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Nat. Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service

United States Department of 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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900A). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Nicolet High School

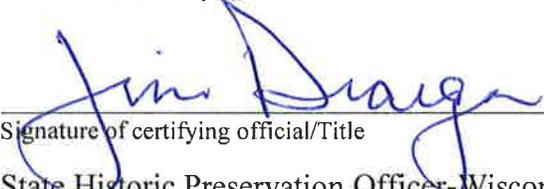
other names/site number West Side High School, Abbot Pennings High School, Pennings Activity Center

2. Location

street & number	111 Third Street	N/A	not for publication
city or town	De Pere	N/A	vicinity
state	Wisconsin	code	WI
county	Brown	code	009
zip code	54115	zip code	54115

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  Statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

  
Signature of certifying official/Title  
State Historic Preservation Officer-Wisconsin

8/17/15  
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  
( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

Nicolet High School

Brown

Wisconsin

Name of Property

County and State

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

entered in the National Register.  
 \_\_\_ See continuation sheet.  
 \_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register.  
 \_\_\_ See continuation sheet.  
 \_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register.  
 \_\_\_ See continuation sheet.  
 \_\_\_ removed from the National Register.  
 \_\_\_ other, (explain:)

*Edson H. Beall*

*10-5-15*

*[Signature]*

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

### 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  
 structure  
 site  
 object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

contributing	noncontributing
1	buildings
	sites
	structures
	objects
1	0 total

**Name of related multiple property listing:**  
(Enter "N/A" if property not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

### 6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)  
EDUCATION/school

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)  
EDUCATION/college

### 7. Description

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS/  
Classical Revival

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls BRICK

roof ASPHALT

other STONE

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Nicolet High School  
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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 the 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.)

Property is:

- 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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture (C)

Education (A)

### Period of Significance

1923 (C)

1923-1958 (A)

### Significant Dates

N/A

### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

Foeller, Schober, & Stephenson

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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### 9. Major Bibliographic References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous Documentation on File (National Park Service):**

- 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 #

**Primary location of additional data:**

- X State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local government
- X University
- X Other:  
Name of repository: Berners-Schober Assoc.

### 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.586 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 16 415040 4922040  
Zone Easting Northing

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

2 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

See Continuation Sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

### 11. Form Prepared By

<b>name/title</b>	Timothy F. Hegglund/ Consultant for St. Norbert College	<b>Date</b>	November 26, 2014
<b>organization</b>		<b>telephone</b>	608-795-2650
<b>street &amp; number</b>	6391 Hillsandwood Road	<b>zip code</b>	53560
<b>city or town</b>	Mazomanie	<b>state</b>	WI

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**Description:**

Nicolet High School is a freestanding, highly intact building that was constructed as a high school to serve students from the west side of De Pere. The building was completed for the West De Pere School District in 1923 in the Neo-Classical Revival style and designed by the Green Bay, Wisconsin architectural firm of Foeller, Schober, and Stephenson, which by that time was northeast Wisconsin's largest and most prominent architectural firm. This three-story, T-plan building measures 157-feet-long (from north to south) by 148-feet-deep (from east to west). The main north-south orientated portion of the building contains the school's classrooms, while the rear wing contains the auditorium/gymnasium.

The building's structure is steel frame and structural clay tile; it has a poured concrete foundation and the walls are of red brick. The building's exterior walls are ornamented with Bedford limestone panels and trim. The limestone is used for the belt courses and cornice which helps to organize the design of the building's facades, it frames the entrances, and is used for window sills as well as the panels on the parapet wall. The tall parapet wall conceals the asphalt-covered roof from view.

The interior of the school building features stair halls at the north and south ends of the building. These halls have floors of terrazzo, and the walls and ceilings are of plaster. Corridor floors are also of terrazzo and here too, the corridor walls and ceilings are of plaster. In addition, the room layout of each story is still largely intact and so are such features of these rooms as their original plaster walls and ceilings, original maple hardwood floors, and some original woodwork and ceiling light fixtures.

Nicolet High School is sited on a prominent, highly exposed one-and-one-half-acre parcel on the west bank of the Fox River in the city of De Pere, which is itself located approximately three miles south of the city of Green Bay, Wisconsin's third largest city.<sup>1</sup> This parcel is adjacent to the west end of the Claude Allouez Bridge, which carries Main Avenue (STH 32) across the Fox River. It is also the only automobile/pedestrian bridge within De Pere's corporate boundaries that connects the east and west sides of the city. The school parcel is bounded by Main Avenue and the west bank of the Fox River on the north, by South Third Street on the west, and by Reid Street on the south. The school building is located at the west end of the parcel, which appears to be mostly flat but actually descends several feet from south to north. Those portions that lie to the front (west) and side (north) of the building are given over to mown lawn and are ornamented with both mature and more recently planted shade trees and shrubs. Those portions that lie to the south and east sides are surface parking lots. Grass covered parkways separate concrete sidewalks from the adjacent streets to the south and west. Additional concrete sidewalks extend to the buildings entrances; with the west entrance featuring a sweeping

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<sup>1</sup> The population of De Pere was 23,800 in 2010.

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semi-circular walkway.

Nicolet High School was constructed with its primary (west) façade facing De Pere's commercial core. This commercial area is now part of the NRHP-listed Main Avenue Historic District, the eastern boundary of which begins on the opposite side of South Third Street across from the school. The remaining land surrounding the school in 1923 consisted of a large residential neighborhood. Since that time the campus of St. Norbert College, which in 1923 was located two blocks further south, has been greatly expanded. Today, the campus occupies all the land from Main Avenue south to Stewart Place and from South Third Street east to the Fox River; this includes all the land to the east and south of the school parcel. All the residential buildings that used to occupy these city blocks have been replaced by campus buildings. South Second Street has since been discontinued, its former north-south route is now a pedestrian walkway that forms one of the principal arterial pathways within the campus grounds. The Nicolet High School's grounds now flow without interruption into the campus grounds that adjoin it to the east.

**Exterior:**

The plan of this school consists of a 157-foot-wide by 79.25-foot-deep, three-story main block that contains the school's classrooms. Perpendicular and to the rear of the main block is the 59-foot-wide by 86-foot-deep, three-story auditorium/gymnasium wing. A description of the exterior of the school building that was published in the local De Pere newspaper just days before the school was dedicated is still valid today, due to the school's high level of integrity. The newspaper reported:

The front of the building faces west and is 157 feet long north to south, and 148 feet deep east to west. The building is built of fireproof construction; three stories high, concrete foundations, some twenty feet deep in ground. The floors throughout are of reinforced concrete. Walls are of brick and clay tile. The exterior is faced with a vitreous surface facing brick, trimmed with Bedford limestone, entrances with carved stone figures and name panels. ... All study and classrooms are lighted from one side only—each room having the maximum glass area of one-fifth its floor area. The light in all cases coming over the left shoulder of students. Auditorium and gymnasium are lighted from two sides.

The building has six exits of such width as to permit of emptying the building in case of panic in two minutes. The main entrances for pupils are on west, south and north sides, at east end will be an automobile drive to a separate entrance for the general public to the gymnasium and

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auditorium so as to do away with the chance of the public wandering through the school proper or class rooms, except on special desired occasions.<sup>2</sup>

West-Facing Principal Facade

The 157-foot-wide principal façade of this building faces west onto South Third Street and it is symmetrical in design and has a five-bay, classically derived composition. The center and end bays project slightly from the wall plane. The ground level of this façade is a raised basement with two stories above. The walls are of brick and a broad limestone belt course encircles the entire building about six-feet above grade (which corresponds to the top of the basement windows). The belt course provides visual separation between the basement and upper floors.<sup>3</sup> A second, narrow limestone belt course that also encircles the building is placed a few feet above, corresponding to the level of the first floor window sills. A much broader paneled limestone cornice encircles the entire building at the level corresponding to the top of the second story windows. This cornice separates the lower stories from the parapet wall above. This brick-clad parapet wall also encircles the entire building and hides the asphalt-covered roof from view.

The main entrance on this side of the school is placed at the ground story of the center bay. Historic photos and original blueprints show that this entrance originally contained a centered pair of doors that were flanked on either side by an additional single door. The lower halves of these four nearly identical doors featured two inset panels while the upper halves contained Craftsman style multi-light windows, the windows of the narrower side doors containing 12-lights and the two slightly wider center doors, 15-lights. Transom lights were placed above these doors, the smaller ones above the two side doors each containing 18-lights, and the one above the two center doors, 42-lights. These doors and windows were all placed within a large rectangular opening, the two center doors were separated from the side doors by narrow pilasters, and the entire opening was then enframed by a limestone-clad decorative surround. Placed just above the belt course on either side of the entrance were almost fully modeled three-quarter-height limestone statues of a boy reading on one side and a girl reading on the other side. A broad inset limestone panel above the entrance featured "Nicolet High School" in raised letters, these words being flanked on either side by the date "1922" in raised numbers (the raised letters and numbers are no longer extant). The doors were accessed by ascending a flight of four concrete steps that were flanked by simple concrete-clad wing walls, and two simple metal hand rails whose designs were identical to the hand rails that were used inside the building. The original doors and transoms have been removed from this entrance, replaced by a pair of modern one-light wood

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<sup>2</sup>"Nicolet High School Up-To-Date In Every Detail." *De Pere Journal-Democrat*, July 26, 1923, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> A classically derived detail that the architects incorporated into the brick-clad wall surface at the basement level is that every sixth course of brick is inset slightly and consists of header bricks, thereby giving this wall surface a subtly rusticated appearance.

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doors flanked on either side by a large one-light window. Above these two windows and the doors are two small and one larger single-light transoms. Fortunately, the concrete steps, the metal hand rails, and the entire limestone surround is intact, including its high relief statuary, and while the name and dates have been removed from the panel, the panel itself is intact.

This entrance is flanked by two tall, narrow, rectangular window openings, one on either side, that originally contained three-light windows that provided light to a small toilet room on the left (north) and a fresh air inlet space on the right (south). Identical windows are located directly above in the first and second stories of the center bay; these windows provided light to two small utility closets on both floors. Placed in between these narrow windows in the first and second stories are three window bays. The bays are slightly recessed for their entire height, terminating at the cornice. The window openings are rectangular, the center opening is slightly wider than the flanking two. Each of the first story's window openings originally contained multi-light, double-hung, steel sash windows, the center having an eight-over-eight-light design and the two flanking windows, a six-over-six-light design. Brick spandrels separate the first story windows in these three bays from those at the second story. These rectangular second story window openings have limestone sills and originally contained triple-hung, multi-light, steel sash windows, the two narrower windows having a six-over-six-over-six-light configuration while the wider middle window had an eight-over-eight-over-eight-light configuration. Today, though, while the window openings are intact, the original windows themselves have since been replaced with modern windows of a different design. This is true of all of the building's windows.

The center bay features, at the parapet, a decorative limestone panel on whose surface are raised festoons and a carved owl that is reading a book. The parapet is further ornamented by a projecting course of soldier bricks along its lower edge where small, square limestone ornamented panels are placed at regular intervals along its length. The upper edge of the parapet is topped with limestone coping.

The wall surface that is located on either side of this façade's projecting center bay, each have six window bays. These twelve window bays are all slightly recessed into the wall surface and have rectangular window openings in each of its three stories. The ground story's openings originally contained six identical eight-over-eight-light, double hung, steel sash windows, while the first and second stories both contained triple-hung, eight-over-eight-over-eight-light, steel sash windows. Here too, these windows have been replaced with modern windows of a different design.

The two projecting bays that are located at the north and south ends of this façade have no openings in them. The encircling belt courses and cornice described earlier carry across these bays; the parapet is ornamented in the same way as the center bay including identical limestone panels decorated with

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festoons and an owl. In addition, the large blank wall surfaces that comprise the first and second stories of these end bays are subtly enlivened by being outlined with very slightly projecting courses of brick, the upper corners of which are ornamented with small, square limestone panels.

North-Facing Side Facade

The north-facing side facade of the school consists of two parts: the 79.25-foot-wide side of the main block, and the 70.75-foot-wide side of the auditorium/gymnasium wing.

Main Block

The portion that is part of the main block is symmetrical in design and seven-bays-wide, with the center bay being slightly projecting. Here too, the ground story of this side is a raised basement, above which are two full stories. Above the basement walls, a broad limestone belt course encircles the building about six-feet above grade and corresponding to the height of the top of the basement windows, visually separating this story from those above. A second, narrow limestone belt course that also encircles the building is placed a few feet above, corresponding to the level of the first floor window sills. A much broader paneled limestone cornice encircles the entire building at the level corresponding to the top of the second story windows. This cornice separates the lower stories from the parapet wall above. This brick-clad parapet wall hides the asphalt-covered roof from view.

The projecting center bay contains the north entrance to the school in its ground story level and although narrower and shorter than the main (west) entrance, is otherwise nearly identical in design. Historic photos and original blueprints show that this entrance originally contained a pair of doors that were flanked on either side by sidelights. The lower halves of these doors featured two inset panels, the upper halves contained Craftsman style 15-light windows, and the flanking side lights each contained 6-lights placed above a single panel. Transom lights were also originally placed above these doors and the sidelights, the smaller ones above the two side lights each containing 4-lights, and the one above the two center doors, 28-lights. These doors and sidelights were all placed within a large rectangular opening, enframed by a large limestone decorative surround. Almost fully modeled three-quarter-height limestone statues of a boy and a girl reading were placed on either side flanking the doors. Above, was a broad, inset limestone name panel. Today, all of the original doors and windows have been removed from this entrance and replaced by a pair of modern one-light doors that are flanked on either side by two-light sidelights, while above these two sidelights and the doors are two small and one larger single light transoms. Fortunately, the entire limestone surround is still intact, including its high relief statuary, and the date panel above is also intact as well.

Placed above this entrance is a single broad bay, slightly inset into the main wall surface. This is the location of one of the school's two main stair halls. As a result, there are three stories of windows

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above the entrance because the windows in each of these stories light the landings of the staircase inside. Brick-clad spandrels separate each of the window groups in this bay from those above and below and these rectangular window openings all have limestone sills. Originally, the lowest of these three window openings contained three nine-light steel sash windows while the two slightly taller window openings in the stories above each contained three six-over-six-light steel sash windows. Today, though, while the window openings are still intact, the original windows have since been replaced with modern windows of different design. The bay has a parapet wall, in the center of which is placed a decorative limestone panel on whose surface are raised festoons and a carved owl that is reading a book. This parapet is further ornamented by a projecting course of soldier bricks placed along its lower edge that has small, square limestone panels bearing a raised square ornament that are placed at regular intervals along its length; the upper edge of the parapet is topped with limestone coping.

To either side of the projecting center bay are four window bays, each slightly inset into the wall surface. All of the windows have rectangular openings. Historic photos show that each of the window openings in these three stories originally contained a triple hung, steel sash, eight-over-eight-over-eight-light window, but here too, all of these windows have been replaced with modern windows of a different design.

**Auditorium/Gymnasium Wing**

The 70.75-foot-wide north side of the school's auditorium/gymnasium wing is five-bays-wide and the four right-hand (west) bays are identical in design, but the far left (east) bay is inset from the other four and has a less ornamented design. This difference in design reflects the different functions inside the wing itself. The left bay is the location of the rear stair hall which serves the auditorium. The four bays to the right constitute the side of the auditorium itself. This left bay contains a single window opening in each of its three stories; the one in its ground level story having originally contained an eight-over-eight, double-hung, steel sash window while those in the first and second stories above contained six-over-six-over-six-light, triple-hung windows.

The other four bays each contain a single rectangular window opening in each of the three stories. Each window bay is separated by a narrow engaged column, each having a limestone base and capital. The height of the capitals correspond to the height of the limestone cornice. The capitals are ornamented with a raised shield motif on which is placed a Greek cross. Because the interior of the auditorium wing consists of just a single large three-story space, its natural lighting requirements differed from those of the main block of the school. As a result, the ground story windows are located higher than on the main block. Each of these ground story window openings originally contained three six-light steel sash windows, the openings in the first story originally contained three six-over-six-light steel sash windows and the shorter openings in the second story originally contained three

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six-light steel sash windows. Here too, all of these windows have now been replaced with modern windows of a different design.

East-Facing Rear Facade:

The 157-foot-wide, east-facing rear facade of the school is also symmetrical in design and has a classically derived composition. The rear of the building is dominated by the 59-foot-wide, three-story back wall of the auditorium/gymnasium wing. Recessed, and to each side of it, are the north and south end bays of the school's main block.

Main Block

The bay to the far right has no openings on it. The encircling belt courses and cornice described earlier continue along this wall, as does the parapet. The parapet is ornamented in the same way as that at the front of the building, having an identical limestone panel decorated with festoons and an owl. In addition, the large blank wall surface is also subtly enlivened by being outlined with very slightly projecting courses of brick, the upper corners of which are ornamented with small, square limestone panels.

The 24-foot-wide wall surface of the main block that is located to the left (south) of this end bay is three-bays-wide. At ground level is a door opening that originally contained a two-panel, fifteen-light door surmounted by a 24-light transom, but which now contains a modern solid door surmounted by a one-light transom. Placed above this door in the first and second story are rectangular window openings, one on each floor, which originally contained a six-over-six-light steel sash window that has now been replaced with a modern window. The original ground level story of the two bays to the right is now obscured by a small one-story, brick-clad addition of later date, having three glass block windows. Above, the original first and second story window openings of these two bays are intact. They originally contained eight-over-eight-over-eight-light, triple-hung steel sash windows that have now been replaced with modern replacements.

The 24-foot-wide wall surface of the main block that is located to the left (south) of the auditorium wing is a mirror image of the equivalent wall surface on the north side of the wing that was described above. This wall surface is also three-bays-wide, and the ground level of its right-hand bay contains a door opening that originally contained a two-panel, fifteen-light door surmounted by a 24-light transom, but which now contains a modern, solid door surmounted by a one-light transom. Placed above this door in the first story is a rectangular window opening that originally contained a six-over-six-light steel sash window that has now been replaced with a modern window, and an identical window is located in the second story above. The original ground level story of the two bays to the left is now obscured by a small one-story, brick-clad addition of later date, having three glass block

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windows. The first and second story window openings in each of these bays are still intact and these window openings are larger than the ones in the right-hand bay and they originally contained eight-over-eight-over-eight-light, triple-hung steel sash windows that have now been replaced with modern sash.

The bay at the far south end is essentially identical to that at the far north end, with one exception: there are two window openings at the first story level. The original windows are not extant and the openings have been obscured with a solid panel. The other details remain the same: there are no other openings; the encircling belt courses and cornice described earlier continue along this wall, as does the parapet. The parapet is ornamented in the same way as that at the front of the building, having an identical limestone panel decorated with festoons and an owl. In addition, the large blank wall surface is also subtly enlivened by being outlined with very slightly projecting courses of brick, the upper corners of which are ornamented with small, square limestone panels.

#### Auditorium/Gymnasium Wing

The rear wall of the 59-foot-wide auditorium/gymnasium wing has two parts. The center part is 43-foot-wide and projects 15-feet from the rear wall. This is the area that contains the stair hall for the auditorium/gymnasium. The eight-foot-wide, east-facing wall surfaces that are located on either side of this stair hall have no openings of any kind. The rear wall of the stair hall has a single, centered bay having the entrance to the auditorium in its ground story and a grouped pair of rectangular windows above, one pair of windows at each story. Four concrete steps lead up to the entrance, which now contains a modern one-light door, while the rest of the opening is in-filled with solid panels.<sup>4</sup> This entrance is enframed by a limestone surround and name panel that is similar to but not quite as elaborate as the ones found elsewhere on the school, although it too has almost fully modeled three-quarter-height limestone statues of a boy and a girl reading placed on either side flanking the entrance. The belt courses, cornice and parapet features are the same as previously described.

#### South-Facing Side Facade:

The south-facing side of the school consists of two parts; the 79.25-foot-wide side of the main block to the right (east), and the 70.75-foot-wide side of the auditorium/gymnasium wing to the left (west). In almost every respect the south side of the building is identical to the north side described earlier with two notable exceptions. Because the land that the school sits on actually slopes down several feet from south to north through the site, the south side of the school is actually several feet shorter than the otherwise nearly identical north side. As a result, this ground level story's eight window openings

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<sup>4</sup> The appearance of the original door or doors that filled this opening is not known but they were probably similar to those at the school's other entrances, which had one or more fifteen-light over two-panel doors surmounted by a multi-light transom.

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are not as tall as those on the north side, and originally contained double-hung, steel sash, six-over-six-light windows rather than the triple-hung, steel sash, eight-over-eight-over-eight-light windows found on the other side. In addition, the door opening and transom located in the ground story of the projecting center bay is slightly taller than those on the north side. Because of the height difference between the two sides, there was only space for two window openings to light the main staircase in the bay above the entrance. Otherwise, the design of the remainder of this side is identical to that of the north side.

**Interior:**

Like the exterior, the interior of the Nicolet High School retains a high degree of integrity. A description of the interior that appeared in the local newspaper just before the school was dedicated in 1923 is still a good description today. The De Pere Journal-Democrat reported:

The interior construction is in keeping with the exterior in design and durability. All stairs are of concrete with slate treads. Corridors throughout and all toilets, locker and shower rooms have terrazzo floors. Auditorium and balconies have concrete finished floors, while all classrooms, study halls, and gymnasium have the very best quality maple top floors on concrete surfaces. The interior trim, such as doors, frames, casings, base boards, etc. are all of select oak in a medium dark dull varnish finish.

The plumbing is of the best quality. Five separate toilet rooms; one for kindergarten, two for grade pupils, and two for high school pupils. Two drinking fountains on each floor. Ample storm sewers conduct the rain water from roofs directly into river, while all other sewage flows through the sanitary city sewer system. A large water main provides water capacity for all the fixtures, as well as stand pipes for six interior fire hydrants fully equipped with hose and nozzles for any fire emergency. Water heater for shower baths is also provided. All piping that conduct the acid water from laboratories is of special acid proof metal. The building is fully equipped with the most efficient artificial electric lighting units obtainable, and electric fire signal and call bell system.

The interior arrangement of rooms as follows: Ground floor—One kindergarten, two grade class rooms, manual training quarters, boiler room, coal room, fan room, toilets, locker and shower rooms, and a spacious gymnasium 56 feet wide and 70 feet long with stage and galleries, of size to accommodate a regular basketball game and 600 to 700 spectators. Gymnasium is 20 feet clear story height.

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The first floor is divided into four grade class rooms, and one open air class room, coat rooms, large study hall, two class rooms for commercial courses, toilets and locker rooms.

The second floor contains the domestic science and sewing rooms, study hall, physical and chemistry laboratories with lecture room between, two teachers' retiring rooms, office consisting of general office, principal's private office and supply room, two lunch rooms, toilets, and a spacious auditorium with galleries and stage, of ample size to accommodate 900 spectators. Separate coat room facilities for public in connection with auditorium.

A well lighted 12 foot wide corridor the full length of building on each floor gives access to all rooms in the building, with wide stairs at each end and center to all exits. The building will accommodate 750 pupils in all classes, including grades, 600 occupants in gymnasium during a basketball game and 900 spectators in auditorium. Provision is made for future additions on both ends to the east to almost any capacity.

The cost of the building, exclusive of equipment, is approximately \$130,000.00. The building covers an area of 14,398 square feet, has a floor area of 42,000 square feet, and a total cubage of 685,000 feet.<sup>5</sup>

Much of the school's original interior that is described above is still intact today and is still being used for something like its original purpose. Students entering the school today via the South Third Street main entrance ascend a flight of stairs that takes them directly to the first story, those entering through the north entrance enter directly into the ground level story, and those that enter via the south entrance enter at a half story level and have the choice of either descending to the ground level story or ascending to the first story. The stairs are the same concrete with slate treads that the school's first students used and the plaster walls and ceilings of the stair halls are also the same. Likewise, the hall corridors that are used to get to the building's various rooms still have their original terrazzo floors and plastered walls, although the hall corridor ceilings and also many of the classroom ceilings have now been covered with acoustical tiles. In addition, many of the school's original classrooms still retain their original maple flooring and plaster walls, and some even retain their original blackboards and associated wood trim.

Not surprisingly, though, many of the other original interior features that were described in the 1923 description quoted above have been changed over the years. Most of these changes occurred in 1959, when the school was updated to house the Abbot Pennings High School, or else in 1990, when the school building was taken over by St. Norbert College. For instance, some of the original maple

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<sup>5</sup> "Nicolet High School Up-To-Date In Every Detail." *De Pere Journal-Democrat*, July 26, 1923, p. 1.

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flooring in the classroom spaces is now either carpeted or covered with other materials in rooms that are used for laboratory work. In addition, many of the school's original blackboards have now been replaced with modern bulletin boards and new metal student lockers have since been placed in the corridors. Other changes include the removal of almost all of the building's original built-in cabinetry, which was replaced with blonde wood cabinetry of more modern (late 1950s era) design. At the same time, almost all of the school's original nine-light-over-two-panel wood classroom doors were removed and were replaced with the three-light wood doors that are still in place today. In addition, the original crown molding trim and the window and door trim sets in the classrooms were also removed at this time and were not replaced, and almost all of the original lighting in the classrooms and in the corridors was replaced at this time as well.

Remarkably, most of the school's original floor plan is still intact. Comparing floor plans from 1923 and 1959 makes it clear that when the school changed ownership the original floor plan was still viable and it continues to be viable today. Some rooms that were divided by partitions originally had these partitions removed in 1959, while others that had not previously been partitioned had new partition walls put in place. For the most part, though, the 1923 room arrangement was left intact and most of the partitions that were added to the rooms subsequently do not extend from floor to ceiling and are readily removable.

In addition, the interior of the school's auditorium/gymnasium is still largely intact. This very large room has a rectangular plan, a concrete floor, plaster walls, and a ceiling that still retains most of its original 1923-vintage hanging light fixtures, although the ceiling itself has now been covered in acoustic tiles. There is also a large raised stage and accompanying backstage inset into this room's west wall. This stage's proscenium opening is encircled by plaster ornamentation and the stage itself also still retains its original maple flooring. Also intact is the gallery that encircles three sides of this room. This gallery has a floor of concrete and has solid balustrades, and while walls have since been built that enclose the gallery space on the room's north and south sided, these walls are of temporary construction and are removable.

**Integrity:**

The changes that have been made to the exterior of the school over the years have been limited to the replacement of its original windows and doors and to the construction of two small one-story additions on either side of the gymnasium. In addition, while numerous changes have been made to the interior of the school over the years, the original design is largely intact and many of the original interior design elements are also intact. It is also believed that the later changes to the interior may be significant in themselves because they document changes in the community that the school served and changes in educational policy that have occurred over the lifetime of the school. These alterations are

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not serious enough to affect the overall integrity of the building and the fact that detailed original blueprints of the building are extant and in the hands of the original architects means that exact replacements for the building's original features can be recreated if desired.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Nicolet High School/Abbot Pennings High School Blueprints. Green Bay: Berners-Schober, Assoc., Company Archives, Stick No. 361-M.

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**Significance:**

The Nicolet High School was built on the west side of the city of De Pere in 1923 as a modern replacement for an earlier high school building, which had been built in 1877 and expanded in 1898. Nicolet High School is now the west side's only surviving pre-World War II public school building. Designed in the Neo-Classical Revival style by the prominent Green Bay, Wisconsin architectural firm of Foeller, Schober, and Stephenson, the brick clad, three story building cost \$140,000.00 to construct. This architectural firm was known for school design having designed an elementary school for the west side of De Pere in 1901 as well as many schools located in nearby Green Bay and in other communities throughout northeast Wisconsin. Once completed, the school was used for its original purpose until 1958, by which time the needs of De Pere's rapidly increasing west side student population could no longer be met by its existing building. Consequently, Nicolet High School was sold to the Norbertine Order of the Roman Catholic Church, whose St. Norbert College campus in De Pere was located just one block to the south of the high school, and a new, much larger west side public high school was then built to replace it.

The timing of this sale was excellent because by 1958 the private Catholic high school for boys that the Norbertine Fathers had conducted in one of the St. Norbert College's buildings for more than thirty years was in dire need of larger quarters. The former Nicolet High School was slightly remodeled and then reopened as Abbot Pennings High School in 1959. Abbot Pennings High School continued as a high school until June of 1990, at which time the school was merged with other schools in the Green Bay diocese. Subsequently, the high school building was purchased by St. Norbert College, renamed the Pennings Activity Center, and is currently used for classes and various administrative functions. The Nicolet High School building is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) for its local significance under National Register (NR) Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an excellent example of a school in the Neo-Classical Revival style. It is also locally eligible under NR Criterion A in the area of Education as the only remaining public school constructed on the west side of De Pere prior to 1958, representing the history of public education in the community.

**Methodology**

Research designed to assess the school's potential for eligibility under Criteria C and A was undertaken using the areas of Architecture and Education, themes identified in the State of Wisconsin's Cultural Resource Management Plan (CRMP). This research centered on evaluating the school by utilizing the Neo-Classical Revival style subsection of the Architectural Styles and the Secondary Education subsection of the Education study units of the CRMP.<sup>7</sup> The results of this research are detailed below and demonstrate that the Nicolet High School is locally significant under

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<sup>7</sup> Wyatt, Barbara (ed.). *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin* (3 vols.). Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Division of Historic Preservation, 1986, Vol. 2, (Architecture) pp. 2-18-19; Vol. 3, (Education) pp.3-1 – 3-12.

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NR Criterion C, as an excellent, representative, highly intact Neo-Classical Revival style high school building, and as an excellent example of the work of its designers, the important Green Bay architectural firm of Foeller, Schober, and Stephenson. The period of significance, 1923, coincides with the year the school building was completed.

Nicolet High School is also locally significant under NR Criterion A in the area of Education as the only remaining building constructed as a public school on the west side of De Pere prior to 1958 and because it is the physical embodiment of the early history of public education on the west side of De Pere. The period of significance, 1923-1958, reflects the period between when the building opened and when it finally closed as a public high school.

**History:**

A general history of the city of De Pere and its built resources is included in the *City of De Pere Intensive Survey Report*, written in 2001.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, the historic context that follows deals primarily with the history of Nicolet High School and the surrounding area.

Like most other early Wisconsin communities, the city of De Pere owes its existence to its proximity to water, which provided the state's first settlers with transportation routes, a reliable and easily accessible source of water for drinking, and the only readily available means of generating power for industrial purposes before steam power became wide spread. De Pere is situated on both banks of the Fox River at a point located some five miles south of the mouth of the river, which empties into Green Bay and Lake Michigan. Because there was a considerable rapids at this location, further navigation upstream was impossible in the days before a lock system and canals were developed.

The city of De Pere has the distinction of being one of the oldest points of European-American settlement in Wisconsin. The first European to see it was, in all probability, Jean Nicolet in 1634, who claimed the surrounding territory for France. In time, Nicolet was followed by two Jesuit missionaries, Fathers Allouez and Andre, who established a mission at the first rapids of the Fox River in 1670. In 1671 the fathers erected a chapel and residence on the east shore of the river, which became their headquarters, and were the first buildings constructed here. In 1675 this chapel burned and several new, more substantial log structures, including a church, were built in its place. This mission, known as St. Francis Xavier Mission at Rapids des Peres, lasted for almost twelve years but was burned by the Indians in 1687. The history of this place was then subsumed into the larger history of the French and English contests for regional supremacy followed by a similar contest between the English and

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<sup>8</sup> Heggland, Timothy F. *City of De Pere Intensive Survey Report*. De Pere: City of De Pere, 2001.

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Americans.<sup>9</sup>

It was not until the creation of the Military road system in 1832 that interest in utilizing the rapids at De Pere began. The construction of the first of these roads from Fort Howard on the Fox River at Green Bay to Fort Crawford on the Mississippi River at Prairie Du Chien, brought wagon and foot traffic up and down the river and past the site that was to become De Pere. But this opening up of the region by road was of limited value to any economically significant movement of goods. Hopes fastened instead on improving the Fox River, which was navigable for much of its length but needed to be linked with the Wisconsin River in order to become a link between the Mississippi and the Great Lakes.

While work was commencing to develop the Fox-Wisconsin rivers waterway, others were laying claim to the heavily forested land that once surrounded De Pere. In 1835, the De Pere Hydraulic Co. was formed and one of its first acts was to purchase a 100 acre plat of land on the east bank of the river abutting the rapids. A portion of this land was then platted into lots, which was called the Plat of the Town of De Pere, a contraction of the French "Des Peres."

The following year the company started construction of a dam above the rapids to tap the water power potential of the river. When the dam was completed in 1837, the future growth of the city seemed assured. This growth did not materialize immediately because the company lacked the resources to harness the water power potential and the situation was exacerbated when the dam washed out in 1847. It was only when a new dam was built in the following year that substantial efforts were made to harness the river for water power for industrial purposes. It is from this date that measureable growth of the city began.

By 1850 the population of De Pere had grown to 500. The same year the first bridge across the river, just below the dam, was constructed. This was a toll bridge and although lightly constructed it provided a vital transportation link whose importance would continue to grow in the years to come.

In 1852, Chicagoan Robert Ritchie and his brother-in-law, Andrew Reid, built a saw mill (non-extant) at the west end of the bridge and three years later Capt. Elias Sorenson started a shipyard (non-extant) on the west bank of the river north of the bridge. The following year, a saw mill and agricultural implement factory (non-extant) was started by W. O. Kingsley just south of the bridge on the east bank of the river. The really big news in 1856, however, was the arrival of the first ship to make the voyage up the newly completed lock and canal system of the Fox and Wisconsin Rivers. This was the "Aquila," which had begun its journey in Pittsburgh, traveled west on the Ohio River, then north on the Mississippi River to

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<sup>9</sup> Maes, Matthew J. *The History of Brown County and De Pere, Wisconsin*. *Brown County Democrat*: April 3, 1914, p. 9 and April 10, 1914, p. 9.

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the Wisconsin River, continuing to Portage, Wisconsin, and then on to the Upper and Lower Fox Rivers to De Pere and Green Bay.<sup>10</sup>

The following year, Mrs. A. B. Williams reported that De Pere had improved since she had left in 1850. "The population all told was about 400. Wilcox & Wager had a flouring mill. There were two saw mills, one owned by Ritchie and Reid and the other by Frank Thompson; four stores kept by Dominicus Jordan, C. R. Merrill, Mr. Kelsley and Mr. Wager, respectively."<sup>11</sup> Also in 1857, the community on the east bank of the river was incorporated as the Village of De Pere.

Proximity to the Fox River was the critical factor in the establishment of both of these communities. The mouth of the Fox River empties into Green Bay which leads to Lake Michigan. De Pere is located five miles south of this mouth at a place on the river where sizable rapids made further navigation upstream impossible in the early 1800s. This was also a time when shipping on nearby Lake Michigan was the only reliable means of transporting large quantities of goods and large numbers of people to and from the area before adequate overland roads and railroads were developed. Consequently, that portion of the river between these rapids and Lake Michigan gradually developed into an essential Great Lakes port. More importantly, the rapids of the Fox River at De Pere were a vital source of water power in the area in the 1840s-1860s. It was thus the logical place for the construction of a dam and saw mills, flour and grist mills, and other industries that could make use of the power generated by mechanically harnessing the flow of the river.

The combination of transportation access and readily available water power made the communities on both sides of the rapids economically viable and facilitated their growth. It also resulted in the development of commercial districts at both ends of the bridge and along the main roads that accessed these areas. The most important of these roads on the east side of the river was Broadway. What made this particular road important was that it was already the principal road north to Green Bay from points south. And as such, when the first bridge was constructed, its intersection with Broadway created a convenient commercial core.

Similar development occurred at the west end of the bridge for identical reasons. Here too, several existing and newly created roads quickly came to focus on the area near the end of the new bridge. The most immediately important of these roads was Main Avenue, and what made this particular thoroughfare important was that its eastern terminus was the west end of the bridge. Consequently, commercial development grew around this point, and along the three-block length of Main Avenue.

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<sup>10</sup> Maes, Matthew J. "The History of Brown County and De Pere, Wisconsin." *Brown County Democrat*, July 10, 1914, p. 10.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, February 12, 1915, p. 7.

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The period from the end of the Civil War in 1865 until the financial panic of 1873 was a boom period for the communities on both sides of the river. By 1870, the census showed that the population of De Pere on the east side of the river had risen to 2,800 and on the west side to 875. As a consequence, the community on the west side petitioned to be incorporated as the Village of West De Pere, which was approved in that same year.

In 1871, the Village of De Pere received a railroad of its own when the Milwaukee Northern Railroad (later the Milwaukee Road) reached the community on its way to Green Bay. As had happened on the west side, property owners responded with a flurry of platting activity of their own. A Bird's Eye View of the two villages, published in 1871, shows that the Village of De Pere (east of the river) was bounded by the river to the west, Fulton Street to the north, Huron Street to the east, and Chicago Street to the south. The settled portion of West De Pere was bounded by the river on the east and north, the C. & NW RR tracks on the west, and Butler Street to the south. Both communities had public schools, there were six churches (Irish, French, and German Catholic, Methodist, Congregational, and Presbyterian), three hotels (California House, National House, and Village House), and three large industries (De Pere Iron Works, Fox River Iron Co., and First National Iron Co.).<sup>12</sup>

The growth of these two communities was accompanied by a rapid increase in the number of school age children and the creation of schools to serve them. The first classes were held in private homes or business places; it was not until 1858 that a building was constructed exclusively for school purposes. In that year a stone schoolhouse (non-extant) was built on the east side of the river on the corner of James and Wisconsin streets in the Village of De Pere. The first school on the west side of the river was in the Town of Lawrence, a small frame building built in 1857 on land donated by Louis Scheuring on the corner of River Road and Scheuring Street known as the Scheuring School. This was followed, in 1865, by the construction of the first school building in the Village of West De Pere. The school was a two-story frame building that was generally known as the Lawtontown School (non-extant) located on the northwest corner of Eighth and Oak streets. It was not long, however, before larger schools were needed in both villages.<sup>13</sup>

By 1875, the villages of De Pere and West De Pere had evolved into the principal trading center for the area. The two well-established business cores were both surrounded by residential plats. In 1876, the following description of De Pere was contained in an advertisement for land that was owned by the De Pere Co.

The waterpower is made by the first dam on the Fox River of the Green Bay & Mississippi Canal

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<sup>12</sup> *Bird's Eye View of De Pere, Wisconsin*. Madison: J. J. Stoner, publisher, 1871.

<sup>13</sup> Maes, M. J. "History of West De Pere School District." *De Pere Journal-Democrat*, July 26, 1923, Section 2, pp. 1, 16.

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Company. Depere [sic] and West Depere [sic] lie on opposite sides of the river, and are connected by a commodious bridge of fifteen hundred feet in length. Their population numbers over four thousand people. There are eight churches, three public and one private school; four furnaces for smelting iron ore; one extensive railroad car manufactory and iron works; one machine shop; three flour mills; two large wooden ware factories; three shingle mills; four saw mills; two sash and door factories; one stave factory; one hub and spoke factory; five wagon ships; seven smitheries; a steam forge and various other manufactories. The Milwaukee and Northern Railroad runs on the river bank through Depere, [sic] and the Chicago and Northwestern Depot is at West Depere [sic]. The Goodrich line of steamers make regular trips between Depere [sic] and Chicago, and the Buffalo line takes freight from our wharves to Buffalo and intermediate ports.<sup>14</sup>

Among the three schools mentioned above was a brick school house in west De Pere that had been built in 1874 on the southeast corner of Butler and South Fourth streets. This building began as an elementary school but beginning in 1877, high school classes were also conducted in the building. Once this building was put into operation, the old Scheuring School was discontinued, and the new school, West De Pere's first high school, would continue in operation until 1923, when the building that is the subject of this nomination was built.

And yet, even during this prosperous period, larger forces were then in operation that would have a substantial affect on the future of the two villages. By 1880, the combined populations of the nearby twin cities of Green Bay and Fort Howard (also located on the east and west sides of the Fox River) was 10,500, more than double the 3,824 of the two De Peres, and this difference in relative size has continued until the present day. The reasons for this difference in size and rate of growth reflected many things, of course, and among them was the simple fact that the initial advantages that had led to the creation and subsequent growth of De Pere had slowly dwindled. By 1880, De Pere's water power advantage was gradually being offset by the construction of new coal-fired steam boilers. Green Bay also reaped the advantage of being the final destination point of all the land and water transportation routes that passed through De Pere. In addition, Green Bay's position at the mouth of the Fox River gave it advantages as a port that could not be matched by a site further upstream. As a consequence, the rate of De Pere's population growth gradually began to level off. Nevertheless, the growth that had occurred up to this point was sufficient to ensure that the commercial cores that had been established in the two villages would survive and would continue to grow and evolve.

In 1883, the two villages were incorporated as the City of De Pere (east side) and the City of Nicolet (west side). Nicolet subsequently changed its name back to West De Pere in 1887. The two cities agreed to merge on August 7, 1889, and became known as the City of De Pere. By 1900, De Pere's overall

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<sup>14</sup> Maes, Matthew J. "The History of Brown County and De Pere, Wisconsin." *Brown County Democrat*, March 5, 1915, p. 10.

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population had dropped slightly to 4,038, and the city was entering a more mature phase of its history. Changes in the lumber industry that had previously been of such importance to De Pere were dictating that certain kinds of manufacturing that had once been done in factories like those in De Pere could now be done more efficiently in plants located nearer to the forests themselves, forests that had largely been depleted in Brown County. In addition, other types of manufacturing that had once been done in the city were now being done by much larger firms with regional and even national markets. As a result, industrial production was slowly losing its importance in the economic life of the city.

**Education:**

One of the most interesting features of the public school system in De Pere is that while many other aspects of city government were joined when the twin cities of De Pere and West De Pere merged in 1890, the two sides continued to maintain separate school systems. On the east side of the river, for instance, the original stone 1858 school building became the East Side High School and it remained in operation as such until 1899, when a new high school (non-extant) designed by Van Ryn and DeGellke of Milwaukee was built on the corner of South Broadway and Merrill Street. A new east side grade school was constructed on the northwest corner of George and North Michigan streets in 1899 (non-extant). On the west side, during the same period, an addition was added onto the High School building in 1898 and a brick elementary school (non-extant) known as the Fourth Ward or Lincoln School, was built in 1901 on the northeast corner of Main Avenue and Tenth Street. As a consequence of the latter action, the frame Lawtontown School was discontinued and the building was moved from the corner of Oak and Eighth streets to the northwest corner of Oak and Ninth streets. It was converted into a tenement and it is now believed to be either non-extant or greatly altered. There was still cooperation between the two school districts when the necessity arose, however.

Owing to the lack of accommodations in the East Side High School prior to the construction of their new building [in 1899], many entered as tuition students in the already well filled West De Pere High School. This necessitated the enlarging of our [west side] building and an extension to the east wing was made in 1898.<sup>15</sup>

De Pere's population increased from 4,038 to 4,477 between 1900 and 1910 and the prosperity of the city gradually plateaued in the subsequent decade. However, most of the building activity that took place in the city during the 1910s was residential construction and this growth was accompanied by an increase in the numbers of school age children on both sides of the river. By 1920, De Pere's population had risen to 5,165 and as a consequence, both school districts began looking toward the

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<sup>15</sup> Maes, M. J. "History of West De Pere School District." p. 16.

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future and a time when their existing school buildings would need to be replaced. As described in the *History of West De Pere School District*:

In 1912 the [west side] district bought of J. S. Chase the present [1923] "Nicolet High School" site on Third street between Main avenue and Reid streets, on which the construction of a new high school building was commenced in 1922.

It was on this site that Andrew Reid, (for whom the street running along the south side of the property was named) in 1852, built the first manufacturing plant on the west side. It was a sawmill to which subsequently was added a planing mill. The plant was destroyed by fire in 1874 and a brick building was erected on the site for the manufacture of sash, doors, and blinds.

Upon coming into the possession of the school district this building was torn down and the materials sold.

In 1921 the east and west side districts, both in need of better schools, appointed a conference committee to see what could be done towards the consolidation of the two school districts and the erection of a Union High School. The conference failed, whereupon the west side proceeded to build a new high school building of their own.<sup>16</sup>

The west side's new school was the same Nicolet High School that is the subject of this nomination.

Planning for the new school began shortly after the failure of the consolidation conference. As was noted above, the west side district already possessed a fine site on the corner of Reid and South Third streets at the west end of the Fox River Bridge. Late in 1921, plans for a new building on this site were prepared by the Green Bay architectural firm of Foeller, Schober, and Stephenson, the same firm that had designed the west side's Lincoln School in 1900.<sup>17</sup> Construction of the new high school, which was named for Jean Nicolet, began in 1922 and it was completed in early July of 1923 at a cost of \$140,000.00. A few days prior to the school's dedication, which occurred on July 30, 1923, the following editorial praising the new building and those responsible for it was printed in the local newspaper:

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid. During the same period, the growth of the city also necessitated the creation of a new east side high school, the first unit of which was begun in 1922. This was a large Collegiate Gothic structure that was added on to the already existing 1899 high school building. Subsequently, the 1899 building was demolished and more additions were added to the 1922 building in 1938 and 1952. The substantial building that resulted is extant and in use today as a middle school (615 South Broadway). It was expanded again and further modernized in 2001.

<sup>17</sup> "Soon Ready To Start New High School." *De Pere Journal-Democrat*, January 26, 1922, p. 1.

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Monday, July 30 will be a red letter day in the annals of School District No. 2 of West De Pere, marking as it does the dedication of their new high school building, to known as Nicolet High School. The building, modern in its construction and up-to-date in its equipment, stands as a monument of the public spirit of the voters of the district and of their due appreciation of the value of education, as the new school will present to the young people additional and superior facilities and advantages that could not be offered in the old building.

Great credit is due to the members of the School Board, who were instrumental in bringing about the erection of the structure, as well as members of the Building Committee, who spared neither time nor effort in seeing to it that the funds, placed at their disposal, were wisely expended. These men were actuated by unselfish motives; they had in mind only the present and the future educational needs of the district, and performed their task in a manner that entitles them to well-merited felicitations.

May this new temple of learning fulfill the mission to which it is to be dedicated, and may it send forth from its wall in the years to come, young men and women, imbued with lofty ideals of citizenship, appreciative of the sacrifices necessary to make the institution a reality, and impressed with their duties and responsibilities toward the city, state, and nation.<sup>18</sup>

Following the dedication of the school at the end of July, the interior was equipped with the necessary furnishings and the school was then ready for the start of the new school year.<sup>19</sup> West De Pere's new school was built at a time when the design of the nation's public schools was receiving a great deal of attention from both the professional educational community and from architects. The huge surge in population that the country experienced in the preceding decades created a great need for new and larger schools. This need was also fueled by the nation's increasing acceptance of the merits of universal education. In addition, schools, and high schools in particular, were increasingly being asked to provide more in the way of education than just the traditional reading, writing and arithmetic. By 1920, high schools were expected to provide facilities in which the physical sciences could be taught, the domestic sciences and the manual arts could be practiced, and the fine arts encouraged. Achieving these goals, though, meant that schools increasingly needed specialized classrooms as well as the general classrooms that had sufficed in the past. As a result, schools were becoming increasingly complex and this led both teachers and architects to seek a better, more sophisticated understanding of what comprised good school design.

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<sup>18</sup> "Nicolet High School Dedication." *De Pere Journal-Democrat*, July 26, 1923, p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> The following year, 1924, sidewalks were laid in and around the school and an additional lot was purchased and added to its grounds.

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De Pere, Brown County, Wisconsin

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One result of this search was the establishment of standards for school design, provided by the National Education Association's Committee on Standardization of Schoolhouse Planning and Construction, a group created by the National Education Association (NEA) just after the end of World War I. The task of this committee, which was made up of both architects and educators, was to establish basic standards that architects could use as a guide when creating designs for schools. The impetus for doing so came from the shared realization that the times called for both new school designs and new school curriculums. The results of this study were compiled in a massive book and published in 1921 entitled *School Architecture: Principles and Practices*. In it, all aspects of school design were examined and assessed, and examples illustrating the best current practices were provided. In the concluding chapter, its author described the challenges that both educators and architects were then facing:

The world war has accelerated the general trend toward a more flexible educational system. The educator considers his work from a new point of view. The old-fashioned formal program, with its stereotyped methods, was the inevitable product of an age that demanded that pupils in a given grade should, on a given day, recite practically the same lesson in standard graded schools from coast to coast.

That old method is giving way to a new one, one which considers the pupil who have only a few school years in which to prepare for his life's work. Universalism in education is yielding to individualism, the educational program which caters to the individual child.

The increasing flexibility of educational courses, the changes which this imposes upon school design, and the economic pressure, all emphasize the imperative need of basic or fundamental standards in schoolhouse planning.<sup>20</sup>

The standards that were recommended by the Committee covered many things including the ideal proportion of space that should be allocated to administrative space, instructional space, stairs and corridors, walls and partitions, and accessory space, among others. Nicolet High School was an excellent representative example of the kind of building that was designed with these new, modern standards in mind. The school was designed to accommodate these features, including but not limited to, a library, nurses office, cafeteria and kitchen, science lab, domestic science room, art room, gymnasium and locker rooms, and an auditorium.

Nicolet High School continued to serve De Pere's west side high school students for another thirty years. By 1950, De Pere's population had risen to 8,146 and by the end of the decade was nearing

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<sup>20</sup> Cooper, Frank Irving. "Standards of Schoolhouse Planning." In: Donovan, John J. and Others. *School Architecture: Principles and Practices*. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1921, p. 569.

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10,000 and once again both sides of the city found themselves having to address the shortcomings of their existing school facilities. Matters approached resolution when, in early March of 1957, the West Side District's electors voted to sell the Nicolet High School to the Norbertine Fathers, who operated St. Norbert Roman Catholic College and a high school for boys on the west side of De Pere. The \$185,000 in proceeds were used to launch the building program of a new public high school to be built on the west side of the river. The announcement of this decision was accompanied by an explanation of the problems that the district was facing as it tried to utilize the existing Nicolet High School building for its rapidly expanding enrollment.

Howard C. Lewis, principal of Nicolet high school, explained the inadequacies of the present building at the request of Harley Stowe, school board president. "This fall, 125 freshman enrolled," Lewis said. "We will enroll in high school by 1965 double the present enrollment. In terms of numbers alone, this building is no longer adequate." Lewis pointed out that the laboratories, kitchen facilities and library were inadequate, and that the gymnasium was too small. "We're a team without a home floor," Lewis said. The principal also pointed out that the school had no hot lunch program for lack of space, and that the music department had no quarters.<sup>21</sup>

Fortunately, what was no longer adequate for the public school population of the West Side District was a major improvement over the current quarters of the parochial high school for boys that the Norbertine Fathers operated on the nearby St. Norbert College campus. In 1957, the city's male Catholic high school students were housed in Francis H. Boyle Hall (extant) on the campus, this being a four-story Neo-Classical Revival style building that had been built for the College in 1917 and which originally housed classrooms, dorm rooms, a recreation area, a convocation center, and staff living quarters. In 1932, the upper two stories of Boyle Hall were repurposed to serve as a high school for the city's increasing Catholic high school population; this usage continued until 1957 by which time continuing growth necessitated new facilities.

The Norbertine Fathers' purchase of the Nicolet High School building meant that for the first time De Pere's Catholic high school students had a building of their own. It was decided to name the new school for Abbot Pennings, the leader of the order who first brought the Norbertines to De Pere in 1896. The acquisition was accompanied by a diocese-wide \$258,000 fund-raising drive to finance the purchase and necessary renovations to the building.

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<sup>21</sup> "Nicolet School Sold To SNC For \$185,000 At Special Meeting." *De Pere Journal-Democrat*, March 7, 1957, p. 1.

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Essential renovations, which include new classroom equipment and major alterations in the lighting and heating systems, are estimated at \$100,000. Hence, the total cost of putting the new school into operation would be \$258,000.<sup>22</sup>

In May of 1958, the last graduating class attended commencement ceremonies in Nicolet High School and work then began on the renovations that were necessary to turn it into Abbot Pennings High School. The designs for these renovations were the work of the Green Bay firm of Foeller, Schober, Berners, Safford, and Jahn, this being the successor firm to that which had designed the original building. The newly renovated building was completed in time for the start of the 1959/1960 school year.<sup>23</sup>

Abbot Pennings High school opened with a student body of 197 and was originally a private high school for boys only. Eventually, though, the school became a co-ed institution and it remained a high school until June 1990, when the school closed and was merged with St. Joseph Academy and Premontre High School of Green Bay, to become Notre Dame de la Baie Academy of Green Bay. The former high school building was then purchased by St. Norbert College in August of 1990 and repurposed as the College's Penning Activity Center. By this time, St. Norbert College had become one of the most respected four-year colleges in Wisconsin and its campus had expanded to the point where it now adjoined the Abbot Pennings High School grounds on two sides. Acquiring the former high school building for the use of the College therefore made excellent sense. Since its purchase the building has been used by the College for classroom and meeting spaces, administrative offices, the College's ROTC program, and campus security operations, and continuing its original use as a school.

**Conclusion:**

Nicolet High School is eligible for listing in the NRHP, locally significant under National Register Criterion A in the area of Education representing the history of education, and particularly high school education, in the first part of the twentieth century in De Pere. Built in 1923 at a cost that was several times larger than that of any previous public school building erected in West De Pere, the new high school incorporated the characteristics of progressive school design of the time, including but not limited to, a library, nurses office, cafeteria and kitchen, science lab, domestic science room, art room, gymnasium and locker rooms, and an auditorium. Nicolet High School is now the only surviving public school building that was built in West De Pere prior to 1958.

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<sup>22</sup> "Announce Campaign For Norbertine High School." *De Pere Journal-Democrat*, May 8, 1958, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> This same firm was also designing the new Contemporary style West De Pere High School building at this time, which opened in 1959.

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**Architecture:**

Nicolet High School is eligible for listing in the NRHP at the local level of significance under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an excellent example of a post-World War I secondary school building in the Neo-Classical Revival style. Its importance in the community is further enhanced by having been designed by the prominent Green Bay architectural firm of Foeller, Schober, and Stephenson.

The Neo-Classical Revival and the Collegiate Gothic styles were both favorite styles for architects designing secondary schools in Wisconsin in the first thirty years of the twentieth century. Nicolet High School is an especially fine representative Neo-Classical Revival example of this preference. In *American Architecture Since 1780*, Marcus Whiffen defined a number of the salient characteristics of the Neo-Classical Revival style: "Broad expanses of plain wall surface are common; roof lines, when not level, are quiet and unbroken by sculptural incidents. The Greek orders are employed much more than the Roman, and in keeping with this, windows and doorways are linteled rather than arched; pedimented porticos are frequent features."<sup>24</sup> High style examples of the style frequently made use of two-story-tall, colossal order, free-standing columns based on the classical orders, which columns may support a portico or an entablature. Engaged colossal order columns were also used on some examples as were pilasters, and facades tended to be organized vertically in a classical fashion and had a distinct base, a midsection, and an upper part, these being analogous to a classical column, with its base, shaft, and capital.<sup>25</sup> Residential examples of the style are often sided with wood clapboards but public building examples are almost always clad in either brick, stone, or both, as is the case here.

The Neo-Classical Revival style was especially favored for use on large public buildings in the first forty years of the twentieth century thanks in large part to the precedent set by the numerous monumentally scaled examples that were on display at the World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893. These very large, symmetrically designed, classically derived buildings were widely published at that time and so popular did they become that they came to virtually define what a public building should look like. As a result, architects around the country, and indeed around the world, were quick to supply their clients with similar buildings, and brick-clad, simplified examples were especially popular with public officials who sought to create monumentality on a limited budget. The Nicolet High School, completed in 1923, is typical of such buildings in that it is large in scale and symmetrically designed, but actually quite plain. Classical ornamentation is sparingly applied, being limited largely to stone panels ornamented with raised swags that are set into the building's parapet, while dressed stone beltcourses serve to demarcate the main sections of the building's facade, i.e., the

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<sup>24</sup> Whiffen, Marcus. *American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to Styles*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1969, p. 167.

<sup>25</sup> Longstreth, Richard. *The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture*. Washington DC: The Preservation Press, 1987, p. 93.

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raised basement story (the base), the main two stories above (the midsection), and the parapet at the top (the capital). Columns are also implied by the use of narrow lengths of brick between window bays. Overall, the Nicolet High School's design expresses monumentality, permanence, and practicality, and it is an excellent example of the kind of Neo-Classical designs that were applied to public and private non-residential buildings in Wisconsin's smaller cities during the first forty years of the twentieth century.

Architects

The architect of Nicolet High School was the firm of Foeller, Schober & Stephenson, which has become one of the most important architectural firms in northeastern Wisconsin since its founding in Green Bay in 1895. The founding partner was Henry Foeller (1871-1938), who was born in the French province of Alsace in 1871, the eldest of 17 children. He came to Wisconsin in 1885 and lived with an uncle in Oshkosh who put him through high school and Oshkosh Teachers College. During this time, Foeller was apprenticed to Oshkosh architect William Waters (1843-1917), the most prominent architect in that city and one of the most prominent in the state. In 1895, Foeller came to Green Bay where he formed a short-lived partnership with James E. Clancy under the name Clancy & Foeller. Two years later, Foeller began practicing on his own and he continued to do so until 1907, when he took as a partner Max W. Schober, who began his Green Bay career as a draftsman in Foeller's office. The new firm, Foeller & Schober, soon became the most important one in Green Bay.

A major reason for this success was the skill that the firm showed in attracting new personnel who had the ability to design conservative versions of the latest architectural styles and fashions. This task was made easier because of the prominence of the firm, which made it the logical place for newly arriving architects and engineers in Green Bay to begin their careers. Among these persons was Edgar Berners, who was born in Port Washington and raised and educated in that community. Berners became an engineer and came to Green Bay in 1925, where he was promptly employed in the offices of Foeller & Schober. By 1929, Berners had been made a partner in the firm, which was renamed Foeller, Schober & Berners. Berners eventually became certified as an architect and was subsequently honored by being named a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects.

Not surprisingly, given its close proximity to De Pere, this firm designed more buildings in De Pere than any other known firm between 1904 and the present, and most of them are still extant. The first was the Beaux Arts style remodeling that Henry Foeller did for the State Bank of De Pere in 1904 at 127 North Broadway, which is still extant today. This was followed by a lengthy list of projects of every kind, including the De Pere Public Library located at 300 Main Avenue, which was built in 1937 and is listed in the NRHP. New projects are still being created today by the latest generation of the

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firm, which is now known as Berners-Schober Associates, Inc. and is one of the oldest if not *the* oldest continuously operating architectural firm in Wisconsin.<sup>26</sup>

**Conclusion:**

The Nicolet High School is eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an excellent example of a secondary school in the Neo-Classical Revival style. The school exhibits nearly all of the design characteristics that are typically associated with the Neo-Classical Revival style such as symmetry, monumentality, classically derived elevations that exhibit minimal classically derived ornamentation. These elements have been skillfully blended by the architect and it is one of the best institutional examples of the style in De Pere. The significance of the school is further enhanced by its intact and largely original interior and by the very fine physical condition of the building. Nicolet High School is now the only remaining pre-World War II public school building in West De Pere and is one of just two intact pre-World War II schools remaining in the entire city, the other one being the Collegiate Gothic style Irwin Elementary School, located at 428 North Superior Street on the east side of the river. It is listed in the NRHP as a contributing resource in the North Michigan Street-North Superior Street Historic District.<sup>27</sup>

**Criteria Consideration A:**

Ordinarily, buildings belonging to religious institutions are not eligible for listing in the NRHP unless the building meets NRHP Criteria Consideration A, which states that such resources must be: "A religious property deriving primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction."<sup>28</sup> The Nicolet High School building meets the requirements of Criterion Consideration A. Although originally built as a public high school, Nicolet High School is now owned by a religious institution but derives its significance due to its association with the history of education in De Pere and from its architectural distinction as a fine example of the Neo-Classical Revival style as applied to an early twentieth century, public secondary school. It is also notable as a fine example of the work of the prestigious Green Bay architectural firm of Foeller, Schober, and Stephenson.

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<sup>26</sup> Berners-Schober Associates. Archives. The archives of the firm in Green Bay retain the original plans of Nicolet High School and also of the 1959 remodeling of the Abbot Pennings High School.

<sup>27</sup> The other two surviving pre-World War II schools in De Pere are the East Side High School and the St. Francis Xavier Roman Catholic School, both of whose original portions were designed in the Collegiate Gothic Style and built in 1923, and both of which have been greatly altered by the construction of later additions. Irwin Elementary School is no longer used as a school.

<sup>28</sup> National Register Bulletin 16. *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form*. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. U.S. Government Printing Office, 1991, p. 37.

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De Pere, Brown County, Wisconsin

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**Verbal Boundary Description:**

The Nicolet High School sits on two adjacent parcels of land that are described as follows:

Parcel Number WD-905. Plat of West De Pere, Lots 1-6 & land N of said lots described in Vol. 205 D 202/203 & ½ vacated road adjacent southerly & ex road in 2258339.

Parcel Number WD-934. Plat of West De Pere, Lots 55, 56, 57, 58, 59 & 60 & part described in Vol. 643 R 313 & ½ vacated road adjacent northerly.

**Boundary Justification:**

These parcels enclose all the land that has been historically associated with the high school building.

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Items a-d are the same for photos 1 – 19.

Photo 1

- a) Nicolet High School
- b) De Pere, Brown County, WI
- c) Timothy F. Heggland, May 12, 2014
- d) Wisconsin Historical Society
- e) Main Facade, View looking E
- f) Photo 1 of 19

Photo 2

- e) General View, View looking NE
- f) Photo 2 of 19

Photo 3

- e) South-Facing Elevation, View looking N
- f) Photo 3 of 19

Photo 4

- e) South-Facing Elevation, View looking N
- f) Photo 4 of 19

Photo 5

- e) Rear View, looking WNW
- f) Photo 5 of 19

Photo 6

- e) East-Facing Rear Elevation, View looking W
- f) Photo 6 of 19

Photo 7

- e) General View, View looking SW
- f) Photo 7 of 19

Photo 8

- e) North-Facing Side Elevation, View looking S
- f) Photo 8 of 19

Photo 9

- e) North-Facing Side Elevation, View looking S
- f) Photo 9 of 19

Photo 10

- e) North-Facing Side Elevation, View looking S
- f) Photo 10 of 19

Photo 11

- e) Main West-Facing Entrance, View looking E
- f) Photo 11 of 19

Photo 12

- e) Girl Reading Statue, View looking W
- f) Photo 12 of 19

Photo 13

- e) Boy Reading Statue, View looking W
- f) Photo 13 of 19

Photo 14

- e) Owl Reading Plaque, View looking W
- f) Photo 14 of 19

Photo 15

- e) First Story Corridor, View looking S
- f) Photo 15 of 19

Photo 16

- e) Second Story Stair Hall, View looking S
- f) Photo 16 of 19

Photo 17

- e) Second Story Classroom, View looking NE
- f) Photo 17 of 19

Photo 18

- e) Auditorium, View looking W
- f) Photo 18 of 19

Photo 19

- e) Auditorium, View looking E
- f) Photo 19 of 19

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Figure No. 1

Historic Photo (c1924) of Nicolet High School

Figure No. 2

Abbot Pennings High School: Ground Level Floor Plan (1959)

Abbot Pennings High School: First Story Floor Plan (1959)

Figure No. 3

Abbot Pennings High School: Second Story Floor Plan (1959)

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Figure No. 1

Historic Photo (c1924) of Nicolet High School



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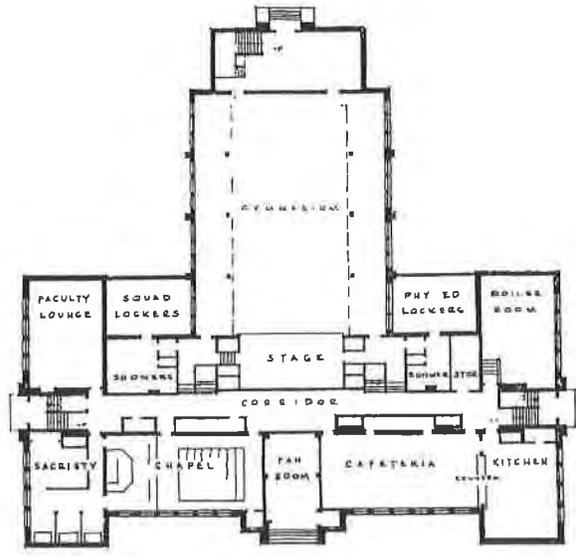
Section figures Page 3

Nicolet High School  
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Figure No. 2

Abbot Pennings High School: Ground Level Floor Plan (1959)

Abbot Pennings High School: First Story Floor Plan (1959)



GROUND FLOOR PLAN



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

Nicolet High School  
De Pere, Brown County, WI  
Not to Scale  
W

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National Park Service

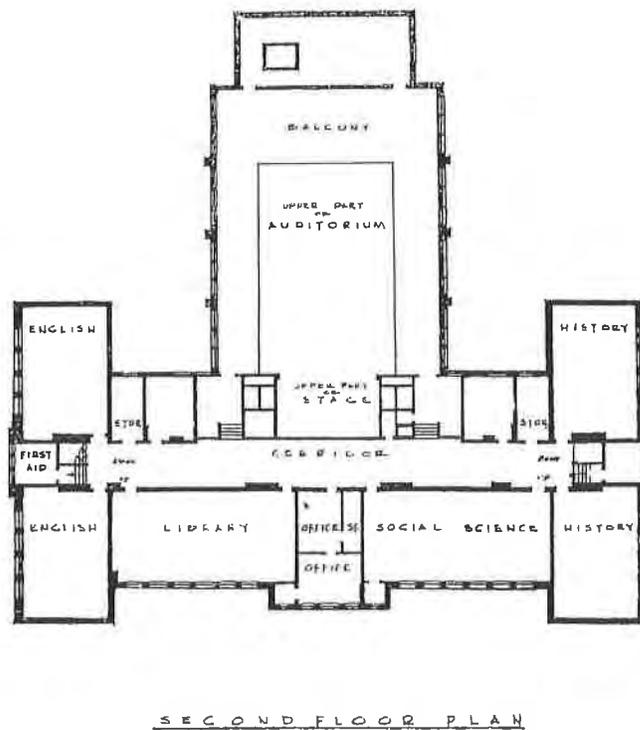
National Register of Historic Places  
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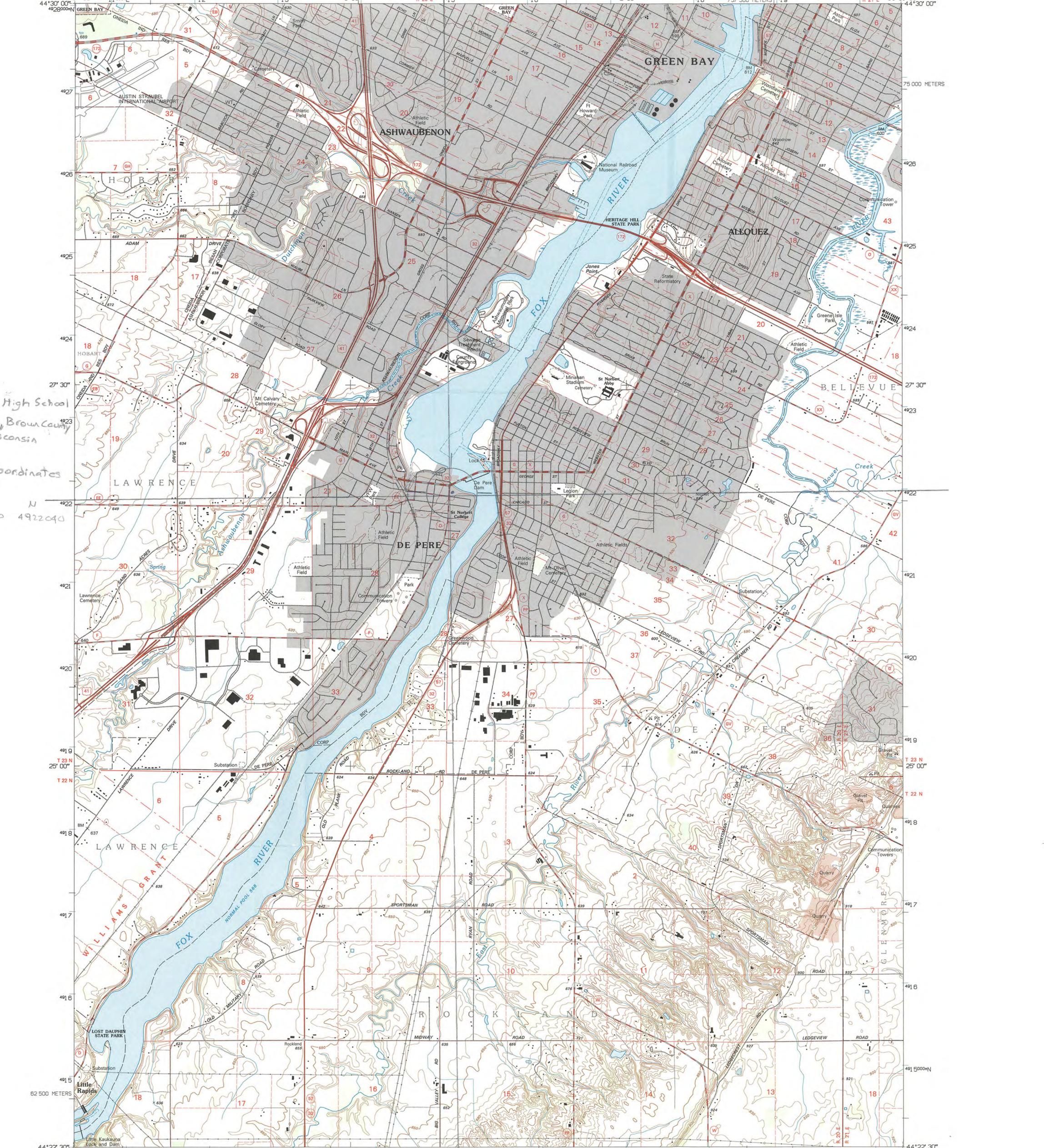
Section figures Page 4

Nicolet High School  
De Pere, Brown County, Wisconsin

Figure No. 3

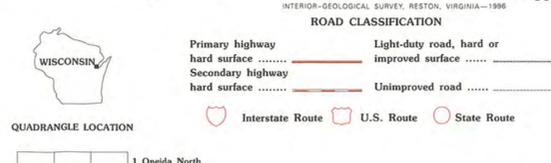
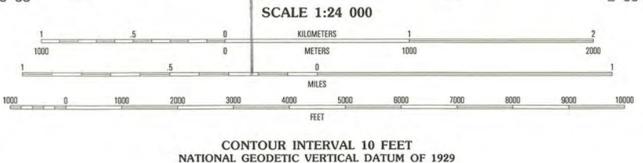
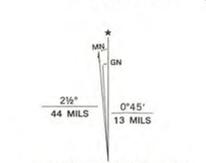
Abbot Pennings High School: Second Story Floor Plan (1959)





High School  
Brown County  
coordinates  
N  
4922090

Produced by the United States Geological Survey  
 Compiled from imagery dated 1978-79. Revised from  
 imagery dated 1992-93. PLS and survey control current  
 as of 1981. Contours and elevations current as of 1978-79  
 Map edited 1995  
 North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83). Projection and  
 blue 1000-meter ticks: Universal Transverse Mercator, zone 16  
 2500-meter ticks: Wisconsin Coordinate System of 1983 (central zone)  
 North American Datum of 1927 (NAD 27) is shown by dashed  
 contour ticks. The values of the shift between NAD 83 and NAD 27  
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 There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of



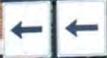




Reid St

Welcome to De Pere

SOUTH TO  
32 57



BIKE LANE





290 Reid Street  
Pennington Activity Center

PENNINGTON ACTIVITY CENTER

ST. NORBERT  
COLLEGE

LADY OF THE TORDES  
(Ladies' Golf Club)  
MARCH PICNIC  
SUNDAY MAY 18  
10:00 AM - 4:00 PM  
FOR ALL LADIES PLEASE



UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN  
SUMMER STUDENT'S  
EMERGENCY PARKING  
NO OVERNIGHT  
PARKING





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PHOTOGRAPHY



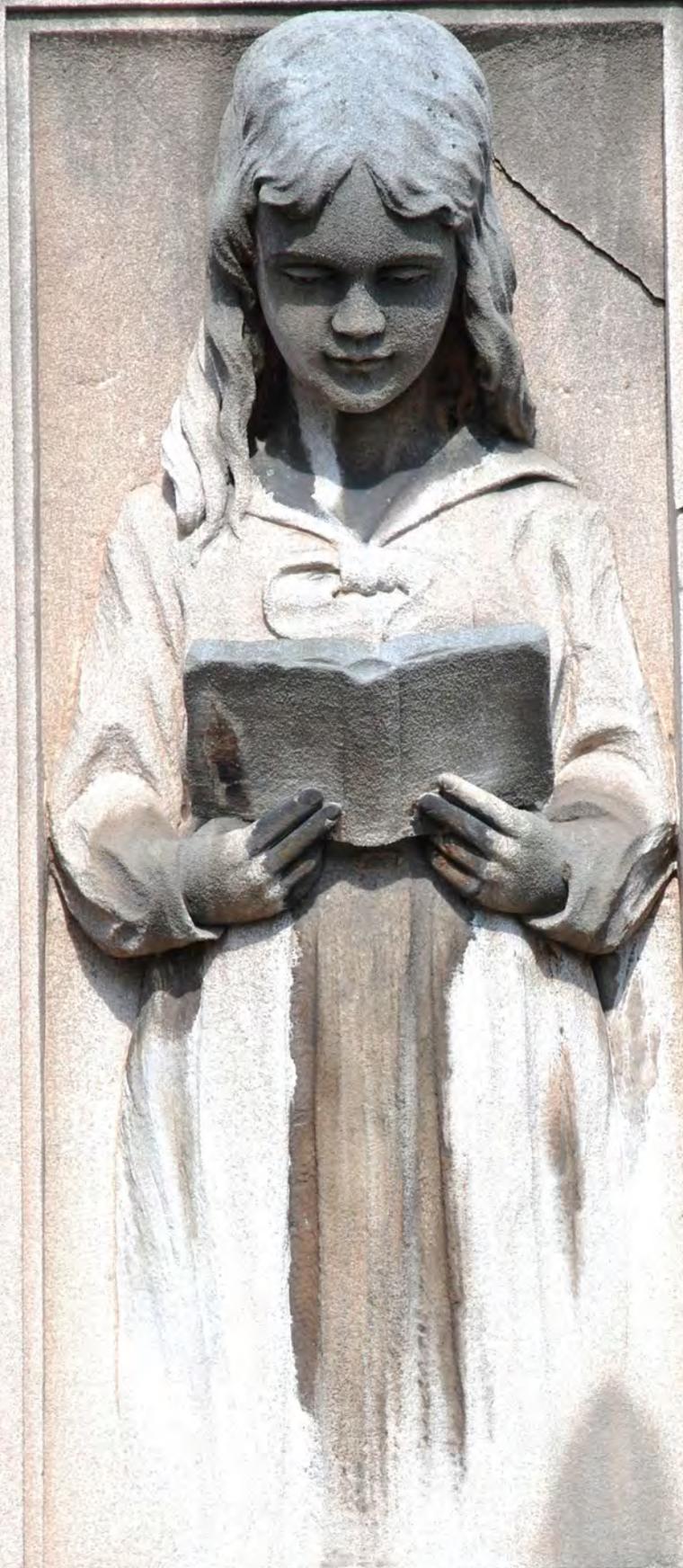


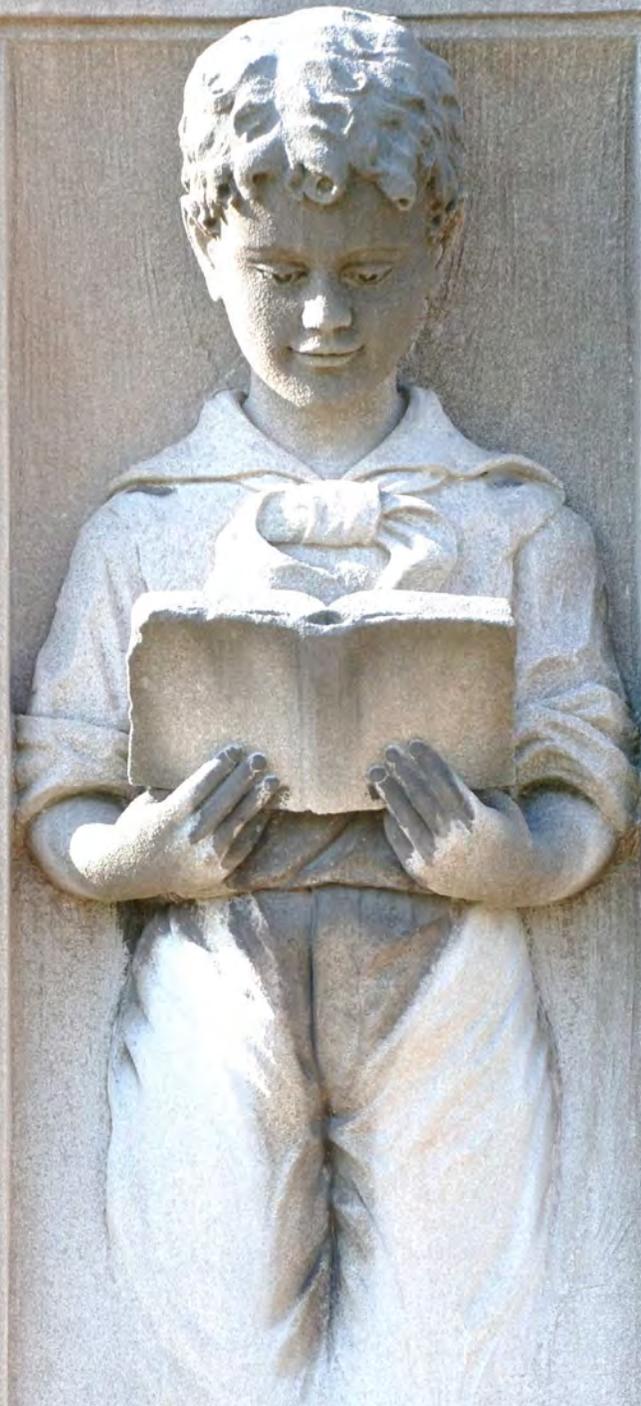
















EXIT

GREEN KNIGHT  
COMPANY  
ROTC





207



Faculty  
Building  
Room

208



209







