

United States Department of the Interior

National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Baker School

Other name/site number: Baker Junior High School (1939-1980), W.R. Robbins High School (1980-c.1995)

Name of related multiple property listing: NA

2. Location

Street & number: 3908 Avenue B

City or town: Austin

State: Texas

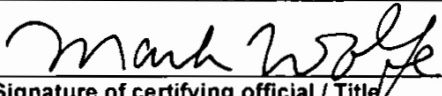
County: Travis

Not for publication: ☐Vicinity: ☐

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 at the following levels of significance

☐ national ☐ statewide ☒ localApplicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

State Historic Preservation Officer

8/30/23

Signature of certifying official / Title

Date

Texas Historical Commission

State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is

☐ entered in the National Register☐ determined eligible for the National Register☐ determined not eligible for the National Register☐ removed from the National Register☐ other, explain: _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Baker School, Austin, Travis County, Texas

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Private
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - Federal

Category of Property

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
3	1	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
3	1	total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: NA

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions: Education: school

Current Functions: Commerce: business, professional

7. Description

Architectural Classification: Neoclassical

Principal Exterior Materials: Brick, Cement, Glass

Narrative Description (see continuation sheets 7-7 through 7-11)

Baker School, Austin, Travis County, Texas

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria: A, C

Criteria Considerations: NA

Areas of Significance: Education, Architecture (*local level of significance*)

Period of Significance: 1911-1973

Significant Dates: 1911, 1924, 1939, c. 1940, 1958, 1961

Significant Person (only if criterion b is marked): NA

Cultural Affiliation (only if criterion d is marked): NA

Architect/Builder: Endress & Walsh; Thomas, Roy L.; Kuehne, H.F.; Kreisle & Brooks

Narrative Statement of Significance (see continuation sheets 8-12 through 8-23)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography (see continuation sheet 9-24 through 9-27)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☒ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested. *Part 1 approved on 2/19/2019; Part 2 approved 10/09/2020; Part 3 approved 03/04/2021*
- ☐ 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 #

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission, Austin*)
- ☐ Other state agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government: Austin History Center
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other -- Specify Repository:

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): NA

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: approximate 3 acres

Coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: NA

1. Latitude: 30.304057° Longitude: -97.735743°

Verbal Boundary Description: 3.3512AC OF OLT 78 HYDE PARK ADDN PEVILION TRACT

Boundary Justification: The boundary includes all property currently and historically associated with Baker Elementary School.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Richard Weiss, Principal Architect with assistance from THC Staff
Organization: Weiss Architecture
Street & number: 3355 Bee Cave Rd, Ste. 303
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Date: 10/28/22

Additional Documentation

Maps (see continuation sheets MAP-28 through MAP-30)

Additional items (see continuation sheets FIGURE-31 through FIGURE-44)

Photographs (see continuation sheets PHOTO-45 through PHOTO-59)

Baker School, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photograph Log

Baker School
3908 Avenue B, Austin, Travis County
Photographer: Richard Weiss and Bonnie Tipton (THC Staff)
Date(s) Photographed: October 26, 2022 and February 28, 2023

Photo 1: Baker School, looking southwest. (2/28/23)

Photo 2: The Baker School is in Hyde Park, an early 20th century streetcar suburb. Looking east from school's main entrance to neighboring bungalows. (2/28/23)

Photo 3: East (primary) elevation, camera facing west. (2/28/23)

Photo 4: Stucco covers the original brick on the west elevation entrance portal. (2/28/23)

Photo 5: Brick pilasters and a corbeled "entablature" are neoclassical details on the 1911/1924 building.

Photo 6: South elevation, camera looking north.

Photo 7: South elevation (partial), looking north.

Photo 8: South elevation (partial) showing 1939 addition, camera looking north. (2/28/23)

Photo 9: Southwest oblique, camera looking northeast.

Photo 10: West elevation, camera looking east. (2/28/23)

Photo 11: Historic steel frame windows on the west elevation. Camera looking southeast.

Photo 12: North elevation, looking south.

Photo 13: North elevation (detail), camera looking southwest.

Photo 14: Courtyard – west and south façade of metal mechanical room (date unknown), west façade of 1911 building, north facade of 1939 addition, camera facing east.

Photo 15: 1911 Main Entrance (Level 2) with original wood floors, ceiling tiles, crown molding, arched opening, and transoms beyond, camera facing west.

Photo 16: 1911 Level 2 corridor with original wood floors, wall mounted clock, transoms, trim, and ceiling tiles. Camera facing south.

Photo 17: 1911 Principal's Office (Level 2), camera facing west.

Photo 18: Typical 1911 classroom at the central east side of Level 3, camera facing north.

Photo 19: Typical classroom in the 1924 Addition, currently used as open office space, camera facing west.

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Photo 20: 1924 Stairway from Level 2 corridor looking down to Level 1 and up to Level 3, camera facing north.

Photo 21: 1939 Corridor (Level 2), with original lockers, terrazzo floors, steel windows, and wall sconces, camera facing west.

Photo 22: 1939 Cafetorium (Level 1), camera facing southeast.

Photo 23: 1939 Library (Level 2), currently used as open office space, camera facing southwest.

Photo 24: 1939 Library (Level 2), currently used as open office space, camera facing north

Photo 25: 1958 Band House, camera looking northeast.

Photo 26: Boiler House (c. 1940), camera looking northeast.

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Baker School, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Narrative Description

Baker School is a 66,000-square-foot former public school on a three-acre rectangular lot in Austin, Travis County. It is in the Hyde Park neighborhood approximately two miles northeast of the State Capitol. Hyde Park is an early 20th century streetcar suburb, a local historic district, that encompasses the Hyde Park and Shadowlawn National Register districts.¹ Originally constructed in 1911 as a rectangular 3-story brick and concrete Neoclassical school, its current appearance reflects two significant additions in 1924 and 1939, and renovations in 1958 and 1961. The 1911/1924 H-plan section is two stories over a raised basement symmetrically fenestrated with classical language expressed in pilasters and a corbeled “entablature” cornice. Its interior three floors are organized around a central corridor opening to classrooms. The 1939 U-plan rear addition forms a central courtyard with the original school building. It is faced in blond brick, unornamented, with large steel frame glass windows lighting the interior gymnasium and cafetorium. A non-historic metal mechanical room in the courtyard is a non-contributing building on the property. The current property owners rehabilitated Baker School into offices using Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives. Throughout the interior, historic wood and terrazzo floors, wainscot, windows, transoms, lockers, chalk boards, and floor plans are intact. Baker School retains excellent integrity to communicate its historical and architectural significance. Although the school’s significance is directly related to the context presented in *Historic and Architectural Resources of Hyde Park, Austin, Texas*,² Baker School is not nominated under the cover document because its period of significance (1911-1973) postdates the MPS context, which ends in 1941.

Location & Setting

Baker School is in Austin’s Hyde Park neighborhood:

[An area of] relatively level terrain about 20 blocks north of Austin's original town site...Comprised of land initially platted as a residential suburb of the City of Austin in 1891, it is characterized by detached single-family dwellings. The initial development period resulted in the construction of Victorian-era dwellings, [but most homes are bungalows] built in the 1920s and early 1930s during Hyde Park’s most intense development period.

The Austin State Hospital grid complex and a strip of commercial buildings fronting Guadalupe Street define Hyde Park’s western edge...A grid-pattern street system features narrow roads and parallel alleys. Guadalupe Street, Speedway, and Duval Street, as well as streets following the route of the original streetcar line (40th Street, Avenue G, 43rd Street, and Avenue B) are significantly wider than the neighborhood average.³

Facing east, the school is centered on an approximately 3-acre rectangular parcel, occupying half of its block, which is bordered by W. 40th Street (north), Avenue B (east), W. 39th Street (south), and Guadalupe St. (west). The oversized block was once the site of the 1892 Hyde Park Pavilion, a recreation area with row boating on a man-made lake. Baker

¹ “Historic Districts,” City of Austin Housing and Planning Department, accessed February 27, 2023, <https://www.austintexas.gov/page/historic-districts#Hyde%20Park>; National Register of Historic Places, Hyde Park Historic District, Austin, Travis County, Texas, National Register #90001191, <https://atlas.thc.texas.gov/NR/pdfs/90001191/90001191.pdf>; National Register of Historic Places, Shadow Lawn Historic District, Austin, Travis County, Texas, National Register #90001192, <https://atlas.thc.texas.gov/NR/pdfs/90001192/90001192.pdf>.

² National Register of Historic Places, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Hyde Park MPS*, Austin, Travis County, Texas., <https://atlas.thc.texas.gov/NR/pdfs/64500640/64500640.pdf>. A list of all properties and districts listed under the MPS can be found here: <https://atlas.thc.texas.gov/AdvancedSearch/MPS?mpsId=2>.

³ National Register of Historic Places, Hyde Park Historic District, pgs. 7-1 through 7-2.

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School replaced the pavilion when it was built in 1911. Commercial buildings face Guadalupe on the block's west side. The wide streets surrounding Baker School were once on Austin's streetcar line.

Blocks facing Baker School show historic 1920s bungalows with some non-historic late-20th and early 21st century single and multi-family dwellings. Hyde Park Presbyterian Church (1896), listed individually under the *Historic and Architectural Resources of Hyde Park*, is across the street at 40th and Avenue B. Baker School is just outside the Hyde Park Historic District (NR 1990).

The nominated boundary includes the Baker School and two contributing resources: the 1958 Band Building and c. 1940 Boiler House, on the north side of the property. The property has a slight east-to-west downward slope. Two low brick walls, which match the boiler room brick, wrap in a right angle to create a small courtyard. In 2019, three rows of raised planter beds were added as a community garden on the east side of the site. There are two parking lots on the north and south sides and an asphalt drive with parallel parking on the west side. Additionally, there is parallel parking on 30th Street, perpendicular parking on 40th Street, and angled parking on Avenue B. Concrete sidewalks line the east and south boundaries of the site.

Baker School

The nominated building is a former public school built in 1911 with subsequent additions in 1924, 1939, and an interior renovation in 1958 and 1961 (**Map 5**). Architect Roy L. Thomas' original design for the central rectangular section (finished in 1911) included specifications for the north and south wing additions, which were built in 1924. As a result, the 1911/1924 section is a cohesive three-story H-plan masonry building with a flat roof. It is symmetrically fenestrated with modest neoclassical details. Metal frame windows with teal panel transoms are historic-age (1961) replacements for the 1911/1924 building's original wood-frame windows. The 1939 U-shaped 2-story addition extends from the rear (west) elevation of the 1924 wings. It is faced in blond brick, unornamented, with large steel frame glass windows lighting the interior gymnasium and cafetorium. Together, the 1911/1924 and 1939 addition have an O-shaped footprint with a central courtyard. Within the courtyard, a corrugated metal building (**Photo 14**) is considered a non-contributing resource as it was built outside the period of significance to house mechanical equipment.

East (Primary) Elevation (Photo 3)

Facing Avenue B, the school's east elevation is composed of a central section flanked by two winged additions. The additions are ornamented with two brick pilasters on either side of six tall windows. Each pilaster features two vertical brick protrusions with diamond patterns below. The center section features a stucco portico with thirteen steps leading to the main-floor entrance, which is over a raised basement. Originally made of brick, stucco cladding is a historic alteration applied in 1961 as a means to repair the failing masonry. The top of the portico is wrapped with stepped stucco ornamentation and donned with a carved inscription, "Baker School." A cornerstone on the bottom, northernmost column states the original Board of Trustees (Photo 3). Within the portico, two large metal doors are surrounded by two sidelight windows and a transom.

This elevation is balanced by twenty-five tall windows on either side of the portico (including the six windows on each tower), with three central windows above it. Single-hung, aluminum frame windows replaced the school's original wood-frame 12/1 windows in 1961. The sill of the ground floor (raised basement) windows are nearly level with grade. A water table rims the base of the building between the raised basement and second floor. On the second and third floors, the top of each window is filled with a solid teal panel, which was added to conceal drop tile ceilings added in the 1961 renovation. The window elements on the east elevation are repeated on the south and north elevations of the 1924 additions. Modest neoclassical details include the brickwork, which follows a running bond to the top of the third-floor windows. Furthermore, the east elevation is topped with brick parapet, which is ornamented to reference a

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classical entablature. Here, the brick pattern is organized in three sections, recalling classical architrave, frieze, and cornice. There is also a triangular, pediment-like extension at the center of the east elevation parapet.

South & North Elevations (Photos 6-9; 12-13)

The south and north elevations display the 1924 and 1939 additions. While both additions' facades are brick, they are differentiated with the two-story 1939 addition connecting to the three-story 1924 addition. Furthermore, the 1939 minimal brick pattern contrasts with the 1924 Neoclassical brick ornamentation.

The brick design of the east elevation continues on the south and north elevations at the 1924 additions. Here, a double door with sidelights and transom is centered between two brick pilasters and thirty tall, single-hung aluminum windows. There is a large, flat awning covering the entrance to the double doors. Above the awning, a recessed brick frame features a large diamond pattern, which coordinates with the smaller diamond patterns on the pilasters. Above the diamond pattern, there are three double-height windows.

The 1939 addition on the south and north elevations both feature a simple, tan brick façade with several bays of 10' tall aluminum windows at the original lunchroom (south side) and gymnasium (north side).

At west end of the south elevation, a small one-story brick room protrudes to the south next to a tall, covered entrance supported by two brick piers. Three steps and an ADA accessible ramp lead up to a set of metal double doors with large windows above. A rectangular concrete pad sits on the east side of the south elevation's 1939 addition. This area houses mechanical equipment and is surrounded by a tall brick wall with a pierced brick base and chain link fencing on top of the wall.

The north elevation mirrors the south in form, material, fenestration, and aesthetic.

West (Rear) Elevation (Photo 10)

The two-story, brick 1939 addition compiles the entire west, or rear, elevation, and the 1911 and 1924 portions of the building cannot be seen from this elevation. It reverses the form of the east elevation, with the center extending forward and the north and south sides recessing back. Furthermore, this central portion is also taller than its two sides, which is emphasized by five 10' tall bays of aluminum windows on the second floor. The central portion is flanked by two double-height, covered entrances, each with double metal doors below a full wall of fixed windows extending to the second-floor ceiling.

Interior

Baker School's interior floor plan has remained relatively unchanged since 1958. The few interior changes mainly consist of adding partition walls within the large original classrooms, dividing them into smaller offices. The 2018 renovation removed most of the prior work that covered original architectural elements. With the exception of modern mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems, the interior layout and finishes are quite similar to the time they were constructed.

According to Austin Independent School District's Building Project Data Record for 1911, the original building included 12 classrooms and a principal's office on three separate levels, each with a central corridor.⁴ Entering at the second level through the central portico, the principal's office (Photo 14) is located through an arched opening, directly

⁴ "Building Project Data Record: Baker – New". *Austin Independent School District*. Austin, Texas, January 20, 1911.

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across the corridor from the main entrance. Each classroom is filled with daylight with prominent tall windows. There are transoms and clerestory windows on the second and third levels that provide the corridors with natural light. Throughout the second and third levels, the original narrow plank oak floors run the length of the corridors, as well as the classrooms. The basement level has the original concrete in the corridor and classrooms.

The central corridors are bookended by two large, bright stairways, which were added on the north and south sides of the building in 1924. This addition also included 12 identical classrooms flanking each set of stairs, with 4 classrooms on each of the three levels.

On the first and second levels, four corridors extend perpendicularly to the west, wrapping around an exterior courtyard and leading through the two story 1939 addition. Each corridor is lined by two rows of original lockers on one wall and the original steel frame windows facing the interior courtyard on the opposite wall. The south corridor houses the original cafetorium (a combined cafeteria and auditorium), while the north corridor originally housed the gymnasium. It is currently a recording studio and offices for a classical guitar organization. The original library is located at the westernmost end of the 1939 addition. Below the library on the first level, the original boys and girls lockers rooms are now men's and women's restrooms. Across the hall, a science lab and an art room are now used as offices.

Contributing Resources

Band House (1958) (Photo 25)

The Band House is a 40'x 40' one-story wood-frame and Cemesto⁵ panel building on a concrete foundation with a shallow side gable roof. The north and south elevations each have four, 7'x 5' steel frame casement windows; a metal door with a vertical wire glass light interrupts the window wall between the third and fifth bay. The east and west elevations are Cemesto board with a 24-foot continuous row of 2-foot-tall casement windows set high on the wall.

Boiler House (c. 1940) (Photo 26)

The Boiler House appears on Sanborn and aerial maps by 1940. It is a 22'x 23' brick building with a flat roof. Original paired doors, metal with 4/4 lights and louvered at the bottom, are under a concrete canopy supported by square brick piers on the west elevation. Steel frame windows are on the north and south elevations.

⁵ Cemesto is a composite building material made of asbestos and cement with sugar cane fiber insulation. First developed in 1937, cemesto panels were used in residential, commercial, and industrial construction through, at least, the 1950s.
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cemesto> (accessed March 2, 2022)

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Integrity

Baker School retains excellent integrity to convey its significance for its association with the history of Austin public schools and as an example of early 20th century educational architecture. The nominated building is at its original **location** in Hyde Park, the neighborhood for which the school served. It retains good integrity of **setting**. Although much of Austin is undergoing rapid redevelopment, the area is a well-preserved streetcar suburb. Historic bungalows and a National Register-listed church line most of the surrounding blocks. Current property owners rehabilitated the former school with assistance from the National Park Service's Technical Preservation Services and the Texas Historical Commission. As a result, Baker School retains excellent integrity of **design, materials, and workmanship**. The 1911/1924 school has its original three-story, symmetrical form and H-plan with interior classrooms (now offices) organized around a central corridor. Economically designed, the school's modest Classical Revival style was originally expressed by brick pilasters, corbeled entablature, and columned portico. Although alterations to the portico removed the classical columns, the building's remaining ornament communicates classicism. The PWA-funded 1939 addition also retains its original footprint, form, and interior circulation. Original or historic-age materials are present throughout the nominated building. Interior classrooms and hallways retain original flooring (wood and terrazzo), wainscot, chalkboards, and lockers and the rehabilitation preserved the gym, cafetorium, and library spaces. Because Baker School shows a preponderance of good integrity in the previous five aspects, it has excellent integrity of **feeling** and **association** as an early 20th century public school building with additions that reflect evolving trends in school design through the 1950s.

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Statement of Significance

Named for DeWitt Clinton Baker, Baker School was built in 1911 to educate white children living in Hyde Park, a suburb in Austin, Travis County. The building's 1924 and 1938 additions corresponded with Hyde Park's booming development during those decades. Designed by local firm Endress & Walsh with associate Roy L. Thomas, Baker School conformed to early 20th century schemes for school design. The 1911/1924 section's symmetrical H-plan, large windows, and classical ornament reflected high interest in improving students' health, educational needs, and as an architectural landmark indicative of the city's dedication to public education. In the late 1930s, federal aid funded a large rear addition. With new amenities and square footage, the school was renamed Baker Junior High School to reflect its older student body. Renovations in 1958 and 1961 modernized the school during an era when the city experienced large-scale suburban development. At that time, the Band Building was also built. In 1980, it was converted to a high school but closed in c. 1995. Baker School is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of Education at the local level of significance for its association with the development of Austin's public education in the 20th century. As an excellent example of early 20th century school design, the Baker School is also nominated under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. The period of significance is 1911-1973, representing the year it was built through the current 50-year threshold for listing.

Public Education in Austin, Texas

The 1836 Texas Declaration of Independence records the Mexican government's failure to provide a public school system among the reasons for Texas establishing sovereignty from Mexico. With Texas' independence from Mexico, settlers began building an education system along with their new Republic. Each community built a schoolhouse, with families hiring and paying a teacher. In 1840, with the ardent support of Republic of Texas President Mirabeau Lamar, Texas' Congress passed legislation establishing an elementary to university level school system, delegating control to counties, and granting 17,712 acres of land to each bounty for the support of schools. Additionally, with the annexation of Texas to the United States, the new state's Constitution of 1845 stipulated that one tenth of annual tax revenue would be set apart as a perpetual education fund. Texas Governor, Elisha Pease, signed the Common School Law of 1854 which officially laid the foundation for the Texas public School system. The law created organized common schools, provided tuition assistance for indigent and orphaned children, allowed for private schools to convert to common schools, and provided money to be apportioned to counties based on annual scholastic census. The law also created a permanent school fund with \$2 million of \$10 million received by Texas from the sale of lands to the United States. However, the law stated each county was responsible for constructing a school building, but it did not apportion any money for the cause. For this reason, thirty-eight of Texas counties still had made no effort to survey their granted school land by 1855.⁶

Therefore, during the latter half of the 19th century, Texas schools were still mostly operated on a sporadic, localized, and private basis. This stagnation was not due to lack of interest. In fact, the citizens of Austin had conflicting views on some very important questions surrounding education. Who should decide what children are taught? Who should pay for their education? And should children even be required to go to school?

The law was amended in 1856 to provide state funding to any school that met certain requirements, regardless of whether the school was common or private. An important Austin school to take advantage of the amended law was

⁶ Etheridge, Truman Harrison. *Education in the Republic of Texas*. 1942. University of Texas. PhD dissertation. repositories.lib.utexas.edu/handle/2152/96512?show=full, Accessed November 14, 2022.; Berger, Max and Lee Wilborn, "Education" *Texas State Historical Association: Handbook of Texas*, May 28, 2021, www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/education, Accessed November 14, 2022.

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The German Free School, which opened in 1858, at 10th Street and Red River. Its building still stands, and now houses the German-Texan Heritage Society.⁷

With the onset of the Civil War in 1861, state funding for education depleted and many schools closed. During the Reconstruction period, a Republican government passed the School Law of 1871, as one of the most highly centralized education systems in the country. A very unpopular law, it increased the power of the State Board of Education greatly. The board could now regulate the establishment of schools, examine, and appoint teachers, fix salaries, define the course of study, and select textbooks. All of which was achieved through increased taxation. Despite outrage by many of Austin's citizens, the city's (and Texas') first free public schools were opened on September 4, 1871. Schools were racially divided and located in rented buildings, storefronts, and churches basements. The Boys School, for example, was housed at the Christian Church on the corner of 8th Street and Lavaca. During the next two years, six more schools would open in Austin, with a total attendance of 866 students.⁸ However, private schools still outnumber public schools.

When the Democrats gained power in 1873, they reversed much of the previous two decades' improvements to the Texas educational system, and many of the city's early public schools are shuttered by 1875. In 1876, the Texas Legislature passed a law allowing cities to establish their own public schools. However, Austin citizens had significant opposition to transferring education powers from parents to local governments. To combat poor local opinions of public schools, the Austin Graded School (later Pease School) was created in 1876, by a few championing parents. It was the city's first school built with public money and organized by grade levels. While state money was used to pay teachers, the school was intended to be free to students. However, parents typically had to pay between two and four dollars per month for half of the school year's tuition.

Despite the moderate progress of the Austin Graded School, many schools still closed in the city during this time, especially in the city's African American communities. However, African American community leaders created their own schools to replace the closed by the new government. In 1877, two schools for African American students were opened, including Wheatville School at 25th Street and Longview Street. By 1880, there were five schools in Austin for African American students.⁹

Significant change was still needed in Austin education. On August 16, 1880, voters elected to formally organize the Austin public school system, giving the city control of public free schools within the city limits. The new system would be run by a duly elected, eight-member Board of Trustees. On September 20, 1880, another election was held to select the board. A. P. Wooldridge, J.B. Rector, B.C. Ludiow were elected to serve the long term of four years, and William von Rosenberg, R.V. Campbell, and H.C. Hill for the short term of two years. The mayor and county judge served on the first school board as ex-officio members.¹⁰ Wooldridge served as the board's first president, and John B. Winn was appointed as the first superintendent of schools.

The Austin Public Schools officially organized on September 12, 1881, beginning with an annual budget of \$13,210, 26 teachers, and 500 students. Enrollment increased to 1,328 by the end of the school year, although attendance was low with an average of 806 students. The total number of school buildings had increased to eleven by this time, and students were assigned to different schools based on race and ward location. Five of these schools were for African

⁷ "The German Free School-History," *German-Texas Heritage Society*, www.germantexans.org/building-history, Accessed November 14, 2022.

⁸ "Exhibit Chronicles Slow Embrace of Public Schools," *Austin American-Statesman*, September 11, 2015, B3.

⁹ Barr, Alwyn. *Black Texans: A History of Negroes in Texas, 1528-1971*, Austin, Jenkins, 1973.

¹⁰ "Austin's Advantages as Educational Center" *Austin American-Statesman*. October 1, 1939, 1.

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American students, four elementary schools, and one high school. In 1899, voters narrowly approved the first school bond, valued at \$50,000, to fund construction for the first public high school at 9th Street and Trinity.¹¹

The system continued to grow, and the city had more than doubled their real estate by 1900, owning seven schools for white students and four schools for African American students. The seven white schools included Bickler, Pease, Palm, Wooldridge, Fulmore, Baker, and a new high school building, while the four African American schools were Robertson Hill, Gregorytown, West Austin, and Wheatville. The city also rented two schools, one in South Austin for African American students, and the Garland School for Hispanic students. The Garland School was located on 2nd Street and Nueces Street and closed in 1901 in spite of increased school buildings within the rest of the city. Schools were underfunded and overcrowded, yet voters were still reluctant to support school funding and repeatedly voted down tax increases proposed by the Board of Trustees.¹² Poverty also impeded African American and Hispanic children's access to education. In 1908, for example, the scholastic census reported fewer African American students than white students reasoning that cotton picking season required these children to miss school.¹³

In 1903, Arthur N. McCallum was appointed as superintendent. He worked tirelessly to secure bonds to revitalize the struggling school system. His description at a January 1910 City Council meeting depicts a shortened school year, two students per desk, and half-day grade lessons with one grade in the morning and one grade in the afternoon. Improved and new school buildings were part of a broader debate around much-needed municipal improvements. The city government had limited funds and limited power to raise money for street improvements, schools, parks, and sewers. Mayor Wooldridge and Superintendent McCallum campaigned that year for bonds, a funding tactic rarely taken at that time, to pay for these issues.¹⁴ Austin voters handily approved a \$75,000 school bond to fund the erection of two new school buildings in North Austin (Baker School) and South Austin (Fulmore School), improvements to Palm and Pease Schools, as well as an addition to Austin High School.¹⁵

While educational opportunity and quality was growing for white students in Austin, African American and Mexican American pupils were still greatly disadvantaged. Students and teacher of these races received less state funding and less pay than white teachers. With the Mexican American Garland School's closing in 1901, some the school's students may have integrated into white schools, but many were simply denied an education. Between 1910 and 1920, Austin saw an influx of Mexican immigrants fleeing the Mexican Revolution. So, in 1916, the West Avenue School opened for the "non-English speaking community." As Austin's only Spanish language school, students were required to travel from across the city at great objection from parents. In 1923, the Comal School was opened as a second Mexican American student school, and in 1936, Zavala School opened as a third Mexican American student school. These two schools eased the commute for Mexican American students but kept them segregated.¹⁶

Conversely, the city's 1928 Master Plan created a "negro district". The plan sought to confine African American communities to East Austin with hopes of "eliminating the necessity of white and black schools, white and black parks, and other duplicate facilities for this area".¹⁷ By 1940, there were eight schools for African American students,

¹¹ Austin Public Schools. *Austin's Schools 1881-1954: Origin, Growth, Future*, 1954. (A 370.9764 AU76S)

¹² Ibid.

¹³ "Attendance at Schools: More White Children," *Austin Daily Statesman*, October 4, 1908.

¹⁴ "Bond Issue Campaign on the Last Lap," *Austin Daily Statesman*, March 15, 1910.

¹⁵ "Exhibit Chronicles Slow Embrace of Public Schools," *Austin American-Statesman*, September 11, 2015, B3

¹⁶ Adams, Carol R. *The History of Mexican American Schools in Austin: From Reconstruction Through World War II*, 1997. (A 371.009 AD); McInerney, Claire, "To Preserve The Legacy Of A Closing Austin ISD School, UT Students Create A Digital Archive" *KUT : Austin's NPR Station*, February 1, 2021, www.kut.org/education/2021-02-01/to-preserve-the-legacy-of-a-closing-austin-isd-school-ut-students-create-a-digital-archive, Accessed November 14, 2022. Also, see Isabel Work Cromack, "Latin-Americans: A Minority Group in the Austin Public Schools," University of Texas, 1949.

¹⁷ Kock & Fowler. "A City Plan for Austin, Texas." *City of Austin*, 1928.

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and all but two were located in East Austin. Most of these schools taught very limited grade levels and usually all by one teacher. Very few African American schools grades one through eleven.¹⁸

By 1942, superintendent McCallum has served 39 years and increased Austin's school system to include 32 schools with 16,128 total students. He successfully shifted the public's perception of public schools, and lead Austin voters to pass over \$20 million in school bonds by 1950. With this tremendous growth, the Board of Trustees pushed for a vote to organize an independent school district, which would give the board authority to call elections, levy and collect taxes, and financially and administratively separate the schools from local government. On April 30, 1955, voters passed the creation of the Austin Independent School District (AISD).¹⁹

Coinciding with AISD's organization, the U.S. Supreme Court's 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* ruled racial segregation in public schools as unconstitutional. AISD's initially adopted an integration policy that allowed individual students to choose between attending a segregated or integrated school. In 1955, thirteen African American students became the first to integrate Austin high schools—seven individuals at Stephen F. Austin High School, five at William B. Travis High School, and one at McCallum High School. Elementary and junior high schools were much slower to integrate, however, these schools remained segregated until the early 1960s. In 1968, the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (now separated into the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services) found that AISD was not compliant with the Civil Rights Act and the U.S. Department of Justice filed suit against AISD in *United States v. State of Texas*. The court ruled that AISD had intentionally segregated both African American and Mexican American students.

In response, AISD adopted a mandatory, court-supervised integration policy of one-way busing in 1971, where African American students were required to transfer to white schools. This one-way busing policy placed the entire burden of transportation and social integration on minority students, and in 1979, Austin pivoted to two-way busing, where white students were also required to transfer to African American schools. By 1986, AISD was released from court supervision.

During the 1990s and 2000s, AISD grew with Austin's booming economy. At the start of the 2022 school year, AISD had 74,645 students, 5,508 teachers, and 1,569 administrators across 116 schools. Mostly due to the COVID-19 pandemic, AISD schools saw a decrease in 982 students between 2020/21 and 2021/22. With the pandemic limiting most public schools to virtual learning, parents saw opportunities for school choice, and many opted for alternative schooling. Therefore, AISD enrollment is expected to decline by more than 5,600 students in the next 10 years.²⁰

History of Hyde Park Neighborhood²¹

In December 1890, Martin Monroe and Adele Shipe of Abilene, Kansas conveyed 206.25-acres to the Texas Land and Town Company for \$180,000. A month later the company filed the Hyde Park Addition with the Travis County Clerk. An early promotional map of Hyde Park reveals Shipe's layout of the new neighborhood. Drawn by noted map maker Augustus Koch, who prepared "bird's eye" maps of many Texas cities, it depicts a grid pattern of treelined streets. The

¹⁸ Jackson, Robena Estelle. *East Austin: A Socio-Historical View of a Segregated Community*, 1979. (A 305.8097643 JA); Barr, Alwyn. *Black Texans: A History of Negroes in Texas, 1528–1971*, Austin, Jenkins, 1973.

¹⁹ Austin Public Schools. *Seventy-Three Vital Years: Public Education in Austin, 1881-1954, 1954*. (A 370.9764 AU76S)

²⁰ Templeton Demographics. "AISD Demographic Analysis, 2021-2022." *Austin Independent School District*. 2022.

www.austinisd.org/about-us, Accessed November 14, 2022.

²¹ This section is adapted from Section E, "Hyde Park: An Early Suburban Development in Austin, Texas (1891-1941)" in: National Register of Historic Places, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Hyde Park MPS*, Austin, Travis County, Texas., <https://atlas.thc.texas.gov/NR/pdfs/64500640/64500640.pdf>.

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west side of the development was dominated by a large park in the area bounded by present-day Guadalupe, West 38th, Avenue D and West 43rd streets. Two separate man-made bodies of water [at the park] were labeled Gem Lake and Crystal Fountain. Frequently mentioned among the amenities Hyde Park offered, the lakes were ultimately drained in the mid-1890s to provide additional land for residential use as part of the effort to develop Hyde Park Addition No. 2.

Critical to Hyde Park's development, electric streetcars attained considerable success throughout the nation during the late 19th century as a new mode of transportation. In 1890 Shipe obtained exclusive franchise rights to operate an electric streetcar system from the city council. On February 26, 1891, Austin's first electric streetcar rolled along the Austin Rapid Transit Railway's tracks on Congress Avenue. Shipe's control of the system enabled him to extend the line north from the city, building tracks along the Old Georgetown Road (now Guadalupe Street). Near the entrance to the State Insane Asylum (now the Austin State Hospital) at 40th Street, the tracks turned east into the new development and made a loop along 40th Street, Avenue G, 43rd Street and Avenue B. This service was essential to Hyde Park's development as it linked the new subdivision with the rest of Austin.

Documentary information suggests that economic uncertainties, including the Panic of 1893, affected the salability of lots in the development. In response, Shipe apparently shifted his market strategy to appeal to the city's expanding middle class. The prominent park (land on which the nominated building was later constructed) was re-platted as Hyde Park Addition No. 2 in 1892 for the development as residential lots. Contrary to earlier assertions that Hyde Park would be "the most aristocratic" area of Austin, Hyde Park's architectural character shifted after 1895, as smaller, more modest frame houses came to typify the neighborhood.

By the 1930s, Hyde Park evolved into a semi-independent community within Austin with its own school (Baker School), park, stores, and churches. Although Hyde Park was primarily residential in 1921, small-scale commercial buildings were scattered throughout the neighborhood. Four churches served local Baptist, Presbyterian, Christian and Methodist congregations.

Sanborn maps of 1935 document the intense development that occurred after 1921. Most lots had been improved with houses of frame construction, although seven brick-veneered residences were concentrated in the Shadow Lawn section. More commercial buildings lined the east side of Guadalupe Street, and many wood-frame buildings were refaced with stone or brick. In addition, five tourist camps were built in Hyde Park along Guadalupe Street, which still served as Austin's primary northbound highway. Other important physical landmarks included the fire station at East 43rd Street and Speedway, the North Austin (later renamed Shipe) Park, and a small cluster of commercial buildings at the northwest corner of East 43rd and Duval streets.

Continued expansion of the neighborhood subsequently was hampered by several events. In response to the increased mobility afforded by the availability of automobiles, city administrators conducted a massive campaign in the 1930s to improve the local transportation network by paving streets and building bridges. Therefore, newer subdivisions were developed further from the city's downtown core. The streetcar system that provided the underpinning of the development subsequently was dismantled in 1941. As a result, numerous Hyde Park residents left the neighborhood and it had begun to deteriorate by the 1960s. Rapid expansion of the student population at the University of Texas in that decade exacerbated the situation, as Hyde Park's proximity to the university made it an attractive area for students. Suburban flight increased the number of rental properties and afforded greater opportunities for developers to build apartment complexes to meet student housing needs. Apartment buildings replaced many historic houses in the area, most notably along Speedway. Hyde Park was "rediscovered" during the 1970s and its unique character, history and architecture were enhanced by an infusion of new residents.

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Baker School

The first schools in Hyde Park were the Free School and Oak Hill School. Both organized to educate the community's white children. Hyde Park's developer, Martin Monroe and Adele Shipe founded and funded the "Free School," located in a small 3-room building on Speedway.²² Oak Hill School operated out of a commercial building on Guadalupe Street. In 1892, the Austin School System bought the Free School. They enlarged it to accommodate students from both neighborhood schools and renamed it Hyde Park School.²³ Ten years later, its name was again changed to memorialize DeWitt Clinton Baker (1832-1881) who moved to Austin from Maine in 1850. Baker, a druggist by trade, is said to have helped organize the city's first public school system.²⁴ As enrollment steadily increased to nearly 200 in 1908, the six-room Baker School strained to contain its student body. The institution's Mother's Club, akin to a modern-day Parent-Teacher Association, formed to organize a petition for a new school as "[the building was] inadequate, unsafe, lop-sided, sagging, out-of-date, insecurely lashed to its foundation and located in the midst of a bog whenever it rains."²⁵

Austin voters, in 1910, approved the city's first school bond that included funding to purchase and construction of the new building for Hyde Park's Baker School. The school board bought the city block where the Hyde Park Pavilion stood and sold the sixteen-year-old structure to the Hyde Park Baptist Church.²⁶ Austin architectural firm Endress & Walsh were retained by the school board to prepare plans for two identical buildings that became Baker School and Fulmore School in South Austin. The resulting design considered the board's budget as it showed, "merely simple square [brick] structures, classically outlined and not ornately beautiful but with pleasing dignity." (Figure 12) It also conformed to the era's standards for school architecture with ample windows "so planned that all light enters from the pupil's left," effective air ventilation, fireproof construction and exit considerations, and windowed classroom doors "so that the principal in passing through the hall can observe the work being done." Importantly, the plans included drawings for winged additions to double the school's capacity "without throwing [the] architectural lines out of harmony or making them poorly ventilated or lighted."²⁷

The nominated building opened in time for the 1911-1912 scholastic year. On November 25, 1911, a large crowd attended its formal dedication. Following statements by Mayor Wooldridge and Superintendent McCallum, University of Texas educator Dr. A. Caswell Ellis advocated making the school a civic and recreation center for the larger community "so that adults will feel that they are as much at home in the school and are as much concerned with it as are the children."²⁸ The Baker School Mother's Club initiated programs and funding drives that did just that. Their work secured safe drinking fountains, a piano, library, lunchroom, playground, and restrooms for the school. With their support, local bonds passed to improve nearby streets and sewers. They also sponsored public lectures from health,

²² "Bids and Proposals," *Austin Statesman*, June 29, 1911, 9

²³ "Hyde Park Had Own School," *Austin American-Statesman*, August 21, 1980.

²⁴ Baker also served as the inspector of schools from 1872 to 1877, organized Austin's first public library, and was the treasurer of the Austin Library Association. Baker authored multiple books about Texas History. His home, which was built in 1871, received landmark status in 1971 and is owned by a University of Texas sorority." Jeanette H. Flachmeier, "Baker, DeWitt Clinton," Handbook of Texas Online, accessed March 06, 2023, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/baker-dewitt-clinton>; Obituary, *Austin Daily Statesman*, April 19, 1881, p.4; "New Baker School Formally Dedicated," *Austin American Statesman*, November 25, 1911.

²⁵ "Attendance at Schools: More White Children," *Austin Daily Statesman*, October 4, 1908; "Seek New Building," *Austin American Statesman*, August 6, 1908.

²⁶ "Property is Paid For," *Austin American Statesman*, January 17, 1911; "The Old Pavilion is Sold," *Austin American Statesman*, January 21, 1911.

²⁷ "Austin's New School Buildings Will Be Beautiful," *Austin Daily Statesman*, February 12, 1911.

²⁸ New Baker School Formally Dedicated," *Austin American Statesman*, November 25, 1911.

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psychology, and education specialists to teach community lessons on parenting, gardening, and arranged medical exams for the neighborhood children.²⁹

Baker School initially served elementary aged children (6-11) who lived in the surrounding neighborhood. Enrollment increased annually and reflected Hyde Park's overall population boom of the 1920s and 1930s. In 1923, for example, Baker's administration reported the building's eight classrooms could not accommodate all 449 pupils. As a resolution, they reduced certain grades to half-day instruction and created new classroom space in the basement and principal's office. The Austin School Board subsequently recommended and was awarded school bonds that doubled the size of Baker School.³⁰ Construction commenced on the north and south wings in 1924 and were completed in accordance with the architect's original drawings. Between 1925 and 1931, enrollment increased from 600 to 800.³¹ Sixth grade students graduating from Baker in the 1930s attended one of two junior highs, University Junior High and Allen Junior High. Expanding the capacity of junior high schools became one of the school board's priorities by mid-decade, which led to the nominated building's subsequent reclassification in 1938.³²

In 1938, the Austin School Board supplemented a \$750,000 bond with a \$615,000 Public Works Administration (PWA) grant to renovate Baker School and complete other school-related projects throughout the city.³³ PWA, a federal relief agency created by the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933, funded public works projects across the nation. The local firm of Kreisle & Brooks designed the then-called Baker Junior High School's 1939 rear addition. Costing \$105,900, the new gymnasium, home economics lab, cafetorium (combined cafeteria and auditorium), and locker rooms greatly expanded the school's footprint. Improvements to Baker Junior High School precipitated its high scholastic rankings and variety of extracurricular activities it was known for in the mid-century. The *Austin American Statesman* frequently published announcements for plays, orchestral series, Glee club, dance classes, scout groups, and carnivals; and chronicled seasonal standings for the school's football and basketball teams. Baker Junior High also published a school newspaper, *The Baker Rocket*, from 1949 through at least the mid-1950s with a printing press located in the 1939 addition.

The nominated building underwent additional renovations in 1958 and 1961 as the Austin School Board anticipated increased enrollment through the 1960s. Designed by Roy L. Thomas, the changes occurred primarily in the 1939 section. The work included boys and girls locker rooms, kitchen reconfiguration, and additional classrooms. The same year, an ancillary band room building was also built on the northwest corner of the building across from the gymnasium.³⁴ Furthermore, an extensive renovation occurred in 1961 when the school upgraded the HVAC system and added drop tile ceilings throughout, covering the original architectural details. This 1961 renovation also required repairs to the original portico, which was separating from the building. At the portico, the original, but failing, Doric columns were removed, and the brick was stuccoed over.³⁵

Demographic changes in Hyde Park and suburban sprawl in the 1960s led to Baker School's eventual decline. In 1980, the building was repurposed as an alternative high school, taking the name W.R. Robbins High School. In the late

²⁹ "History of Baker School Club Much Accomplished," *Austin American*, October 14, 1928.

³⁰ "Austin Public Schools Statement by the Board," *Austin American Statesman*, November 27, 1923.

³¹ "School Enrollment Gain," *Austin American Statesman*, May 13, 1931. "Austin Public School System Without a Peer in Texas," *Austin American Statesman*, February 8, 1925.

³² "New Junior Highs to Open," *Austin American Statesman*, October 1, 1939.

³³ "Three Weeks to Bring Out School Plans," *Austin American Statesman*, October 11, 1939.

³⁴ "Building Project Data Record: Baker Junior High, Renv. & Add-1958," *Austin Independent School District*. Austin, Texas, May 15, 1958.

³⁵ "Building Project Data Record: Baker Junior High School, Renv. 1961." *Austin Independent School District*. Austin, Texas, 1961.

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1990s, the school became an administrative building for the school district. Finally, in 2018, the building was purchased by Alamo Drafthouse Cinemas to serve as their corporate headquarters.

Architectural Significance

The architectural development of schoolhouses in Austin followed state and national trends, which are well-documented in the National Register of Historic Places multiple property forms and SHPO-published historic contexts.³⁶ Early 20th century school design was shaped by state legislatures, federal education agencies, progressive educators, social reformers, and architects. Educational journals were “one of the best forums for developing a consensus on appropriate school design” that addressed shared priorities for student health, safety, educational, and social development.³⁷ The journals and other published bulletins included standardized plans and construction material recommendations for superintendents and school boards to follow. In many states, like Texas, legislatures codified ventilation, lighting, heating, and fire safety regulations. As a result, public schools became a distinguishable building type found in cities across the United States.

Early 20th century public schools are typically two or three-story buildings with “H,” “I,” “T,” or “C” symmetrical plans. The primary entrance, serviced by stairs leading to an intermediate main floor, is often the building’s architectural focal point. Large banks of grouped windows dominate the exterior elevations because light and ventilation were critical to student performance. Classrooms line double-loaded central corridors that, typically, terminated with staircases for interior circulation and fire safety. Auditoriums, gymnasiums, and cafeterias (sometimes combined) became integral and essential spaces in early 20th century schools. These large, flexible rooms were open to local communities for public education, civic events, and recreation. Economic considerations limited architectural expressions of style in schools:

Ample opportunity for beauty without great expense is given the architect in the general shape and proportion of the building, in the division and attenuation of the surface, in pilaster, buttress and portico, in the treatment of the roof, in the color and texture of the brick, in the stone trimming and in the variety of mortar.³⁸

Although a secondary priority, architecturally attractive school buildings were valued as civic landmarks that make “a lasting, although silent, impression upon the taste of young people who must see it day after day.”³⁹ Historicist vocabulary of the era’s popular styles—like Neoclassicism, Spanish Revival, Colonial Revival—also linked schools to local or national history and values.⁴⁰

In 1908, the Austin School Board undertook a building program to construct new schools and remodel existing structures. For their first project they brought on Dr. A. Caswell Ellis to oversee the planning and construction of the nominated building and the South Ward (Fulmore) School. Ellis (1871-1948) was a respected professor of educational philosophy at the University of Texas and social reformer.⁴¹ In 1905, UT published Ellis’ “School Buildings,” a free

³⁶ Sources cited in this nomination included: Michigan State Historic Preservation Office, *An Honor and Ornament: Public School Buildings of Michigan*, September 2023. MPS Multiple Property Document Forms: *Historic Educational Resources of Pennsylvania* and *Historic Public Schools of Kansas*.

³⁷ *An Honor and Ornament*, 5.

³⁸ Dr. A. Caswell Ellis and Hugo “School Buildings,” *Bulletin of the University of Texas* 66, No. 13 (June 15, 1905): 39.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Amy S. Weisser, “‘Little Red School House, What Now?’ Two Centuries of American Public School Architecture,” *Journal of Planning History* 5, no. 3 (August 2006): 202-203.

⁴¹ “Ellis, Alexander Caswell,” *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed August 21, 2023, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/ellis-alexander-caswell>.

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bulletin on scientific and hygienic school design for school trustees across Texas. The 119-page pamphlet, which included plans by Austin architect Hugo Kuehne, discussed building sites, plans, materials, lighting, ventilation, heating, sanitation, equipment, interior wall coloring, and exterior design and ornament.

Ellis' expertise was realized in the completion of Baker School and Fulmore School, both built in 1910, which became Austin's first examples of modernity and hygiene in Progressive Era school design. Their construction pre-dated state laws regulating the construction of public schools.⁴² In 1913, the 33rd Texas Legislature's bill for such a law acknowledged the influence of experts like Ellis: "the regulations are exactly those now employed by the experts in the State University (University of Texas)...and have been tested out for years...and found to be excellent."⁴³ Two years later, the Austin School Board began building a new high school, two ward schools, and remodeled its oldest institutions: Pease, Winn, and Palm Schools—all of which were designed or improved following the design principles Ellis, other experts, and the state legislature endorsed.

Pragmatism characterized school architecture of the Depression and Pre-WWII eras. Schools built in that period were usually one-story, devoid of historicist ornament with a design that prioritized "continued improvement of mechanical systems, systemization of classroom layouts, addition of group facilities like auditoria and gymnasias, and clarification of the relationship of classrooms to these larger amenities."⁴⁴ As the city's scholastic population grew in 1930s, the Austin School Board sought federal funds to enlarge its existing building stock rather than build new schools. Baker School was one of several local schools that benefitted from WPA funds, and its large, utilitarian addition was largely dedicated to group facilities. After World War II, federal monies and a booming economy funded an ambitious school construction program to meet the needs of Austin's growing suburbs. Sprawling, single-story campuses—like Highland Park Elementary, Lamar Middle School, and McCallum High School—featured steel frame construction, air conditioning, flexible rooms, indoor-outdoor integration, and colorful interiors.⁴⁵ Austin's older schools, like the nominated building, received technological improvements—like A/C systems—that often required removing or covering historic materials.

Baker School is an excellent local example of early 20th century educational architecture with an addition and interior alterations that reflect how approaches to school design evolved through mid-century. Designed by architect Roy L. Thomas under Ellis's oversight, Baker School received wide praise when it opened as an "attractive, modern, well lighted schoolhouse embodying... all that is good in school architecture."⁴⁶ The rectangular floor plan, which became a H-plan in 1924 with the construction of north and south wings, features characteristic symmetrical massing and articulated entrance portico. Its exterior masonry is three-wythe, locally sourced, Austin Common Butler buff brick, which was made from the alluvial clay deposited by the Colorado River. This brick was the predominant masonry material used between 1873 and 1912 in Austin.⁴⁷ The building features prominent windows to allow natural daylight and ventilation in all of the classrooms. Central stairs, originally decorated by Doric columns, lead to the intermediate main floor. A short entrance hall opens to double-loaded lateral corridors that terminated in large stairwells for safe circulation between floors.

⁴² Texas Legislature, 33rd Regular Session, "Chapter 120: Public Schools—Regulates Lighting, Heating, Etc., of Public School Buildings," *General Laws of Texas: Thirty-Third Legislature of Texas* (1913): 244-246.

https://lrl.texas.gov/scanned/sessionLaws/33-0/HB_24_ch_120.pdf

⁴³ Edgar P. Haney in H.B. 24, 33rd R.S. bill file, Legislative Reference Library of Texas online database, accessed August 2, 2023.

<https://lrl.texas.gov/legis/billsearch/text.cfm?legSession=33-0&billtypeDetail=HB&billNumberDetail=24&billSuffixDetail=>

⁴⁴ Weisser, 207.

⁴⁵ Amy F. Ogata, "Building for Learning in Postwar American Elementary Schools," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 67, No. 4 (December 2008): 575.

⁴⁶ "Eleven Pass City Teachers Examinations," *Austin Statesman*, August 12, 1910, 8.

⁴⁷ Allen, Phoebe. "Michael Butler and the Butler Brick Legacy." Preservation Austin, April 28, 2021, www.preservationaustin.org/news/2021/4/28/michael-butler-amp-the-butler-brick-legacy

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The large, two-story steel truss and concrete addition, funded by the WPA, doubled the school's square footage. Like schools of that era, this addition provided space for modern mechanical equipment and separated group facilities—auditorium, cafeteria, gymnasium, and library—from classrooms in the 1911/1924 section. Ample steel frame windows provided ventilation and lighting during a period before air conditioning.⁴⁸ Renovations in the late 1950s, including the construction of the one-story band house, added terrazzo floors and air conditioning to Baker School.

Rehabilitation

The most recent renovation occurred in 2018, when the current owners, Alamo Drafthouse Cinemas, purchased the building to serve as their new corporate headquarters. This renovation included three phases: demolition, rehabilitation, and new work. Demolition work removed non-historic finishes from the 1970s-1990s, including carpeting, cabinetry, faux wood wall paneling, partition walls, fluorescent lighting and drop ceiling system. Rehabilitation work uncovered and refinished the most of the existing, original architectural details installed between 1911 and 1958, including wood and terrazzo floors, doors, transoms, chalk rails, chalkboards, wainscot, brick wall tiles, wood trim, crown molding, beadboard ceilings, as well as decorative soffits and arches. Additionally, the historic concrete floors, steel windows, steel cross beam, and wood rafters of the 1958 band room addition were exposed and refinished. Lastly, there was minimal new work, which mainly brought the building to current energy and code standards, including ADA compliant restrooms and new, historically referenced schoolhouse light fixtures in original light locations. While most of the classrooms were repurposed as open office space, new partition walls divided select classrooms into executive offices. Originally painted walls were also repainted with a color scheme informed by historic colors uncovered during demolition.

Architects

Endress & Walsh was an early 20th century architecture firm in Austin. The firm's early work was primarily located in the new towns springing up along the Rio Grande in South Texas. Their work at the San Benito Water District Building (1910) was designated as a Recorded Texas Historical Landmark in 1997. The firm's most notable Austin work is the historic Paramount Theater. While Chicago firm, Eberson, Fugard, and Knapp served as Architect of Record for the design, the theater was constructed under the local direction of Endress & Walsh.

The firm's principal architects, George Endress and Dennis Walsh, both had prominent individual careers in Austin. Prior to partnering with Walsh, George Endress designed the campus of the Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary (1907) and the St. Austin's Chapel (1909) on Guadalupe. Both buildings are now extant. However, Endress also designed many, still-standing buildings at Austin's Camp Mabry in 1918, including the School of Automotive Mechanics (SAM), wood workshops, six brick barrack buildings, a brick mess hall, and several support buildings. From 1913 to 1917, Endress partnered with William Ward Watkins, who designed several buildings at Rice University and later served as the head of the university's Department of Architecture.⁴⁹

Endress & Walsh's other principal, Dennis Walsh, was born in Austin in 1875. He worked as an architect on the east coast before returning to Austin in 1908, where he would soon partner with George Endress. In 1911, Walsh built an imposing frame house in present-day West Lake Hills, west of Austin. The house was demolished in the 1970's, and a Randall's grocery store now occupies the site. Walsh was said to be the first professional main in the area, which was primarily known as an enclave of "cedar choppers". The present-day Walsh-Tarleton Road in West Lake Hills is named

⁴⁸ "Building Project Data Record: Baker Junior High, Add-1939," *Austin Independent School District*. Austin, Texas, February 16, 1939.

⁴⁹ Stephen Fox, "Watkin, William Ward," *Texas State Historical Association: Handbook of Texas*, June 29, 2018, www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/watkin-william-ward, Accessed November 11, 2022

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for Walsh. In 1916, Walsh designed Metz School in East Austin, and Mathews School in Old West Austin. He also designed many notable residences around Austin, including William H. Stacy's iconic "Swiss" Chalet at 1201 Travis Heights Blvd. Walsh later partnered with Bertram Geisecke. In 1916, Walsh was the lead architect on an addition to Pease School, as well as the original building for Allan Junior High (1916), which later became Austin High School and is now Austin Community College Rio Grande.

While employed at Endress & Walsh, architect **Roy L. Thomas** designed the original 1911 building. He would later return to design the school's 1958 addition, though no longer with Endress & Walsh. Thomas was born in San Marcos in 1887. He attended Southwestern University in Georgetown in 1905, and later enrolled in the School of Engineering at The University of Texas in 1906. He worked for Endress & Walsh from 1909 to 1911, after which he opened his own practice in Austin's Scarbrough Building. During his long career, he served as president of the Hill Country chapter of the American Institute of Architects in 1935 and designed a number of iconic buildings in Austin. In addition to the original Baker School (1911) and the Baker School's Music Room addition (1958), his work includes the Stephen F. Austin Hotel (1924), the Herbert Bohn House (1938), Robert E. Lee Elementary (1939), and Tarrytown Methodist Church (1947).⁵⁰

Famous Austin architect and city planner, **Hugo Franz Kuehne**, completed the 1924 addition at the Baker School. Kuehne was born in Austin on February 10, 1884. He graduated from The University of Texas in 1906 with a degree in civil engineering, followed by a master's degree in architecture from Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1908. Immediately after his graduation, he was hired to find the School of Architecture at The University of Texas as part of the College of Engineering. He was also a practicing architect in Austin for fifty-three years, with notable works including the Ritz Theater (1929), the quaint Zilker Caretaker's Cottage (1929), the Commodore Perry Hotel (1950), and the Austin Central Library (1933), which is now the Austin History Center. In addition, Kuehn was a dedicated public servant to Austin for over twenty-five years. His service included positions as chairman of the city's Zoning Board of Adjustments, chairman of the Parks and Recreation Board, and chairman of the City Planning Commission. In 1955, he was honored by the citizens of Austin as their "Most Worthy Citizen."⁵¹

Edwin C. Kreisle and Max Brooks, of **Kreisle & Brooks**, were the architects for the Baker School's 1939 addition. A native Austinite, Kreisle was born in 1888 and attended Palm School as a child. He focused mainly on residential work, designing nearly 1,000 residences in the Austin area. In the mid-1930's, Kreisle partnered with fellow Austin architect, Max Brooks, a graduate of the University of Texas in 1933 and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1936. Together, their work includes the Central Fire Station #1 (1938) and the San Jose Motor Court (1936), which is now the San Jose Hotel on South Congress in Austin. In 1939, they partnered with Geisecke & Harris, Page & Southerland, and another Baker School architect, Hugo Franz Kuehne, on Santa Rita Courts, for the nation's first federal public housing project.⁵²

After Kreisle and Brooks dissolved in the early 1940s, Kreisle went on to design Interestingly, Max Brooks later went into partnership with Hugo Franz Kuehne and Howard R. Barr to form Kuehne, Brooks, and Barr from 1942 to 1960. Brooks would also serve as the Commissioner of the Austin Housing Authority, and design many government buildings, including the United States Embassy in Mexico City, the Labor Department Building in Washington D.C.,

⁵⁰ "Roy L. Thomas," AIA Historical Directory of American Architects.

aiahistoricaldirectory.atlassian.net/wiki/spaces/AHDAA/pages/36958495/ahd1044718. Accessed November 11, 2022; Long, Christopher, "Thomas, Roy Leonidas," Texas State Historical Association: Handbook of Texas, August 1, 1995, www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/thomas-roy-leonidas, Accessed November 11, 2022

⁵¹ "H. Kuehne Succumbs," *Austin American-Statesman*, November 25, 1963, 1, 8.

⁵² "Architect Kreisle Succumbs," *Austin American-Statesman* January 3, 1971, 6

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and the Manned Spaceflight Center in Houston. He also designed the Lyndon B. Johnson Memorial Library (1971) at the University of Texas.⁵³

Conclusion

Named for DeWitt Clinton Baker, Baker School was built in 1911 to educate white children living in Hyde Park, a suburb in Austin, Travis County. The building's 1924 and 1938 additions corresponded with Hyde Park's booming development in the 1920s and 1930s. Originally designed by local firm Endress & Walsh with associate Roy L. Thomas, Baker School conformed to early 20th century schemes for school design touted by educational experts at the University of Texas. The 1911/1924 section's symmetrical H-plan, large windows, and classical ornament reflected high interest in improving students' health, educational needs, and as an architectural landmark indicative of the city's dedication to public education. In the late 1930s, federal aid funded the large rear addition which was designed by Roy L. Thomas and the school was renamed Baker Junior High School. Interior renovations in 1958 and 1961 modernized the school in an era of suburban development and postwar modern school construction. At that time, the Band Building was also built. In 1980, it was converted to a high school but closed c. 1995. It is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of Education at the local level of significance for its association with the development of Austin's public education in the 20th century. It is also an excellent example of early 20th century school design. Therefore, the Baker School is also nominated under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. The period of significance is 1911-1973, representing the year it was built through the current 50-year threshold for listing.

⁵³ "R. Max Brooks, 75, Architect; Designed U.S. Labor Building." *New York Times*. September 11, 1982.
www.nytimes.com/1982/09/11/obituaries/r-max-brooks-75-architect-designed-us-labor-building.html. Accessed October 27, 2022.

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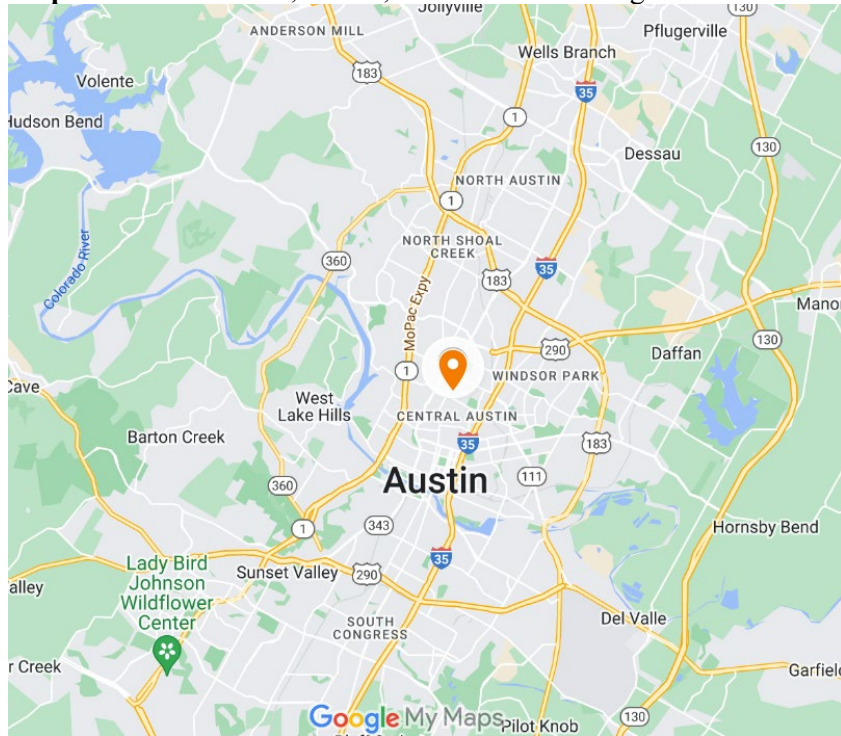
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Maps

Map 1: 3908 Avenue B, Austin, Texas. Source: Google

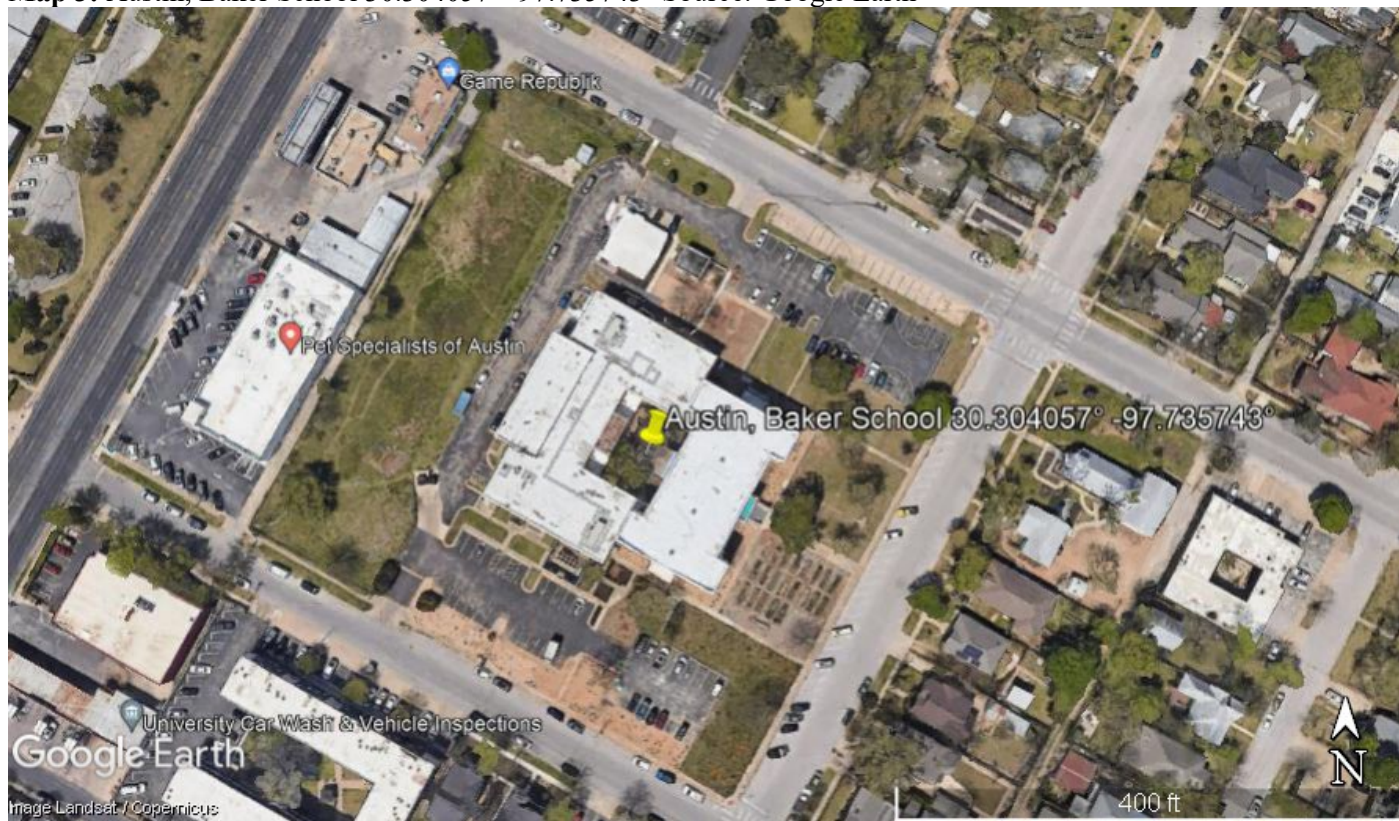


Map 2: The nominated boundary is 3.3512AC OF OLT 78 HYDE PARK ADDN PEVILION TRACT. Source: City of Austin Property Profile (accessed 9/19/22).



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Map 3: Austin, Baker School 30.304057° -97.735743° Source: Google Earth



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Map 4: Site map showing contributing and non-contributing resources. Source: Open Street Map and Adobe Illustrator

1. Baker School (1911/1924/1939)
2. Band House (1958)
3. Boiler House (c. 1940)



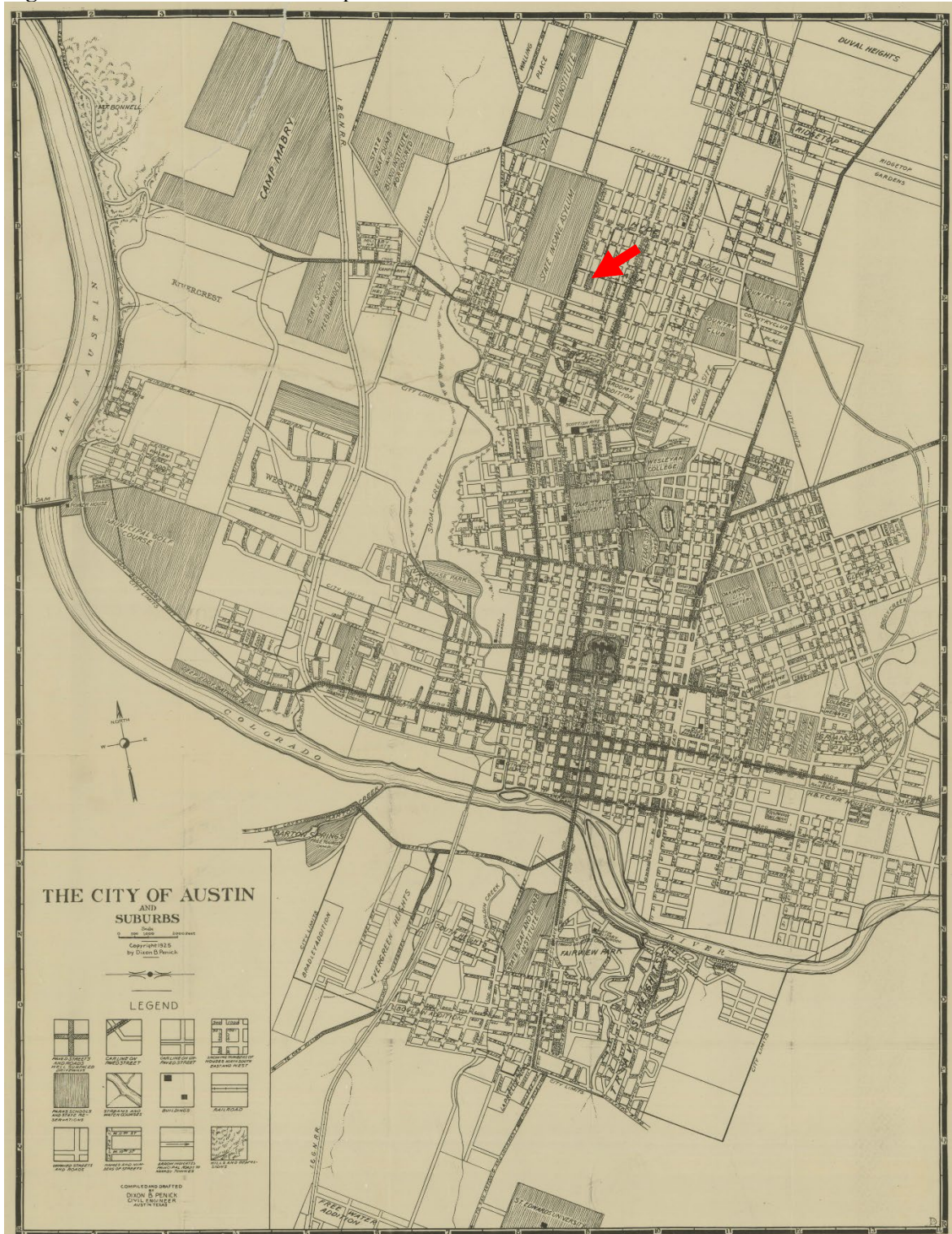
Map 5: Map showing additions to Baker School.



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Figures

Figure 1: 1925 Austin Suburbs Map.



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Figure 2: Detail of 1925 Austin suburbs map showing Baker School. Source: Ibid.

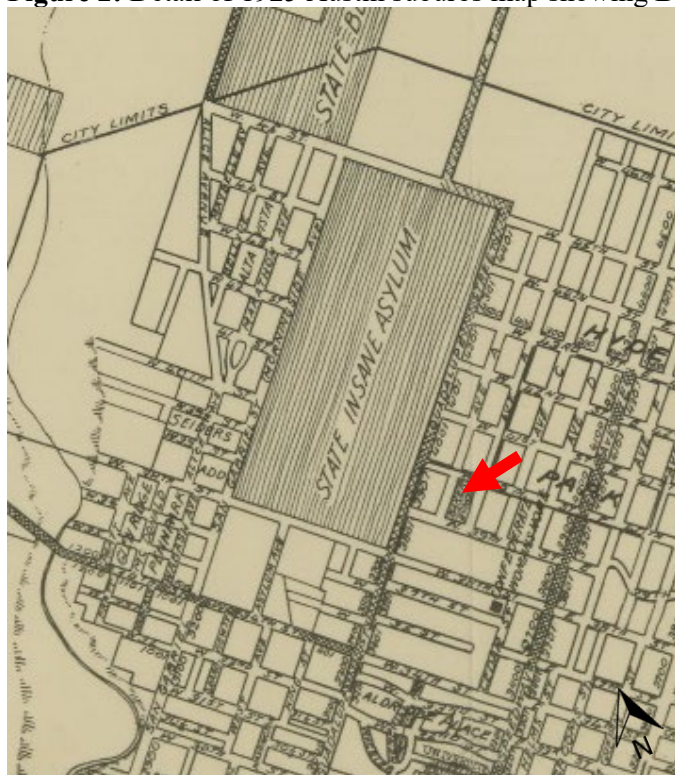
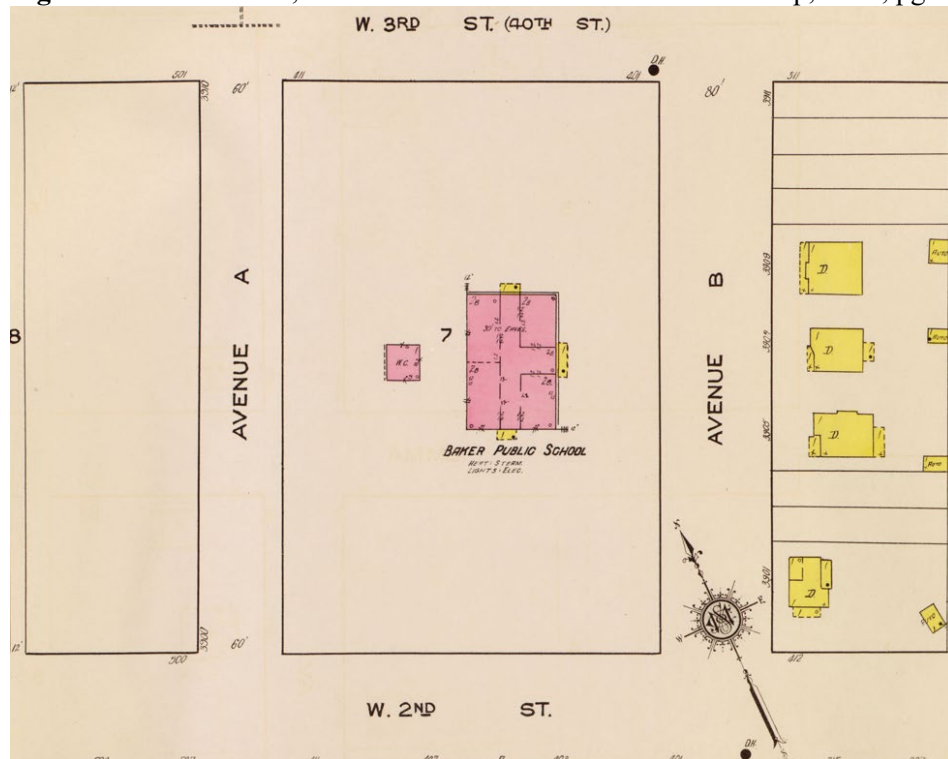


Figure 3: Baker School, 1921. Source: Sanborn Fire Insurance map, 1921, pg. 72.



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Figure 4: 1935 Sanborn Fire Insurance map, pg. 304, showing additions on north and south elevations.

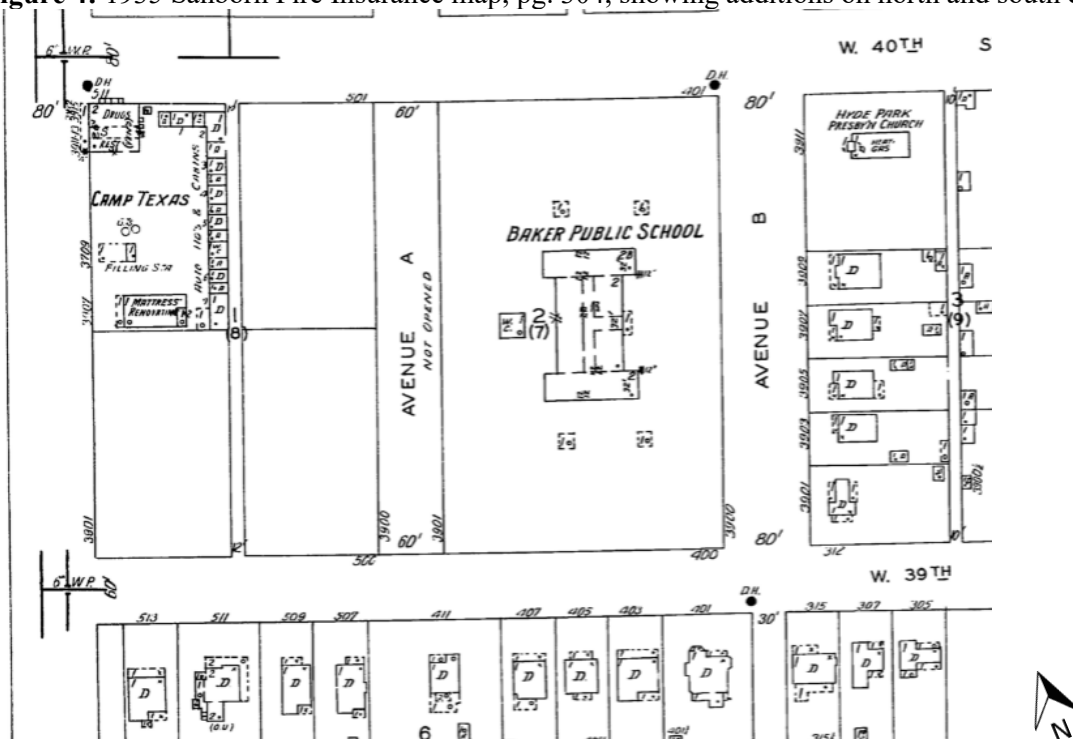
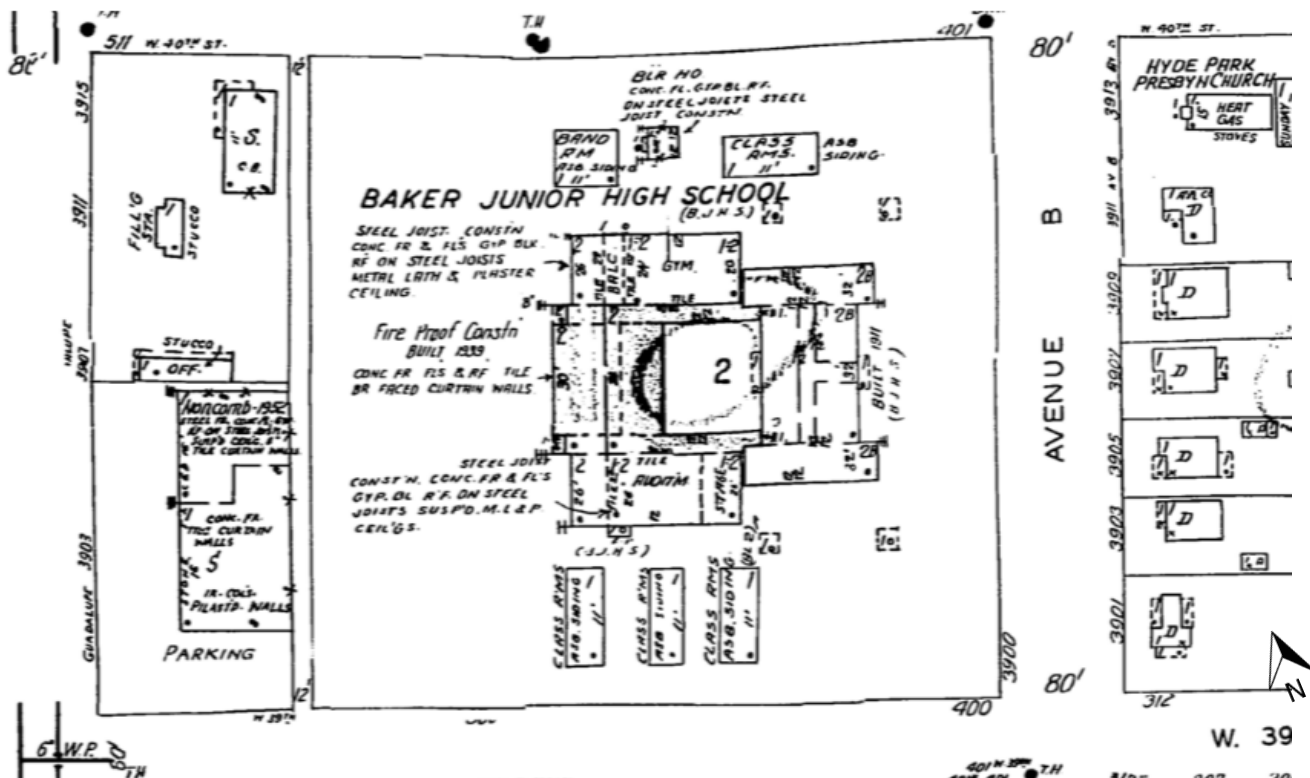


Figure 5: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map 1935, updated to 1962, pg. 304 showing 1939 rear (west) addition.



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Figure 6: Baker School was built on the former Hyde Park pavilion and lake, shown here in 1895. Source: Texas Historical Commission.



Figure 7: Baker Public School, 1922 showing the original rectangular plan. Source: Austin History Center



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Figure 8: Baker Elementary School, c. 1922 Source: <https://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=350567>



Figure 9: Baker Elementary School, c. 1930 Source: Austin History Center

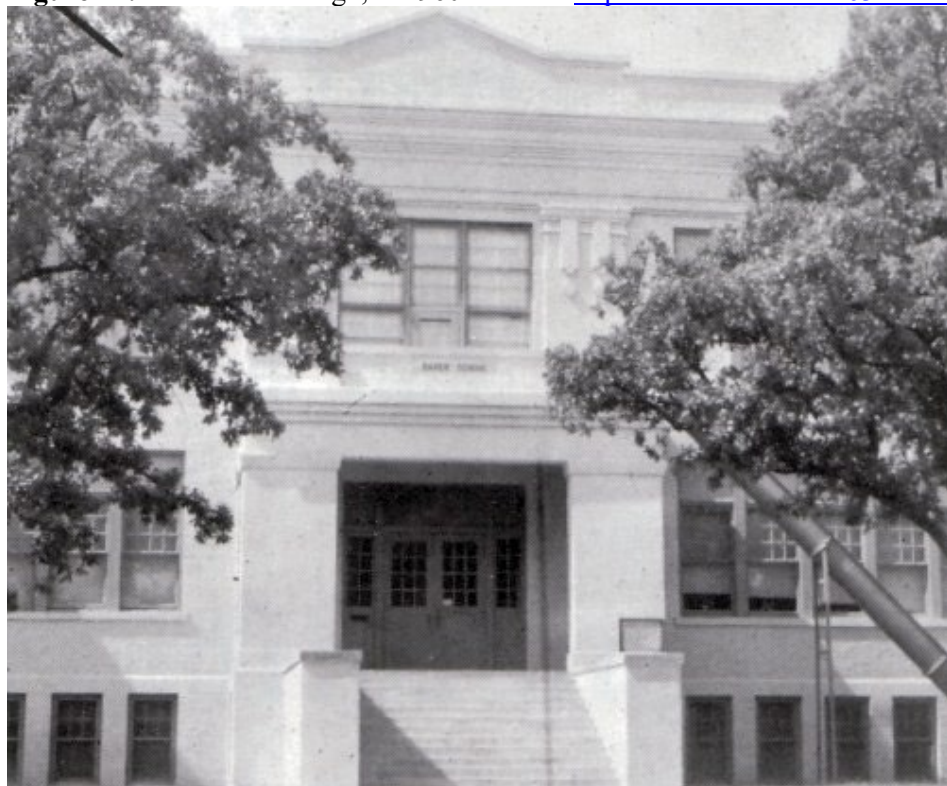


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Figure 10: Baker Junior High Band, c. 1955. Source: <https://www.ahsclassof63.com/Baker-Junior-High.html>.



Figure 11: Baker Junior High, c. 1960. Source: <https://www.ahsclassof63.com/Baker-Junior-High.html>



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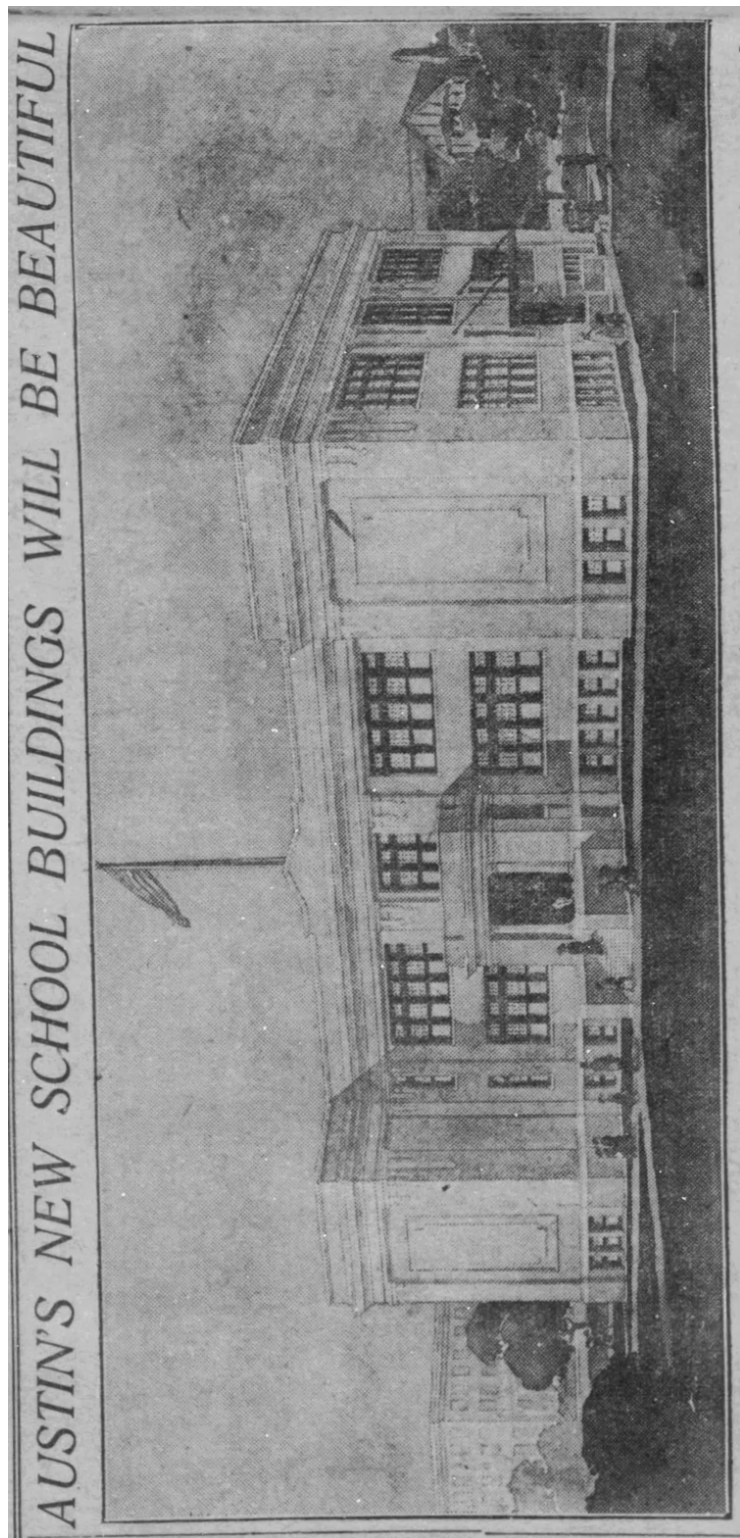
Figure 12: Students got a running start on summer in 1963. Source: *Austin American Statesman*, August 21, 1963.



American-Statesman/UPI

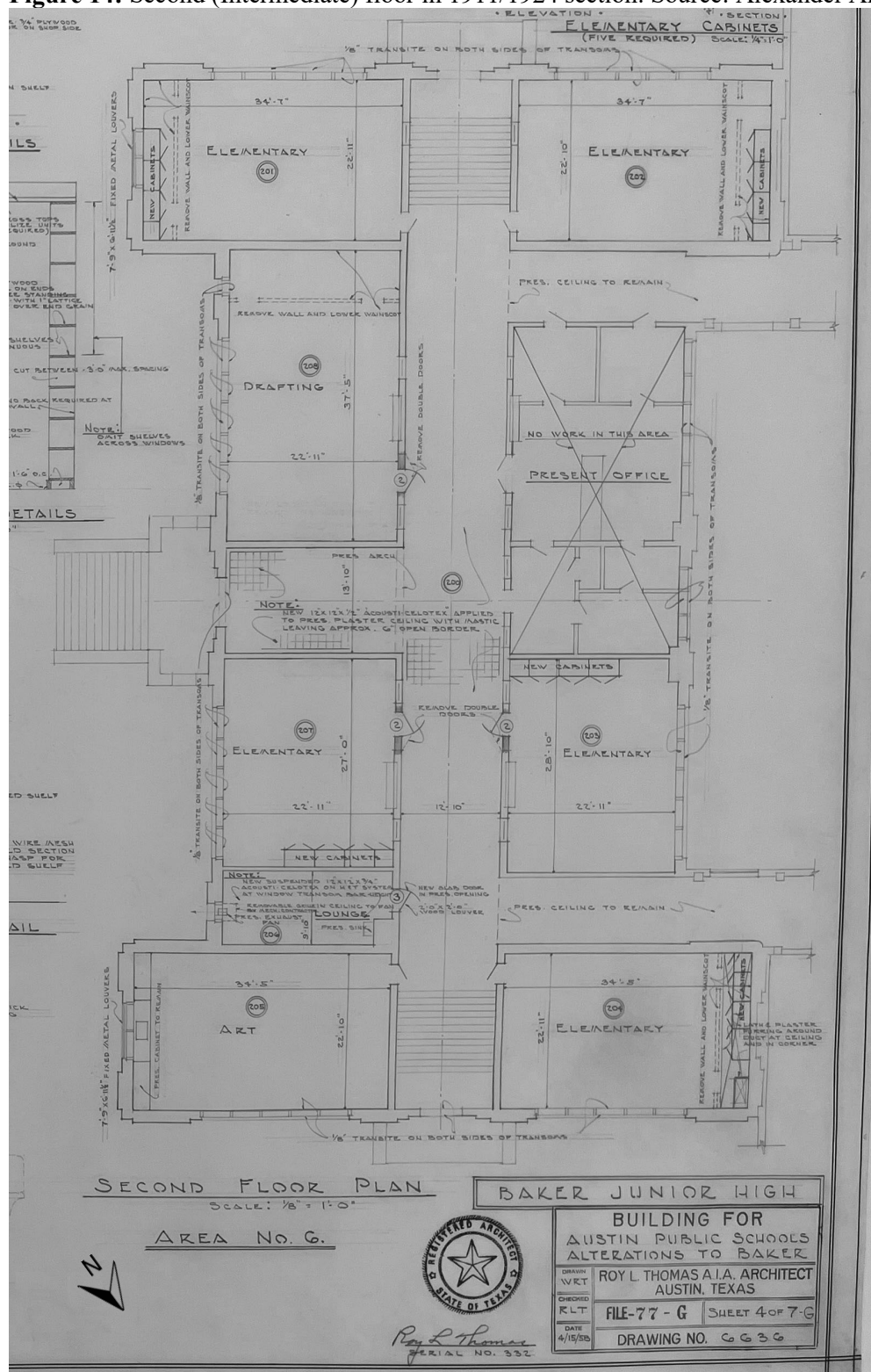
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Figure 13: Architect's rendering of Baker and Fulmore Schools. Source: Austin American Statesman 2/12/1911.



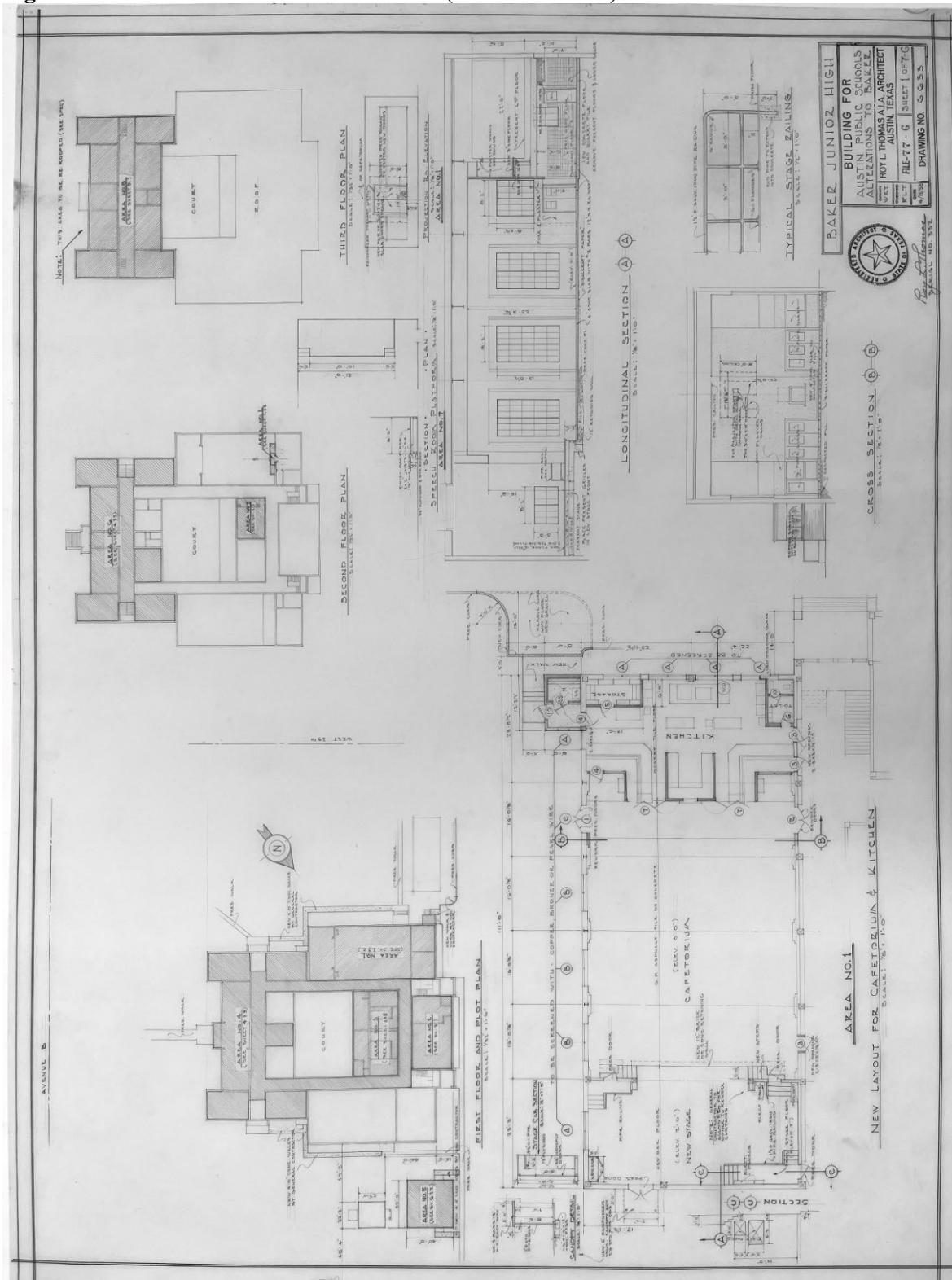
Baker School, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Figure 14: Second (Intermediate) floor in 1911/1924 section. Source: Alexander Architectural Archives



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Figure 15: Historic Rear Addition Floor Plan (redrawn in 1958). Source: Alexander Architectural Archives



Baker School, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Figure 16: Band House. Source: Alexander Architectural Archives

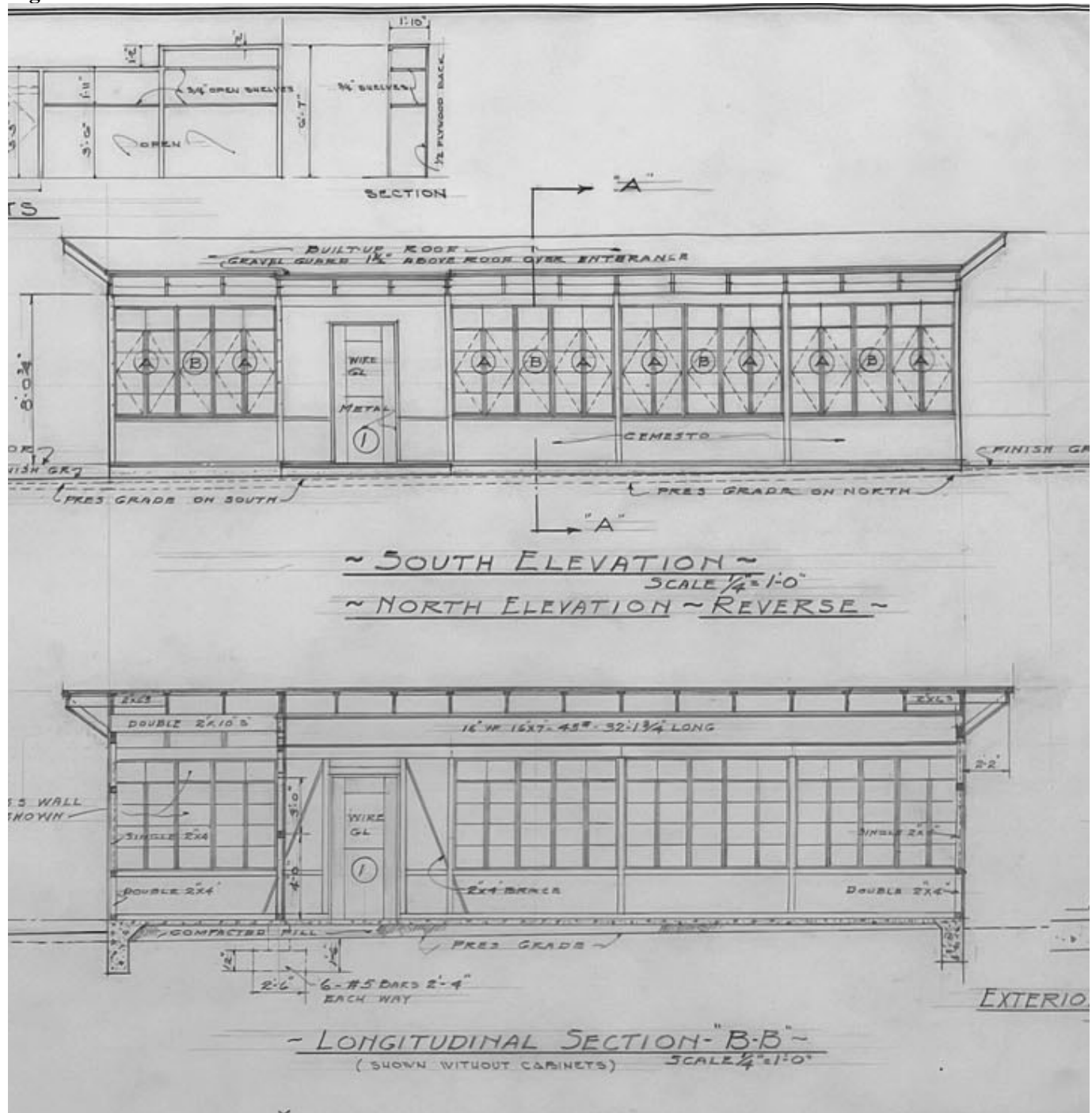
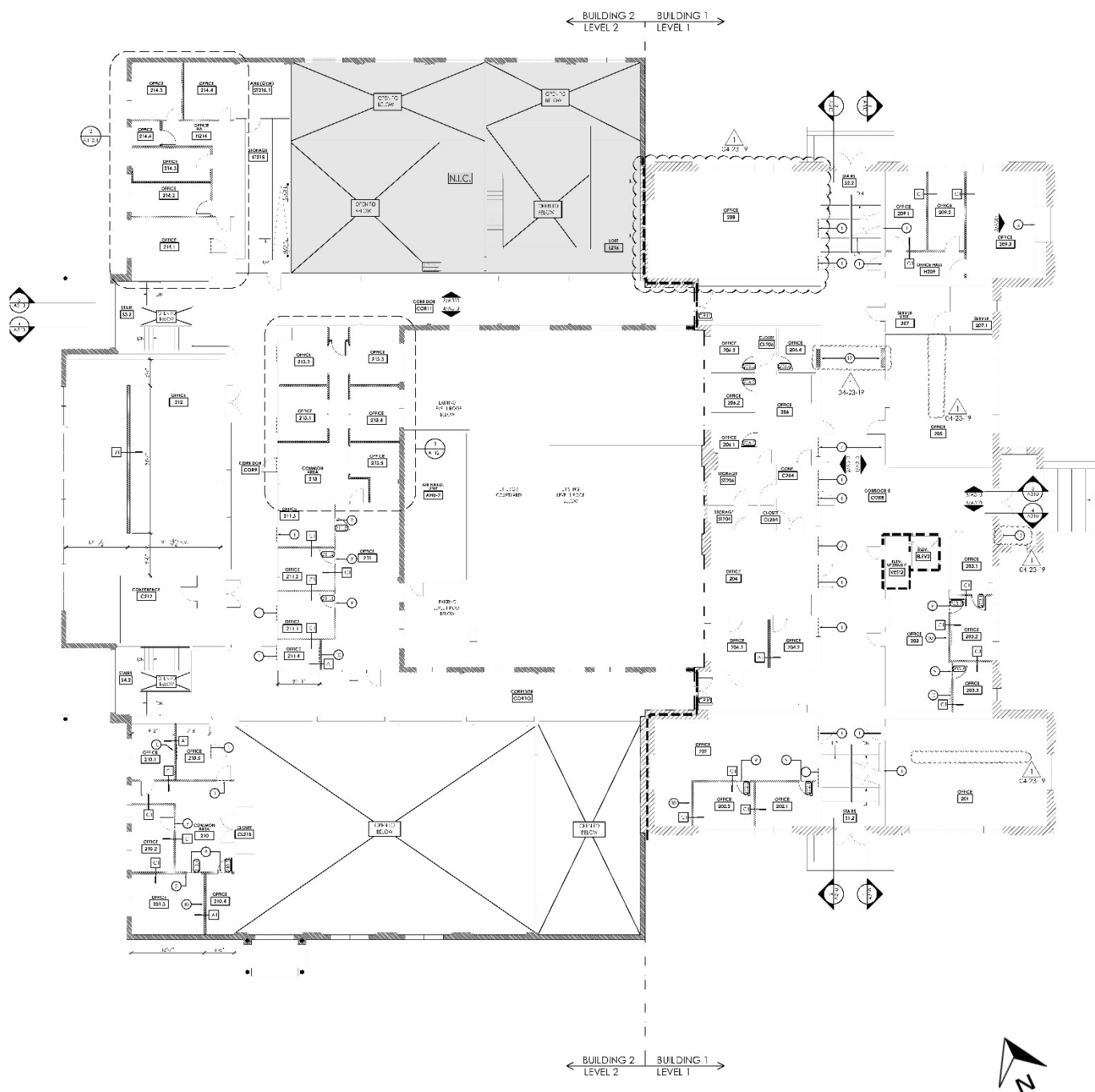


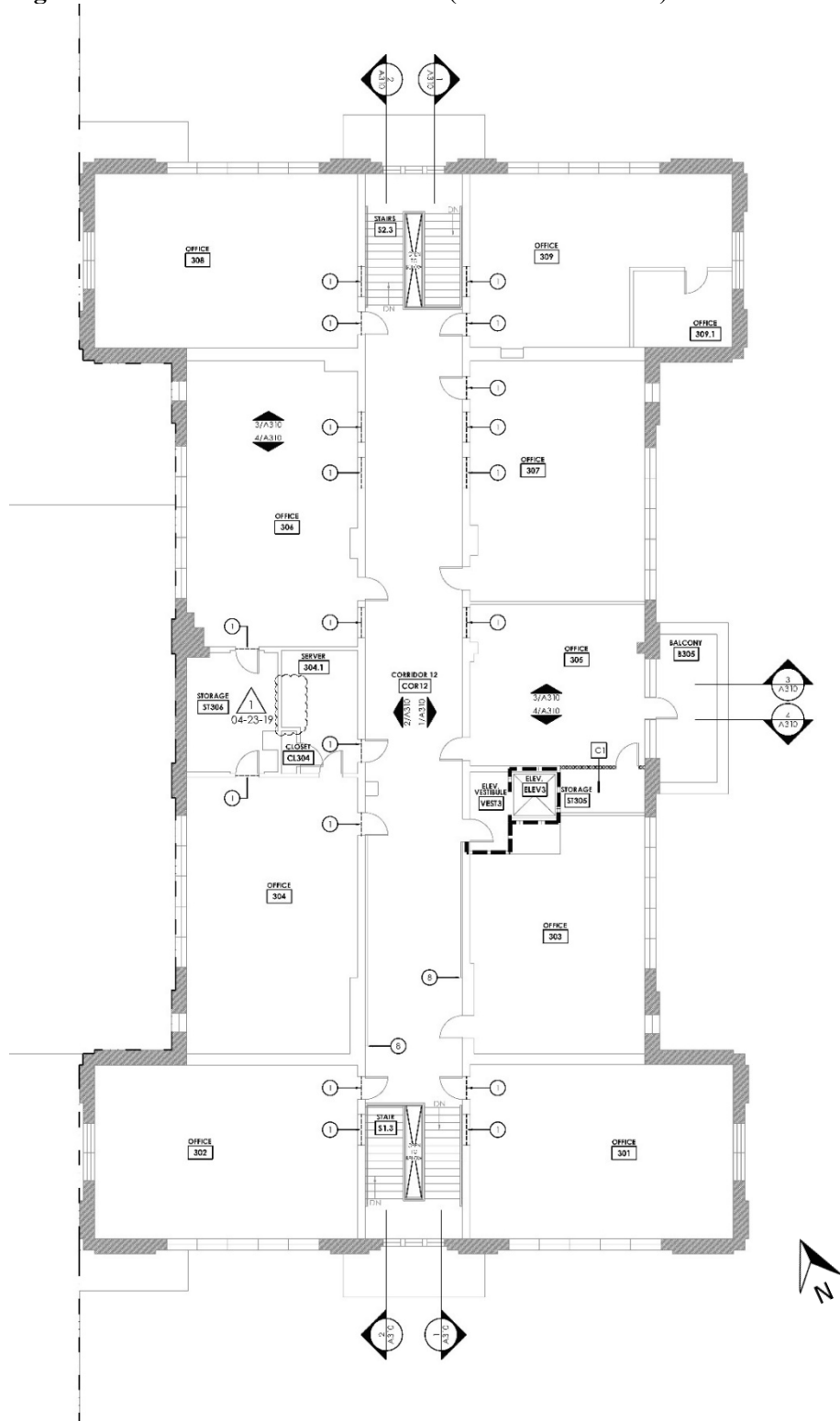
Figure 18: Current Plan for Main/Intermediate Floor (1911/1924 Section) and Second Floor (1939 Addition)



1 BLDG 1 - LEVEL 1 & BLDG 2 - LEVEL 2 : NEW WORK PLAN

Baker School, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Figure 19: Current Plan for Third Floor (1911/1924 Section)



Baker School, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photographs

Baker School

3908 Avenue B, Austin, Travis County

Photographer: Richard Weiss and Bonnie Tipton (THC Staff)

Date(s) Photographed: October 26, 2022 and February 28, 2023

Photo 1: Baker School, looking southwest. (2/28/23)



Photo 2: The Baker School is Hyde Park, an early 20th century streetcar suburb. Looking east from school's main entrance to neighboring bungalows. (2/28/23)



Baker School, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 3: East (primary) elevation, camera facing west. (2/28/23)



Baker School, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 4: Stucco covers the original brick on the west elevation entrance portal. (2/28/23)



Photo 5: Brick pilasters and a corbeled “entablature” are neoclassical details on the 1911/1924 building.



Baker School, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 6: South elevation, camera looking north. The 1939 addition is left and 1911/1924 building is at right.



Photo 7: South elevation (partial), looking north. The south elevation shown is the 1924 wing addition to the original 1911 rectangular school. It is symmetrical to the north elevation.



Baker School, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 8: South elevation (partial) showing 1939 addition, camera looking north. (2/28/23)



Photo 9: Southwest oblique, camera looking northeast. The 1-story entrance at the corner was added in 1958.



Baker School, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 10: West elevation, camera looking east. (2/28/23) The 1939 addition housed a gymnasium and new cafetorium.



Photo 11: Historic steel frame windows on the west elevation. Camera looking southeast.



Baker School, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 12: North elevation, looking south.



Baker School, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 13: North elevation (detail), camera looking southwest. The recent rehabilitation retained historic-age (but not original) windows, canopies, and double doors on the 1911/1924 building.



Photo 14: Courtyard – west and south façade of metal mechanical room (date unknown), west façade of 1911 building, north façade of 1939 addition, camera facing east.



Baker School, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 15: 1911 Main Entrance (Level 2) with original wood floors, ceiling tiles, crown molding, arched opening, and transoms beyond, camera facing west.



Photo 16: 1911 Level 2 corridor with original wood floors, wall mounted clock, transoms, trim, and ceiling tiles. Camera facing south.

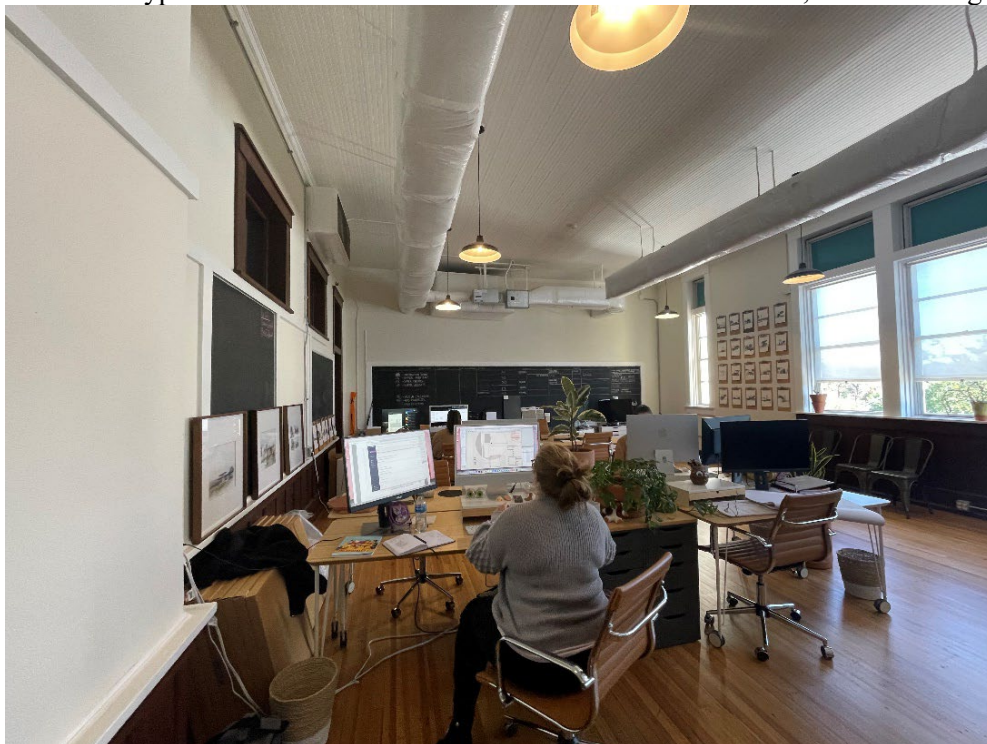


Baker School, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 17: 1911 Principal's Office (Level 2), camera facing west.



Photo 18: Typical 1911 classroom at the central east side of Level 3, camera facing north.

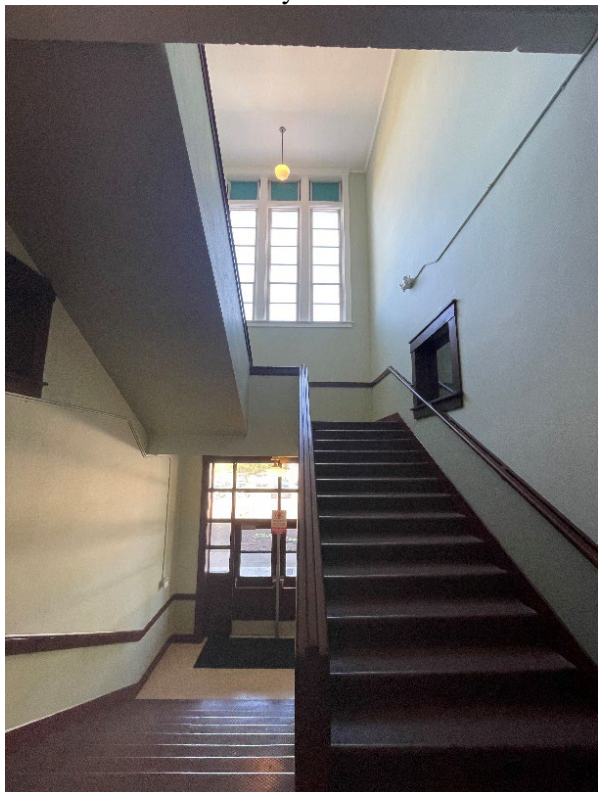


Baker School, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 19: Typical classroom of 1924 Addition, currently used as open office space, Classroom/Office shown is located at the southeast corner of Level 2, camera facing west.



Photo 20: 1924 Stairway from Level 2 corridor looking down to Level 1 and up to Level 3, camera facing north.



Baker School, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 21: 1939 Corridor (Level 2), with original lockers, terrazzo floors, steel windows, and wall sconces, camera facing west.



Baker School, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 22: 1939 Cafetorium (Level 1), camera facing southeast.



Photo 23: 1939 Library (Level 2), currently used as open office space, camera facing southwest.



Baker School, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 24: 1939 Library (Level 2), currently used as open office space, camera facing north.



Photo 25: 1958 Band House, camera looking northeast.



Baker School, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photo 26: Boiler House (c. 1940), camera looking northeast.



~end~