



The City of Seattle

## Landmarks Preservation Board

700 Third Avenue · 4th floor · Seattle, Washington 98104 · (206) 684-0228

### REPORT ON DESIGNATION

LPB 18/02

Name and Address of Property: **Madison Middle School**  
**3429 45<sup>th</sup> Ave. SW**

Legal Description: Tracts 148 & 149, West Seattle 5 acre tracts No. 5 as recorded in Volume 2, page 79, records of King County, Washington. Together with vacated 46<sup>th</sup> Ave. SW and vacated alley between 45<sup>th</sup> Ave. SW and 46<sup>th</sup> Ave. SW in Tract 148 Ordinance 53977 except streets.

At the public meeting held on January 16, 2002, the City of Seattle's Landmarks Preservation Board voted to approve designation of Madison Middle School as a Seattle Landmark based upon satisfaction of the following standards for designation of SMC 25. 12.350:

*D. It embodies the distinctive visible characteristics of an architectural style, period, or of a method of construction*

### DESCRIPTION

#### Setting

Madison Middle School is located at 3429 45<sup>th</sup> Avenue Southwest in the Admiral neighborhood in northwest Seattle. The immediate neighborhood around the school is comprised of single-family residences, with brick and wood frame houses dating to the 1920s along 45<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and mixed housing styles and ages along other streets bordering the site. The school site is bound by Southwest Hinds Street and 45<sup>th</sup> Avenue Southwest and Southwest Spokane Street and 47<sup>th</sup> Avenue Southwest, all local streets serving single family residences. The grounds are three blocks west of California Avenue, the principal north-south street in west Seattle, and five blocks east of Schmitz Park.

Madison Middle School is the only school building with three-story brick 20<sup>th</sup> Century Gothic stylistic features and only building in the District with such details designed by the District's third

architect, Floyd Naramore. Madison provides the community significant views both from streets and distant hills.

The campus of Madison Middle School is a 7.92-acre site located on a hill sloping steeply down towards the west. The school building consists of the 1929 original three-story building, a 1931 addition that is compatible in style with the original structure, and a detached 1971 addition of gymnasium. The school occupies the east end of the site and faces 45<sup>th</sup> Avenue SW with the 1929 façade facing east. The 1931 addition is the north end of the building and has Gothic details. The 1971 building is not historic but does not detract from the significance of the main building.

The school site has been graded into two principal terraces, connected by two sets of concrete stairs with landings. The upper terrace is the location of the original building and a detached gymnasium built in 1971. The lower terrace is devoted to a large grass playfield. A third terrace, located several feet below the grade of the upper terrace, is located along the north edge of the grounds; it is paved with asphalt and is the location of several portable buildings.

The upper terrace steps down slightly along its west edge, before the descent to the lower field. The west wing of the building is located somewhat below the grade of the principal edge of the building. The main building is located roughly in the center of the upper terrace, with the main entrance facing east. The east edge of the site is planted in lawn with foundation shrubs and trees along the building edge; none of the plant material appears older than 1950s. Lawn planted along the south elevation has been covered with asphalt. The steeply sloped bank separating the upper and lower terraces has a variety of deciduous and evergreen trees and shrubs, none of which appear to date to the historic period.

There are currently three single portables and one double portable on the site.

### **Appearance - 1929 Original Building**

Madison School was constructed in 1929, and is the only extant middle school in the District detailed with collegiate Gothic type of architectural elements, expressed through buttresses with cast stone caps, pointed-arched entries and label molding on some windows.

Madison School is one of four three-story middle school buildings dating to the historic period in the Seattle School District. All four schools have a hollow square floor plan, in which the assembly room and cafeteria are located in the center of the building, surrounded by corridors, classrooms and gymnasiums. The symmetry of the plans is reflected in the buildings' elevations. In all four schools, gymnasiums, heating plants and specialized classrooms, such as wood shops, are located in one and one-and-half story wings at the rear of the buildings.

The main block of Madison School is a three-story unit, extending along a north-south axis. The building has a flat roof with a raised parapet and cast stone coping. The front and side elevations of this block have a molded cast stone cornice, and a cast stone water table below the first floor windows. The exterior is faced with a red pressed brick, laid in a running bond in a gray mortar. Windows are typically twelve-over-twelve double-hung wood sashes, usually organized in banks of

four, with cast stone sills, lintels and trim. All cast stone is buff colored. The building has an exposed concrete base, reinforced concrete floors and stairways, and hollow tile partitions.

The main elevation (east) has a three-part organization; the center section projects slightly forward of the main elevation plane. An entry bay centered within is projects further forward, with corner buttress trimmed in terra cotta. The first floor of the entry bay has a one-story flat-roofed porch with a stepped false front and appointed-arch portal with ornamental label molding. The porch exterior is faced with random ashlar cast stone panels. The portal archivolts have a variety of molded profiles and include rosettes in one archivolt course. The portal leads to a pair of glazed and paneled doors, flanked by single glazed and paneled doors on each side; composition panels in the lintel above the doors have foliated grapes and grade leaf motifs. A pointed-arch multi-light transom is located above the doors. An original wrought-iron light fixture is centered within the portal. The portal is flanked by two one-story relief buttresses with stepped and pointed caps. The windows on the second and third floors above the portal are divided by cast stone mullions with molded panels, and cast stone pieces up to the parapet coping; there is a square cast stone panel with a shield in the center of the parapet.

The entry bay is flanked by a bank of three double-hung windows on each side. This center section is flanked by three bays are divided by projecting buttresses with cast stone caps. The north end of the elevation terminates in a pavilion, added by Naramore in 1931; its east elevation has no openings.

### **1931 Addition/Alteration**

The 1931 pavilion on the north end has a projecting central bay with a stepped cornice above the second floor windows and brick buttresses. The first floor of the bay has a cast stone pointed-arch archivolt portal with recesses paneled and glazed doors with a pointed arch transom. The portal is reached by a brick-enclosed stair. The second floor of the bay has a pair of pointed arched double-hung windows with cast stone tympanums and label molding. A cast stone panel with a shield is centered above the windows. The central bay is flanked by a bank of four double-hung windows on each side on each floor. The pavilion added six additional classrooms to the building.

The south elevation of the main block has a central projecting bay identical to the north elevation. There are no other windows on the elevation.

The rear (west) elevation of the main block has a series of paired, single and banks of double-hung windows lighting interior classrooms. The stairwells, located at the end and quarter points of the elevation, have transom double-hung windows on the third floor, and simple-pointed arched portals with pairs of glazed and paneled doors on the first floor.

The two-story auditorium/lunchroom wing, projecting from the center of the rear of the building, has a parapeted roof with cast stone coping. It has elevated daylighting, consisting of pairs of double-hung windows on the side and rear elevations in the second story. The wing is flanked by one-story locker rooms have a door located in each corner and small double-hung windows; the door farthest from the main block on each room has a pointed arch transom and pointed brick arch.

The locker rooms lead to one-and-one-half story gymnasiums to the west, which flank the north and south edges of the lunchroom and kitchen. The exterior side elevation of each gymnasium has a series of six-pointed arched double-hung window with cast stone trim, each separated by brick buttresses with cast stone capitals.

The west wing terminating the rear of the building is two stories tall and has a cast stone coping. The west elevation is detailed with projecting brick pilasters, dividing bays with two double-hung windows on each floor; a shallow pointed-arch one brick deep spans each bay above the second floor windows. The side elevations each have a pair of glazed and paneled doors with pointed-arched transoms.

The building's interior has been altered with the addition of acoustic tile ceilings and florescent lights. However, the main entry hall, with its pink and black terrazzo floor and arched and plaster ceiling is intact. Hallways beyond the entry hall have original light fixtures, original door trim with varnish, and classroom signs. The auditorium retains the original plastered stage with plaster cartouches and exposed trusses.

### **1971 Addition**

The 1971 addition, designed by the Seattle architectural firm of Grant, Copeland, Chervenak and Associates, is a detached gymnasium located south of the main building. It is a two-story structure, with a one-story wing. The concrete block structure had flat roof, brick veneer, and a few windows located near the cornice on the north and south elevations.

### **Current Condition**

#### *Exterior of 1929 and 1931 structures*

The 1929 original building's exterior is virtually unaltered since the 1931 addition. The only changes have involved replacing original glass panes with opaque glass and fiber glass panes on some windows, primarily in the gymnasiums. Panels in some doors have been altered or replaced. The building is in general good condition. In 1994, the building received seismic upgrade, exterior restoration and re-roofing.

#### Physical Description of the 1929 and 1931 Interior Structures

Madison facility is comprised of two principal structures: the main building built in 1929 and 1931, and the gymnasium built in 1971. The original 1929 building is primarily a concrete frame and shear wall building.

Overall, the interior of the buildings is in good condition, given the building's age and use, with the exception of a problem with falling ceiling tiles. The main entrance hall is well maintained and painted. The original architectural details on the ceiling are still intact. The main entrance ceilings and first and third floor hallways have missing tiles. The interior of the whole building was painted in late 1980s. The electrical system was replaced in early 1990s. Some floors are apparently patched. Doors are operable. Skylights are generally in good shape. Many classrooms are about 600 square feet. There is good potential for enlarging some classrooms because of the concrete frame

structure. Classroom walls are mainly non-load bearing clay tile. Only the western portion of the building, gymnasium and auditorium area is wheelchair accessible. No access for the disabled has been provided.

The 1931 structure is a small three-story classroom addition at the north end of the classroom block. It is very similar to the major original structure. One exception is that the floor framing is wood.

The following is a list of changes made to the Madison building:

1931	A new attached wing with four classrooms, a study hall and a conference room
1944	Alterations in basement for game room
1958	Incinerator installation
1960	Art room alteration and remodeling
1962	Electrical upgrades
1964	398 new lockers added
1965	Earthquake damage repair
1966	Ventilation alterations
1971	A new detached gymnasium, covered play court and chimney extension
1973	New cabinets for library
1982	Roof Replacement
1984	Skylights, Fire Alarm, Patch Roof, etc.
1985	Corridors & Stairways, Windows
1986	Alarm & HVAC Controls, Ductwork, etc.
1986	Automate Boiler #1, Two New Safety Valves, Remove
1987	Fire Alarm System, Heat and Smoke Detector
1989	Corridor Locker Replacement
1991	Fuel Oil Tank Work
1990	A new domestic hot water heater
1990	Corridor upgrade & elec. Modifications, & intercom
1994	Seismic, Exterior Restoration and Reroofing
1999	Replace Gym Athletic Scoreboards
2001	Wide Area Network

## **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

In 1927, the Seattle School District purchased a large 7.92 tract of land in West Seattle for building James Madison Middle School. Due to the increasing population of wartime and lack of facilities, the District developed the 1927 building program. It called for additions to three high schools, additions to seven elementary schools, one new junior high school, and two new elementary schools, and a special school. In 1927, the School Board passed a 2.4-million bond that funded the design and construction of the new Madison School. Madison School is the only extant Seattle school building in the Collegiate Gothic style.

In 1919, the Seattle School Board brought Floyd Naramore from Portland, Oregon to become the new school architect (Edgar Blair had resigned from the District in 1918). Naramore would serve until 1932, when he went into private practice forming the architectural partnership now known as NBBJ. Naramore had considerable design experience for school buildings and he oversaw the construction of the largest school building of the 1927 program.

When World War I ended, Seattle's wartime industries closed and somewhat of a recession set in. Population growth between 1920 and 1930 slowed considerably and the enrollment over this ten-year period increased less than 8 percent. In spite of the downturn, the construction of new schools was well funded due to the passage of the 1927 bond issue. The emphasis on the types of schools shifted to providing new secondary schools and construction of additions to existing school buildings.

### Historic Context

During the 1920s enrollment in the Seattle School District increased by approximately 1,000 students every year. Superintendent Cole and the Board of Directors, in their effort to increase efficiency, directed District Secretary Ruben Jones to conduct a building survey outlining the present situation and including recommendations for the future. This survey would become the foundation for any future building program.

The building survey contained a detailed review of each school building and school property within the District. It included the location of each building or property, its relationship to other schools, the distance between schools, the territory served, census figures, attendance, size, character and adaptability of the building and future possibilities. After conducting a comprehensive building survey, Jones recommended that the maximum distance that a child would have to travel in going to school should not exceed one and a half miles.

Based on Jones' recommendation, Cole and the Board outlined a new building program and submitted a bond issue of \$2,250,000 to finance it at the March 1925 city-wide general election. In March Seattle voters decisively endorsed the bond issue.

The 1925 building program was a success. It provided a capacity for 6,270 students. Despite the increased capacity, district facilities did not keep pace with increasing attendance. Over 5,000 students were housed in temporary and portable buildings. This prompted Superintendent Cole and the Board to pursue another two-year building program in 1927. The largest and most significant buildings of the 1925 building program were the Hamilton and Marshall Intermediate Schools. Completed in 1927, Hamilton and Marshall were the first junior high schools built in Seattle.

The schools built in the 1920's signaled a new approach to school design directed by Floyd Naramore. Among the changes were the inclusion of combination assembly-lunchrooms in each school which served to extend the school's use into the community by providing public meeting space; inclusion of a covered open air playcourt – Naramore was responsible for adding these to most earlier school buildings as well as designing them to new ones; inclusion of additional specialized staff rooms and offices such as nurse's stations; linear extensions of buildings with long corridors flanked by classrooms. Underlying all of this was the Board's determination to build fewer and larger buildings. All of the new, flat-roofed, reinforced concrete and brick schools were utilitarian structures, usually with bilaterally symmetric massing and applied terra-cotta or cast stone detailing. Madison School represents one of Naramore's earliest attempts at Gothic revival architecture.

The 1927 building program was developed in the same way as the 1925 program. A building survey was prepared by Cole and Jones using the same survey method. Based on the survey findings, a building program was outlined calling for two new elementary schools, one junior high school and one special school and additions to three high schools and seven elementary schools. In March 1927 the Board submitted a bond issue of \$2,400,000 for the building program to district voters. The issue was passed.

Based on the building needs, population, and attendance trends and the relationship of school to homes and other schools, a need for a new junior high school was identified at West Seattle. That was James Madison Junior High School. Madison was the largest building of the 1927 program. It represents one of the Naramore's earliest attempts at gothic revival architecture.

What is unique to Madison is that it is the only school building with Gothic characteristics in the District. The Gothic Revival was characterized by strong associational values of religion and nature. It is a revival style based on English and French precedents from the late 12th-15th centuries. Collegiate Gothic is a term used to describe school buildings similar in style to those found at Princeton University, the University of Chicago or Duke University. The pointed arch is the most distinguished characteristic of the Gothic Revival. Other features include window tracery, leaded glass, parapets and pinnacles.

Madison School, by its style and size, is a major presence in the West Seattle community. The most significant architectural components of the school are the entire eastern block of the original 1929 building and its primary façade. The entry bays at the eastern end of the north and south elevations are also of historic importance. Madison's character-defining features include all Gothic cast-stone detailing, buttresses, pointed arches and label molding. Madison is also significant for its spatially prominent feature on its large, dramatically terraced, sloping site when viewed from the west and north.

In 1928, when the original Madison building was designed, it was for a capacity of 1,300 students. The 1931 addition by Naramore increased capacity to 1,750 students. It included four classrooms, a study hall, and a conference room. Subsequently, with a curricular change, the study hall was divided into two classrooms and a reading room. The first year enrollment was 749 for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders. The students were from Alki, Gatewood, Fauntleroy, Jefferson and Lafayette. The next year the 9<sup>th</sup> graders were added, bringing enrollment up to 1,212. In 1932, students from Hughes and Youngstown were added to Madison. By 1961, students graduating from Schmitz Park, Fairmount Park, Genesee Hill and Cooper also came to Madison and enrollment was at 1,650. However, by 1973, Cooper students moved to Boren Middle School and enrollment dropped to about 1,400. In the 1980s, Madison held just 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Today, Madison has approximately 900 students enrolled at grades 6 through 8, including those in special education and bilingual programs.

Madison has a very highly involved and active parent's group. In 1993, during the assessment of the proposed Capital Improvement Program (CIP II), the District contracted with CRSS/TRA consultants for the assessment of all schools including Madison Middle School in order to determine the future of District-owned buildings. This process included several large well-attended community

meetings. From this study, 14 schools were identified as potentially having historical value. In 1994, the consultants continued to study those 14 schools that had potential historic merit, including Madison, in workshops specific to each school. The meeting held for Madison included over 30 participants that counted in their membership principals, District central staff, Board members, historic preservation groups, and community organizations. Both the 1929 and the 1931 structures are recognized and well integrated into the community and were considered to have historical value. The historic renovation of Madison School is strongly supported by the community. In spring of 2000, during the process of planning for 2001 capital levy, the District held a community meeting at Madison School that was well attended by parents, District staff, Board members, and community organizations. About 40 people provided very valuable input at the meeting. They strongly supported the proposal of historic renovation of Madison School.

A neighborhood school is a symbol of community identity and cohesion. In the neighborhood surrounding Madison School, the school is considered the center of the community. The Seattle School District has a long history of encouraging use of the school buildings by the general public for community related events. In a brief search of the Seattle School Board's minutes from the 1930's through the 1950's, several requests to the Board to use school buildings are made. The uses vary from church and youth group services, civil defense and military uses, community and social groups and continuing education. Even though specific schools are not listed in the archival records as to where these activities took place, it represents a general philosophy that community use took place historically in the schools. According to school staff, Madison School students are highly involved with the school. There is a variety of before and after school programs at Madison. Community programs or Parks Department programs are held on a regular basis at the school.

### Architect Floyd Naramore

Floyd Naramore was born in Illinois in 1879. He graduated from M.I.T. in 1907 with a degree of architecture. He had been designing schools since 1912 when the Seattle School Board brought him from Portland, Oregon in 1919. He was to serve as Seattle's school architect until 1932 when he went into private practice, later designing additions to many of the schools he designed as architect for the district.

When Floyd Naramore became the district's third architect in 1919, building styles, along with building plans and organizations, changed from American Renaissance to mainly Twentieth Century Georgian. All but a few schools Naramore designed over the next twelve years were given Georgian exteriors with red brick walls and light terra cotta or cast stone detailing, a style adopted for many school buildings throughout the country in the 1920s.

During his tenure, Naramore designed twelve elementary school buildings, four junior high schools, and three high schools. The elementary schools Naramore designed were Highland Park, John Hay, Columbia, Dunlap, Montlake, Bryant, E.C. Hughes, Magnolia, Whittier, Daniel Bagley, Laurelhurst, and Loyal Heights. The junior high schools Naramore designed included Alexander Hamilton, John Marshall, James Madison, and James Monroe. Three high schools are Roosevelt, Grover Cleveland, and James Garfield.



Before Naramore designed Madison School, he had designed eight elementary schools which seven of them were twentieth century version of Georgian buildings, two Georgian styled junior high schools, and three high schools which two of them were in Georgian. Towards the end of his tenure, Naramore decided to add buttresses and Gothic exterior details to the 1928 Whittier Elementary School and 1929 Madison Junior High School. Madison was the only junior high school with Gothic stylistic features in Seattle School District.

*The features of the Landmark to be preserved, include:*

**The exterior of the building, the main entrance hall and lobby with coved ceiling and cast plaster ornament, and the site, excluding the 1971 gymnasium building and the portables.**

Issued: January 23, 2002

Karen Gordon  
City Historic Preservation Officer

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