

United States Department of the Interior
 National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Holcomb, Samuel D., School
 Other names/site number: Holcomb, Samuel D., Elementary School; Holcomb School
 Name of related multiple property listing:
Public Schools of Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan
 (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 18100 Bentler Street
 City or town: Detroit State: MI County: Wayne
 Not For Publication: Vicinity: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 X 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 X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A B X C D

	Deputy SHPO June 7, 2023
Signature of certifying official/Title:	Date
<u>Michigan SHPO</u>	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

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

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

**State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government**

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this 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:) _____

James Gabbert
Signature of the Keeper

7/21/2023

Date of Action

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private:

Public – Local

Public – State

Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s)

District

Site

Structure

Object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION/school

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Collegiate Gothic

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick, Concrete, Stone: Limestone

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Samuel D. Holcomb School is located at 18100 Bentler Street, Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan. The school is located in a residential area of the Holcomb Community neighborhood, just northeast of Detroit's Old Redford area, north of Grand River Avenue about twelve miles northwest of downtown Detroit. The school building is situated mid-block, between Karl Street and Santa Clara, and faces west toward Bentler Street. Built in 1925 and expanded in 1929 and again in 1946, the single-story, Collegiate Gothic-influenced building is constructed of red brick and features limestone trim. The building has a side gable roof above the façade which turns the corner and continues along the north elevation, the remainder of the building, east of the original building and hidden from Bentler Street, has a flat roof. The gable roof is covered in asphalt shingles. The building has a rectangular, figure-eight shaped footprint with two interior courtyards. Twin projecting bays are centered on the façade and are flanked by shallow projecting entries. The bays and entries possess the most elaborate exterior detail. A third, stylistically restrained façade entrance is located near the northern end of the building. The building sits back from the street with a flat grassy lawn surrounded by a low wrought iron fence of a simple design. Three concrete walkways cross the lawn at the three front entrances. A flagpole with concrete base sits in the center of the front lawn. There are large overgrown trees

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and bushes throughout the front lawn. The property has a large grassy flat lawn to the south. A deteriorated driveway and rear parking area surround the immediate building. The property previously contained two non-contributing one-story, temporary classroom buildings located to the north of the primary school building. Only one of those classroom buildings, the one immediately north of the school building, is extant. The Samuel D. Holcomb School retains historic integrity and conveys its historic and architectural significance.

Narrative Description

Setting and Environment

The Samuel D. Holcomb School is located in the Holcomb Community neighborhood in northwestern Detroit, about twelve miles from the center of downtown Detroit. The school is several blocks east and north from the main commercial thoroughfare, Grand River Avenue, which runs in a northwest-southeast line from downtown Detroit. Several blocks to the north is Seven Mile Road, a primary east-west commercial thoroughfare. One mile farther north is the northern boundary of Detroit, Eight Mile Road. Apartment buildings, religious buildings, and some small commercial buildings line Lahser Road to the east and Santa Clara to the south.¹ The surrounding neighborhood, however, is predominantly residential with parcels occupied by single-family homes, though some demolition has occurred.

The neighborhood is arranged in a typical city block fashion with some blocks larger (longer) than others and some streets terminating at those longer blocks. The general Redford area developed as a suburban residential community in the 1910s and 1920s and was annexed to Detroit in the mid-1920s. Additional development occurred after World War II. The former section ten of Redford Township is composed of several small subdivisions. The subdivision on which the Holcomb School is situated, "Serp's Redford Subdivision" was platted by Joseph and Jennie Serp in 1919 and consists of the west half of the block and extends from the northern edge of the school property to Santa Clara at the southern end. At that time Bentler Street was known as Garden Avenue and Santa Clara, at least the portion abutting the Serp's subdivision, had been laid out as Waterford Avenue.²

Houses are typically set back from the streets at a uniform distance and fronted by shallow yards. Houses are a mix of one- and two-stories and designed in a variety of styles, many incorporate several stylistic elements of popular styles and forms at the time they were constructed, including Tudor Revival, Craftsman, Colonial Revival, Ranch, and Minimal Traditional.

Outbuildings are presented, but intermittent. Wood, chain-link, and other fence types have a minimal presence. Concrete sidewalks are present all blocks but not each block has street curbs.

¹ According to the United States Postal Service website, Santa Clara is the official name of this street. It does not include a street type in its name.

² The historical record is not entirely clear as to when the street names were changed, but local newspapers record the first use of "Bentler Avenue" in 1927 and "Bentler Street" c. 1935.

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The neighborhood contains many mature trees. Most are deciduous, but some evergreen trees are present. The topography of the neighborhood is generally flat. The former William G. Rogell Golf Course (formerly Redford Country Club) is located at the southwest corner of Seven Mile Road and Lahser Road. The Rouge River is to the west.

To the north of the school is a series of one-story, vernacular, Minimal Traditional style houses as described by Virginia Savage McAlester. To the south of the school are vacant lots and two two-story houses. Opposite Bentler Avenue, at the southwest corner of Glenco Street and Bentler Street, is the one and one-half store Old Pathway One-ness Apostolic Faith Holiness Church of God. Three Minimal Traditional style houses occupy the rest of the block on the parcels to the south of the church. On the north side of Glenco Street is a vacant lot, then three two-story vernacular houses that display some Tudor Revival influences at the north end of the block, at the southwest corner of Curtis Street and Bentler Street is a one-story, Ranch style house.

Exterior

The west facing façade is broken up into three sections. The side-gabled center section is taller and deeper than the flanking wings. The ends of the center section are marked by tall brick gable ends that extend above the flanking wings. This section has two projecting three-sided bays with stone framed window openings. Above the windows in the parapet wall there are stone quoins at the corners and a stone cartouche in the center parapet wall of each bay. Flanking and in between the bays there is a brick buttress-like pier with a limestone shoulder and cap. An octagonal, louvered, copper clad cupola previously located in the center of the roof was partially removed between 2013 and 2016 and the remainder (base) was removed c. 2020.³

The wings flanking the center section are slightly lower in profile but side-gabled like the center section, extend to the north and south. Starting at the center section the north wing has a bay of window openings, a projecting entrance pavilion, and two more bays of window openings. A second entrance pavilion and an additional bay of windows are located at the north end of the wing's façade. The bays are delineated by projecting brick buttress-like piers. Starting at the center section the south wing has a bay of window openings, a projecting entrance pavilion, and two more bays of window openings. Like the north wing the bays are delineated by projecting brick buttress-like piers. The entrance pavilions in the north and south wings closest to the center of the building are identical. A set of four limestone steps lead to a set of triple doors that are now boarded over. There is a Tudor arched topped transom and the entire opening is framed in limestone with an archivolt top. Above the arch a large stone cartouche is flanked by two herringbone brick panels framed in limestone. The top of each cartouche reads "Samuel D. Holcomb School" in raised script. Heavy brick buttress-like piers with stone shoulders and caps flank both sides of the entrance pavilion. The entrance pavilions have half-hip roofs. The northernmost entrance pavilion has four limestone steps leading to a pair of steel double doors with a Tudor arch transom. The opening is framed in limestone with an archivolt top, but in a

³ The timeline for the removal of the cupola is based on Google Street View imagery.

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simpler style than the other two pavilions. The spandrels at each corner of the arch have carved leaves. A limestone sill course runs on top of the door frame and there is a simple brick parapet wall above.

The south elevation has the gable end of the front portion of the building and a flat roof section to the east. A lower section that contains two entrances and a limestone course at the base of the parapet wall projects from the elevation. On the west end there is a limestone framed double-door with Tudor arched transom entrance recessed behind a limestone framed opening. There are leaves carved in the spandrel panels at the corner of the arch. Above the arch are four herringbone brick panels framed with limestone. The parapet is stepped above the door. A second entrance to the east projects slightly and contains a pair of steel doors with arched transom recessed behind a limestone framed Tudor arched opening. There are leaves carved in the spandrel panels at the corner of the arch. A flat limestone panel engraved with "AUDITORIUM" spans the wall above the door. Two square boarded window openings flank the auditorium entrance. Further east and set back three large bays, another flat roof wing extends toward the rear. It is four bays wide with the bays separated by brick piers with sloped stone caps. Each bay contains a wide opening with glass block windows. Another entrance containing double doors and framed in simple limestone trim with herringbone brick panels above is located one bay west of the east edge of the building.

The rear elevation is comprised of four sections. The southernmost section is slightly taller to accommodate the auditorium and is set back from the rest of the rear wall. Moving north the next section has one narrow window at each end, with three wide window openings each separated by two narrow window openings. Moving north the center of the elevation is dominated by a large brick chimney extending from ground level. The chimney base is square and is capped by a limestone water course and trim. The upper portion of the chimney is octagonal. It corbels outward near the top and has a limestone coping. The northernmost portion of the rear elevation has two bays each with a wide window opening flanked by narrow openings. At the very end the end of the northern section of the building has a hip roof and a limestone framed pair of doors.

The north elevation is seven bays wide and has a hip roof. The bays are separated by buttress-like brick piers with stone shoulders and sloped tops. Starting at the west side the first bay has a wide window opening containing three windows that is flanked by a single window opening. Moving east the second bay contains a paired window opening. Moving east there are three bays each containing three windows high up on the wall. At the very east end, which is set back, there are a combination of single and triple window openings.

Interior

The original, 1925 section of the building was constructed in an irregular T-shape, with the horizontal top bar turned toward Bentler Street to the west. An addition in 1929 at the north end of the school created a P-shape and resulted in the northern interior courtyard. This addition included the gymnasium, additional standard classrooms, and a specialty classroom. The 1940s addition at the south end of the building resulted in the present figure-eight shape and created the

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southern interior courtyard. This addition added classrooms, an auditorium, a shop, and restrooms. Once fully complete, the interior classrooms were arranged around the interior courtyards. This interior arrangement remains a defining feature of the school and remains intact.

All of the building entrances are comprised of a set of doors on the exterior with an interior vestibule with doors leading to the corridors. The exterior doors are newer flush wood doors, the interior vestibule doors are wood panel at the bottom and multi-light at the top. The entrance vestibules have tile floors. The north-south corridors are single-loaded, with classrooms along the perimeter of the building. These hallways are connected by three, double-loaded east-west corridors. The corridors in the 1925 and 1929 sections of the building are almost ten feet wide and have concrete floors, plaster walls, and acoustic tiles installed over the plaster ceilings. The built-in lockers have all been removed although the wall openings and wood trim remain. The corridors in the 1946 portion of the building have concrete floors with glazed block walls to the tops of the locker openings and painted concrete block walls above. The corridors of the 1946 section match those of the 1920s sections, with the exception of the southeast corridor, which is nearly twelve feet wide. The ceilings are acoustical tile. The two drinking fountain niches tiled with Pewabic tile and designed and installed by the Boston Tile & Terrazzo Company, a longtime Detroit company formed in 1922, in 1949 are still intact in the 1946 section of the building. These are the only known Pewabic tile niches designed and installed by Boston Tile in the Detroit Public School system.

The classrooms are arranged around the perimeter of the building. In total there are twenty standard classrooms and five specialty rooms, in addition to lavatories, service rooms and miscellaneous spaces. The classrooms in the 1925 and 1929 portions of the building retain their historical volumes, with ceiling heights of about twelve feet, but possess varying amounts historical materials. Generally, plaster walls and ceilings are intact. Some classrooms retain their wood floors, wood window casings, and trim. Some wood doors with divided nine-pane windows remain in the entries to the classrooms. Some classrooms contain chalkboard frames, some contain both frames and chalkboards. Some classrooms contain stained wood cabinetry. All classrooms display some level of deterioration or vandalism.

According to architectural plans, the projecting bays of the façade contained the library (northern bay) and an art room (southern bay). Each room has ceiling heights of sixteen feet. The entry to the library is centered on its interior wall. The library is an open volume with dark stained wood shelves lining the perimeter walls. Aside from the shelves, the defining features of this space is the three-part projecting bay at the west side of the room. The larger center window is composed of three windows, while the outer windows are single units. The windows of the projecting bay are missing the perimeter casing elements, but the dark stained wood sills are present on all windows and interior members of the tripartite center window. Fluorescent lights are suspended from the ceilings and electrical conduits extend from floor to ceiling. The entry to the art room is off-center and located at the northern end of the room. Like the library, the art room is an open volume, and its defining feature is the projecting bay at the west side of the room. A nonhistoric suspended ceiling covers the original ceiling, though some panels are missing and the original ceiling is observable. Residue of previous ceiling tiles are present.

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The original kindergarten room has a four-sided bay projecting into the south courtyard with a pair of doors leading directly into the courtyard. It retains its painted brick fireplace and plaster walls and ceiling.

The gymnasium and lunchroom in the north end of this section has a vinyl tile floor, glazed block wainscot and painted cinder block walls above. Windows on the north wall are grouped in sets of three. Each grouping retains their wood casing. Under each window grouping along the entire north wall are rectangular alcoves that appear to have held fold-up cafeteria tables. Similar storage alcoves are located along the south wall. The ceiling is covered in square acoustical tiles and fluorescent lights are affixed to the ceilings in east-west lines that roughly divide the ceiling into fourths. Basketball goals consisting of wooden backboards on metal supporting brackets and metal rims are located at the center of the east and west walls, on the full wall elements between the windows of the north wall, and along the south, interior wall. An arched double entry door is located at the northeast corner of the room. Interior doors are located near the center and southeast corner of the east wall, about the one-quarter points of the south wall, and south of center on the west wall.

The classrooms in the 1946 portion of the building have glazed block tile walls up to the bottom of the windows and chalkboards and are painted concrete block above. The ceilings are acoustical tile and there are some wood floors.

The auditorium at the south end of the building, added in 1946, has glazed block at the base of the walls with painted concrete block walls above, and an acoustical tile ceiling. It has a slightly sloped floor and a square proscenium arch and a raised stage area at the north end. The stage is framed with decorative concrete block creating fluted recesses on the sides and across the top that are separated by decorative tile squares. The decorative fluted panels topped with tile rectangles continues along the side walls of the auditorium. The east wall has window openings high in the wall, and the west wall has recessed panels imitating the window openings on the opposite wall. The rear wall has two sets of double doors in the center and windows and doors into auxiliary rooms on both sides. The wall above the openings has raised frames created out of decorative block. The auditorium retains its historical seat configuration, historical seats, and decorative end caps, which display subtle Art Deco references.

Temporary Classroom Building (Noncontributing Building)

Located just north of the school building, the one-story tall classroom building has a rectangular footprint. Clad in vertical wood siding, the building has a shallow-sloped, gable roof. There are two doors on the north side that have been boarded over. The south side has two entrances near the center each accessed by a set of metal steps. Two sets of three single sash window openings are located on both sides of the steps. The interior was not accessible.

Historical newspapers, aerial photography, and Detroit Board of Education reports indicate that temporary buildings were located on the Holcomb School parcel soon after its construction. Based on aerial photo-documentation, the original building at the north end of the parcel was set

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back to the east of the northwest corner of the main school building, while the west elevation of the current building is situated to the west of the west plane of the main building. Available aerial photographs appear to show the 1920s building had been removed by the early 1970s and the current building in place by 1982.⁴

A second temporary building was located near the southeast corner of the building. It is not clear if or when that building was replaced with a newer building, but Google Earth imagery suggests the building began to show signs of deterioration in the mid-2010s and was completely removed from the site sometime in 2021.

Integrity

The school is in the original location within a residential neighborhood. Although many of the windows, lockers, and the copper clad cupola have been vandalized and stripped from the building, it retains integrity and continues to convey its architectural and historic significance. The form, massing, and interior layout remain intact, as do many of the interior finishes. The s

The Registration Requirements described in the *Public Schools of Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan* Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) require that the building must be in its original location and must retain integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. The MPDF also requires that:

school building interiors must retain their basic floor plans and important interior spaces such as auditoriums, gymnasiums, entry vestibules, main hallways, and classrooms.... Basic interior finishes and interior decoration must remain substantially intact – though it must be pointed out that many of these buildings stand vacant and subject to vandalism as well as weather infiltration with resultant destruction to and deteriorate of materials and finishes. Severe deterioration and vandalism to a school interior was not viewed as resulting in a severe loss of integrity of the basic character of the finishes remained evident.

Certain exterior modifications, however, may have limited impacts to the integrity of the property. According to the MPDF, “reversible exterior alterations, such as modern doors and window replacements – the latter typical in Detroit and throughout Michigan because of the state’s northern climate – have not been viewed as representing major losses of integrity.”

On the exterior, the Holcomb School retains its original materials, pattern of fenestration, decorative features and massing on the principal facades. All of the additions were made during the period of significance. The windows that have been stripped by vandals were newer replacement windows, their loss does not reduce the building’s integrity.

⁴ Aerial photographs are available for 1940, 1957, 1972, and 1980. The building is clearly present in 1940, but tree cover and clarity affect the ability to discern whether the building is present in 1957.

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On the interior the school retains its entry vestibules, original floor plan and circulation system, and the gymnasium and auditorium remain intact. Although there is deterioration and damage from vandalism, the interior finishes remain evident. The two Pewabic tile water fountain niches installed in 1949 remain although the drinking fountain fixtures have been stolen. The niches are in good condition generally, but one has some broken tiles.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture
Community Planning and Development

Period of Significance

1924-1949

Significant Dates

1925
1929
1946

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Verner, Wihelm and Molby
Carey, Raymond

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Samuel D. Holcomb School is significant at the local level under National Register Criterion A in the area of Community Planning & Development for its association with the development of the former village of Redford, which became part of Detroit when that part of Redford Township was annexed in 1926. The Holcomb School is also significant under National Register Criterion C as an important example of the variations within the Collegiate Gothic style as well as variations within elementary school building forms in Detroit in the early twentieth century. The Holcomb School illustrates the influence of the Collegiate Gothic style in educational architecture in what is now Detroit, but what was an independent suburban public school system. While the school does not display all the characteristics of the Collegiate Gothic style, it embodies certain characteristics that illustrates how the principles of the style were employed in neighborhood elementary schools during a period of intense growth and development in Detroit. The school also illustrates the physical influence and impact of the Detroit Public Schools system on adjacent suburban communities prior to annexation. The Holcomb School was designed by the Detroit firm of Verner, Wilhelm and Molby, which had designed a number of public school buildings in Detroit and surrounding communities and had been engaged by the Redford Union School District to design the elementary schools of that district to mirror those of Detroit, as community and school leaders realized the likelihood of annexation. The period of significance for the Holcomb School begins in 1925 with the construction of the original school building and ends in 1949 when the building had reached its full, current extent. The Holcomb School meets the registration requirements described in the *Public Schools of Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan* Multiple Property Documentation Form.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Redford Township was established in 1829 as Pekin Township, which had been created out of a portion of Bucklin Township.⁵ The remainder of Bucklin Township was reorganized as Nankin Township. Bucklin Township had been created in 1827 and was one of nine townships created in Wayne County that year.⁶ In 1833 part of Pekin Township was renamed Redford Township and, a short time later, the southern half was renamed Dearborn Township. That same year, the

⁵ George B. Catlin, *Historic Michigan: Land of the Great Lakes* (Dayton, Ohio: National Historical Association, Inc., 1928): 109

⁶ Silas Farmer, *The History of Detroit and Michigan* (Detroit, Mich.: Silas Farmer & Co, 1889), 127.

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Grand River road was established. It was the last territorial road undertaken by Michigan territorial government.⁷ Railroad and streetcar lines eventually followed.

The first White, Euro-American to settle in what became Redford Township is said to have been Azarias Bell, who arrived in 1818.⁸ Bell is said to have been the only settler in this area until 1825 when he was joined by Thomas Geldard. The opening of the Erie Canal in 1826 led to a significant increase in the number of people coming to Michigan from the east. The state 1840 gazetteer indicated the population of the township had increased to 1,021.⁹ The 1856 gazetteer noted an increase of nearly eight hundred by the time it was published. The 1863 gazetteer noted that the township contained “about 200” inhabitants, but that was likely a typographical error, as the 1867 gazetteer indicated two thousand people lived in the township. A population total was not provided in the 1875 gazetteer, but that edition described the village as “considerable.”¹⁰

Indeed, the village, first known as Sand Hill,¹¹ had grown since Bell’s arrival in 1818. The earliest known gazetteer, published in 1840, described the village as containing “a post office, a store, 2 saw mills, a flour mill... and 2 taverns.”¹² The 1856 gazetteer does not provide a description of the commercial activity of the village, but the 1863 edition notes the presence of “four churches... four saw mills, one grist and flouring mill, five stores and various mechanical trades and professions.”¹³ The number of commercial and industrial enterprises continued to increase over time, and by 1875 the village also held factories that produced cheese, glue, and chains, as well as a brewery.¹⁴ Other businesses and professions found in the village reflected the agrarian, frontier-like nature of the community. Among these were harness makers, coopers, wagon makers, blacksmiths, brickmakers, millers, and various medical professionals.¹⁵

While the village of Redford, or Sand Hill, continued to develop as a commercial center, along with other, smaller commercial areas, the majority of Section 10, and Redford Township for that matter, remained rural and dominated by farms through the turn of the twentieth century.

Redford in the Early Twentieth Century

⁷ John T. Blois, *Gazetteer of the State of Michigan* (Detroit, Mich.: Sydney L. Rood & Co., 1840), 96.

⁸ Catlin, *Historic Michigan*, 109.

⁹ Blois, *Gazetteer of the State of Michigan*, 351. It is worth noting here that most of the gazetteers treat the township and the village as one entry and describe them together. The 1840 edition, however, treats them separately.

¹⁰ R.L. Polk & Co., *Michigan State Gazetteer and Business Directory for 1875* (Detroit, Mich.: Tribune Publishing Co., 1875), 641.

¹¹ Clarence Monroe Burton, ed., *The City of Detroit, Michigan, 1701-1922*, Vol. 2 (Detroit & Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1922), 1592.

¹² Blois, *Gazetteer of the State of Michigan*, 351.

¹³ Charles F. Clark, *Michigan State Gazetteer and Business Directory for 1863-4* (Detroit, Mich.: City Directory and Commercial Advertiser, 1863), 455.

¹⁴ R.L. Polk & Co., *Michigan State Gazetteer and Business Directory for 1875* (Detroit, Mich.: Tribune Printing Co., 1875), 641

¹⁵ R.L. Polk & Co., *Michigan State Gazetteer and Business Directory for 1875*, 62.

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As the new century dawned, the village of Redford (still Sand Hill at the turn of the century¹⁶) and Redford Township continued to develop. In 1901, the *Detroit Free Press* opined that the thriving village stood “to become a lively suburb” of the rapidly expanding city to the south. The brief entry in the newspaper also noted what may be the earliest subdivision of the farmland surrounding the village. Apparently, the Hart Bros., a contracting and real estate development firm from Detroit, had acquired “a large farm property of the McIntyre heirs.”¹⁷ This former farm was described as having been the fair grounds of the popular Redford fair. Yet, in a sign of things to come, the Hart Bros. firm had subdivided the former farmland and fair grounds into building lots.¹⁸

In the 1910s and the early 1920s, the city of Detroit, both in geographic area and population, expanded rapidly. Geographic expansion came through annexation and population expansion resulted from the incredible number of jobs available in the city’s vast factories. An increasing population and expanding factories created wide, if uneven, prosperity and led to a city that was seen as congested, noisy, and dirty. The allure of healthful suburban living drew those with the means and the ability to choose where they lived to acquire land and build houses. The development of an extensive streetcar system, and eventually paved streets (due in part to the Good Roads Movement) and the automobile, made travel to and from these then-distant locations. These developments led to expansion of the city that was, in the words of *Detroit Times* reporter Glen K. Stimson, “marvelous almost beyond logic.”¹⁹ One outcome of that tremendous expansion was the rapid growth of what were then outlying areas like Redford Township.

The first significant phase of growth in Redford Township occurred in the 1910s. By 1915, Detroit newspapers carried articles and advertisements that touted the advantages of Redford and chronicled the growth of city along Grand River Avenue. Detroit, so it was said, had found “a new avenue of expansion,”²⁰ as the land adjacent to the road was “subdivided pretty much all the way from the city limits,” and one saw “subdivision after subdivision” from downtown to Redford.²¹ The whole of the northwest section of greater Detroit was “booming,” and where toll gates had once stood on rural plank roads, Stimson, the *Detroit Times* reporter, found that “now all is intense activity.”²²

¹⁶ The historical record is not clear as to when the name Sand Hill fell out of disuse. The Village of Redford was incorporated by Public Act 395 1907, but newspaper accounts until 1916 refer to Sand Hill.

¹⁷ “Real Estate Market,” *Detroit Free Pres*, July 21, 1901. The Hart Bros. firm was led by John and William Hart and established c. 1897.

¹⁸ “Real Estate Market,” *Detroit Free Pres*, July 21, 1901.

¹⁹ Glen K. Stimson, “Detroit Finds New Avenue of Expansion—Grand River Way and Northwest Section Booming,” *Detroit Times*, November 11, 1915.

²⁰ Stimson, *Detroit Times*, November 11, 1915.

²¹ “Grand River Section is Booming,” *Detroit Evening Times*, November 19, 1915.

²² Stimson, *Detroit Times*, November 11, 1915.

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Developers, foreseeing – or hoping for – tremendous growth had platted lots then considered “wide and deep.”²³ They had also paved roads, installed sewers, laid out sidewalks, planted trees and installed electric lights. A group of developers joined together and established a maintenance fund that was used to keep the lots free of weeds and rubbish until the lots were sold.²⁴

Development appears to have stalled during World War I but resumed in the early 1920s.

When development resumed, the village was marketed as “an ideal home community,”²⁵ and groups like the Redford Exchange Club regularly advertised the many benefits of the village. Real estate developers and builders alike extolled the various virtues of their many subdivisions. Growth was so rapid that the construction of essential services could not keep pace.²⁶ Annexation to the City of Detroit was a logical solution for many, and annexation of a portion of Redford Township was approved by voters in Redford and Detroit in 1923.²⁷

In 1924, Grand River Avenue was widened to one hundred feet and paved from Joy Road, south of Redford, through to Redford and two miles beyond. That work was said to result in the construction of 1,500 homes and 125 commercial buildings along Grand River Avenue,²⁸ which only increased development pressures in the area.

By 1925, a broader annexation movement, which included the village of Redford, was afoot. Advocates of annexation argued Detroit had “everything to gain and nothing to lose” by bringing much of the northwest area into the city.²⁹ The village of Redford, along with Brightmoor, Rosedale Park, and Five Points also offered some eight thousand homes and thirty-five thousand people to Detroit, which would help ensure Detroit’s place as the fourth largest city in the country.³⁰

Another benefit of annexation – for both Redford and Detroit – was the incorporation of the Redford Union Schools into the Detroit Public School system. Redford schools, it was said, accounted for \$23 million in value, ten permanent schools, and four thousand students, with a bonded debt of \$2.5 million.

Redford Union Schools District, Annexation, and Mid-Century Growth

²³ “Redford Shows Work of Land Developers,” *Detroit Free Press*, September 24, 1916.

²⁴ “Redford Shows Work of Land Developers,” *Detroit Free Press*, September 24, 1916.

²⁵ “Grand River Area Develops Rapidly,” *Detroit Free Press*, April 3, 1921.

²⁶ “Grand River Area Develops Rapidly,” *Detroit Free Press*, April 3, 1921.

²⁷ “Complete Returns,” *Detroit Free Press*, October 10, 1923.

²⁸ “Road Widening Boosts Grand River Building,” *Detroit Free Press*, October 5, 1924.

²⁹ “Annex Redford Voters Urged,” *Detroit Free Press*, September 20, 1925.

³⁰ Redford Annexation Association advertisement, *Detroit Free Press*, October 5, 1925.

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According to *Redford Union Schools, 1842-1989* by Lyle Kinsey, before annexation of the eastern portion by the City of Detroit, Redford Township was the typical thirty-six square miles with ten school districts formed in 1900. One- and two-room schoolhouses were the norm.³¹

The first school was organized in Redford Township in 1837, the same year Michigan was granted statehood. This school was located at the intersection of Burt Road and Grand River Avenue. A second school was organized in 1855 and, according to local history, constructed of locally produced brick. The third school building, a one-room frame building, was constructed in 1890. This third building was expanded with a one-room addition in 1907.

As typical for Detroit and the surrounding communities, the 1920s brought huge population increases. In just three years the district more than doubled the number of teachers and population was growing so fast that a new teacher was required every month. In 1923 six of the districts voted to consolidate into Redford Union Schools District No. 1, Redford Township. The six districts included: District No. 3 (Vetal), District No. 4 (Bell Branch), District No. 5 (Beech Road), District No. 8 (DuBois), District No. 10 (Redford Village), and District No. 12 (Seven Mile Road). At the time of consolidation there were sixty teachers in the district. By 1925 the number of teachers had increased to 107, and by 1926 the number of teachers had reached 150.

After consolidation the district began an extensive building campaign. Anticipating the township's annexation to the City of Detroit the district hired Detroit architects Verner, Wilhelm and Molby as the exclusive architects for the district for elementary schools so the new school buildings would harmonize with those of Detroit. The district also modeled its curriculum and teacher's pay after Detroit's, which was then considered among the best public school systems in the country.³² Most of the township's early population growth and development of the township was centered on Grand River Avenue east of Telegraph Road, which was annexed to the City of Detroit in May 1926. Nine elementary schools were constructed between about 1923 and 1926, all are now in Detroit. Among them were the T. Dale Cooke School (extant); Thomas Burt School (extant); Warren G. Harding School (unknown); Samuel D. Holcomb School (extant); Thomas Houghton School (unknown); Don Hubert School (appears to have been replaced); Eugenia Mettetal School; Peter Vetal School (unknown); and E.W. Yost School (appears to have been replaced).

The present-day Redford Union Schools is comprised of the area in the west half of the township that was not annexed in 1923 and 1925.

³¹ The Redford Township District No. 5 School still exists. The building is located on the southwest corner of Beech Daly Road and Margareta Street. The school was listed in the State Register of Historic Sites and received a Michigan Historical Marker in 1994. The building was also listed in the National Register in 1997 (NR Ref. No. 97000279).

³² Jeffrey Mirel, "The Politics of Educational Retrenchment in Detroit, 1929-1935." *History of Education Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (1984): 323-358.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/368012>.

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Community growth slowed during the Great Depression and World War II, but some construction in Redford occurred during the war. Possibly anticipating demand from returning veterans, or catering to those engaged in war work, sixty-one homes, many what we now call Minimal Traditional, were built on Thatcher, Bentler, and Glenco streets in 1942.³³

After World War II, the population of Redford Township exploded again, this time in response to huge suburban growth in the Detroit area.

The district enrollment tripled between 1940 and 1960. In 1941 a new high school was constructed (now the junior high), and in 1952 the present-day Redford Union High School was built as a junior high. The building program included several other elementary schools. By the late 1970s the township's population began to decline and two schools were closed in 1978.

The land presently containing the Holcomb School was originally part of District No. 10, and contained the Village of Redford, originally called the Village of Sandhill. The original school was located on the north side of Grand River Avenue between Six Mile Road and Trinity Avenue. The land on which the school is located is part of Serp's Redford Subdivision, platted by Joseph and Jennie Serp of Detroit in 1919. The subdivision of Section 10 of Redford Township approximates the distribution of the former farm parcels within the section. A 1936 plat map for Redford Township depicts the several subdivisions of Section 10. The southwest quarter of the section in that map is composed of seven subdivisions that roughly match the farm plats depicted in 1904 and 1914 county atlases. Serp's subdivision appears to occupy the west half of the forty acres held by D. N. Sutherland in 1914.³⁴

Public School Buildings in Michigan and Detroit Public Schools

According to *An Honor and an Ornament: Public School Buildings in Michigan*, school forms changed in response to myriad factors, including state legislation, social concerns and expectations, social and civic movements, and trade and popular publications.³⁵ The state legislation was intended to improve education, generally, provide manual and domestic training, and open up public schools for children with distinct social and educational needs.³⁶ Other physical changes to school buildings that occurred in the early twentieth century were the separation of upper grades from lower grades and the introduction of dedicated kindergarten room. *An Honor and An Ornament* indicates:

the kindergarten room was typically on the first floor near an entrance, with a fireplace to replace to create a more home-like atmosphere. In some elementary schools, the

³³ "Part of a Group of 61 New Homes in Northwest Section," *Detroit Free Press*, September 27, 1942.

³⁴ According to county atlases published in 1876, 1904, and 1914, the west half of the 1914 Sutherland property was identified twenty acres held by R. Hoffman in 1904. The twenty-acre Hoffman parcel was part of a forty-acre parcel owned by Sutherland in 1876.

³⁵ *An Honor and an Ornament: Public School Buildings in Michigan* (Lansing, Mich.: State Historic Preservation Office, 2003).

³⁶ *An Honor and an Ornament*

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kindergarten room walls were semi-rounded to allow more light and fresh air into the room. Elementary schools continued the ward school's role as the neighborhood school. The community regularly used the building and grounds for political, social, and recreational purposes.³⁷

In addition to legislation, broad social movements, and changing expectations, public education in Detroit was also affected by certain social and political conflicts, the influence of vast industrial development, continued expansion and development, the city's status as the fourth largest city in the country, an era of incredible prosperity, and, later, the economic and material impacts of World War I.³⁸ Arguably one of the most important concerns was a change in how the board of education was elected, from a ward-based system to an open election.³⁹ Among other reforms, the platoon system, which resulted in certain programmatic requirements for school buildings, was instituted in Detroit in 1919, earlier than many school systems in the country.⁴⁰

One of the most remarkable outcomes of the broad changes in Detroit Public Schools in the 1920s was that business and labor groups – usually in open opposition – as well as other disparate groups all agreed on the need for high-quality public education.⁴¹ This consensus is apparent not only in the number of buildings constructed during the 1920s but also in the quality of design displayed in those buildings. According to educational historian Jeffrey Mirel this commitment to public education positioned the city of Detroit as “the shining star of the New Era,” and Detroit Public Schools ranked among the best public school systems in the nation.⁴² The *Detroit Free Press* opined in 1927 that the city's schools had “played an important part in the remarkable development of this city,” and that the continued development of the school system was “laying a foundation for the continuance of this general prosperity and progress that has astounded the world.”⁴³ According to Mirel, the number of students in the Detroit Public Schools system increased from 95,023 to 254,645 by 1932.⁴⁴ According to meet this tremendous need, the school district would have had to add about ten thousand seats per year.⁴⁵

³⁷ *An Honor and an Ornament*

³⁸ Mirel, *The Politics of Educational Retrenchment in Detroit*; Jeffrey Mirel, *The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System: Detroit, 1907-81*, 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1999); Deborah M. Goldstein, “Public Schools of Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan,” National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, 2011.

³⁹ Mirel, *Rise and Fall*, 44.

⁴⁰ Deborah M. Goldstein, “Public Schools of Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan,” National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, 2011.

⁴¹ Jeffrey Mirel, *The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System: Detroit, 1907-81*, 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 54

⁴² Mirel, *Rise and Fall*, 43.

⁴³ “Public School System Plays Mighty Part in Progress of Detroit,” *Detroit Free Press*, June 13, 1927.

⁴⁴ Mirel, *Rise and Fall*, 54.

⁴⁵ Mirel, *Rise and Fall*, 60.

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Some of this growth is attributable to annexation. In 1925 alone, the public school system added twenty schools,⁴⁶ including the Samuel D. Holcomb School. Many of these schools came from the Redford Union Schools district. After annexation was approved by voters, however, auditors discovered that Redford School District No. 1 was bankrupt and that the state funds allotted to District No. 1 would be sent to that portion of Redford Township that was not annexed for the unannexed schools.⁴⁷ This meant that Detroit Public Schools had to absorb the Redford debt. Some Detroit board of education members were opposed to absorbing the debt and waged a campaign to not allow the Redford schools into the district while the matter was unresolved.⁴⁸

As the district added students at an incredible rate, the number of buildings increased as well. Mirel recorded that the district operated 126 schools in 1917, 162 schools in 1922, and between the 1920-1921 and 1929-1930 school years, forty-four elementary schools, eleven intermediate schools, and five high schools were constructed,⁴⁹ to say nothing of the number of additions and temporary buildings. In 1926, after the addition of the group of schools that included Holcomb School, the district reported that it operated 178 elementary schools out of a total of 311 school buildings.⁵⁰

Over time, as the population of the city changed and shifted, some buildings were replaced with larger buildings, others expanded with permanent additions or temporary buildings (or both in some cases), others were repurposed, and still others were demolished.

In a 2010 survey of 183 current and former Detroit Public Schools buildings, eight-eight extant school buildings were identified as possessing both historic significance and historic integrity and appeared to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.⁵¹ The survey found that the majority of the schools were constructed between 1910 and 1929, with eighteen schools built in the 1910s and forty-four built in the 1920s. By the 1930s new architectural styles and forms supplanted the preeminence of Collegiate Gothic, as no more schools were built in that style.

Of those eighty-eight schools, half (forty-four) were constructed during the 1920s, and nineteen of those forty-four were designed in a Late Gothic Revival or Collegiate Gothic style. Only Holcomb School, however, was built as a one-story school.

⁴⁶ Detroit Public Schools Board of Education, *Annual Report* (and Detroit (Mich., 1926), 13. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/miua.0553309.1926.001>

⁴⁷ "Redford No. 1 School is Declared Bankrupt," *Detroit Free Press*, February 2, 1925.

⁴⁸ "Redford Men Hear Dr. Hall," *Detroit Free Press*, October 8, 1926.

⁴⁹ Mirel, *Rise and Fall*, 65.

⁵⁰ Detroit Public Schools Board of Education, *Annual Report* (and Detroit (Mich., 1926), 11. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/miua.0553309.1926.001>

⁵¹ Since that survey some buildings identified as eligible have been demolished. Those school buildings not included in the eighty-eight schools noted above should not automatically be considered not eligible for listing in the National Register. Rather, each school should be evaluated against the registration requirements described in the *Public Schools of Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan*, MPDF.

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Collegiate Gothic Architecture

The Collegiate Gothic style in the United States is an adaptation of the Late Gothic Revival that occurred in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Popularized by Philadelphia architects Walter Cope and John Stewardson, Collegiate Gothic became the dominant expression of educational values at colleges and universities across the country. Public school districts also utilized Collegiate Gothic for many of the primary and secondary school buildings.

Cope and Stewardson drew upon the Gothic buildings of Oxford and Cambridge Universities in England and the ideas of the earlier Gothic Revival in the United States to produce a new form that resulted, first, in series of buildings at Bryn Mawr College – Radnor Hall in 1887, Denbigh Hall in 1893, Pembroke Hall East and West in 1894, Rockefeller in 1904, and the M. Carey Thomas Library in 1906 – that were highly influential and led to commissions at Princeton University, Cornell University, the University of Missouri, Washington University in Saint Louis, and the University of Pennsylvania.

Writing in 1926, architect and architectural historian Talbot Hamlin, wrote “the development of the architecture of American educational buildings is a symbol of the importance which education holds in American life.”⁵² The Collegiate Gothic style developed as the embodiment of that expression and sentiment, and much like their Gothic and Gothic Revival counterparts, was the reflection of “a mental attitude” and the “visualizing of a spiritual impulse.”⁵³

Most Collegiate Gothic primary and secondary educational buildings in Detroit are vernacular expressions of the style, with some displaying Jacobethan influences. Collegiate Gothic elementary schools, particularly, were simplified versions of the style and employed a limited set of characteristics such as masonry construction, recessed arched entries, stone trim and moldings, and decorative stone panels, as seen in Holcomb School. Yet, even with this limited palette, these buildings symbolized the importance of public education in Detroit, in Michigan, and in the United States in the 1920s, and important educational virtues.

Samuel D. Holcomb School

Samuel D. Holcomb School built in September 1925 in what was then the village of Redford. The first phase of the building consisted of a thirteen room, single-story school building that served District No. 1 of the Redford Union School District. Although many of the Redford Union’s elementary schools, such as Mettetal, Coffey, and Hubert – all constructed the same year – consisted of smaller buildings in more remote parts of the township, Holcomb School was located in Redford’s commercial and residential center, the village of Redford, centered on Grand River Avenue just to the south.

⁵² Talbot Faulkner Hamlin, *The American Spirit in Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926), 326.

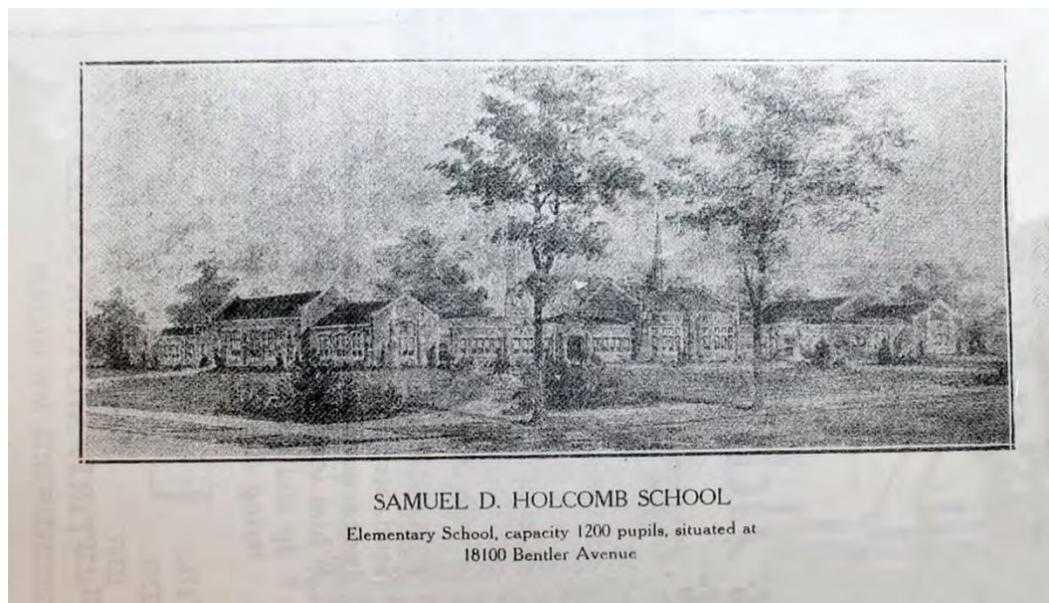
⁵³ Ralph Adams Cram, *The Gothic Quest* (New York: Baker and Taylor Co., 1907), 57.

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Although smaller than Detroit schools being constructed at the time, the district specifically hired Verner, Wilhelm and Molby, designers of many Detroit schools, to design all of the Redford Union School District elementary schools and ensure the district's school architecture would be harmonious with Detroit in the likely event of annexation.

Indeed, the Holcomb School, designed in an adaption of the Collegiate Gothic, appears to borrow from the vocabulary of the one-story George Washington School, which was also designed by Verner, Wilhelm & Molby and constructed in 1924 at the southeast corner of Lawley Street and Dequindre Street, on the east side of the city. The Washington School was reportedly Detroit's first one-story school.⁵⁴ Like Holcomb School, Washington School featured a gable roof, a center cupola, twin projecting bays centered on the façade. The ultimate form of Washington School resembled an 8, like Holcomb School, and contained interior courtyards. The Washington School exhibited more detailed masonry, columned entry porches, more extensive quoining, and other, more developed details, though these details appear to have been removed or covered over time.



SAMUEL D. HOLCOMB SCHOOL
Elementary School, capacity 1200 pupils, situated at
18100 Bentler Avenue

Illustration of original school building from "Greater Redford, Souvenir Edition, Historic-Pictorial-Commercial Review, 1928." Photocopy located at the Redford Township Library.

Holcomb School is about one and one-half miles north of Thomas Burt Elementary School, 20710 Pilgrim Street, and was also annexed into Detroit Public Schools. The Burt School was constructed in 1925 and is also within the Collegiate Gothic vocabulary. The Burt School differs from Holcomb School, however, in its size and form. The two-story Burt School is roughly U-shaped and, at two stories, reflects standard Detroit public school buildings of the 1920s.

⁵⁴ "Detroit's First One-Floor Public School," *Detroit Free Press*, August 3, 1924. The illustration of the Washington school that appeared in the *Free Press* bears a strong resemblance to the illustration of the Holcomb School that appeared in the *Greater Redford, Souvenir Edition, Historic-Pictorial-Commercial Review*, 1928.

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About three miles to the northeast is the Wilford Coffey Elementary School, 19300 Lindsay Street. The original section of the Coffey School was constructed in 1925. It was a one-story building, but contained only four rooms, one of which was a kindergarten room. The school served students only to the third grade. The school closed in 1933 but was reopened in the 1940s and in the mid-1950s received a significant two-story addition that increased the capacity of the building from 180 students to 875 students. A later addition increased capacity to 1,085 students. The additions to the building overpower the small, original building and illustrate other important aspects of education and public school architecture in Detroit.

Some two miles to the south is the Don Sherman Hubert School, 14825 Lamphere Street. Hubert School was constructed in 1924. Like Coffey School, the Hubert School was originally constructed as a one-story, four-room school. The school was expanded in 1930 and in 1953. This original building displays limited Collegiate Gothic details and the expansions created an interior courtyard. As with the Coffey School, the additions to the building overpower the small, original building and illustrate other important aspects of education and public school architecture in Detroit.

Holcomb School was named in honor of Samuel D. Holcomb, a physician and popular resident of the area. The school was annexed to Detroit before the start of the 1926-1927 school year. As the area's population continued to grow, a second unit, featuring six additional classrooms, a multi-purpose lunchroom and gymnasium was added in April 1929. Building permits identify Raymond Carey as the architect of the addition. This increased the capacity of the school to more than one thousand students. A 1939 account of the site describes "flowers, garden paths, and a miniature pool...the advantages of the country woodside brought to [a] city school doorstep" (Detroit Board of Education).



Samuel D. Holcomb School in 1931, City of Detroit Request for Proposal.

A temporary classroom building was used on the site until the 1946 addition was constructed. The last addition, located at the south end of the building, contained five classrooms, the

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auditorium, a shop, and additional restrooms. The cost of the addition was \$442,335. In 1949, the Boston Tile Company supervised the installation of a Pewabic tile drinking fountain, matching that of the city's Frederick Schulze School, now demolished.

Verner, Wilhelm and Molby

Holcomb School was designed by the Detroit firm of Verner, Wilhelm, and Molby. The firm maintained a general architectural practice and designed a number of public schools in Detroit and surrounding communities at the same time as their work for Redford Township, including Detroit's first single-story school, Washington School in 1924. The two other extant Detroit schools designed by the firm are Coolidge School (1925), and McKerrow School (1926).

Holcomb school was originally constructed for Redford Union Schools and the district made the conscious choice to hire Detroit school architects. According to Kinsey:

with an eye to the possibility of future annexation by the City of Detroit, the Board of Education tried to model Redford Union Schools after that of Detroit. It hired the Detroit architects, Verner, Wilhelm and Molby, so that the school buildings would harmonize with others found in Detroit. The Board also adopted the platoon system of teaching, courses of study offered in the Detroit high schools, advanced methods of instruction that had proved valid by experimentation in Detroit, and Detroit salary schedule for teachers and principals.⁵⁵

There are similarities between Holcomb School and Washington School, the original part of Coolidge School, and in Redford the Keeler school; in particular the large multi-sided bays on the fronts of the buildings.

According to period trade journals, the firm may have designed school buildings in Belleville, Lincoln Park, and Roseville. In Detroit, the firm also designed the Lafayette elementary school, the Foch intermediate school and a school on Ravenswood. In 1927 the firm also designed the nearby Redford Theater as well as the Mayflower Hotel in downtown Plymouth.

The firm was founded in 1921 by Eugene B. Wilhelm, a native of Highland, Michigan, who graduated in civil engineering from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in 1910. He laid out Grand Lawn cemetery, at the intersection of Telegraph Road and Grand River Avenue, and was the Redford Township Engineer from 1913 to 1915. Wilhelm also practiced privately. From 1917 to 1919 he served in the United States Army, first as a captain of engineers, with a promotion to major. From 1919 to 1921 he worked for the Ford Motor Company, where, for a time, he served as the superintendent of mechanical construction and maintenance at the company's River Rouge Plant.⁵⁶ In addition to his architectural practice, Wilhelm was active in the Detroit Gyro club, a professional civic-minded men's organization. He served as president of the club in 1923,

⁵⁵ Lyle C. Kinsey, *Redford Union Schools, 1842-1989*, p. 6.

⁵⁶ "A Builder of Big Buildings," *Greater Redford, Souvenir Edition, Historic-Pictorial-Commercial Review*, 1928

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during which time the organization advocated for the creation of a subway system that would help facilitate easier movement around the congested and expanding city.⁵⁷

William F. Verner was a mechanical engineer from Ann Arbor. He was graduated from Purdue University in 1906.⁵⁸ He first worked for the Jeffrey Manufacturing Company in Columbus, Ohio, then joined the faculty of the engineering department of the University of Michigan.⁵⁹ He designed the Lincoln Motor Company plant in 1917 and was responsible for mechanical design work at the Ford River Rouge Plant.⁶⁰

Frank Molby studied architecture at Columbia University.⁶¹ After graduating, he began practicing architecture in 1892 in the office of the supervising architect of the Treasury in Washington D.C., where he worked for sixteen years. While there he worked on the Philadelphia and Denver mints.⁶² When he came to Detroit, he worked at Albert Kahn Inc. before joining Verner and Wilhelm.

Ralph F. Shreve, a structural engineer joined the firm at an unknown date and the firm's name changed Verner, Wilhelm and Shreve. Prior to joining the firm, Shreve worked on the wharves and docks of the Ford River Rouge Plant,⁶³ and may have come into contact with Verner there.

In June 1929 William Verner stepped down from the firm and it merged with Detroit architect Harry S. Angell, creating Angell, Wilhelm, and Shreve. The partnership was short lived, however, as on July 6, 1929, Eugene Wilhelm died in an automobile accident in Pontiac, a northern suburb community. According to his obituary he lived in Franklin and during World War I he was stationed at Camp Meade in Maryland.

Registration Requirements of the *Public Schools of Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan, Multiple Property Documentation Form*

The Samuel D. Holcomb School meets the general registration requirements as described in the *Public Schools of Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan, Multiple Property Documentation Form* as well as the specific requirements described under National Register Criteria A and C in the MPDF.

⁵⁷ "Demand for Subway Backed by Gyro Club," *Detroit Free Press*, February 3, 1923.

⁵⁸ "Engineering Firm Handles Many Building Projects," *Michigan Manufacturer and Financial Record*, September 8, 1923.

⁵⁹ "Engineering Firm Handles Many Building Projects," *Michigan Manufacturer and Financial Record*, September 8, 1923.

⁶⁰ "Engineering Firm Handles Many Building Projects," *Michigan Manufacturer and Financial Record*, September 8, 1923.

⁶¹ "Engineering Firm Handles Many Building Projects," *Michigan Manufacturer and Financial Record*, September 8, 1923.

⁶² "Engineering Firm Handles Many Building Projects," *Michigan Manufacturer and Financial Record*, September 8, 1923.

⁶³ "Engineering Firm Handles Many Building Projects," *Michigan Manufacturer and Financial Record*, September 8, 1923.

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The Holcomb School was “built as a public school building” and, although was built for Redford Union Schools, was annexed to the City of Detroit in 1926 and “formed part of the Detroit public school system” until its closure. The school and its additions were constructed in 1925, 1929, and 1946, during the period of significance for the MPDF, defined as 1888-1960. Holcomb School remains in its original location and retains integrity of design, materials, and workmanship.

Conclusion

Under Criterion A, the school is significant under the theme of Community Development and Planning for its ability to convey important information about the development of Detroit’s early northern suburbs, area and population growth, annexation, and the development of the Detroit Public School system. The school was one of twenty-six schools that were annexed into Detroit from the surrounding townships in the mid-1920s, and one of twelve schools from Redford Township.

Under Criterion C the building is an important illustration of the adaptation of Collegiate Gothic architectural principles to a neighborhood elementary school in a fast-growing metropolitan community in the mid-1920s.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

Holcomb, Samuel D., School
Name of Property

Wayne County, MI
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 4.421

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 42.421381 | Longitude: -83.252501 |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |

Holcomb, Samuel D., School
Name of Property

Wayne County, MI
County and State

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

E BENTLER 12 THRU 1 SERPS REDFORD SUB L40 P73 PLATS, W C R 22/400 600 X
321.14A

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The Verbal Boundary Description is the legal description for the school parcel as described in the City of Detroit Parcel Viewer, <https://detroitmi.gov/webapp/city-detroit-parcel-viewer>, and derived February 2023. The boundaries include the entire parcel historically and presently associated with the school.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Kristine M. Kidorf, owner
organization: Kidorf Preservation Consulting
street & number: 451 E. Ferry Street
city or town: Detroit state: MI zip code: 48202
e-mail: kristine@kidorfpreservationconsulting.com
telephone: 313-300-9376
date: June 2021 and February 2023

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Holcomb, Samuel D., School
Name of Property

Wayne County, MI
County and State

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Holcomb, Samuel D. School

City or Vicinity: Detroit

County: Wayne State: MI

Photographer: Kristine M. Kidorf

Date Photographed: May 21, 2021 (photos 5-9 and 11-27); February 2, 2023 (photos 1-4, 10)

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 28. Looking northeast at west façade and south elevation.
MI_Wayne_Holcomb, Samuel D., School_0001.
- 2 of 28. Looking southeast at façade.
MI_Wayne_Holcomb, Samuel D., School_0002.
- 3 of 28. Looking southeast at façade.
MI_Wayne_Holcomb, Samuel D., School_0003.
- 4 of 28. Looking southeast at west façade and north elevation.
MI_Wayne_Holcomb, Samuel D., School_0004.
- 5 of 28. Looking east at central entrance.
MI_Wayne_Holcomb, Samuel D., School_0005.
- 6 of 28. Looking north at south elevation.
MI_Wayne_Holcomb, Samuel D., School_0006.
- 7 of 28. Looking northwest at south and east (rear) elevations.

Holcomb, Samuel D., School
Name of Property

Wayne County, MI
County and State

- MI_Wayne_Holcomb, Samuel D., School_0007.
- 8 of 28. Looking northwest at east (rear) elevation.
MI_Wayne_Holcomb, Samuel D., School_0008.
- 9 of 28. Looking northwest at north portion of east elevation.
MI_Wayne_Holcomb, Samuel D., School_0009.
- 10 of 28. Looking east at north elevation of school and south side of non-contributing classroom building.
MI_Wayne_Holcomb, Samuel D., School_0010.
- 11 of 28. Looking west in north corridor at north entrance.
MI_Wayne_Holcomb, Samuel D., School_0011.
- 12 of 28. Looking south in west corridor.
MI_Wayne_Holcomb, Samuel D., School_0012.
- 13 of 28. Looking west in library.
MI_Wayne_Holcomb, Samuel D., School_0013.
- 14 of 28. Looking west in art room.
MI_Wayne_Holcomb, Samuel D., School_0014.
- 15 of 28. Looking east in gymnasium and lunchroom.
MI_Wayne_Holcomb, Samuel D., School_0015.
- 16 of 28. Looking west in north corridor.
MI_Wayne_Holcomb, Samuel D., School_0016.
- 17 of 28. Looking northeast in typical classroom.
MI_Wayne_Holcomb, Samuel D., School_0017.
- 18 of 28. Looking north in east corridor.
MI_Wayne_Holcomb, Samuel D., School_0018.
- 19 of 28. Looking west in kindergarten room.
MI_Wayne_Holcomb, Samuel D., School_0019.
- 20 of 28. Looking southwest in kindergarten room toward interior courtyard.
MI_Wayne_Holcomb, Samuel D., School_0020.
- 21 of 28. Looking west in middle corridor.
MI_Wayne_Holcomb, Samuel D., School_0021.

Holcomb, Samuel D., School

Wayne County, MI
County and State

Name of Property

- 22 of 28. Looking north in east corridor, 1946 portion, Pewabic tile fountain niche on right.
MI_Wayne_Holcomb, Samuel D., School_0022.
- 23 of 28. Looking east in south corridor, 1946 Pewabic tile fountain niche on left.
MI_Wayne_Holcomb, Samuel D., School_0023.
- 24 of 28. Looking northeast in typical 1946 classroom.
MI_Wayne_Holcomb, Samuel D., School_0024.
- 25 of 28. Looking north in west corridor.
MI_Wayne_Holcomb, Samuel D., School_0025.
- 26 of 28. Looking south in west corridor at entrance.
MI_Wayne_Holcomb, Samuel D., School_0026.
- 27 of 28. Looking north in 1946 auditorium.
MI_Wayne_Holcomb, Samuel D., School_0027.
- 28 of 28. Looking south in 1946 auditorium.
MI_Wayne_Holcomb, Samuel D., School_0028.

Figure Log

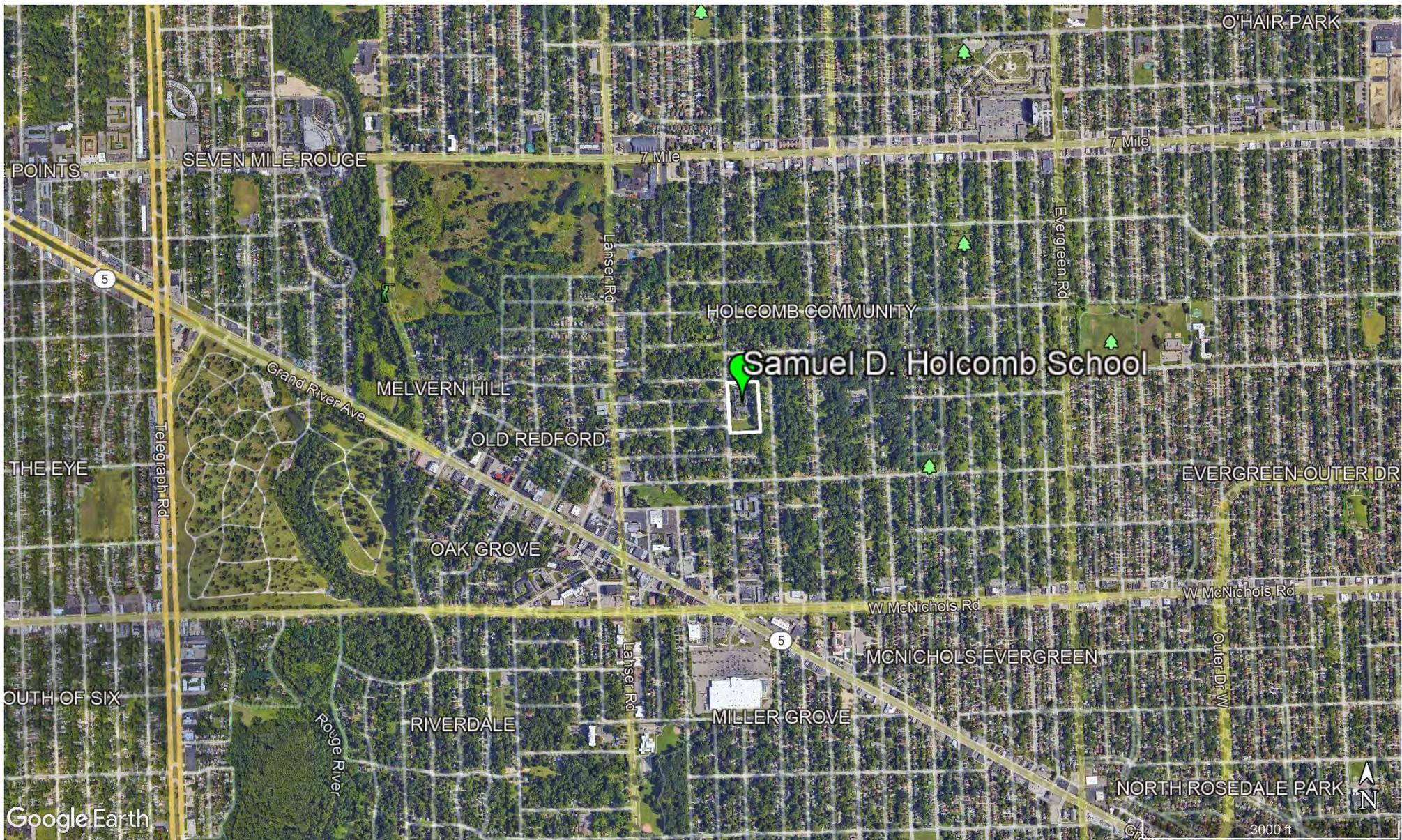
- 1 of 3. "Building Evolution." *Overview Report*. "Holcomb,"
www.afterschooldetroit.com/schools/1-holcomb.
- 2 of 3. "First Floor Plan." (1948) *Floor Plans*. "Holcomb,"
www.afterschooldetroit.com/schools/1-holcomb.
- 3 of 3. "Basement Plan." (1948) *Floor Plans*. "Holcomb,"
www.afterschooldetroit.com/schools/1-holcomb.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations 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.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
Tier 2 – 120 hours
Tier 3 – 230 hours
Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.



Samuel D. Holcomb School

18100 Bentler Street, Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan

Latitude: 42.421381

Longitude: -83.252501

Map Source: Google Earth 7.3.6.9345 Map Image Date: July 2022



Samuel D. Holcomb School

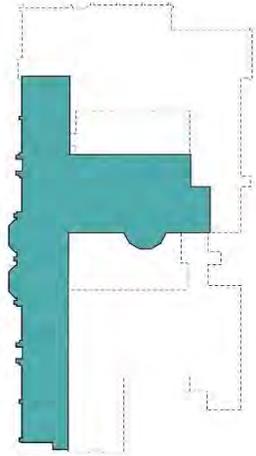
18100 Bentler Street, Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan

Latitude: 42.421381

Longitude: -83.252501

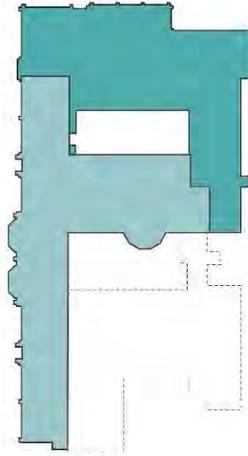
Map Source: Google Earth 7.3.6.9345 Map Image Date: July 2022

Building Evolution



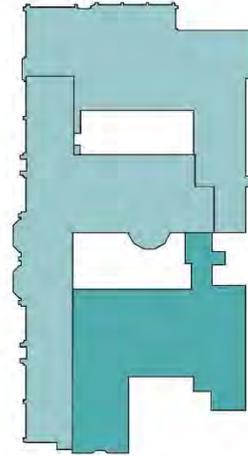
Original Unit (1925)

The original school building was an unusual T-plan, with a long single-loaded west wing forming the primary street frontage, and a short, double-loaded classroom and kindergarten wing extending toward the rear of the site.



First Addition (1928)

In 1928, an L-shaped wing was added to the north end of the site, creating an interior courtyard. The addition included a gym, eight standard classrooms, and a large specialty classroom.



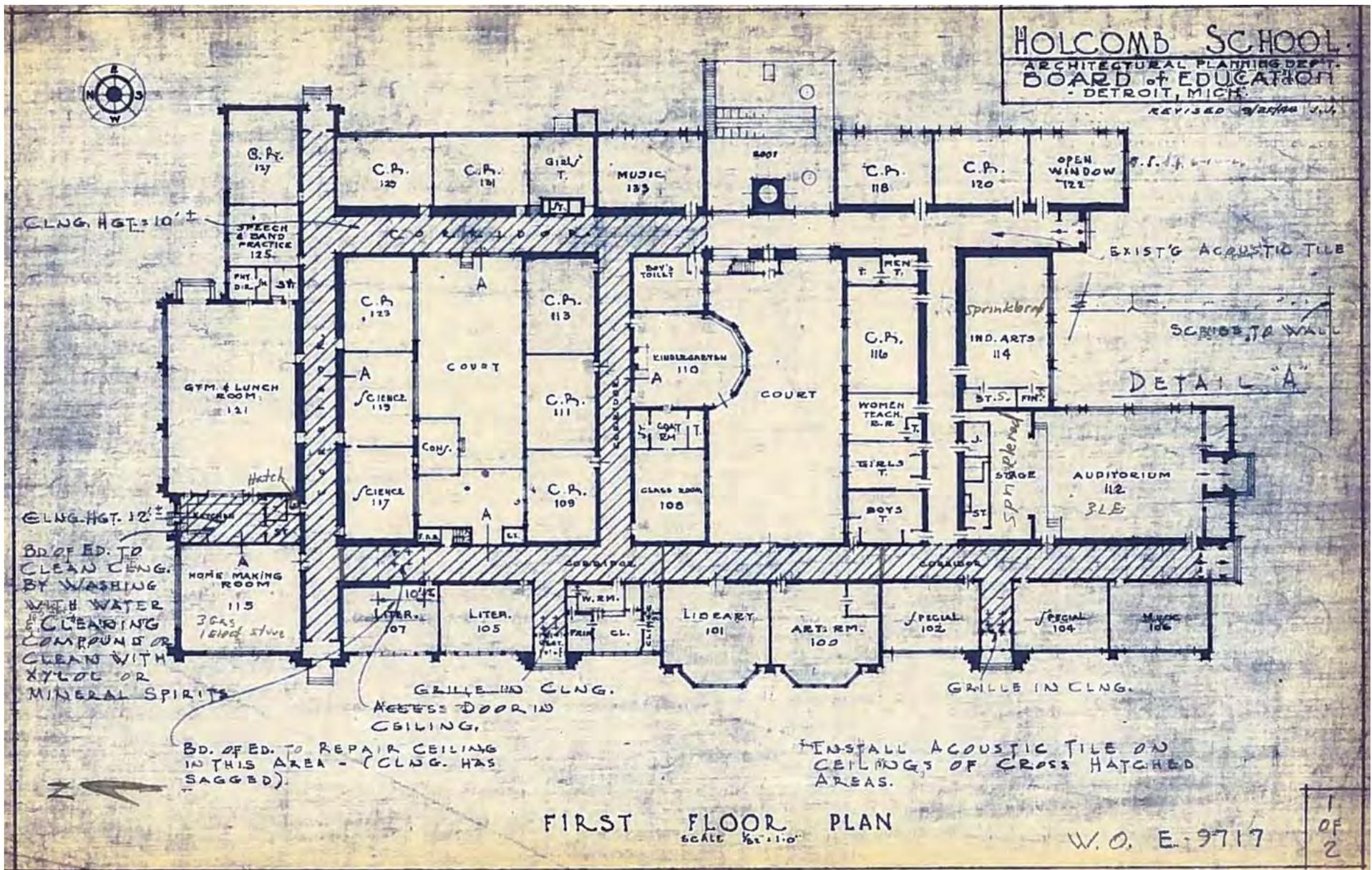
Second Addition (1948)

The southern end of the school was expanded in 1948, in a completely different architectural style. This wing created a second enclosed courtyard. The southern addition included an auditorium, and five more classrooms.

Samuel D. Holcomb School

18100 Bentler Street, Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan

Figure Source: *Overview Report*, "Holcomb," www.afterschooldetroit.com/schools/1-holcomb

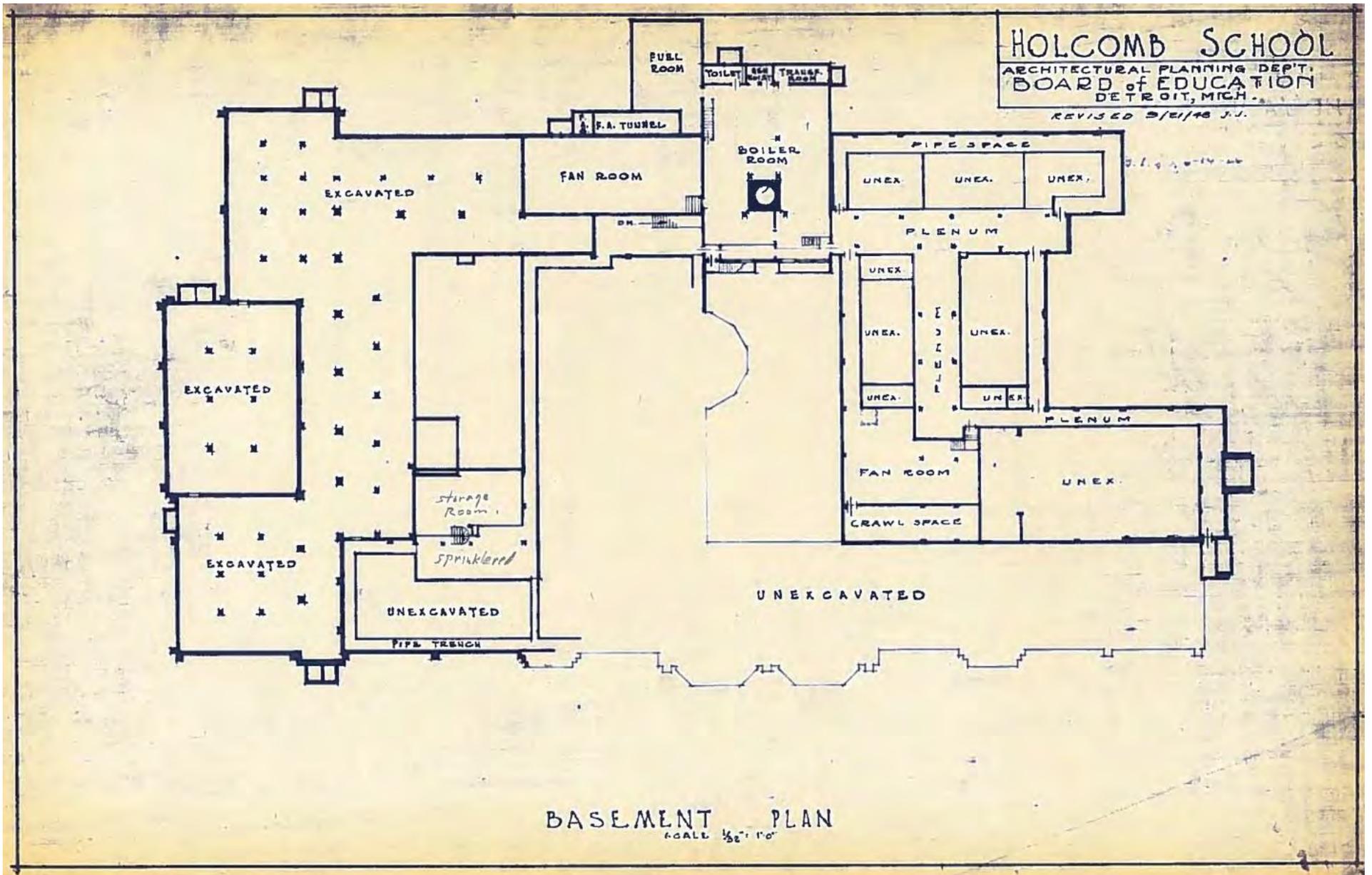


Samuel D. Holcomb School
 18100 Bentler Street, Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan

1948 First Floor Plan

Figure Source: *Floor Plans*, "Holcomb," www.afterschooldetroit.com/schools/1-holcomb

Figure 2



Samuel D. Holcomb School
 18100 Bentler Street, Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan

1948 Basement Floor Plan

Figure Source: *Floor Plans*, "Holcomb," www.afterschooldetroit.com/schools/1-holcomb

Figure 3

hatcher

Bentley

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UP TO \$400





DRUG
FREE
SCHOOL
ZONE



HOLCOMB SCHOOL





NO
TRESPASSING









but
sparty!!!



If my mind conceives it, and I believe
it, I can achieve it. *Ted Hunt*

EXIT

EXIT!







TRUE
LOVE WILL
FIND YOU IN
THE END



























EXIT

2



HODAM!



EXIT



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 6/7/2023 Date of Pending List: 6/23/2023 Date of 16th Day: 7/10/2023 Date of 45th Day: 7/24/2023 Date of Weekly List:

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

Accept Return Reject 7/21/2023 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria:

Reviewer Jim Gabbert Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2275 Date _____

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



STATE OF MICHIGAN
MICHIGAN STRATEGIC FUND
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

QUENTIN L. MESSER, JR.
PRESIDENT

Wednesday, June 7, 2023

Ms. Joy Beasley, Keeper
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1849 C Street, NW, Mail Stop 7228
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Ms. Beasley:

The enclosed file contains the true and correct copy of the nomination for the **Samuel D. Holcomb School, 18100 Bentler Street, Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan**. This property is being submitted for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. This nomination is a New Submission Resubmission Additional Documentation Removal.

- 1 Signed National Register of Historic Places Registration Form
- 2 Locational maps (incl. with nomination file)
- 2 Sketch map(s) / figures(s) / exhibits(s) (incl. with nomination file)
- 2 Pieces of correspondence (incl. with correspondence file)
- 28 Digital photographs
- Other (incl. with nomination file): _____

COMMENTS:

- Please ensure that this nomination is reviewed.
- This property has been approved under 36 CFR 67.
- The enclosed owner objections constitute a majority of property owners.
- This nomination has been funded by the following NPS grant:
- Other:

Questions concerning this nomination should be addressed to Todd A. Walsh, National Register Coordinator, at (517) 331-8917 or walsht@michigan.gov.

Sincerely yours,

Martha MacFarlane-Faes
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer





CITY OF DETROIT
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

COLEMAN A. YOUNG MUNICIPAL CENTER
2 WOODWARD AVE SUITE 808
DETROIT, MICHIGAN 48226
(313) 224-1339 TTY: 711
(313) 224-1310
WWW.DETROITMI.GOV

August 18, 2021

Mr. Todd A. Walsh
National Register Coordinator
State Historic Preservation Office
300 North Washington Square
Lansing, MI 48913

RE: Support for National Register listing of the Samuel D. Holcomb School,
18100 Bentler Street, Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan

Dear Mr. Walsh,

On behalf of the City of Detroit, owner of the Samuel D. Holcomb School at 18100 Bentler Street (“Property”), this letter will confirm that the City is in support of the Property being listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and the submission of Parts 1 and 2 of a federal historic tax credit application for the rehabilitation of same.

Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Garrick B. Landsberg'.

Garrick B. Landsberg
Director of Historic Preservation, Planning Department
City of Detroit