

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only
received
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic George W. Guthrie School

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 643 North Washington Street ___ not for publication

city, town Wilkes-Barre ___ vicinity of congressional district

state code county code

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name *New Owner*
~~Wilkes-Barre Area School District~~

street & number ~~730 South Main Street~~

city, town ~~Wilkes-Barre~~ ___ vicinity of state Pennsylvania

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Luzerne County Court House

street & number North River and West North Streets

city, town Wilkes-Barre state

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Historic Sites Survey of Wilkes-Barre has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date Completed October 1979 federal state county local

depository for survey records Wyoming Historical and Geological Society

city, town Wilkes-Barre state Pennsylvania

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The building is a four-story High School with a single block-like mass (no wings) and a hip roof. Overall dimensions are 136 feet across the front by 109 feet deep, and 56 feet high to the top of the cornice. The top of the hip roof is 70 feet above the ground, and above that there is a small, centrally located penthouse, bringing the overall height to 83 feet.

Classrooms are organized along a single double-loaded corridor on each floor, with windows facing Northwest (front), and Southeast (rear). There are nine bays along each facade. These bays are both the structural fenestration bays.

Windows cover approximately sixty percent of the area of the front and rear facades, the remainder being finished in brick, stone, and terracotta. The sidewalls (Southwest and Northeast) have fewer windows. There is a continuous band of windows at the fourth floor, and a four-floor glass "curtain wall" for the stairwells which are located at either end of the central corridors. The roof features six large skylights.

The building's structural system is a steel frame, completely fire-proofed, with reinforced concrete and tile-arch floor and roof decks.

The exterior is brick, with stone and terracotta ornament and trim. The sloping roof is slate. The penthouse is reinforced concrete with no other finish. Windows are double-hung wood sash, and were originally double glazed (i.e. two sheets of glass set $\frac{1}{2}$ " apart in each sash).

The exterior has experienced no alteration other than deterioration and minor vandalism. All major materials appear to be original and in relatively good condition. Windows on the front and sides are original, windows on the rear have had their sash removed, and are boarded up. Interior modifications are also limited.

The original construction drawings exist, and confirm that materials are original.

When new, the Guthrie School represented the state-of-art in school building design. The use of structural steel and reinforced concrete made possible design. The use of structural steel and reinforced concrete made possible fire-proof construction, large spaces for general and vocational instruction, and permitted large glazed areas to maximize classroom lighting. The windows were double-glazed to conserve heat, and also reduced condensation and comfort problems that such large areas can cause. The heating system was outfitted

11/78)

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with humidifiers, and separately controlled heating coils for each room. A large air shaft drew fresh air for ventilation from the top of the building. Original artificial lighting included both gas and electric system. In addition to avoiding combustible materials, the building contains an elaborate fire exit system. The steel frame, large window area and massive scale were relatively innovative features of the building, and the response is a similarly innovative architectural style. Traditional materials and detailing are used on these new forms, in a manner perhaps reminiscent of the Chicago School's approach to skyscrapers around the turn of the century.

Prominent features:

1. A cornice a full story in height, consisting of a projecting terracotta shelf/ gutter supported by a large terracotta brackets, with windows framed between the brackets.
2. Brick walls with pilasters in the manner of conventional bearing wall detailing.
3. Relatively plain stone and terracotta ornament at entrance.

The original school included two open "pavillions," extending on either side and in the rear. These pavillions had iron columns, steel trusses, concrete floors, and no sides. They were presumably for recreational purposes. In 1922, both were enclosed to accommodate industrial and domestic arts classrooms. The southern pavillion no longer exists, having been demolished. Only the concrete floor remains. The northern pavillion stands in ruin, the victim of a fire.

The building sits atop a hill, making it one of the tallest, and most prominent structure in the city.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates

Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

When the George W. Guthrie School first opened in September 1915, it was an innovation in the educational and architectural history of Wilkes-Barre, and a product of the prosperity the anthracite industry brought to the region. Being an extraordinarily elaborate building, it represented a major investment in education. It is located on a hill in the northern portion of the City, where it is a prominent landmark, clearly intended to be a highly visible monument to the community's commitment to public education.

The building was intended to accommodate 1,225 pupils. Eighteen classrooms were expected to hold 900 students. The building's in educational history was not for creating classes of 50 students each, but for the planned inclusion of facilities for pupils with special needs. In addition to the eighteen regular classrooms, the building included one room for 25 "backward children", one manual training room for 150, and a cooking and dressing department for another 150. The school was the first in Wilkes-Barre to have such special facilities included in its design. At the time, manual training and home economics were only beginning to be widely included in elementary curricula across the nation, and the measurement of intelligence to identify "backward children" with special educational needs was in its infancy.

Americans were first introduced to manual training as an integrated part of school curricula by an exhibit of the Moscow Imperial Technical School at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876. In the 1870's and 1880's educators hotly debated the wisdom of including manual training in school programs. By 1890 only 36 cities in 15 states had schools with manual training and home economics programs. While the National Association of Manufacturers advocated manual training in the schools as a way to circumvent union regulations of apprenticeships, trade unions often opposed the programs as training grounds for strike breakers. The National Society for the Promotion of Industrial Education, founded by liberal educators in 1906, began to modify resistance from the American Federation of Labor in 1907 and 1908. Finally, in 1910, an A.F. of L. committee headed by former United Mine Workers president John Mitchell, recommended that the labor movement press for public trade schools to give a balanced combination of general education and shop instruction.

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The Wilkes-Barre School Board passed a resolution to introduce domestic art, domestic science, and manual training in the grades on September 15, 1913. A similar resolution had been narrowly defeated September, 1896, although private manual training classes had been held in the basement of the Wilkes-Barre Central High School since 1889. The 1913 resolution is significant because it followed fairly soon after the labor movement adopted its new stance, and because it introduced the new curriculum in the grades at a time when large numbers of students did not go to high school. Inclusion of industrial and domestic arts facilities in the new Guthrie School was tangible evidence of a willingness to adopt what was an innovation in education.

Similarly, the provision of facilities for "backward children" was early evidence of a progressive approach to education. Alfred Binet's idea of measuring learning ability with a series of graded problems was only developed between 1905 and 1908. The fascination with testing ability and achievement in specific areas was brand new when Guthrie School was built.

The school was built with latest educational innovations in mind. It was itself architecturally innovation. Advances in technology which made steel frame and reinforced concrete construction possible also made it possible to incorporate large areas of glass to provide natural interior lighting. Even in an era of extremely inexpensive fuel, the building used double glass and weather stripping to conserve heat. Classroom space was flexible. Sliding doors allowed two smaller rooms to be joined and used as one large space. Maintenance was made easier by minimizing use of dust-trapping moulding and projections in the interior finish. Amenities such as a teacher's rest room and kitchenette were included.

The building incorporated a variety of safety features. Wood floors were used only in rooms. Halls, toilets, handrails, wainscoating, and baseboards were all of fireproof materials. Enclosed staircases to the ground, and exits from the third and fourth floors to the roof provided additional fire safety.

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The school's architect, Robert Ireland, was an important local figure. He designed many school buildings in Wyoming Valley, as well as a number of coal breakers. In 1912, two years earlier, Robert Ireland designed another school for Wilkes-Barre, named the Weaver School. This structure is much smaller, having only three floors and twelve classrooms, but bears certain strong resemblances to the later Guthrie project. It featured very similar staircases at both ends, enclosed by glass curtain walls. Architecturally, it would appear that the Weaver building was a small "experiment", with principles which were subsequently refined and enlarged in the Guthrie School. The Weaver building is not included in this nomination because, although still standing, it has been seriously altered in recent years.

George W. Guthrie, incidentally, was Superintendent of Schools in Wilkes-Barre until his death in 1913.

The Guthrie School is the embodiment of a host of the most up-to-date advances in American education and architecture. Just before World War I, progressive attitudes and the opulence of design and construction were the products of an economic boom period before the war. With the exception of the war years of 1917 and 1918, when over 43,500,000 tons and 42,700,000 tons of anthracite respectively shipped from the Wyoming District, peak exports of over 41,000,000 tons were reached in 1911, 1913, and 1914. Although the rate of population growth had slowed somewhat since the last decades of the nineteenth century, Wilkes-Barre still experienced a 42% increase in population between 1900 and 1920, most of it occurring between 1900 and 1910.

The prosperity created by coal inspired a building boom which gave Wilkes-Barre some of its grandest buildings, the Spring Water Supply Company and James M. Coughlin High School in 1911, the Penn Tobacco Company in 1912, and the Miner's Bank Building by D.H. Burnham and Company nearing completion in 1912. In 1911 the Board of Trade became the Chamber of Commerce and moved into more elegant quarters. In 1913 the Chamber sponsored the Greater Wilkes-Barre Industrial Exposition in the Penn Tobacco building which made \$6,000 that became the nucleus of a Chamber of Commerce building fund.

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Another sign of prosperity was the fact that many firms such as Hazard Wire, Rope Works, Sheldon Axle Company, and Miner-Hillard Milling Company cut working hours and increased worker's pay in 1915. Guthrie School was part of the building boom made possible by economic developments.

Prosperity made the school possible, population growth made it necessary. The need to cope with a substantial foreign born population contributed to the appeal offered by new educational strategies.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 1 3/4 acres

Quadrangle name _____

Quadrangle scale _____

UMT References

A

18	27	700
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4	5	67	3	20
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B

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Verbal boundary description and justification

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title William Siener and Frank Grauman

organization Wyoming Historical & Geological Society

date January 1980

street & number 49 South Franklin Street

telephone (717) 823-6244

city or town Wilkes-Barre

state Pennsylvania

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title	date
-------	------

For HCRS use only I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	date
---	------

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:	date
---------	------

Chief of Registration

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 1 3/4 acres

Quadrangle name Pittston, Pa.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

18	27	700	45	67	320
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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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E

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F

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G

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state code county code

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State Historic Preservation Officer signature

ED WEINTRAUB, State Historic

title Preservation Officer

date April 9, 1980

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Phillips, Edward. "History of Wilkes-Barre and Luzerne County". 14 volumes. Typed MSS notes, Wyoming Historical and Geological Society, n.d.

Saward, F.A. The Coal Trade: The Year Book of the Coal and Coke Industry.

Smith, S.R. Leaders in Thought and Action. Wilkes-Barre, 1910.

Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Commerce, : The George W. Guthrie New School Building. "Chamber of Commerce Journal," Volume X, number 4

Wilkes-Barre Record, April 24, 1889; September 7, 1896, September 16, 1913.

George W. Guthrie School
 Luzerne County
 Zone 18 E427700 N4567320

(WILKES-BARRE WEST)
 5866 111 NW



41°15' 75°52'30" 2.1 MI. TO U.S. 11 2 520 000 FEET

GEORGETOWN 1.7 MI. HAZELTON 28 MI.

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey

Control by USGS, USC&GS, and USCE

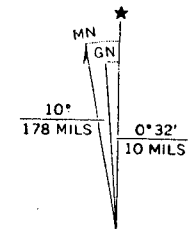
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1942. Field checked 1947

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
 10,000-foot grid based on Pennsylvania coordinate system, north zone
 1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 18, shown in blue

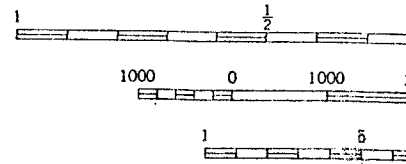
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown

Revisions shown in purple compiled in cooperation with State of Pennsylvania agencies, from aerial photographs taken 1969
 This information not field checked

Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas



UTM GRID AND 1969 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET



THIS MAP COMPLIES FOR SALE BY U. S. GEO A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRA