

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Waltersville School

Other names/site number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of related multiple property listing:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

## 2. Location

Street & number: 167 Steuben Street

City or town: Bridgeport State: CT County: Fairfield

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this \_\_\_ nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ **national**      \_\_\_ **statewide**      \_\_\_ **local**

Applicable National Register Criteria:

\_\_\_ **A**      \_\_\_ **B**      \_\_\_ **C**      \_\_\_ **D**

|   |                                 |
|---|---------------------------------|
| <p>_____</p> <p><b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p> | <p>_____</p> <p><b>Date</b></p> |
|---|---------------------------------|

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>  |  |
| <p>_____</p> <p><b>Signature of commenting official:</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>Title :</b></p> | <p>_____</p> <p><b>Date</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p> |

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 5. Classification

##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

##### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

| Contributing      | Noncontributing   |            |
|-------------------|-------------------|------------|
| <u>1</u>          | <u>0</u>          | buildings  |
| <u>          </u> | <u>          </u> | sites      |
| <u>          </u> | <u>          </u> | structures |
| <u>          </u> | <u>          </u> | objects    |
| <u>1</u>          | <u>0</u>          | Total      |

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register           

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION/ school

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/not in use

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS/Colonial Revival  
LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS/Renaissance Revival

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick, concrete, cast stone, stone

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

### Summary Paragraph

The Waltersville School is a 114,314 square foot, two-story, brick, early twentieth-century public school complex located in the City of Bridgeport, Fairfield County, Connecticut (Photograph 1). It is of load-bearing masonry construction and it consists of two blocks, which were constructed at different times (Photo 1). The two buildings have main entrances on different streets and are situated back to back on the lot. They are connected by a hallway on their east ends. The north block is an elementary school in the Renaissance Revival style with a hipped roof, built between 1902 and 1905. The building faces north onto Hamilton Street (Photograph 2). It is U-shaped, with additions to the rectangular main block on the east and west ends of its south elevation. The south block, built in 1918 as a junior high school, is a rectangular Colonial Revival-style building with a flat roof behind a parapet. It faces south onto Steuben Street (Photographs 3-5). The building retains its original massing, plan and materials, but there is some damage to the interior due to its vacancy for several years.



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## Narrative Description

### Setting

The building sits at the southeast corner of a 1.57-acre level lot bounded by Hamilton Street to the north, Gilmore Street to the east, Steuben Street to the south and a row of early twentieth-century commercial buildings on Pembroke Street to the west. The school occupies the majority of the lot and it is the largest building in the neighborhood. There is an asphalt paved parking lot to the north and west of this block. The entire lot is surrounded by a chain link fence. The school served a neighborhood known as The East Side, which is a peninsula bounded by the Pequonnock River to the west, Yellow Mill Channel to the east and Bridgeport Harbor to the south (Figure 2). The south end of this peninsula, approximately one-half mile from the school, was once filled with factories. The building is approximately one-quarter mile south of the former New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad tracks that once provided transport for the many factories north of the tracks. The school is surrounded by a neighborhood of residences, churches and commercial buildings. Most residences are vernacular two-and-one-half-story wood-frame homes, which were built in the late twentieth century to replace the late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century New England Worker Houses<sup>1</sup> that once lined these streets.

### Exterior

The elementary school wing of the Waltersville School is a two-story rectangular building with a U-shaped plan. It has a raised basement and hip roof with dormers and a later junior high school addition to its south. Overall materials are red brick with stone and cast stone trim. The façade (north elevation) of the elementary school building is 155 feet long facing Hamilton Street. The entrance is recessed within a projecting arch with a fluted keystone. A flight of two concrete stairs leads to a vestibule with a pair of steel doors that are not original to the building. The school rests on a brick foundation set one-half story above grade. The exterior of the raised basement level is finished with brick laid in common bond below a rusticated cast stone water table which continues on all elevations of this wing. The basement windows are arranged symmetrically and are bricked-in except for two one-over-one double hung replacement units on each side of the main entrance. There are one-over-one-over-one replacement windows with

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<sup>1</sup> The domestic architectural form that was once most represented in the neighborhood is a vernacular form that will be called the New England Worker House for the purposes of this nomination. These homes are usually two- and one-half story, wood frame buildings with gable roofs and entrances on the gable end. Some have cornice returns or triangular pediments. Most of them have full-width, one-story front porches with shed roofs. A few examples have side gable entrances and some of the porches are enclosed. A variant of this form, the Cross Gable New England Worker House, has a side-gabled wing attached at right angles to the basic house. This basic form and its variants was the most popular type of single and sometime multi-family house in New England in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Similar homes were built in large numbers in urban and rural areas throughout the region and beyond.

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segmental arched openings and cast stone sills on the first and second stories. The overhanging cornice has a copper gutter supported by copper dentils. A two-window dormer with a hipped roof is in the center of the roof at the cornice and it is flanked by a similar seven window dormer on each side. Dormer windows have been covered (Photograph 2).

An arched entrance with a flight of three concrete stairs leading to a vestibule with replacement steel doors and a filled-in transom is centered on this elevation. A flat canopy supported by round iron posts on a concrete knee wall protects a basement entrance and runs south along the water table from the entry porch to the north elevation of the connecting section. Two window dormers with hipped roofs are placed at the cornice to the north and south of the center bay. Dormer windows are covered or broken (Photograph 1). The west elevation is similar to the east elevation, except that there are three, dormers with paired windows and two single window dormers with covered windows at the cornice line (Photograph 3).

The north elevation of this block faces the junior high school in an interior courtyard. Two story wings that are one classroom deep are attached to the east and west ends of the building. They continue the architectural elements of the other elevations and are completely integrated into the building. Both wings and the center of the main block have hipped roofs. There is a seven window dormer on the south side of the west wing, two single window dormers on its east side, a three window dormer in the center section, a single window dormer on the west side of the east wing and a brick chimney on the roof of the east wing (Photograph 4). A two-story brick hyphen connects the elementary school to the junior high school, which was added to the south of the elementary school in 1917 (Photo 5).

The junior high school faces south and stretches 232 feet along Steuben Street. It has a symmetrical plan inspired by Georgian and Palladian architecture, with a central pavilion and flanking wings which end in pavilions, similar to the central element of the façade. This block continues the raised basement with bands of one-over-one double-hung replacement windows below a cast stone watertable and they are supported by a rusticated stone base. A corbeled table runs along the east, south and a west elevation at the cornice and the parapet has a glazed tile cap. These elements continue on the east and west elevations. East and west pavilions have flat decorative brick boxes with cast stone squares at their corners and a single filled-in window opening with a cast stone sill in the center (Photograph 6). The main entrance consists of a pair of replacement steel doors in the central pavilion within a two-story arched entry porch. The doors are reached by a flight of five cast stone stairs between brick cheek walls with a cast stone cap. Tall, narrow one-over-one replacement windows with fixed transoms and cast stone sills flank the entrance arch at the first story level. Smaller one-over-one replacement windows with cast stone stills in segmental arched openings with cast stone keystones, cast stone plinths and cast stone infill in the arch flank the entrance opening at the second story level. The entrance is divided between a lower section covered in glazed yellow brick with two replacement steel doors and an upper section covered in stucco with a pair of one-over-one replacement windows at the second-floor level (Photograph 7).

The east side elevation of the junior high school, to the south of the hyphen joining it to the east elevation of the elementary school, has a projecting center pavilion that includes a center

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entrance with replacement steel doors recessed within a rectangular opening. It is reached by a flight of six stone stairs originally flanked by brick cheek walls with stone caps, but the north cheek wall has been removed. The cheek walls are themselves flanked by bricked-in window openings with concrete sills. These openings are surmounted by a cast stone water table that continues on all elevations. The entryway is surmounted by a pair of one-over-one double-hung replacement windows with stone sills with single narrow one-over-one double-hung replacement windows with stone sills surmounted by a square panel containing a lighting fixture and, on the south window, a bell. A four-light window in an arched opening is centered on the second story and there are smaller one-over-one double-hung replacement windows in arched openings to its north and south a corbelled brick cornice above these windows runs the width of this elevation and continues on all elevations of the junior high school. It is surmounted by a brick parapet with ceramic coping. Which also continues on all elevations. There is a row of five, one-over-one double-hung replacement windows with cast stone sills and iron bars to the north and south of the entry pavilion on the lower level. Rows of five one-over-one double-hung replacement windows with cast stone sills and blank upper panels are to the north and south of the center pavilion on the first and second floors (Photograph 8). The west side elevation of the junior high school also has a center pavilion with flanking wings. Its entrance is a replacement steel door in a rectangular opening reached by a flight of four cast stone stairs. It has a double one-over-one replacement window with a cast stone sill above the entrance. This window is flanked by tall, narrow one-over-one replacement windows with fixed transoms and cast stone sills. An arched replacement window with a fixed upper section and a two-part sliding lower section with a cast stone sill is centered in a segmental arched opening with a cast stone keystone and cast stone plinths at the second story level. It is flanked by smaller one-over-one replacement windows with cast stone stills in segmental arched openings with cast stone keystones, cast stone plinths and cast stone infill (Photographs 9). The north elevation has no ornament and there are bands of windows similar to those on its other elevations at the second story level. The one-story auditorium and gymnasium addition extends from the north elevation into the space between the schools. It has arched windows above the cast stone water table at the first story level and one-over-one replacement windows at the basement level on its north elevation (Photographs 6 and 10).

### Interior

The elementary school is currently entered through the east entrance, where original wood stairs with decorative wood banisters and newel posts survive (Photograph 11). The basement has a double-loaded east-west corridor in its center with stairways to the first and second floors at its east and west ends. There is a storage room and a boiler room under the east addition, with two storage rooms under the west addition storage rooms under the west addition. A corridor linking the elementary school with the junior high school runs north south between the boiler room and the storage room. The north side of the corridor is lined with four storage room and three smaller rooms. All of these storage rooms are former classrooms. The first floor is arranged around a central corridor with stairs to the basement, first floor, second floor and attic at its east and west ends.. An entry vestibule in the center of its north side with a classroom and administrative offices to its east and two classrooms to its west. There is a classroom on the south side of the corridor in the southwest corner of the building and a corridor linking the

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elementary school to the junior high school to the west of this classroom. A bathroom and an office are on the west side of this corridor. There are two classroom on the south side of the main corridor on the southwest corner of the building and they are separated from the eastern rooms by a row of windows on the south side of the corridor. Classrooms retain their original size, as well as beadboard wainscoting, wood window casings, pressed metal ceilings and most blackboards. The corridor has been vandalized but it retains its original width, most of its trim and original window openings. Most doors have been removed, but those that remain are replacements. Some classrooms have recently installed cabinetry (Photographs 11-15). The second floor is identical to that of the first floor. The attic also has a central corridor with stairs to all levels at its east and west ends. There are large open rooms above each of the south additions, with wood floors, exposed brick walls, wooden beams, dormers and rafters. There are two similar rooms on the north side of the corridor (Photographs 17-19).

The interior of the junior high school is currently entered through the east entrance (Photograph 20). The interior is arranged around double-loaded corridors on three floors with a gymnasium in the basement. All entrances have rubber tile floors, installed c.1985, glazed brick lower walls with plaster above and drop ceilings. The basement has a stairway to the all floors in the center of the north side of the corridor, with two classrooms and an office to its west. There is a classroom, an office and a library to the east of the stairway. The north side of the corridor has arched niches on the gymnasium wall. The gymnasium, one classroom and a boiler room are on the north side of the corridor. A storage room is on the east side of a north-south corridor to the east of the gymnasium that connects the junior high school with the elementary school. The gymnasium has a concrete floor, plaster walls with arched niches on the south wall and a band of windows on its north wall. It has its original pressed metal ceiling. There are two rows of round steel columns supporting encased beams and a low stage at the east end of the room. Basketball backboards are hung from the ceiling in four locations (Photographs 21 and 22). The first floor corridor has six classrooms on its south side and the auditorium on its north side. The cafetorium with one classroom to its east and two classrooms to its west on the north side of the corridor. It has a 12"x12" linoleum tile floor, plaster walls with arched niches on the south side and arched window openings on the north side. It retains its original pressed metal ceiling and stage. The stage has entrances with staircases from the corridor on its north and south sides. There is a kitchen on the west end of the room (Photographs 23 and 24). The second floor has a staircase to the first floor in the center of the south side of a double-loaded corridor. There are three classrooms and a girls' bathroom to the east of the stairs with three classrooms and a boys' bathroom to the west. There are seven classrooms on the north side of this corridor and another to the east of a north-south corridor that connects the junior high school with the elementary school. There are stairways at the east and west ends of the main corridor that serve all floors. (Photograph 25). All classrooms have 12x12 linoleum tile floors, plaster walls and original pressed metal ceilings. They are lit by hanging fluorescent fixtures (Photographs 26 and 27).

### Integrity

Waltersville School retains its integrity in location, design, materials, workmanship, setting and association and feeling. It is in its original location and setting in a neighborhood of modest homes. It also retains its original plan, workmanship, and design as completed by 1917. Its

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exterior is unchanged since 1917, except for replacement windows and doors, and historic materials are intact. The interior of the elementary school has suffered from vandalism since its closing in June 2008, but it retains a portion of the historic materials that have not deteriorated. Original plaster walls and stamped metal ceilings, as well as its wood moldings, wood paneling and blackboards remain. The stairways, newel posts, balusters and banisters remain intact. The corridors retain their original widths, wood paneling and finishes, despite damage by vandals and moisture. Classrooms have not been divided and have sustained less damage than the corridors. They have also retained nearly all their original architectural elements and finishes. The interior of the junior high school is less damaged than that of its neighbor. Stairways and corridors, glazed brick and plaster walls remain intact. Classrooms in this building have also been left in their original configurations. The auditorium retains its open space and stage, but windows on its north side have been removed. The open space and small stage of the gymnasium have also survived, but moisture and vandalism have taken their toll on ceiling, floor, and finishes. The school is a large presence in the neighborhood, and it retains the feeling and association of its past use as a focal point of the community. Many current residents of the area or their older family members fondly remember attending school in this building.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Education

Social History

Architecture

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1902 - 1940

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1902 – Construction of first phase of current elementary school building

1917 – Construction of junior high school

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Ashiem, Leonard – Architect, Junior High School

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Waltersville School is locally significant under Criterion A in the categories of Education and Social History. The school was built during the rapid expansion of the Bridgeport, Connecticut school system during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Because of a rapid increase in the school-aged population linked to immigration and the resultant overcrowding of schools, Waltersville needed to be expanded within 15 years of its initial construction. While the fireproofed building incorporated many Progressive Era architectural arrangements including an auditorium and gymnasium, the new learning facilities were also tailored to providing not only a better learning environment, but also space for differentiated paths of learning including domestic science and vocational training. The children that attended Waltersville were largely foreign-born and their parents worked in one of the nearby nationally ranked factories located in Bridgeport's East Side.

The school is locally significant under Criterion C in the category of Architecture. Waltersville School is composed of two connected blocks that are examples of two periods of school construction based on the principles of the Progressive Movement in education. The older school building incorporates the basic tenets of the movement by using fireproof construction, wide corridors and large classrooms, while the later building also includes a gymnasium, auditorium and classrooms fitted for vocational and gender-based instruction such as wood workshops, cobbling room with a shoe shine station, sewing and laundry rooms. The period of significance begins with the construction of the first phase of the elementary school in 1902 during a period of mass immigration into the United States from southern and eastern Europe. It ends on the eve of World War II in 1940, when nearly all of the children who would have attended the school had been born in Connecticut and few new adult immigrants appear in the census records.<sup>2</sup>

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

**Criterion A: Education and Social History**

The Progressive Era

The early 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the expansion of industry and progressive educational reform which sought to alleviate social and economic problems that stemmed from big business and governmental corruption; working conditions in factories were poor, housing conditions unsanitary, education inadequate and labor was provided by children. While many of these issues were brought about by rapid industrialization, the Progressive Movement (1890-1930s)

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<sup>2</sup> The end date could be when vocational training stopped in this school, pending confirmation of that date through access to the Bridgeport Library/History Center archives, when it is open to the public.



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fought to create better educational systems that would prepare students for not only American citizenship, but also the economic and gender-based roles they would assume as adults.

During the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, educators began to acknowledge that schools had the tough task of educating a diverse group of students with ever wider backgrounds. Between 1880 and 1919, over 23 million immigrants had come to America, creating an ethnic imperative for curriculum differentiation. Foreign-born children and, by extension their families, needed courses in English and special Americanization classes which taught how to live in a democracy and the Anglo-Saxon and Protestant values that underlay American cultural systems.<sup>3</sup> To make matters more complicated, child labor legislation and compulsory attendance laws placed extra strain on already overcrowded schools. Not only were schools seeing an increase in enrollment from immigration, but now children who previously would not have been attending school, were now mandated to receive education.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, as increased mechanization in factories decreased the need for a large labor force, many juveniles and adults found themselves unemployed in the early 1900s. Consequently, urban areas became plagued with delinquency, poverty and crime. School became an appealing alternative to unemployment. While only six to seven per cent of children attended secondary school in 1890, by 1900 11% of kids between 14 and 17 attended secondary school. This number rose to 33% in 1920 and 51% in 1930.<sup>5</sup>

It became clear to progressive reformers that in order to adequately address these demographic changes and altering demands in educational outcomes, curriculum in schools needed to be differentiated. John Dewey (1859-1952), an educational philosopher, began pushing for educational reform. He believed that schools should be agents of social change as well as places of education and that curriculum should be directed to the achievement of objective both broadly, and scientifically, drawn from real life.<sup>6</sup> In Dewey's view, there were seven educational objectives: health, command of fundamental processes, worthy home membership, vocation, citizenship, worthy use of leisure and ethnic character.<sup>7</sup> It was clear that teaching and learning should no longer be based in memorization and rote, but rather rooted in acts of "doing." The academic curriculum was revamped and expanded in response to these ideas. Ultimately, two educational tracks emerged: a college preparatory and a vocational/industrial path. Although this saw children locked into their social class, the federal government embraced the idea of preparing students for entering the workforce. They saw funding the vocational path as a means to feed economic growth and responded by passing the Smith-Hughes Act in 1917.<sup>8</sup> This was the first law to authorize federal funding for vocational education in American schools. In addition, art learning was expanded as the "work-study-play system" spearheaded by William Wirt, the

<sup>3</sup> Edson, C. H. "Curriculum Change During the Progressive Era." *Educational Leadership* (October 1978), 66.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>5</sup> Spring, J. *The American School: 1642-2000*. (Boston: McGraw-Hill Publishing, 2001), 254-264; Faust, Carolyn J. *Progressive Education in Transition: An Intellectual History*. (Unpublished Dissertation for Georgia Southern University), 2007, 28; See also Greenberg, Ivan. "Vocational Education, Work Culture, and the Children of Immigrants in 1930s Bridgeport." *Journal of Social History* 41, no.1 (Fall 2007), 149-160.

<sup>6</sup> Faust, *Progressive Education*, 33.

<sup>7</sup> Edson, "Curriculum," 68.

<sup>8</sup> Faust, *Progressive Education*, 29; Hanford, Emily. "The troubled history of vocational education." *American RadioWorks*, September 9, 2014.

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superintendent of schools in Gary, Indiana, gained national recognition; progressive educators believed that emotional, artistic and creative aspects were essential to human development.<sup>9</sup>

### Curriculum in Waltersville

During the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century at least 11 school buildings were newly constructed, and another two remodeled or given annexes to accommodate an ever-growing school-age population.<sup>10</sup> Between 1900 and 1910, the number of school age children increased 48.8% from 9,787 to 14,567.<sup>11</sup> This was due in no small part to immigration.

The East Side neighborhood of Bridgeport was home to several large manufacturers including: Singer Manufacturing Company (sewing machines), Bridgeport Brass Company (copper wire, kerosene lamps, clock movements) American and British Manufacturing Company (guns, ammunition, steam and gasoline engines), Lake Torpedo Company, American Tube and Stamping (steel mill), The Farist Steel Company, Remington Arms (rifles, shotguns, ammunition) and others. Connecticut Railway & Lighting Company, which operated trolley lines in the region surrounding Bridgeport, Norwalk, Derby, New Britain, and Waterbury, was also within walking distance.<sup>12</sup> Because of the demand for workers, the city soon saw an influx of immigrants. The city's population more than doubled between 1900 and 1920 and most of these new arrivals settled near the factories in order to be able to walk to work<sup>13</sup> (Figures 3 and 4). Like other sections of Bridgeport, the East Side neighborhood which fed Waltersville School was primarily dominated by Russian Jewish and Irish immigrants between 1900 and 1910.<sup>14</sup> By 1920, the Irish population was eclipsed by a growing number of Italians and Slovaks.<sup>15</sup> Coupled with child labor legislation and compulsory attendance laws that were the subject of much concern and social protest, this put a strain and new demand on the already overtaxed Bridgeport schools, including Waltersville.

While space was a problem soon remedied to some degree by an annex and, later, the addition of a junior high school, curriculum was just as much of a concern. The children attending the school not only needed classes in English and Americanization, but also needed special provisions for mental handicaps, irregular attendance, and perpetual sicknesses like tuberculosis and anemia. Likewise, with the progressive movement toward differentiated curriculum, manual training, domestic science, art classes and physical education were added to the school day in order to provide children with a well-rounded education and prepare them sufficiently for their roles as adults.

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<sup>9</sup> Edson, "Curriculum," 68.

<sup>10</sup> Waldo, George Curtis, ed. *History of Bridgeport and Vicinity, Volume 1*. (Bridgeport: S. J. Clarke Publishing, 1917), 347-351.

<sup>11</sup> *Municipal Register*. Bridgeport, CT: The Joyce Press, 1910, 567.

<sup>12</sup> "Insurance Maps of Bridgeport, Connecticut," New York: Sanborn-Ferris Map Company, 1898, maps 48-68.

<sup>13</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Bridgeport, Fairfield County, 1900. U.S. Census Bureau, Bridgeport, Fairfield County, 1910; U.S. Census Bureau, Bridgeport, Fairfield County, 1920.

<sup>14</sup> Census, 1900; Census, 1910.

<sup>15</sup> Census, 1920.

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*Special classes for the mentally handicapped*

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The first class for mentally handicapped children in Bridgeport was established in Waltersville School in October 1910 with Miss Frances B. Coggsell, a Normal School graduate, as teacher.<sup>16</sup> While Miss Coggsell was not trained in special education, she attended two summer sessions in New York in preparation for her role as a special educator. The class had an initial enrollment of 70 students, all of whom were classified as institutional or disciplinary cases, “backward” or “defective” children, and/or non-English speaking.<sup>17</sup> Although the manner or method by which students were removed from the class is unclear,<sup>18</sup> by the end of the year only 25 children were enrolled.<sup>19</sup> The class was five hours long and structured around the premise that students would complete three hours of academic work with the remaining two hours given to manual training. Equipment for manual training was limited, however.<sup>20</sup>

Parents were opposed to the institution of the special class at Waltersville. Paramount among their concerns was the attitude of other children toward children receiving the specialized instruction.<sup>21</sup> Despite parent outcry, the class proved successful. Two years after its establishment, the Board of Education allocated \$741 to provide a better, more specialized room for the mentally handicapped children at Waltersville. While other cities had preceded Bridgeport in designating rooms specifically for children with mental handicaps, this was the first room fitted for this purpose in Bridgeport. The Superintendent hoped to establish rooms for the same purpose in the East End, West End, North End and South End.<sup>22</sup> The following year, Grand Street School, located in the Bridgeport neighborhood of The Hollow, instituted a class for mentally handicapped children<sup>23</sup> with a third class started in the West End’s Elias Howe School on Clinton Avenue in April 1914.<sup>24</sup>

According to the Superintendent’s Report in the 1914 *Municipal Register*, Bridgeport had to provide more classes for pupils who were unsuited to conventional classroom environments. Superintendent of Schools Deane acknowledged that “habitual truants, mental defectives,” children who suffered from tuberculosis or anemia, “irregular attendees, overgrown foreigners” and “overage slow pupils” had to be segregated from students who could be placed into typical classrooms.<sup>25</sup> He stated that children who fell into one of the first three categories should be segregated into special purpose-built schools while those that fell into that latter three could be

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<sup>16</sup> Board of Education minutes, September 1910.

<sup>17</sup> “Bridgeport, Connecticut. October, 1910.” In *Development and Progress of Special Classes for Mentally Deficient Children in Connecticut*, Connecticut Special Education Association. (New Haven, CT: Connecticut Special Education Association, 1936), 17.

<sup>18</sup> Documentation from the school on curriculum and specific class enrollment is not preserved at the Bridgeport Board of Education, Bridgeport Library or History Center or the Dodd Center. Board of Education minutes and the Superintendent’s Report also do not detail the reason for this change.

<sup>19</sup> “Bridgeport, Connecticut. October, 1910,” 17.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> “Assistant May be Given Supt. of Schools,” *Bridgeport Evening Farmer*, November 12, 1912.

<sup>23</sup> *Municipal Register*. (Bridgeport, CT: The Joyce Press, 1914), 649

<sup>24</sup> “Bridgeport, Connecticut. October, 1910,” 17

<sup>25</sup> *Municipal Register*, 1914, 649

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housed in classes alongside other students. Unfortunately, Bridgeport had neither the financial capacity nor the ability to construct purpose-built special needs schools; the city was faced with the reality of needing to fill all schools to their capacity.<sup>26</sup>

Although the Superintendent could not provide special schools for mentally handicapped children, in September 1914, a second section of the special class was opened at Waltersville under the direction of Miss Grace Hopson. While Miss Hopson was trained to teach regular grade work, she was later enrolled in specialty classes that would better prepare her to be a special needs teacher. Her “ungraded” class at Waltersville had an enrollment of 33 boys and girls, all of whom were placed in the class because they were deemed ill-suited for conventional classroom settings; placement was not based on test scores. Like the first class established in 1910, the students would do three hours of academic work with an additional two hours of manual training. The equipment was still limited, but parents did not object to the class itself. Miss Hopson remained the teacher of this class until 1917.<sup>27</sup> Within the next year, both Longfellow and Franklin Schools received one special class each and, in 1916, Garfield and Wheeler Schools followed suit.<sup>28</sup>

In 1916, the Yale Clinic, under the direction of Dr. Arnold Gesell, began to administer intelligence tests to children in the Bridgeport School system. Over the course of the next several years, subsequent tests were administered by F. C. Walters and Mr. Lentz. This was the beginning of a push for Bridgeport special classes to conform to State Board rulings regarding enrollment; in order to be placed into special classes, a child needed to have an IQ between 45 and 75 and a mental age of at least five. Within 10 years, Waltersville’s special classes adhered to these guidelines.<sup>29</sup>

Waltersville Junior High School was constructed in 1917 and cost approximately \$320,000 for the land, construction of the building and heating mechanicals.<sup>30</sup> Once completed, another special class was begun, this time for junior high school boys. Miss Grace Hopson was moved to this section and remained the teacher of the junior high school special class until the 1930s. Miss Cox assumed responsibility for the 18-student lower level class.<sup>31</sup>

The Board of education allotted \$3,800 to “defective classes” for the 1919-1920 school year with an appropriation of only \$1,500 in 1920-1921.<sup>32</sup> Special classes had expanded by this time with new sections opened at Shelton, Jefferson, Black Rock and Barnum Schools.<sup>33</sup>

In 1922, Waltersville began an experimental special class in the junior high school section. This class was run by a local shoemaker who was paid by the Bridgeport Board of Education to teach

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> “Bridgeport, Connecticut. October, 1910,” 18

<sup>28</sup> “Bridgeport, Connecticut. October, 1910,” 19.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> *Municipal Register*. (Bridgeport, CT: The Joyce Press, 1919), 105; “Only single building designed to serve as memorial and school,” *Bridgeport Telegram*, December 6, 1919.

<sup>31</sup> “Bridgeport, Connecticut. October, 1910,” 19

<sup>32</sup> *Municipal Register*. (Bridgeport, CT: The Joyce Press, 1919), 102; *Municipal Register*. (Bridgeport, CT: The Joyce Press, 1921), 70

<sup>33</sup> “Bridgeport, Connecticut. October, 1910,” 19

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older boys the art of cobbling for one hour per day in the afternoon. People who had their shoes mended by the students paid half the regular charge for the work. Of this, half of each fee was placed into the school treasury to either supplement the repair of shoes for children in the school who did not have the means to pay themselves or to purchase supplies for other work undertaken in the room. The other half of the fee was given to the boy who did the work; usually this amounted to between \$0.10 and \$0.35 for jobs that required two to three hours of instruction. Students were required to keep their own accounts, which furnished a practical kind of arithmetic. In addition to the students in the class who were enrolled at Waltersville, a 16-year old Slavic boy who had left school and had no job was allowed to have 14 months of instruction in order to assist in the cobbling work. It seems that parents who were interested in enrolling the children in the class could write to the Special Education Division.<sup>34</sup>

An additional service, while separate from the class, was also offered. As every pair of shoes that was repaired got a shine, a shoeshine stand was set up and became an independent enterprise. Pupils and teachers paid \$0.05 for a shine. Of this fee, \$0.03 went to the boy who shined the shoe and the remaining \$0.02 went to supplies. Children in the special class who did not have the ability to cobble could still benefit from paid work and training.<sup>35</sup> Miss Grace Hopson, the teacher of this experimental class, recognized that the program was successful in part because of the school's location in an Italian neighborhood, but also because the class needed little equipment; the equipment that was required was inexpensive.<sup>36</sup>

Over the next two years, special classes opened at Read, Newfield, Prospect, Hallen, McKinley, Maplewood and Sheridan Schools.<sup>37</sup> Bridgeport was investing in preparing the city's mentally handicapped children to become members of the community. According to a newspaper article from January 21, 1925, 81% of the "defective" children in Bridgeport were adequately trained through the Bridgeport school system and became assets to the community. The article surveyed 90 former students, of which 73 were reported as being of "satisfactory" citizens with good behavior (defined as not causing any problems for authorities). These former students filled roles as laborers, factory workers, tradesmen (six took up painting specifically), and one became a clerk. Overall, the conclusion of the article was that the longer "subnormal" children were kept in school, the more likely they would develop the right attitude to govern their later conduct which would become indispensable to good citizenship. By 1925, defective classes were based on individual instruction and there were, by this time, 17 special classes in Bridgeport with a total enrollment of 250 students. Schools generally began starting students in the special classes at the age of nine, although a number entered at the age of 15.<sup>38</sup> The following year, additional special classes were instituted at Madison and Maplewood Schools, with another section at Staples beginning in 1928.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Grace Hopson, "Cobbling in a Special Class," *Connecticut Schools* 5, no. 4 (December 1923), 7.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> "Bridgeport, Connecticut. October, 1910," 19

<sup>38</sup> "Mental Defectives Turn into Assts, Young Reports," *Bridgeport Telegram*, January 21, 1925.

<sup>39</sup> "Bridgeport, Connecticut. October, 1910," 19

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By September 1930, Waltersville School had instituted its fourth special class with an inaugural enrollment of 15 children; the school now had two classes in the elementary school, one in the intermediate school and one in the junior high school. Not only did the newest class have a complete set of equipment for the handwork component, but it worked in conjunction with the other sections of the class. Because the classes depended on the ability of the children to do academic and handwork, students could get promoted to subsequently higher degrees of education and training. William McAndrews, the principal of Waltersville in the 1930s, further insisted that the students in the intermediate and junior high sections participate in school activities. Consequently, students were members of different clubs and could take regular subjects with the other junior high school kids if they showed an aptitude and ability.<sup>40</sup> All children enrolled in these classes met State Board requirements and any child with the mental age of seven or above was given achievement tests.<sup>41</sup> The teacher, Miss McPadden, and her successor, Miss Mary Grimmer, were not Normal School graduates who took a summer course to prepare for special needs teaching. Instead, they had both undertaken specialized training courses and were certified by the State Board of Education in special needs work.

*Vocational training, Americanization classes and hygiene<sup>42</sup>*

Manual training began in four schools in 1909 and, that same year, two schools were kitted out for domestic science with two others getting similar arrangements in 1910. Dental hygienists made the rounds to all of these schools in order to check teeth, and arts programs were instituted (Bridgeport Telegram, December 6, 1919. "Only single building designed to serve as memorial and school.").

In 1919, the Superintendent of Schools for Middletown, NY and architect D. H. Canfield visited Waltersville junior high and Madison School. They were impressed by the modern domestic science courses, especially the instruction in sewing and laundry work (Bridgeport Telegram, December 6, 1919. "Only single building designed to serve as memorial and school.").

At night, they held Americanization classes which seems to be fairly normal in the schools at that point. A summer dental clinic for kids in higher grades is mentioned in 1921 (Municipal Register 1921, 171).<sup>43</sup>

The 1919-1920 school year saw an appropriation of \$2,500 for drawing classes, \$3,500 for domestic science, \$7,000 for manual training, and another \$15,000 for evening schools and Americanization classes. The following year, drawing was allotted \$2,600, domestic science

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 17

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 20

<sup>42</sup> This section could be broken into subsections (i.e. Americanization Classes, Hygiene and Dental Clinics, etc.) depending on available information. Resources from the UCONN Dodd Center and Connecticut State Library were accessed. The Bridgeport Library and History Center, respectively shared Municipal Registers; there are some that could not be easily accessed due to lack of staff and hours. Likewise, there were other resources – Health Information, Annual Reports, etc. The Bridgeport Library and History Center is not yet open to the public.

<sup>43</sup> See also:

[https://books.google.com/books?id=JOYwAAAAIAAJ&pg=PA611&dq=waltersville+school+dental+hygienist&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks\\_redir=0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewigqaumrrrrAhXRg-AKHSvFCkEQ6AEwBnoECAIQAg#v=onepage&q=waltersville&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=JOYwAAAAIAAJ&pg=PA611&dq=waltersville+school+dental+hygienist&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewigqaumrrrrAhXRg-AKHSvFCkEQ6AEwBnoECAIQAg#v=onepage&q=waltersville&f=false)

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\$6,128, 97, manual training \$8,161.65, regular evening school \$20,687.10 and Americanization evening courses \$15,151.92. In 1921-1922, drawing was given \$2,500, domestic science \$6,000, manual training \$75,000, regular evening school \$25,000 (Municipal Register 1921, 70). 1922 – Dental hygienists and dental clinics.<sup>44</sup> That same year, the hygienic service offered at Waltersville was extended. The station at Waltersville would now be open Monday morning and Thursday afternoon. The aim was to keep parents of children both enrolled in school and not abreast of the weight and general health of their children (Bridgeport Telegram, July 6, 1922. “Hygienic service in schools has been extended.”).

1923 - The Waltersville Health Station led five other schools in the number of children seen during December. They saw 166 kids of the total seen that month of 690 (Bridgeport Telegram, October 19, 1923. “Waltersville School leads health stations”).

1927 – An exhibit of student work was given at Waltersville. It was displayed in the basement and showed posters in corrective English, art, and health as well as novelty exhibits, Chinese exhibits and a display of articles made in the wood shops (Bridgeport Telegram June 11, 1927, No Title).

### A new school for the East Side

While industry in Bridgeport began in the 1830s, it wasn't until the 1880s that industry in Bridgeport boomed. Resident P. T. Barnum and others began to bring outside capital and manufacturers to the city, all of whom were attracted by Bridgeport's excellent rail connections, good harbor, as well as the proximity to the capital and markets in New York City. Between 1900 and 1920, Bridgeport's population had more than doubled from 70,996 to 143,555. This placed a large strain on local schools all of which needed to be expanded or completely rebuilt between 1884 and 1920 in order to accommodate the school-aged population.

The construction of Waltersville School between 1902 and 1905 was situated square in the middle of a full overhaul of Bridgeport school buildings which began with a new Board of Education in 1876. The Board of Education built 12 schools between 1884 and 1900, and subsequently went on to not only build more new schools, but also remodel, expand and provide

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<sup>44</sup> Additional information can be found in: [https://books.google.com/books?id=BbI2AQAAMAAJ&pg=RA1-PA375&dq=dentist+bridgeport+1920&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks\\_redir=0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiL-rfQn83sAhVQn-AKHWjNAXoQ6AEwAHoECAIQAg#v=onepage&q=dentist%20bridgeport%201920&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=BbI2AQAAMAAJ&pg=RA1-PA375&dq=dentist+bridgeport+1920&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiL-rfQn83sAhVQn-AKHWjNAXoQ6AEwAHoECAIQAg#v=onepage&q=dentist%20bridgeport%201920&f=false)

Article starts on page 302 here:

[https://books.google.com/books?id=vcoyAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA379&dq=dentist+bridgeport+1920&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks\\_redir=0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiL-rfQn83sAhVQn-AKHWjNAXoQ6AEwA3oECAUQAQg#v=onepage&q=dentist%20bridgeport%201920&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=vcoyAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA379&dq=dentist+bridgeport+1920&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiL-rfQn83sAhVQn-AKHWjNAXoQ6AEwA3oECAUQAQg#v=onepage&q=dentist%20bridgeport%201920&f=false)

History of Dental Clinics:

[https://books.google.com/books?id=Wz0BqYeol1oC&pg=PA432&dq=dentist+bridgeport+1920&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks\\_redir=0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiL-rfQn83sAhVQn-AKHWjNAXoQ6AEwAnoECAQAQg#v=onepage&q=dentist%20bridgeport%201920&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=Wz0BqYeol1oC&pg=PA432&dq=dentist+bridgeport+1920&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiL-rfQn83sAhVQn-AKHWjNAXoQ6AEwAnoECAQAQg#v=onepage&q=dentist%20bridgeport%201920&f=false)

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eight-room annexes to the schools built only decades before between 1901 and 1920. While all of these schools adhered to new standards in ventilation, incorporated basements and assembly halls into their plan, only a few were provided with gymnasiums in the first stages of design. After Ohio's Collinswood School Fire which killed 176 students in 1913, all of Bridgeport's school buildings built prior to 1913 were given iron fire escapes, while all new buildings constructed after were fire-proofed.<sup>45</sup>

By the turn of the 20th century, the first Waltersville had already undergone several iterations. Originally built in the 1870s, the original Waltersville School was a six-room brick building situated on Hamilton Street. By 1895, this building was no longer sufficient and an additional wooden building with four rooms was constructed alongside the earlier brick building.<sup>46</sup> In 1902, Waltersville was once again overcrowded and the Bridgeport Board of Education moved to expand the building. Construction does not appear to have been finished when the school board began contemplating yet another addition to relieve the congestion at the school in 1904. The owner of the neighboring brewery, James Spargo, offered the eastern 50 feet of his property to the school board for a price of \$6,500. The board approved the transaction, expanding the school's lot to 253 feet by 140 feet. Soon after, an eight-room brick building was constructed along Gilmore Street. Now obsolete, the original six room brick schoolhouse was demolished.<sup>47</sup> The new 20-room Waltersville School Annex opened in 1905 and cost a total of \$9,375 to build.<sup>48</sup>

Despite being the largest school in Bridgeport with 24 rooms, Waltersville could not accommodate any grade levels above sixth grade in 1910.<sup>49</sup> Overcrowding once again became a problem. In 1911, the Garfield School was opened on Stillman Street and even with only four of its eight-rooms initially in use, it was expected to relieve the "congested conditions in the Waltersville School."<sup>50</sup> While this may have helped to some degree, crowded conditions at Waltersville continued to deteriorate and two basement rooms were allocated as classroom space in 1912.<sup>51</sup> One room was ultimately dedicated to children requiring special attention due to emotional and mental issues. Other towns had already adopted such measures. The arrangement of this room would cost the school board \$741.<sup>52</sup> Enrollment at Waltersville increased and the number of pupils rose from 1,138 to 1,146 as did the total number of school children in Bridgeport schools from 13,922 to 14,544.<sup>53</sup> The crowded conditions of the schools became a serious concern and students were shuffled from their district schools to others further afield to accommodate the growing school-age population. Likewise, the Board of Education discussed

<sup>45</sup> Waldo, George Curtis, ed. *History of Bridgeport and Vicinity, Volume 1*. Bridgeport: S. J. Clarke Publishing, 1917, 339-355.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 340, 347.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 348.

<sup>48</sup> *Municipal Register*. Bridgeport, CT: The Joyce Press, 1905, 318.

<sup>49</sup> "Eighth Grade Diplomas for Many Pupils," *Bridgeport Evening Farmer*, July 26, 1909.

<sup>50</sup> "New Garfield School Will Open Monday," *Bridgeport Evening Farmer*, February 4, 1911; *Municipal Register* 1910, 567.

<sup>51</sup> "Board of Education Up Against Big Problem to House School Children," *Bridgeport Evening Farmer*, April 9, 1912.

<sup>52</sup> "Assistant May be Given Supt. of Schools," *Bridgeport Evening Farmer*, November 12, 1912.

<sup>53</sup> "School Population Increases 622," *Bridgeport Evening Farmer*, September 11, 1912.



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allocating rooms for double sessions in several schools.<sup>54</sup> By 1913, the Board of Education appealed to the Board of Apportionment for funds for “educational improvements.” At Waltersville alone, there were 100 students in the primary class, all of whom came from the surrounding neighborhoods which were mostly populated by Italian immigrants. These improvements included an eight-room addition at Bostwick School and either a four-room addition to Waltersville or the complete replacement of the Nichols Street School by a 16-room building.<sup>55</sup>

According to the 1914 *Municipal Register*, every attempt was made to organize schools so there were no more than 42 students per teacher. Only nine of the 28 schools in Bridgeport could keep this acceptable limit; Waltersville itself already averaged 45.6 students per room.<sup>56</sup>

Many of the schools had fallen into disrepair by 1915. Basements were flooding and roofs leaking. Such conditions lead the school board to try an open air school at Waltersville and, later, the superintendent of schools suggested that Waltersville needed to be altered so as to allow more air and light into the building.<sup>57</sup> The superintendent also suggested that an additional 38 rooms were needed to meet the growing demands on Bridgeport Public Schools. Of the 38 rooms, six would have to be fitted at Waltersville.<sup>58</sup> By the end of the year, students at four schools, including Waltersville, were on half time sessions. The superintendent asked for a \$250,000 bond in order to construction additions at all four schools.<sup>59</sup>

The situation continued to worsen. More students were attending half time sessions than ever before. At Waltersville, seven rooms were allocated for such use. Approximately \$300,000 in bonds were issued, but this did little to relieve the pressure put on the overtaxed public schools. The construction of a new school on Wayne Street was being discussed as was several additions to pre-existing buildings.<sup>60</sup> The school board began to look for a site for the Waltersville addition. Three were found: one lot, 166 feet by 101 feet, was located on the corner of Gilmore and Steuben Streets (166 feet x 101 feet, respectively) and priced at \$25,000 with an assessment of \$14,000; another lot cost \$7,000 and was assessed at \$3,300; the third lot was priced at \$7,500 and assessed for \$5,500.<sup>61</sup> Eventually, the first lot was chosen and the board of education petitioned for a \$200,000 bond.<sup>62</sup> In the meantime, many students who tried to register for classes in September 1916 were turned away and asked to come the next day.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> “Special Meeting to Take Action on Congested Schools,” *Bridgeport Evening Farmer*, September 21, 1912; “News About Town,” *Bridgeport Evening Farmer*, October 7, 1912.

<sup>55</sup> “School Board’s Needs Told to Apportioners,” *Bridgeport Evening Farmer*, February 3, 1913.

<sup>56</sup> *Municipal Register* 1914, 647.

<sup>57</sup> “Find High School Basement Will Be Flooded by Water,” *Bridgeport Evening Farmer*, April 13, 1915; “Floods in Cellars of Public Schools,” *Bridgeport Evening Farmer*, August 4, 1915.

<sup>58</sup> “Challenger and Havens Scrap in Session of Board,” *Bridgeport Evening Farmer*, October 12, 1915.

<sup>59</sup> “Need 75 More Teachers Here Havens Asserts,” *Bridgeport Evening Farmer*, December 29, 1915.

<sup>60</sup> “Schoolhouses of Bridgeport Far Overtaxed,” *Bridgeport Evening Farmer*, April 26, 1915.

<sup>61</sup> “Award Contract for Schoolhouse in Wayne Street,” *Bridgeport Evening Farmer*, July 11, 1916.

<sup>62</sup> “Confusion Marks Opening of Schools as Children Overtax Facilities Here,” *Bridgeport Evening Farmer*, September 25, 1916; “Aldermen Want Improvement in Phone Service,” *Bridgeport Evening Farmer*, October 17, 1916.

<sup>63</sup> “Building Notes,” *Bridgeport Evening Farmer*, August 11, 1917.

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After being discussed for several months, the board announced that the plans for a new eight-room Waltersville school would be available August 18<sup>th</sup> and were drawn by Leonard Asheim, a noted schoolhouse architect.<sup>64</sup> The new school would be a 109 foot x 230 foot brick building with concrete steps, limestone trimmings and a gravel roof. There would be a total of 27 classrooms: six in the basement for manual training and domestic science work, nine on the first floor and 12 on the second. There would also be a gymnasium, locker rooms and shower in the basement, a first-floor assembly hall measuring 60 by 117 feet, and teachers' retiring rooms and toilets on each floor. A clinic, hospital and principal's office would also be present. The corridors and stairs would be fireproof and there would be terrazzo flooring, electric gongs and clocks, as well as a telephone system. Steam heat and a vacuum cleaning system were also installed.<sup>65</sup> A playground opened the following year, before the schoolhouse itself was finished.<sup>66</sup> Ultimately, Waltersville Junior High School cost \$270,000.<sup>67</sup> The land for the school cost \$39,100 with the buildings being an additional \$263,019 and the heating apparatus another \$17,395.<sup>68</sup> The plan of the school has remained unchanged since 1917 (Figures 5-7).

### Criterion C: Architecture

The Waltersville School is locally significant under Criterion C because it illustrates the evolution of Progressive Era school design and it is the only building that embodies both early twentieth century architectural styles of Bridgeport schools in a single joined structure.

Progressivism was a social and political movement that attempted to find ways to solve social and economic problems, such as governmental corruption, poor housing, inadequate education and child labor that were created by rapid industrialization in the United States. The Progressive Era lasted from about 1890 until just after WW I and it achieved many of its goals.

John Dewey (1859-1952) was the Progressive Movement's leading educational philosopher. He believed that schools could counteract, to some degree the dehumanizing effects of industrialization. In his view, schools should be agents of social change as well as places of education. Students should be taught how to become productive members of society alongside academic subjects.

School buildings had to evolve into a new form in order to fulfill Dewey's vision. The simple wood-framed structures that had served communities for many years were abandoned for modern masonry buildings. A leader in the design of these new schools was C. B. J. Snyder, who was appointed New York City Superintendent of school buildings in 1891. He evaluated the impact of building design on the educational environment and concluded that fresh air and sunlight were

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<sup>64</sup> "Building Notes," *Bridgeport Evening Farmer*, August 11, 1917; "Plan New Building to Relieve Congestion in Schools of City," *Bridgeport Evening Farmer*, May 1, 1917.

<sup>65</sup> "Building Notes," *Bridgeport Evening Farmer*, August 11, 1917.

<sup>66</sup> "Playgrounds for Two Schools Open This Week," *Bridgeport Evening Farmer*, June 19, 1918.

<sup>67</sup> "Only single building designed to serve as memorial and school," *Bridgeport Telegram*, December 6, 1919.

<sup>68</sup> Municipal Register 1919, 105

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imperative for effective instruction. These new buildings eventually had electric lights, central heating, plumbing and ample windows.<sup>69</sup>

By 1903, these ideas of schoolhouse design had become so widespread that William George Bruce (1856-1949), editor of the *American School Board Journal*, wrote a guidebook for architects of elementary and high schools, *School Architecture: A Handy Manual for the Use of Architects and School Authorities*, in 1903. In the book, he translated Progressive ideas into architectural practice. He describes many aspects of school design including construction materials, architectural style, adequate corridor width, fireproof staircases, materials for flooring and ceilings, ratios of windows to floor space and the best location for a heating plant. He recommended that classrooms “should afford fifteen square feet of floor space and two hundred cubic feet of air space for each pupil.” The book is illustrated with many exterior images of schools throughout the United States.<sup>70</sup>

The Waltersville elementary school building includes the wide halls and stairways, staff offices, fireproof construction, central heating and large well-lit classrooms, some of which were dedicated to specific elements of the curriculum mentioned above, that the Progressives believed necessary for education. The school also had a playground (now removed and the area is used for parking), another feature Progressive feature that was unusual for the time. These elements were a major step toward creating a more comfortable and safer learning environment.

The Colonial Revival design of the 1917 addition, which later became the junior high school, reflects the increased emphasis on patriotism that swept the United States before and during World War I.<sup>71</sup> This building has all of the Progressive features found in the older building, as well as a gymnasium with showers and an auditorium/lunchroom with a kitchen. These features served the social purpose of providing wholesome food and facilities for personal hygiene that may not have been available in pupils’ homes.

### Architect

Leonard Asheim (1877-1961) designed several significant buildings in Bridgeport, Connecticut. They include three schools, all of which are in the Colonial Revival style. He was born in Germany, but settled in Waterbury, Connecticut. He worked for Waterbury architect Joseph A. Jackson for three years, before going to Boston, where he took evening classes in architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, while also working for architects in that city. He opened his Waterbury office in 1898. He designed schools as well as private residences, synagogues and public buildings after he moved his office to Bridgeport in 1909. He also studied at the Yale School of Fine Art and was awarded the Leon W. Robinson Bronze Medal for

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<sup>69</sup> Christopher Gray, “Streetscapes/Charles B. J. Snyder; Architect Who Taught a Lesson in School Design,” *The New York Times*, November 21, 1999.

<sup>70</sup> William George Bruce, *School Architecture: A Handy Manual for the Use of Architects and School Authorities*, Milwaukee: Johnson Service Company, 1903.

<sup>71</sup> William B. Rhodes, “The Colonial Revival and American Nationalism,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* (1976) 35 (4): 239–254.

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Excellence in Architecture by the Architectural Club of New Haven in 1925.<sup>72</sup> He was elected President of the Connecticut Society of Architects in 1954, the same year that he reopened his Bridgeport Office after an absence of seven years.<sup>73</sup> He also served as president of the Bridgeport Society of Architects for fourteen years.<sup>74</sup> At his death in 1961, he was the oldest practicing architect in the city.

Asheim designed many prominent ecclesiastical and municipal buildings during the years he practiced. They include the Orthodox synagogue West End Congregation/Achavath Achim (1926) which is one of the few remaining buildings that are associated with the once-sizable Hungarian Jewish community in Bridgeport's West End. It was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1995.<sup>75</sup> His last religious building is the Park Avenue Temple in Bridgeport (1956).<sup>76</sup> His Bridgeport schools include the Sheridan School (1910), and the Maplewood Junior High School (1916) and the Whittier School (1912-1919) and the Theodore Roosevelt School (demolished 2012).<sup>77</sup> One of these buildings The Sheridan School is now the Bridgeport Learning Center, a therapeutic Day program for students with emotional and behavioral disorders.<sup>78</sup> Maplewood School is in the process of rehabilitation into affordable housing in 2020 and only Whittier School is vacant. The architect-designed Bridgeport public buildings including the Klein Memorial Auditorium (1938) which continues in use as a regional theater and concert venue in 2020.<sup>79</sup> He also designed the Welfare Building (1917, demolished c.1995), Fairfield Avenue Fire /Police Station (1917), Newfield Branch Library (1922), West End Branch Library (1922, demolished 2020), Central Fire Station (1928) and the Orcutt Boy's Club (1939).<sup>80</sup> Most of these buildings, with the exception the Welfare Building and the West End Branch Library, remain standing in 2020. The architect designed only three private residences: the Mrs. Bernard Blumberg House (1916) listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1987 as contributing to the Golden Hill Historic District,<sup>81</sup> the Ferdinand Frassinelli House<sup>82</sup> and his own residence, which was listed in the National Register of Historic places as contributing to the Stratfield Historic District in 1980.<sup>83</sup> All of these homes are in Bridgeport. All of his designs, except the Frassinelli House, which is in the Renaissance Revival style, and the Park Avenue Temple, which is in an eclectic Craftsman-influenced style, are in variants of the Colonial Revival style. The Waltersville Junior High School is a fine example of his work in the style for which he is best known.

<sup>72</sup> "Asheim, Leonard," *American Architects Directory, First Edition 1956*, New York: R. R. Bowker Company, 1955, 18.

<sup>73</sup> "Leonard Asheim Reopens Office," *The Bridgeport Telegram*, November 14, 1954.

<sup>74</sup> "Architect Dies in his 85<sup>th</sup> Year," *Bridgeport Post*, September 8, 1961.

<sup>75</sup> David Ransom, "West End Congregation/Achavath Achim Synagogue," National Register of Historic Places nomination, 1995.

<sup>76</sup> "Architect Dies in his 85<sup>th</sup> Year."

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> "Bridgeport Learning Center," <https://www.bridgeportedu.net/Page/10364#calendar20443/20201019/month> accessed October 19, 2020.

<sup>79</sup> "About Us," *The Klein*, <https://www.theklein.org/about-us/> accessed September 20, 2020.

<sup>80</sup> "Architect Dies in his 85<sup>th</sup> Year."

<sup>81</sup> "Golden Hill Historic District," National Register of Historic Places nomination, 1987.

<sup>82</sup> Amanda Cuda, "Family has deep ties to Black Rock home," *Connecticut Post*, June 7, 2018.

<sup>83</sup> Charles W. Brilvitch, Stratfield Historic District," National Register of Historic Places nomination, 1979.

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** 1.57\_\_\_\_\_

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 41.192318 | Longitude: -73.177937 |
| 2. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |
| 3. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |
| 4. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |

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**Or**  
**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |          |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundaries of the property are recorded in the Bridgeport, Connecticut land records as Map 36 Lot 846 Block 6 (Figure 2).

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries of the property are those of the lot on which the school building sits. This is the historic parcel and the boundaries have not changed since the building and its additions were completed in 1917.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Tod Bryant MA and Daryn Reyman-Lock, Ph.D.  
organization: Heritage Resources  
street & number: 23 Morgan Avenue  
city or town: Norwalk state: CT zip code: 06851  
e-mail tod@heritageresourcesct.com  
telephone: 203-852-9788  
date: February 6, 2018

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

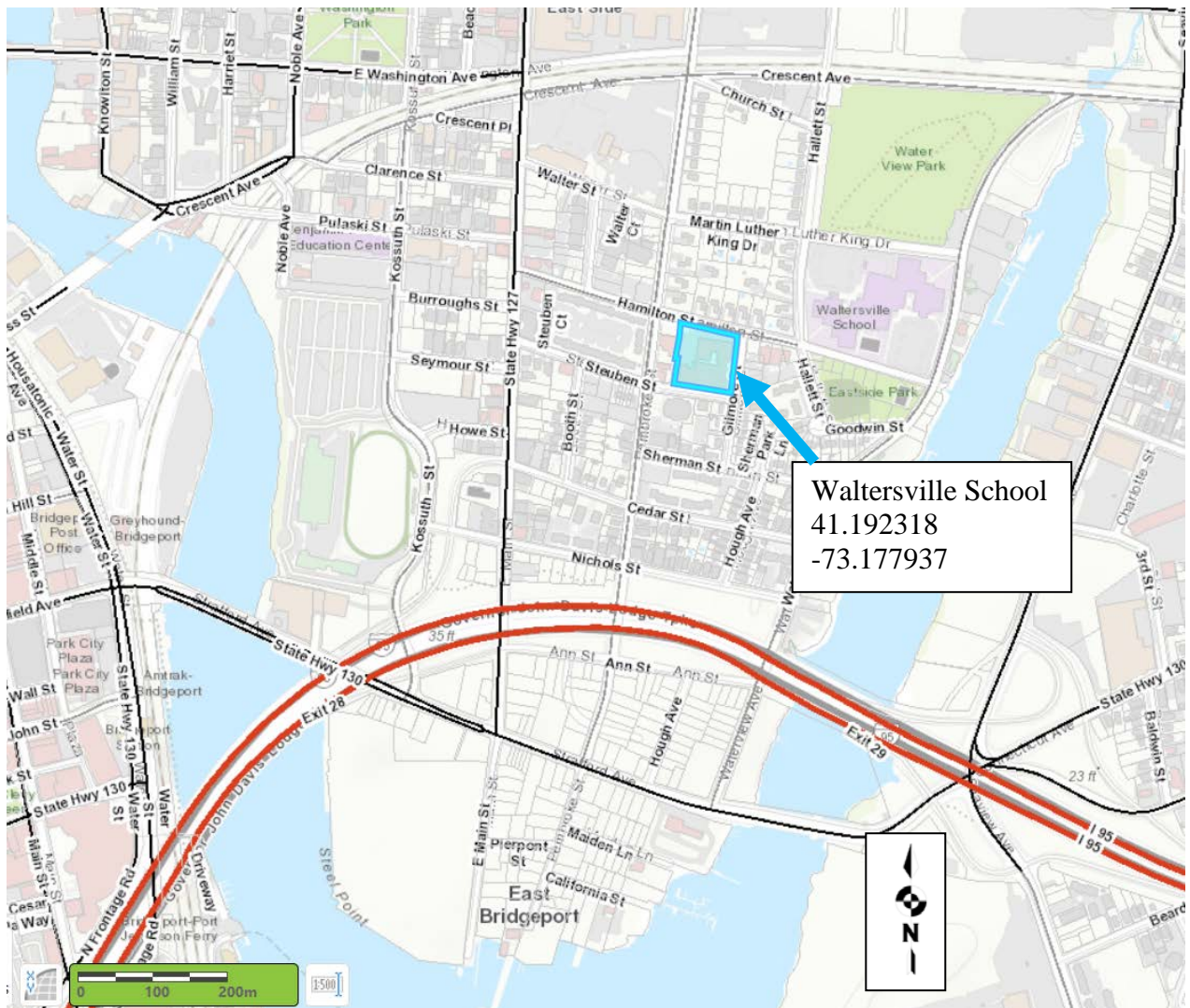


Figure 1. Map showing location of Waltersville School. City of Bridgeport GIS)

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Figure 2. Map showing boundaries of property and plan of Waltersville School.  
(City of Bridgeport GIS)



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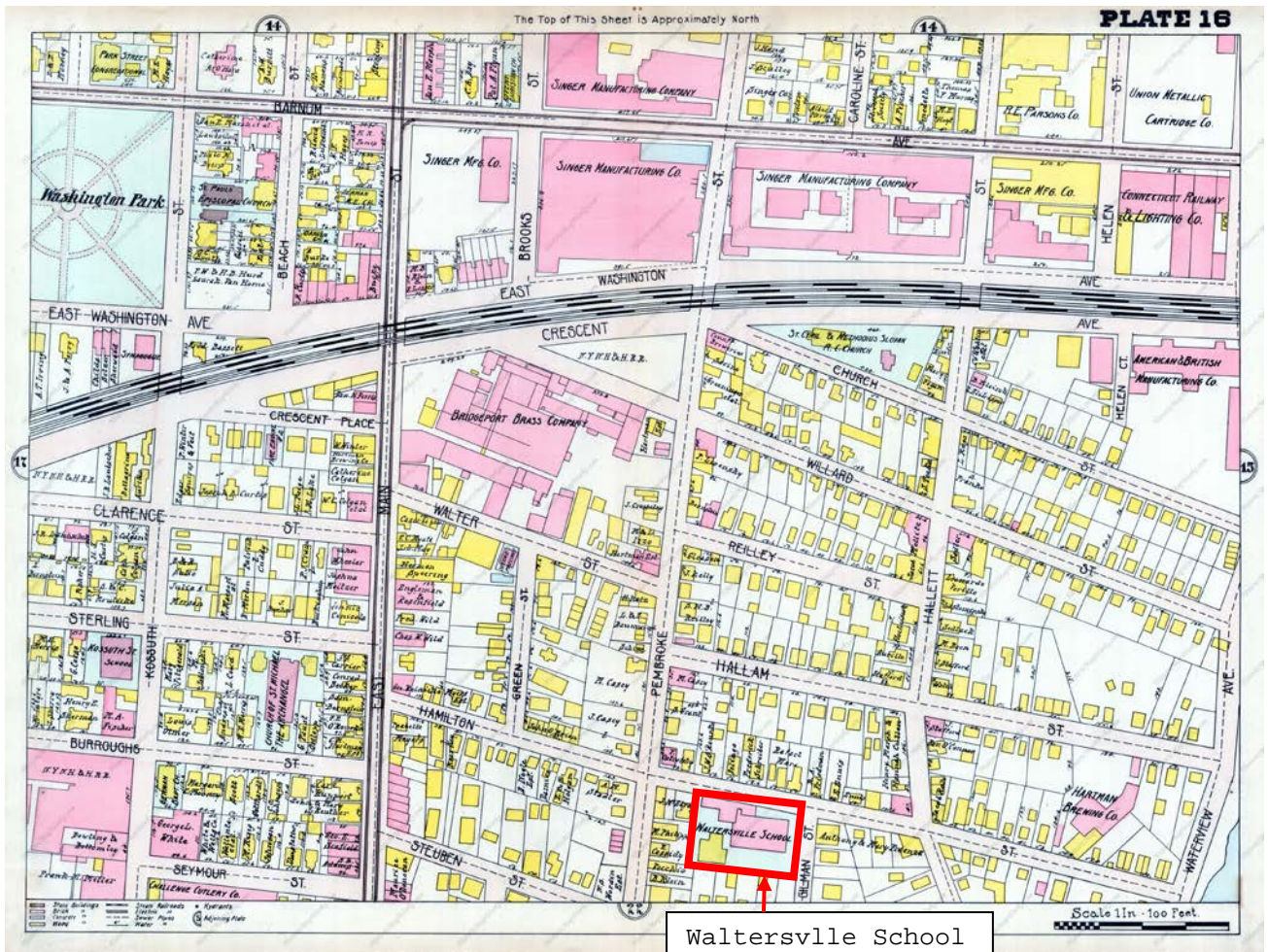


Figure 3. 1910 map showing location of Waltersville School and industries north of it.  
(Atlas of Bridgeport, Connecticut, 1910)



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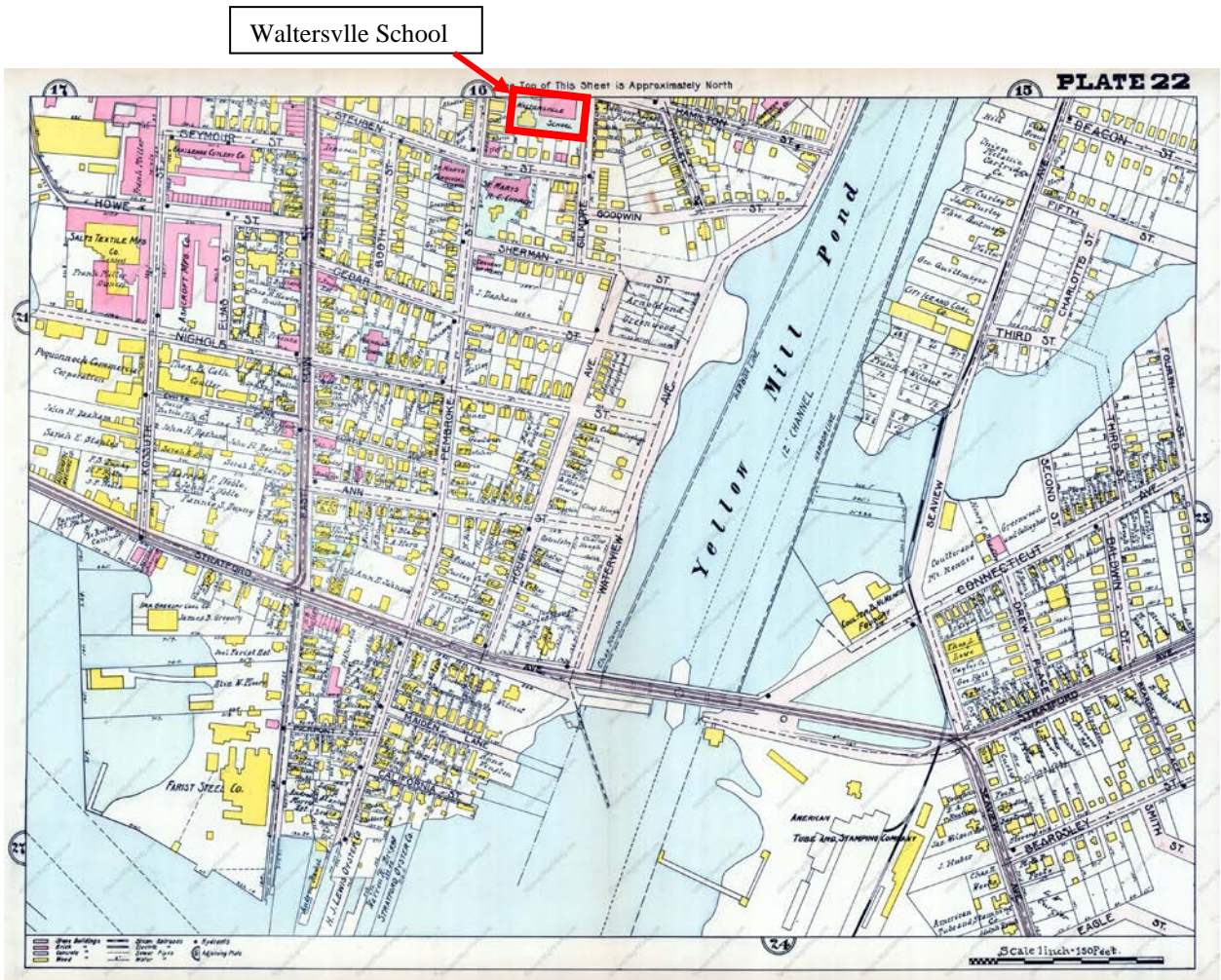


Figure 4. 1910 map showing location of Waltersville School and industries south of it.  
(Atlas of Bridgeport, Connecticut, 1910)

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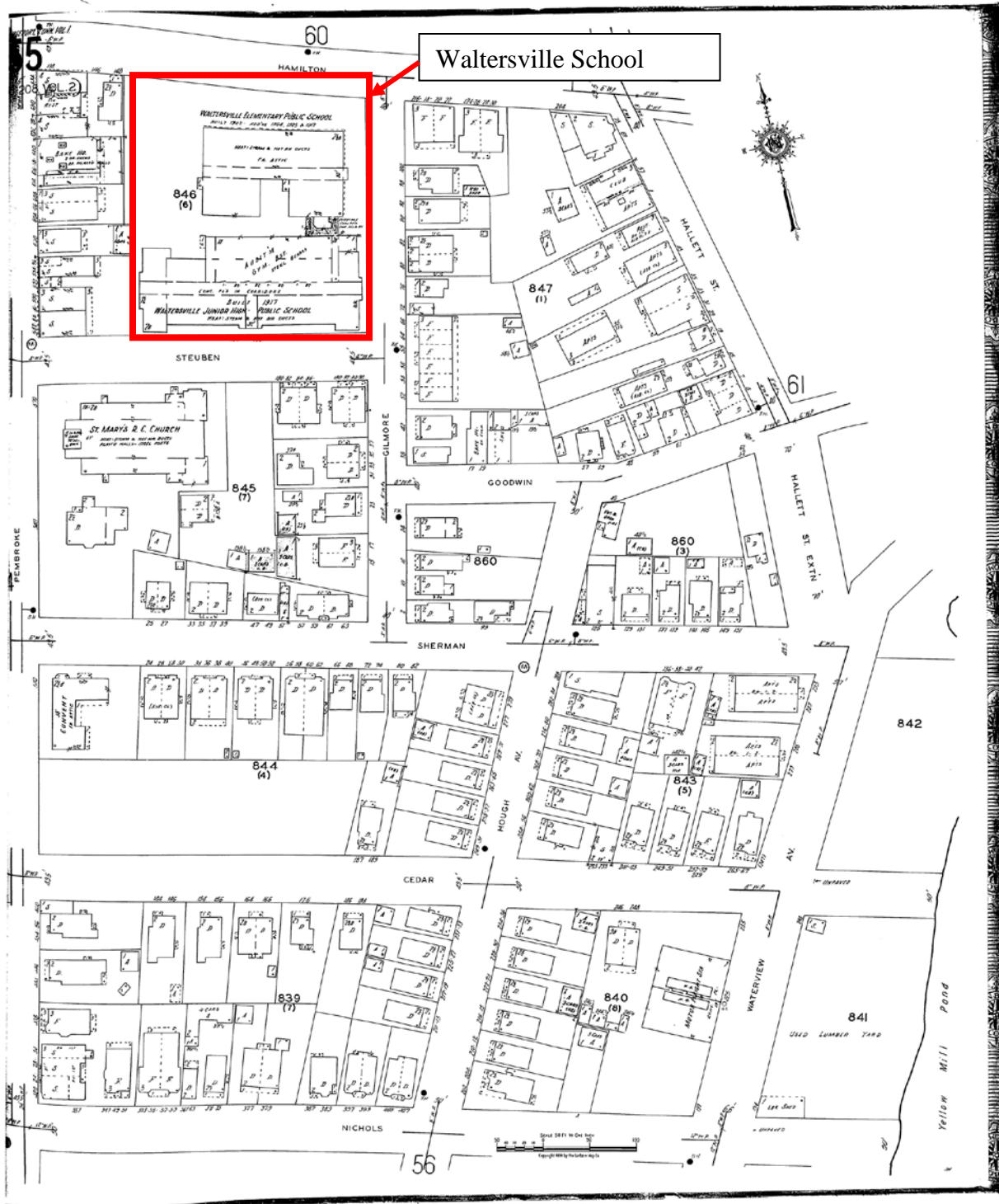


Figure 5. 1939 Sanborn map showing plan and location of Waltersville School.  
(Sanborn Map Company)

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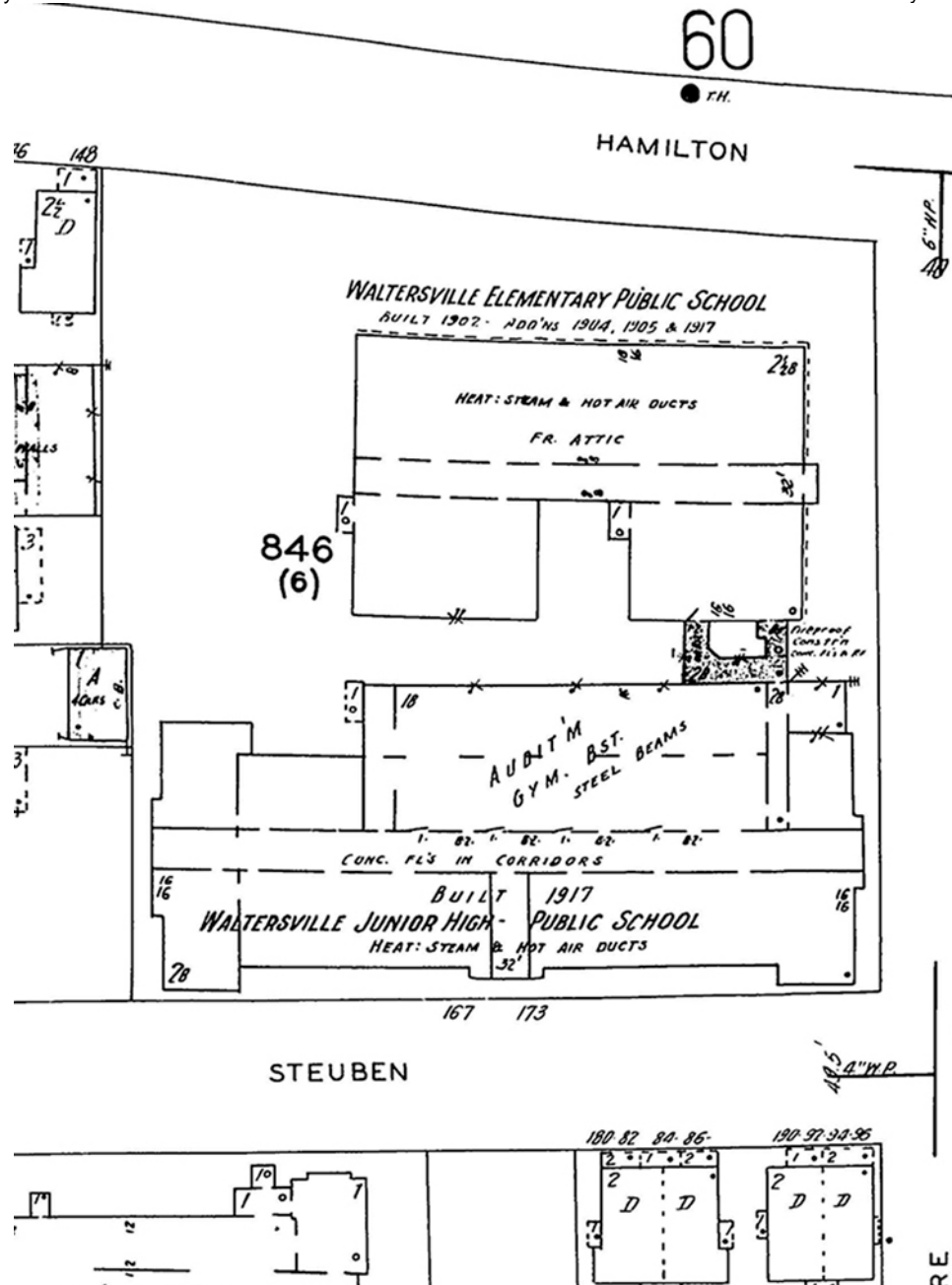


Figure 6. Detail of 1939 Sanborn map showing plan of Waltersville School.  
(Sanborn Map Company)



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Figure 7. Postcard showing completed school c.1920.

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### Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### Photo Log

Name of Property: Waltersville School

City or Vicinity: Bridgeport

County: Fairfield

State: Connecticut

Photographer: Tod Bryant

Date Photographed: January 22, 2018

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photograph 1 of 27. View southwest showing facades on Gilmore Street and north elevation of elementary school.

Photograph 2 of 27. View south showing north elevation of elementary school.

Photograph 3 of 27. View southeast showing north and west elevations of elementary school, part of north elevation of junior high school and west elevation of junior high school.

Photograph 4 of 27. View northeast showing south elevation of elementary school from junior high school auditorium.

Photograph 5 of 27. Waltersville School. View west showing parts of east elevations of both buildings and connecting hyphen.

Photograph 6 of 27. View northwest of facade and east elevation of junior high school.

Photograph 7 of 27. View north showing center entrance on facade of junior high school.

Photograph 8 of 27. View west showing east elevation of junior high school.

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Photograph 9 of 27. View northeast showing west elevation and facade of junior high school.

Photograph 10 of 27. View south showing east and west elevations of elementary school south wings, as well as part of north elevation of junior high school.

Photograph 11 of 27. Interior view east showing stairways and east entrance of elementary school.

Photograph 12 of 27. Interior view southwest showing first floor corridor of elementary school.

Photograph 13 of 27. Interior view south showing connecting corridor from elementary school to junior high school.

Photograph 14 of 27. Interior view southwest showing original paneling, moldings, plaster walls, flooring, stamped metal ceiling and blackboards in typical classroom on north side of elementary school.

Photograph 15 of 27. Interior view east showing original paneling, moldings, plaster walls, flooring, stamped metal ceiling and blackboards in typical classroom on north side of elementary school.

Photograph 16 of 27. Interior view east showing second floor corridor of elementary school.

Photograph 17 of 27. Interior view east showing east entry stairway of junior high school.

Photograph 18 of 27. Interior view east showing corridor south of gymnasium with niches on north wall.

Photograph 19 of 27. Interior view east showing gymnasium with niches on south wall.

Photograph 20 of 27. Interior view east showing corridor first floor corridor of junior high school.

Photograph 21 of 27. Interior view east showing auditorium of junior high school.

Photograph 22 of 27. Interior view east showing second floor corridor of junior high school.

Photograph 23 of 27. Interior view northwest of typical junior high school classroom.

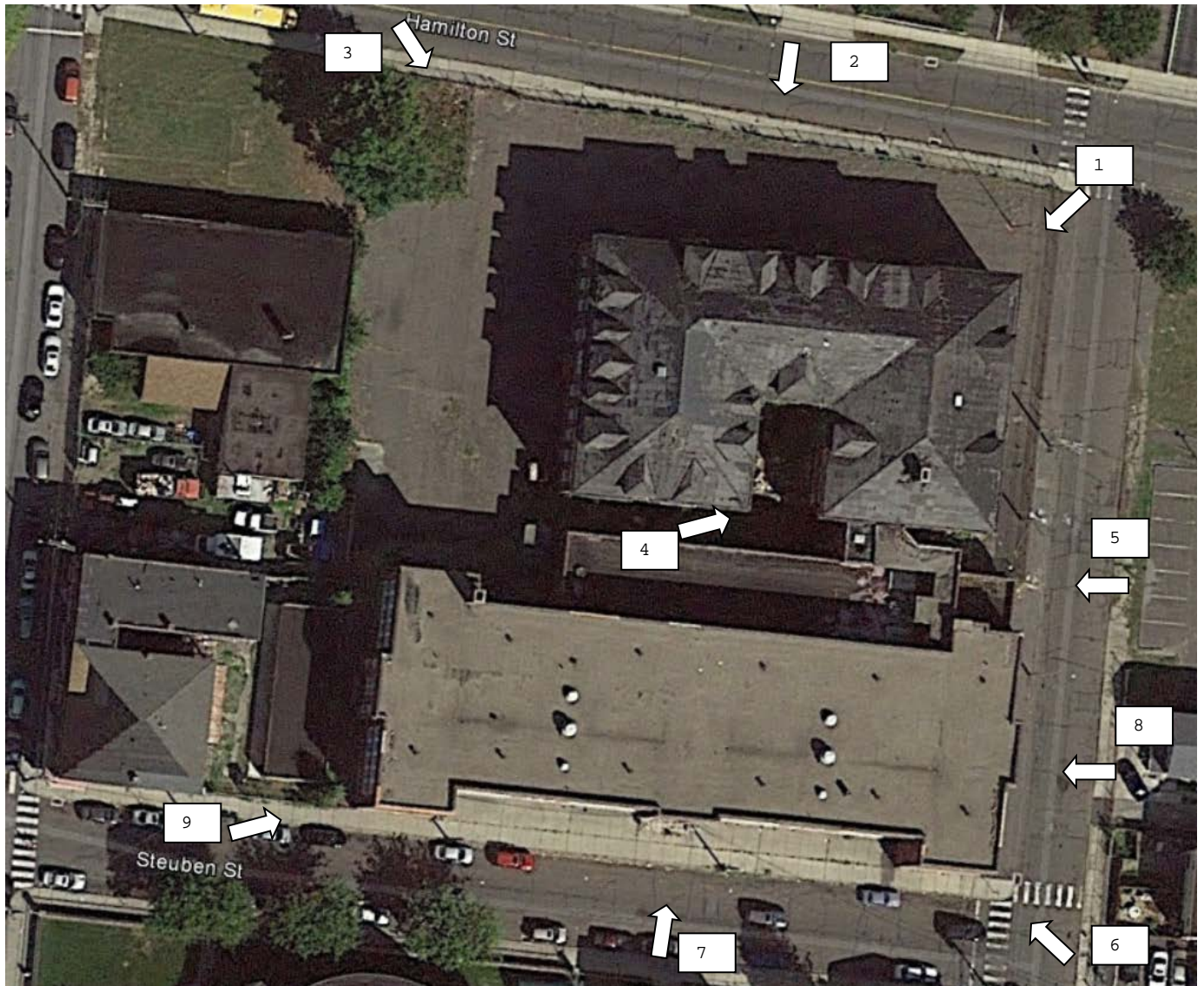
Photograph 24 of 27. Interior view southeast of typical junior high school classroom.

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

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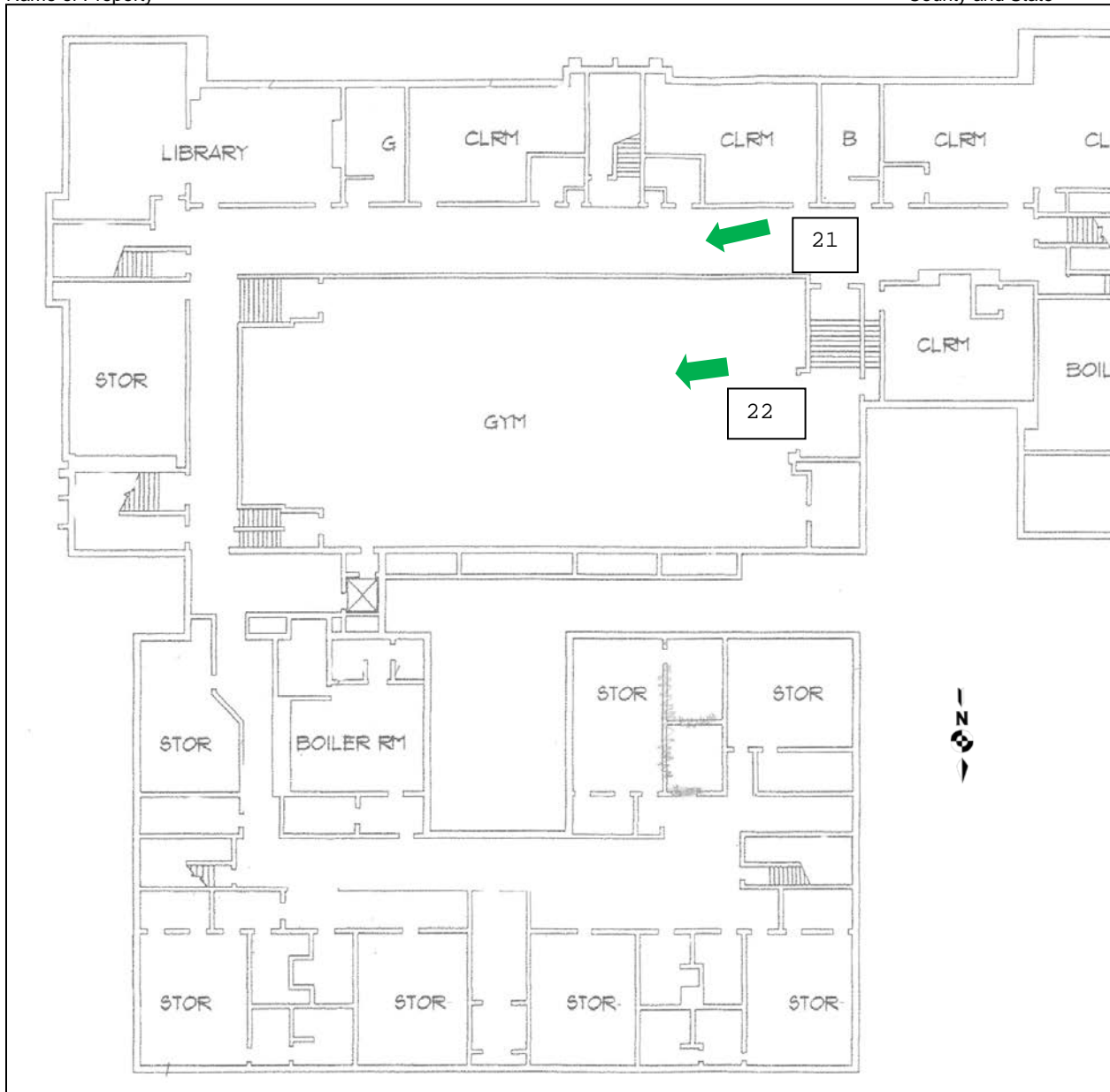
**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



Exterior Photograph Key

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Basement Photograph Key



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First Floor Photograph Key

Waltersville School  
Name of Property

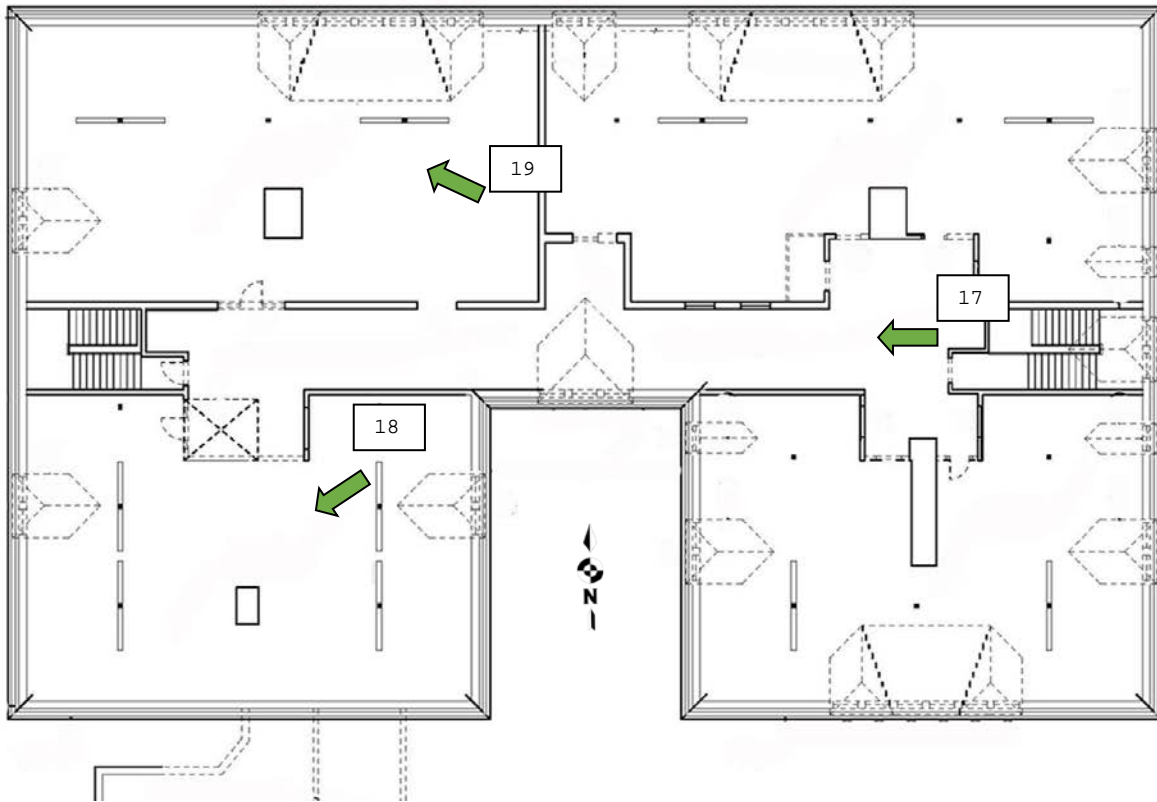
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Second Floor Photograph key

Waltersville School  
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Fairfield County, CT  
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Attic Photo Key



Waltersville School National Register Nomination Photographs



Photo 1 Waltersville School. View southwest showing facades on Gilmore Street and north elevation of elementary school.



Photo 2. View south showing north elevation of elementary school.





Photo 3. View southeast showing north and west elevations of elementary school, part of north elevation of junior high school and west elevation of junior high school.



Photo 4. View northeast showing south elevation of elementary school from junior high school auditorium.





Photo 5. Waltersville School. View west showing parts of east elevations of both buildings and connecting hyphen.



Photo 6. View northwest of facade and east elevation of junior high school.





Photo 7. View north showing center entrance on facade of junior high school.



Photo 8. View west showing east elevation of junior high school.





Photo 9. View northeast showing west elevation and facade of junior high school.



Photo 10. View south showing east and west elevations of elementary school south wings, as well as part of north elevation of junior high school.





Photo 11. Interior view east showing stairways and east entrance of elementary school.



Photo 12. Interior view southwest showing first floor corridor of elementary school.





Photo 13. Interior view south showing connecting corridor from elementary school to junior high school.



Photo 14. Interior view southwest showing original paneling, moldings, plaster walls, flooring, stamped metal ceiling and blackboards in typical classroom on north side of elementary school.





Photo 15. Interior view west showing original paneling, moldings, plaster walls, flooring, stamped metal ceiling and blackboards in typical classroom on north side of elementary school.



Photo 16. Interior view east showing second floor corridor of elementary school.





Photo 17. View west of attic corridor showing wood floor, brick walls and rafters.



Photo 18. Interior view southwest showing wood floor, brick knee walls existing skylight and exposed wood structure in attic of elementary school.





Photo 19. Interior view northwest showing wood floor, brick knee walls, dormers and exposed wood structure in attic of elementary school.



Photo 20. Waltersville School. Interior view east showing east entry stairway of junior high school. .





Photo 21. Interior view east showing corridor south of gymnasium with niches on north wall.



Photo 22. Interior view east showing gymnasium with niches on south wall.





Photo 23. Interior view east showing corridor first floor corridor of junior high school.



Photo 24. Interior view east showing auditorium of junior high school.





Photo 25. Interior view east showing second floor corridor of junior high school.



Photo 26. Interior view northwest of typical junior high school classroom.



Photo 27. Interior view southeast of typical junior high school classroom.