

City of Madison Landmarks Commission  
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM

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Name of Building or Site

Common:	Historic:
Longfellow School	Same

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Location

Street Address: 210 S. Brooks Street, aka 1010 Chandler Street Madison, WI 53715	Aldermanic District:  13 (formerly 9)
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Classification

Type of Property:

Building

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Zoning District:  R3 and R4	Present Use:  School; Hospital and Community Education
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Current Owner of Property

Name(s):

Board of Education, Madison Metropolitan School District

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Street Address:  545 West Dayton Street Madison, WI 53703	Telephone Number:  (608)266-6070
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Legal Description

Parcel Number:  0709-233-0507-7	Legal Description:  Lots 1-4 and 9-12, Block 9, Greenbush Addition
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Condition of Property

Physical Condition:

Fair to Good

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Altered or Unaltered?  Unaltered	Moved or Original Site?  Original Site
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Wall Construction:

Load-bearing brick (1918); Structural clay tile with brick  
veneer (1924, 1938)

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Describe Original and Present Physical Appearance and Construction

Longfellow School is located on the west side of South Brooks Street between Chandler and Mound Streets in Madison's Greenbush neighborhood. It was designed in three phases by Madison architects (James R.) Law, (Edward) Law and (Ellis) Potter. The north end of the building was completed in 1918, the central section in 1924, and the south end in 1938. Longfellow School is a two story building in the formal brick subtype of the Tudor Revival style, sometimes called Elizabethan Revival. Despite the fact that it was designed and built over twenty years, Longfellow presents a unified appearance. The east (main) facade is more or less symmetrical about the projecting central section. It has a reverse L-shaped plan. The 1938 gymnasium, one tall story, forms the tail of the L. The walls are load bearing red brick in running stretcher bond (1918) and structural clay tile with brick veneer (1924 and 1938). The 1918 section has a raised basement. Because the site slopes down toward Chandler Street, the basement becomes the ground floor in the 1938 section. The foundation is poured concrete. The school's flat built-up roof is hidden by a crenelated parapet, finished with a limestone coping. Other details include a limestone water table separating the basement and the first floor, and a limestone string course running around the building above the second floor windows, except on the central projecting section. On this section, a limestone string course, ~~enriched with six grotesques in human form, aligns with the parapet~~ coping of the flanking sections, and is surmounted by a deep parapet with a stepped, curvilinear central gable and pierced stone strapwork ornamentation. There is a stone cartouche in the central gable. Other ornamentation on the school includes rectangular stone panels reading: "Longfellow," and stone spandrels featuring Tudor roses, shields, or squares. The fenestration pattern is almost the same for each floor, and symmetrical except on the south facade. Nearly all the windows are wood, multipaned double hung sash with limestone sills. There are three sets of double doors on the east facade. Each is set in a Tudor arch and surmounted by a label hood mold. The south facade entrance is similar, except that there are two fixed art glass windows above the doors. One depicts a boy seated at a desk, the other a boy playing basketball. On the west (rear) facade there are two sets of double doors on the central section. The 1938 gymnasium has a single door in the west face, and double doors in the north face. Two brick ventilation stacks rise on the west (rear) facade in the central section.

On the interior, the plan consists of a central corridor running north-south with series of rooms opening off of it. There are three stairhalls at irregular intervals east of the corridor, and a fourth at the south end of it. All four are dog-leg staircases of poured concrete with terrazzo treads and landings. Longfellow originally included the following special purpose rooms: a sunken

gymnasium, locker rooms with showers, and manual training rooms in the basement of the 1918 section; a nurse's office and a lunchroom in the basement, a library and an auditorium on the first floor, and industrial arts and nature study rooms on the second floor in the 1924 section; a gymnasium with locker rooms and showers, and dentist and physician's offices on the ground floor, an expanded library on the first floor, and a music room on the second floor (1938 section). Wall finishes include exposed and painted brick (1918), plastered structural clay tile (1924 and 1938), tile (1938) and plastered wood and gypsum partition walls. The flooring in the classrooms is wood. In the corridors and basement/ground floors the finish is linoleum (1918) or terrazzo (1924 and 1938). The sloping floor of the auditorium is concrete. The original ceilings throughout most of the building, excluding the auditorium and gymnasiums, are concealed with dropped acoustical tile ceilings and hanging fluorescent lights. The auditorium retains its original plaster cornice with alternating shield and floral motifs. Above the stage are plaster figures in classical dress, flanked by swags and wreaths. Most of the interior doors are panelled wood with a glass pane in the upper half. Built-in cupboards, closets and cabinets are found throughout the building. In the 1918 section many of the classrooms retain original air-pump clocks and tiny intercom-phones, and the restrooms have original wood stall partitions and doors.

Alterations to Longfellow School's exterior have been confined to the replacement of some of the original windows on the rear facade. The window openings are unchanged. On the interior, temporary partitions have been installed in the basement, restricting access into the basement gymnasium, and in a few classrooms.

City of Madison Landmarks Commission  
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM

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Original Owner:

School Board, Madison  
Metropolitan School District

Original Use:

Elementary School

Architect:

Law, Law and Potter

Architectural Style:

Tudor Revival

Dates of Construction:

1918, 1924 and 1938

Indigenous Materials:

Bibliographic References:

McAlester, Virginia and Lee. A Field Guide to American Houses.  
New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985.

Miller, Elizabeth L. "The History and Adaptive Use of the  
Longfellow School." Master's thesis, Cornell University, 1984.

Mollenhoff, David V. Madison: A History of the Formative Years.  
Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co., 1982.

~~Rankin, Katherine H. Unpublished report of the Intensive Survey of  
the Historic Resources of Madison, no date.~~

Valentine, John Arthur. "A Study in Institutional Americanization:  
The Assimilative History of the Italian-American Community of  
Madison, Wisconsin." Master's thesis, University of Wisconsin,  
1967.

Wisconsin State Journal. 1916 and 1939.

Wright's Madison City Directory. Milwaukee: Wright Directory  
Company, 1925, 1939, 1940.

Form Prepared by

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Historic Preservation Consultant

Organization Represented: Madison Trust for Historic  
Preservation

Address: c/o Rick Bernstein  
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Telephone Number:  
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Date Nomination was Prepared: April 6, 1993

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Significance of the Nominated Property

Longfellow School, built in three phases between 1918 and 1938, is architecturally significant as a fine local example of the rare formal brick subtype of the Tudor Revival style sometimes called Elizabethan Revival; of the work of the prominent local architecture firm Law, Law and Potter; and as a school building representing the evolution of elementary education during the early twentieth century. In addition, the building has historical and cultural significance for its association with, and as a symbol of, the ethnically rich Greenbush neighborhood.

Historical Background

In 1869, anticipating that a new school would be needed, the City of Madison purchased block nine of the Greenbush Addition for \$3,000 from Dr. Chandler Chapman and his wife Eugenia.<sup>1</sup> Growth in the "Bush" was slow until about 1875. Between 1875 and 1910, population in the Bush increased rapidly. The ethnic composition was primarily German and Irish until the mid-1890s.<sup>2</sup> In 1891, the city conveyed block nine to the Board of Education, "for a schoolhouse thereon," for one dollar.<sup>3</sup> The Board of Education sold lots 5 through 8, which face South Mills Street, to raise money to build the school.<sup>4</sup> Greenbush Public School was erected at Chandler and South Brooks Streets, on the southeast corner of the present Longfellow site, and opened in the fall of 1892.<sup>5</sup>

During the 1890s, the character of the Bush began to change as Russian Jews settled in the area. They tended to cluster along Mound Street near South Park Street. Between 1900 and 1915, the ethnic diversity of the Bush increased as Italian immigrants settled in the neighborhood. Many purchased homes in the "Triangle," that part of the Bush that lies east of South Park Street between Regent Street and West Washington Avenue. Fully 99 percent were from Sicily. One third were Albanian-Italians. A

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<sup>1</sup>Warranty Deeds, Dane County, vol. 144, p. 137.

<sup>2</sup>Elizabeth L. Miller, "The History and Adaptive Use of the Longfellow School", (Master's thesis, Cornell University, 1984,) pp. 7-9.

<sup>3</sup>Warranty Deeds, Dane County, vol. 144, p. 137.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 265.

<sup>5</sup>Miller, pp. 35-36.

fierce rivalry existed between the Albanian-Italians and their compatriots, each supporting separate churches and clubs.<sup>6</sup>

Greenbush Public School was renamed Longfellow around 1902. In 1909, a second school building was erected on the Longfellow site, north and west of the 1892 building. The 1909 structure was probably designed by the prominent Madison architectural firm of (Louis) Claude and (Edward) Starck, best known for their Prairie Style buildings.<sup>7</sup> When the 1909 building was completed, it was called Longfellow School, and the 1892 building became Longfellow Annex.<sup>8</sup>

Burgeoning enrollment led to the construction of the north section of the present Longfellow School, completed in 1918. Designed in the formal brick subtype of the Tudor Revival style by Madison architect James R. Law, the two-story structure was called, in concert with the 1892 structure, the Longfellow Annex. It opened in the fall of 1918.<sup>9</sup>

During the teens, living conditions in the Bush became a concern of the citizens of Madison. A study done in 1916 revealed that one-third of all the homes in the Bush had no city water connection and even more were overcrowded. That same year, a national housing expert reported that the Bush had all the aspects of a large city slum. He became the first to advocate urban renewal for Greenbush.<sup>10</sup>

By 1920, the ethnic composition of the Bush included approximately 20 percent each of Germans, Russian-Jews and Italians, and six

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<sup>6</sup>Miller, pp. 11-12; and John Arthur Valentine, "A Study in Institutional Americanization: The Assimilative History of the Italian-American Community of Madison, Wisconsin," (Master's thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1967), pp. 79-86.

<sup>7</sup>Gordon D. Orr, Jr., "Louis W. Claude: Madison Architect of the Prairie Style," The Prairie School Review, vol. XIV, final issue, 1981, p. 6.

<sup>8</sup>Madison City Directory: 1914, (Madison: G.R. Angell and Co., 1914).

<sup>9</sup>Madison Metropolitan School District, enrollment figures; and James R. Law, original plans for Longfellow School, May 1, 1917.

<sup>10</sup>Mollenhoff, pp. 352-53; Henry Barnbrock, Jr., "Housing Conditions of the Italian Community in Madison," (Senior thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1916), p. 7; and WSJ, May 20 and 21, 1916.

percent African-Americans. These ethnic mini-communities would remain an integral part of the Bush until urban renewal.<sup>11</sup>

In 1924, the central section of the present Longfellow School was constructed. It was designed by James and Edward Law to match the original section. The expanded building continued to be known as the Longfellow Annex, while the 1892 schoolhouse became Longfellow School and the 1909 building became Longfellow Junior High School.<sup>12</sup>

The 1892 building was razed in 1938, and the south section of the present Longfellow School built as a Public Works Administration (P.W.A.) project. It was designed by (James) Law, (Edward) Law and (Ellis) Potter to harmonize with the remainder of the building. The junior high at the rear of the site was demolished about 1940. From that time until 1972, when an alternative high school opened in the building, Longfellow served only elementary students.<sup>13</sup>

In 1957, the city inaugurated an urban renewal program. Despite considerable opposition from Greenbush residents, 52 acres in the Bush, including all of the Triangle, were razed between 1962 and 1965. As a result, much of the Italian and African-American communities were relocated. In the mid-1960s, Longfellow's enrollment declined, and never recovered. Longfellow's use as an elementary school was discontinued in 1980. Since that time, the School Board has leased it to Meriter (formerly Madison General) Hospital. The hospital's employee and community education programs, CPR center, data processing and computer training are housed in the school. In addition, the gymnasiums are used for employee exercise, and the School Board retains one educational program in the building, School Age Maternity.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Miller, pp. 14-15.

<sup>12</sup>James and Edward Law, original plans, February 14, 1924; and Wright's Madison City Directory: 1925, (Madison: Wright Publishing Co., 1925).

<sup>13</sup>Law, Law and Potter, original plans, July 22, 1938; and Wright's Madison City Directory: 1940, (Madison: Wright Publishing Co., 1940)

<sup>14</sup>Madison Metropolitan School District, enrollment figures; Valentine, p. 73; WHA, "The Triangle: A Three-Cornered Circle," December, 1983; and Miller, pp. 16-17.

Architectural Significance

Longfellow School is architecturally significant as an excellent local example of the rare formal brick Tudor Revival subtype, sometimes called Elizabethan Revival; as the work of an outstanding local architecture firm, Law, Law and Potter; and as a school building representing the evolution of elementary education in the U.S. during the early twentieth century.

There are numerous fine residential examples of the half-timbered and stone cottage subtypes of Tudor Revival in Madison, especially in the Vilas, University Heights and Nakoma neighborhoods. There is even one school building in the half-timbered style: Randall Elementary (1906, NHRP). In contrast, the formal brick subtype is rare in Madison. It was generally used for larger projects and built primarily between 1905 and 1920. Characteristics of this substyle include Flemish shaped gables and ornamental strapwork; parapets, often castellated and/or with finials; large elaborate chimneys; Tudor arched doorways enriched with stone, especially quoining; Tudor and Renaissance ornamentation; and grouped windows. Longfellow School displays nearly all of these elements. It compares well to the few other formal brick Tudor examples in Madison, such as the Delta Upsilon House (1906) on the University of Wisconsin campus.<sup>15</sup>

Law, Law and Potter was one of two premier architectural firms in Madison during the post-World War I era. James R. Law founded his own firm in 1914, and made his brother Edward his partner in 1919. Ellis Potter joined the firm in 1926. Madison projects included the Gay Building (the city's first skyscraper), the Tenney Building, the Wisconsin Power and Light Building, the First Congregational Church, two wings of Madison General Hospital, West High School, Marquette Elementary School, many residences and several fraternities. Law, Law and Potter was also active outside of Madison in southern Wisconsin and northern Illinois. The successor firm, Potter Lawson, is still operating.<sup>16</sup>

As a school building type, Longfellow reflects the changes taking place in elementary school curriculum in the early twentieth centuries. During this time, the curriculum expanded beyond the

<sup>15</sup>Barbara Wyatt, Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin, (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986), vol 2, page 2-30; and Virginia and Lee McAlester, A Field Guide to American Houses, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), pages 354-70.

<sup>16</sup>Katherine Rankin, unpublished report of the Intensive Survey of the Historic Resources of Madison, no date; and Miller, pp. 167-9.



"three Rs." Attention was directed at developing well-rounded individuals with the inclusion of "manual training" in metal and woodworking, and sewing. A rising concern for health and nutrition led to the inclusion of a gymnasium, lunchroom, and nurse's, physician's and/or dentist's offices in the state-of-the-art school. An auditorium was included reflecting a new view of the role of the elementary school, serving as a community center. Libraries also came into vogue during this period. Longfellow incorporated all of these ideas.<sup>17</sup>

#### Historical Significance

From the mid-1850s until the mid-1960s, Greenbush maintained a concentration of ethnic mini-communities unmatched by any other Madison neighborhood. In the nineteenth century, Irish and Germans predominated. After the turn of the century, Greenbush was home to Italians, Russian Jews, African-Americans and Germans. While much of the housing stock of the German enclave remains, and remnants of the Italian community are evident in the restaurants and groceries along Regent and Park Streets, all vestiges of the Jewish and African-American communities have disappeared. No one building symbolizes the Bush's lost ethnic heritage better than Longfellow School. Here, the children of all these communities were brought together and educated. Longfellow's significance is especially important now that much of the Bush is gone.

In conclusion, Longfellow School, built in three phases between 1918 and 1938, is architecturally significant as a fine local example of the rare formal brick subtype of the Tudor Revival style; of the work of the prominent local architecture firm Law, Law and Potter; and as a school building representing the evolution of elementary education during the early twentieth century. In addition, the building has historical and cultural significance for its association with, and as a symbol of, the ethnically rich Greenbush neighborhood.

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<sup>17</sup>Miller, pp. 44-45.

