

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT



WEST PULLMAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

11917-11951 SOUTH PARNELL AVENUE

Preliminary and Final Landmark Recommendation adopted by the
Commission on Chicago Landmarks, March 8, 2018



CITY OF CHICAGO
Rahm Emanuel, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development
David Reifman, Commissioner

The Commission on Chicago Landmarks, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor and City Council, was established in 1968 by city ordinance. The Commission is responsible for recommending to the City Council which individual buildings, sites, objects, or districts should be designated as Chicago Landmarks, which protects them by law.

The landmark designation process begins with a staff study and a preliminary summary of information related to the potential designation criteria. The next step is a preliminary vote by the landmarks commission as to whether the proposed landmark is worthy of consideration. This vote not only initiates the formal designation process, but it places the review of city permits for the property under the jurisdiction of the Commission until a final landmark recommendation is acted on by the City Council.

This Landmark Designation Report is subject to possible revision and amendment during the designation process. Only language contained within a designation ordinance adopted by the City Council should be regarded as final.

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WEST PULLMAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

11917-11951 SOUTH PARNELL AVENUE

BUILT: 1894, 1900, 1923

**ARCHITECT: W. AUGUST FIEDLER (ORIGINAL BUILDING)
WILLIAM B. MUNDIE (1900 ADDITION)
JOHN C. CHRISTENSEN (1923 ADDITION)
(BOARD OF EDUCATION ARCHITECTS)**

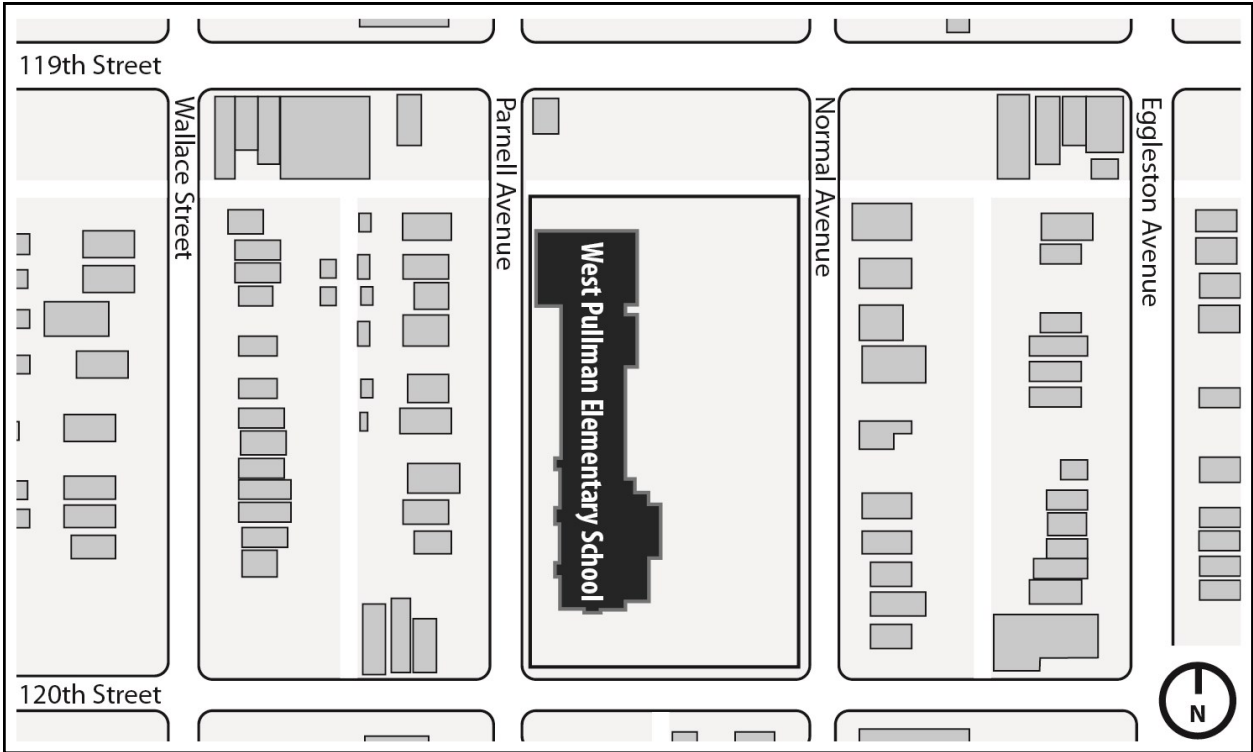
The West Pullman Elementary School is a handsomely-designed and visually detailed public school building, a significant building type in the context of Chicago history. The block-long school building was built in three stages between 1894 and 1923, and served the West Pullman neighborhood for almost 120 years until it closed in 2013.

The West Pullman School was first completed in 1894 as a two-story school accommodating just over 400 students. An addition completed in 1900 doubled the school's size, and an even larger third addition completed in 1923 increased capacity to over 2000 students. Each section was built to provide adequate facilities for West Pullman's growing population of families who were attracted to West Pullman for its affordable residential lots and manufacturing employment, including in George Pullman's nearby Palace Car Works.

Architecturally, the West Pullman School's three separate periods of construction display innovations made in the form and style of public school buildings in Chicago during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In addition to demonstrating changing aesthetic tastes from Romanesque Revival (seen in the original 1894 school and 1900 addition) to Classical Revival (seen in the 1900 and 1923 additions), the West Pullman School's development shows the Chicago School Board's shift from building small schools with equal-sized classrooms to larger and more complex facilities with specialized classrooms and group gathering spaces.



East elevation of the West Pullman Elementary School looking west from South Normal Avenue. The two-story section (left) was completed in 1894, with two later additions completed in 1900 (middle) and 1923 (right).



The West Pullman Elementary School occupies a portion of a block on the east side of Parnell Avenue in the Far South Side community area of West Pullman.

The West Pullman Elementary School is significant as one of Chicago's best examples of public school architecture from the Progressive Era. Its history also mirrors the growth and development of the surrounding Far South Side community area of West Pullman during a critical period in Chicago's history.

CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOL HISTORY: FROM FOUNDING THROUGH 1894

Chicago's public school system formed following Chicago's incorporation in 1837 with the founding of a managing board appointed by the City Council. Several rudimentary frame school houses were constructed in the 1840s, during which time the Illinois state legislature granted additional power to Chicago to purchase and manage school lands and to fund the construction of new schools through taxation. Tax funds allowed for the construction of Chicago's first brick school, later known as the Dearborn School, which was completed in 1845 in the Greek Revival style (and demolished in 1871). Dozens of new school buildings were completed through the 1860s as Chicago's student population rose from fewer than 2,000 in 1849 to nearly 41,000 in the 1860s. School buildings, such as the Chicago High School, built in 1856 in the Gothic Revival Style (demolished in 1950), and the Haven School, completed in the Italianate style in 1862 (demolished following its closure in 1974), followed conventional rectilinear floor plans with classrooms arranged around central corridors.

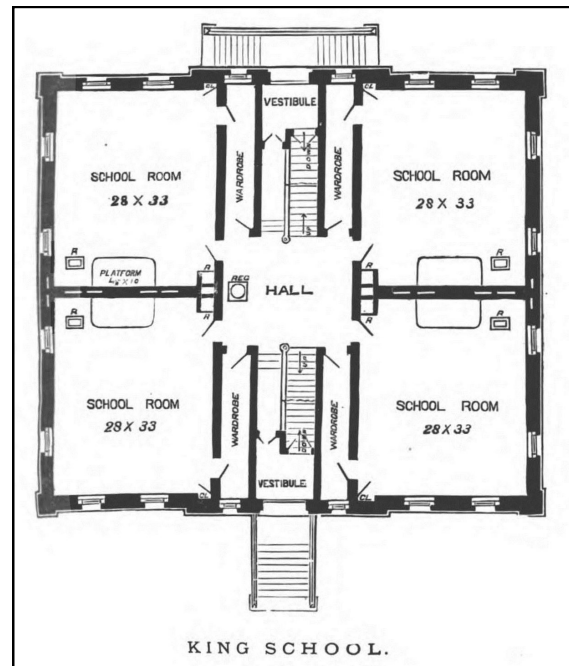
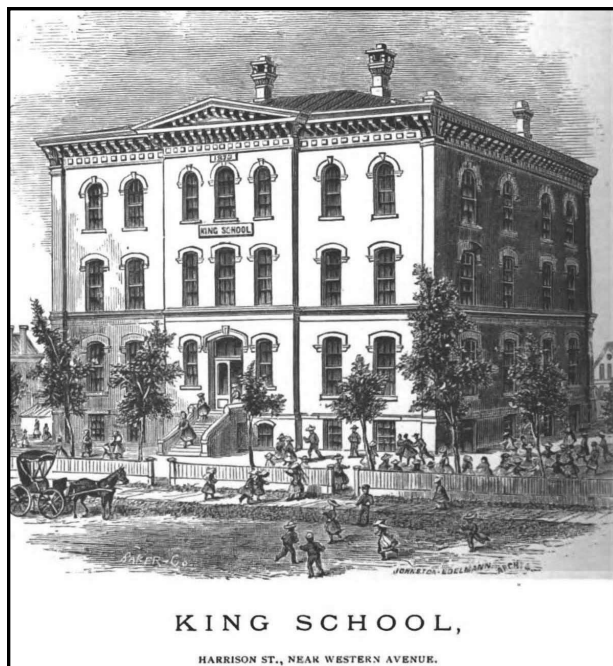
Across the United States in the mid-19th century, the design of school houses followed a few standard formulas for size and layout. The intended purpose of the school building was primarily to contain classrooms where long-established methods of recitation and memorization could be performed. School buildings of this period were simple, either single room structures in rural areas and small towns, or larger multiple room buildings in cities. Most of these early school houses featured a standard square or rectangular footprint. Few offered more than just classrooms, with some allowing for office space for teachers and principals.

While most early school buildings shared the same basic design principals, concerns about the healthfulness of enclosed indoor air and the benefits of improving the illumination of classrooms led to the publication of guides for the design of school buildings, including one published in 1848 by Henry Barnard, the commissioner of the public schools of Providence, Rhode Island. In his *School Architecture; or Contributions to the Improvement of Schoolhouses in the United States*, Barnard proposed a series of standards for the location of schools, the size and layout of classrooms, the size and position of windows for light, and most importantly the ventilation of buildings. Having toured schools of every type across the country during his career, he asserted that existing buildings were largely unhealthful and uninspiring. Children, he observed, "should spend a large part of the most impressible period of their lives," in buildings which could positively shape their lives. Overall, "the style of the exterior should exhibit good, architectural proportion, and be calculated to inspire children and the community generally with respect for the object for which it is devoted." Barnard's moral-driven enthusiasm for the purpose and design of public school buildings helped slowly propel changes in school design.



The Haven School was completed in 1862 and designed by architect Gurdon P. Randall. The Italianate style school building stood at the corner of 15th Street and Wabash Avenue until it was replaced in 1884. It was an early example of a school building with classrooms arranged around a central corridor.

Chicago History Museum, ICHI-69903, stereograph, J. Carbutt, photographer



The King School, designed by Johnston & Edelman in 1874, was designed in the Italianate style, which was popular during the 1870s. This school building was favored by the school board, and it influenced the design of Chicago school buildings through the early 1880s.

Twentieth Annual Report of the Board of Education, 1874.

In Chicago, the Great Fire of 1871 destroyed ten public school buildings. The loss of these buildings offered the opportunity to rebuild following new methods popularized by education thinkers like Barnard. Just three years after the fire, nearly 48,000 students were enrolled in the city's 39 school buildings. One of the new post-fire buildings was the King School, completed in 1874 by architects Johnston & Edlmann in the Italianate style (Harrison Street and Western Avenue, demolished). The King School's form followed a familiar template with a symmetrical square footprint with rooms set around a central corridor. While similar to previous schools in form, however, the King School featured many of the improvements to design, layout, ventilation, and lighting which had been advocated by educators for over a half century. The three-story, twelve-room King school house, featured tall windows and special ducted ventilation systems, among other new features. In addition, as a precaution against fire, brick interior partitions were used instead of the previous standard of frame. The King School's modern design and low construction budget made it the school board's favored design. All public schoolhouses built in Chicago for the next decade followed its design until architect John J. Flanders became architect for the city's schools. The James Ward Public School (a designated Chicago landmark) was completed in 1875 by Johnston & Edlmann following the same plans as the King School.

Following years of contract design work by early Chicago architect Augustus Bauer (1827-1894), the Chicago Board of Education created the official position of architect to the Board in 1882 by hiring architects on-commission. The Board initially elected three architects, each serving for brief terms of fewer than six months. Despite restructuring, designs for new schools between 1882 and 1884 continued to reflect the 1874 King School model. One example completed in 1883, the North Division High School (later named the James Sexton Public School and today known as the Ruben Salazar Elementary Bilingual Education Center, a designated Chicago landmark) offered the same overall symmetrical form and layout as other King School-modeled buildings, except with more exterior decorative features and larger windows.

Architect John J. Flanders was elected chief architect of the Chicago Board of Education in January of 1884 and was immediately presented with the problem of overcrowding that consistently plagued the city's existing school facilities. Flanders' new post coincided with a new legislation-driven expansion of Chicago's public school system. In 1883, the Illinois Legislature enacted the Compulsory Education Law, which required that every student between the ages of 8 and 14 have at least twelve weeks of school each year. The legislation followed years of advocacy by progressive groups seeking to stem child labor and to raise the importance of "childhood" as a special stage of life to be protected. Despite criticism of the law as unenforceable and despite the School Board freely granting "good cause" exemptions to keep children at home or at work, the new law increased demand for seats in Chicago's public schools, particularly in the city's growing outer neighborhoods. In response to these changing education policies, Flanders altered the standard Chicago school building design by introducing asymmetrical footprints and elaborate architectural design elements; an early example of Flanders' influential work is the 1884 John Lothrop Motley School Building at 739 North Ada Street (a designated Chicago Landmark).



The Ruben Salazar Elementary School (originally the North Division High School) at 160 W. Wendell St. was one of the last Chicago school buildings completed following the form and style of the King School model. Designed by school board architect Julius S. Ender and completed in 1883, a designated Chicago Landmark.



John J. Flanders developed a new asymmetrical design for Chicago's public school buildings following his appointment as Architect to the Board of Education in early 1884. One of his designs is the 1884 John Lothrop Motley School at 739 N. Ada St. A designated Chicago Landmark.

Between the 1880s and World War I, thousands of immigrant families settled in Chicago annually, and caused a drastic increase in the need for public school accommodations. An additional source of new students was the City of Chicago's 1889 annexation of five surrounding townships. All of the newly annexed communities together covered nearly 170 square miles, and placed over 100 schools and 35,000 students under the jurisdiction of the Board of Education. Hundreds more students were added to the city's roster in 1890 with the annexation of three villages on the city's far south side including Kensington, which was later known as West Pullman. The combination of new attendance requirements, child labor laws, new immigrant populations, and a much larger city area led to an extensive school construction campaign to accommodate Chicago's thousands of new students.

In 1894, in an effort to increase efficiency during this wave of new school construction, the Chicago Board of Education reorganized its system for designing and building new schools by replacing commission-based architect contracts with an elected position and a complete in-house architecture department. Architect W. August Fiedler, commonly known as August Fiedler, was the first in-house architect. That same year, the School Board completed construction of twenty-two new school buildings, including the West Pullman Elementary School, and approved plans for ten more school buildings, all designed by Fiedler. Fiedler's term as Board architect saw the most productive period of school building construction in the Board's history.

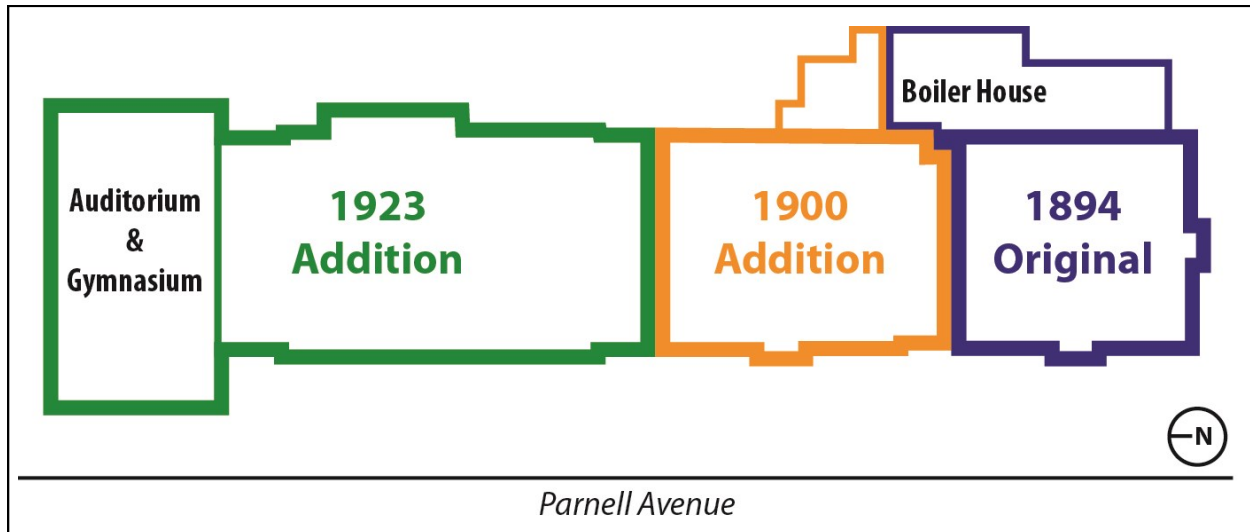
DESCRIPTION OF THE WEST PULLMAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The West Pullman School occupies nearly an entire block bounded by Parnell Avenue on the west, Normal Avenue on the east, 120th Street on the south, and an alleyway on the north. The school building is oriented north to south along Parnell Avenue with paved playing fields and playground to the east; the school playground is bordered by a wrought iron fence with brick piers. The area surrounding the school is largely developed with two- and three-story frame and brick houses and apartment buildings.

The school was originally built in 1894 and was expanded twice with additions in 1900 and 1923 to accommodate the neighborhood's rapidly growing population. The original portion forms the two-story southern third of the building designed by architect W. August Fiedler in the Romanesque Revival style and was built in 1894. Six years later a three-story addition designed by architect William B Mundie was built on the north side of the original building. A final three-story addition was completed at the building's northern end in 1923 and was designed by architect John C. Christensen. The architects of the two additions maintained the general materials and visual character of Fiedler's original 1894 design, but complemented the building by incorporating Classical Revival style elements and by using different decorative materials.

Original 1894 School

W. August Fiedler's original 1894 two-story and raised basement school building forms the southern end of the current school block. The red pressed-brick clad building typifies the Romanesque Revival style popular during the 1880s and 1890s and features shallow projecting



The West Pullman Elementary School was built in 1894 with addition completed in 1900 and 1923. The three sections share similar forms and materials, but they also illustrate a progressive period of school building design innovation from the late 19th to the early 20th centuries.

bays on its west and south elevations, with a short pyramidal roof crowning its western bay. The main entrance, topped by a large arched transom, is centered on the southern bay facing 120th Street. Rusticated limestone blocks clad the base and water table of the building, and also envelope the basement level of the western bay. The name “WEST PULLMAN SCHOOL” in raised letters is decoratively carved in the stonework and set against a carved foliate background.

Decorative Romanesque Revival style details continue across the building including decorative brickwork, varied window styles, and fine limestone and unglazed terra cotta ornament. Plain limestone bands form the sills and lintels of the first floor windows, which are rectangular. Spandrels between the first and second floor windows enliven the building, displaying rich checkerboard patterns of plain and molded red brick. Windows at the basement and second floor levels are arched; terra cotta hood molding caps the second floor windows. A pressed metal cornice and a brick parapet with terra cotta coping tiles top the school building.

The south elevation is similar to the west elevation in form. A central bay features an entrance with an arched transom. A pair of tall windows above the entrance is divided by a half round brick mullion with a limestone Corinthian capital. The bay is flanked by paired windows that match the style of the west elevation.

The rear east elevation has a similar design and fenestration pattern to the west elevation, except that it has no central bay. The basement level connects with the rear single-story boiler house, which has tall brick chimney that rises from its northeast corner. The first level of the east elevation features flat arched windows, while the second floor has windows with round arches. No decorative brickwork or terra cotta was employed on this elevation.



The original 1894 school building was designed by W. August Fiedler in the Romanesque Revival style, which features rich patterned brickwork, foliate stone and terra cotta, a dentiled metal cornice, and projecting bays. The west and south elevations are shown.



The 1900 addition was designed by William B. Mundie who retained Fiedler's original design for the first two floors of the addition, but added a third level in the Classical Revival style with rustic brickwork and a painted metal cornice. The west elevation is shown.



The 1923 addition was designed by John C. Christensen in the Classical Revival style and was clad in brick with unglazed terra cotta trim and ornament. The addition provided a southern section with three floors of new classrooms and a library (above), and a northern section with a ground floor auditorium and an upper floor gymnasium (below). The west elevations are shown.



1900 Addition

William B. Mundie's 1900 addition is three stories tall with a basement level. The overall design of the basement through second floor matches Fiedler's original 1894 design. Above the second floor is a band of unglazed terra cotta with a dentil mold, topped by a third floor clad in red pressed brick set in a rusticated common bond with two recessed courses and five raised courses. Third floor windows have flat arches with a continuous lintel of unglazed terra cotta. The west elevation is capped by a deep bracketed Classical-inspired pressed metal cornice with a plain brick parapet wall above.

The east elevation of the 1900 section is similar to the west elevation, except that the middle bay is flush with the elevation. Part of the south end of the basement level is obscured but not covered by the single-story boiler house. The cornice on the west elevation continues along the upper part of the south and east elevations.

1923 Addition

John C. Christensen's 1923 addition was designed in the Classical Revival style. It has a T-shaped footprint, with classrooms in the south half and an auditorium and gymnasium in the north half forming the top of the "T." The classroom portion of this addition has two stairwells and main entrances on its west elevation. Both entrances feature a terra cotta surround with an entablature and a frieze with the word ENTRANCE flanked by stylized flowers. The doorways retain original twin eight-pane transoms above modern steel doors.

The west street-facing elevation of the classroom portion is composed of three bays, each with a group of five windows per floor. The base has a water table of smooth limestone with red press brick set in a rustic pattern with a single recessed course and six raised courses. A terra cotta string course caps the base, above which the walls are clad in pressed brick set in a common bond pattern. All windows on the first and second floors have terra cotta sills with lintels composed of brick set in a soldier course. Windows on the third level are capped by a terra cotta string course. The entirety of the west elevation is topped by a terra cotta cornice and a plain brick parapet.

The west elevation of the auditorium is similar to the south half in its cladding, but with brick quoining at its corners. The ground level features a set of three double doorways with round arched transoms. The arches are of terra cotta with large scroll keystones. The first and second levels of the elevation are predominantly clad in brick with little fenestration, except for a row of five evenly spaced windows at a point between the first and second floor levels. Above these windows and below a terra cotta string course is a terra cotta panel that reads: ASSEMBLY HALL in raised letters; decorative terra cotta shields flank the panel. The third level has five evenly spaced windows below a continuation of the terra cotta banding and cornice seen on the classroom portion.

The east elevation is similar to the west elevation, and maintains the same cladding, design, and fenestration. The only difference is a wide projecting bay with a flat roof and a plain terra cotta cornice for the first floor library space. The north elevation is symmetrical and is similar in design to the east and west elevations. It features five paired windows with brick tympana at the auditorium level, and seven single sash windows at the upper gymnasium level.



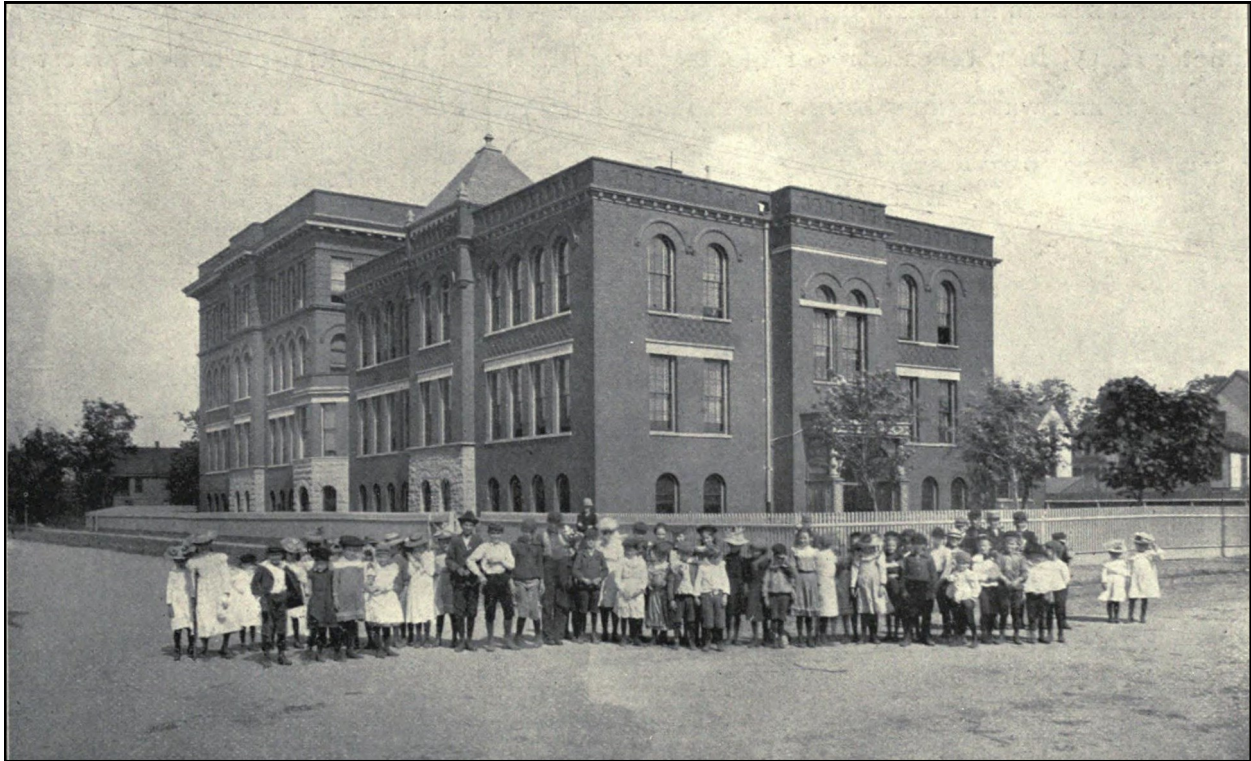
Left: The south elevation of Fiedler's 1894 building features decorative molded brick and fine arched terra cotta hood molds with foliate returns. The central bay features a twin stairwell window with a brick column as a mullion.



Right: The 1900 addition is similar to the 1894 section, but it includes a third floor with Classically-inspired details. Rusticated brickwork and a large metal cornice top the addition.



The 1923 addition has fine examples of Classically-inspired ornament. At left is shown a trio of entrances on the west elevation that lead to auditorium. Each is bordered in unglazed terra cotta and features a prominent keystone in the shape of a scroll.



The West Pullman School and students circa 1900. The 1894 section is centered in the photograph, with the recently completed 1900 addition immediately to the left. Published in a brochure by the West Pullman Land Association in 1900.

West Pullman Land Association, 1900, page 29.

HISTORY OF THE WEST PULLMAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Original 1894 Construction

The West Pullman School was one of twenty-two Chicago public schools constructed in 1894. At the time, West Pullman was a suburban community recently annexed to the city in 1890 and lacked enough school facilities to accommodate its growing numbers of newcomers. In 1893 the Board of Education proceeded with W. August Fiedler's plans for a new school in West Pullman, however Fiedler's original plan for a 16-room school were scaled back to an 8-classroom building. Land for the new school was donated by the West Pullman Land Association in April 1893. According to the *Annual Report* of the Board of Education for the year 1894:

“Contracts were awarded August 2, 1893, for an eight-room building. October 28, 1893, it was named the *West Pullman School* building, being located in the thriving suburb of West Pullman. February 24, 1894, it was opened. It has a seating capacity for 432 pupils. The cost was \$33,963.06, and the average membership for June, 1894, was 249.”

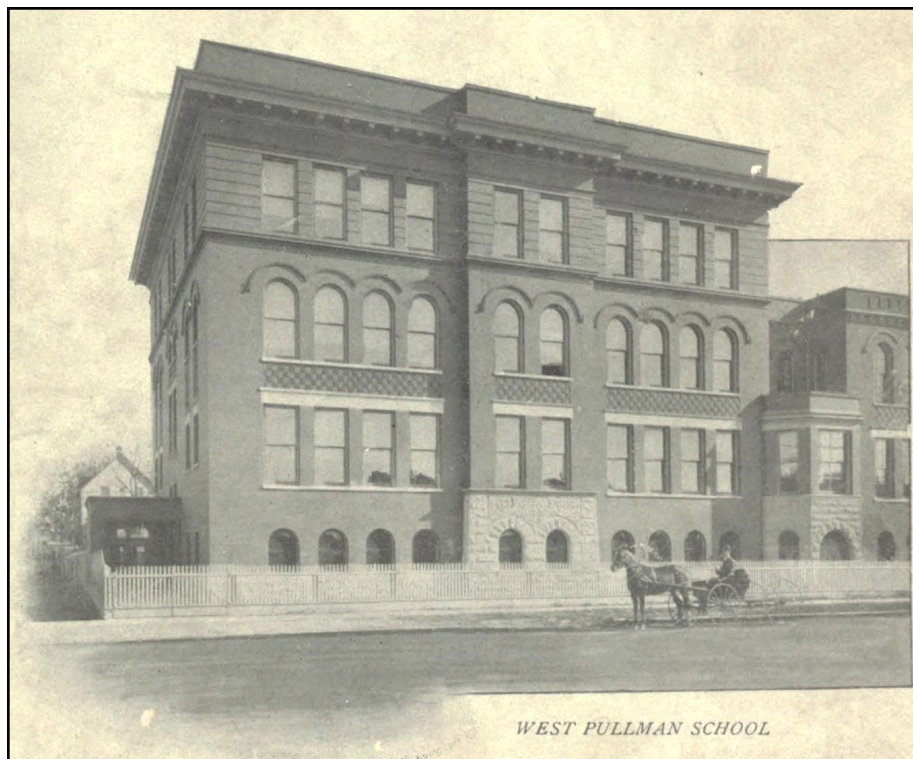
In its first year the West Pullman School served only slightly more than half its capacity and had two classrooms left unused. Within two years, the school was well over capacity with over

550 students. In June of 1896, the West Pullman Business Men's Association petitioned the Board of Education to build "the remaining half of the school building" outlined in Fiedler's original plans, but to no avail and the West Pullman School, like so many schools in Chicago, remained chronically over-crowded.

1900 Addition

A new addition to the West Pullman School became a priority in 1897 with Normond S. Patton's installation as Board architect, but this urgency dissipated after Patton was discharged in 1898. At first, the Board proposed building the missing 8-room twin as specified in Fiedler's original plans. But as demand for more space increased, the board approved the construction of a larger \$43,000, 12-room addition. The structure's design initially followed the plans left by Fiedler, but included a third floor to hold four additional classrooms. In December 1898, William B. Mundie was hired as the new Board architect and was directed to complete several urgent projects, the second most important of which was the addition for the West Pullman School. In his 1899 plan for the West Pullman School addition, Mundie respected Fiedler's Romanesque style design for the long-planned two-story, 8-room school addition, but left his mark on the addition's third floor by designing it in his preferred Classical style with rusticated brickwork, and terra cotta banding and cornice.

Mundie's addition to the West Pullman School was completed in February 1900 and held twenty-two classrooms with capacity for over 1000 students. The first floor featured a flexible space for use as an assembly hall or a gymnasium, and new manual training rooms for trades were included. Additionally, the building provided classroom space for high school students.



The 1900 addition was originally planned to be two-story twin to the original 1894 building. However, additional demand required the construction of a third floor, which was treated with a different architectural style.

West Pullman Land Association, 1900, cover.

1923 Addition

West Pullman Elementary School continued to grow and develop with the community through the 1920s. Board architect John C. Christensen designed a large new addition with eighteen classrooms, a ground floor auditorium, and an upper floor gymnasium. The three-story addition cost \$320,000 and the engineer for the project was John Howatt who later published a history of Chicago's public school buildings in 1946. Outside the school, the playgrounds were expanded to cover nearly the entire block between Parnell and Normal Avenues. Houses were moved or razed, and the block's bisecting alley was vacated.

ARCHITECTS OF THE WEST PULLMAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

W. (William) August Fiedler – Original 1894 Building Architect

Born in Elbing, Germany, **W. August Fiedler (1842-1903)** was educated in architecture before immigrating to the United States in 1871. He worked as an architect in New York City for several years, and then moved to Chicago in 1874 as part of a large influx of architects who saw professional opportunity in the rapidly-growing city.

Once in Chicago, Fiedler (generally known by his middle name August) entered the field of interior design and high-quality furniture and furnishings, first in partnership with John W. Roberts and then by himself as A. Fiedler & Co., "Designer and Manufacturer of Artistic Furniture." Fiedler's clients included many of the city's social elite, with one of his most elaborate interior designs created in 1879 for Samuel M. Nickerson's sumptuous residence at 40 East Erie Street (1883, a designated Chicago Landmark).

During the 1880s, Fiedler formed an architectural firm with John Addison, who was known for his "Modern Gothic" designs. The firm designed grand homes and commercial buildings in Chicago and across the Midwest. One of their best Chicago works was the Germania Club Building at Germania Place and Clark Street (1889, a designated Chicago Landmark). After 1890, Fiedler briefly practiced independently until he was appointed Board of Education Architect in 1893.

Prior to Fiedler's appointment, the position of Architect to the Board of Education had been held by architects who worked on commission rather than for a salary; they were paid a percentage of the cost of each school in compensation for their work. As a result, architects tended to produce standard designs that were not site-specific and could easily be copied across the city, guaranteeing a stream of income without the need for great customization.

However, when Fiedler was hired as Board architect in 1893, he faced a new Board employment system and a growing public desire for unique and site-specific architecture. Fiedler took over design and supervisory roles previously performed by the school board and its staff, and as a result he greatly expanded his drafting and superintendent staff. The resulting professionalism and capacity for closer cooperation between the Board of Education and the Architect's office was an expression of the greater professionalism spreading through architectural practice at the close of the nineteenth century.



Above left: W. August Fiedler around 1880.

Below right: Ad for Fiedler's first Chicago design firm the A. Fiedler & Co., which produced exceptional interior furnishings for some of Chicago's finest homes.

[Wikimedia Commons](#)

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| <p>Office and Manufactory, 24 & 26 Van Buren Street, between Michigan and Wabash Avenues.</p> | <p><i>A. FIEDLER & CO.</i> DESIGNERS AND MANUFACTURERS OF ARTISTIC FURNITURE —AND— INTERIOR DECORATIONS, <i>CHICAGO, ILLINOIS.</i></p> | <p>AUG. FIEDLER. — L. W. MURRAY.</p> |
| <p>This cut represents the treatment of a Library wall, where Book Cases, Mantel and Mirror Frame are connected as one piece, in lieu of single and separate pieces. High Book Cases being necessary to contain all the books.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">VIEW OF LIBRARY INTERIOR.</p> | <p>we choose this design to show how all the space can be utilized, keeping good proportions; thus making a piece which gives a favorable impression, by its conception as a complete thing, without regard to the question of cost.</p> |
| <p><i>In the interest of those who contemplate building, we beg leave to suggest that they confer with us (in case they incline to honor us with a commission for work) in regard to the treatment of the interior, before committing themselves to the old-fashioned ideas of some unstudied architect or mechanic.</i></p> | <p>Where furniture is bought simply to fill a space, without regard to utility or comfort, ready-made furniture will answer, and we are out of the question. But where the furniture is required as an expression of the individuality of a person, and of an advanced taste, where it is indispensable to a refined home, where it is considered the key to harmonious surroundings, then ready-made furniture is out of the question, and it requires knowledge and experience in household art to design it.</p> | <p><i>The furniture in certain rooms in a house is inseparable from the doors, trims, wainscoting, etc., and requires careful study. The execution of the same will depend upon the means of the patron. If limited, it can be made good, but economical; if unlimited, can be made elegant, and at large cost.</i></p> |



Left: Fiedler's Germania Club Building of 1889. The building is a designated Chicago Landmark.



W. August Fiedler designed 58 new schools and dozens of additions for the Chicago Board of Education during his 3 years as board architect. No two schools followed the same plan. Each was designed for its site and neighborhood.

Elizabeth Peabody School (left) at 1444 W. Augusta Blvd. was built in 1894.

Pappageorge Haymes Partners



The Augustus H. Burley School (right), located at 1630 W. Barry St. was built in 1895-1896.

Bauer Latoza



The Richard Yates Public School (left) at 1839 N. Richmond St. was built in 1896.

Bauer Latoza

During his three years as Board architect, Fiedler designed 58 new school buildings and dozens of additions and presided over the most productive period of construction in the school board's history up to that time. Extant examples of the many school buildings that he designed are the Elizabeth Peabody School at 1444 West Augusta Boulevard (a designated Chicago Landmark), Augustus Burley Public School at 1630 West Barry Avenue, the Richard Yates School at 1839 North Richmond Street, the Goethe School at 2236 North Rockwell Street, the West Pullman School, and the Thomas Scanlan School at 11725 South Perry Avenue (also in West Pullman).

William Bryce Mundie – 1900 Addition Architect

Architect **William B. Mundie (1863-1939)** was born in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada and studied at the Hamilton Collegiate Institute and apprenticed for three years with a Canadian architect. In 1884, Mundie immigrated to the United States and to Chicago where he worked as a draftsman for early Chicago architect William Le Baron Jenney, before becoming a partner in Jenney's firm in 1891. Two notable buildings designed by Jenney & Mundie are the Ludington Building (1891) at 1104 South Wabash Avenue, and the now-demolished Horticulture Building at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition.

Mundie served as architect to the Chicago Board of Education for four years starting in 1898. During his term, Mundie designed many new school buildings and additions, the majority of which were executed in the Classical Revival style. His schools include Wendell Phillips Academy High School at 244 East Pershing Boulevard (1904) and the former Sullivan Elementary School at 8255 South Houston Avenue (1902).

Following Jenney's retirement in 1905, Mundie partnered with Elmer Jensen with whom he formed the firm of Mundie & Jensen.

John Charles Christensen – 1923 Addition Architect

John C. Christensen (1879- 1967) was born in Copenhagen, Denmark, and immigrated with his family to the United States at the age of ten. In 1906 he began working as Clerk of the Works in the Chicago Board of Education Architect's Department under the direction of architect Dwight Perkins. During Perkins tenure, Christensen contributed to and oversaw the construction of several of Perkins Arts and Crafts and early Prairie School influenced schools, including the Graeme Stewart School (4524 North Kenmore, 1907, a designated Chicago Landmark), Lyman Trumbull School (1600 West Foster, 1908), and the monumental Carl Schurz High School (3601 North Milwaukee, 1910, a designated Chicago Landmark).

With the exception of a hiatus between 1908 and 1910, Christensen worked as an architect with the Board nearly his entire life. He served as Board architect three separate times – from 1921 to 1924, then from 1926 to 1928, and again from 1931 through the 1950s. During his long career at the Board of Education, Christensen oversaw the construction of dozens of schools and additions, most notably the large Chicago Vocational School (2100 E. 87th Street, 1938).

THE DEVELOPMENT OF WEST PULLMAN

The Chicago neighborhood today known as West Pullman is a combination of several earlier communities, including a subdivision called West Pullman, which were associated and named West Pullman by sociologists at the University of Chicago during the 1920s. The Town of Kensington, one of these earlier communities, was established at “Calumet Junction” following the intersection of new rail lines in 1852 laid by the Illinois Central and Michigan Central Railroads (the junction was located at the current intersection of 119th and Halsted Streets). Irish, German, and Scandinavian immigrants and residents moving westward from the East Coast settled the area during the 1850s. The opening of George M. Pullman’s Palace Car factory and the development of his surrounding factory town of Pullman in 1880 attracted additional investment, new manufacturers, and new settlers to the area.

The Village of Gano, another earlier community, was platted in the 1880s by developers from Cincinnati, Ohio seeking to profit from growing demand for land in the area of Kensington and Pullman. Gano housed many Pullman workers who did not want to live in corporate Pullman-controlled housing. Gano and the surrounding communities of Washington Heights and West Roseland were annexed to the City of Chicago in 1890, which linked them to Chicago’s city utilities, fire and police protection, telegraph and mail systems, and public school system.

In 1891, the West Pullman Land Association (WPLA) purchased a 480 acre tract of farmland primarily west of Wentworth Avenue and south of Gano. WPLA organizers immediately subdivided and organized the land into two general sections: Stewart Ridge, an area of finer homes along a higher, wooded eastern part of the land; and a manufacturing district, which was laid out nearly a mile away from Stewart Ridge as the location for new manufacturing facilities and for the homes of factory workers; land was also set aside for the new West Pullman School. Manufacturers were drawn to the new subdivision both by specific enticements from the WPLA and due to the proximity to Pullman’s existing labor supply. By 1900, seven major companies and several smaller firms were organized within West Pullman, including Sherwin-Williams and International Harvester Company which each built local factories.

According to a 1900 WPLA brochure, the West Pullman neighborhood grew at a faster rate than the City of Chicago itself between 1890 and 1900. While Chicago’s population increased by 54% during this time, the ward that included West Pullman increased by 202%. By 1900, 7,896 inhabitants lived in West Pullman. The WPLA advertised the area as a less congested alternative to living in Chicago, and where, “the laboring people living in their own homes and are contented.” Also, compared to the Pullman neighborhood which was riled by labor unrest during the 1890s, the advertisement for West Pullman went on to claim that, “no strike or serious labor difficulty has ever been known” in the community. Working-class residents built modest frame homes in the West Pullman section of the subdivision, while the more affluent built in the more restrictive and affluent Stewart Ridge section, which occupied the area east of Halsted, along Parnell Avenue, and Wallace and Normal Streets. As development flourished, dozens of new retail stores and commercial business blocks were built along Halsted, 119th, and 120th Streets. The Stewart Ridge passenger rail station stood at the intersection of Stewart Avenue and 119th Street.

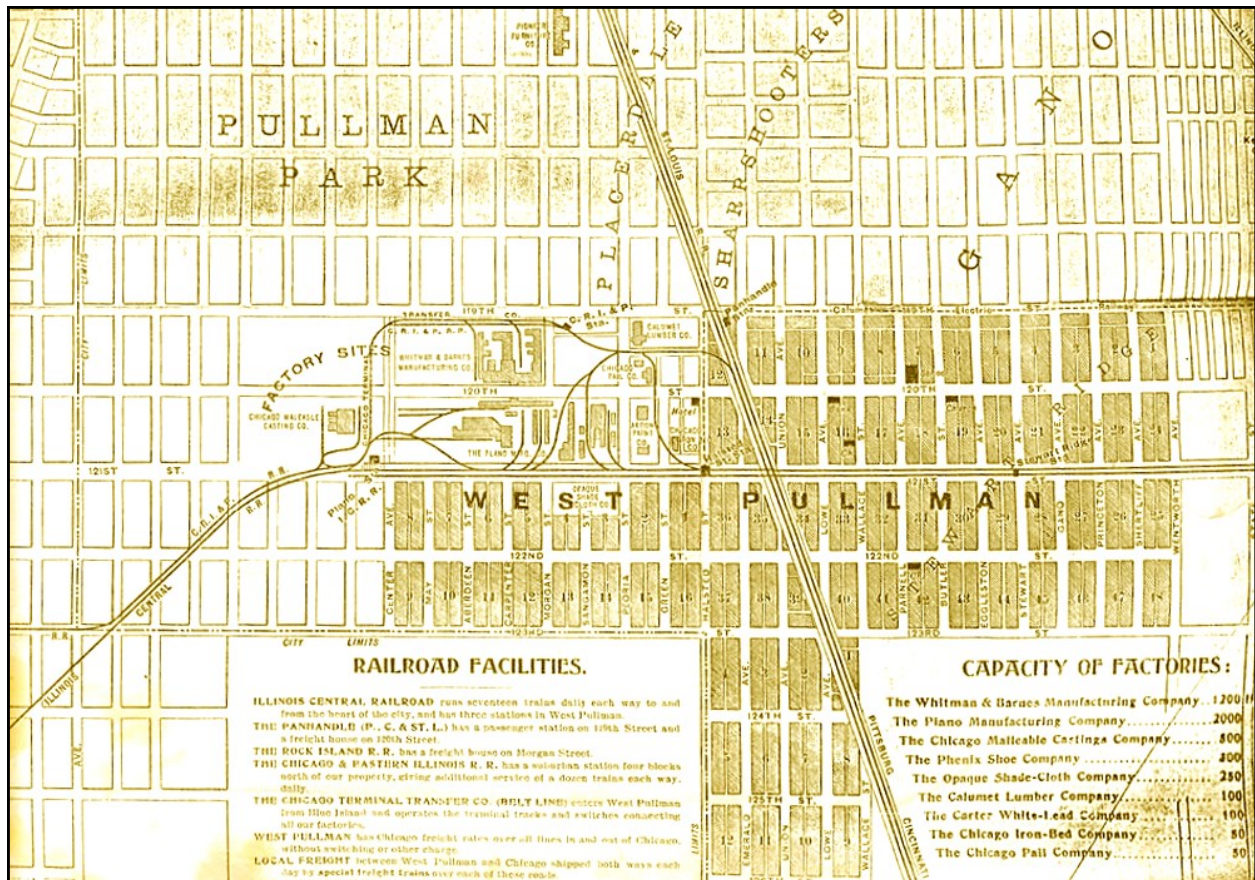


CENTRAL PORTION OF WEST PULLMAN

Looking west from corner of Parrell avenue and 120th street toward factory district beyond Halsted street. The old Morgan farm, of which this was a part, had only one house upon it up to 1892.

This view from the roof of the West Pullman School was published in 1900 by the West Pullman Land Association. It shows dozens of new frame houses lining the blocks immediately west of the school. Between 1890 and 1900 the West Pullman community grew to nearly 8,000 residents.

West Pullman Land Association, 1900, page 2.



Map showing West Pullman's manufacturing district, railroad connections, and Stewart Ridge area, circa 1900. *West Pullman Land Association, 1900, inside cover.*

By the 1920s, the neighborhoods of West Pullman, Stewart Ridge, and Kensington together reached a population of over 20,000, with stores, factories, schools, parks, and several institutions. New waves of immigrants brought Italians, Poles, Hungarians, Lithuanians, and Armenians to the area.

African Americans were wholly excluded from the community both by restrictive housing covenants and by exclusive hiring practices at the local major manufacturing plants such as International Harvester. The area's total population declined during the Depression, but surged again following World War II. Racial restrictions on housing remained until 1962 with the opening of a special subdivision called "Maplewood Park," which finally made homes in the area available to African American buyers. The passage of the Fair Housing Act in 1968 opened the rest of the community to African American residents, but predatory lending, unfair housing practices, and aggressive resistance by existing residents maintained a rigid divide until the 1970s.



Aerial photograph of West Pullman and surrounding neighborhood taken in November 1938. The West Pullman School and its light-colored paved playground is visible in the upper middle of the image. Houses surround the school, with large factories clustered to the west. The Little Calumet River appears at the bottom. *Illinois Aerial Survey, 1938.*

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Section 2-120-690), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a final recommendation of landmark designation for an area, district, place, building, structure, work of art or other object with the City of Chicago if the Commission determines it meets two or more of the stated “criteria for designation,” as well as possesses a significant degree of historic integrity to convey its significance.

The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the West Pullman Elementary School be designated as a Chicago Landmark.

Criterion 1: Example of City, State, or National Heritage

Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois, or the United States.

- The West Pullman Elementary School exemplifies the importance of Chicago’s public schools to the City’s social and cultural history.
- Public education has historically been one of the most important responsibilities of Chicago government, and public school buildings often are architecturally prominent buildings and visual and social anchors in the City’s neighborhoods. Opened in 1894 and expanded in 1900 and 1923, the West Pullman Elementary School was one such institution in the West Pullman neighborhood for more than a century.
- The school building is composed of three unique sections, which illustrate a range of forms and styles that bridge a significant transitional period in the design of public school buildings.
- The West Pullman Elementary School’s physical expansion represents a period of rapid urbanization of Chicago’s periphery at the turn of the twentieth century. Each addition to the school building reflects the growing needs of the West Pullman community as it developed from farmland into a major Chicago neighborhood.

Criterion 4: Exemplary Architecture

Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.

- The West Pullman Elementary School is a handsome example of a public school building, a building type of significance to the history of Chicago and its neighborhoods.
- The building is finely designed and displays excellent examples of the Romanesque Revival and Classical Revival styles between its three sections.

- The building's exterior, with its finely-detailed masonry elevations embellished with decoration in stone, molded brick, terra cotta and decorative metal, exemplifies the fine craftsmanship that defines historic architecture.
- The West Pullman Elementary School reveals a progression in the design of public schools between its three sections. It exhibits the changing prevailing concepts of and innovations in school architecture during the late-19th and early-20th centuries, with its masonry construction, central corridor layout, large windows for ample light and ventilation, and its variety of classroom and assembly spaces.

Integrity Criterion

The integrity of the proposed landmark must be preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and ability to express its historic community, architectural, or aesthetic value.

The West Pullman Elementary School exhibits a high degree of architectural integrity. No major additions or alterations have been made to the building since the historic 1923 addition was completed, leaving historic features, finishes, overall form, footprint, and location of entrances and arrangement of fenestration intact.

The exterior retains its historic brick, limestone, and terra cotta ornament. Other elements including galvanized metal cornices, finials, and other details remain intact. All of the upper level fenestration remains with only a few openings infilled with brick. All window sash have been replaced over time, leaving only a few original transoms above the west elevation entrances, including fanlights above the three auditorium entrances. While some window openings along the east elevation at the basement level have been infilled, the fenestration remains distinguishable and would facilitate the restoration of the windows if required. All exterior doors have also been replaced with non-historic metal doors.

Despite these changes, the West Pullman Elementary School Building continues to express its architectural and historical values as a finely-designed and -crafted public school building. The building exemplifies the significance of public school buildings to the history of Chicago and its neighborhoods. The building's historic integrity is preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and ability to express such values.

SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

Whenever an area, district, place, building, structure, work of art or other object is under consideration for landmark designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks is required to identify the “significant historical and architectural features” of the property. This is done to enable the owners and the public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the historical and architectural character of the proposed landmark.

Based upon its evaluation of the West Pullman Elementary School, the Commission staff recommends that the significant features be identified as:

- All exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the building.



Left: Detail of stonework on the west bay of the 1894 building. The school name is set in raised letters against a foliate background. This design was copied and applied to the 1900 addition.

Right: the north entrance of the 1923 addition is executed in the Classical revival style with an entablature and a frieze bearing the word "Entrance." The doorway is framed in unglazed terra cotta, a material that was used in earlier sections of the school, but was employed most extensively in the 1923 addition.



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Students of West Pullman School planting trees on the school grounds and along Parnell Avenue for Arbor Day 1913.

Blair. "West Pullman School, Chicago." *Illinois Arbor and Bird Days*, (68) 1913. Page 29.

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