

**NEWTON PUBLIC BUILDINGS SURVEY
PHASE II – ANALYSIS OF HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE**

Building Analysis

Ward Elementary School



Address: 10 Dolphin Road
Year of Construction: 1928

Level of Significance: Moderate

Recommended Treatment Level: Rehabilitation

PART I - Analysis of Historical Significance

Building History

The Ward Elementary School was designed by James H. Ritchie & Associates in the Tudor Revival style, and built in 1928. The school was the fifth school building constructed within Newton in the late 1920s through 1930s in response to the rapid population growth the city experienced beginning in the mid-1800s. After World War I, a period of time that saw limited public building construction, the need for new schools had become particularly acute. Eventually, fourteen new school buildings were constructed in Newton between 1921 and 1939 to meet this increased need.

The school was built on land owned by the Ward family, which was willed to the City of Newton by John Ward (1825-1911). The school was named for an earlier John Ward (1626-1708), one of the first settlers of Newton. Ward was presented with a gift of 40 acres in the town from his father-in-law, Edward Jackson, upon his marriage to Jackson's daughter Hannah. Eventually the Ward family owned approximately 500 acres of land in the Newton area. Ward was Newton's first representative to the General Court and was a member of the committee that planned Newton's first meetinghouse.

The new school building was designed to fit into the residential style of the adjacent Fred Holland Chamberlin subdivision, developed in 1926. Most of the houses adjacent to the school building are also Tudor Revival style. The original building had eleven classrooms, a kindergarten space, two play rooms, an auditorium and a library.

Architect James H. Ritchie was born and educated in Scotland. From 1908 until his death in 1964, he practiced in Boston. During his career, he designed many institutional buildings, including several in Newton, and two houses for himself in Newton. From approximately 1923-1927, Ritchie was in the partnership of Ritchie, Parsons & Taylor; during these years, his firm remodeled the Somerville City Hall (1923-4) and designed the Lexington High School (1924) and the Newton Centre Branch Library (1927). The partnership dissolved, with Ritchie forming his own firm: James H. Ritchie and Associates. This firm designed the Ward Elementary School (1928), the Police Headquarters and Courthouse (1931) and built an addition on the F.A. Day Junior High School, now known as the Education Center. Ritchie remained in active practice until the early 1960s. His firm, later named The Ritchie Organization, is still in practice today, as TRO Jung|Brannen, one of the largest international architecture/engineering firms in the northeast.

James H. Ritchie and Associates were also responsible for additions to the building in 1949 and 1956. Other changes to the building include replacement of the original wood windows with aluminum windows in the 1980s.

Level of Significance

A well-designed building constructed of high-quality materials that fits well within the context of the buildings in the surrounding neighborhood.

Bibliography

- Kalish, Mark. "History of John Ward Elementary School." 1957-58. <http://ward.newton.k12.ma.us/about-ward>, (accessed 12/15/11).
- Koyl, George S., ed. *American Architects Directory: First Edition*. New York: R. R. Bowker Company, 1955.
- Massachusetts Historical Commission, "Form B NWT.2894—10 Dolphin Street" (1987).
- Massachusetts Historical Commission, "Form B NWT.3606—225 Nevada St" (1987), 2.
- United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service. "National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form: Newton 20th Century Multiple Resource Area Amendment, Newton, MA". 1990.
- TRO Jung|Brannen website, <http://www.trojb.com/history.aspx>, (accessed 2/24/12).

PART I - Analysis of Historical Significance: Historic Images

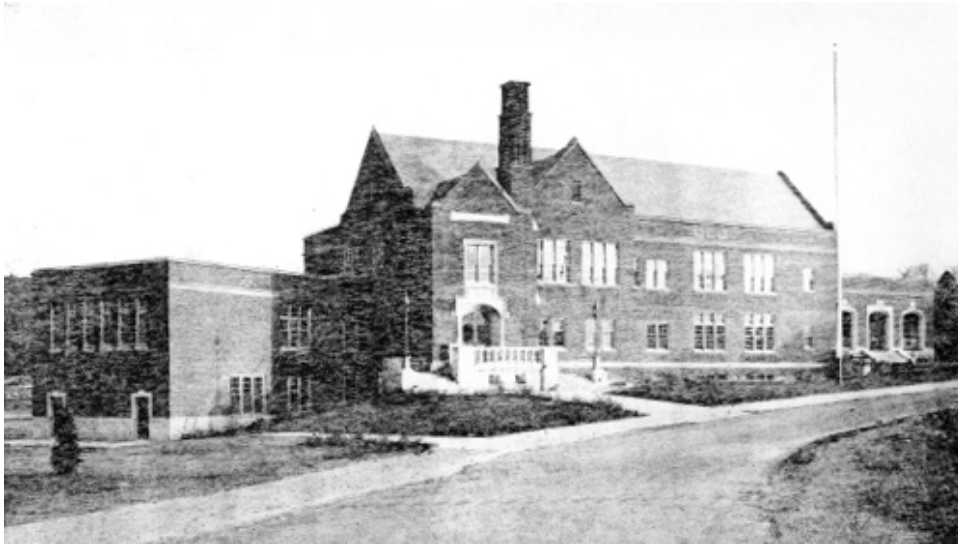


Figure 1: Ward Elementary School circa 1929 from the Newton City Report (Credit: MACRIS).

Part 2 – Description of Historically Significant Features

Exterior Visual Character

Setting

- Set within a residential neighborhood consisting primarily of Tudor Revival style residence constructed in a similar time period as the school.
- The building faces west towards Dolphin Street. The site slopes down towards the field to the north.

Shape

- The front building is rectangular, two stories tall and has angled side wings. There are two later additions at the rear
- The building becomes three stories at the rear of site where the grade is lower.

Roof and Related Features

- The slate-clad gable roof at the front portion of the original building terminates at brick parapets at the gable ends. The remaining portion of the building has a flat roof concealed behind a brick parapet.
- The building has a large masonry chimney adjacent to the main entrance and a second chimney to the south. Both chimneys have decorative brickwork and cast stone bands.
- Gutters and leaders appear to be lead coated copper.

Openings

- The building has large window openings, with granite sills and steel lintels. The original wood windows have been replaced with aluminum windows.
- With some exceptions, current (non-original) windows are typically sets of three I-over-I double-hung sashes with opaque transom panels, set within larger masonry openings.
- The multi-pane steel basement windows appear to be original.
- A shallow, round bay centered on the south elevation is articulated with wood engaged columns between five windows.
- The double doors at the main entrance are aluminum replacements set into an elaborate stone surround with carved reliefs.
- Two single doors set within decorative cast stone surrounds flank the south elevation bay. The doors are aluminum replacements.
- The door opening at the north elevation is set within a decorative cast stone surround. The door is an aluminum replacement.

Projections:

- There is a single story porch at the south end of the front facade. The original large cast stone basket-handle arched openings have been infilled with non-original wood-framed windows.
- The site wall at the grade change on the west elevation is brick and cast stone.

Trim and Secondary Features:

- The building has cast stone string courses and a cast stone water table.
- The main entrance has an elaborate double-staircase with a wide landing.

Materials

- The building is constructed of running bond brick with Flemish bond at every 6th course. It features cast stone trim, a concrete foundation, and granite stairs.

Craft Details

- The main entry features a Tudor arch and cast stone window and door surround. There is a cast stone panel at the second floor wall centered on the entrance door, inscribed "JOHN WARD SCHOOL".
- There are ornamental grilles above the cornice string course (below roofline), at the east and west elevations.
- The copper cap flashing at the parapet coping has a decorative profile.

Interior Visual Character

Individually Important Spaces

Library

- The library was once divided into three rooms; the wood frame at the division is still extant.
- Access is through standard exterior doors within shallow arched wood frames at each of the two side rooms.
- The library has plaster walls and ceiling. The original flooring is covered by carpeting with vinyl baseboard.
- A round bay features 5 windows and a built-in wood paneled bench with cubbies below.
- The closet has an original window (into porch/teachers room). It is wood, 4-over-4 double-hung, with profiled muntins and privacy glass.
- The library has an alcove which features:
 - A lower ceiling with exposed wood beams.
 - Textured plaster below a painted chair rail.
 - A fireplace with a brick interior and an ornamental tile front depicting Dutch scenes.
- The wood-finished cabinetry is the same design as the classroom fixtures.

Porch/Teachers Lounge (next to library)

- A pair of wood doors lead to the teachers lounge. The doors have 12-lights, 2-panels, with a 22-light transom above.
- The painted cast stone walls have a shallow cove. The original floor is covered with vinyl tile and commercial carpeting.
- The shallow-arched windows are filled in with wood-framed glazing.

Related Spaces

Front Vestibule

- The plaster ceiling is bordered by an ornamental plaster cornice.
- The terrazzo floor has a checkerboard pattern, with terrazzo baseboard.
- The doors have painted stone trim, and framing wall panels with ornamental grilles
- The vestibule connects to the main lobby through a pair of wood framed doors with 15 lights each, bronze hardware, and 2 wood transom panels.

Main Lobby/ Main Stairs

- The main stairs are utilitarian, metal pan stairs with concrete treads, vertical balusters, wood handrails and small round ornaments at the stringers.
- The main lobby walls are covered with a tall (~7'+) wainscot of painted, textured blocks mimicking travertine, above which are textured plaster walls and a plaster ceiling. The original flooring has been covered with vinyl tile.
- The pair of painted bronze doors to first floor corridor have 9 lights each, with a 12-pane transom. The doors to the second floor are similar, but without the transom.

Corridors

- The walls are covered with a tall (~7'+) wainscot of painted, textured blocks mimicking travertine, above which are textured plaster walls and a plaster ceiling. There is adhered acoustic tile on the ceiling in the north wing. The original flooring has been typically been covered with vinyl tile.
- A wood picture rail runs along the wall of the second floor corridors.
- Built-in wood cubbies line the corridors.
- The extant wood classroom doors are in good condition. They feature 9 lights each, some with privacy glass, with tall 9-light transoms in wood frames.
- As is typical for the Newton schools of this time period, there are two metal framed glazed walls in the south wing corridor, consisting of a pair of doors with 9 lights each, flanked by 4-

pane sidelights and a tall, multi-pane transom. In this case, the glazed wall leading to the library is unpainted bronze, and the doors have been removed.

- Concrete stairs in the south wing corridor lead to the library. The stairs have a center pipe rail, concrete cheekwalls and mosaic panels in front.

Other Significant Interior Features

Classrooms

- The first floor classrooms have tall plaster ceilings; on the second floor have had been modified to have acoustic tile ceilings.
- The walls are typically smooth, painted plaster with rounded edges and corners.
- Cabinets in some of the classrooms have rolling top wood doors with large handles; most have been painted.
- The rooms typically have wood cabinets with a pair of 12-pane upper doors above and drawers below.

Part 2 – Images



Figure 2: Main entrance bay and chimney. Figure 3: Close up view of main entrance door surround.



Figure 4: Main entrance staircase.



Figure 5: Interior wall partition.

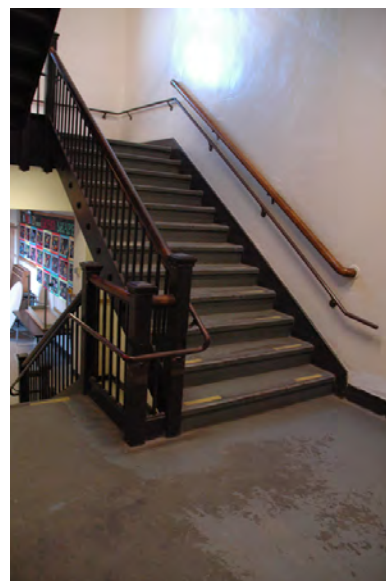


Figure 6: Main staircase.

Part 3 – Treatment Recommendations

Preservation Treatment Level

Ward Elementary School is still in use as part of the Newton school system, and as an active school has ever changing programming needs. To enable the school to continue to serve its primary educational function it is recommended that future work be performed according to the "Rehabilitation" Level of treatment outlined in the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*. The Rehabilitation treatment allows for the building to be altered or added to through the construction of additions to support new uses while preserving those portions or features that convey the building's historic character.

The following bulleted list contains an analysis of existing conditions and recommended treatments for the significant features catalogued in Part 2 of this report.

Exterior Recommendations

Critical/Urgent (Timeframe: As soon as possible)

First Priority (Timeframe: 1-3 years)

- The roof was not accessible for survey, but there was no indication of leaks visible from the ground. Inspect the roof and repair as required. Replace broken or missing slates.
- Investigate the structural integrity of the roof framing next to west gable wall where there appears to be deformation. Repair as necessary.
- Survey condition of all steel lintels. Replace severely rusted lintels. Reset and repoint displaced bricks where rust jacking has occurred and where removed to replace lintels. Repaint all lintels.
- Rebuild cracked areas of the brick parapets and replace missing brick at the north corner of the main building.
- Properly prepare and repoint cracked and missing mortar in joints at the exterior masonry walls and at the cast stone decorative elements. Some existing joints have been sealed with sealant. This sealant should be removed and the joints repointed. Install weathercaps at horizontal joints at the watertable and chimneys.
- Repair an area of spalled cast stone at the south chimney.
- Clean rust and repaint steel basement windows. Replace cracked panes, including panes that have been altered to accommodate electrical conduits.
- Remove rust and repaint all ferrous elements, including steel grates over areaways, conduit brackets, unused ferrous elements, protective window grilles, handrails and guard rails.
- Repair and secure, or replace deteriorated wood elements as necessary, including at the south round bay. Paint all wood elements.
- Efflorescence is present below each vertical mullion of aluminum windows, most noticeably at the east elevation. This is typical at all Newton schools with aluminum replacement windows, and appears to be indicative of water infiltration. Inspect all windows, including sealant joints, and repair as necessary.
- Secure loose copper flashing and replace pieces as required. This includes the flashing at roof and string courses.
- Repair or replace the cracked and spalled concrete stairs at the infilled porch. Handrails should be installed at this stairway.
- Patch cracks at the concrete foundation.
- Reset the displaced granite elements at the front stair, including the front edge of the top landing.

Second Priority (Timeframe: 3-5 years)

- Remove extraneous ferrous and other elements from building exterior. Patch as required.
- Clean the building exterior, including:

- copper staining at water table
- efflorescence- miscellaneous, including below replacement windows
- graffiti: at entry stairs, at east elevation
- biological/ moss growth: at areaways, west site wall
- ivy: at north, west and south elevations
- water staining: at cornice, at front stairs, at porch openings
- rust staining: below rusting ferrous elements, including conduit
- paint spatter at brick on the second floor level of the front (west) elevation
- general atmospheric soiling
- Review the locations of exposed conduit and piping.
- Confirm the necessity of the non-original grilles below some windows. Coordinate with HVAC strategy (beyond the scope of this survey) and replacement of windows with operable windows to match original. If grilles are no longer necessary tooth in brick infill to match existing adjacent brickwork.
- Remove sloppy, non-original pointing. Properly prepare and repoint to match original pointing mortar. Includes east elevation below the water table and above all windows where steel lintels appear to have been replaced.
- Secure or remove loose wires strung across the building façade.
- Replace the water-damaged, non-original plywood south doors within the original door opening.
- The original balustrade at front of the top landing (front exterior stair) has been replaced with a pipe railing. Provide a new balustrade to match original.

Maintenance (Timeframe: Ongoing)

- Continue regular maintenance of character-defining features.
- Maintain all gutters, leaders and drains to keep clog-free.

Interior Recommendations

Critical/Urgent (Timeframe: As soon as possible)

First Priority (Timeframe: 1-3 years)

- Replace the 3 missing panes at the front vestibule interior doors.
- Remove the paint and clean the stone trim and wall panels in the front vestibule.
- Investigate and remediate the source of water damage:
 - at north side of the front vestibule cornice
 - at the second floor ceiling above the main stairs
 - at south ceiling of south stair
 - at east door, basement level
- Clean and repaint the rusting metal stair pans and nosings. Rusting is particularly pronounced at the basement level of the main stair.
- Clean and repaint the rusting steel-framed windows at the basement and additions.

Second Priority (Timeframe: 3-5 years)

- Repair or replace in kind the water-damaged plaster cornice in the front vestibule.
- Repair or replace in kind the water-damaged plaster ceiling locations in both stairs.
- Repair and repaint the cracked plaster in the main stair at the underside of the second floor landing.
- Repaint bricks at basement corridor where paint had peeled.
- Repaint metal stair elements. Refinish the wood handrail and the concrete treads and landings.
- Survey the condition of the roll-top classroom cabinets. Repair to working order.
- Refinish the wood front vestibule interior doors.
- Replace and resecure loose and damaged acoustic ceiling tiles in kind.

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- Refinish the wood stage floor, which is very worn, but in good condition.
- Secure and repair the delaminated plywood at the gymnasium doors and wainscot.
- Dutchman repair the wood sill and panel (one location each) in the built-in bench in the library bay. Refinish.
- Repair the cracks and repaint the concrete south corridor floor.

Maintenance (Timeframe: Ongoing)

- Continue regular maintenance of character-defining features.