



HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY - BUILDING AND STRUCTURES

Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism, One Constitution Plaza, 2nd Floor, Hartford, CT 06103

*** Note:** Please attach any additional or expanded information on a separate sheet.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Building Name (Common) West Hills School - Microsociety Magnet School
 Building Name (Historic) West Hills School
 Street Address or Location 311 Valley Street
 Town/City New Haven Village West Hills County New Haven
 Owner(s) City of New Haven Public Private

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Present Use: Elementary school
 Historic Use: Elementary school

Accessibility to public: Exterior visible from public road? Yes No
 Interior accessible? Yes No If yes, explain During school hours
 Style of building Modernist - Bauhaus - International Date of Construction 1950

Material(s) (Indicate use or location when appropriate):

- | | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clapboard | <input type="checkbox"/> Asbestos Siding | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brick | <input type="checkbox"/> Wood Shingle | <input type="checkbox"/> Asphalt Siding |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fieldstone | <input type="checkbox"/> Board & Batten | <input type="checkbox"/> Stucco | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cobblestone | <input type="checkbox"/> Aluminum Siding |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concrete (Type _____) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cut Stone (Type <u>Random Ashlar</u>) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other <u>Wood Trim</u> | | |

Structural System

- Wood Frame Post & Beam Balloon Load bearing masonry Structural iron or steel
 Other Precast Concrete Joists

Roof (Type)

- Gable Flat Mansard Monitor Sawtooth
 Gambrel Shed Hip Round Other _____

(Material)

- Wood Shingle Roll Asphalt Tin Slate Asphalt Shingle
 Built up Tile Other Rubber membrane

Number of Stories: 1 Approximate Dimensions 60' x 260', 60' x 160', 40' x 180'

Structural Condition: Excellent Good Fair Deteriorated

Exterior Condition: Excellent Good Fair Deteriorated

Location Integrity: On original site Moved When? _____

Alterations? Yes No If yes, explain: window and door replacement, ramps, portable classrooms

FOR OFFICE USE: Town # _____ Site # _____ UTM _____
 District: S NR If NR, Specify: Actual Potential

PROPERTY INFORMATION (CONT'D)

Related outbuildings or landscape features:

- Barn Shed Garage Carriage House Shop Garden
- Other landscape features or buildings: Play fields and asphalt parking areas, stone retaining walls

Surrounding Environment:

- Open land Woodland Residential Commercial Industrial Rural
- High building density Scattered buildings visible from site

• Interrelationship of building and surroundings:

The school is located on a parcel of land that was set aside in the early 1940s when the surrounding area was subdivided for residential development to house returning World War II veterans. The neighborhood forms a coherent example of planning ideas of its time; a suburban-style layout with a mix of small 1- and 2-family dwellings and provision for automobiles.

• Other notable features of building or site (*Interior and/or Exterior*)

The school is a 1-story building, set back from the street behind a terraced playing field. The structure consists of an L-shaped building with classrooms opening from double-loaded corridors. A taller volume at the NW corner of the L contains the gym/multi-purpose room. The west and north wings shelter a south-facing terrace, now covered by added pre-fabricated structures. At the east end of the north wing a short cross-wing contains a single row of rooms including at the ends two kindergarten rooms each with its own outdoor play yard. A paved service court is on the north, enclosed by a stone retaining wall. A row of bicycle racks remains extant from the early years when this was a neighborhood school. Exterior is red brick Flemish bond; large bands of windows light classrooms. The flat roof has an overhanging level soffit on all sides. Decorative touches include gray stone (Ansonia granite) chimney masses at the ends of the kindergarten wing and cast concrete bas-relief sculptures set into the end wall facing the street. A flag-stone terrace with flag pole and ashlar stone retaining walls, forms an overlook onto the play fields.

Architect Joseph DellaValle Builder Fusco Amatruda Company

• Historical or Architectural importance:

See continuation sheet.

• Sources: Brown, Elizabeth Mills; *New Haven: A Guide to Architecture and Urban Design*, Yale U.Press, New Haven, 1976, 228 pp.
 Carley, Rachel D., *Tomorrow is Here: New Haven and the Modern Movement* (Privately printed by the New Haven Preservation Trust, New Haven CT) June, 2008.
 Koyle, George S. FAIA, *American Architects Directory 1st Edition*, American Institute of Architects, Bowker, R.R. C., 1956, p.132.
 Dana Collection, New Haven Museum and Historical Society, v. 58, pp. 34, 54-56.
 New Haven Tax Assessor's Record: Map/Block/Parcel: 402/1183/017, Building Department permit files.
 Wright, Gwendolyn, *USA modern architectures in history*, Reaktion Books, London, 2008, pp. 135-8.

Photographer Charlotte Hitchcock Date 7/29/2010

View Multiple views Negative on File NHPT

Name Charlotte Hitchcock Date 8/07/2010

Organization The New Haven Preservation Trust

Address 934 State Street, P.O. Box 1671, New Haven, CT 06507

• Subsequent field evaluations:

Threats to the building or site:

- None known Highways Vandalism Developers Renewal Private
- Deterioration Zoning Other Renovation Explanation _____

• Historical or Architectural importance:

This West Hills neighborhood represents an example of the community development philosophies which emerged from the New Deal years with the goal of providing healthy living environments for deserving working families (see Inventory form for Valley Street-Victory Drive). The neighborhood school and a community center adjacent to it were connected by several walking paths to cul-de-sacs and playgrounds. The school itself suggests a visual relationship to the Crow Island School in Winnetka, Illinois (Perkins & Will, Eliel & Eero Saarinen, 1940) which was a well-known symbol of school reform in the post-WW II years. The informal horizontality of the complex, with chimney-like vertical accents and bands of windows, contrasted dramatically with the traditional school model, found throughout New Haven, in which rooms were stacked two or three stories high, forming tall imposing monuments. The textured stone and brick, and bas-relief details, suggest a softening of International Style Modernism than began in the 1930s and helped to gain public acceptance. The attention lavished on the kindergarten spaces was emblematic of the more child-centered educational philosophies gaining popularity.

Architect: Joseph Della Valle was a native of New Haven, born in 1892. He studied at Pratt Institute, graduating in 1914. Notable early experience was in the office of Carrere and Hastings from 1920-23. Subsequently he was a principal in his own firm. He designed St. Bernadette's Church and St. Michaels School during the 1930s, and public housing at Brookside in 1952. He was a member of the American Institute of Architects from 1945-1958.



1. Southwest view of west classroom wing, camera facing north.



2. East view of west classroom wing, camera facing west, shows flagpole terrace, stone walls and steps down to play fields.



3. South view of south kindergarten wing and play yard, camera facing northeast.



4. North view of north kindergarten wing and play yard, camera facing southeast.



5. a. East doors, showing original frames and glazing



b. South entry wall with bas-relief tiles.



6. Aerial view from Google Maps <http://maps.google.com/maps> accessed 8/07/2010.



7. Site Plan – from City of New Haven Tax Map 402/1183/017, not to scale, North ↑