# Oregon Historic Site Record

## LOCATION AND PROPERTY NAME

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|---|---|---|---|
| **address:** | 1320 NE Brazee St<br>Portland, Multnomah County | **historic name:** | Irvington School |
| | | **current/other names:** | Irvington Elementary School |
| **assoc addresses:** | | **block/lot/tax lot:** | 76 |
| **location descr:** | | **twnshp/rng/sect/qtr sect:** | 1N 1E 26 |

## PROPERTY CHARACTERISTICS

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **resource type:** | Building | **height (stories):** | 2.0 | **total elig resources:** | 1 | **total inelig resources:** | 1 |
| **elig evaluation:** | eligible/contributing | | | **NR Status:** | Listed in Historic District | | |
| **prim constr date:** | 1932 | **second date:** | 1951 | **date indiv listed:** | | | |

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|---|---|---|---|
| **primary orig use:** | School | **orig use comments:** | |
| **second orig use:** | | | |
| **primary style:** | Mediterranean Revival | **prim style comments:** | |
| **secondary style:** | | **sec style comments:** | |
| **primary siding:** | Standard Brick | **siding comments:** | |
| **secondary siding:** | Terra Cotta: Other/Undefined | | |
| **plan type:** | School (General) | **architect:** | Jones, George H |
| | | **builder:** | Quinn, Edwin L |

**comments/notes:**

HRI Rank II. Irvington Conservation District - Contributing Resource.

## GROUPINGS / ASSOCIATIONS

| Survey/Grouping Included In: | Type of Grouping | Date Listed | Date Compiled |
|---|---|---|---|
| Irvington Historic District | Listed Historic District | 10/22/2010 | 2008 |
| Portland Public Schools Historic Building Assessment | Survey & Inventory Project | | 2009 |

## SHPO INFORMATION FOR THIS PROPERTY

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|---|---|---|---|
| **NR date listed:** | N/A | **106 Project(s):** | None |
| **ILS survey date:** | 06/19/2009 | **Special Assess Project(s):** | None |
| **RLS survey date:** | 06/19/2009 | **Federal Tax Project(s):** | None |

## ARCHITECTURAL / PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

*(Includes expanded description of the building/property, setting, significant landscape features, outbuildings and alterations)*

Summary Description Situated in the Irvington neighborhood of northeast Portland, Irvington Elementary School is located at 1320 NE Brazee Street. The two story school building is situated at the northeast corner of the 3.79-acre parcel. The reinforced concrete structure, faced in sand colored brick, rests on a poured concrete foundation. Designed in the Mediterranean Revival style, the gable roof is clad in red pantiles. Terra cotta embellishments include decorative panels, label moldings, quoins at the entry, and arched openings at the entries. Fenestration consists of a mixture of metal frame and multi-light wood frame windows. Architectural Description Situated in the Irvington neighborhood of northeast Portland, Irvington Elementary School is located at 1320 NE Brazee Street. The neighborhood is comprised primarily of single family residences built between 1900-1950 (Sanborn Maps 1924-1928, 1908-1950 updated). The two story school building (259A) is situated at the northeast corner of the 3.79-acre parcel. A covered play shed (259B) and asphalt playground are located at the southeast corner of the campus. The west side of the campus features play equipment, an outdoor stage, and a community garden. The reinforced concrete structure, faced in sand colored brick rests on a poured concrete foundation. The school exhibits many of the design characteristics common to the Mediterranean Revival style The most prominent characteristic is the gable roof clad in red pantiles. This is supplemented by terra cotta embellishments including decorative panels, label moldings, balconets, and arched openings at the entries. The central tower as well as the gable ends of each of the wings is emphasized through the use of decorative brickwork called “diapering” or repeating bands of brick that form interlocking diamond-shapes. The primary entry to the building is marked by an arched opening in the central bay of the north elevation as well as a balconet. The Romanesque style main entrance is lined with receding unfluted jamb shafts with stylized capitals that then support perched gargoyle-like eagles. Even the arches that spring from the jamb shafts feature elaborate bands of decorative motifs. Just above the doorway is a balconet supported by consoles. An additional balconet lies above the central doorway and is situated in front of three arched windows that pierce the wall of the tower above the second floor. The pair of cross gable bays that project from the east and west ends of the elevation are further embellished with projecting bay windows elaborated by arched windows and topped by a false parapet. Fenestration on the main part of the building consists of a mixture of metal frame and multi-light wood frame windows. On the principal elevation, each bank of windows is separated by a two story column composed of brick that features a plain terra cotta base and capital. Aside from the main central entrance, the other main entrances feature notably less architectural detail but are nonetheless emphasized through the use of arched doorways usually flanked by engaged columns with unfluted shafts and floriated capitals topped by eagles. The interior plan consists of a U-shaped corridor arrangement with double loaded corridors that provide access to the classrooms, offices, and community spaces. The entry lobby features murals painted by WPA artist Edward Burns Quigley. Other original artwork includes panels decorated with wood inlay by Aimee Gorham and Valentine Weise located in the first and second floor corridors. A media center, in the central portion of the building, occupies the double height space that originally functioned as the auditorium. The gymnasium is located on the rear (south) elevation. The kitchen, cafeteria, oil boiler, and several classrooms are located in the basement. Flooring consists of a mixture of 6” x 6” tiles, newer 12” x 12” tiles, carpet, and hardwood. Tubular fluorescent light fixtures are suspended from the acoustic tile covered ceiling. Many spaces feature original woodwork in the moldings, window surrounds, and built-ins. The classrooms are primarily rectangular. Chalkboards and built-in cabinetry are located on the interior walls. Heat for the individual spaces is provided by radiators and univents. Alterations Built in 1932, the original school building was rectangular with a rear bay that contained the gymnasium. In 1951, a classroom was added to the south end of the west side of the school. In 1952 a similar classroom was added to the south side of the east side of the school. Later alterations include 1966 remodel of the interior that altered the auditorium to serve as the library, classroom, and east and west light courts. Later changes include window replacement in 1985, the addition of steel columns for seismic protection in 1991, and the installation of a ramp at the main entrance in 1994 (Irvington Elementary School Facility Profile). There have also been multiple changes to flooring, finishes, and light fixtures. Integrity Although there have been multiple changes to Irvington Elementary School, the building retains its integrity. The additions have maintained the symmetry of the building, utilized similar brick, and are modest in scale. The majority of classrooms retain their original configuration and many built-ins.

## HISTORY

*(Chronological, descriptive history of the property from its construction through at least the historic period - preferably to the present)*

Statement of Significance Constructed in 1932, Irvington Elementary School was the last of a dramatic building program begun by Portland Public Schools in the early 1900s. Gradually influenced by John Dewey's Progressive Education Movement, the program responded to changing city demographics and ideas concerning school safety, sanitation, and child centered instructional methods beginning in the first decade of the 1900s (Rippa, 1997: passim; Cremin 1961: 135-153; Cubberley 1915: 283-290). By 1905, it became increasingly clear that dramatic increases in school-age children outstripped the district's existing classroom capacity and existing schools could not effectively serve areas of the city where new residential development was occurring (Cubberley 1915: 283-285, 288-290). After several well-publicized school fires elsewhere in the United States, calls for a more fundamental change in the building stock of the district began as early as 1906 when Mayor Lane called for the construction of new "fireproof" school buildings (Oregonian, 10-31-1906). In 1910, various city neighborhood "advancement clubs" joined forces to discuss the unfit school buildings in their respective neighborhoods (Oregonian 07-31-1910). Soon after this meeting, on August 16, 1910, the Portland City Council enacted a requirement that all schools constructed after January 1, 1911 would have to be of fire proof construction (Powers and Corning 1937: 183). By 1914, in the first joint meeting between Portland city officials, Multnomah County Commissioners, and the school board, officials agreed to work with building code officials to encourage the use of fireproof construction and to implement fire safety measures in all existing and future schools (Oregonian, 03-31-1914). In 1908, Portland Public Schools created the Bureau of Properties in an effort to centralize the management of the district's various properties (Powers and Corning 1937: 182). Within this office, the District architect took on a more formalized role in the design and maintenance of school facilities. Two of the most influential district architects during this period included Floyd Naramore and George Jones who designed a majority of the schools between 1908 and 1932. These new school buildings were often constructed of brick and concrete and were one or two stories in height. To speed the construction of the new schools and to anticipate later growth in the neighborhood, these new buildings were often constructed in units (sometimes referred to as extensible schools) (Powers and Corning 1937: 182). The buildings also contained more differentiated and increasingly specialized instructional spaces such as libraries, gymnasiums, science rooms, music rooms, as well as assembly spaces (Powers and Corning 1937: 182). The architectural details of the new schools were largely encompassed by the Classical Revival, Colonial Revival, and Collegiate Gothic styles; architectural revivals that were viewed as inspirational and appropriate for educational settings (Betelle 1919: 28; Sibley 1923: 66; Patton 1967: 1-8). The architect of Irvington Elementary School, George Jones, was well versed in the design of school facilities through his role as Superintendent of Building for the district. The son of Thomas J. Jones, who had also served as district architect for many years, George Jones was born in Portland in 1887. After attending Oregon State College for two years, George Jones obtained a degree in architecture in 1913. Jones worked in New York for several years before serving in U.S. Army Combat Engineers during World War I. Following his return to Portland in 1920, Jones obtained his architecture license. He quickly assumed the position of school architect after his predecessor Floyd A. Naramore became district architect for the Seattle School District. In his role as district architect, George Jones designed about 25 new schools and supervised the construction of additions for many existing buildings. Following his tenure with Portland Public Schools, Jones went into private practice in Portland. With architect Harold Marsh, he established the firm of Jones & Marsh. Throughout his career Jones continued to specialize in school design, with projects in Pendleton, Klamath Falls and Oregon City. The firm of Jones & Marsh also designed additions to Roosevelt High School in Portland, buildings at Concordia Academy, and the Engineering wing and coliseum at Oregon State College in Corvallis (Ritz 2002 217). Named for the neighborhood that surrounded the 3.79-acre parcel, acquired by the district in 1905 for $8,000.00, the current Irvington facility replaced the original three story frame 1905 building which was located just south of the current building (Portland Chronology Binder). The decision to replace the existing building and demolish the Albina Homestead School, located nearby at 352 Beach Street, resulted in a legal action against the district. Community members were dismayed about the additional costs associated with the construction of the new school which cost $255,794 (PPS School Chronology Binder). The community also expressed concern over the expense required "to properly clothe their children for the long walks" to reach their newly assigned schools after the closure of the Albina Homestead School (Oregonian 09-04-1931). Despite the controversy, the district proceeded with construction of the only new school built in Portland during the Depression. In order to alleviate the extensive unemployment in the area, the board negotiated contracts and specifications that "required that all labor on the job and also in the shops of the various sub-contractors, be rotated in order to spread employment among the greatest possible number of workmen. Under this plan of operation a man was to be employed not more than 10 consecutive days" (Annual Report of the Portland Schools 1932-1933: 40). The new school was one of several in Portland that received assistance from the Works Progress Administration during the Depression (Oregonian 06-21-1936). Artist Edward Burns Quigley painted a series of murals depicting the "Settling of the West" for the entrance lobby to Irvington School. Three panels depict the arrival of the wagon trains, scenes of a newly established homestead, and the departure of the Umatilla from their village. Writing for the Oregon Cultural Heritage Commission in 2002, Phoeboe Oeilheim noted that the murals "demonstrate Quigley's aptitude for vividly portraying America's Wild West as his generation wanted to remember it: free, exciting, and far removed from the Great Depression and the recent World War I. In creamy tones, he painted pictures of a simpler, more optimistic era" (Oeilheim: 2002). The school also exhibits several wood inlay panels by noted Depression-era carvers Valentine Weise and Aimee Gorham (Oregonian 06-21-1936). PPS viewed the art as not only a means of conveying a variety of artistic mediums for children to experience, but to also provide a broader set of schools users from the community with a source of cultural pride (Oregonian 06-21-1936). Schools during this era were increasingly seen as having broader community use that extended beyond the elementary curriculum towards adult educational opportunities. Since the time of its construction in 1932, there have only been modest alterations to the school. The replacement of many of the windows resulted in the most significant change to the original appearance of the school. The most significant interior alteration occurred in 1966 when the auditorium was converted to serve as the library and with the enclosing of two interior courtyards in 1966. Despite the alterations, the school retains a high degree of integrity. The ceiling height, stair location, and corridor configuration are intact. The school retains much of the built-in cabinetry, flooring, moldings and other woodwork, and many original windows. In 2002 the Oregon Cultural Heritage Commission enlisted conservator Hiawatha Johnson and artist George Johanson to assist in the restoration of the Quigley murals. More than 200 community members provided donations to support the effort (Oeilheim 2002). Irvington Elementary School is a good example of the schools designed by George Jones during his tenure as PPS Superintendent of Building. The only school built by Portland Public Schools during the Depression, the school is an important example of community development during the period. In comparison with other Portland schools developed during the same period and constructed of similar styles, Irvington Elementary School retains a high degree of integrity and is therefore eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A as a rare example of Depression-Era school planning and the role the school played in the historical development of the Irvington neighborhood. The school is also eligible under Criterion C as an example of the work of George Jones and as one of the best expressions of the Mediterranean Revival style as applied to a school in Portland. It is also significant for its important collection of Depression-era murals by noted artist Edward Burns Quigley and for the wood inlay panels by artists Valentine Weise as well as Aimee Gorham.

## RESEARCH INFORMATION

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| Title Records | Census Records | Property Tax Records | ✔ Local Histories |
| ✔ Sanborn Maps | ✔ Biographical Sources | ✔ SHPO Files | Interviews |
| Obituaries | ✔ Newspapers | State Archives | ✔ Historic Photographs |
| City Directories | Building Permits | State Library | |

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| **Local Library:** | Multnomah County Library | **University Library:** | Portland State University Library |
| **Historical Society:** | Oregon Historical Society | **Other Respository:** | PPS Archives |

**Bibliography:**

Annual Reports. Portland Public Schools. 1932-1933. PPS Archives. Betelle, James O. "Architectural Styles as Applied to School Buildings." American School Board Journal. Vol. 58 (April 1919). Cremin, Lawrence. The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957. New York: A. Knopt, 1961. Cubberley, Ellwood Patterson. The Portland Survey: A Textbook on City School Administration Based on a Concrete Study. Yonkers-on-Hudson, NY: World Book Co., 1915. Oelheim, Phoebe. "Artist Edward Quigley's Romantic Vision of the West." Oregon Cultural Heritage Commission, 2002 http://www.ochcom.org/quigley/. Internet accessed July 22, 2009. Oregonian. "Change Favored in School Buildings." 3-31-1914. Oregonian. "Let's Make Our Schools into Community Centers." June 21, 1936. Oregonian. "Mayor Lane and the Schools." 10-31-1906. Oregonian. "School Buildings are Called Unfit." 7-31-1910. Oregonian " School Directors Face Legal Action." 09-04-1931. Portland Public Schools. Schools Chronology Binder. _____. "Annual Report of the Portland Schools 1932-1933. Powers, Alfred and Howard McKinley Corning, History of Education in Portland. [Portland]: Work Projects Administration, 1937. Rippa, Alexander. Education in a Free Society: An American History. New York: Longman, 1997. Ritz, Richard. E. Architects of Oregon. A Biographical Dictionary of Architects Deceased – 19th and 20th Centuries. Portland: Lair Hill Publishing, 2003. Sanborn Map Company 1924-1928, 1908-Dec. 1950 Sanborn Maps, Multnomah County Public Library, Portland, Oregon. Available at: https://catalog.multcolib.org/validate?url=http%3A%2F%2F0-sanborn.umi.com.catalog.multcolib.org%3A80%2F. Accessed June 16, 2009. Sibley, Ernest. "Why I Prefer the Colonial Style." School Board Journal: Vol. 66 (January 1923). Snyder, Eugene E. Portland Names and Neighborhoods. Their Historic Origins. Portland: Binforrd & Mort Publishing; 1st edition 1979.