

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 for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Oakdale Public School

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 33 Hastings Street N/A not for publication

city or town Oakdale N/A vicinity

state Pennsylvania code PA county Allegheny code 003 zip code 15071

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Brent Glass Brent Glass, Exec. Dir. 2/18/97
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

PA Historical and Museum Commission
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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:)

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

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)

LATE VICTORIAN/Romanesque Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone

walls brick

roof slate

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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Section number 7 Page 1

Sited on a knoll and set back from State Street in a residential area, the 1894 Oakdale Public School maintains a prominent presence in Oakdale Borough, 15 miles southwest of Pittsburgh. Its roughly trapezoidal lot is terraced above State Street, overlooking the railroad and the creek, just two blocks east of the Borough's main commercial street, Noblestown Road. The Romanesque/Classical Revival, brick building, topped by a hip roof with a central chimney and a central tower on the southeast (front) facade, measures 71'-2" x 78'-6" overall and consists of a large block with a projecting central entrance pavilion on the front and a matching, slightly smaller block (ca.1895-1905) to the rear (northwest). Although it is in poor condition, its integrity remains good. A stone retaining wall parallels the State Street sidewalk. No other buildings occupy the site.

The design of the Oakdale School is a modest interpretation of a transitional Romanesque/Classical Revival style. The structure rises two and a half stories above a raised basement. The orange brick walls are enhanced with red brick and stone trim. A heavy stone water table runs the perimeter of the building above the basement level, which is laid up in ashlar on the front block and in a mixture of ashlar and uncut stone on the rear block. The tower, once crowned by a pyramidal roof which has been removed, features an open belfry with arched windows in a Palladian configuration. A box cornice projects over brick sawtooth ornament and dentils. At the cornice level on the central tower bay is a datestone which reads, "Anno Domino Public School MDCCCICIV." The pyramidal roof was removed at an undetermined date.

All four elevations of the building are symmetrical. The windows, topped with red brick arches and rock-faced keystones, are arranged in single and double configurations on the southeast (front) facade, and in single and triple configurations on the other three elevations; their arches share brick spring courses, but their stone sills are separate. The windows were boarded up sometime after the school closed in 1972. The central entrance in the tower bay on the southeast consists of the original double wood-paneled doors recessed behind a broad arch with brick detailing and a stone keystone to match the windows; it is reached by stone

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steps with flanking stone walls. A secondary doorway with an arched transom is located in the central bay on the northwest (rear) facade. The heavy stone work and arched windows suggest the influence of the Romanesque style, while the use of keystones, dentils and a Palladian motif look forward to subsequent Classical trends that came to dominate public school architecture after the turn of the century.

The addition, believed to have been added within a short time after the initial construction (ca.1895-1905), is an exact match of the original in materials and detailing.

The plan of the basement, first, and second floors of the building consists of a central hall with four major rooms on each floor, divided into sets of two by the hall. The front two rooms both measure roughly 35'6" x 27'4"; the rear two rooms measure 34'6" x 29'10" and 28'10" x 27'3". Each of the rooms has two structural iron columns set on a northwest-southeast axis which bisects the room. Coat rooms are attached to the classrooms on their southeast sides. The original building had just one room on either side; the rear (northwest) two rooms are part of the ca.1895-1905 addition. The third floor is unfinished, with one open, full height space framed by exposed structural members.

The major landscape feature of the site is a retaining wall of coursed, rock faced stone with a stone cap; it extends for approximately 160 feet along State Street, and varies in height from three to five feet. The historic site treatment has not been well documented, but included play areas, sand boxes, and trees. A barberry hedge was added in 1925. Five poplars were replaced by pin oaks in 1937.

An examination of school board records c.1922-1966 reveals only minor alterations over the years. Seven rooms received new wood floors between 1932 and 1937. A fire alarm system was approved in 1933. The basement was excavated and received some finish treatment as a U. S. Civil Works Administration project in 1934. Fire escapes were added to the northeast and southwest sides sometime prior to 1936; they have since been removed, leaving minimal scars in the brickwork. Major repairs followed fire damage as a result of lightning in 1942. Ceilings in eight rooms were replaced to

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correct emergency conditions in 1944. And throughout the 78 years during which the building served as a school, periodic repairs were made to the plaster, the tower, the furnace, the electrical systems, the blackboards, and the fire escapes.

Consequently, the building, which has stood empty for nearly a quarter of a century, maintains a strong level of integrity. On the exterior, it appears much as it did in a postcard view, probably produced within 20 years of the construction date, showing its appearance after the northwest expansion had been added. The tower roof is currently missing and the original double-hung sash windows have been removed and boarded up; the tower roof, however, could be replicated from historic photos and the windows could readily be replaced with an appropriate double hung (1/1) sash. Otherwise, most of the school's original architectural features are intact and nothing has been added. On the interior, many historic features survive, including wood wainscot, door and window casings, horizontal-panel doors, cast grates for the heating system, diagonal strip flooring, and chalkboards with their chalk trays. To the extent that historic features do not survive, it is the result of extensive water damage rather than subsequent alterations. The damage includes severe deterioration of the main staircase, as well as the failure of the floor and ceiling structure in selected portions of the front block, and extensive plaster damage throughout. Most of the deteriorated elements, however, are restorable or replaceable.

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The Oakdale Public School meets Criterion A for its association with the educational history of Oakdale and the surrounding area, and Criterion C as an important architectural example of the Romanesque/Classical Revival style in the community. The period of significance begins with the building of the school in 1894 and ends in 1946.

Background

Initially settled as a farming community at the intersection of two creeks, Oakdale subsequently grew into a prosperous industrial and mining town as the result of several influences: the establishment of Thompson's Grist Mill, in 1849; the completion of the Panhandle Division of the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1865; the beginning of speculative real estate development by C. Hanson Love, a land developer from Pittsburgh, in 1866; and the fervor of "The Oil Excitement" and coal mining, attracting drilling outfits and oil and coal companies to the town, beginning in the 1870s. The railroad made the area accessible for development, and the natural resources made it attractive. Among the industrial concerns that settled in Oakdale were Carnegie Coal Company and Breuning Cork Company.

By 1892, the Borough was incorporated, and was home to 1,200 inhabitants. The years that followed, until the turn of the century, saw continued growth and expansion, with connections to Pittsburgh maintained through the railroad and an emerging industrial base.

Criterion A Education

The Oakdale Public School was built in 1894, during the Borough's peak decade of development. It stands today as the only remaining public or institutional building that dates to the Borough's boom years. The community's first school, with one room, had been built in 1869; a second room was added in 1886. This early school served the basic "primer" or "grammar" school level of grades one through six or eight. In 1870, C. Hanson Love opened the Oakdale Classical and Normal Academy, an elite co-educational boarding school which provided further education to regional students who had completed grammar school.

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With the introduction of the Oakdale Public School in 1894, however, the Oakdale Academy soon lost favor, and closed in 1898. The Oakdale Public School initially served grades one through eight, and it continued as the Borough's only elementary school until its closing in 1972. At an undetermined date after the construction of the Oakdale Public School, a two year high school was operated in three rooms of a house on Highland Avenue. The students then traveled to McDonald to finish high school. The house was demolished for construction of the new four-year high school on Highland Avenue in 1926. That school has also been demolished.

Throughout the southwestern Allegheny County/northern Washington County region of which Oakdale is a part, the educational system was apparently being studied and expanded during the economic boom period of the 1890s. Academies and high schools were being opened in a number of regional towns, such as Imperial, Hickory, Burgettstown, McDonald, and Noblestown. With the passage in 1893 of a new state text book law requiring schools to provide books to their students, and an accompanying appropriation of \$5 million, many communities initiated curricular assessments and extensive book purchase programs. While Oakdale School Board records for the period of the 1890s do not survive and the specific book acquisitions and curricular strategies in Oakdale have not been documented, the local papers that served Oakdale devoted attention to these activities in other nearby communities. Educational trends in these communities are possibly representative of similar changes in Oakdale. The full exam for graduation from the nearby McDonald Public School, for example, published in the *McDonald Outlook* on April 1, 1893, included Reading, Arithmetic, History, Spelling, Geography, and Physiology. Later that year, The Washington County Institute of Teachers held its 43rd annual meeting in November 1893 to discuss such issues as: "School Laws Passed by Our Last Legislature;" "Selection and Salary of Teachers;" "How Shall we Successfully Carry Out the Mandates of the New Text-book Law;" "What Kind of School Houses Shall we Build, and How Shall we Take Care of Them?"¹ While both the McDonald curriculum and the Teachers Institute

¹ *McDonald Outlook* (September 9, 1893).

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would technically have excluded Allegheny County teachers (and therefore Oakdale), they would presumably have influenced Oakdale as part of their local cultural sphere of influence. In later years for which Oakdale School Board minutes are available, ca. 1922-1966, the board's decisions focused on hiring, firing, and salaries of teachers, as well as facilities issues.

In addition to its role in elementary education, the Oakdale Public School served as a community meeting place for a variety of activities, such as the Oakdale School Board, Vacation Bible School, and Polish language classes. Its role was particularly strong until construction of the new high school in 1926.

The Oakdale Public School and the Oakdale High School remained the two public schools in the Borough for half a century. Oakdale was also the site of the Boys' Industrial Home, a private reform institution founded in 1901 that was housed in the former Academy Building. Both the High School and the Academy are now gone. The Boys' Home has been significantly altered for use as apartments.

1949 saw the merger of the school districts of Findlay and North Fayette Townships and Oakdale Borough into "West Allegheny Joint Schools." Under the terms of the merger, provided for under the School Code of 1949, the districts would pool their facilities and share maintenance issues under a joint board. The Oakdale Public School then became known as Oakdale No. 1 and functioned as an elementary school which in 1950 accommodated 161 of the new joint district's 1,182 elementary school students. It was closed in 1972 and auctioned to a private owner, who ultimately defaulted on taxes, leading to the current owner's purchase at Sheriff's Sale in 1994. The building has stood vacant since its 1972 closing, despite attempts to renovate and reuse it. Current plans call for a certified historic multi-unit residential rehabilitation.

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Criterion C Architecture

Oakdale Public School meets Criterion C as a handsome example of the Romanesque/Classical Revival style interpreted in a small town environment. The building is an admirable, though modest interpretation of a transitional Romanesque Revival/Classical style, considering its location in a relatively remote community. The handsome detailing of its tower, cornice, and arches, expressed largely through the use of a contrasting brick color, reflects a restrained and straightforward approach befitting the character and possibly the budget constraints of a small town. Originally planned to include six rooms and to cost \$12,000 (financed through a bond issue), the project drew fourteen bids ranging from \$19,000 to \$24,000. In September 1894, the school board awarded the contract to J. M. Andrews for \$17,948. According to a news item at the time, the only alterations to the original plan were the substitution of pine for hemlock in the roof and a change in the plastering.

The construction of the northwest (rear) addition has not been documented. Its close stylistic and materials correlation to the original section of the building, coupled with the known growth patterns of the town, however, suggests that it was added within approximately ten years of the original construction date, or ca.1895-1905. Presumably, the addition was built to house a growing school population.

The architect for the Oakdale Public School was J. E. Allison of Pittsburgh and Allegheny. He was listed in the 1891 Pittsburgh and Allegheny City Directory as a draughtsman, but by 1892 as an architect. Allison apparently maintained his practice in Pittsburgh over the next twenty years, occupying four successive office locations and joining with at least two different partners: O. M. Topp from ca.1902-1903, D. C. Allison from ca.1905-1909, and possibly Charles Allison at an undetermined time. By 1910, the firm was no longer listed in the Directory. Other Allison (or Allison and Allison) commissions identified to date include the Citizens National Bank in Vandergrift, PA; a high school in Scottsdale, PA; campus buildings for the University of Pittsburgh and for the University of California in Los Angeles; the First National Bank in McDonald; and numerous churches and homes in the Pittsburgh area.

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Viewed in the larger context of regional school architecture, the Oakdale School is a reflection of the trends of its time. The 1890s were a boom period in school construction throughout southwestern Pennsylvania as new buildings and additions were completed to accommodate the children of a rapidly growing industrial labor pool. In the immediate vicinity of southwestern Allegheny County and northern Washington County, a number of municipalities built or planned school projects contemporaneously with the Oakdale Public School; among them were McDonald, Canonsburg, and Cecil, none of which are extant. Like the Oakdale building, both the Canonsburg and the McDonald schools were to have prominent towers, according to local news accounts. Today, it would appear, Oakdale is the only school of the ca.1890-1910 period that survives in that immediate region.

Looking beyond the immediate area, of the 45 school buildings added to the National Register in 1987 as part of the "Pittsburgh Public Schools Thematic Group," 13 date to the 1890s. The schools of this era were meant to be formal in character, and the formality was expressed in a number of variations on the Romanesque/Renaissance/Classical Revival styles in the 13 Pittsburgh examples. Of that group, the three most closely related stylistically to Oakdale are Fulton Elementary School (1894;1900;1929; Charles Bartberger and M. Nordlinger, architects); Larimer School (1896;1904;1932; U. J. L. Peoples and Geo. M. Rowland, architects); and Oakland School (1893;1899; U. J. L. Peoples, architect). Both Bartberger and Peoples were prominent Pittsburgh architects, each with several schools to his credit. Another related school design was built on Walnut Street in West Homestead Borough in c.1900. While some began to introduce innovations in plan and design, others, like Oakdale, followed a fairly traditional architectural format. This context places the Oakdale Public School squarely in the mainstream of school design for its time, despite its relatively remote location. Certainly, it was appreciated at the time as a fine addition to the townscape. A local paper described the new school house as "solid looking, imposing, and everything in good taste."²

² *Oakdale Rural*, Vol. 2, No. 12 (December 29, 1894).

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property Less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1, 7	5 69 6, 30	4 4 7, 21, 2, 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Eliza Smith Brown/ President

organization Brown, Carlisle & Associates date 10/12/96

street & number 175 Woodridge Drive telephone 412-683-5822

city or town Carnegie state PA zip code 15106

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Matt Cochran

street & number 261 Union Avenue Extension telephone 412-921-8418

city or town Oakdale state PA zip code 15071

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1894-1946

Significant Dates

1894

ca. 1895-1905

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Allison, J. E., Architect

Andrews, J. M., Builder

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

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OAKDALE PUBLIC SCHOOL, ALLEGHENY CO., PA

Bibliography

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Aurand, Martin, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form for Pittsburgh Public Schools Thematic Group, 1986.

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Imperial: West Allegheny School District History Book Committee, 1991.

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Oakdale Rural, (1894).

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Pittsburgh and Allegheny City Directories, 1890-1910.

Schroeder, Fred E. H., "Schoolhouses," in Diane Maddex, ed., *Built in the U.S.A.* Washington, DC: Preservation Press, 1985, 150-153.

Stillman, Cecil George, *The Modern School*. London: Architectural Press, 1949, 12.

West Allegheny Joint Schools Board Minute Books, Vols. 1 (1949-1954) and 2 (1954-1958).

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Section number 10 Page 1

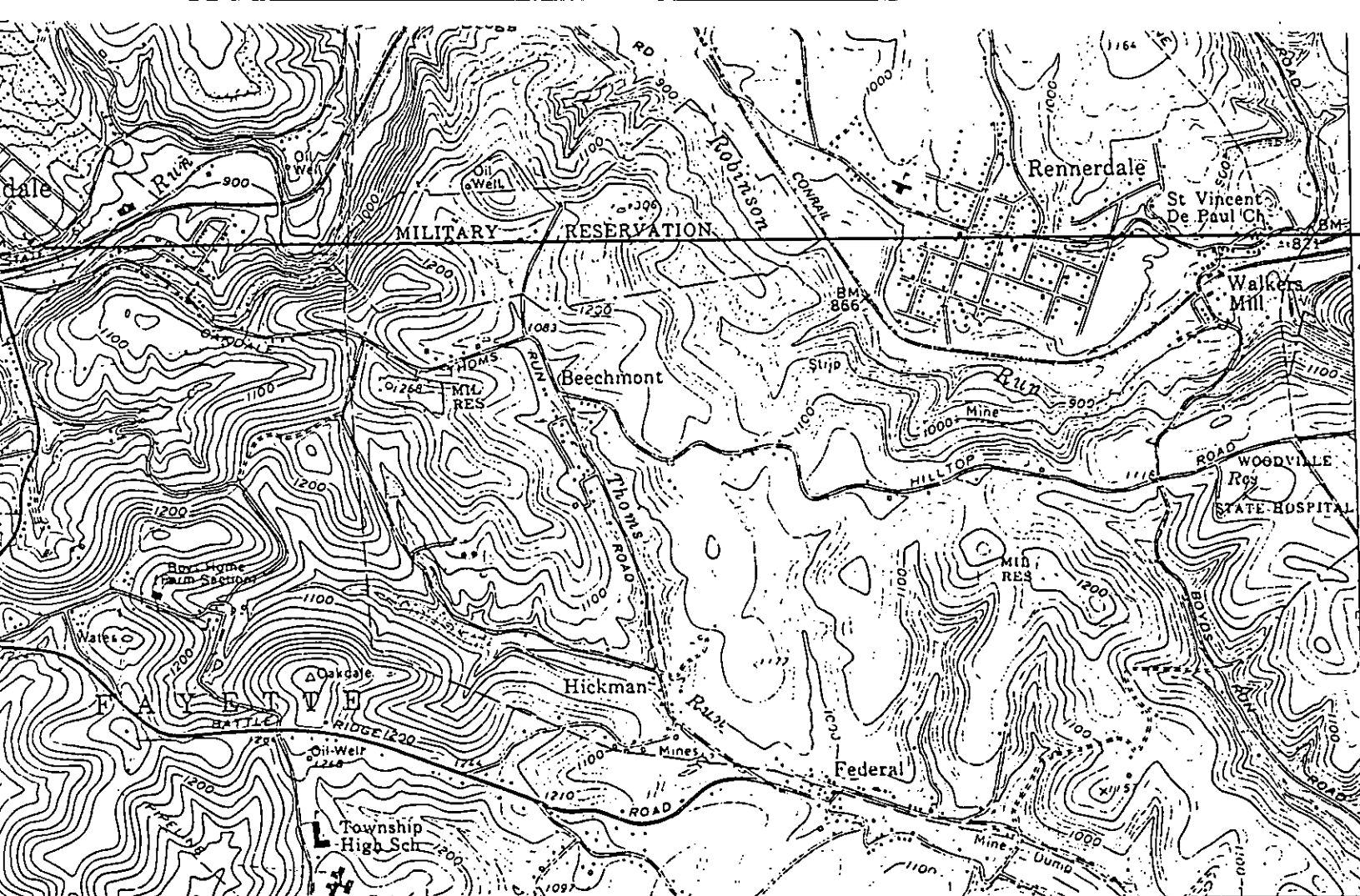
OAKDALE PUBLIC SCHOOL, ALLEGHENY CO., PA

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of Oakdale Public School is shown as the dotted line on the accompanying map entitled "Hastings School Apartment, July 1995."

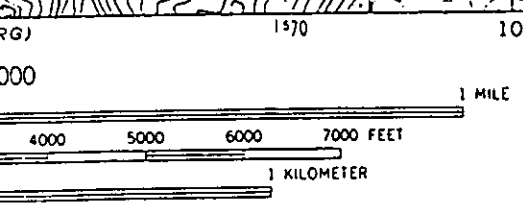
Boundary Justification

The boundary shown represents all that portion of the original school property which has stayed under the same ownership as the building. It is currently described as three parcels. The portions of the original school site that are excluded do not contain any resources related to the school.



Oakdale Public School
 33 Hastings Street
 Oakdale Borough
 Allegheny County, PA

zone 17
 E 509630
 N 4472120



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Heavy-duty Light-duty
 Medium-duty Unimproved dirt

U. S. Route State Route

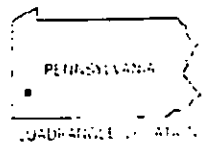
OAKDALE, PA.

N 4022.5—W 8007.5/7.5

1960

AMS 4964 I NW—SERIES V831

MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
 VEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
 SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



Revisions or corrections
 taken 1977
 not field checked

40°22'30"
 80°07'30"

(BRIDGEVILLE)
 4964 I SE

- 28 IRON PIN AT PROPERTY LINE AT R/W
- 29 IRON PIN AT PROPERTY CORNER
- 30 IRON PIN AT PROPERTY CORNER
- 31 IRON PIN AT PROPERTY CORNER
- 32 IRON PIN PROPERTY LINE AT RW
- 33 IRON PIN AT R/W
- 34 IRON PIN AT R/W

2000.00	1000.00
1930.53	928.07
1916.15	941.96
1880.03	904.55
1820.33	962.20
1823.85	991.44
1863.72	1131.59

Oakdale Public School
 Oakdaleboro,
 Albany Co.
 sketch site plan
 from Topical
 map.

