

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT



(Former) James Mulligan Public School Building 1855-63 N. Sheffield Ave.

**Final Landmark Recommendation adopted by the Commission on Chicago
Landmarks, February 6, 2014**



**CITY OF CHICAGO
Rahm Emanuel, Mayor**

**Department of Planning and Development
Andrew J. Mooney, Commissioner**

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

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

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

(FORMER) JAMES MULLIGAN PUBLIC SCHOOL BUILDING 1855-63 N. SHEFFIELD AVE.

BUILT: 1889-1890
ARCHITECT: CHARLES RUDOLPH
(BOARD OF EDUCATION ARCHITECT)

Public school buildings built and operated by the Chicago Board of Education are an important building type in Chicago neighborhoods. School architecture reflects the aspirations and powers of civic leaders to provide for the future of the City and its citizens. The (Former) James Mulligan Public School Building exemplifies this long-standing commitment to the education of Chicago's children.

Located in the Lincoln Park neighborhood on Chicago's North Side, Mulligan exemplifies late-nineteenth century ideas about school architecture with its large scale, rectangular form, masonry construction, and large, high-ceilinged classrooms with tall windows for ample light and air circulation. The building's Italianate- and Queen Anne-style detailing is executed with excellent craftsmanship in traditional building materials, including red pressed brick, molded brick, yellow Joliet and gray limestone, and pressed metal.

THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL ARCHITECTURE TO 1889

Chicago's rich history of public education dates to the incorporation of the City in 1837, when management of the schools was vested in the newly created City Council. As directed by the City's Charter, Council members immediately appointed a Board of Inspectors—predecessors to the Board of Education—to oversee management of the schools. Progress in establishing a system of free public schools had to wait, however, due to the Panic of 1837 and

the Depression that followed. Only a few meager frame buildings were erected over the next several years. During that time, the State Legislature expanded the City Council's powers over school matters, giving it authority to sell or lease school lands, and to raise funds by taxation when necessary for constructing school buildings.

Chicago's first permanent school was erected in 1845 on Madison Street near Dearborn. Built at a cost of \$7,500, the two-story brick structure measured 60 x 80 feet and was known as School No. 1 until its name was later changed to the Dearborn School. The building (now demolished) was designed in the Greek Revival architectural style, which had been America's favorite building style since the 1820s, and had Classical pilasters and a pedimented front gable.

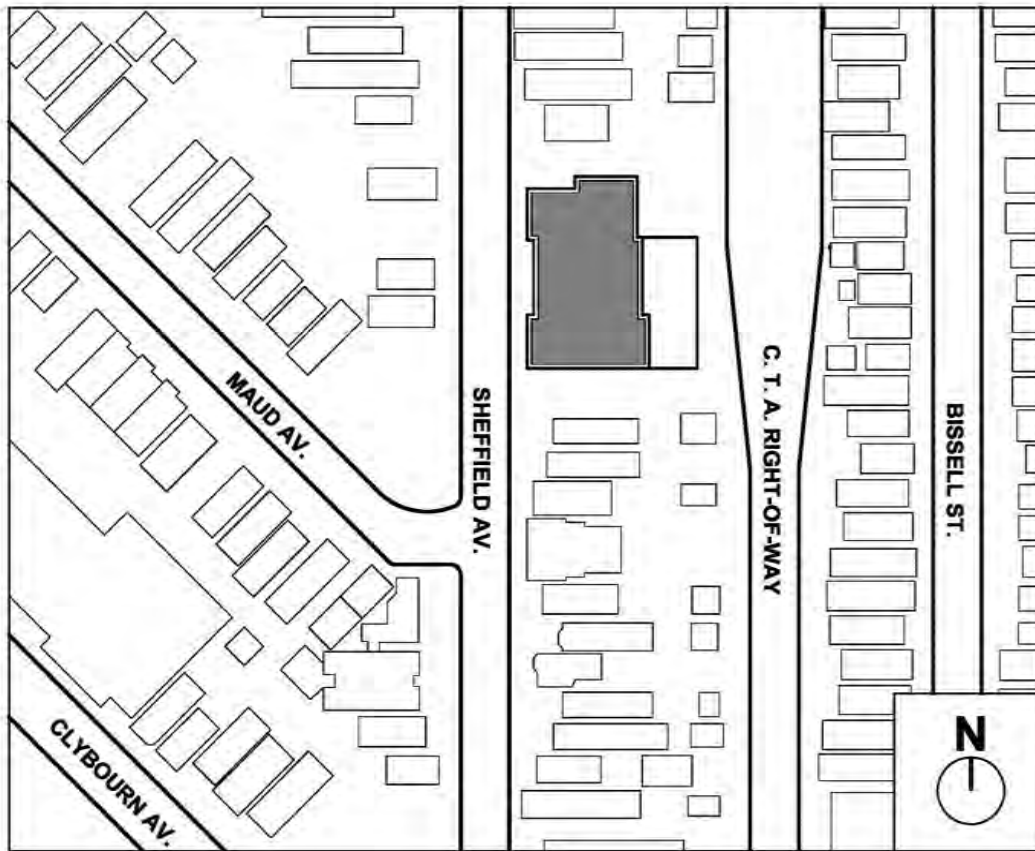
Chicago's public school enrollment remained small through the 1840s and 1850s. Although all children five years and over were eligible to attend the public schools, only 1,794 children were enrolled in 1849. In the elementary grades, instruction was offered in spelling, reading, grammar, penmanship, arithmetic, geography, and morals. By 1857, the City had just ten public schools—including its first high school (built 1856)—and a total of just 4,380 students. The new Chicago High School, located on W. Monroe between Halsted and Desplaines (now demolished) was a substantial building built in a modified Gothic Revival style.

Chicago's student population rose to nearly 41,000 during the 1860s, reflecting the phenomenal growth of the City's population during this decade. An influx of new public school buildings and additions to established schools was urgently needed. Prior to 1865, money for erecting school buildings came in part from special taxes levied for the purpose, and in part from the school fund income. Between 1867 and 1870, however, bonds totaling \$1.2 million were issued for the purpose of purchasing new school sites and constructing buildings upon them. The schools erected during the sixties were considerably more substantial than their predecessors, costing from \$30,000 to \$75,000 each, reflecting the City's commitment to investing in public education. For example, Haven School, located at 1472 S. Wabash Ave. (now demolished), was designed in a handsome Flemish Revival style.

19th-century school architecture theories

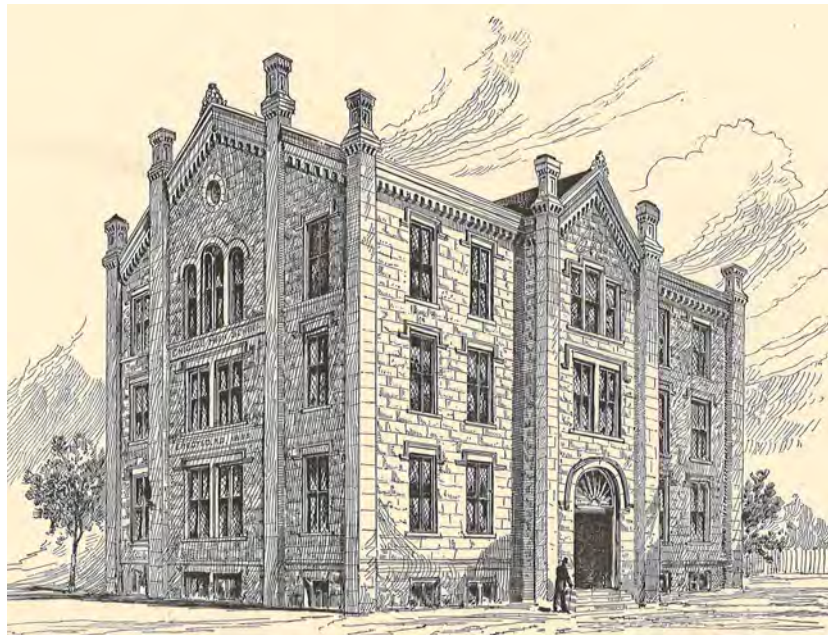
Chicago grew rapidly through the late nineteenth century, and the need for new schools seemed never ending. The noted architectural historian Carl Condit quotes Chicago Board of Education statistics that the City built 169 public school buildings between 1871 and 1900. Based on information gathered by the Chicago Historic Resources Survey, certain common physical characteristics of Chicago schools during this period can be identified. They commonly were two to four stories in height and built with load-bearing exterior walls of brick, usually red. Facades were symmetrical, with central entrances embellished with ornament. Windows were tall and narrow. Classrooms, the number of which could vary, opened off central corridors dominated by wooden staircases. Architectural styles varied, including mainly the Italianate and Queen Anne, while overall building form, plan and general arrangement of windows remained consistent.

Chicago school architecture throughout the late 19th century reflected the views of educators that school design was an important factor in the education of children. Good exterior design contributed to the moral and intellectual development of a child. Interior design, with an emphasis on proper illumination, sanitation, and ventilation, accompanied by appropriate furniture and equipment, made it possible for children to learn. Comfortable, attractive school buildings would also encourage attendance and achievement.

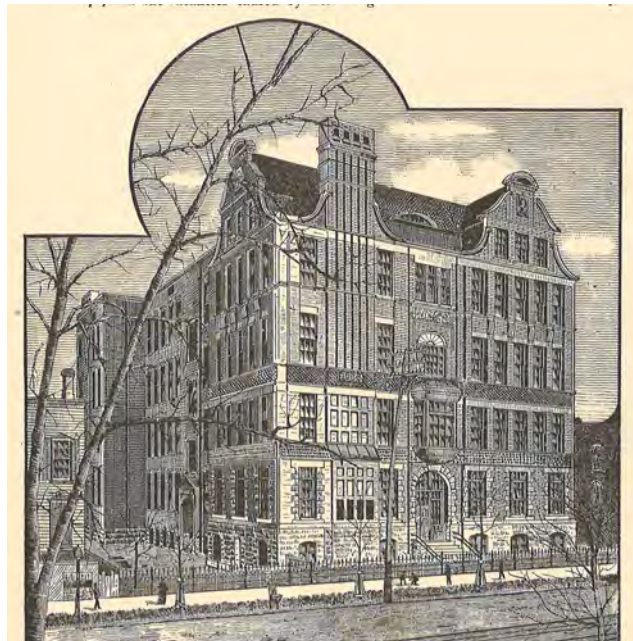


The (Former) James Mulligan Public School is a three-story with high-raised basement brick school building built in 1889-1890. It is located at 1855-1863 N. Sheffield Ave. in the Lincoln Park community area.

The earliest permanent public school building in Chicago was the Dearborn School, (now demolished) built in 1845 and located on W. Madison St. near Dearborn.



School buildings built in the 1850s and 1860s were larger and more urban in scale and design. Representative examples include: (middle) Chicago High School the City's first public high school, built in 1856 and located on W. Monroe between Halsted and Desplaines, and (bottom) Haven Public School at 1472 S. Wabash Ave., built in 1861. Both school buildings have been demolished.



The "school hygiene" movement during the 19th century also saw the proper design of school buildings as a public-health issue. Classrooms with adequate space, light, heat, ventilation, and sanitation were of prime importance in the protection of students' health, and by extension, the health of their communities. Healthful surroundings directly impacted the ability of students to learn.

Such views can be traced back to educator and author William A. Alcott, who established, in his 1832 *Essay on the Construction of School-Houses*, design standards that held in American school architecture until the mid-twentieth century. Alcott was less concerned about exterior style and more about internal layout and function. In his view, an ideal school house contained large, high-ceilinged classrooms, large windows providing good light and air circulation, and adequate playgrounds. Alcott wrote:

The strongest evidence is everywhere afforded, that in constructing and furnishing schools, we too often consult our own convenience, rather than the comfort, welfare, or accommodation of our children. Location, size, structure, internal arrangement and furniture—all combine to force upon our minds the same conclusion. The many dark, crowded, ill-looking, and sometimes disorderly and filthy huts, called, or rather mis-called school-houses, seem to have been provided as a kind of necessary evil, rather than places of voluntary and cheerful resort.

Alcott's basic building program became the standard for school building construction through the United States, including Chicago, and the (Former) James Mulligan Public School is a good example of this basic school building type.

Chicago school buildings in the 1870s and 1880s

The Great Fire of October 1871 dealt a severe blow to Chicago's public schools. Enrollment dropped from nearly 41,000 in 1870 to 3,500 in 1872. Ten school buildings—one in the South Division and nine in the North Division—valued at over a quarter of a million dollars, were destroyed by the Fire, leaving only two buildings in the North Division still standing. The State Legislature immediately passed an Act expanding the Board of Education's powers, making it independent of the City Council. The Board, which numbered fourteen members, quickly set about the work of reconstruction, and by the end of 1873, most of the destroyed buildings were reconstructed.

An editorial in the May 3, 1874, *Chicago Tribune* reviewed the City's public schools, stating that:

No one can examine the Public Schools of this city at all carefully or intelligently, without being impressed with their admirable character. Free to the poorest child in the city, and yet so conducted as to be in every respect suitable to the wealthiest. Every boy and girl in Chicago, who has the disposition and ability, may have completed the High School course of study, upon attaining the age of seventeen years. This course of study will compare favorably with the average college course.

Despite this praise, the pace of school building in Chicago continually failed to keep up with growing enrollment. Only eleven new schools were constructed in the three years following the 1871 Fire. In 1874, there were nearly 48,000 enrolled in the City's 39 public schools, of whom 10,000 children could only attend half-day sessions due to the lack of space. One of the new schools erected in 1874 was the King School, located on Harrison Street near Western (now demolished). This three-story brick structure was designed in the Italianate style and featured a

center-hall plan with four rooms on each floor that measured 28 x 33 feet, very much in the spirit of Alcott. King was used as a model for all Chicago public schools constructed during the 1870s, including the James Ward Public School at 2103-09 S. Shields (a designated Chicago Landmark), built in 1875 and remaining one of the oldest Chicago public schools still in educational use.

In the 1880s, new school construction continued at a rapid pace. Chicago was growing rapidly during this period, with the City's population increasing during the decade from 490,000 to 1,200,000, brought about through births, immigration and annexation of neighboring suburban townships. Chicago's school population increased accordingly. Also, in 1883 the Illinois General Assembly expanded compulsory education to children 8-14, increasing even more demand for schools. Chicago school buildings built during this period continued to have the same rectangular forms, large windows and high-ceilinged classrooms used by earlier school buildings, but were built in both older styles such as the Italianate, but also newly-popular architectural styles such as the Queen Anne. Many examples remain in use. The James Sexton Public School at 160 W. Wendell St., originally the North Division High School and built in 1882, is one example; it is a designated Chicago Landmark.

An important change in the design and construction of Chicago school buildings came in 1882, when the Board of Education created the position of "Architect" to the Board of Education. Until that time, the Board of Education had contracted with independent architects for school designs. Now, Chicago public school design and construction would be handled by in-house expertise. Public schools needed to be built quickly and economically in order to keep up with growing numbers of children, and having a dedicated Board of Education Architect and staff was seen as a step towards meeting this demand.

The first Board of Education Architect was Frederick Baumann, who remained in the position less than 4 months. Two other architects served briefly before the appointment of J. J. Flanders, whose tenure as Board of Education architect lasted almost five years. Flanders has previously been identified as the architect for the (Former) Mulligan Public School Building. However the Board of Education increasingly found cause during his tenure to question what was considered costly and "extravagant" school buildings, and Flanders was replaced by Charles Rudolph, beginning in December 1888. During his two-year stint as Architect, Rudolph designed at least a half-dozen school buildings, including Mulligan. (Interestingly, Flanders then replaced Rudolph as School Architect and served for an additional two years.)

BUILDING CONSTRUCTION AND DESCRIPTION

The (Former) James Mulligan Public School was constructed in 1889-1890. Although the Board of Education had first looked at the site, facing Sheffield near Willow, for a school as early as 1886, the 200 x 125 foot lot was not purchased until 1888; the price was \$8,579.14. The new school was seen as providing relief for the already-existing Headley, Newberry and Arnold school buildings. At its meeting of March 6, 1889, the Board of Education authorized the construction of the new building at a cost "not to exceed \$75,000." Building plans were approved by the Board on May 15, 1889, and contracts, amounting to \$62,920.25, were awarded on May 29, 1889. The building opened in September 1890 and at its opening accommodated 918 students.



Public school buildings built in the 1870s and 1880s in Chicago typically were boxy in overall form and with rows of large windows to provide ample light and air, reflecting the influence of educator William Alcott, who established school design standards in his 1832 *Essay on the Construction of School-Houses* that remained common in Chicago and elsewhere in the United States into the 20th century. Stylistically, both Italianate and Queen Anne-style details and ornament were used during this period. Representative school buildings are (top) James Ward Public School, built in 1875 and located at 2103-09 S. Shields, and James Sexton Public School, located at 160 W. Wendell and built in 1882. Both buildings are individually-designated Chicago Landmarks.

The new school building was named for Col. James A. Mulligan, who died a hero in the Civil War. The building is located on the west side of North Sheffield Ave., near W. Willow St. and 1½ blocks south of West Armitage Ave., and it backs onto the elevated tracks used by Chicago Transit Authority trains. (The elevated tracks were built during the 1890s, soon after the school building's completion in 1890.) The building has three full floors set atop a high raised basement. It is roughly rectangular in plan and cubic in overall form, with the central third of the building “pinched” inward slightly to create slightly projecting end pavilions. The building is constructed with load-bearing walls of dark-red pressed brick used for upper walls and yellow Joliet limestone for the building's base. Upper-floor trim is gray limestone used for window and door details and pressed metal for the building's cornice. Interior partitions are also brick, finished with plaster. Halls on each floor, oriented north-south, provide access to a total of 24 classrooms, each measuring 27 feet x 34 feet x 14 feet.

Windows are varied in pattern but share similarities in sash. Basement windows are round-arched and typically filled with 6-over-6 double-hung wooden sash. First-floor windows are segmental-arched and also have 6-over-6, double-hung wooden sash. Segmental-arched lintels for these windows are molded brick and spring from triangular gray limestone blocks. Second-floor windows are flat-arched with large, thick, heavy-looking gray limestone lintels. Sash for these windows are also 6-over-6, double-hung sash. Third-floor windows are round-arched and are filled with multi-paned, double-hung sash.

The building's main entrance, set off center on the main Sheffield facade, has a handsome gray limestone surround with foliate ornament and a tall pediment set on pilasters. “Mulligan School” is carved into the surround. Other applied ornament is restrained, including brick used in a three-dimensional “basket weave” motif in spandrels between second- and third-floor windows, and a molded-brick string course connecting third-floor windows. The building's pressed-metal cornice extends outward with boldly-molded dentils, or tooth-like details.

Overall, the building's design shows excellent craftsmanship in traditional masonry of brick and stone, and much of the building's visual appeal comes from the innate visual qualities and strength of these materials. The Joliet limestone base is roughly textured, while upper pressed-brick walls are smooth with narrow, precise joints. Light-and-dark contrasts between dark brick and light limestone also provide visual interest. Although the building's exterior details can be categorized as a mix of Italianate and Queen Anne details, the building's functional interior spaces with their abundant light and ventilation were the primary goals of the building's design, while ornamental style was secondary.

Architect Charles Rudolph

Although the (Former) James Mulligan Public School Building has previously been attributed to architect J. J. Flanders, Board of Education annual reports, *Chicago Tribune* articles, and other sources indicate that **Charles Rudolph (1854-1902)**, the Board of Education architect from December 1888 to December 1890, was the architect for the (Former) James Mulligan Public School. Rudolph was a native of St. Louis. In Chicago, he received early architectural training in the office of architect Augustus Bauer, then studied overseas at the Vienna (Austria) Polytechnicum, from which he graduated with honors.

After his return to Chicago, Rudolph partnered with C. J. Furst under the firm name of Furst & Rudolph. Among other works, he is credited with the design of the first natatorium, or swimming pool pavilion, in Chicago. He was elected a Fellow of the American Institute of Archi-



The (Former) James Mulligan Public School Building is a 3-story plus high basement brick building. Yellow Joliet limestone and gray limestone are used for trim, along with molded brick and pressed metal.

The building is roughly rectangular in overall plan and boxy in form, with classrooms on 3 floors opening off north-south-oriented hallways.



The (Former) James Mulligan Public School Building has both Italianate and Queen Anne-style details, but the building's visual appeal is largely due to the varied arrangement of large windows and the handsome, well-crafted use of brick, stone and pressed metal.

Top: The south façade, with windows lighting both a centrally-placed stair and classrooms on either side.

Bottom: A close-up view of the building's upper floor, illustrating its decorative use of brick, stone, and pressed metal.



pects in 1885. After his stint as Board of Education Architect, Rudolph returned to private practice. He returned to St. Louis in later years and practiced architecture until his death.

James A. Mulligan

James A. Mulligan (1829-1864), for whom Mulligan Public School was named, was one of Chicago's more prominent Civil War heroes. The choice of Mulligan for the new school's name was somewhat controversial at the time. The Lincoln Park neighborhood, within which the school is located, was in 1890 largely ethnic German in population, and many neighborhood residents would have preferred a German name for the new school.

Born in Ithaca, New York, Mulligan came to Chicago as a boy with his family. He was admitted to the Illinois bar as a lawyer in 1856. At the outset of the Civil War, he organized the 23rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment, locally known as the "Irish Brigade," and served as colonel to this military unit. An early battle in which Mulligan and the Regiment was involved was the Battle of Lexington (Missouri) on September 13, 1861, where Mulligan and his troops battled the pro-Confederate Missouri State Guard for control of this river town.

For several months in 1862, Col. Mulligan was commander of Camp Douglas, the famous prisoner-of-war camp located on what was then the southern edge of Chicago, near 35th St. and



James A. Mulligan, for whom Mulligan Public School was named, was a Chicago lawyer who served as a colonel in the Union army during the Civil War. Depicted with his military staff, Mulligan (center front) served as commander of the Camp Douglas prisoner-of-war camp on Chicago's South Side and as leader of the 23rd Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment. Mulligan died from wounds suffered in the Battle of Kernstown (Virginia) in 1864.

Lake Michigan. Later in the war, in 1863, Mulligan oversaw the construction of Fort Mulligan, an earthworks fortification in West Virginia.

Mulligan's last Civil War battles took place in Virginia in 1864. On July 3 of that year, he led a Union force against Confederates at the Battle of Leetown. Three weeks later, at the Second Battle of Kernstown, near Winchester, Virginia, Mulligan fell in battle, victim of a Confederate sharpshooter. Captured by Confederate soldiers, Mulligan died two days later on July 26.

Later history

The Mulligan Public School remained an elementary school in the Chicago Public School system for roughly a century. It closed in the early 1990s, but soon was leased to a private school. Finally closed in the early 2000s, the building remained vacant until the Board of Education recently sold it to a private developer, who intends to rehabilitate the building for rental apartments. The building is a contributing building to the Sheffield Historic District, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and the proposed rehabilitation plans to utilize the federal rehabilitation tax incentive.

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

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

The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the (Former) James Mulligan Public School Building be designated as a Chicago Landmark.

Criterion 1: Value as an Example of City, State or National Heritage

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

- The (Former) James Mulligan Public School exemplifies the importance of Chicago's public schools to the City's social and cultural history.
- Public education has historically been one of the most important responsibilities of Chicago government, and public school buildings often are visual and social anchors in the City's neighborhoods. Opened in 1890, the Mulligan Public School was one such institution in the Lincoln Park neighborhood for more than a century.

Criterion 4: Exemplary Architecture

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

- The (Former) James Mulligan Public School Building is a handsome example of a school building, a building type of significance to the history of Chicago and its neighborhoods.



The entrance to the (Former) James Mulligan Public School Building is finely built of gray limestone and detailed with Classical-style ornament.

Views of building details, including decorative brickwork and fencing.





Views of the building's basement windows, ornamented with stone and brick, and the building's pressed metal cornice.

- The building was finely built with Italianate and Queen Anne-style details in traditional materials, including red pressed brick, molded brick, yellow Joliet and gray limestone, and pressed metal, and exemplifies the fine craftsmanship that defines historic Chicago architecture.
- In its emphasis on large windows and high ceilings, which provided large, airy, well-lit classrooms, the building reflects late-nineteenth century school ideals.

Integrity Criterion

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

The (Former) James Mulligan Public School Building retains its historic integrity in location, site, setting, form and details. Overall, the building maintains a very high degree of architectural integrity on its exterior facades. The building retains exterior ornamental detailing, including a gray-limestone entrance surround and projecting pressed-metal cornice. It retains most historic windows as well.

Changes to the building's exterior are relatively minor and do not detract from its ability to convey its architectural and historical significance. Non-historic front doors and a small amount of non-historic window sash comprise the most important changes to the building's historic appearance.

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

SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

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

Based on its evaluation of the (Former) James Mulligan Public School Building, the Commission recommends that the significant features be identified as:

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

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Historic Preservation Division, HED: pp. 5, 9 (top), 11, 12, 15, 16, & 17.

Gilbert & Bryson, *Chicago and its Makers*: p. 6 (top)

Andreas, *History of Chicago*: pp. 6 (middle & bottom), 13.

Commission on Chicago Landmarks photograph files: p. 9 (bottom).

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