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The Two-Year Process and the Buildings

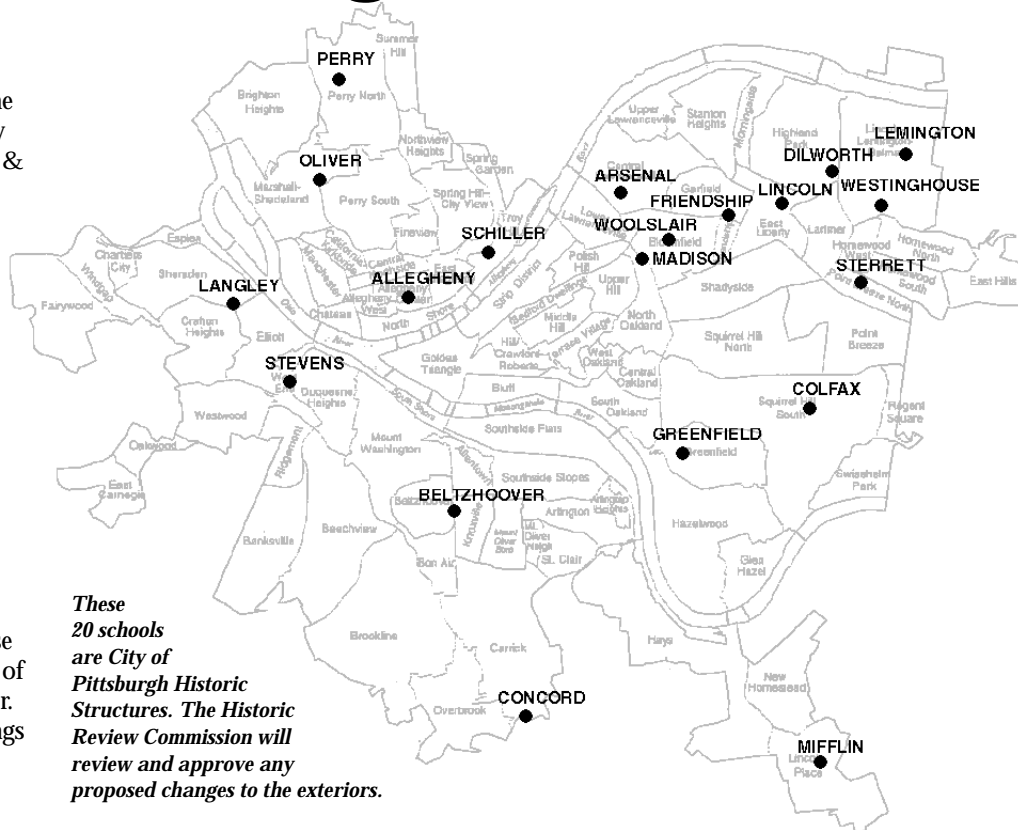
20 Pittsburgh Public Schools Designated as City of Pittsburgh Historic Structures

Albert M. Tannler

One of the discoveries made during the Allegheny County Historic Site Survey undertaken by the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation from 1979 through 1984 was the large number of architecturally and culturally significant public school buildings in the City of Pittsburgh. In 1986 Landmarks staff members Lu Donnelly and Martin Aurand prepared a National Register of Historic Places nomination of what was called the Pittsburgh Public Schools Thematic Group. As a result 49 public school buildings dating from 1850 to 1939 were placed on the National Register in 1986 and 1987. (Please see the listing on page 2.) These buildings account for about one third of all Pittsburgh buildings on the Register.

Not all of the 49 designated buildings are currently owned by the Board of Public Education, nor were they in 1986. One building (Oakland School) was subsequently demolished and 12 have been sold to private developers; for example, the oldest school building, the Bedford School of 1850 on the South Side, is now condominiums. Park Place School (1903) in Point Breeze is also condominiums, while Morse School (1874) on the South Side houses senior citizens, and Latimer School (1898) on the North Side is an apartment building. (Please see the illustrations below.)

In 1998 the Board of Public Education released a ten-year report that predicted the possible closing of numerous school buildings listed on the National Register. In response, Landmarks initiated a process of nominating school buildings, including some in private hands, as City of Pittsburgh Historic Structures, hoping thereby to increase the level of protection available to these historic buildings. An additional five schools, either overlooked in 1986 or too new to qualify, were added to the list of nominees.



These 20 schools are City of Pittsburgh Historic Structures. The Historic Review Commission will review and approve any proposed changes to the exteriors.

Ultimately, 38 school buildings owned by the Board of Public Education were nominated as City Historic Structures. Several buildings on the Register, including three owned by the Board of Education—South Side, Schenley, and Conroy—were not nominated because they were located within City Historic Districts and presumed to have the same status as individually designated structures. In view of the City Law Department's intervention in a bed-and-breakfast application in Schenley Farms and the Historic Review Commission (HRC) vote to un-designate the Market Square City Historic District, both in 2000, such presumptions should be reviewed.

In 1986, the Board of Public Education did not object to the designation of school buildings it owned as National Register buildings. In 1999, however, there was ambivalence regarding City Historic Structure status, which would require that proposed changes to

existing building facades and additions be submitted to and approved by the HRC. The Board initially agreed to the designation of 16 buildings but opposed designating the remaining 22.

After months of testimony by Landmarks and others, a compromise was proposed by HRC chairman John DeSantis. According to his proposal, HRC would recommend to City Council that 20 buildings become City Historic Structures; 12 buildings would be subject to renovation "Guidelines/Standards" approved by HRC and Landmarks; and four of the remaining six buildings which the Board intended to sell, would be offered to Landmarks first in order to find an appropriate buyer; the other two would be cut adrift. Otherwise, the Board of Education would oppose the designation of all of the school buildings, requiring a City Council majority of six of nine votes in favor of designation.

In due course City Council was asked to vote to designate 20 buildings and

vote not to designate the remaining 18. Council chose to do the former, but not the latter. Satisfactory "Guidelines" had not yet been prepared by the HRC and the School administration for Council review; in addition, several members of Council objected to the omission of some of the buildings from the list of nominees.

In any event, on December 8, 1999, 20 Pittsburgh public school buildings, 18 of which are on the National Register of Historic Places, were designated City of Pittsburgh Historic Structures. This designation provides protection only for the building facades. Some of the most architecturally distinguished features are interior ones, and these have no protection. The guidelines covering exterior alterations to 16 schools were finally completed in 2000. Although the guidelines are comprehensive, they will be beneficial only to the extent that the School Board chooses to follow them; they do not carry the force of law.

City-designated schools need not be limited to 20. Other public school buildings may be nominated in the future, as well as the privately owned buildings that were formerly schools. Two public schools in the Hill District may be worthy candidates: Miller School, designed in 1905 by John Blair Elliott and enlarged by M. M. Steen, and McKelvy School, designed in 1911 by Carlton Strong.

Our story continues on the following pages, with comments about each public school building now designated as a City Historic Structure. The information is derived in large part from the National Register and City Historic Structure nomination forms written by Lu Donnelly, Martin Aurand, Walter Kidney, Barry Hannegan, and myself. The schools are described in chronological order, so the progression of design is evident.

Privately-owned former school buildings: Latimer is a City Historic Structure and the others may be nominated in the future.



Bedford School (1850) on the South Side now houses condominiums.



Park Place School (1903) in Point Breeze is also condominiums.



Morse School (1874) on the South Side is home to senior citizens.



Latimer School (1898) on the North Side is an apartment building.

Pittsburgh Public School Buildings Placed on the National Register of Historic Places

September 30, 1986 and February 3, 1987

Eighteen city-designated structures (noted by asteriks) are among 49 Pittsburgh public school buildings entered on the National Register of Historic Places. Buildings currently owned by the Board of Education are shown in boldface.

- | | |
|---|--|
| * 1. Allegheny | 33. Morrow |
| * 2. Arsenal | 34. Morse |
| 3. Baxter-Brushston | 35. Oakland (demolished) |
| 4. Bayard | * 36. Oliver |
| 5. Bedford (located in the East Carson Street Historic District) | 37. Park Place |
| 6. Beechwood | * 38. Perry |
| * 7. Beltzhoover | 39. Prospect |
| 8. Birmingham | 40. Schenley (located in the Oakland Civic Center City of Pittsburgh Historic District) |
| 9. Boggs Avenue | * 41. Schiller |
| * 10. Colfax | 42. South Side (located in the East Carson Street Historic District) |
| 11. Connelley | 43. Springfield |
| 12. Conroy (located in the Manchester City Historic District) | * 44. Sterrett |
| * 13. Dilworth | 45. Taylor Alderdice |
| 14. Fifth Avenue | 46. Washington |
| 15. Fort Pitt | * 47. Westinghouse |
| 16. Foster | 48. Wightman |
| 17. Frick | * 49. Woolslair |
| * 18. Friendship | |
| 19. Fulton | |
| * 20. Greenfield | |
| 21. Knoxville | |
| * 22. Langley | |
| 23. Larimer | |
| 24. Latimer | |
| 25. Lawrence | |
| * 26. Lemington | |
| 27. Letsche | |
| * 28. Lincoln | |
| 29. Linden | |
| * 30. Madison | |
| 31. McCleary | |
| * 32. Mifflin | |

Public school buildings omitted or too new to meet National Register criteria in 1986 and subsequently nominated by Landmarks for City Historic Structure status:

1. **Concord (M.M. Steen, 1939)**
2. **Rogers (Janssen & Abbott, 1914)**
3. **South Hills (Alden & Harlow, 1916-24)**
4. **Stevens (M.M. Steen, 1940)**
5. **Weil (M.M. Steen, 1942)**

Only Concord and Stevens were designated City Historic Structures.

None of the public school buildings on the National Register of Historic Places will be affected by Pittsburgh Public School Superintendent John Thompson's recent statement recommending that 11 schools be closed.

Pittsburgh is most fortunate in having such a handsome collection of public school buildings, many recognized nationally, and some now designated as city landmarks. We encourage the School Board and its Facilities Department to continue to maintain these buildings in ways appropriate to their status as unique regional treasures.

A GIFT of appreciated securities or real estate can create lifetime income for you and provide the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation with much-needed resources to restore historic houses, churches, schools, parks, and gardens in the Pittsburgh region. You can help revitalize a main street in one of our neighborhoods, provide restored housing for low- to moderate-income residents, or put an empty church or school back into use.

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Woolslair, Fortieth Street and Liberty Avenue, Bloomfield. Samuel T. McClarren, 1897

WOOLSLAIR School is a warm golden brick building in a Romanesque-style modified by Classical details: oval oculus and Palladian windows and Renaissance balconies are placed over Romanesque-arched entrances or at the center of rows of Romanesque arched windows.

Woolslair resembles Samuel T. McClarren's other Pittsburgh school commission, the National Register John Morrow School in Brighton Heights, and both buildings evoke the

design vocabulary of Longfellow, Alden & Harlow.

Samuel Thornburg McClarren's (b. 1862) primary known contributions to regional architecture include two Pittsburgh public schools (and an addition to the Thornburg School); several churches; the Husler Building in Carnegie, now the Historical Society of Carnegie, PA; and preeminently the houses he designed c. 1900-1912 in suburban Thornburg for his cousin, Frank Thornburg.



Sterrett, 7100 Reynolds Street, Squirrel Hill. Edward J. Carlisle, 1898

STERRETT School is a Classically inspired school building interesting not only for its turn-of-the-century architectural features but also for the patronage of its wealthy neighbors. Andrew Carnegie's sons (Will, Andrew, and Frank) attended Sterrett as did Henry Clay Frick's only son and oldest child, Childs Frick. H.C. Frick donated library books, a telescope fabricated by noted astronomer John A. Brashear, and athletic equipment to the school. The library was one of the most complete school libraries in America at the turn of the century.

Sterrett is also noteworthy for the fine natural illumination provided by the large windows of its design, for its

stained glass (much of which has been removed), and for the uniquely progressive elements it contained:

an observatory, an auditorium with full stage, and a drill room in the basement staffed by a special instructor. The second-story auditorium is characteristic of the late nineteenth century; schools designed after 1910 had their auditoriums on the first story for easier public access.





Friendship, 5501 Friendship Avenue, Friendship. Charles M. Bartberger, 1899 (Historic Landmark plaque, 1998)



Allegheny, 810 Arch Street, North Side. Frederick J. Osterling, 1904; M. M. Steen, 1936 (Historic Landmark Plaque, 1992)

FRIENDSHIP School is a grand Beaux-Arts building, unique in the city for the elaborateness of its moldings and the splendor of its portico. This exuberant design creates a dignified impression and forms a neighborhood focal point. The architect was Charles Mathias Bartberger (1850–1939). He was born in Pittsburgh and studied architecture in Germany from 1870 to 1873. In 1880 he joined his father, Charles Bartberger, Sr., who had organized an architectural firm in Pittsburgh in the 1840s. A 1922 biographical

sketch states that C. M. Bartberger “specialized in school houses, and among others which owe their symmetry and practical convenience to his designs are the Friendship School, Margaretta School (now embedded in Peabody High School), and Fort Pitt School.” He is also credited with the Fulton School. (Fort Pitt and Fulton Schools are on the National Register.) Of all the schools designed by Bartberger, Friendship is his most elaborate and interesting design.

ALLEGHENY School was the first high school in Allegheny City. The 1904 building was built as an annex to the original (now demolished) 1888 building. Both were designed by Frederick J. Osterling (1865–1934), a prominent Pittsburgh architect known for expanding H. H. Richardson’s Allegheny County Jail, creating “Clayton” for Henry Clay Frick, and designing landmark downtown commercial buildings such as the Union Trust, Arrott, Colonial Trust, and Times Buildings. He also designed industrial complexes (Armstrong Cork Company), institutional buildings (Dixmont and Woodville State Hospitals), and the Washington County Courthouse. Osterling designed many schools, but this building is the sole survivor.

The 1936 annex—a separate yet adjacent building—was designed by Marion M. Steen (1886–1966) shortly after he was appointed Board of Education architect in 1935. Steen was born in Pittsburgh, the youngest son of architect James T. Steen who had established his firm in Pittsburgh in 1864. M. M. Steen studied architecture at the Carnegie Institute of Technology. After graduation in 1908, he worked for Henry Hornbostel as a draftsman on campus buildings. In 1918 he left Pittsburgh and briefly worked in Chicago, returning later that year to head the architectural department of the Carnegie Land Company. In 1922 he joined the family firm, James T. Steen & Sons, as junior partner with his father and his older brother, James Howard Steen. While there he designed Oliver (1924/28), Herron Hill (1928), and Prospect (1931) Schools.



Annex detail



Madison, 3401 Milwaukee Avenue, Hill District. U. J. L. Peoples, 1902; Pringle & Robling, 1929

MADISON School is located on a corner site leveled out of sloping terrain. The focal point of each facade is the entry, framed with a rounded arch supported on plain stone columns. Tiered capitals, the inner edge of the arch, and an inner surround are richly ornamented in terra cotta featuring monkeys, snakes, cherubs, and a variety of other beasts and vaguely Romanesque decorative motifs. Some of this ornamentation is in deep relief; some is very flat.

Architect Ulysses J. L. Peoples specialized in school architecture (Larimer and Wightm, privately owned) and (All three buildings are on the Register.) His designs are extraordinary, such as the Madison School. Ulysses Peoples worked with D. H. Burnham & Co. in Chicago, and reportedly introduced elaborate terra cotta forms to Pittsburgh following their display

at the 1893 Columbian Exposition. Peoples also made extensive use of terra cotta in the Moose Building (demolished), his best-known non-school commission. The 1929 addition is by Pringle & Robling, architects who apparently were associated for public school projects. They also designed an addition to Linden School as well as Lincoln School, a livelier version of the Deco approach seen at Madison.



Steen added to and enlarged many older school buildings during his tenure: three outstanding examples are the new auditorium and gymnasium at Prospect School (1936); the auditorium at the 1905 Miller School at 61 Reed Street (1939); and the gymnasium/auditorium at the 1905 Letsche School at 1701–05 Bedford Avenue (1941). The latter two schools are in the Lower Hill. Steen hired Edward J. Weber to design Lemington and Schiller Schools (see pages 6 and 7).

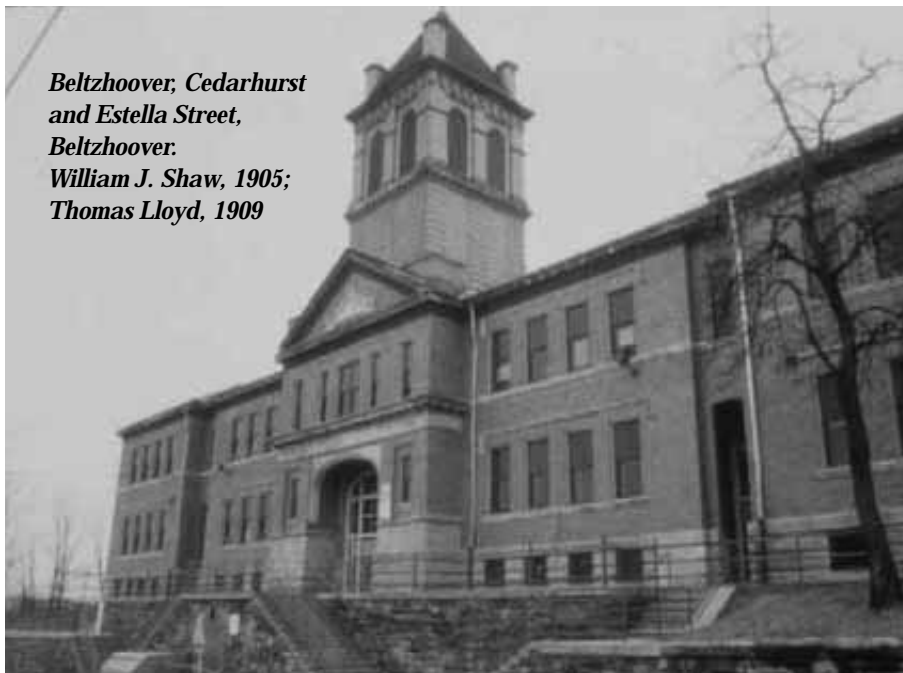
M. M. Steen’s Art Deco school buildings include Burgwin, 5401 Glenwood Avenue, Hazelwood (1937); Carmalt, 1583 Breining Street, Brookline (1937); Thaddeus Stevens, 822 Crucible Street, Elliott (1940); and A. Leo Weil in the Hill (1942).

Weil was M. M. Steen’s last school design as Board architect, although he held that position until 1954. He then joined theatre architect Victor A. Rigaumont (1889–1983) in a partnership that lasted until Steen’s death; Rigaumont & Steen designed Minadeo School at 6502 Lilac Street in Squirrel Hill (1957), and Phillips School at 1901 Sarah Street in the South Side (1958).

Seven of the 20 designated school buildings were either designed by, had additions designed by, or had design and construction supervised by M. M. Steen.



In 2000, Landmarks presented an Award of Merit to the Board of Public Education for the sensitive design and installation of a handicapped-accessible entrance to the 1936 Allegheny school building.



Beltzhoover, Cedarhurst and Estella Street, Beltzhoover: William J. Shaw, 1905; Thomas Lloyd, 1909

BELTZHOOVER School fits the popular image of a school with its stern Classical ornament and bell tower (added in 1909). The school is representative of the modest pretensions and traditional design of turn-of-the-century schools in Pittsburgh's working-class neighborhoods. Beltzhoover is such a neighborhood, opened to mass settlement after the opening of the Mt. Washington trolley tunnel nearby. The building has none of the elegant ornamentation of the East End schools, such as stained glass stairhall windows or marble foyers.

What Beltzhoover School lacks in sophistication it makes up for in character. It dramatically crowns its steeply sloping site and acts as a major focal point for its neighborhood, both physically and socially. Summoned by the manually operated bell, 250 students come here each morning to learn just as they did ninety years ago. Little is known of the architects of the school beyond their names: William J. Shaw (1905 section) and Thomas Lloyd of the Lloyd Brothers (1909 section).



Colfax, Beechwood Boulevard and Phillips Avenue, Squirrel Hill. Edward Stotz, 1911

COLFAX School is prominently sited on a terrace above a curve in Beechwood Boulevard. Its Jacobean Revival styling and its green yard behind an iron fence are in keeping with the spacious and architecturally eclectic residential neighborhood which it was built to serve.

This is Pittsburgh's only elementary school designed by architect Edward Stotz (1868–1949). Stotz also designed three landmark high schools: Fifth Avenue (1894; now privately owned; on the National Register); South Side (1898; in the East Carson Street City Historic District); and Schenley (1916; in the Schenley Farms National Register and City Historic Districts). Architecturally, Colfax School plays a transitional role between Stotz's early compact and traditional school designs and the sleekly sprawling and progressive Schenley High School. The Jacobean Revival styling is typical of the era, and the banded windows show a new emphasis on light and air.

Colfax School was named for Schuyler Colfax, Vice President of the United States under Ulysses S. Grant.



A loggia column, prior to defacement.



Dilworth, St. Marie and Collins Streets, East Liberty. Vrydaugh & Wolfe, 1914 (Historic Landmark plaque, 1997)

DILWORTH School was designed three years after the 1911 decision to consolidate the city school boards of Pittsburgh and Allegheny City. Until 1935 the school district contracted with independent architectural firms for school designs. Dilworth School was consciously elegant, stylistically unique in the city, and echoed European school designs of the 1910s. It also incorporated progressive educational features such as a well-lit kindergarten. By this time, the basement play spaces had become an essential part of the school buildings, and they commanded much design attention. The school reveals progressive trends in school design to be found in Chicago and St. Louis, particularly in regard to detailing.

Dilworth School's architects, Martin U. Vrydaugh and Thomas B. Wolfe, were partnered c. 1892. Vrydaugh was trained by his father, a Belgian architect who attended the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. Vrydaugh apprenticed with Adrian Van Brunt in Kansas City. There Vrydaugh met Charles Shepherd, and they formed a firm specializing in churches. The commission for Calvary United Methodist Church in Allegheny West brought Vrydaugh to Pittsburgh. Once here, he associated himself with Thomas Wolfe, and they designed houses and churches for wealthy patrons.

The school is named for Mary Dilworth, who originally owned a large tract of land in the area.



Greenfield, Algar Street and Greenfield Avenue, Greenfield. Kiehnel & Elliott, 1916 (Historic Landmark plaque, 1998)

GREENFIELD School exemplifies the School Board's desire in the post-World War I era for more sophisticated elementary-school facilities, and reveals the influence of artist and building superintendent James Bonar on the quality of design of the Pittsburgh schools of the 1920s. Plans for this building were prepared in 1916. Construction began in 1922 and the building opened in 1923.

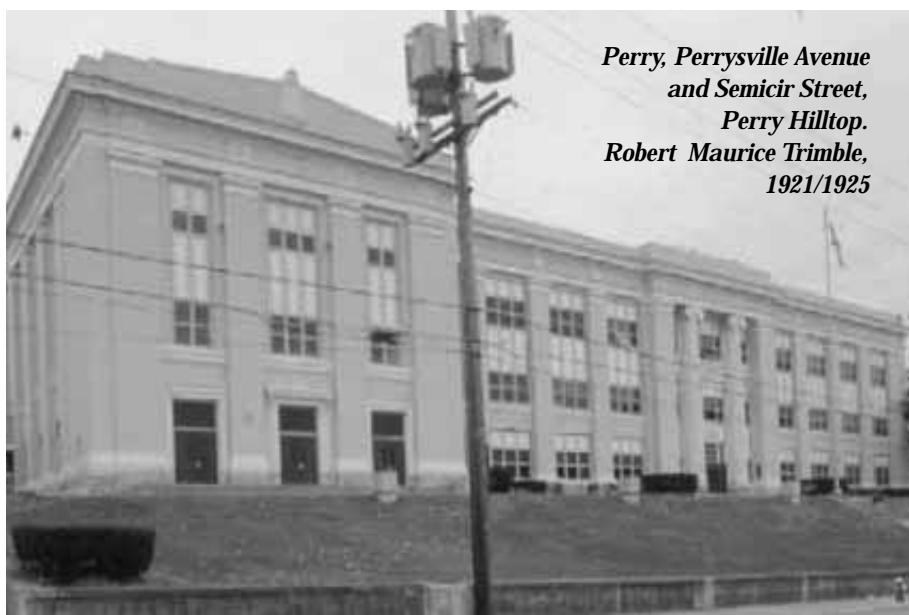
German-born and educated Richard Kiehnel (1877–1944) and his partner John Blair Elliott (b. 1868) were commissioned to design the school. Greenfield School, like most of Kiehnel & Elliott's Pittsburgh buildings, is a highly accomplished work of the early twentieth century that drew from contemporary European and American designers such as Jozsef Plecnik and Frank Lloyd Wright. Kiehnel & Elliott's buildings include a fire house, a bank, the Central Turnverein, two hospitals, two churches, a half-dozen residences,

Brushston School (on the National Register), and Greenfield School. Kiehnel opened an office of the firm in Florida in 1918 and is credited with introducing Mediterranean and Art Deco design to the Miami area.

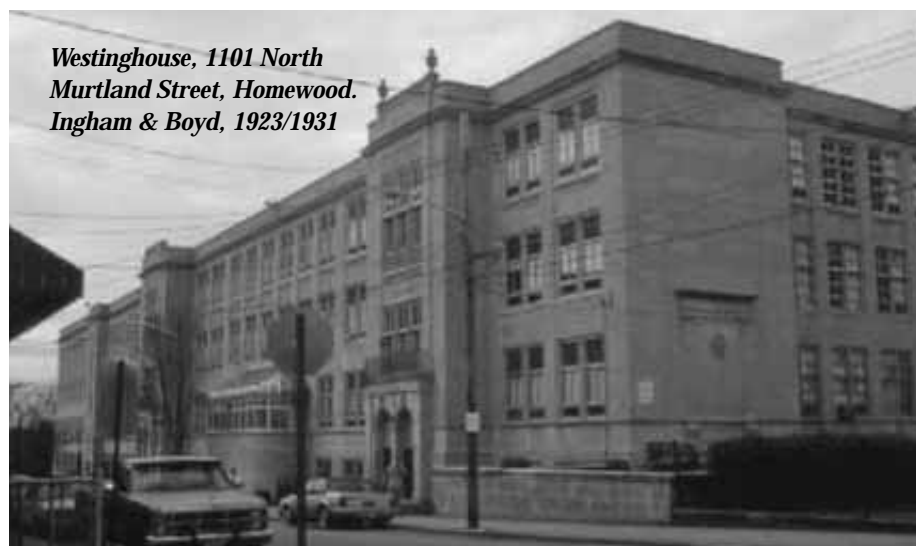
The National Register nomination form states that Greenfield is one of Pittsburgh's "most architecturally significant schools, comparable only to Mifflin School for the progressiveness of its design." The form further notes that "the interior of the entrance lobby, with its geometric and foliated capitals, is the highlight of the design."

The lobby loggia was bricked up in the summer of 1999, an incomprehensible act of vandalism that illustrates both the importance and the limitations of City Historic Structure designation.





*Perry, Perrysville Avenue
and Semicir Street,
Perry Hilltop.
Robert Maurice Trimble,
1921/1925*



*Westinghouse, 1101 North
Murtland Street, Homewood.
Ingham & Boyd, 1923/1931*

WESTINGHOUSE

School was to have been designed by George Orth in 1916, but World War I and Orth's death in 1918 intervened. The building was designed in 1921 by the Pittsburgh firm of Ingham & Boyd; built in stages, the building was not completed until 1931. Like Schenley and Taylor Allderdice High Schools, Westinghouse has Classical detailing. The National Register nomination form notes: "the school's Classicism is merely a skin over a utilitarian modern school plant, designed to efficiently educate, not edify, the students."

The school is named for George Westinghouse, the brilliant inventor who arrived in Pittsburgh in 1868. He invented the air brake for railcars and was responsible for developing the alternating current system.

The senior partner in the firm of Ingham & Boyd was Pittsburgh native Charles Tattersall Ingham (1876-1943). He became a draftsman with Peabody and Stearns in 1897, and worked in Pittsburgh on the firm's large local commissions: Horne's Department Store and the East Liberty Market House.



After working in Peabody & Stearns' Boston office, Ingham returned to Pittsburgh in the early 1900s to work for the firm of Rutan and Russell. In 1911 he formed a partnership with William Boyd, Jr.

Ingham & Boyd designed the Vann School (1914), the Board of Public Education Administration Building (1926), and the Frick School (1927; on the National Register). The firm also designed six of the seven public elementary schools in Mount Lebanon, as well as the Andrew W. Mellon middle school and the senior high school.

The most noteworthy of their commissions are the old Buhl Planetarium on the North Side and Chatham Village, the Buhl Foundation's 1935 planned community in Mt. Washington.

PERRY School was named for its community, which is generally known as Perry Hilltop, but also traces its name to Commodore Oliver H. Perry. The school's siting and Neoclassical styling make it one of Pittsburgh's most monumental school buildings, and a prominent representative of the high school building boom of the 1920s.

Robert Maurice Trimble designed both the 1921 school building and the 1925 addition. The 1921 building included an auditorium and stage gym in the corner pavilion while the 1925 addition provided a new gymnasium, a cafeteria, and shop rooms.

R. M. Trimble (1871-1966) was born in the City of Allegheny; attended Western University (the predecessor to the University of Pittsburgh); and lived in Ben Avon. He designed the Sarah Heinz House, North Side Unitarian Church, and many residences. He produced numerous institutional

buildings in Western Pennsylvania and southern states. He also designed a series of United States foreign consulates including buildings in Shanghai, China, and Calcutta, India.

He wrote frequently for *The Charette* in the 1930s and his articles are a primary resource for understanding architecture and the architectural profession in Pittsburgh from the 1890s through the years prior to World War II.

Perry High School is similar to Trimble's Taylor Allderdice School (on the National Register) in its bulk, Classical styling, and commanding site.



*Langley, Sheridan Boulevard and Chartiers Avenue, Sheridan.
MacClure & Spahr, 1923/1927*

LANGLEY School represents Pittsburgh's great era of high school construction in the 1920s, combining the progressive educational characteristics of Schenley High School with traditional styling.

The school was designed by MacClure & Spahr. This prominent early-twentieth century Pittsburgh firm is best known for the Union National Bank Building and a succession of other

downtown business buildings. Langley is MacClure & Spahr's only Pittsburgh public school commission. The design was supposedly modeled after England's Warwick Castle, although the resemblance is limited.

In keeping with Langley's early scientific emphasis, the school was named for Samuel P. Langley, aviation pioneer and director of Pittsburgh's Allegheny Observatory.



*Oliver, Brighton Road and Island Avenue, Brighton Heights. M. M. Steen for
James T. Steen & Sons, 1924/1928*

OLIVER School was designed by M. M. Steen for the firm of James T. Steen & Sons. This commission and the Prospect School commission apparently led to the appointment of M. M. Steen as staff architect for the Board of Public Education. Unlike Prospect School (on the National Register) however, Oliver contains few clues to Steen's later accomplished Art Deco manner. Art Deco elements mingle with the prevail-

ing Classicism, but the architectural appeal of the building rests primarily in its arc-like massing. It is one of the earlier—perhaps the first—Pittsburgh schools with the differentiated and balanced auditorium and gymnasium wings which soon became standard practice.

Oliver High School was named for David B. Oliver, first president of the Pittsburgh Board of Public Education.



Lincoln, Lincoln and Frankstown Avenues,
Lincoln-Larimer. Pringle & Robling, 1931

LINCOLN School is one of Pittsburgh's first two Art Deco school buildings. Lincoln, in the Lincoln-Larimer neighborhood, shares the honor with Prospect School on Mt. Washington designed by M. M. Steen; both were built in 1931.

Lincoln School was designed by Thomas Pringle and Oliver J. Robling. These architects had designed an addition to Linden School

(on the National Register) in 1927 and an addition to Madison School in 1929; Lincoln School appears to be their only new school design.

A handsome building of contrasting shades of buff brick, Lincoln School's facade displays "dog-tooth" piers (brickwork laid so that rows of triangular edges point outward) with stepped or "Mayan" tops, chevron panels under

the windows, and a stylized owl set within a sunburst over the main entrance. The plan—gymnasium on one side of the classroom block and auditorium on the other—is important. This plan, found for perhaps the first time in M. M. Steen's 1924 Oliver High School, would become the norm for most Pittsburgh school buildings, with the auditorium often serving as a neighborhood meeting place. Lincoln's auditorium is lower than the gymnasium and juts out farther; later schools usually have symmetrical wings.

The 1930s character of the auditorium appears to be intact. While the room has some handsome touches (marble wainscoting, Classical-Moderne pilasters on either side of the stage, and geometric metal ventilating grilles) it is not as innovative a space as is the contemporaneous 1931 Prospect School auditorium, which the National Register nomination form called "one of Pittsburgh's most fully realized Art Deco interiors."



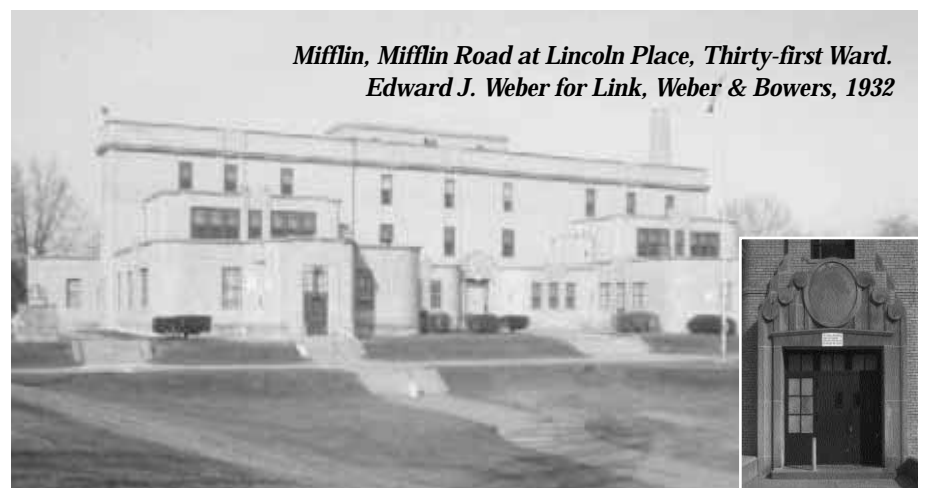
Arsenal, 3900 Butler Avenue, Lawrenceville. Schwab, Palmgreen & Merrick, 1932; M. M. Steen, 1939

ARSENAL School was built on a site acquired by the Board of Public Education in a 1921 land swap, but construction did not begin until 1931. The original school building was L-shaped and served as a junior high school. The west wing was added in 1939 to house an elementary school. The building surrounds a prominently sited playing field with its light standards and grandstands.

Arsenal School's Classical styling, which gives way at some point to Art Deco motifs, encloses one of the Pittsburgh public school's most ornate interiors in the auditorium and its forecourt hallway.

The architect for the original building was the firm of Schwab, Palmgreen & Merrick. M. M. Steen officially designed the later west wing. This section, however, had been anticipated in the

original plan, and Steen's work closely matched the existing building. Thus, Schwab, Palmgreen & Merrick can be credited with the building's overall conception and design. Unfortunately, virtually nothing is known about this firm.



Mifflin, Mifflin Road at Lincoln Place, Thirty-first Ward.
Edward J. Weber for Link, Weber & Bowers, 1932

MIFFLIN School sits on a hill-top in Lincoln Place in the Thirty-first Ward on the southeastern edge of the city. Mifflin follows the rectilinear central-block-with-frontal-wings plan. The stepped-back, two-story gymnasium and auditorium wings on each end flow into the tall and narrow central block. At first glance the building appears to be Streamline Moderne, with smooth buff brick walls terminating in elegantly rounded corners. The gymnasium and auditorium doorways are surrounded by wide Egyptian Art Deco borders.

The first floor wall curves inward to frame a grand oversized entrance topped by an ornamental tablet framed by abstract flowers. Cloverleaves filled with floral tracings top wall piers. The walls are not smooth but reveal patterns of parallel waving lines incised in the exterior brickwork, and the decorative cornices circling the roofs are not flat but rounded. The strange eclecticism of the facade, which grows increasingly wonderful the longer one views it, appears to be a marriage of the Moderne and sixteenth-century Mannerism which enlarged and exaggerated Classical Renaissance forms.

This mixture of contemporary and historical styles is found in the polychromatic auditorium, only here the historical elements recall Georgian neo-classicism. A ceiling of aluminum

panels is the principal Art Deco element; Art Deco decoration also appears on the geometric metal air grilles which sport a maple leaf motif. Most of the auditorium is sheathed in wooden paneling—paneled columns are topped with light blue capitals; green and white medallions and a green scalloped border decorate the white plaster, covering those areas not paneled in wood. White metal chandeliers are trimmed with gold. At the rear of the auditorium white plaster panels framed in wood hold green and white medallions similar to those on the ceiling. The rear exit is surrounded by wooden Classical pilasters and topped with a scrolled pediment.

The architectural firm responsible for Mifflin School was Link, Weber & Bowers; the designer, Edward J. Weber (1877–1968). Weber had attended the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris before working for MacClure & Spahr in Pittsburgh. He achieved some success in the 1920s as a Roman Catholic ecclesiastical architect, writing two books on church architecture, and he designed churches, convents, and intricately patterned brick parochial schools, such as St. Colman's in Turtle Creek and Central Catholic in Oakland. He also designed two other Pittsburgh public school buildings: Lemington and Schiller.

LEMINGTON

School exhibits the tripartite pattern of gymnasium, classroom block, and auditorium. The exterior is buff brick with gray stone trim; the brick walls are not smooth but enlivened by extruding bricks that give the surface texture. It is easy to miss this interesting wall treatment, however, because of the extravagant polychromatic terra cotta ornament. Under the cornice is a frieze of polychromatic children's faces, and over the gymnasium and auditorium doorways a child's face stares out from what appears to be a Mayan-inspired head dress—wide ruff topped by a lamp of learning and great plumes—surrounded by decorative panels, all in vivid green, purple, red, blue, and gold. Gold Mayan terra cotta panels decorate the chimney and sections of the facade; a polychromatic, somewhat sinister Comedy mask adorns the rear wall of the auditorium. Black geometric Art Deco ironwork and colorful Mayan patterns ornament the interior of the auditorium.

Prior to 1997 it was assumed that all public school buildings erected between



Lemington, 7060 Lemington Avenue, Lemington.
Edward J. Weber (M. M. Steen, Supervising Architect), 1937

1935 and 1954 were designed by M. M. Steen. Two buildings—Lemington and Schiller—are markedly different from any of Steen's other buildings. This mystery was solved when Patricia Lowry of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, using family papers and newly discovered Board of Education documents, learned that Lemington and Schiller Schools were designed by Edward J. Weber. M. M. Steen wisely hired Weber to assist with the work of school design.



Schiller, 1018 Peralta Street, East Deutschtown. Edward J. Weber (M. M. Steen, Supervising Architect), 1939

SCHILLER School seems to stand apart from all the other school buildings erected in the 1930s. Its modernity is not that of ornate Art Deco but rather that of a contemporaneous starkly fanciful German and Dutch style known as "Expressionism." Once again



the plan of the building is the now familiar tripartite one, but here the severe brick exterior rises from a stone base in a series of heavy flat-topped piers separated by pointed panels filled with a triangular pattern. Even in this monochromatic design, one senses the architect's love of brickwork. The building may have been inspired by Konrad Wittman's design for the Great Hall of

the City of Hanover Crematory, illustrated in *American Architect*, October, 1928.

The school is named for German dramatist Friedrich Schiller.



Stevens, 824 Crucible Street, Elliott. M. M. Steen, 1940

STEVENS School appears less monolithic than some of M. M. Steen's earlier designs, due to the light colored brick and the long incised horizontal lines that define the base. The five limestone relief sculptures by Pittsburgh artist Charles Bradley Warren (1903-1967) are most elegant. (Another series of more robust images by Warren decorates Prospect School.) Art accompanied by Music and Drama (far right) identify the auditorium entrance, while athletes (right) are portrayed over the gymnasium entrance. At the rear of the building Discovery is symbolized by a male figure holding a globe with a Viking ship at his feet and a female figure with Pegasus at her feet; a small male figure holds a mask at the stage door entrance.

The school is named for the great abolitionist Thaddeus Stevens. Stevens School was not old enough in 1986 to qualify for National Register nomination.



Concord, Brownsville Road at Biscayne Drive, Carrick. M. M. Steen, 1939

CONCORD

School, built in 1939, leans toward the traditional side of Steen's work: a kind of Neo-Georgian simply executed in red brick with Moderne curves and geometric metalwork. Concord School is an essay in excellent proportion with the grouped fenestration characteristic of a school as its principal means. Somehow this wonderful building was omitted from the National Register nomination process.



See Four Pittsburgh Public Schools

T O U R

with the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation

The Art Deco Schools of Pittsburgh: Part 1*

A bus tour offered through Pitt's Informal Program

Saturday, March 31, 2001
9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
The bus will depart from and return to Station Square.

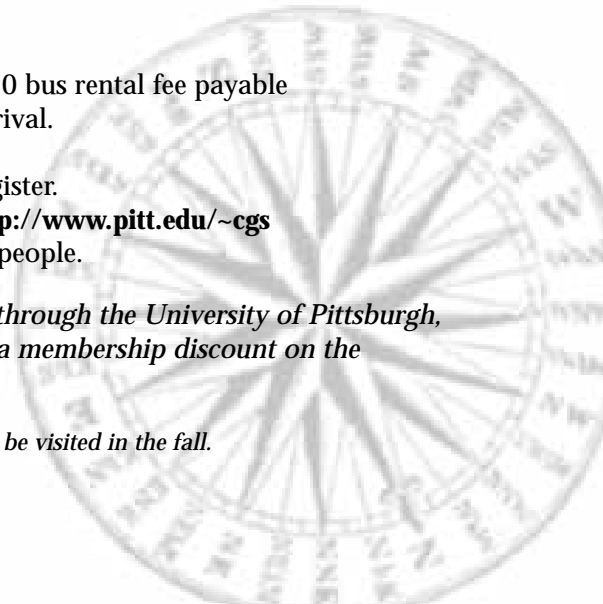
Al Tannler and Mary Ann Eubanks of Landmarks will lead a bus tour to four Art Deco schools: Lincoln, Mifflin, Lemington, and Schiller.

\$24 per person, plus a \$10 bus rental fee payable to the instructor upon arrival.

Call 412-648-2560 to register.
Or register on-line at: <http://www.pitt.edu/~cgs>
The tour is limited to 40 people.

Since this tour is offered through the University of Pittsburgh, Landmarks cannot offer a membership discount on the registration fee.

**Schools by M. M. Steen will be visited in the fall.*



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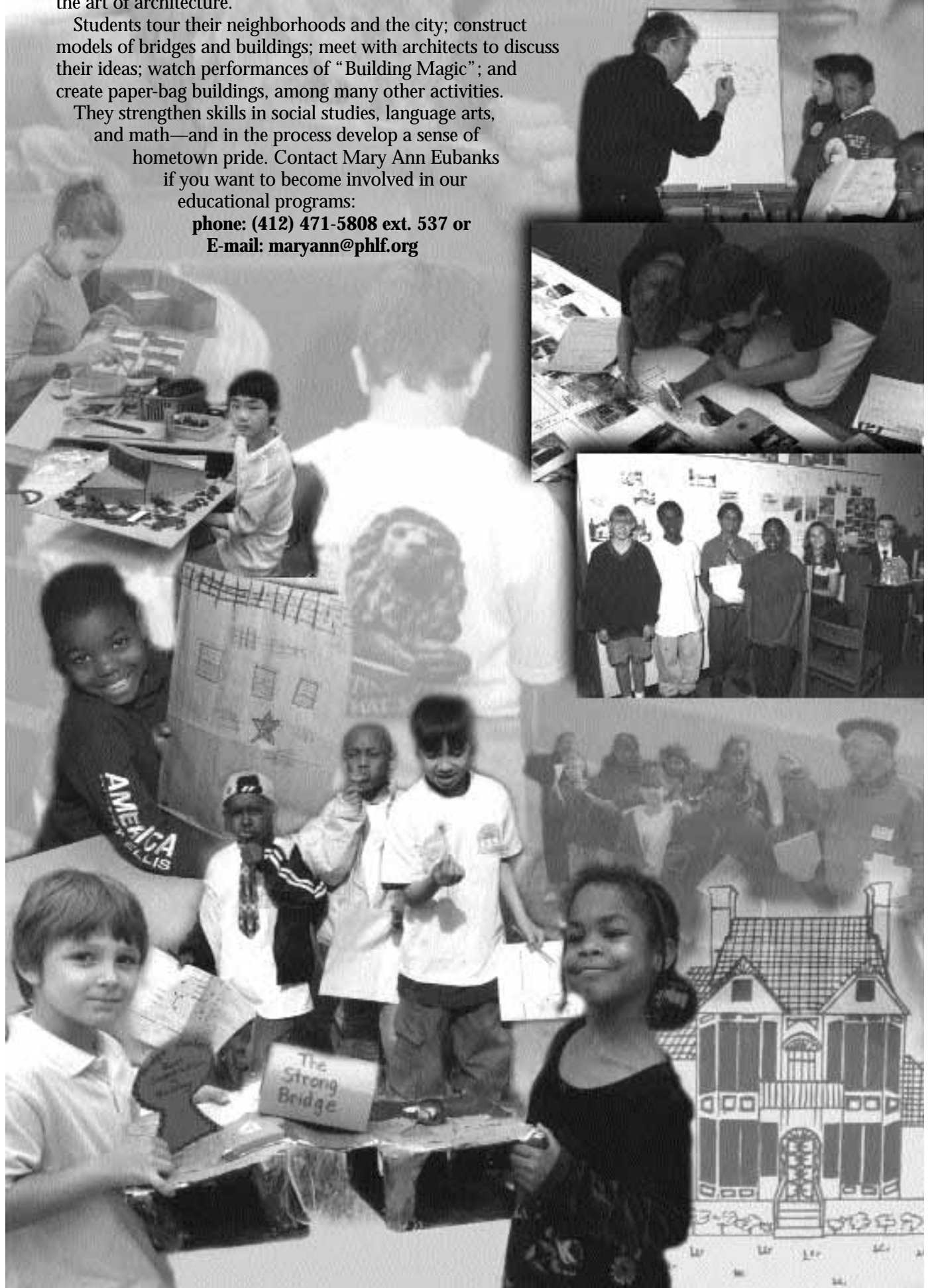
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Many Pittsburgh Public Schools team with Landmarks' education staff to promote student achievement through the art of architecture.

Students tour their neighborhoods and the city; construct models of bridges and buildings; meet with architects to discuss their ideas; watch performances of "Building Magic"; and create paper-bag buildings, among many other activities.

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