

JOINT HIGH SCHOOL  
625 Pontiac Street  
Rochester  
Fulton County  
Indiana

HABS No. IN-237

HABS  
IND  
25-ROCH,  
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
Northeast Region  
U.S. Custom House  
200 Chestnut Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19106

ADDENDUM  
FOLLOW

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

JOINT HIGH SCHOOL

HABS No. IN-237

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IND  
25-ROCH,  
1-

Location: 625 Pontiac Street, eastside of Pontiac Street between 6th and 7th Streets, Rochester, Fulton County, Indiana.  
USGS, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: Rochester Quadrant, UTM: 16 565650 4546330

Present Owner: City of Rochester  
120 E. 7th Street, P.O. Box 110  
Rochester, Indiana

Present Occupant: Civic Center until June 1992.

Present Use: Offices for the following organizations: Council on Aging, Salvation Army, Red Cross, Food Pantry, Fulton County Housing, Single Parent Coordinator, Senior Citizen Center.

Significance: The Joint High School is significant in architectural style and educational/cultural attitudes of the period. This two story with basement building is an example of the Eclectic Revival style. The school was built as a joint high school between the city and township and was one of the most modern of its type with new curriculums in domestic economy and manual training. This building represented a desire by the community to provide the best possible educational and cultural facility for the development of the youth in the community.

PART I - HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Circa 1912-1913. Construction started July 1912 and was completed September 1913, as per article from the yearbook, Manitou Ripples, 1913.
2. Architect: Charles E. Bacon of Indianapolis, Indiana, and former Rochester resident.
3. Original and subsequent owners:  

Rochester City School/Rochester Community School Corporation.

1975 Deed, August 1975, the City of Rochester.
4. Contractor: The contractor was Mr. Stephen Parcel, a local builder.
5. Original plans and construction: The approximate construction cost was \$65,000, as stated in History of Fulton County, page 98. The original building was basically "I"-shaped in plan, with the center being extended out to the rear. The basement floor is only approximately three feet below grade, so all rooms have above grade windows. This building originally had a gymnasium with basketball floor of 50' x 75' which was located where the cafeteria and kitchen are currently.
6. Alterations and additions: In 1958 there was a two-story addition attached at the northeast corner. This addition housed a band room, chemistry room, metal shop and wood/agriculture shop. Mechanical, electrical and plumbing have been updated over the years with new mechanical in 1976.

B. Historical Context:

This is a general history of the structure based on available records including 1913 high school year book, Fulton County Historical Society and newspaper articles.

The original name of Joint High School is from the joint agreement between the City of Rochester School System and Rochester Township to form one high school. Rochester High School was started in 1874 in Central School, which was across Pontiac Street and was commissioned by the State

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Board of Education on December 16, 1884. By 1912, there was a need for more classrooms and laboratories which made the construction of a new high school necessary.

The school board spent several years working on developing a plan for the new structure. These efforts included visiting other schools in other cities, examining plans, and hiring an Indianapolis architect, Charles E. Bacon, to perfect the plans. City school board members were Mr. True, Mr. Leonard, and Mr. Copeland. The township trustee was Mr. Wylie and his advisory board was Mr. Kline, Mr. Matthias, and Mr. Rogers. These men are given credit for providing a building the community really needed.

The school was one of the most modern of its type. It housed botany, chemistry and physics laboratories on the second floor and classroom and administrative offices on the first floor. Domestic economy and manual training laboratories, plus boiler room, were in the basement. In addition to the academic areas, this building also had a gymnasium with a basketball floor of 50' x 75' with seating in the balcony for about 250 spectators and an assembly room large enough to seat 300 students.

The new school was designed to incorporate new curriculum in domestic economy and manual training. These courses represent the desire of the school system to provide practical training as well as academics. Domestic economics taught cooking, sewing and dietetics. The classroom contained a cooking laboratory. Manual training dealt with woodworking, turning, and mechanical drawing. The shop was equipped with a lathe, a jointer and a universal saw.

The 1958 addition included a metal and wood shop on the first floor with a band room and chemistry lab on the second floor. This addition provided additional space required to keep up with the increasing enrollment.

Additional school history is available from yearbooks at the school library and the Fulton County Historical Society.

The building was used as a high school or middle school until the property was sold to the City of Rochester in 1975. The building served as a civic center from 1975 until 1992 and housed many organizations in that time period. The school is located two blocks west of the downtown in a residential neighborhood, intermingled with churches, which allowed this relatively large structure to fit in very well with its surroundings.

PART II - ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. General character: This building is a good example of an Eclectic Revival Period structure in the Tudor Gothic style.
2. Condition of fabric: The masonry bearing brick building is in sound structural condition. The building has been severely damaged by neglect and vandalism since the building was vacated in June 1992.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The original building was "I"-shaped with additions making the plan asymmetrical. The building is two-story with basement. The basement is recessed approximately 3'-0" below grade. (See floor plans.)
2. Foundations: Foundations are poured concrete below grade with limestone base course above grade approximately 12" thick.
3. Walls: Exterior masonry walls are approximately 12" thick. The basement walls are red brick separated from the upper two floors of brownish yellow brick by a limestone belt course. All brick is laid in running bond. The corners have buff limestone quoins.
4. Structural system: Exterior and interior masonry walls are load bearing. Floor joists and ceiling joists are wood, bearing on the north-south wall of the original building.
5. Porches and stoops: The entrances at north, south and west have one-story brick and limestone extensions from the building facade. Stoops, steps and sidewalks are poured concrete.
6. Chimneys: Brick masonry chimneys are located on the east side at the inside leg of the "I" of the original building, and at the north elevation of the 1958 addition.

7. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: The front entrance (west elevation) has an ornate limestone surround, double wood doors, side lights, transom and gothic arch divided light transom. The side doors (north and south) have limestone surrounds and non-original aluminum double doors.
- b. Windows and shutters: All windows in the original building have limestone surrounds. The basement windows are double-hung with two- or three-over-one sashes. The first and second stories have double-hung windows with two- or three-over-one sashes with divided transoms. The windows in the 1958 addition are steel with fixed or awning sashes.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The built-up tar roof is basically flat and is in very poor condition.
- b. Parapet, cap: The brick parapet is trimmed with a limestone cap. The pediment above the front entry has decorative limestone inserts in the parapet.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The original building has an "I"-shaped plan approximately 108' x 48' with central corridor and additions to the original shape. (See floor plans.)
2. Stairways: All stairs are steel and concrete tread and riser with steel decorative balusters and oak railings. Stairways open onto main corridors with low, plaster arches. (See floor plan.)
3. Flooring: Original wood floor has been covered with sheathing, vinyl asbestos tile, and carpet with the exception of the first floor of the 1958 addition which is poured concrete.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls are plaster on brick masonry. The ceilings are lathe and plaster on wood joists. Some areas have acoustical tile glued to the plaster. The ceiling of the assembly room has large light wells which originally had skylights on top.

5. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: Front entry oak doors had 3/4 lights with gothic top molding. Interior doors from classroom to corridor are flush oak doors with top half light and top transom. (Doors may not be original.) All doors and trim have clear finish with medium stain.
- b. Windows: The original large, double-hung windows provided light to most of the interior rooms. Window trim is flat oak approximately 6" wide with natural stain.

6. Decorative features: The slate black boards (have been removed) have oak trim frames, chalk tray and top bracket with cap.

7. Mechanical equipment:

- a. Heating: Non-original hydronic heating system.
- b. Lighting: No original fixtures remain.
- c. Plumbing: New plumbing fixtures have been installed at original locations.

D. Site - General Setting and Orientation:

The building faces west with the main entrance on Pontiac Street. The site is one-half block with the exception of the church on the northwest corner. The street trees between the sidewalk and the street help maintain a residential character. The site also included a parking lot north of the building. The athletic fields were across Pontiac Street at the old Rochester High School. These fields and the high school do not currently exist.

PART III - SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Interview:

- 1. Mayor Edward J. Fansler  
November 1992  
Rochester, Indiana  
Mayor of Rochester

B. Bibliography:

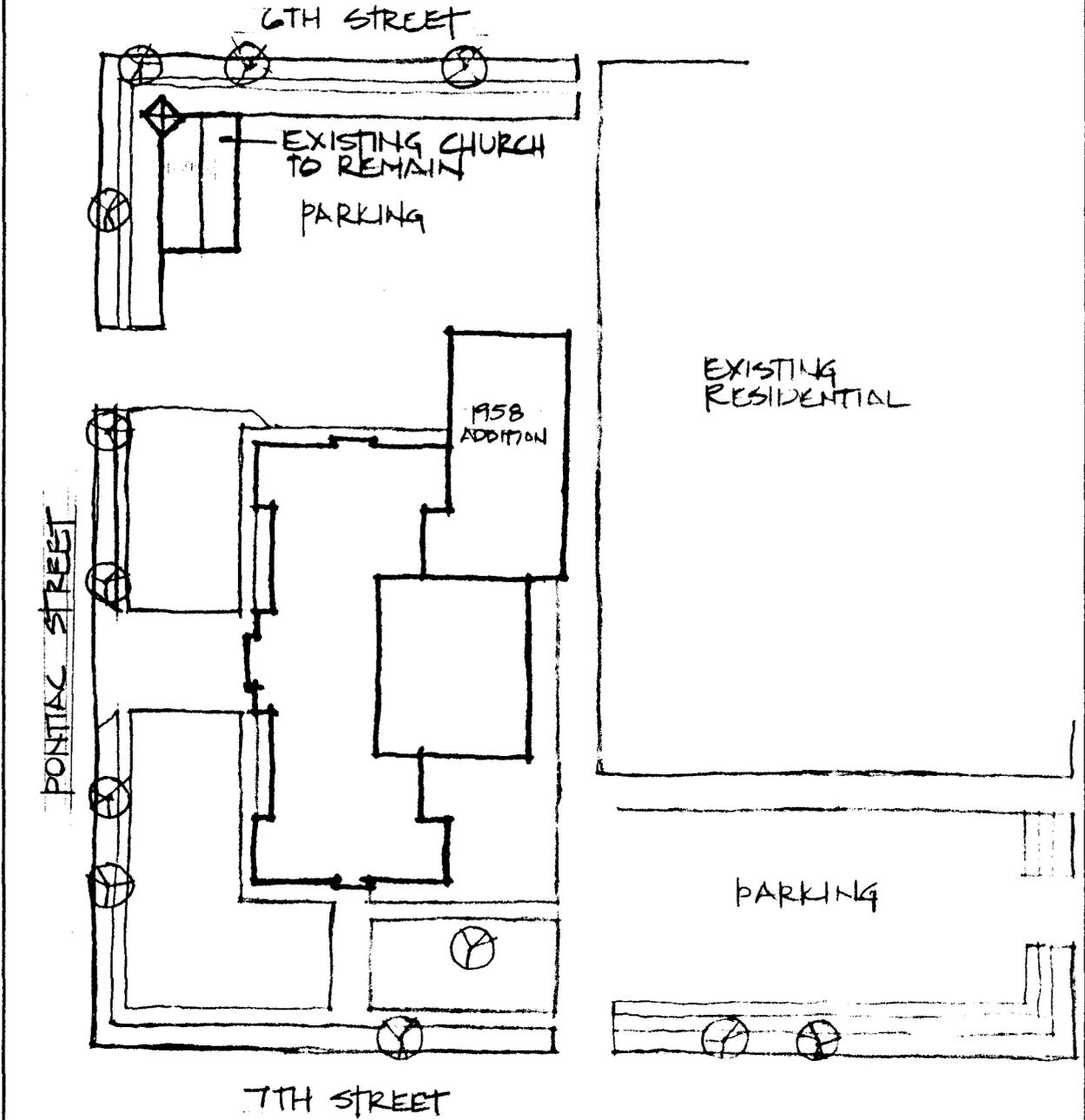
1. Fulton County Historical Society, Rochester, Indiana. Archival files.
2. 1913 Manitou Ripples, Rochester High School Yearbook, Fulton County Library, Rochester, Indiana.
3. History of Fulton County, Fulton County Historical Society, Rochester, Indiana.
4. Rochester Sentinel Newspaper, numerous articles, Fulton County Library.

PART IV - PROJECT INFORMATION

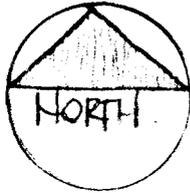
This site has been selected by the Fulton County Council on Aging for use as Rochester's new senior center to provide services such as fuel assistance, information and referral, weatherization, nutrition programs, a food pantry, and transportation programs to 728 elderly citizens.

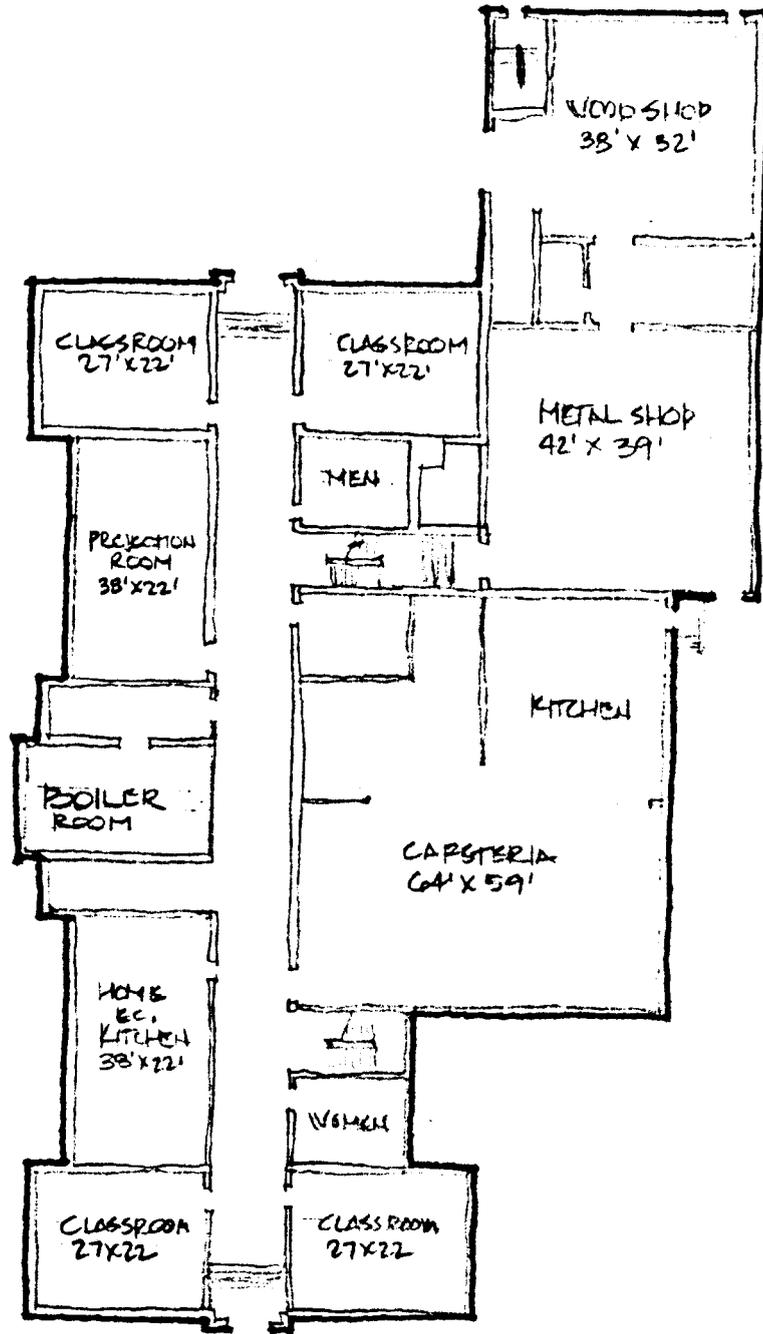
The City of Rochester has been awarded a \$500,000 Community Focus Fund Grant for this project. The structure is to be demolished in December 1992 after all requirements for the HABS/HAER documentation have been met.

Prepared by: Dann Keiser,  
H.L. Mohler & Associates, P.C.  
Title: Architect  
Affiliation: Historical Consultant  
Date: November 1992

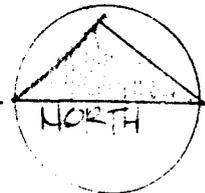


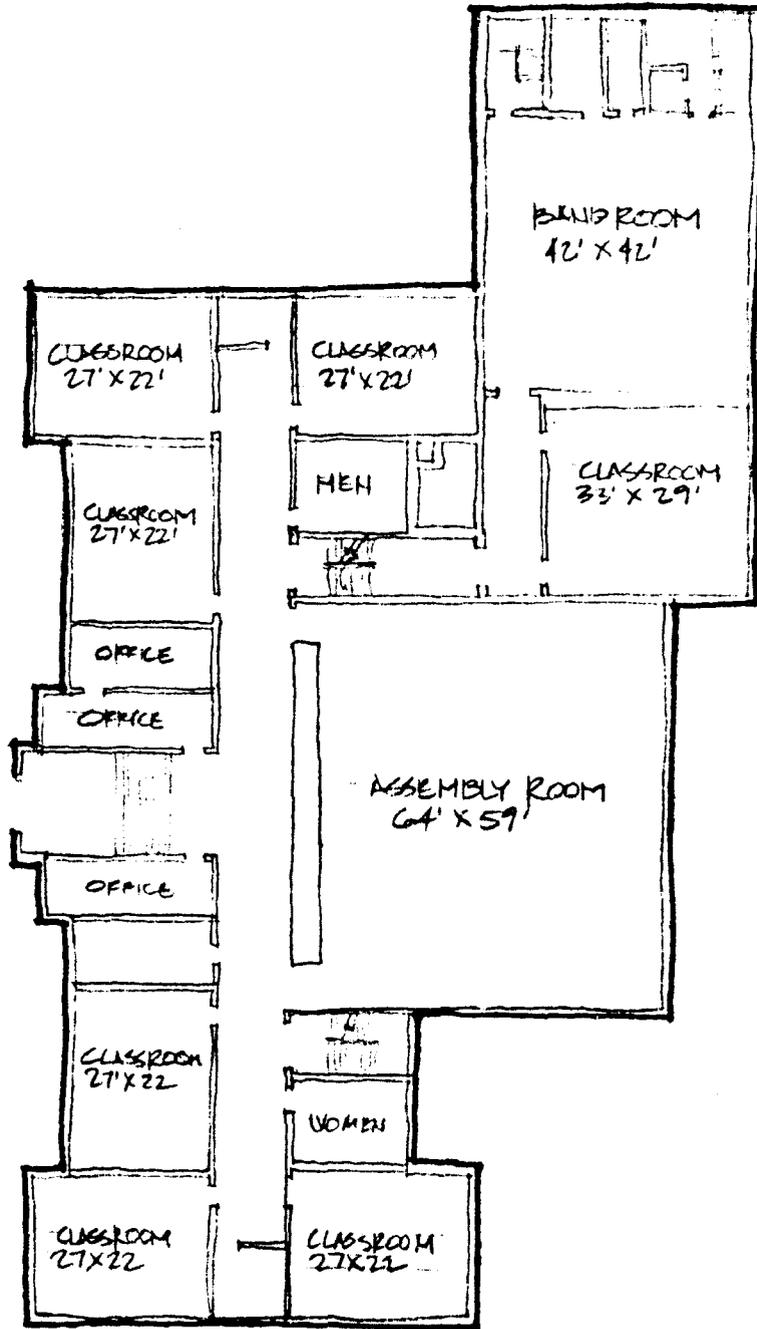
SITE PLAN  
N.T.S.



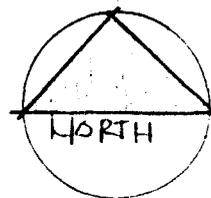


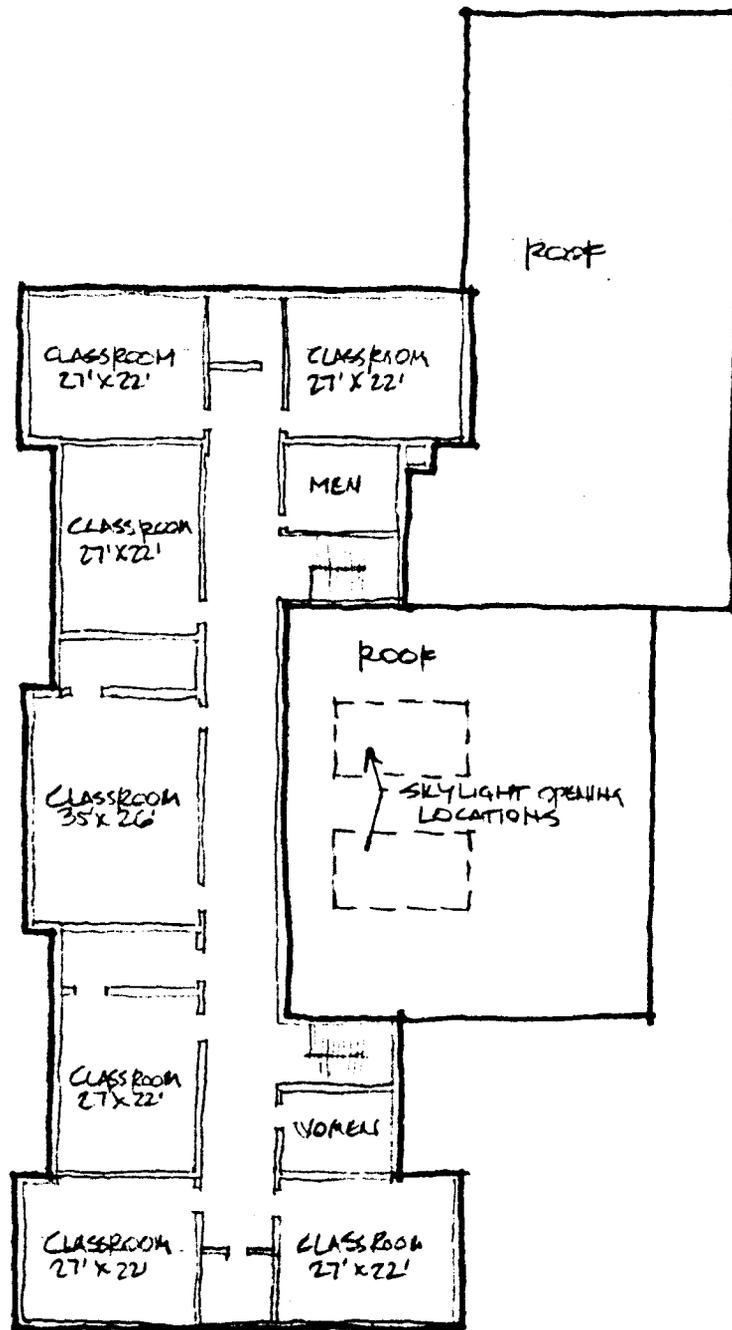
GROUND FLOOR PLAN  
N.T.S.



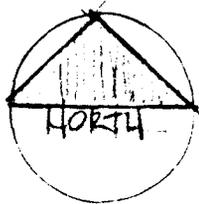


FIRST FLOOR PLAN  
N.T.S.





SECOND FLOOR PLAN  
N.T.S.



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1849 C St. NW  
Washington, DC 20240