

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

7. Local survey organization

8. property owners name and address
 Darrah Associates
 311 S. Juniper Street
 Suite 400
 Philadelphia, Pa. 19107

9. tax parcel number/other number

10. U.T.M. Zone 18 Easting 20
 less than one acre
 4424020
 usgs sheet: Philadelphia northing

11. status (other surveys, lists etc.)

12. classification
 site () structure () object ()
 building () district ()
 Thematic

13. date(s) (how determined)
 1926-1927
 14. period

15. style, design or folk type
 Moderne

19. original use School

20. present use Residence

16. architect or engineer
 Irwin T. Catharine

17. contractor or builder

18. primary building mat./construc.
 Brick/terra cotta

21. condition Good

22. integrity Excellent

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)
 NPS counting purposes: one contributing building
 (continue on back if necessary)

27. history, significance and/or background
 (continue on back if necessary)

28. sources of information
 see bibliography for nomination
 (continue on back if necessary)

29. prepared by:
 B. Mintz

Computer Coding (BHP Survey Grantees Must Complete)

30. date 9/1986
 revision(s)

31. county _____ 32. style _____
 33. construction material _____ 34. roof _____
 35. design type _____
 36. historic function _____
 37. construction feature _____ 38. ext. walls _____ 39. plan _____
 40. facade width _____ 41. roof material _____ 42. stories _____ 43. depth _____
 44. ext. design _____
 45. int. design _____

1. County PHILADELPHIA
 2. municipality PHILADELPHIA
 3. street address or specific location
 4. survey code
 5. present name LYDIA DARRAH SCHOOL
 6. other name (historic name if any) N/A
 708-32 NORTH SEVENTEENTH STREET

Lydiah Darrah School

Physical Description

Rising three stories in height with a basement, located partially at grade level, the building is constructed in brick with handsome, colorful, decorative paneling. Even the use of lighter tone brick expresses the subtle shift from the standard "little red school house" form to more sophisticated uses of color and detail. Rectangular in plan, the building's main entrance fronts on 17th Street. Rather restrained in scale, the entrance surround is richly detailed with smooth dressed pilasters and fluted columns supporting an entablature with molded cornice and undulating parapet wall. Within the opening are richly detailed panels in vivid blue and green tones. A greek key panel rests within the frame of the door; colorful geometric patterns rest within the reveal. The entablature is brought to life with the alternating patterns of floral times and triglyphs and metopes. Both the pilasters and columns are capped with decorative dentilation and fluted console blocks. Rising above the cornice line is a parapet with an open scroll pronouncing LYDIA DARRAH PUBLIC SCHOOL. With the exception of the enamel panels, the surround is executed in limestone.

Catharine successfully devised a means of decorating the body of the building by using a variety of brick patterns in conjunction with other building materials. The building rests on a granite base. Rising from the base of the building is the basement area finished with four rows of stretcher bricks and one row of soldier bricks. This pattern stops at the top of the basement sash. A large limestone band course denotes the level of the first floor. The brick pattern changes here with the introduction of a subtler pattern of four rows of stretcher brick and one row of smaller header bricks. The 17th Street elevation is pierced with flanking rows of smaller windows and one center panel of windows. The main stair case rests immediately behind the entrance. The side elevation is pierced by a regular pattern of tripartite sash with pronounced mullions. The sash are double hung six over six with a fixed transom panel on top.

Crowning the building is a richly colored guilloche band framed by decorative brick banding. The front of the building's entrance frontispiece projects slightly creating a parapet at the top of the building. In accordance with twentieth century innovation, outdoor recreational areas were provided within the school structure. The roof area was caged over to create a play area, for a structure constructed on a small building lot.

Statement of Significance

The Lydiah Darrah School, located at Seventeenth and Folsom Streets, is situated in the city's Fairmount section. Constructed in 1926, the Darrah School is an important example of design work of School Building Superintendent, Irwin T. Catharine. Following the consolidation of the City, the School Board began a serious effort to construct schools to meet the rising demands of the student population. After a building lull, during the Civil War, the Board again resumed its building program. In order to more efficiently address their needs, a Department of Building was created which was charged with the responsibility of designing and supervising the construction of all new school structures. The

EVALUATION

EVALUATOR(S)

Lydia Darrah School

Statement of Significance

tenure of Irwin T. Catharine, both as head draftsman and later as Superintendent, marked a turning point in the design of Philadelphia public schools as Catharine injected new architectural styles into the repertoire of existing school structures, reflecting his own personal and current design aesthetics.

Buildings designed during Catharine's tenure displayed a strong Moderne influence, with greater attention to detail and ornamentation than most schools of the previous period. The Darrah School is an example of his design work, constructed shortly after Catharine rose to the position of School Superintendent. In keeping with a practice developed by the Board, the Office of the Architect often designed proto-type structures which were repeated with slight variations. The Darrah School designated as Building Type No. 146, was the proto-type design for an elementary school constructed with a roof top recreation area. This style was repeated several times, each with slight variation, most notably in the Spring Garden School (1927), located at 12th and Ogden Streets.

Thus the Lydia Darrah School is important as a proto-type Moderne design by Irwin T. Catharine.

area of significance: architecture

verbal boundary description

The nominated property consists of Philadelphia County lot 151033510 which contains the school and its contiguous grounds.

EVALUATION

EVALUATOR(S)

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

Philadelphia Public Schools
Philadelphia County
Spring Garden School #2
12th & Melon St.
18E486 620M423 660

Philadelphia Public Schools
Philadelphia County
Spring Garden School #1
12th & Ogden St.
18E486 660M424 000

Philadelphia Public Schools
Philadelphia County
W&E Martin Orthopedic Sch.
18E485 100M424 220

Philadelphia Public Schools
Philadelphia County
Lydia Darrah School
18E485 820M424 020

PHILADELPHIA QUADRANGLE
PENNSYLVANIA-NEW JERSEY
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

Philadelphia Public Schools
Philadelphia County
Rudolph Walton School
18E484 900M427 020

Philadelphia Public Schools
Philadelphia County
George Heade School
18E485 900M425 140

Philadelphia Public Schools
Philadelphia County
Verbrook High School
18E481 460M422 340

Philadelphia Public Schools
Philadelphia County
Wm. Shoemaker Jr. High
18E480 480M424 840

Philadelphia Public Schools
Philadelphia County
William B. Hanna School
18E479 800M424 680

Philadelphia Public Schools
Philadelphia County
George L. Brooks School
18E480 020M424 040

Philadelphia Public Schools
Philadelphia County
James Dunlap
18E481 040M423 440

Philadelphia Public Schools
Philadelphia County
West Phil. High School
18E481 460M422 520

Philadelphia Public Schools
Philadelphia County
Willa R. Maceremus School
18E485 820M423 440

Philadelphia Public Schools
Philadelphia County
David Landreth School
18E484 480M420 620

Philadelphia Public Schools
Philadelphia County
Weir Mitchell School
18E480 880M420 520

Philadelphia Public Schools
Philadelphia County
Honny Wayne School
18E481 660M419 960

Philadelphia P
Philadelphia C
Daniel Boone S
18E488 920M442

Philadelphia P
Philadelphia C
Edison High Sch
18E487 660M421

Philadelphia P
Philadelphia C
David Farragut
18E488 420M442

Philadelphia P
Philadelphia C
William S. Scot
18E486 040M423

Philadelphia P
Philadelphia C
Paul Lawrence D
18E486 800M440

Philadelphia P
Philadelphia C
William Penn Sc
18E486 040M423

Philadelphia P
Philadelphia C
Alexander Dallas
18E485 160M424

Philadelphia P
Philadelphia C
Mifflin School
18E487 760M442

Philadelphia P
Philadelphia C
James P. Pilsner
18E486 340M423

Philadelphia P
Philadelphia C
Thaddeus Steven
18E486 340M423

Philadelphia P
Philadelphia C
Heredith School
18E487 100M442

Philadelphia P
Philadelphia C
J. Sylvester Ma
18E486 300M442

Philadelphia P
Philadelphia C
Samuel J. Rand
18E486 340M442

Philadelphia P
Philadelphia C
Robert Raiston
18E487 460M420

Philadelphia P
Philadelphia C
Francis M. Ures
18E485 220M442