

7. Local survey organization  
 Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation

8. property owners name and address  
 Housing Authority of Pittsburgh  
 Attn: Peg Charny  
 200 Ross Street  
 Pittsburgh, PA 15219

9. tax parcel number/other number  
 12L-296

10. U.T.M. Zone easting  
 17 587270  
 one acre  
 usgs sheet: Pgh. East 1:24000  
 4417154210  
 northing

12. classification  
 site ( ) structure ( ) object ( )  
 building (X) district ( )  
 thematic (X)

13. date(s) (how determined)  
 1874

14. period  
 1861-1880

15. style, design or folk type  
 Italianate

19. original use  
 School

20. present use  
 Apartments

16. architect or engineer  
 T.D. Evans

17. contractor or builder

18. primary building mat./construc.  
 Brick

21. condition  
 good

22. integrity  
 fair

23. site plan with north arrow

BLACK AND WHITE PRINT(S)  
 3 1/2" x 5" enlargement or medium format contact  
 note location of negative in block 24.

24. photo notation

25. file/location

26. brief description (note unusual features, integrity, environment, threats and associated buildings)  
 Morse School is a grand three story, seven-by-eight-bay Italianate school which anchors the east end of a small scale residential district of row houses. The school is unique in the City for its period of construction, exterior integrity, and lavish detailing despite recent alterations.  
 (continue on back if necessary)

27. history, significance and/or background  
 The Morse School was an important social, cultural and architectural element of its South Side neighborhood when it was built in 1874. At that time the area was populated with Scotch-Irish, German and Welsh immigrants who lived in riverside and semi-rural estates. They floated a \$66,000 bond issue to have the school built. An 1876 History of Allegheny County asserts how important new school buildings were perceived to be by the citizenry of the time:  
 (continue on back if necessary)

28. sources of information  
 Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Files  
 Progress 1911-1941. Pittsburgh: Board of

29. prepared by:  
 Lu Donnelly  
 PHLF

Computer Coding (BHP Survey Grantees Must Complete)

30. date  
 5/85

31. county 003 32. style 11;  
 32. construction material 03; 34. roof \_\_\_\_\_  
 35. design type \_\_\_\_\_  
 36. historic function 08 0 3 01 P;  
 37. construction feature \_\_\_\_\_; 38. ext. walls 03; 39. plan \_\_\_\_\_  
 40. facade width 6 41. roof material \_\_\_\_\_ 42. stories E 43. depth \_\_\_\_\_  
 44. ext. design \_\_\_\_\_  
 45. int. design \_\_\_\_\_

1. County Allegheny  
 2. municipality Pittsburgh  
 3. street address or specific location 2418 Sarah Street  
 4. survey code  
 5. present name Morse Gardens  
 6. other name (historic name if any) Samuel F. B. Morse School

26. (cont.)

The hip roof with deck has a flat roofed central cupola with a wooden balustrade. Multiple short brick chimneys and air shafts pierce the roof at interior spots. The eaves are lined with large carved brackets and a wood paneled frieze.

The building's main block is squarish, but there are gabled projections to the north, east, and west. Brick quoining lines each corner, and corbeling marks the bottom of the cornice. Most of the windows on all stories are segmentally arched aluminum two "over" two double sash in wooden frames, with stone hood moldings. On the facade, the hood moldings have incised ornaments at the corner blocks.

The gabled projection at the center of the north facade has a signature stone reading "Morse Sub-District Public School." There are paired windows in the center of the upper two floors; third floor windows are rounded arch. The first floor has an entryway with a recessed porch under three stone pointed arches supported by columns with composite capitals. The porch is now enclosed by curved glass and a piece of stair railing from the 1905 annex (demolished), the original entry wall is preserved in place behind the glass wall.

During recent rehabilitation of the interior, a three story atrium lit by skylights replaced the original central hallway. Each classroom was converted to two one bedroom apartments. The original stairways were removed from the core of the building and a new stairway was built in the place of the eastern sanitary tower. The sanitary tower on the west was removed to accommodate the entry to a new apartment wing. The new wing to the west is five stories but matches the three tall stories of the 1874 school in height. It is built of reddish brick and measures approximately fifty by one hundred feet. The addition was designed with the approval of the Pennsylvania Bureau for Historic Preservation to meet guidelines for additions to historic buildings.

27. (cont)

The change from the primitive log school-house of 1800 to the costly and magnificent structures of the present day is wonderful, illustrating as it does the advance of civilization, morality, and religion.

Along with local churches, the forty-seven schools and major additions built in Pittsburgh in the 1870's were repositories for civic pride and moral fervor. Morse School epitomizes this attitude.

Before its recent adaptive re-use, Morse School displayed the typical 1870's school-house plan: wide central cross-shaped hallways on each of several floors, with stairways at each end of the plan's cross bar and classrooms leading off of the central hall. Originally Morse School had thirteen classrooms, an auditorium on the third floor, and a teachers' room and principal's office on the first floor.

EVALUATION

EVALUATOR(S)

PENNSYLVANIA HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY FORM  
OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION Box 1026  
PA HISTORICAL & MUSEUM COMMISSION Harrisburg, PA 17120

ADDITIONAL PHOTOS -- References:

1 County Allegheny  
2 Municipality Pittsburgh  
3 Street address or specific location 2418 Sarah Street  
4 Survey code  
Page

27. (cont.)

Morse School was designed by Thomas D. Evans (1844-1903). Evans apprenticed with the local firm of Barr and Moser until 1871 when he began a solo practice.

The plan and facade configuration of Morse School were similar to that of the 1870 Oakland District Soho Public School (14th Ward) (demolished) which was designed by Barr and Moser. Morse is a standard school pattern of the 1870's, competently but not innovatively designed.

An ornate cupola with Gothic arches once graced the central roof; it has been removed. The school bell has now been preserved in the lobby of the school. A classical annex was added to the original school in 1905, but it was demolished in 1984 because of structural damage. Sanitary towers were added to the 1874 school in 1916. In the 1930's the school was converted to a girl's vocational facility and the third story auditorium became a gymnasium.

Morse School was closed in 1979. In 1980 the Pittsburgh Board of Public Education donated the structure to the Pittsburgh Housing Authority. In 1984 the structure was converted into thirty one bedroom rent subsidized public housing units with a new forty-apartment wing added to the west. The \$3.4 million conversion was Federally funded requiring the project to meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation of historic properties. It was designed by the firm of Paul Charles Apostolow and Associates.

The school is named for Samuel F (inley) B (reese) Morse, the artist and inventor, who had died two years before the building's erection.

1. History of Allegheny County (Philadelphia: L.H. Everts and Co., 1876), p. 66.

*significance: architecture, education*

28. (cont.)

Education, 1941

Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property consists of Allegheny County block and lot 12L-296 which encompasses the school building and contiguous grounds.

