

# LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT



## **(FORMER) LYMAN TRUMBULL PUBLIC SCHOOL BUILDING**

**5200-5224 N. Ashland Ave. / 1600-1612 W. Foster Ave.**



**CITY OF CHICAGO**  
**Lori E. Lightfoot, Mayor**

**Department of Planning and Development**  
**Eleanor Esser Gorski, AIA, Acting Commissioner**

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

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

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

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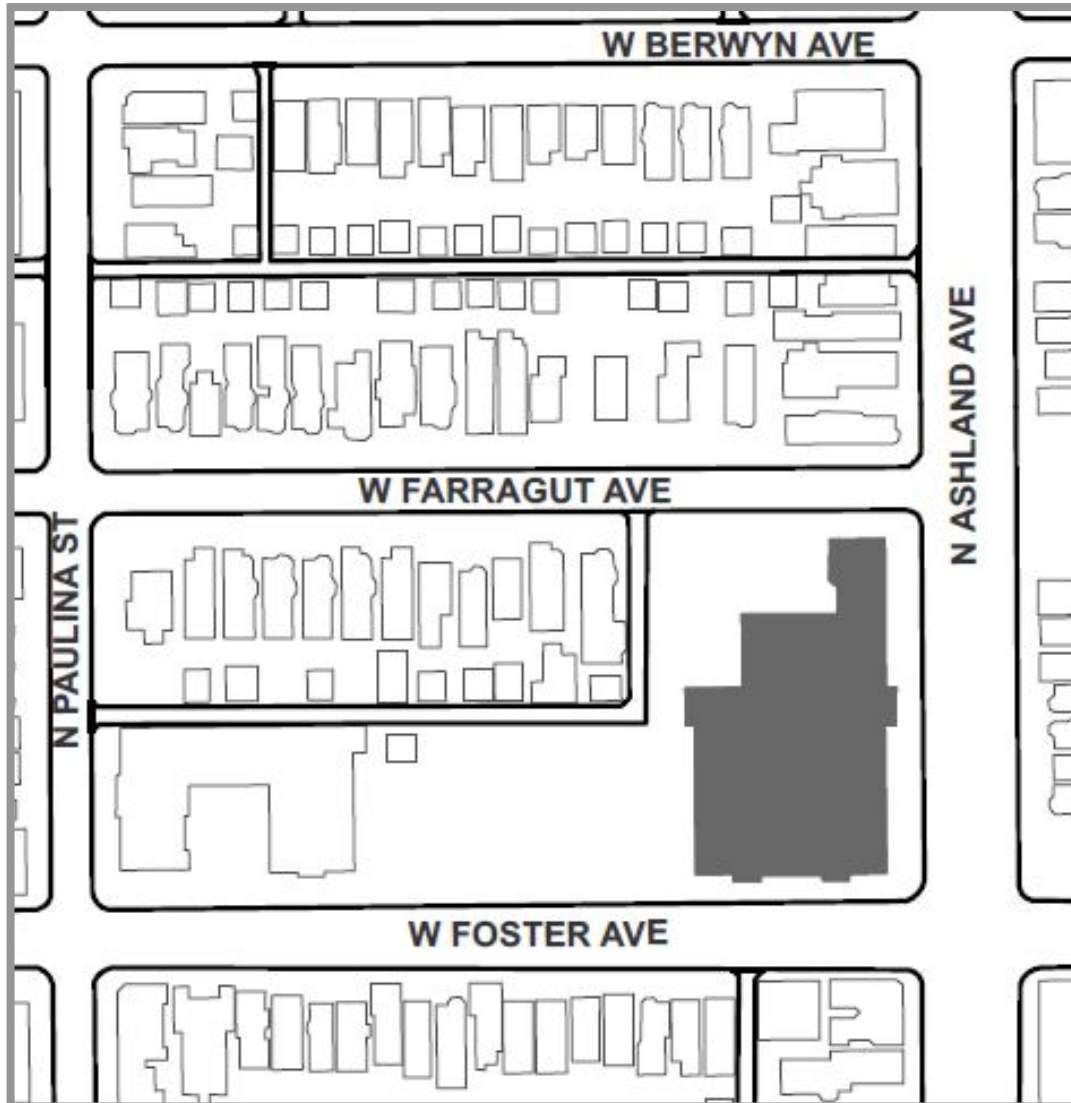
**DATES:**           **1908-1909 (original building)**  
                          **1913 (north wing)**

**Architects:**     **Dwight H. Perkins (original building)**  
                          **Arthur Hussander (north wing)**

The former Lyman Trumbull Public School Building was designed by distinguished Chicago architect Dwight H. Perkins and completed in 1909. Perkins served as architect for the Chicago Board of Education from 1905 to 1910 and is regarded as one of the board's most progressive architects. Built as an elementary school, Trumbull is regarded as one of Perkins's most innovative designs for the Board of Education. With its lack of historical ornamentation, emphasis on simple brick materials, strong massing and a combination of vertical and horizontal emphases, the design of Trumbull exemplifies the Prairie School of architecture,

The building is listed as a contributing building in the Andersonville Commercial Historic District which was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2010. In 1996, the *Chicago Historic Resources Survey* rated the building orange for its architectural and historical significance within its context of Edgewater and Andersonville. The building is also published in the *AIA Guide to Chicago* and Carl W. Condit's influential architectural history *The Chicago School of Architecture* published in 1964.

The former Lyman Trumbull Public School Building is identified as a significant building in the *Chicago Public School Buildings, Pre-1940 Context Statement* adopted by the Commission on April 4, 2019. The context statement narrates the history of Chicago Public Schools and the buildings associated with that institutions history, including Trumbull. The context statement establishes that Chicago Public School buildings may be considered for landmark designation if they meet Criterion 1 for heritage and Criterion 4 for architecture as well as the separate integrity criterion. The former Lyman Trumbull Public School Building meets Criterion 1 as a tangible symbol of the social and educational reforms put forward by the Progressive Movement in the late-19th and early-20th centuries. Trumbull also meets Criterion 4 as an innovative example of the Prairie School movement in architecture. Furthermore, the building was designed by Dwight H. Perkins, who meets Criterion 5 as a significant Chicago architect. For a more complete history of the architecture of the Chicago Public Schools and Dwight H. Perkins, the reader is advised to consult the *Chicago Public School Buildings, Pre-1940*



The former Lyman Trumbull Public School Building, shaded gray in the above map, is located at the northwest corner of Foster and Ashland Avenues in the Andersonville neighborhood within the larger Edgewater Community Area.

*Context Statement.* The scope of this brief designation report is limited to a description of the former Lyman Trumbull Public School Building and a biography of Dwight H. Perkins.

The building ceased operating as a public elementary school in 2013 and was eventually sold to a private entity by the Public Building Commission (PBC) of Chicago. The PBC required future owners of the building to preserve it and to consent to Chicago Landmark Designation. The building currently houses the Chicago Waldorf School.

## **BUILDING DESCRIPTION**

Eschewing the conventional monotone, red-brick structures adorned with surface ornament embraced by his predecessors, Dwight H. Perkins brought public school architecture into a new era both inside and out. Having designed distinctly Prairie School-influenced schools such as the Graeme Stewart Elementary School, the Lyman Trumbull Elementary building on Chicago's North Side and its identical counterpart on the West Side, Tilton School, also exhibited the strong geometry and use of brickwork seen in Prairie School architecture but also incorporated the repeating rhythm of vertical piers characteristic of the Chicago School of architecture.

Given his background, it was no great surprise that Perkins would look to the no-nonsense, economics-driven design approach he had cut his teeth on at Burnham and Root when exhorted by the Chicago School Board President Alfred R. Urion to abandon what he termed as Perkins' "extravagant" designs in favor of a less expensive type to be replicated with greater efficiency. Urion called upon Perkins to create school buildings that embodied "simplicity and strength of construction...with beauty of outline, harmony of color, etc." Although the building the Board President espoused as a foremost example of a building in this vein was William Mundie's 1901 Libby School, what he got from Perkins was more like an austere factory building whose simplicity was meant to convey economy.

The stripped-down elevations of this four-story structure, more or less square in plan and later extended northward, gave it a monolithic character. Powerful, battered towers framing the primary entrance and initially establishing the northwest and northeast corners punctuate and rise above the horizontal dominance of the building's dimensions. Perhaps most striking was the use of alternating colors of brick which broke up large fields of masonry and created a rhythmic language which visually connected all elevations of the structure.

The primary elevation at Foster Avenue has the feel of a temple façade with solid walls at either end and a central entry pavilion framed by projecting towers separated by an architrave. The architrave is ornamented with brick masonry set in diamond and rectangular patterns. Terra cotta in a matching color scheme frames the architrave and is used as banding at the top of piers. Pyramidal roofs on the towers and a central pediment included in the structure originally but now missing would have further emphasized the verticality and symmetry drawing focus to the entry. The tapering verticals of the towers are repeated in the limestone window and door surrounds. Bay windows are set into the base of each tower and single windows punctuate the upper floors with decorative masonry used for spandrels and as a frame around the windows.





**The design of the former Lyman Trumbull Public School Building relies on bold, geometric massing in lieu of traditional architectural ornamentation; the color scheme consists of two-tone brick set in horizontal bands (top). The entrance pavilion (lower left) is framed by projecting towers and surmounted by an entablature with brick set in a geometric pattern. The façade is articulated by deep vertical piers (lower right).**

Tall, segmented windows above the three double entry doors are separated by thin vertical piers. Limestone coping tops the towers here and at the other elevations with the remainder of the structure topped by terra cotta coping.

Bedford stone wraps the base of the structure and is topped by light tan brick along the first floor. Continuous light tan brick is also employed at the top of the structure to create a subtle, flush cornice and at corners to frame each elevation. Polychromatic piers divide primary elevations into grids. Within each block of the grid, five tall windows are recessed and separated by vertical piers. Terra cotta headers and sills frame these and all windows on the structure. Brick spandrel panels are set below the second and third floor windows. Between the third and fourth floors, continuous flush bands create a stronger horizontal to visually separate the upper portion of the building. Simple, large, terra cotta scuppers are installed above the interior polychromatic piers. Stone banding above the first floor and continuous terra cotta headers above the fourth floor windows extends down across the top of each pier, creating a subtle, shared vocabulary.

Ground floor auditoria were an important interior feature of architect Dwight Perkins's school designs. He designed these spaces to be used after school hours by neighborhood residents for cultural programs, adding utility to the school building beyond the school day. The auditorium at Trumbull is located just inside the entrance doors on W. Foster Avenue. Inside these doors there is an entrance vestibule with an arched plaster ceiling pierced with bull's eye openings that draw in natural light from the transom windows over the entrance doors. The walls of the vestibule are clad in a field of beige glazed brick with olive glazed brick accents, a wall finish that continues into the auditorium. The 360-seat auditorium features a domed ceiling which was originally pieced with skylights though these windows have been covered and the openings plastered over. A raised stage topped with an arched proscenium are the focal point of the space.

Ample lighting and the use of skylights were another feature of Perkins's designs and skylights do survive over four open stairwells that serve the classroom floors of the building just outside the auditorium. These skylit stairwells feature glazed brick wainscoting, cast-iron carriages and newel posts and wrought-iron balusters. The treads and risers are a painted cementitious material

Construction of the building began in October 1908 and the school opened in September 1909. It was dedicated in April 1910 when it was named for Lyman Trumbull, a Civil War Era U.S. Senator who supported the abolition of slavery.

Board of Education architect Arthur Hussander oversaw construction of a wing which was built in 1913 extending the east elevation northward and mirroring the design of the existing structure. This wing was part of Perkins' original design and it was meant to respond to the school system's seemingly perpetual need to respond to localized growth of student populations. Although a second wing at the west elevation was also shown in architectural plans, it was never built.





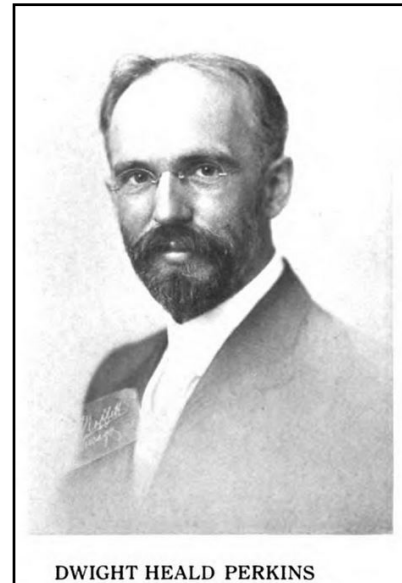
Ground-auditoria were an important part of Dwight Perkin's school designs as he felt these space could be used by neighborhood residents for cultural events, thus maximizing the utility of the school building after school hours. The auditorium at Trumbull features a domed ceiling with pendentives framing the balcony.



Skylights are another element that are characteristic of Perkins's schools, and they survive at four open stairwells at Trumbull.

## ARCHITECT DWIGHT H. PERKINS

**Dwight H. Perkins (1867 – 1941)** is significant to Chicago's architectural, social, and planning history for his dedication to the city's welfare and for his architectural work during the rise of the Prairie School. Born in Memphis, Tennessee in 1867, Perkins moved with his family to Chicago at age twelve. Before completing high school, the death of his father forced him to find employment to help support his family. He took a position at the Chicago Stockyards before entering the office of architect Frederick R. Schock. With the help of family friend Mrs. Charles Hitchcock, Perkins enrolled in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's architecture program. Afterward he remained in Boston as a university instructor and as an assistant in office of architect Henry Hobson Richardson.



DWIGHT HEALD PERKINS  
**Portrait of Dwight H. Perkins  
(from *Brickbuilder*, June  
1915)**

Perkins returned to Chicago in 1888 and worked briefly with Wheelock & Clay before becoming John Wellborn Root's assistant at Burnham & Root. Following Root's death in 1891, and while Daniel Burnham was involved in organizing and designing the fair grounds for the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, Perkins became the manager of the firm's tremendous project schedule. Before leaving the firm, Perkins completed several of Root's last commissions, and some of Chicago's most recognized Chicago School buildings including the Monadnock Block (a designated Chicago landmark).

Perkins started his own firm in early 1894, following a commission from the Steinway Piano Company for a new 11-story office tower and recital hall (completed 1896, demolished). The design of the Steinway Building reflected to the Beaux Arts Classicism made popular by Burnham and his plan for the 1893 fair. When the Steinway Building was completed, Perkins took offices in the building and established there a collaborative studio space in the attic that became an important center in the development of the Prairie School of architecture, an original form of American architecture inspired by the Midwest prairie. Irving and Allen Pond, Robert Spencer, Perkin's cousin Marion Mahony, and Walter Burley Griffin all collaborated in Perkins's new studio space; Frank Lloyd Wright opened his first office in the building.

The civic and social responsibilities of architecture to the city were the focus of Perkins's practice. Perkins's progressive attitude and sense for how architecture could serve as the framework for social improvement developed from an early age. His mother, Marion Perkins, was involved in social reform and was an associate of Jane Addams, founder of the Hull House Settlement. The need for new supportive centers for poorer immigrant and working-class communities led Perkins to collaborate with and design settlement houses for both the University of Chicago and Northwestern University; only the University of Chicago settlement house was completed (demolished).

During the 1890s, a new type of study that mapped social problems in the city identified geographic disparities experienced between poor and more affluent neighborhoods as potential sources for certain social and health issues in poorer neighborhoods. In 1903, Perkins and landscape architect Jens Jensen published a report for the Special Parks Commission that detailed the needs for open space in the city. The report called for the consolidation of Chicago's many park commissions, and outlined a proposal for the addition of dozens of small, but accessible, neighborhood parks and playgrounds as breathing spaces across the city. These parks would open congested neighborhoods and improve the health and wellbeing of residents – especially children. By 1907, the creation of dozens of new parks brought green space, recreation facilities, baths, and social services to many Chicago neighborhoods. Perkins continued to promote an even greater series of parks by advocating for the creation of the forest preserves that today ring Chicago's western boundaries; a section of preserve in Evanston was named in his honor.

Perkins joined with architect John Leonard Hamilton in 1905, forming the firm of Perkins & Hamilton. The firm moved into a new four-story studio and office designed by Perkins in 1907, directly across from the old Water Tower, in what was then an artist enclave known as "Towertown" (the studio is a designated Chicago landmark). Hamilton graduated from the Chicago Manual Training School in 1895 and, like Perkins, entered the offices of D. H. Burnham & Co. He later joined the architectural department of the Board of Education under the direction of board architect Normond Smith Patton, and then entered the offices of Frost & Granger, before joining Perkins. That same year Perkins was appointed architect to the Board of Education, a position which allowed him to apply and develop his social and aesthetic ideas toward the improvement of education. Perkins's school board team included a young John C. Christianson, who later became the school board architect.

Perkins led the design of many of the firm's works between 1905 and 1910, while also serving as school board architect. Several commissions involved the design of field houses and other practical structures for the very parks that he had helped create; the Hamlin and Seward Park fieldhouses were completed during this time. These new park structures allowed Perkins to apply his ideas for improving the city. The buildings emphasize Perkins's particular Prairie School style of architecture in form, and promoted social services and enhancements that reflected the rising progressive movement.

Some of the firm's more familiar park projects can be seen in Lincoln Park, which was improved substantially and extended during the 1910s. At the time, Bryan Lathrop, businessman and president of the Graceland Cemetery Association was part of the Lincoln Park Commission. He supported having parks be free of buildings, but recognized some structures were "necessary evils." Perkins & Hamilton designed the South Pond Refectory, now known as Café Brauer, in 1908 (a designated Chicago landmark). It occupies a prominent location on the South Pond and represents some of the firm's best work. Its brickwork, Rookwood tiles, and overall seamless unity with the surrounding landscape make it immediately recognizable as a refined creation of the Prairie School movement. Perkins & Hamilton, and after 1911 as Perkins, Fellows, and Hamilton with the addition of William Kinnie Fellows, the firm designed the boat house (1908), the American Institute of Architects gold-medal winning Lion House in

Lincoln Park Zoo (1912, a designated Chicago landmark), the Fresh Air Sanitarium (1913, now the Theater on the Lake), North Pond Refectory (1913, occupied by North Pond Café), and even the familiar cast concrete lampposts that line the Lincoln Park’s roadways (1911).

In 1910, Perkins’s position as architect to the Board of Education came to an abrupt end as board members rallied to remove him on charges of incompetence, insubordination, and extravagance. Following a public hearing insisted upon by Perkins, the board found him guilty only on the charge of insubordination. Perkins’s interest in the design of schools did not end with his dismissal from the Chicago Schools, instead, his firm continued to design dozens of schools, each with their own design advances, across Chicago’s suburban communities and even across the Midwest. In, 1925, Perkins, who had become completely deaf, left his practice, but continued to serve on park and forest preserve boards.

## **CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION**

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

The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the former Lyman Trumbull Public School Building be designated as a Chicago Landmark.

### ***Criterion 1: Critical Part of City’s Heritage***

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

- The former Lyman Trumbull Public School Building reflects the importance of Chicago's public schools to the city's social and cultural history.
- Public education has historically been one of the most important responsibilities of Chicago government, and public school buildings are visual and social anchors in the city's neighborhoods.
- The former Lyman Trumbull Public School Building is designed with large windows for ample light and ventilation and a large playground that reflects the Progressive Era’s desire to enhance the learning experience through architecture and design.

#### ***Criterion 4: Important Architecture***

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

- The former Lyman Trumbull Public School Building exemplifies the Prairie School of architecture, a historically-important and innovative style derived from the Midwest plains and developed by a circle of Chicago architects.
- Innovative and rare aspects of the design of the former Lyman Trumbull Public School Building include its strong geometric massing and its use of alternating horizontal bands of light and dark colored brick that extends across vertical piers and window mullions.
- The use of brick set in geometric patterns at the entrance entablature reveals a high level of craftsmanship in traditional masonry materials.

#### ***Criterion 5: Important Architect***

*Its identification as the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose individual work is significant in the history or development of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois, or the United States.*

- The original part of the former Lyman Trumbull Public School Building was designed by Dwight H. Perkins, a significant architect in the context of Chicago architecture.
- As Architect for the Chicago Board of Education, Perkins designed more than 40 school buildings and additions to existing buildings, many of which are innovative in overall design and spatial planning.
- The former Lyman Trumbull Public School Building through its handsomely-designed Prairie School exterior, is a fine and significant example of Perkins' efforts in progressive school architecture.
- In private practice, Perkins designed many significant buildings in Chicago and elsewhere, including the South Pond Refectory (now Cafe Brauer) and the Lincoln Park Lion House, both Chicago Landmarks.
- Perkins is significant in Chicago planning history as a strong advocate for Chicago parks and playgrounds and for the creation of the Forest Preserves of Cook County District.

The former Lyman Trumbull Public School Building also meets the additional requirements for designation outlined in the *Chicago Public School Buildings, Pre-1940 Context Statement* adopted by the Commission on April 4, 2019, which state the following:



- The building must have been built as a Chicago Public School before 1940, though it need not currently function as a Chicago Public School.
- The architectural style of the building must reflect at least one of the styles identified in the associated property descriptions in Part 2 of this Context Statement.
- The design of the building must reflect the character defining features identified in Part 2 of this Context Statement with respect to site plan, plan configuration roof shape, fenestration, entrances and additions.
- Additions built outside the period of significance (i.e. after 1940) must not overwhelm original designs.

### ***Integrity Criterion***

*It must have “a significant historic, community, architectural or aesthetic interest or value, the integrity of which is preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and ability to express such historic, community, architectural, or aesthetic interest or value.”*

Overall the building maintains a very high degree of integrity to its original design and appearance with only minor alterations. The most prominent change is the removal of the decorative pyramidal roofs over the corner towers. Some window openings, most notably at the east and west towers, have been infilled. The original windows have been replaced. These changes are common for schools of this vintage and they do not prevent the building from conveying its architectural and historic values.

## **SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES**

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

Based upon its preliminary evaluation of the former Lyman Trumbull Public School Building, the Commission staff recommends that the significant features be identified as:

- All exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the building; and
- the first floor auditorium and vestibule leading to it from the W. Foster Avenue entrance; and
- the four open stairwells at the perimeter of the auditorium from the first floor to the fourth floor skylights.



**An archival photo of Trumbull (top, source: Courtesy of Bill Latoza) from the early-20th century and a current photo shows that the building possesses excellent integrity. The most prominent change is the removal of the pyramidal roofs over the towers.**

## **SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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### **National Register Nomination**

*Andersonville Commercial Historic District* (2010).

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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*Lyman Trumbull School, Foster and Ashland Avenues, Chicago, Ill.*

**An early-20th century postcard view of the former Lyman Trumbull Public School Building anchoring the intersection of Foster and Ashland Avenues. Source: Courtesy of Bill Latoza**



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