camps, including camps in Washington, D.C. and San Juan, Puerto Rico.[89] Upon his return to San Francisco in 1919, Miller promoted Pflueger to the position of chief draftsman, and then in 1920, after Pflueger received his architecture license, Miller made him partner. With the economy booming during the 1920s, and work abundant in San Francisco, Miller & Pflueger designed several buildings that have since become local landmarks. The firm's work in the 1920s still largely adhered to historicist styles, including the Beaux Arts, Spanish Colonial Revival, Mission Revival, and Mediterranean. Some of the firm's most famous works from this era include the Castro Theater (1921) at 429 Castro Street, and the San Francisco Mining Exchange (1923) at 350 Bush Street. The Castro Theater was Pflueger's first major movie theater, a building type that would make him famous. Though the exterior is designed in a straightforward rendition of the Spanish Colonial Revival style, the interior is a fanciful blend of exotic influences that combines features of a Roman amphitheater with a Middle Eastern caravanserai **(Figure 76)**.

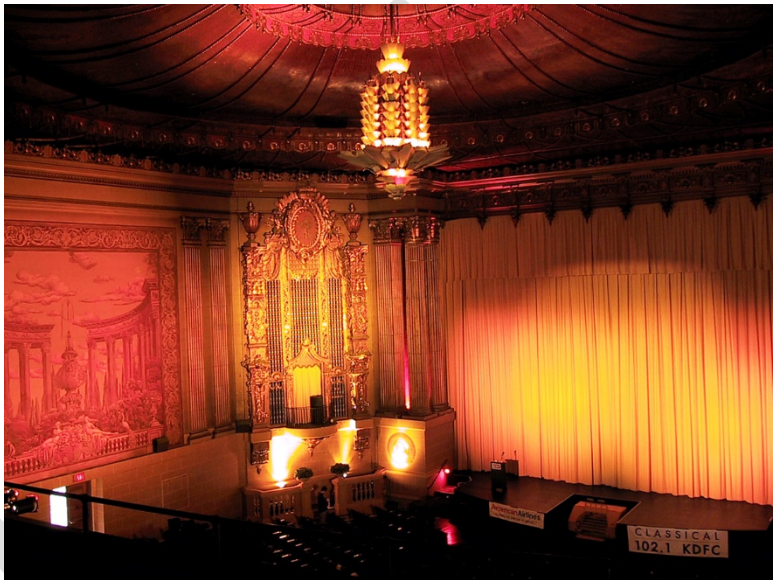



**Figure 76. Interior of the Castro Theater.**
**Source: Flickr user SFHandyman**



The Castro Theater project earned Miller & Pflueger several other high-profile theater commissions, mainly from the Nasser Brothers, the proprietors of the Castro Theater and a chain of theaters throughout Northern California. Indeed, the Nasser Brothers hired Miller & Pflueger to design all of their theaters, including The Alhambra (1925) in San Francisco; three theaters in Tulare, Oroville, and Chico

[86] Poletti, 11.
[87] Poletti, 26–7.
[88] Poletti, 27.
[89] Poletti, 30.

(1926–27); the Paramount (1931) in Oakland; the Alameda Theater (1932) in Alameda; and the New Mission Theater, a remodel of an existing 1917 neighborhood theater in San Francisco's Mission District (1932). The Nassers gave Pflueger a free hand with their commissions, allowing him to come up with fanciful interior spaces that would transport moviegoers to far-off lands before the curtain had even parted.


**Figure 77. Pacific Telephone Building. Source: Author's postcard collection**

The Castro Theater caught the attention of prominent businesspeople, including the directors of the Pacific Telephone & Telegraph Company, who decided to hire Miller & Pflueger to design their new high-rise office building in San Francisco's South of Market area. After securing the commission, Pflueger developed several traditional designs for San Francisco's first true "skyscraper." Not caring for any of his initial schemes, Pflueger became engrossed in the recent 1922 Chicago Tribune Tower competition.[90] One of the entries, by Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen, dispensed with the traditional Beaux-Arts tripartite high-rise arrangement of base, shaft, and capital in favor of a unified, Gothic-inspired approach using vertical lines and sequential setbacks to emphasize the building's height. Pflueger's final 1923 design for the Pacific Telephone & Telegraph Building, which clearly shows Saarinen's influence, was an important breakthrough for the young architect, marking the beginning of his embrace of modern design **(Figure 77)**.



The national press finally took notice of Timothy Pflueger following the completion of the Pacific Telephone & Telegraph Building in 1925. Five years later, Pflueger would make his second major contribution to San Francisco's skyline with the Medical-Dental Office Building (1929) at 450 Sutter Street, a block north of Union Square. Along with Howe & Lescaze's PSFS Building in Philadelphia, 450 Sutter is arguably the most innovative skyscraper built in the United States during the 1920s. Discarding the heavy pseudo-masonry cladding of the Telephone Building, Pflueger embraced the underlying logic of the steel frame and wrapped the Medical-Dental Building in a thin terra cotta and glass curtain wall, with delicate spandrels ornamented with Mayan-inspired patterns. The windows wrap around the corners of the building, contributing to its lightweight and modern appearance. Pflueger, a lover of dramatic flourishes, designed a richly appointed lobby for 450 Sutter. The lobby, one of the most photographed in San Francisco, is finished in black marble and gilded stucco embossed with Mesoamerican pictographs resembling a Mayan temple **(Figure 78)**.[91]

[90] Poletti, 61-5.
[91] Poletti, 79-80.


**Figure 78. Medical-Dental Building.**
**Source: Author's postcard collection**

The Medical-Dental Building was completed several months after the Stock Market Crash of November 1929. The ensuing Depression ushered in a period in San Francisco in which comparatively little was constructed for almost a decade. Fortunately for Miller & Pflueger, their reputation was so great that they continued to get high-profile projects. Theaters and office buildings continued to comprise a major part of their work, including an addition and remodel of the Pacific Stock Exchange (1930), El Rey Theater (1931), and the Paramount Theater in Oakland (1932). Embracing an escapist tendency that is characteristic of so much of their work, Miller & Pflueger designed several high-end San Francisco nightclubs and cocktail lounges, including Bal Tabarin (now Bimbo's 365), Le Cirque Room in the Fairmont Hotel, the Patent Leather Lounge in the St. Francis Hotel, and Top of the Mark in the Mark Hopkins Hotel. The firm's work wasn't solely focused on fantasy; Miller & Pflueger designed several major public buildings in San Francisco during the Depression, including Theodore Roosevelt Junior High School (1930), George Washington High School (1936), the Transbay Terminal (1937), San Francisco Junior College (now San Francisco City College – 1940), and a parking garage beneath Union Square (1942). Much of the firm's work from the latter half of the 1930s shows a gradual evolution away from the "Mayan Deco" toward a more austere aesthetic in keeping with contemporary European modernism. George Washington High School, designed in the Streamline Moderne style with some Regency and International style influences, is one of the best examples demonstrating the growing abstraction of Pflueger's later work. This evolution picked up speed following the retirement of the more traditionally minded J. R. Miller in 1937. From this point on, the firm became known as Timothy L. Pflueger & Associates.



In 1939, Timothy Pflueger was appointed to the board of architects in charge of designing the Golden Gate International Exposition (GGIE) on Treasure Island. As part of his duties, Pflueger designed the Federal Building, the California State Building, the California Auditorium, and the Court of the Pacific. Pflueger's work at the GGIE represented his continuing evolution toward modernism. During World War II, Pflueger worked for the U.S. government, designing the U.S. Army General Depot in Ogden, Utah; various Army transmitter buildings and broadcasting studios; and several housing projects for defense workers. His final project was a remodel of I. Magnin's Co.'s flagship store at the southwest corner of Geary and Stockton Streets in San Francisco's Union Square. This ultra-modern building was under construction when Timothy Pflueger died of heart failure on November 7, 1946, following his daily swim at the Olympic Club.[92] Following his death, the firm was taken over by Timothy's younger brother, Milton, who renamed it, Pflueger Architects.

[92] Poletti, 218.

## Art Deco Architecture in San Francisco

The Art Deco style emerged on the world stage at the 1925 *Exposition des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes* in Paris. Rejecting European Neoclassicism in the wake of the horrors of World War I, the artists, artisans, graphic designers, and architects who developed the Art Deco style were inspired by a variety of sources, in particular the ancient ziggurat-building cultures of the pre-Islamic Middle East, including Assyria, Babylon, and Persia. Other sources included ancient Egyptian art and African textiles, as well as contemporary European Cubist and Fauvist painters and German Expressionist architects, graphic designers, and visual artists. Signature details of the style included its use of geometric shapes, including chevrons, zig-zags, diagonal rays, stylized papyrus leaves, pulvinated moldings, and horizontal "speed lines" (parallel lines incised into the parapet of a building). The Art Deco style soon made its way across the Atlantic to the United States. Gradually, the American public embraced the "modernistic" Art Deco style, largely due to its popularity with Hollywood set designers like Cedric Gibbons. Mass-produced consumer goods, including those designed by industrial designers such as Raymond Loewy, Norman Bel Geddes, and others, disseminated the style to the furthest corners of the country.[93]

The Art Deco style evolved in a different direction in California than it did in Europe or on the East Coast. In part due to the state's geographical proximity to Mexico, architects in California relied more heavily on the pre-Columbian architecture of Meso-America than on Middle Eastern or African sources. Though not specifically Art Deco, Frank Lloyd Wright's "textile block houses" in Los Angeles and Pasadena display the strong influence of Meso-American architecture. Architects working in both Southern and Northern California, including Los Angeles-based Robert Stacy-Judd and San Francisco's Timothy Pflueger, mined Mayan and Aztec architecture for building forms and ornament. By the late 1920s, these various strands had coalesced into a regional school known as the "Mayan Deco" style. One of the best examples in San Francisco is the Western Furniture Mart at 1355 Market Street. Designed by Capitol Co. Architects, this building was completed in 1937 **(Figure 79)**. In addition to its tower's pylon-like massing, the exterior is entirely clad in terra cotta embossed with Mayan and Aztec-inspired ornament.



**Figure 79. Western Furniture Mart, by The Capitol Co., Architects, 1937.**
**Source: Page & Turnbull, Inc.**

[93] Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture since 1780* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1988), 235-40.

Mayan Deco buildings are characterized by an imaginative interpretation of Meso-American architectural forms, including stepped massing, corbelled entrances, tapered pylon-like tower elements, and ornamentation utilizing pre-Columbian pictographs. San Francisco architects who embraced the style include Miller & Pflueger, Wilbur Peugh, George Kelham, William Crim, and others. Miller & Pflueger employed the Mayan Deco style in several of their San Francisco projects, including the Medical-Dental Building at 450 Sutter Street (1929) and the New Mission Theater at 2550 Mission Street (1932). Other good examples of the style by other local architects include the Independent Order of Foresters' Hall (now the San Francisco Baha'i Center) at 170 Valencia Street (1932), by Harold Stoner; and James Lick Middle School at 1220 Noe Street (1932), by William H. Crim **(Figure 80)**.

The Depression considerably slowed private construction in San Francisco. Nonetheless, the work funded by the PWA and other government agencies ensured that the Art Deco style would remain popular during the 1930s. The majority of the PWA-funded schools in San Francisco were designed in the Art Deco style, including Marina Junior High School at 3500 Fillmore Street (1936), by George Kelham; Visitacion Valley Elementary School at 55 Schwerin Street (1936-37), by G. Albert Lansburgh and Hyman & Appleton; Francis Scott Key Elementary School at 1530 43rd Avenue (1936-39), by Edward Eames, William Mooser, and Douglas D. Stone**(Figure 81)**; Glen Park Elementary School at 151 Lippard Street (1937), by Bliss & Fairweather and Lewis Hobart; and Lawton Elementary School at 1570 31st Avenue (1939), by Ciampi & Rogers and Dodge Reidy.

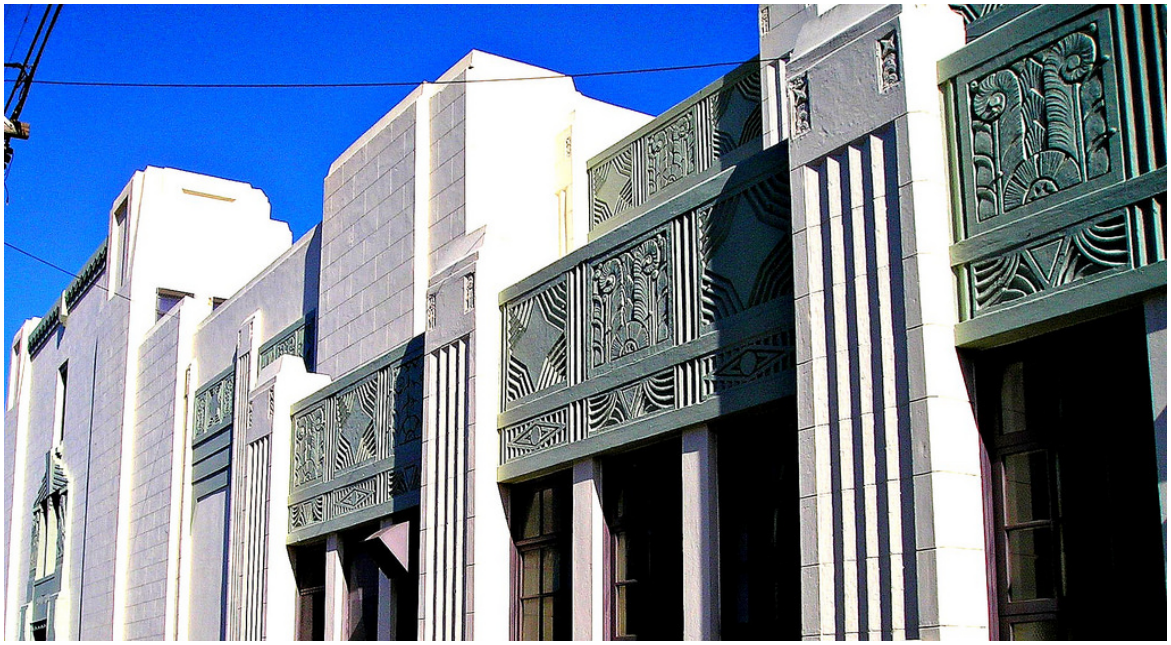


**Figure 80. Detail of James Lick Middle School, by William H. Crim, Architect.**



**Figure 81. Entrance of Francis Scott Key Elementary School, by Edward Eames, William Mooser, and Douglas D. Stone.**

## Dutch and German Brick Expressionist Architecture

Expressionism was an architectural movement that emerged in northern Europe around 1910. Like the Art Deco style, Expressionism was an artistic movement that embraced architecture, fine arts, and the performing arts. Stemming from the early Modernist movement in Europe, Expressionism rejected historicism in favor of industrial materials like brick, steel, and glass; use of unusual geometrical and biomorphic forms; and the handling of commonplace industrial materials in interesting ways. Expressionist architecture, especially as it evolved in Germany and The Netherlands, became known for its use of different types of brickwork to create bold new forms and geometric patterns. Expressionism thrived between the two world wars. Indeed, many of the architects who worked in the style had fought in World War I, and this experience caused them to embrace a Socialist agenda that rejected toxic nationalism, militarism, and rightist political movements. The leading practitioners of Expressionist architecture in Europe included Erich Mendelsohn, Bruno Taut, Hans Poelzig, Fritz Höger, and Michel de Klerk.[94]

One of the most important groups of Expressionist architects to emerge in Europe during the 1910s and 1920s were members of the Amsterdam School, including Hendrik Berlage, Michel de Klerk, Willem Dudok, and Piet Kramer. More so than any other regional school, the Amsterdam school became imbued with Socialist ideals, and they often employed their services for the public good, especially in designing high-quality social housing. One of the most famous examples of the style is "Het Schip" in Amsterdam. This brick and tile-clad apartment building, designed by Michel de Klerk and built 1917-20, embodies many characteristics of the style, including its geometric massing, curved corners, corbelled brick and tiled cladding, and a prominent vertical element in the shape of a central spire **(Figure 82)**.[95]

**Figure 82. "Het Schip," Amsterdam, by Michel de Klerk, Architect.**
**Source: Ben Austwick**

Expressionist architecture also thrived in Germany, including Hamburg and the Ruhr Valley. Evolving around the same time as the Bauhaus in Dessau, German architects who practiced the style known as "Brick Expressionism" did not eschew ornament,

**Figure 83. Chilehaus, Hamburg, by Fritz Höger, 1924.**
**Source: SAHARA database**

[94] Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture –A Critical History,* F
[95] Ibid.

unlike their Bauhaus contemporaries. Indeed, German Expressionist architects were fond of using decorative brickwork – often clinker brick and tile – to create elaborate patterns on their buildings' façades. They also embraced dramatic architectonic features, including angular or pointed elements, towers, and vertical bands of fenestration to express a sense of excitement in their work. Perhaps the best-known example of German Brick Expressionism is the Chilehaus office building in Hamburg, which was designed by Fritz Höger and built in 1924 **(Figure 83)**. Probably the example of Brick Expressionism that most closely resembles Theodore Roosevelt Middle School is Haus Am Köllnischen Park, an office building constructed in Berlin in 1930-33 according to designs by Alfred Gottheiner **(Figure 84)**.

German Expressionist architecture thrived in Germany until the early 1930s when the Nazi regime declared it "degenerate art" and suppressed the style, as well as all other avant-garde architecture in the nation. The style lived on for another few years in The Netherlands until Nazi Germany invaded and occupied the country in 1940. Various strains of the Amsterdam School and Dutch Expressionism survived into the 1950s, and the style continues to influence various Neo-Expressionist movements to the present day, including the work of American architect Frank Gehry.[96]

**Figure 84. Haus Am Köllnischen Park, Berlin, by Alfred Gottheiner, 1930-33.**
**Source: Wolfsraum, architectuul.com**



Unlike the contemporary Art Deco style, Expressionism did not make it across the Atlantic to the United States before World War II, although individual architects – like Timothy Pflueger – were clearly inspired by the style. Aside from Theodore Roosevelt Middle School, there are no other major buildings in San Francisco (or the United States) known to have been designed in the style.

## Public School Design in San Francisco: 1850–1930

During the first decades of the city's existence, San Francisco's public schools were housed in structures built for other purposes, including commercial buildings, churches, and even private dwellings. Post-Gold Rush San Francisco, especially after the Second Vigilance Committee of 1856, was dominated by conservative businessmen who disliked taxes, and infrastructure, including streets, sewers, parks, and schools, all suffered as a result. Nevertheless, a growing population of families in the 1860s increased the demand for public schools. By 1865, there were 37 public primary and secondary schools in San Francisco accommodating around 8,000 students.[97]

[96] William J. R. Curtis, *Modern Architecture since 1900* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1988), 118-31.
[97] George Mullany, "New Goals of Public Education," *San Francisco Chronicle* (1939), 5.

**Early Public School Design in San Francisco: 1865–1890**

Public school buildings erected in San Francisco during the latter half of the nineteenth century were usually of wood-frame construction, three or four stories high, and designed in a utilitarian vocabulary incorporating a modest amount of Italianate ornament. A rare and excellently preserved example of this type is the Irving M. Scott School at 1070 Tennessee Street in Dogpatch **(Figure 85)**. Designed by Thomas J. Welsh, a longtime consulting architect to the San Francisco Board of Education, and built in 1895, the Irving M. Scott School (originally the Potrero School), which is City Landmark No. 138, is the only surviving Victorian-era public school in San Francisco. It is a wood-frame structure massed as a cube an it contains two full floor levels above a raised basement. The basement contains storage and the upper floors simply contain classrooms, a principal's office, and a central stair. The classrooms have oversized windows to admit as much natural light as possible. The windows are also operable and used to regulate indoor temperature. Like most Victorian schools in San Francisco, the Irving M. Scott School did not originally have a central heating system, and the bathrooms were located outside in small one-story structures linked to the main building by covered walkways.

**Figure 85. Irving Scott School.**



**The Progressive Era: 1890–1906**

The Progressive movement of the late nineteenth century began to change how Americans thought about education. Among other things, it led to the professionalization of teaching, the application of business/bureaucratic management methods to school administration, and the standardization of school design. School enrollments surged because of Progressive-era reforms, including the passage of child labor laws and compulsory education statutes in most northeastern, Midwestern, and western states. In response, most large American cities, including San Francisco, found themselves scrambling to build new school facilities to accommodate growing enrollments.[98]

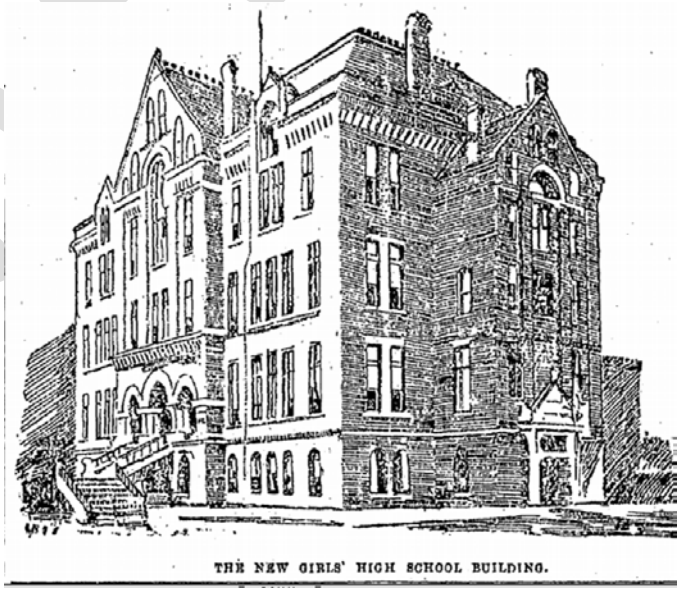



**Figure 86. Rendering of Girls' High School.**
***San Francisco Chronicle* (June 27, 1892)**

[98] Dale Allen Gyure, *The Chicago Schoolhouse* (Chicago: The Center for American Places at Columbia College Chicago, 2011).

During the 1890s, the San Francisco Board of Education launched a campaign to build several new public schools. Many of the city's Victorian schools were reportedly in "wretched" condition, with little or no heat or running water, sewage leaks, and other sanitary and safety issues. Fire was also an ever-present danger with older wood-frame buildings, as evidenced by the destruction by fire of Girls' High School on Scott Street.[99] The Board of Education decided to replace it with a new, state-of-the-art, three-story-over-basement masonry school building **(Figure 86)**. Designed by Thomas J. Welsh, the new Girls' High School was designed in the Richardsonian Romanesque style and built of brick. Its raised basement contained mechanical rooms, a janitor's room, storerooms, two classrooms, a science laboratory, and a recitation [examination] room. Meanwhile, the first floor contained a reception hall, principal's office, library, "museum," four classrooms, and lavatories. The second floor contained six classrooms and a "retiring room," and the third floor contained a large assembly room.[100] Girls' High School, which complied with all of the Progressive reformers' guidelines, was much more sophisticated than the contemporary Irving M. Scott School. The large number of special-purpose rooms at Girls' High School signaled the expanding mission of public schools, as they evolved from teaching basic skills to a small number of students toward providing instruction in a range of specialized subjects to a much larger segment of society, including vocational skills, arts and music, and the hard sciences.

Throughout the rest of the 1890s and into the first decade of the twentieth century, the San Francisco Board of Education replaced several of its older wood-frame "firetraps" with new masonry buildings similar to Girls' High School. Unfortunately, many of these new schools succumbed to the 1906 Earthquake and Fire. In the disaster, 29 of the city's 74 public school buildings, including Girls' High School, were destroyed. Many others were rendered temporarily unusable. The Board of Education hurriedly set up temporary schools in the refugee camps and quickly built 36 temporary buildings accommodating 8,000 children.[101]



**Post-Earthquake School Construction in San Francisco: 1906–1915**

In 1907, Mayor Edward R. Taylor established the Bureau of Architecture, and appointed Newton Tharp as the first City Architect. Just two months later, the Board of Education announced its plan to build 44 new schools, including 16 "Class A" buildings of reinforced concrete and 28 "Class B" schools of wood-frame construction. City Architect Tharp rejected brick construction, given how poorly it had fared in the earthquake. All of the new schools were to be modern in every way, with central heating and ventilation and indoor plumbing. Tharp prioritized four new high school buildings, including replacements for Girls' High School, Lowell High School, and Polytechnic High School, as well as the new Commercial High School. A good example of Tharp's post-quake schools is the former Newton J. Tharp Commercial High School at 170 Fell Street. Built in 1908 on the site of City Hall, this three-story-over-basement, reinforced concrete, brick-clad high school is designed in the Renaissance/Baroque style. It was moved to its current site next to the High School of Commerce in 1911. Lowell High School, now San Francisco City College's John Adams Campus, is another excellent example of a post-quake school. Built in 1911 at the northwest corner of Masonic Avenue and Hayes Street, the former Lowell High School is a typical American high school from the early twentieth century **(Figure 87)**. Constructed of concrete with brick facing, the building has a 'U'-shaped plan enclosing a central courtyard. Its exterior is designed in a restrained Renaissance/Baroque vocabulary with a modest amount of applied ornament. It also has a separate, freestanding gymnasium.

[99] "Money Wanted for Schools and Jails," *San Francisco Chronicle* (February 15, 1896), 15.
[100] "Girls' High School," *San Francisco Chronicle* (June 27, 1892), 3.
[101] City and County of San Francisco, *Municipal Reports: The San Francisco Earthquake and Fire of April 1906* (San Francisco: 1907).

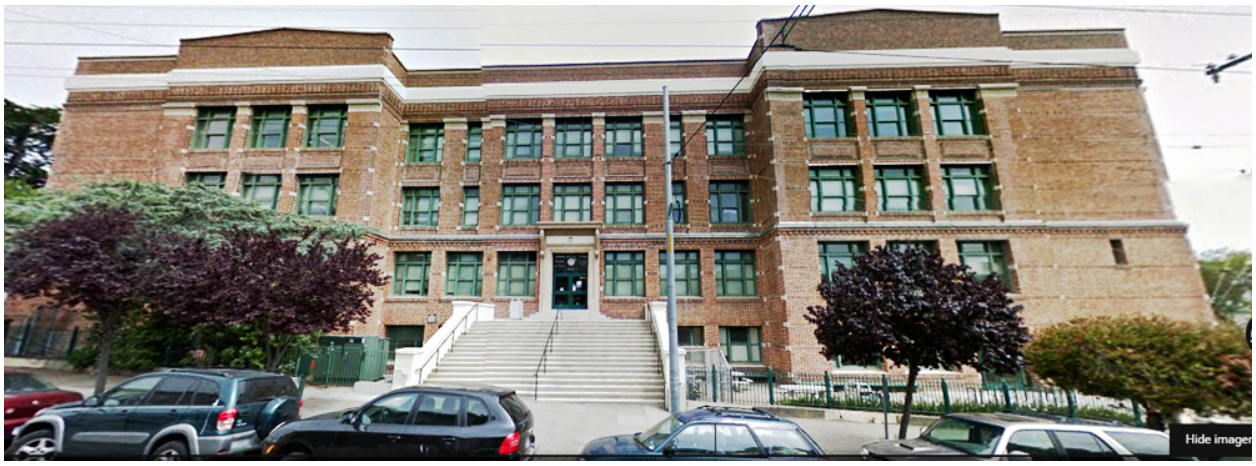



**Figure 87. Former Lowell High School (now San Francisco City College's John Adams Campus).**
**Source: Google Streetview; annotated by Christopher VerPlanck**

**Golden Age of School Construction: 1915 –1930**

The election of James Rolph as mayor of San Francisco in 1911 signaled the beginning of an unprecedented 19-year period of infrastructure development in the city. Though registered as a Republican, Rolph was a progressive politician enjoying strong bipartisan support from many sectors, including unions and working-class San Franciscans. His many infrastructure projects included City Hall, Civic Auditorium, the Hetch Hetchy water system, the Panama Pacific International Exposition, the Municipal Railway, Twin Peaks Tunnel, and many roadbuilding projects. His road and transit improvements opened up the vast western and southern parts of the city to development. The rapid development of these same areas, including the Sunset, Parkside, and Richmond Districts on the West Side; and the Excelsior, Crocker-Amazon, Portola, and Outer Mission Districts in the southeastern part of town, led to demands to increase the number of public schools in these newly developing areas.



Not long after being elected, Mayor Rolph appointed John Reid, Jr. as the new City Architect. Reid immediately found himself confronted with the task of building several new schools and rebuilding many of the city's older schools. The Board of Education still operated 17 outdated Victorian-era schools and several "temporary" schools built in the aftermath of the 1906 Earthquake. With Reid's assistance, Mayor Rolph oversaw the drafting of two school construction bonds in 1917 and 1922 to fund the work. Desperate for better schools, San Franciscans eagerly approved the bonds, ushering in the "Golden Age of School Construction." City Architect Reid designed about half of the approximately 50 schools built in San Francisco between 1920 and 1930, with the newly formed Board of Education awarding the rest to various private architecture firms.[102]

[102] "Message of His Honor, Mayor Rolph," *The Municipal Record* (San Francisco: January 7, 1926), 4.

The schools built during Reid's tenure were almost all designed in regional styles appropriate to California's Mediterranean climate and landscape, including the Spanish Colonial Revival, Italian Renaissance, and Mediterranean styles. In conformance with modern building and life/safety codes, all are built of "fireproof" concrete construction with durable stucco finishes and terra cotta and cement plaster trim. Some of the best examples include Mission High School (1925–27), which is San Francisco Landmark No. 255 **(Figure 88)**; Commerce High School (1926), which is San Landmark No. 140; and Balboa High School (1928–34), which is San Francisco Landmark No. 205.

**Figure 88. Mission High School, 1926.**
**Source: San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library, Image No. AAB-0389**

Many of the new schools built by John Reid, Jr. were much larger than their Victorian and Edwardian predecessors. In contrast to the Victorian-era schools, or even the Edwardian-era schools, both of which typically consisted of a single block sited at the center of a paved lot, Reid's schools were usually composed of multiple buildings, as well as adjoining ballfields and other sporting facilities. Since World War I, educational leaders had advocated for the incorporation of physical education into the public school curriculum. This required large sites to accommodate play yards, running tracks, and ballfields. Accommodating outdoor recreation was not as challenging in the peripheral neighborhoods where land was still available, but it was much more difficult to achieve in already built-up parts of the




**Figure 89. Aerial photograph of Balboa High School.**
**Source: Google Maps**

city, giving administrators the choice of assembling the sites through condemnation proceedings–never a popular idea–or relocating the school to an outlying neighborhood where land was available.

Another factor in the growth in size of American public schools during the 1920s was the invention of the "comprehensive" school model, which combined academic, vocational, arts and music, sports, and home economics departments in one campus. As the complexity of public schools grew, City Architect John Reid Jr. and contract architects designed sprawling multi-unit complexes that typically included an "academic" building, a gymnasium, an auditorium, and a shop/industrial arts building. Typically linked together in an "h," "L," "U," or "O"-shaped plan, each component is expressed on its exterior as a separate building, even though they are all linked together by internal corridors. Balboa High School, the first high school built in the Outer Mission District, occupies approximately five city blocks. It has an O-plan with academic wings extending along Onondaga and Cayuga Avenues; an auditorium on Otsego Avenue; and a gymnasium and sports fields occupying a swath of land bounded by Oneida, Cayuga, Seneca, and Otsego Avenues **(Figure 89)**. One of the largest school campuses in San Francisco, it is even larger when combined with the adjoining James Denman Middle School campus on Oneida Avenue.

By the end of the 1920s, San Francisco, which had once been known for having one of the worst public school systems in the nation, now had what many considered to be the best. In 1923, St. Louis architect William B. Ittner praised San Francisco's commitment to building not only functional but beautiful schools: "The creation of an environment, healthful and beautiful, has been the architectural keynote and the school buildings are a sincere expression of the joy, health and beauty that should belong to our school children."[103]

Although he did not take a salary, City Architect John Reid, Jr. received a commission equal to 6 percent of the construction costs of each completed building. Though there was no evidence of any wrongdoing, Reid was also Mayor Rolph's brother-in-law, and following an incident, he resigned his post in 1927 to quash accusations of nepotism. Reid's resignation left a void at the office of the City Architect. His replacement, Charles Sawyer, did not design many new civic buildings, limiting his role to awarding commissions to private firms. The Stock Market Crash two years later also dealt a temporary blow to San Francisco's school construction campaign. Ten days after the crash, Board of Education President Daniel C. Murphy issued a statement calling into question San Francisco's continued ability to build "the fine type of schools" that the city had grown accustomed to during the 1910s and 1920s.[104] Although the San Francisco chapter of the American Institute of Architects argued that the City should continue "providing school buildings of enduring quality and design," the primary question on everyone's mind



**Figure 90. Theodore Roosevelt Middle School.**

[103] Don Andreini, "Civic Architecture: San Francisco's Public Schools," *Heritage Newsletter*, XVI: 3 (September 1988), 7.
[104] Ibid.

was where the money would come from.

Nonetheless, several schools that had already been designed and funded were built in the first year or two after the Crash, including Miller & Pflueger's Theodore Roosevelt Junior High School (now Roosevelt Middle School), which was built in 1930 **(Figure 90)**. Roosevelt, designed in a fusion of the Art Deco and German and Dutch Brick Expression styles, is universally recognized as one of San Francisco's best-designed public schools. Even though it was not a New Deal project, in terms of the its architectural quality and advanced styling, it foreshadowed the continuation of the Golden Age of San Francisco School Construction into the 1930s, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal public works programs picked up the mantle.

# ARTICLE 10 LANDMARK DESIGNATION

This section of the case report provides an analysis and summary of the applicable criteria for designation, integrity statement, statement of significance, period of significance, inventory of character-defining features, and additional Article 10 requirements.

## Criteria for Eligibility

Check all criteria applicable to the significance of the property that are documented in the report. The criteria checked are the basic justifications for *why* the resource is important.

_ Association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

_ Association with the lives of persons significant in our past.

X Embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

_ Has yielded or may be likely to yield information important in history or prehistory.

## Statement of Significance

**Characteristics of the Landmark that justify its designation:**

*Significant Architecture*

Theodore Roosevelt Middle School is a building that embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type (public school), period (1920s), method of construction (concrete, brick, and tile), and style (Brick Expressionism). Indeed, Roosevelt is an exceedingly rare example of a style that was essentially unknown in the United States until after World War II. Features of the building that embody the distinctive traits of German and Dutch Brick Expressionist architecture include the school's polychromatic clinker brick and terra cotta tile cladding, corbelled brickwork laid in geometrical zig-zag and diaper patterns, the basket-weave balustrade, and the use of the building's overall form – particularly the tower and the gymnasium roof – to achieve an emotional, almost Gothic, effect. Theodore Roosevelt Middle School shows the influence of several specific buildings, including Fritz Höger's Reemtsma Cigarette Factory in Hamburg (1923), the Hoechts Administration Building in Frankfurt by Peter Behrens (1924), Wilhelm Marx Haus in Düsseldorf by Wilhelm Kreis (1922-24), and especially Haus Am Köllnischen Park in Berlin by Alfred Gottheiner (1933-33). It appears that Pflueger left no written account of why he chose the Brick Expressionist style for Roosevelt, especially since he had not traveled to Germany or The Netherlands, but it is likely that he became familiar with these buildings after seeing them published in architectural journals. As a child of German immigrants, it is not surprising that Pflueger may have been drawn to the contemporary architecture of his ancestral homeland, but it is curious that he never used the style again.



As a design of Timothy Pflueger (1892–1946), Theodore Roosevelt Middle School is significant as an important work of one of San Francisco's top architects. Pflueger is perhaps best known for his work in the Art Deco and Streamline Moderne styles, but he was well acquainted with other styles by virtue of his extensive library containing hundreds of monographs on architecture and dozens of American and European architectural journals. By the time his firm designed Roosevelt, Pflueger had transitioned from a more rigorously historicist and regionalist approach that had characterized much of his early work, toward

a more experimental vocabulary influenced by both contemporary European modernism and the indigenous architecture of pre-conquest Mexico and Central America. Roosevelt is the only building designed by Pflueger in the Brick Expressionist style. Indeed, it is the only building designed in the style in San Francisco and possibly the only major example of the style in the United States. Theodore Roosevelt Middle School is one of four public schools – all in San Francisco –designed by Pflueger. In addition to Roosevelt, they include Alamo Elementary School (1926), George Washington High School (1935-40), and Abraham Lincoln High School (1940). One of Pflueger's early works, Alamo Elementary was originally designed in the Spanish Colonial Revival style, but it was later stripped. George Washington and Abraham Lincoln High Schools, which are two of his later projects, are both designed in the Streamline Moderne style and more modernist in character than Roosevelt, which remains unique among Pflueger's *oeuvre*.

Theodore Roosevelt Middle School embodies high artistic values by virtue not only of Pflueger's design but also its three New Deal murals sponsored by the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP). Painted four years after the school was completed, the murals include two by Horatio Nelson Poole in the main lobby (*Land* and *Harvest*) and one above the entrance to the auditorium on the second floor level by George Nelson Walker (*Education*). Unlike many other New Deal-era art projects in San Francisco, most of which were frescoes, the murals at Roosevelt are oil painted on canvas, reflecting the fact that they were installed several years after the school was built and that they were not an integral part of the building's original design. *Land* and *Harvest* depict time-honored themes of family, labor, and landscape and *Education* celebrates the role of the public school in American life.

**Period of Significance**

The period of significance for Theodore Roosevelt Middle School is 1930-35, beginning with the completion of the school building and concluding with the completion of the last New Deal mural.



**Integrity**

The seven aspects of integrity used by the National Register of Historic Places, the California Register of Historical Resources, and Article 10 of the Planning Code are location, design, materials, workmanship, setting, feeling, and association. In summary, though Theodore Roosevelt Middle School has undergone several alterations, chiefly window replacement and various interior upgrades to the classrooms, corridors, etcetera, the building retains ample integrity to convey its associations with its original design and period of significance.

Location:

Theodore Roosevelt Middle School retains the aspect of location because it has not been moved.

Design:

Theodore Roosevelt Middle School retains the aspect of design because it has kept its original form and massing, fenestration pattern, and Brick Expressionist ornament. Within the interior, the school retains its original floorplan and features in the main entrance lobby, corridors and stairs, administrative office suite, auditorium, and gymnasium. In contrast, the library, cafeteria, and many of the classrooms have been refinished. However, these spaces were all utilitarian to begin with and contained no known significant features.

Materials:

Theodore Roosevelt Middle School retains the aspect of materials because it still has nearly all of its original building materials, including its polychrome clinker brick and tile exterior cladding, copper window accents, and cast stone and terra cotta trim. The only original materials that have been removed include the steel windows, which were replaced in-kind with compatible metal windows in recent years. In addition, aside from the main entrance, which retains its original wood doors, most of the original exterior doors have been replaced with non-historic metal counterparts. Within the interior, most of the original materials remain, particularly in the public and semi-public areas, including the main lobby, corridors and stairs, administrative office suite, and the majestic auditorium, which retains its original lath and plaster walls, Art Deco light fixtures, and Heywood-Wakefield seating.

Workmanship:
Theodore Roosevelt Middle School retains the aspect of workmanship because the building's exterior and much of its original interior craft-based materials, including – on the exterior – the corbelled brickwork, tiled spandrel panels, and copper and terra cotta trim, have been kept and maintained. Within the interior, the building retains its original tile and terrazzo finishes in the primary public areas, as well as the lath and plaster wall finishes and Art Deco light fixtures in the auditorium. Roosevelt also retains all three of its New Deal murals, which appear to be in good condition.

Setting
The one aspect of integrity that has changed the most at Theodore Roosevelt Middle School is its setting. After the building was completed in 1930, the site has been incrementally expanded to increase the size of the play yard, eventually resulting in the removal of eight adjoining dwellings along Palm Avenue. In addition, two portable "bungalows" were relocated from the northeast to the southeast corner of the property in 1959. However, the character of the play yard as a simple asphalt-covered area has not changed. Furthermore, none of the changes to the site and its surroundings have detrimentally affected views of the building from public rights-of-way along Arguello and Geary Boulevards and Palm Avenue.



Feeling:
Though Theodore Roosevelt Middle School has been periodically upgraded and renovated over the years, it retains the aspect of feeling because it continues to look largely as it did when it was completed almost 90 years ago. Its unique Brick Expressionist styling and intact New Deal murals provide a window into a lost world in which public works were considered to be one of the most important contributions that a government could make to its citizens. Aesthetically, both the building's architecture and its three murals evoke the feeling of the 1920s and 1930s, a time of transition from a more traditional Beaux-Arts sensibility toward a more modern and egalitarian outlook.

Association:
Theodore Roosevelt Middle School retains the aspect of association because it essentially looks the same as it did when it was built and, as a result, it continues to convey the architectural, artistic, and social values behind its design and construction that make it significant.

## Article 10 Requirements Section 1004 (b)

**Boundaries of the Landmark Site**

The site proposed for Landmark status encompasses the entirety of Assessor Parcel Number 1061/049, a 94,468-square-foot parcel bounded by Arguello Boulevard to the west, Palm Avenue to the east, a pair of residential properties to the north, and three commercial properties to the south.

**Character-defining Features**

Any property proposed for Landmark status under Article 10 of the Planning Code requires an inventory of all character-defining features. This is necessary so that the property owner, Planning staff, and the public know what features and materials (elements) should be preserved to protect the historical and architectural character of the proposed landmark. The character-defining exterior features of Theodore Roosevelt Middle School include all exterior elevations, including but not limited to: form, massing, structure, architectural ornament, and materials. In the case of Theodore Roosevelt Middle School, its specific character-defining features are:

- The school's overall height, massing, and footprint.
- The publicly visible portions of the school's four exterior façades, including their corbelled brick and tile spandrel cladding; and copper, cast stone, and terra cotta trim;
- The arched primary entrance at 490 Arguello Boulevard, including the oak doors and transom;
- The tower, including its corbelled brick exterior cladding and cast concrete screens;
- Terra cotta balustrades on the roof of the academic building;
- Grid-like fenestration pattern and trim (though not the window sashes themselves), including copper colonnettes, copper spandrel panels (gymnasium only) and terra cotta sills and lintels;
- The flat roofs of the academic building and the auditorium wing and the gambrel roof of the gymnasium wing.



At the time of designation, non-character-defining exterior features include all post-1935 alterations, including the following features:

- All window sashes;
- All exterior doors except for the original doors in the main entrance at 490 Arguello Boulevard;
- Metal signage to the left of the main entrance at 490 Arguello Boulevard;
- Infilled window openings on the east façade of the gymnasium wing;
- Elevator shaft at the intersection of the academic building and the gymnasium wing on the east side of the building;
- Concrete canopy/*porte cochères* on the east façade;
- Changes to first-floor level fenestration on the east façade of the academic building corresponding to the cafeteria;
- Changes to basement-level fenestration on the east façade of the auditorium wing;
- Enclosed fire exits on the north façade of the auditorium wing.

The character-defining spaces and features of the interior of Theodore Roosevelt Middle School include:

- Layout, design and materials of the following spaces: main entrance lobby, corridor near the administrative offices, auditorium, auditorium balcony, stairs, and gymnasium;

- All three surviving New Deal-era murals, including those in the main entrance lobby and second floor level.
- All surviving doors, hardware, and light fixtures in the main entrance lobby, corridor near the administrative offices, auditorium, and auditorium balcony.
- Tile wainscoting in corridors and stairs.

At the time of designation, non-character-defining interior features include all spaces affected by post-1935 alterations, including all bathrooms, all classrooms, and all utilitarian back-of-house spaces in the basement.

## PROPERTY INFORMATION

**Historic Name:** Theodore Roosevelt Middle School

**Popular Name:** Roosevelt Middle School

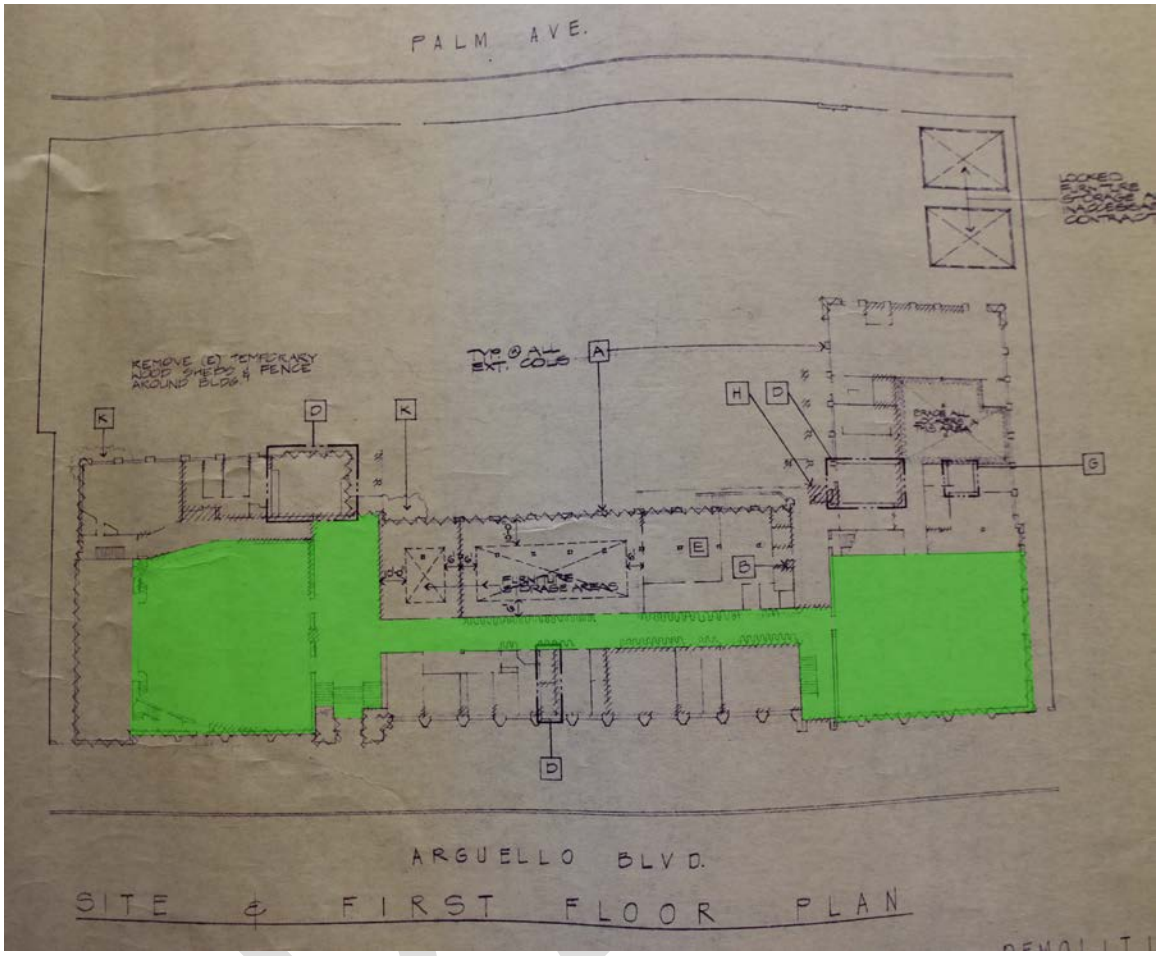
**Address:** 460 Arguello Boulevard

**Block and Lot:** 1061/049

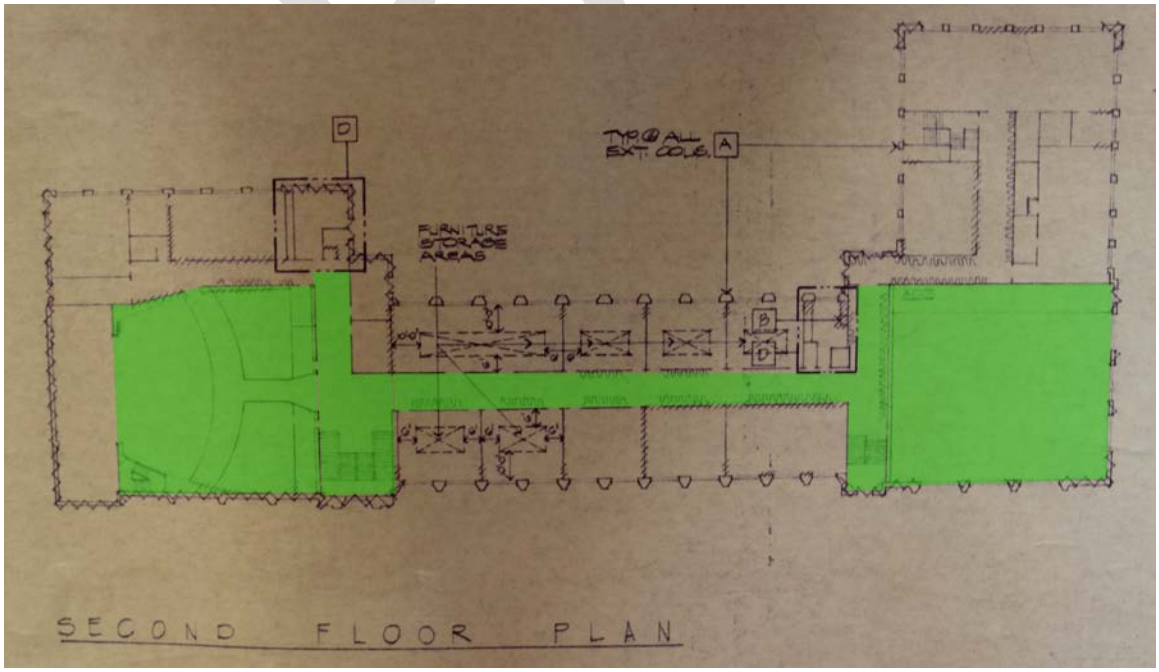
**Owner:** San Francisco Unified School District

**Current Use:** Public School

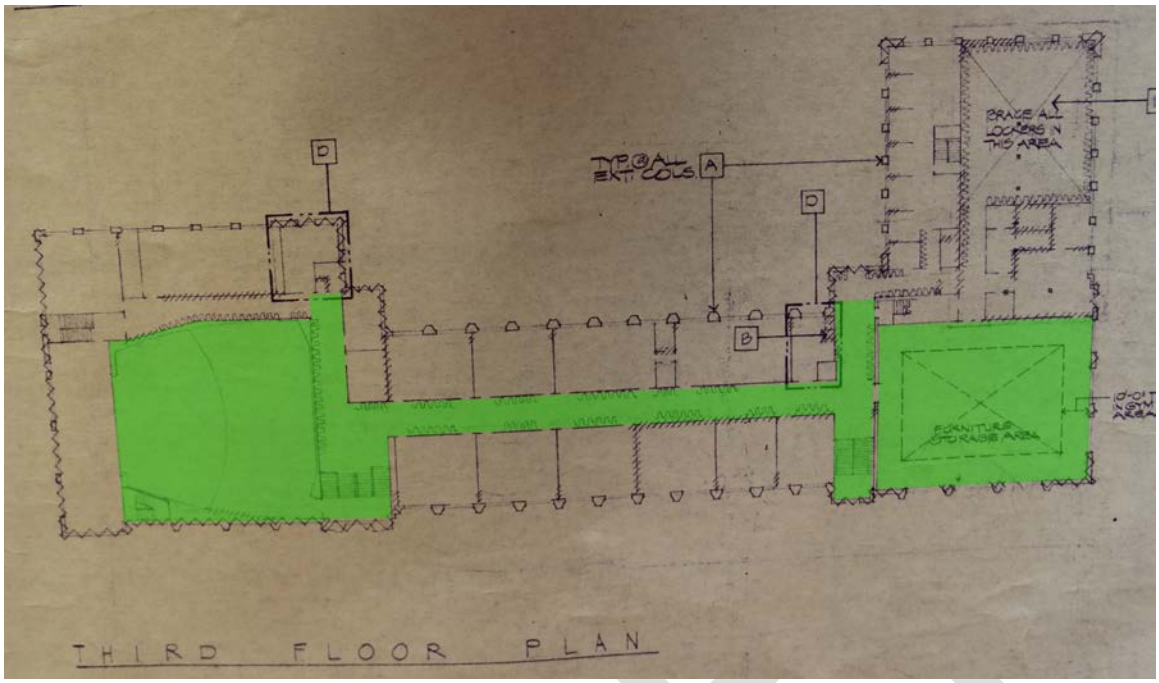
**Zoning:** P – Public; 40-X height and bulk




First floor interior character defining features are shaded.




Second floor interior character defining features are shaded.



Third floor interior character defining features are shaded.

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