

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

**Building Analysis**

**Cabot Elementary School**



Address: 229 Cabot Street  
Year of Construction: 1929

Level of Significance: Moderate

Recommended Treatment Level: Rehabilitation

## **PART I - Analysis of Historical Significance**

### *Building History*

Cabot Elementary School was constructed in 1928/1929 adjacent to Cabot Park. The building was designed in the Tudor Revival style by Boston architects Charles R. Greco and W. B. Hollings and built by Phandor Construction, also of Boston.

The school was one of fourteen new school buildings constructed within Newton in the late 1920s through 1930s in response to the rapid population growth the city experienced beginning in the mid-1800s. The area around Cabot Park was subdivided beginning in the early 1900s and was almost completely developed by the end of the 1920s, greatly increasing the school population. The Cabot School was constructed to serve this newly developed area and to take pressure off the nearby Underwood and Claffin elementary schools. The name of the school comes from its location across from Cabot Park. Formerly known as Cabot Woods, the park was created on the former property of 19<sup>th</sup> century Newton resident John Cabot.

Little information was found on the firm of Charles R. Greco and W.B. Hollings, architects for the Cabot School. Greco (1873-1963) worked with the firm of Peabody & Stearns until forming his own practice in 1908. He was the designer of a large number of schools (both public and parochial) and other public buildings in the Boston area. His AIA membership file notes that he was expelled from the AIA in 1942 for paying \$21,000 to Mayor John W. Lyons of Cambridge to solicit and secure public work in Cambridge. He was readmitted to the AIA in 1956, and retired from architecture in 1960.

When the Cabot School opened it served 275 students and contained 12 classrooms and a kindergarten suite, an assembly hall, boys' and girls' playrooms, and staff support areas. A large addition containing four additional classrooms and a gymnasium designed by Samuel Glaser, a Newton resident, was added at one side of the building in 1956. Other alterations to the building include renovations to the interior in 1974, and the replacement of the original wood windows with aluminum windows 1985. In 1991 modular buildings were added at the rear of the structure to address overcrowding.

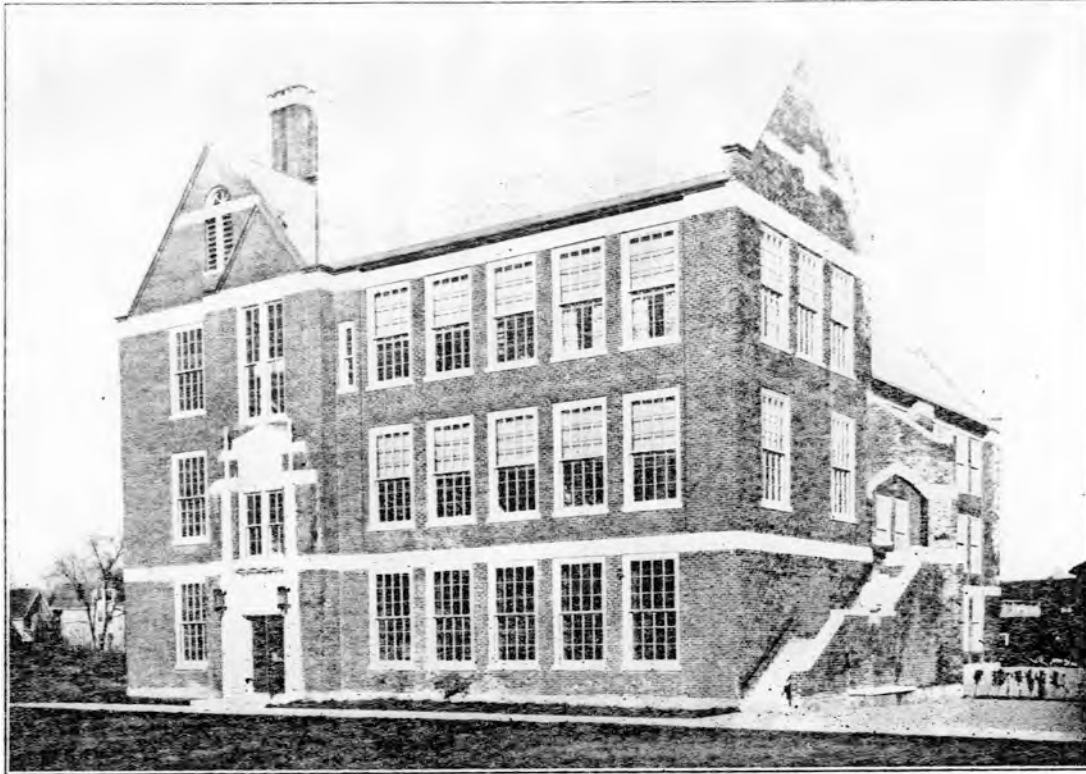
### *Level of Significance*

The Cabot School is significant under National Register Criterion A for its association with the rapid expansion of the Newton Public School system in the 1920s and 1930s. The building maintains a moderate level of architectural integrity, although its appearance has been greatly altered by the installation of historically inappropriate aluminum windows.

### *Bibliography*

American Institute of Architects Archives, "Membership file of Charles R. Greco 1925-1963."  
<http://communities.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki/AIA%20scans/F-H/GrecoCharlesR.pdf> (accessed November 28, 2011).  
Massachusetts Historical Commission, "Form B NWT.3634—229 Cabot Street." 1997, 1987, 1978.  
Massachusetts Historical Commission, "Form B NWT.CJ—Cabot Park." 1987.  
Vaglica, Peggy. "Cabot School History" in "Cabot School 75th Anniversary Celebration Program". 2005.

**PART I - Analysis of Historical Significance: Historic Images**



CABOT SCHOOL

Figure 1: Cabot School circa 1929 (Source: MACRIS)

## **Part 2 – Description of Historically Significant Features**

### **Exterior Visual Character**

#### *Setting*

- The school set within a residential neighborhood, across the street from Cabot Park.

#### *Shape*

- The original building is three stories and roughly “L”-shaped in plan. Multiple additions are located at the north and west sides of the structure.

#### *Roof and Related Features*

- The roof is a steep gable roof that flattens into a concealed flat roof at the center of the structure. A cross gable is located at the east side of the building (over the short leg of the “L”).
- A cupola is located at the center of the roof on the east side of the building. The cupola has a herringbone patterned standing seam cladding at the base and louvers above.
- The sloped portion of the roof is clad in asphalt shingles, with copper flashing at the gable and eaves. The flat roof was not accessible for this survey, but likely has membrane roofing.
- Snow rails run the full length of the east and west eaves.

#### *Openings*

- Windows are typically set within single, regularly spaced rectangular openings with steel lintels and cast stone sills. The original large wood 12-over-12 double-hung windows were replaced in 1985 with historically inappropriate aluminum windows. At each replacement window the upper half of the opening is an opaque spandrel panel while the lower half is subdivided horizontally into three with two fixed sashes and one operable awning.
- The window openings to the left of the main (south) entrance and at the north bay of the west elevation have been infilled with brick.
- The basement windows on the west have been infilled with brick and smaller louver panels.
- Air conditioning units have been inserted into some of the upper, spandrel panels.
- At the main entrance, a pair of replacement aluminum doors with visibility panels is set within an elaborate cast stone surround. Other door openings are also replacements with infilled transom panels.
- Louver panels are present at the attic level of the north and south gables.

#### *Projections:*

- A masonry chimney is located at the south end of the building.
- Wide buttresses along the east and west elevations divide the building into three bays.

#### *Trim and Secondary Features:*

- Two flush bands of cast stone wrap around the building perimeter: one band is located directly below the level of the eaves, the other at the level of a water table.

#### *Materials*

- The building is primarily brick with cast stone trim and a concrete foundation.

#### *Craft Details*

- There is an ornamental cast stone panel over the main entrance that reads “1928” with each digit set within a cast stone shield.
- A (non-original) statue of Humpty Dumpty is set into the wall of an exterior staircase at the east elevation.
- The brick chimney is carefully detailed, with vertical articulation and ornamented cast stone at the top.
- Bricks are arranged in a decorative pattern of “rays” above the arched louvers at the north and south upper gables.

## **Interior Visual Character**

### *Individually Important Spaces*

- None identified.

### *Related Spaces*

#### Corridors

- The walls are scored cast stone, textured to resemble natural stone.
- Display cases are built into the walls.
- The doors from the corridor to the classrooms are wood with vision panels at the upper half consisting of nine divided lights. Above the doors are tall, 9-light transoms.

#### Stair Halls

- The stair halls are separated from the corridors with dividers made of metal (likely bronze) and glass. Each divider consists of a pair of doors with 6 lights each, 6-light sidelights and a multi-light transom. This is typical for the Newton schools of this time period.
- The concrete-filled steel pan stairs, wood handrail, and square steel balusters and newels are typical of local schools of this time period. The detailing at the stringers is simple and unadorned.

### *Other Significant Interior Features*

#### Classrooms

- Classrooms have built-in “pantries” with glass-paned doors in supply rooms between classrooms
- A false fireplace with ornamental mantle cornice is centered at the second floor classroom at the east end of the short leg of the “L” shaped plan. The fireplace surround is the same material as corridor walls.

**Part 2 – Images**



Figure 2: The tall windows set in a simple rhythm around the perimeter of the building were designed to provide daylight deep into the building. This function, as well as the aesthetic character of the building, was greatly affected by the installation of inappropriately designed replacement windows.



Figure 3: Typical classroom door and stairwell/corridor dividing wall.



Figure 4: Close-up view of cupola.

### **Part 3 – Treatment Recommendations**

#### **Preservation Treatment Level**

Cabot Elementary School is still in use as part of the Newton school system, and as an active school has ever changing programming needs. 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 express 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**

Note: the 1956 addition and 1991 trailers were not surveyed as part of this scope.

##### Critical/Urgent (Timeframe: As soon as possible)

- There is severe water damage at the exterior stair at the east side of the building. Damage includes severe efflorescence at the brick sidewalls, cracking and spalling at the cast stone coping and concrete treads and landings, rusting and deterioration of the pipe railings, and failing mortar at brick and stone joints. Remove cast stone copings units and provide through-wall flashing at the top of the wall. Reset and repair the cast stone or replace in kind. Repair and/or replace in kind the pipe rails and repaint. Repoint brick walls.
- Determine and repair cause of spalled bricks at west edge of main (south) entrance.

##### First Priority (Timeframe: 1-3 years)

- The roof and cupola were not accessible for the survey, and therefore only inspected where visible from ground. Inspect the full roof and repair as necessary.

##### Second Priority (Timeframe: 3-5 years)

- Replace spalled and damaged bricks, repoint eroded mortar joints, particularly the joints at the brick buttresses at the east elevation.
- Clean building exterior, including:
  - green (copper) staining below the lettering above the main entrance.
  - rust staining at numerous locations
  - biological growth
  - general atmospheric staining
  - efflorescence at several locations around the building, especially at the water-damaged west edge of the main entrance.
- Replace damaged existing flashing at the third floor above the south entrance projection and repair other areas of damaged flashing as required.
- Replace windows with more historically appropriate windows. Coordinate with daylighting and ventilation strategy.
- Repair or replace in kind the bent, misshapen copper louvers at the north side of the ell.
- Steel lintels should be repainted with rust-inhibiting paint. Some evidence of rust jacking was noted at the steel window lintels at the second floor of the east elevation which should be monitored for further deterioration.
- Review exterior lighting. The original decorative sconces at the main entrance have been previously removed and the replacement fixture appears to be non-functioning.
- Remove rusting ferrous electrical conduit from the building walls.

##### Maintenance (Timeframe: Ongoing)

- Develop a regular maintenance plan that preserves character defining building elements.

**Interior Recommendations**

Critical/Urgent (Timeframe: As soon as possible)

First Priority (Timeframe: 1-3 years)

Second Priority (Timeframe: 3-5 years)

- Future alterations to the building should retain historically significant elements to the greatest extent possible.

Maintenance (Timeframe: Ongoing)

- Develop a regular maintenance plan that preserves character defining building elements.