

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Noble, J. L., School  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number 209 12th Avenue, Juniata N/A  not for publication  
city, town Altoona N/A  vicinity  
state Pennsylvania code PA county Blair code 013 zip code 16601

### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	_____ objects
		_____	_____ Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A  
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

### 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Brent Glass Signature of certifying official Brent Glass, Executive Director 05-15-96 Date  
PA Historical and Museum Commission State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

### 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.  See continuation sheet

determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Education/School

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/Not in Use

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Renaissance Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone/sandstone

walls Brick

roof Asphalt

other Sandstone

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The J. L. Noble school building is situated on a hilltop overlooking the Juniata neighborhood of Altoona. (Annexed to Altoona in 1929, Juniata is located on the north end of Altoona and west of the former main line of the Pennsylvania Railroad, presently Conrail.) Built in 1912, this yellow tapestry brick building with cut brownstone detailing is two stories over a basement. It is located at the southwest corner of Third Street and Twelfth Avenue. It was constructed in two stages. The original building built in 1912, had an L shaped plan and contained eight classrooms. A four room annex in 1929 gave the building a rectangular shape by filling in the previously open left, rear corner. The annex has a similar architectural appearance to the original differing only slightly in color and window fenestration. With the exception of round arch windows above the front and rear entrances, all windows are double-hung six-over-one. The front (eastern) facade measures 92 feet and the side elevations measure 99 feet. The front facade consists of a central pavilion and short, side wings with terminating blocks. The foundation is rock-faced sandstone topped with a water table of cut brownstone. The interior of the building has undergone extensive demolition of partition walls on the first and second floors. The building's exterior retains high integrity and reflects both its original style and use.

The front facade is a three-part design (Photo 1). Beginning at the outer extremes it consists of two story classroom units on either end. Each of these have four windows on each story with the windows above directly aligned with the windows below. Short, recessed wings connect these terminating blocks to a central pavilion which contains the main entrance. Behind two narrow six-over-one single windows, the wings each contain one small room and an access hallway. The pattern is repeated on each story.

The two story central pavilion with full-height corner pilasters exhibits three striking features; the entrance, a window and an arched pediment. The entrance consists of paired doors and a large fanlight all with a brownstone surround topped with a pedimented entablature. The window above the entablature is two part. A neo-Palladian motif is expressed here with a triple window topped by a Diocletian window. The arched pediment at the top of the pavilion is capped with a brownstone cornice

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and dentils. A brownstone belt course extends across the front facade directly above the second story windows and is further defined with a keystone accent of brownstone above the windows in the 1912 section. Brownstone is also used for the window sills and forms a projecting eave just below the flat roof line. The eave and belt course are continued on all but the rear facade. The name of the school is carved into a brownstone tablet inserted between these two features near the top of the central pavilion.

The right (north) and left (south) elevations repeat the three-part design with terminating blocks flanking a recessed center. The 1912 right elevation continues the window fenestration from the front with five single windows in the front block, one single window followed by two bands of four windows along the recess, then four single windows on each story of the rear block (Photo 3). The left elevation contains the 1929 annex where the window fenestration differs from the right elevation in that the recessed section has two bands of three larger windows and the rear block has no windows (Photo 2). Also, the tapestry effect is more pronounced in the newer bricks on the annex.

The rear elevation continues straight across with no recesses (Photo 4). The 1912 section has five single windows evenly spaced followed by a narrower window set slightly apart. A window at the stair landing between the two stories (Photo 13) reflects the Palladian motif from the front facade as does the less grand rear entrance (Photo 8). The terrain slopes upward from the front of the lot causing the rear entryway to lie partially below grade. The 1929 annex has a single window followed by two bands of three windows. The use of brownstone on the rear is limited to window sills and lintels.

The interior of the building has undergone extensive demolition in that all partition walls have been removed on the first and second floors due to plans of the current owner to adaptively reuse the building (Photos 5 - 8). This demolition leaves an essentially open floor plan at present. However, ghost lines and structural elements exposed by the demolition make it easy to read the original arrangement of the interior space. Original woodwork, flooring, plaster, and support beams remain in various stages of deterioration (Photos 9 - 12). The floors on the first and second stories appear to be oak hardwood and are intact although damaged by rain and neglect. The walls and ceilings are painted horsehair plaster in poor condition. The windows are wooden with wood trim which is intact and in fair condition. There are

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two identical stairwells, one in the front and one in the rear. Both are original with painted cast iron handrails and newel posts. The floor plan of the basement reflects the ca. 1929 alignment with partitioning walls intact. The floor is cement; walls and ceilings are plaster in fair condition.

The loss of interior integrity does not effect the high degree of exterior integrity. Even though it has not been used as a school since the 1970s, rather held in private ownership and standing vacant, its presence on that high ground overlooking Juniata invokes a sense of the early twentieth century community it served. The neighborhood surrounding the J. L. Noble School is low-density residential housing consisting of mostly single-family dwellings. Early twentieth century housing continues along uninterrupted streetscapes most notable for the predominance of brick construction, the overall middle-class character of homes and a reflection of concentrated development which occurred in this part of Juniata during the first three decades of the twentieth century.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Education

Architecture

Period of Significance

1912-1946

Significant Dates

1912, 1929

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Hersh, Frank A. and Shollar, Frederic J.

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The J. L. Noble School is significant under Criteria A and C. Under Criterion A, this building has played a significant role in the history of education in the Altoona area. Under Criterion C, it is a locally significant example of an institutional building of the early twentieth century reflecting early twentieth century Renaissance Revival style. It has a period of significance from 1912 to 1946. The J. L. Noble School was built in 1912 by the Juniata Borough School Board as a neighborhood elementary school to alleviate overcrowding in its older schools. This was the last school built by the Juniata board prior to the annexation of Juniata by the City of Altoona in 1929 and represents that parallel system which predates the consolidation of the urban and suburban school systems of the area. It should be noted, however, that both names, Altoona and Juniata, are still used to distinguish addresses in Juniata because there are similar street names and property numbers in use in both areas. The annexations of 1929 were the most important in the history of Altoona. They practically doubled the acreage of the city, added almost a third to its population, increased the school enrollment from 11,819 in 1928-1929 to 16,449 in 1929-1930 and boosted the assessed valuation of taxable property by about \$16,000,000.

When Altoona incorporated in 1868, the Altoona school district consisted of seven frame buildings. The population had gone from 2,000 in 1854 to over 10,000 by 1870 and overcrowding at the schools had reached the critical stage. It was at this time that the school board directors agreed that future schools would be of uniform construction, each having two stories but able to accommodate annexes or additional floors within ten years. Beginning with the Webster School in the First Ward, six new brick schools were built during the 1870s and all of them were added to during the 1880s and 1890s. Four new schools were built during the 1880s and three schools were built between 1890 and 1902 bringing the total number of public elementary

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schools in Altoona to twelve, or one in each ward of the City. The period from 1902 through 1930 saw an accelerated increase in the number of students and schools in the system with the acquisition through annexation of additional acreage. Although this period saw the construction of a new high school, two junior high school buildings and numerous annexes to existing schools, the Altoona board built only one new elementary school. The Thaddeus Stevens Elementary School opened in Altoona's Tenth Ward one year before Juniata's J. L. Noble School.

Altoona and Juniata were both carved out of Logan Township during the last half of the nineteenth century and presently remain landlocked by the Township. Altoona carried its original name with it when it was incorporated in 1868. The village immediately adjacent to Altoona's northwest end, originally known as Bellview, was renamed Juniata at the time it received its charter in 1893. Development of schools in the Juniata area began with the building of its first school in 1886. A second wood frame building was built in 1888 and in 1892, Logan School, a substantial four-room edifice of brick was built. All of these formerly township schools fell within the boundaries of the newly created Borough of Juniata, however, none of these school buildings are extant.

The expansion of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company northward from its original shop complex during 1889-1890 into Juniata and the building of its Juniata Shops brought an army of skilled mechanics and their families to Juniata creating an immediate overcrowding of the existing schools. This resulted in a quickly arranged four-room annex to the Logan School building. Both Juniata Borough and the Juniata Shops grew rapidly over the next decade and in 1904 the ten-room McKinley High School was opened at Eighth Avenue and Fifth Street, Juniata. At that time the Altoona School Board was in the process of acquiring land and planning its new high school which opened in 1906 at Sixth Avenue and Fifteenth Street. The 1906 Altoona High School building was replaced ca. 1973 with a building that was consistent in materials and design with a ca. 1929 annex. The McKinley building is extant and retains high integrity.

Between 1893 and 1912 the Juniata school system grew from six teachers and 300 students to thirty-three teachers and 1300 students. It was at this point, in 1912, that the J. L. Noble School consisting of eight rooms was built. By 1929 the Juniata schools were again overcrowded with some being operated on half-day sessions. Upon annexation, the Altoona Board made improvements at the McKinley building

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and employed a local architectural firm, Hersh and Shollar, to prepare plans for a four-room addition to the J. L. Noble building. When the addition was completed, the original building and the annex together contained six class rooms, the principal's office and a supply room on the second floor and five classrooms, the library, a conference room, and a health room on the first floor. The basement had a kitchen, girls' and boys' lavatories, an auditorium, a gym room, furnace room, storage room, and a crawl space.

The public schools in Altoona developed in three stages: 1854-1870, 1870-1902, and 1902-1930. Juniata schools followed a similar pattern once that area began to be built up. During the first stage, school buildings were wood frame but during the second and third stages were more permanent buildings of brick or stone. Although construction during the first two stages was primarily of elementary school buildings, a high school for the teaching of advanced courses had been developing in tandem with the elementary schools before becoming a separate entity late in the second stage.

By the turn-of-the-century the area seemed destined to present a much different image than it had during the previous fifty years. By 1900 it was unmistakably urban and industrial. The first few decades of the twentieth century witnessed not only substantial growth, but significant changes in new commercial, industrial, and institutional building stock. During that time the commercial district was transformed from its typically residential scale to a mid-rise scale worthy of a retail and wholesale central place. The public building program included new churches and new schools. Overall, Altoona has fine examples of the major architectural styles that prevailed nationwide from the mid-nineteenth century through the 1920s and 1930s. Many of these buildings were architect designed, often by local firms with fluid ties to firms in Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, New York and Chicago. The J. L. Noble School represents well the early stages of a building period replete with a progression of revival styles.

The firm of Hersh and Shollar was responsible for designing many of Altoona's most significant institutional and commercial buildings. Frederic James Shollar (1873-1960) first joined with Frank A. Hersh (1874-1949) in 1900, opening offices in the extant Altoona Trust Building at Twelfth Avenue and Eleventh Street ca. 1902. Their partnership dissolved after 1915 but they were reunited during the 1920s. During their early years together, ca. 1902-15, the firm was known as Shollar and Hersh; when the architects reunited, ca. 1925-30s, they reversed the names and were known as Hersh

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and Shollar. These two architects, in partnership, were the leading school architects in central Pennsylvania in their day and extended their practice into Maryland and West Virginia. Shollar bears the distinction of being Blair County's first native-born architect and helped establish the City Planning Commission of Altoona. Both men were members of the American Institute of Architects (A.I.A.).

One of Shollar's earliest designs, Christ Reformed Church at Twelfth Avenue and Fifteenth Street, has Gothic features but he is best known for the brick and limestone-faced Revival style buildings of the 1910s and 1920s. With Hersh, he designed the Thaddeus Stevens Elementary School located at Crawford Avenue and Lloyd Street in 1910, won an open competition to design Altoona's new City Hall in the Beaux Arts-style during the mid-1920s and designed the imposing D. S. Keith Junior High School as well as annexes for both the J. L. Noble Elementary School in Juniata and the Altoona High School during the late-1920s.

The Juniata School Board was dissolved in 1929 and no records appear to have been maintained. Although it has not been possible to document the architect of the original section of the J. L. Noble building, in comparing the known work of Shollar and Hersh to the Noble school building, it is easy to speculate that they might well have been the original architects. Their ca. 1910 brown tapestry brick Thaddeus Stevens building represented a departure from the use of red brick in new construction undertaken by the Altoona School District. This building was innovative also in that it was the first attempt by the school district at building a fire-proof or fire-resistive building. It is a two-story late-nineteenth century and early twentieth century Revival style building set on a raised brick basement and has horizontal banding of brownstone. Its three-part front facade terminates in projecting blocks connected to the central pavilion by long recessed wings. The brownstone detailing to the central pavilion is very similar to that at the Noble building. Stevens is the larger of the two buildings and indeed was the largest elementary school in Altoona at its construction. It opened one year before Noble. The Stevens building is extant, retains a high degree of integrity, remains in the ownership of the Altoona Area School District and presently houses offices. The use of brownstone accents on both the Stevens and Noble buildings may have been inspired and facilitated by the new Altoona High School built entirely of brownstone and opened in 1906. The brownstone section of the Altoona High School was demolished and replaced with a red brick entryway ca. 1973.



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The ca. 1930 D. S. Keith Junior High School on Nineteenth Avenue between Thirteenth and Fourteenth Streets designed by Hersh and Shollar takes the late-nineteenth century and early twentieth century Revival style to a highly flamboyant state. In this four-story building of buff brick with terra cotta trim, the first story forms a rusticated base for the upper three floors which are linked visually by pilasters and a large entablature extending above the top floor. The three-part front facade terminates in large projecting blocks connected to the projecting central pavilion by long wings. The central pavilion containing the main entrance is accented by four three-story Corinthian columns which support a massive arched pediment. The building is extant and retains a very high degree of integrity.

Apparently no one expected or believed that either Altoona or Juniata would grow as rapidly or as fully as they did but their growth was tied, after all, to the development of the Pennsylvania Railroad. In both communities, the strategy for land acquisition was annexation. The strategy for educating the children of the diverse and growing work force was to build buildings that could be enlarged as needed. That they were designed and executed with style from the time of incorporation places them among the most important institutional buildings in the area. The J. L. Noble School is representative of the four new elementary (Thaddeus Stevens) and secondary schools (Altoona High School, D. S. Keith Junior High School and Theodore Roosevelt Junior High School—designed by Julian Millard and built ca. 1922-24 at Sixth Avenue and Fourteenth Street) built in Altoona and the two (McKinley and Noble) built in Juniata during the first three decades of the twentieth century in both architecture and the public education movement. With the exception of the original section of the Altoona High School all of these buildings are extant and retain high integrity. By the end of the 1930s, the Pennsylvania Railroad had reached its peak. The existing schools proved adequate to meet the needs of a static population and there were no new schools built for another three decades in either community.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Altoona Redevelopment Authority

10. Geographical Data

Acres of property Less than one acre

UTM References

A 17 720800 4490510  
 Zone Easting Northing

C \_\_\_\_\_

B \_\_\_\_\_  
 Zone Easting Northing

D \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Deborah M. Lamborn, Executive Director; Nancy L. Smith, Assistant Secretary

organization ARCHITUR, Inc. date March 8, 1996

street & number PO Box 1214 telephone (814) 943-2724

city or town Altoona state PA zip code 16603-1214

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SECTION 9           BIBLIOGRAPHY

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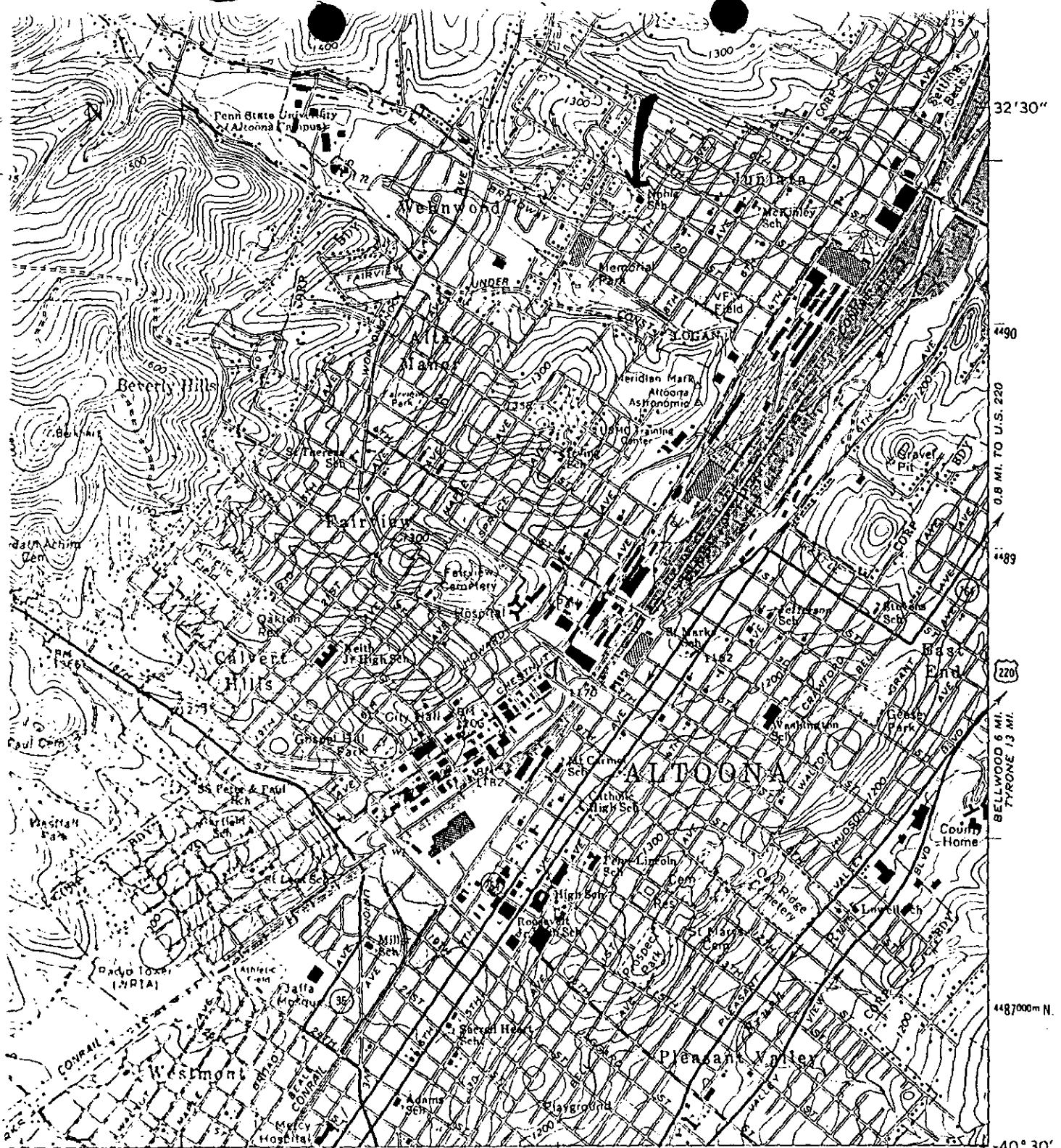
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### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

All that certain lot of ground situate in the City of Altoona, (formerly the Borough of Juniata) Blair County, Pennsylvania, fronting two hundred forty-five (245) feet on the Southwest side of Third Street, Juniata, between Twelfth Avenue and Thirteenth Avenue and extending back, in uniform distance one hundred and ten (110) feet to an alley and being lots numbered 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21 in Block 25 of the plan of lots of Juniata Park as recorded in the Office of Blair County Recorder of Deeds in Plot Book Volume 2, 16 page 57.

### BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

Boundary reflects the legally recorded boundary lines for the plot upon which the resource sits. The boundary contains the nominated building and all historically associated land.



25° 19'

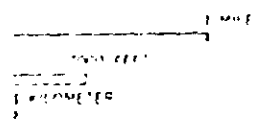
DUNCANSVILLE U.S. 22 & 2201 6 MI.

INTERIOR GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA—1982  
 HOLLIDAYSBURG 5 MI.  
 PA. TURNPIKE 35 MI.

78° 22' 30" 1720000m E

4487000m N

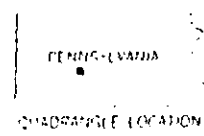
40° 30'



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

- Heavy duty
- Medium duty
- Light duty
- Unimproved dirt

- U. S. Route
- State Route



**ALTOONA, PA.**  
 SW/4 ALTOONA 15' QUADRANGLE  
 N4030—W7822.5/7.5

2092  
 N REQUEST

Revisions shown in purple and woodland compiled in cooperation with Commonwealth of Pennsylvania agencies from aerial photographs taken 1977 and other sources. This information

1963  
 PHOTOREVISED 1981

FRANKSTOWN  
 536 IV JE