

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

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date entered

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

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

**1. Name**

historic Charles S. Foos Elementary School  
and/or common Douglass and Weiser School

**2. Location**

street & number Douglass & Weiser Streets N/A not for publication  
city, town Reading, N/A vicinity of congressional district  
state PA code 42 county Berks code 011

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input 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	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: vacant

**4. Owner of Property**

name Reading City School Board  
street & number 8th & Washington Streets  
city, town Reading N/A vicinity of state PA

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Berks County Courthouse  
street & number  
city, town Reading state PA

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Reading Historic Sites Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no  
date 1978  federal  state  county  local  
depository for survey records PHMC / Reading City Hall  
city, town Harrisburg/Reading state PA

## 7. Description

### Condition

excellent

good

fair

deteriorated

ruins

unexposed

### Check one

unaltered

altered

### Check one

original site

moved date \_\_\_\_\_

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Charles Foos School (aka Douglass and Weiser) was constructed in 1903 in the Victorian Romanesque style typical of Reading schools at that time. Designed by Mr. Head and built by James Matz, it was 2 stories with 8 classrooms, a red brick facade, ashlar sandstone lower course, multiple gabled roof, and 9 bays. In 1912, expansion and renovations resulted in a Classical Revival facade and extension of the school the entire block width (plans attached). The original design can still be seen in the arched entry section of the Douglass St. facade. The architect for this transformation was Edward Scholl. Changes included new window treatments, removal of gabled roofs and lowering of chimneys, and a facade which was extremely decorative for a school building. A second addition in 1921 enlarged the western portion of the Douglass St. facade. The building's facade integrity has been maintained since.

The school has a C-shaped plan, with a school yard and main entrance between the arms of the C along Douglass St. In addition to the Flemish bond red brick, cream brick is used decoratively under the cornice and around the windows. Windows are original grey wood sash and frame, composed of double hung sash, 9/4 lights with 3 light fixed transoms above. A number of windows appear in multiple sets with pilasters and a pediment above the first story central window and bracketed mullions. The large size and number of windows reflects emphasis on natural light.

There are 5 public entrances - 3 on the Douglass Street facades and one each on Ritter and Weiser Streets. The central entrance is a one-story half hexagon with stone and terra cotta pediments on segmented columns, extruding into the school yard. All entrances have stairs and half-light panel wood doors with glazed transoms. The original 1903 entrance has a roman arch, flanking portholes, and 4 arched windows above. The remaining three entrances are topped by decorative pediments along the roof line.

The roof is very low pitch with a parapet wall around it, interrupted by pediments. The cornice is highly decorative with ornamental molding and brackets. Both cornice and pediments have a variety of planes and articulations. Cornice fascia is in rhythm with dentils, punctuated vertically by dovetail trim. There is a panelled frieze between the first and second stories. Main decorative materials are terra cotta, cast stone, and wood. A brick drip course is below the cornice.

The rear of the building is brick with a drip course above the second story windows.

The school yard is edged with a cobblestone bank and covered with macadam. There is a cast stone flag pole base inscribed "1914" with a 60' pole in it. Sidewalks surrounding the schoolyard are brick.

The exterior of the building is in fair condition, in need of paint, repointing of mortar, and cleaning. Many windows must be replaced.

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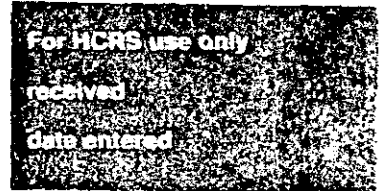
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Charles S. Foos Elementary School,  
Berk Co., PA.

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The building interior contains 21 classrooms, 15' wide hallways, a full basement and a large auditorium (80'L x 40'W x 27'H) which seats over 200. A center coffered grid skylight in the auditorium has been painted shut. There are 4 stair towers. The interior is in poor condition due to water damage from a deteriorated roof, vandalism, and a recent fire.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input 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 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 checked="" 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** 1903-1921      **Builder/Architect** Head-1903      Scholl-1912

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The Charles S. Foos Elementary School is significant for its architectural style and integrity as well as its educational prominence in the Reading school system. It is one of only seven remaining school buildings of the more than 50 existing in Reading in 1923, and it is unique as the only school in the Classical Revival style.

Foos was constructed in 1903 in the northwest section of Reading, a middle class neighborhood of Queen Anne houses which began developing in the 1890's. Known then as the Douglass and Weiser School, it served grades 1-8. Originally designed by Mr. Head as an 8 room Victorian Romanesque school house (typical in Reading), it occupied the eastern portion of the block and was the first school in Reading to have an extensive playground, 110' x 114', purchased for that purpose in 1906.

In 1912, it was transformed into a Classical Revival structure and expanded to Ritter St. by architect Edward Scholl in order to accommodate the growing northwest population. Scholl was the predominant school architect in the Berks County region at that time. A small addition in the same style was built onto the 1912 building in 1921, and the school has retained its exterior architectural integrity since then. Interior renovations were done in 1937.

In 1923, the Douglass and Weiser School became a Junior High School for northwest Reading when the Board of Education established 3 Jr. High School centers in the city in a move away from the K-8 and 9-12 grade separations. By 1930, Douglass & Weiser was overcrowded, and a larger Jr. High School for the northwest was under construction. In 1937, the building reopened as Charles S. Foos Elementary for grades K-6, named after Charles Foos, Superintendent of the Reading School District from 1902-1922. The Foos School was closed in 1979 due to declining enrollments and has remained vacant.

The early part of the 20th century was a period of growth and popularization for public education. Compulsory attendance and universal education were accepted, and there was adequate financial support for public education, as evidenced by the "modernization" of the Foos School's 1903 facade just 9 years later.

During this period, educational reform movements predominated. Educational systems broke out of rigid age-grade relationships. The work-play-study movement led to a greater emphasis on process, not product, direct experience by the student, and freedom for learning for the individual. Playgrounds, gymnasiums, music and art facilities,

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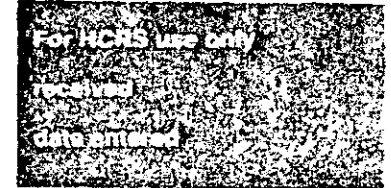
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(cont'd.) science labs, vocational shops, libraries, and auditoriums were extolled by modern educators as tools to build life-long living skills for children and to advance their personal and social development.

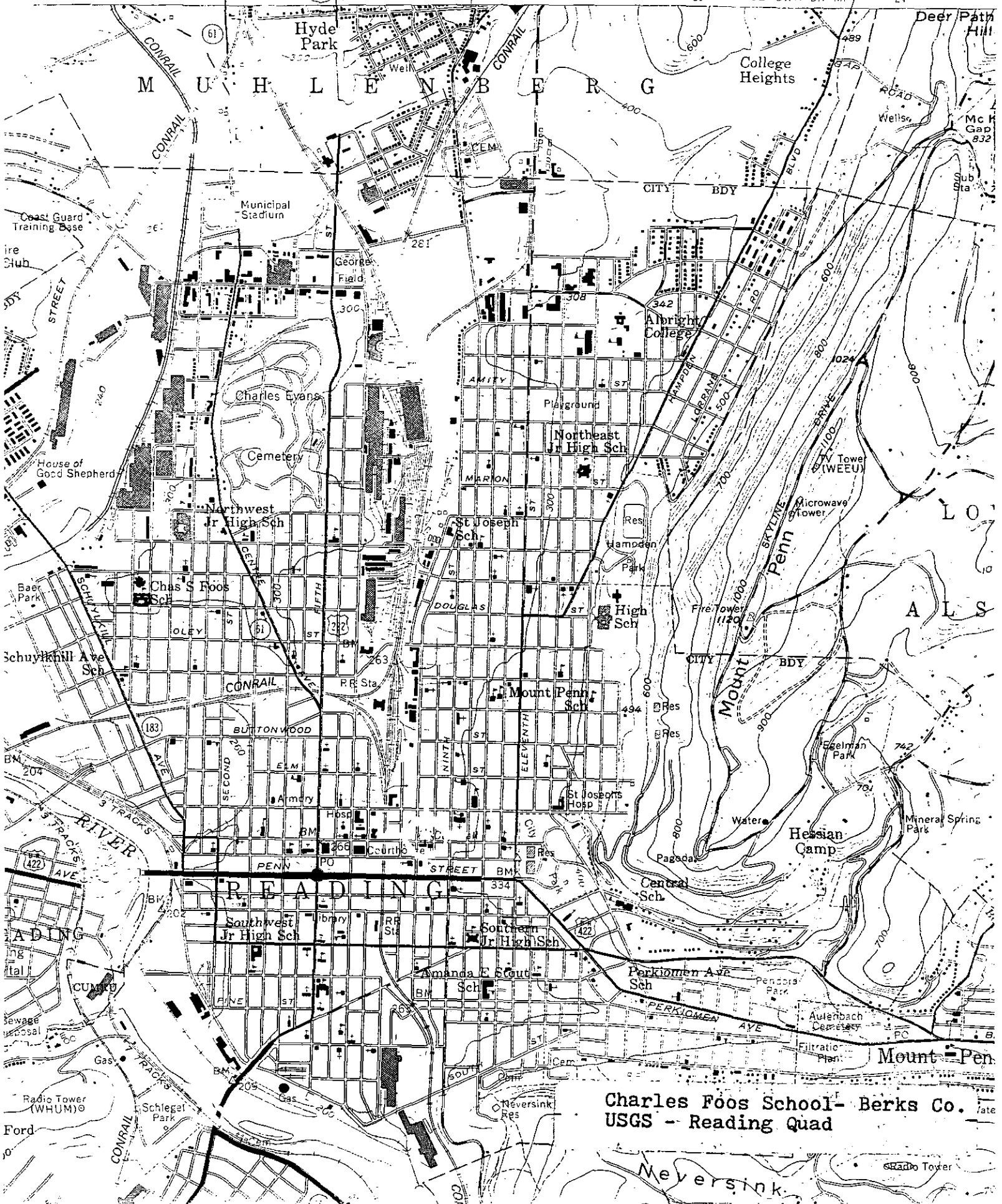
The excellent faculty of the Foos School was able to use the school's superior physical facilities to integrate this pragmatic approach into their students' education. A 1923 study by the Pa. Department of Public Instruction found the Foos School (then Douglass & Weiser) to be the most modern grade school in the city. Among its attributes were spacious classrooms with adequate natural lighting, 3 practical arts shops, a gymnasium with separate locker facilities for boys and girls, a science lab, first aid room, library, cafeteria, and auditorium. These facilities gave students opportunities not available in other city schools during that period. Assemblies on cultural topics were held regularly. There was an ungraded "special opportunity" class for children we might now recognize as learning disabled. Even the kindergarten was extremely well equipped.

This School was also unique in its connections with the neighborhood in which it was located. Schools were not open for use after 4 P.M. Foos School, however, was an exception. It was available for neighborhood groups, such as the Girl Scouts, to meet, and also housed a branch for the Reading Public Library from 1918-1938. Because of its educational excellence and direct involvement with the community, the school retains a special significance for city residents and former students.



LEESPORT (LEESPORT P.O. 5.9 MI.  
TUCKERTON 2.1 MI.  
5864 IV NW  
(TEMPLE)

420 421 222 TEMPLE 2.3 MI. 55' 423 PRICETOWN 5.7 MI. 424



Charles Fools School- Berks Co.  
USGS - Reading Quad

Neversink