

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**National Register of Historic Places Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of PropertyHistoric name: George Washington High School DRAFTOther names/site number: N/AName of related multiple property listing: N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. LocationStreet & number: 600 32nd AvenueCity or town: San Francisco State: California County: San FranciscoNot For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___national ___statewide ___local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___A ___B ___C ___D

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government

George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register
☐ determined eligible for the National Register
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register
☐ removed from the National Register
☐ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private: ☐
Public – Local ☒
Public – State ☐
Public – Federal ☐

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s) ☒
District ☐
Site ☐
Structure ☐
Object ☐

George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>4</u>	<u>8</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>5</u>	sites
<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	structures
<u></u>	<u></u>	objects
<u>7</u>	<u>14</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION/school

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION/school

George Washington High School
Name of Property
State

San Francisco, California
County and

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT/Moderne

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Concrete, terra cotta

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

George Washington High School is located at 600 32nd Avenue in San Francisco's Outer Richmond District. Sited atop a highly visible promontory, George Washington High School (GWHS) enjoys views over much of the northwestern quarter of the city, as well as the Golden Gate Bridge and the Marin Headlands. The buildings are located at the highest point of the four-square-block campus. The four-building complex is complemented by sports fields, tennis and basketball courts, a football stadium, a hardscaped Esplanade, internal pedestrian circulation, and perimeter landscaping (**Figure 1**). Designed by Miller & Pflueger, George Washington High School was constructed in three phases, beginning with the Academic Building and the Shop Building in 1935–1936. The adjoining Auditorium and Gymnasium were both finished in 1940, and the Music Wing Addition (designed by Timothy's brother Milton) was completed in 1952 as an addition to the Auditorium. Designed in the PWA Moderne style, George Washington High School is especially significant for its trove of New Deal artworks, including murals by Victor Arnautoff, Lucien Labaudt, Ralph Stackpole, Gordon Langdon, and Nelson Poole; an outdoor frieze by sculptor Sargent Johnson; and bas-relief portraits by Robert Boardman Howard. George Washington High School has undergone very few changes since it first opened 80 years

George Washington High School
Name of Property
State

San Francisco, California
County and

ago – a testament to its solid construction and timeless aesthetic that continues to resonate with students, faculty, and alumni today.

Narrative Description

Neighborhood Setting

George Washington High School is located in San Francisco's Outer Richmond District, which was surveyed and platted in 1868 along with much of the western half of the city. Today the neighborhood surrounding GWHS is a residential area characterized by a mixture of pre-and post-World War II housing stock. The neighborhood embodies a cohesive pattern of speculative residential development that is typical for the western half of the city: rows of functionally identical, stucco and wood-clad, single-family dwellings built on 25-foot-wide lots. Most of these dwellings were built between 1925 and 1950 and nearly all are designed in popular period revival styles of the day, including the Spanish Colonial, Mediterranean, French Provincial, and Tudor. In addition, there are some modern styles represented, including the Art Deco, Streamline Moderne, and Late Moderne.

Geary Boulevard, which forms the northern boundary of the GWHS campus, is the Richmond District's primary thoroughfare, and it contains some of the only non-single-family properties in the area. Located catty-corner from GWHS, at the northeast corner of 30th Avenue and Geary Boulevard, is Presidio Middle School. This reinforced-concrete, Romanesque Revival-style school was built in 1923 by the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD). Another non-residential property is the Ta Kioh Buddhist Temple. Located at the southeast corner of 30th Avenue and Geary Boulevard, it was originally built in 1949 as the First United Lutheran Church. Much of the rest of Geary Boulevard between 30th and 32nd avenues is dominated by larger apartment buildings and flats.

Site

George Washington High School occupies a 691,811-sf parcel bounded by Geary Boulevard to the north, 30th Avenue to the east, Balboa Street to the south, and 32nd Avenue to the west (APN 1574/001). The parcel, which comprises almost 16 acres, encompasses four city blocks. The terrain slopes steeply uphill from Geary Boulevard to Anza Street, where it levels out before descending downhill toward Balboa Street. The bulk of the GWHS complex occupies a level promontory that sits on axis with Anza Street. The edges of the campus are defined by painted concrete retaining walls and bulkheads capped by chain link fencing, as well as landscaped slopes planted in trees and shrubs, including pines, New Zealand tea trees, bottlebrush, etc. The perimeter landscaping is a contributing feature. Located roughly midway along the Geary Street frontage is a pair of concrete toilet rooms installed Ca. 1980 for the use of Muni operators. The

George Washington High School

Name of Property
State

San Francisco, California
County and

32nd Avenue side of the campus features several lawn panels bounded by concrete sidewalks and footpaths.

The sprawling campus is divided into three sections. The northernmost third adjoining Geary Boulevard includes, from east to west, three basketball courts facing 30th Avenue, six tennis courts facing Geary Boulevard, and a large lawn facing 32nd Avenue. The tennis and basketball courts are non-contributing. The lawn is bisected by an asphalt footpath that leads up from Geary Boulevard to the GWHS complex. Just south of the tennis courts is the contributing Football Stadium which consists of a field and adjoining concrete bleachers that contain storage and toilet rooms. The retaining wall on the south side of the football field is the location of Sargent Johnson's frieze, *Athletics*. West of the Football Stadium is the 1935 Shop Building and a portion of the 1936 Academic Building. To the east of the football field is the non-contributing faculty parking lot and a group of five non-contributing modular classrooms and storage containers.

The central third of the campus is where the majority of the contributing elements of the complex are located, including all four buildings that make up the high school. In addition to being the most level portion of the campus, its elevation provides breathtaking views out over the Golden Gate Bridge and the Marin Headlands. The Academic Building, which faces 32nd Avenue, is centered on the Anza Street alignment. Its siting along the west side of the campus helps block onshore winds coming off the Pacific. Extending eastward along the Anza Street alignment, south of the Football Stadium, is the Esplanade. A contributing element, the Esplanade is defined by low concrete railings. On the south side of the Esplanade are the Auditorium and the Gymnasium, which were both completed in 1940. Attached to the south side of the Auditorium is the 1952 Music Wing Addition.

The southern third of the campus was developed from the late 1950s onward, and due to its later construction, it does not contribute to the significance of the property. This area consists of an oval running track that encloses a soccer field. There are also several non-contributing buildings in this area, including a modular classroom building at the northeast corner, a one-story equipment storage building at the southeast corner, an athletic facility building on the south side, and a substation structure at the southwest corner.

Academic Building

Completed in December 1935, the Academic Building has an "h"-shaped footprint consisting of a north-south classroom wing extending along 32nd Avenue, an intersecting east-west administration wing oriented parallel to Anza Street, and a secondary north-south classroom wing oriented parallel to 32nd Avenue. Three stories over a raised basement, the Academic Building is highly visible from many perspectives throughout the surrounding neighborhood. The main entrance, which is on axis with Anza Street, provides access to the main lobby. Meanwhile, the classroom wings extend half-a-block to either side of the main entrance.

George Washington High School

Name of Property
State

San Francisco, California

County and

The Academic Building is made of reinforced-concrete with terra cotta, cement plaster, and cast stone ornament. The majority of the original steel awning-sash windows were replaced with aluminum counterparts in the 1990s. However, due to their divided-lite design and sash profile, these windows are generally compatible with the original design. In addition, many of the original steel doors have been replaced with aluminum counterparts in the 1990s and the 2000s. Again, these replacements are generally compatible with the original design. The Academic Building has a flat roof concealed behind a raised parapet. The roof is punctuated by several pyramidal skylights that illuminate the third-floor corridors and the interior stairwells.

Academic Building: West (Primary) Façade

The west (primary) façade of the Academic Building faces 32nd Avenue. Almost 500 feet in length, it comprises 16 bays. Constructed of painted concrete, the primary façade is articulated by a grid of punched rectangular window openings. The windows are demarcated by terra cotta panels embellished with geometric motifs, including an abstract dentil pattern at the first-floor level and a reeded design at the second and third-floor levels. Each window opening contains 24-lite operable aluminum awning sashes. The spandrels between the floors are embellished with abstract bas-relief “tree and leaf” motifs. The upper part of the primary façade comprises a plain frieze, a scalloped molding, and a terra cotta coping – hereafter called a “typical cornice.”

All of the bays of the primary façade of the Academic Building are identical apart from the two corner bays and the entrance pavilion. The first bay on the left projects about a foot beyond the rest of primary façade, forming a narrow corner pavilion. At the first-floor level is pair of glazed aluminum doors sheltered beneath a curved concrete canopy. The canopy is supported by cylindrical piers and capped by a metal pipe railing above. Above it is a vertical column of operable aluminum windows enframed within terra cotta relief panels.

The entrance pavilion takes the form of a tower that rises above the rest of the primary façade. The primary entrance is accessed by a broad cement stair from the sidewalk below. Bracketing the main entrance are two massive piers that rise from the basement to the parapet of the tower. To the left of the entrance is an original divided-lite steel window. To the right of the entrance are four aluminum doors and a divided-lite transom sheltered beneath a curved canopy. This entrance is accessed by a concrete wheelchair ramp with a metal pipe railing. This ramp was added in 1990.

The main entrance is located within a field of cast stone paneling. Thick cast stone-clad piers separate the three pairs of aluminum doors. Above each door is a terra cotta bas-relief bust with incised inscriptions identifying each of the figures. They include: “Invention” (Thomas Edison), “Statesmanship” (George Washington), and “Literature” (Walt Whitman). The bas-relief busts were executed from molds made by sculptor Robert Boardman Howard in 1935-36. The main entrance is sheltered beneath a bowed copper canopy with raised lettering reading: “George Washington High School.”

George Washington High School

Name of Property
State

San Francisco, California

County and

Above the main entrance are three vertical columns of aluminum windows that contain operable awning sashes. The bays are demarcated by rectangular piers. Nine concrete bas-relief cartouches are attached to the spandrel panels above each of the windows. These cartouches illustrate academic and vocational disciplines, including music, art, theater, literature, engineering, woodworking, chemistry, science, and electricity. The entrance pavilion terminates with a frieze composed of three horizontal bands superimposed atop a field of scalloped recesses. Above the frieze is a terra cotta coping that is continuous with the rest of the cornice.

The south classroom wing, which is to the right of the entrance pavilion, is identical to the north classroom wing to the left of the entrance pavilion. The only difference between the two wings is that the south wing's basement, which contains the cafeteria, is above-grade. The cafeteria, which has "streamlined" curved corners, projects several feet out from rest of the primary façade. It is fenestrated by a continuous band of divided-lite ribbon windows.

Academic Building: South Façade

The south façade of the Academic Building is composed of three sections: the south walls of the two classroom wings and the south wall of the administration wing. Beginning at the left, the curved volume of the cafeteria wraps around to the south side of the building. It terminates at the open-air service porch. The rear wall of the service porch contains three aluminum doors surmounted by a large porthole window. Above the porch, the first through the third-floor levels of the classroom wing are identical, with a grouping of 15 windows at the center that are enframed by terra cotta surrounds. The outer bays of the classroom wing contain windowless terra cotta panels identical to those on the primary façade. The south wall of the west classroom wing terminates with a typical cornice.

The south wall of the administration wing forms the rear of a large courtyard sandwiched between the two classroom wings. Eight bays wide, it features a grid of divided-lite aluminum windows demarcated by concrete piers that extend from the basement to the parapet. The administration wing terminates with a frieze adorned with decorative cement plaster panels depicting abstract motifs.

The south wall of the east classroom wing adjoins the Auditorium and the Music Wing Addition to the east. It is very similar to the south wall of the west classroom wing, although it is slightly narrower. It has an entrance that is identical to the secondary entrance on the primary façade. The south wall of the east classroom wing terminates with a typical cornice.

The central courtyard is also defined by the inside facets of the two classroom wings. Both are nine bays wide and articulated by a grid of divided-lite aluminum windows demarcated by terra cotta piers. Continuous concrete spandrels embellished with "tree and leaf" motifs demarcate the floor levels. An entrance containing three aluminum doors is located at the north side of the west classroom wing. Both of these elevations terminate with a typical cornice.

George Washington High School

Name of Property
State

San Francisco, California

County and

Academic Building: North Façade

The north façade of the Academic Building consists of two sections: the north wall of the administration wing and the much smaller north wall of the west classroom wing. The north wall of the administration wing is 11 bays wide. The two corner bays project several feet beyond the rest of the elevation, with large porthole windows at the second-floor level. The corner bay on the left has an entrance at the first-floor level. This entrance is framed by a terra cotta surround surmounted by a cusped panel depicting a Masonic square and compass motif—a reference to George Washington's involvement in Freemasonry. The area between the two corner pavilions comprises nine identical bays containing divided-lite aluminum windows that are demarcated by concrete piers. Terra cotta spandrel panels demarcate the first and second floor levels. The third floor level, which is set back from the floors below, has a similar fenestration pattern. The north wall of the administration wing terminates with a typical cornice.

The north wall of the west classroom wing faces the passageway between the Academic Building and the Shop Building. A low concrete stair provides access to the entrance at the first-floor level near the center. This entrance contains three original metal doors with aluminum transoms and terra cotta surrounds. It is sheltered beneath a pedestrian bridge that connects to the Shop Building. The bridge is accessed from the Academic Building by three aluminum doors with operable transoms. The third-floor level includes three divided-lite metal windows with operable transoms and terra cotta surrounds. The north wall of the classroom wing terminates with a typical cornice.

Academic Building: East Façade

The east façade of the Academic Building is composed of two parts: the previously described east wall of the classroom wing that faces the central courtyard and the east wall of the classroom wing that faces the Esplanade and the Football Stadium. This elevation is 18 bays wide. With the exception of two entrance pavilions in the first and eighth bays, the east façade of the classroom wing is an undifferentiated grid of large divided-lite windows. It is detailed the same as the primary façade facing 32nd Avenue, with terra cotta piers and a typical cornice.

At the south end of this elevation is an entrance pavilion that is on axis with the main entrance facing Anza Street. Similar to the primary façade of the Academic Building, this entrance pavilion rises above the parapet as a tower-like form. The entrance at the base of the pavilion contains three paired metal doors, including two original double-leaf doors and an aluminum door added in 1990. The doors are sheltered beneath a curved canopy surmounted by a band of transom windows. The area above the canopy is articulated by a grid of divided-lite aluminum windows embedded within a field of terra cotta panels. The flanking concrete piers are embellished with painted profiles of George Washington that date to the 1970s. The entrance pavilion terminates with a frieze punctuated by a bas-relief bust of George Washington and a parapet capped by a terra cotta coping. The artist who created the bust is not known, but it was likely Robert

George Washington High School

Name of Property
State

San Francisco, California

County and

Boardman Howard, who also completed the bas-reliefs above the main entrance on 32nd Avenue.

As mentioned, the eighth bay also contains an entrance pavilion that marks the location of an interior stair. This entrance contains three contemporary aluminum doors. Similar to the secondary entrance on the primary façade, this entrance is sheltered beneath a curved canopy supported by cylindrical concrete piers. The canopy is capped by a metal pipe railing. Above the entrance is a grid of divided-lite windows set within a field of terra cotta panels.

Academic Building: Interior

The Academic Building contains 88 classrooms, a suite of administrative offices, stairs and corridors, a library, a kitchen, a cafeteria, and mechanical and storage rooms. The Academic Building retains its original floor plan and nearly all of its historic finishes. The 1,400-sf main lobby, the most important interior space in George Washington High School, has a terrazzo floor, a coffered concrete ceiling, and a large-scale fresco mural called *The Life of Washington*, which was painted by Victor Arnautoff in 1936. More information on this mural is provided in the New Deal art section below.

The administrative office suite is located just east of the main lobby. The corridor providing access to the office suite contains Memorial Clock, which was dedicated in 1948 by the Class of 1946 to honor students killed in World War II. This corridor contains several other class gifts, display cases, and a sculpture of George Washington. The corridor south of the administrative office suite contains the three *Response* murals painted by Dewey Crumpler in 1974. More information on these murals is provided in the New Deal art section below.

Also opening off the main lobby are three double-loaded corridors finished with resilient tile flooring, lath and plaster walls, tile wainscoting, metal lockers, and acoustical ceilings. Clerestory windows provide natural light from the classrooms into the corridors. The classrooms on all three floor levels are modestly finished, with metal lath and plaster walls, acoustical tile ceilings, and linoleum flooring.

The second-floor level of the Academic Building has a similar floor plan to the first-floor level. Located directly above the administrative office suite is the library – one of the most important interior spaces in George Washington High School. Located above the entrance to the library is a mural by Gordon Langdon called *Modern and Ancient Science*. The library has two additional murals – one by Lucien Labaudt titled *Advancement of Learning through the Printing Press* and the other by Ralph Stackpole called *Contemporary Education*. More information on these murals is provided in the New Deal art section below.

The third-floor level is similar to the second-floor level, although it is devoted entirely to classrooms. The corridors on the third-floor level are naturally illuminated by skylights.

George Washington High School

Name of Property
State

San Francisco, California

County and

Vertical circulation within the Academic Building is provided by traditional stairwells, as well as a unique double-track stairwell that permits simultaneous but separate upward and downward circulation. This stair, which is made of painted concrete, is illuminated by recessed lighting and roof-mounted skylights. A service elevator is located at the south end of the building.

The basement level of the Academic Building includes the cafeteria, the kitchen, boiler and mechanical rooms, and several storage rooms.

Shop Building

The Shop Building is located directly north of the Academic Building and it is linked to it by a concrete pedestrian bridge. It was completed in 1936, shortly after the Academic Building. The Shop Building, which is two stories above a “daylight” basement, has a rectangular footprint. It is made of painted concrete and it is adorned with a limited amount of ornament. The Shop Building has a flat roof punctuated by a central skylight. The building’s exterior retains the majority of its original divided-lite steel industrial windows.

Shop Building: East and West Façades

The east and west façades of the Shop Building are essentially identical. Both are six bays wide, with each floor level articulated by divided-lite steel industrial windows that admit natural light into the building’s interior. The sills are made of terra cotta and the spandrel panels are painted concrete without any ornament. The bays are defined by concrete piers that extend from the ground to just above the windows at the second-floor level. Terra cotta moldings cap the piers. Due to the sloping terrain, the northernmost section of the west façade includes several basement windows. The basement level on the east façade is completely above-grade, with the same window configuration at the upper floor levels, except for the second bay, which has been reconfigured to include a pedestrian entrance. The east and west façades of the Shop Building terminates with a terra cotta stringcourse, a plain frieze, and a parapet capped by a terra cotta coping.

Shop Building: North and South Façades

The north and south façades of the Shop Building, which are both five bays wide, are also virtually identical. In contrast to the east and west façades, which are both entirely fenestrated, the north and south façades have wide concrete piers at the corners. The upper parts of the piers are embellished with cement plaster figural reliefs, including one on the north façade that shows men working with machinery. On the south façade there is a pair of anvils. Signage attached below one of the anvils reads “A. E. Lubamersky Industrial Arts Center.”¹ At the south façade, the three central bays are articulated by contemporary divided-lite aluminum windows, as well as two contemporary aluminum doors. The windows to the right of the bridge were infilled at an

¹ The shop building was renamed in 1984 in honor of a former coach, shop teacher, and vice-principal of George Washington High School.

George Washington High School

Name of Property
State

San Francisco, California

County and

unknown date. Beneath the bridge, the main entrance contains three original metal doors. In contrast to the south façade, where the basement is below-grade, the basement level on the north side is above-grade. The central bays contain three original metal doors. The three bays at the first and second-floor levels of the north façade each contain original divided-lite steel industrial windows. The north and south façades both terminate with a terra cotta stringcourse, a plain frieze, and a parapet capped by a terra cotta coping.

Shop Building: Interior

The interior of the Shop Building accommodates an auto repair facility at the basement level and 11 industrial arts classrooms on the upper two floor levels. The auto repair shop is finished in concrete and is entirely utilitarian in character. The classrooms have metal doors, concrete walls, and utilitarian light fixtures. Vertical circulation is provided by a centrally located stairwell illuminated by a roof-mounted skylight.

Gymnasium

The Gymnasium was completed in 1940, five years after the Academic and the Shop buildings. Unlike these two buildings, which were both designed by Miller & Pflueger, the Gymnasium was overseen exclusively by the Office of Timothy Pflueger, which launched following J.R. Miller's retirement in 1937. The Gymnasium forms the easternmost part of the high school complex, near the intersection of 30th Avenue and Anza Street. When it was first built, the Gymnasium was a freestanding building. However, within several months it was connected to the rest of the complex following the completion of the Auditorium in the fall of 1940. The Gymnasium has a rectangular footprint and stepped massing with a shallow-pitched gable roof punctuated by ridge-type skylights. The roof and the skylights are all concealed from view by raised parapets.

Gymnasium: North Façade

The north (primary) façade of the Gymnasium is ten bays wide. In the left bay, at the first-floor level, there is a porthole window with a terra cotta surround. A two-level colonnade defines the rest of this elevation. A concrete ramp and a pair of concrete stairs with pipe railings provide access to the walkway within the colonnade. Fenestration at the first-floor level includes two aluminum doors with transoms—one in the second bay and the other in the eighth bay. Other fenestration at the first-floor level includes three divided-lite aluminum windows with operable awning sashes and one double-hung aluminum window. At the second-floor level, metal pipe railings line the walkway, while the eighth and ninth bays each contain divided-lite aluminum windows. The only other openings at the second-floor level include a pair of metal doors in the third bay. There is also a blind porthole window outlined by a terra cotta surround in the tenth bay. At the third-floor level, most of the bays contain divided-lite steel windows, which all appear to be original. The north façade terminates with a typical cornice.

George Washington High School

Name of Property
State

San Francisco, California

County and

Gymnasium: East Façade

The east façade of the Gymnasium is six bays wide. Although three stories high, the fenestration pattern makes it look like a two-story building, with the upper windows being twice as high as the windows at the first-floor level. All bays contain divided-lite steel industrial windows at both the first and second-floor levels, although the windows in the three central bays are much larger than the windows in the corner bays. The windows at the second-floor level are capped by a continuous cement plaster lintel. In contrast, the sills are terra cotta. Vertical terra cotta moldings extend below the windows to meet the cement plaster stringcourse that demarcates the first and second floor levels. At the right side of the first-floor level is a gridded vent. The east façade terminates with a typical cornice.

Gymnasium: South Façade

The south façade of the Gymnasium is nine bays wide. It closely resembles the east façade in terms of its fenestration pattern and detailing. The first bay contains a pedestrian entrance and a gridded concrete vent. The tenth bay has a recessed entrance containing an aluminum door. The rest of first-floor level is articulated by divided-lite aluminum windows of various sizes and configurations. The second and third-floor levels contain seven double-height, divided-lite aluminum windows. The tenth bay is blind except for a small aluminum window at the second-floor level. The south façade terminates with a typical cornice.

Gymnasium: West Façade

The west façade of the Gymnasium is concealed from view because it adjoins the Auditorium. It is presumably a blank expanse of concrete with internal apertures to facilitate passage between the two buildings.

Gymnasium: Interior

The Gymnasium contains separate boys' and girls' locker rooms and an office at the first-floor level and a large co-ed gym at the second-floor level that is illuminated by four roof-mounted skylights. Vertical circulation is provided by stairwells at each corner of the building. The main gym has polished maple flooring and plywood-paneled walls, above which are divided-lite steel windows along the north and south walls. Along the east and west sides are locker rooms, offices, and bleachers. The steel roof trusses are exposed to view within the main gym.

Auditorium

The Auditorium was completed not long after the Gymnasium in the fall of 1940. Similar to the Gymnasium, its construction was overseen by the Office of Timothy Pflueger. The three-story Auditorium has a rectangular footprint and cubic massing, although the south façade has a curvilinear profile where it encloses the backstage. The Gymnasium is built of painted concrete and it is ornamented with cement plaster and terra cotta detailing. Its colonnaded portico,

George Washington High School

Name of Property
State

San Francisco, California

County and

which faces north, references the portico of George Washington's Mount Vernon estate in Virginia.

Auditorium: North Façade

The north (primary) façade of the Auditorium is seven bays wide and sheltered within a two-story concrete portico. A broad concrete stair accesses the main entrance within the portico. The portico roof is supported by simplified Tuscan columns that support a coffered ceiling. The primary entrance is located at the center of the portico. It contains four pairs of original metal doors surmounted by a divided-lite metal window wall. Secondary entrances containing contemporary aluminum doors are located in the corner bays. There is also a box office/ticket window to the right of the main entrance. All fenestration at the first-floor level has terra cotta surrounds. Apart from the window wall above the main entrance, there is no fenestration at the second-floor level. At the third-floor level, five small louvered openings provide ventilation to the auditorium. The north façade of the Auditorium terminates with a scalloped molding and a flared entablature capped by a terra cotta coping.

Auditorium: East Façade

The majority of the east façade of the Auditorium is concealed behind the adjoining Gymnasium. The exposed rear portion south of the Gymnasium has two recessed pedestrian entrances at the first-floor level. Both entrances contain utilitarian metal doors. The upper portion of this wall contains no fenestration, although it is embellished with a painted eagle (the GWHS mascot) and the phrase: "Washington High Eagles are #1." The 1952 Music Wing Addition overlaps a small portion of the east façade at the lower lefthand corner. The front part of the east façade of the Auditorium is north of the Gymnasium. This section is simply an expanse of painted concrete. The east façade terminates with a scalloped molding and a flared entablature that matches the primary façade. Visible above the roof toward the rear of the Auditorium is the fly tower. The fly tower terminates with a raised parapet outlined by a terra cotta coping.

Auditorium: South Façade

The south façade of the Auditorium is seven bays wide. The bays are blind, and articulated by piers reminiscent of the colonnade on the north façade. The first-floor level is concealed behind the Music Wing Addition. The south façade terminates with a scalloped molding and a flared entablature capped by a terra cotta coping. A portion of the fly tower is visible above the entablature.

Auditorium: Interior

The interior of the Auditorium contains the performing arts theater, a pair of lobbies at the first and second-floor levels, a backstage area, toilet rooms, and storage. The main lobby at the first-floor level contains a ticket booth, several glass display cases, and two quarter-turn stairs that provide access to the lobby at the second-floor (balcony) level. Two pairs of paneled wood doors on the south side of the lobby provide access to the auditorium itself. The second-floor lobby

George Washington High School

Name of Property
State

San Francisco, California

County and

comprises a narrow corridor with two metal doors that provide access to the balcony. The partial third-floor level contains lighting harnesses and other equipment. The auditorium itself retains its original varnished plywood seats. The proscenium walls are finished in lath-and-plaster and they are stepped in a telescopic pattern characteristic of the Streamline Moderne style. The backstage area is flanked by control rooms that are connected by a crossover behind the stage. Doors at the rear of the backstage area provide access to the Music Wing Addition. Above the stage is the fly tower, where rigging equipment is located.

Music Wing Addition

According to the original master plan for George Washington High School, a music room was to have been built as an integral part of the Auditorium. However, due to insufficient funding it was not built in 1940 when the rest of the Auditorium was under construction. Instead, it was constructed 12 years later as an addition to the Auditorium. Because it is an addition, it is not included in the overall building count, but treated as part of the Auditorium.

The Music Wing Addition was designed by Timothy Pflueger's younger brother, Milton Pflueger, who took over the firm after Timothy's death in 1946. Although the Music Wing Addition bears some resemblance to Miller & Pflueger's original design, it has a shallower apse and more windows than the adjoining Auditorium. Two stories high, the Music Wing Addition has a generally rectangular footprint. Although mostly cubic in terms of its massing, the south façade curves outward in a gentle arc – echoing the fly tower of the Auditorium behind it.

Music Wing Addition: South Façade

The south (primary) façade of the Music Wing Addition is ten bays wide. Within the first bay, there is an entrance and a divided-lite window at the first-floor level and another divided-lite window at the second-floor level. The central section of the south façade contains seven divided-lite steel windows at the first-floor level. The curved upper part of the south façade is not fenestrated and it terminates with a raised parapet that is capped by a terra cotta coping. In the ninth bay, there are two divided-lite windows at the first-floor level and an aluminum sash window at the second-floor level. Within the tenth bay, there is a divided-lite window at the first-floor level.

Music Wing Addition: East Façade

The east façade of the Music Wing Addition is three bays wide. It includes a divided-lite aluminum window at left, a double-hung aluminum window at center, and a pair of double-hung aluminum windows at right. Like the south façade, the east façade of the Music Wing Addition terminates with a raised parapet capped by a terra cotta coping.

George Washington High School

Name of Property
State

San Francisco, California

County and

Music Wing Addition: North and West Façades

Neither the north nor the west façade of the Music Wing Addition is visible. The north façade adjoins the Auditorium and has no exposure. Likewise, the west façade backs up against the Academic Building.

Music Wing Addition: Interior

The interior of the Music Wing Addition includes classrooms and offices at the first-floor level and several more classrooms and a small auditorium at the second-floor level. The interior is finished in utilitarian materials such as gypsum board walls and acoustical tile ceilings.

Other Site Features

As mentioned, the northern third of the George Washington High School campus was originally set aside for sporting facilities, including a large football “stadium” consisting of a turf field and bleachers, and an L-shaped “play yard” consisting of tennis and basketball courts. A concrete retaining wall separates the level area encompassing the tennis and basketball courts from the steeply sloping northern and eastern edges of the campus facing Geary Boulevard and 30th Avenue. Another concrete retaining wall located roughly midway along the 30th Avenue side of the campus separates the basketball courts from the Esplanade.

Tennis and Basketball Courts

Six tennis courts are located along the north side of the campus near Geary Boulevard, and three basketball courts are located within the northeastern part of the campus along 30th Avenue. The tennis courts were extant as early as 1938, suggesting that they were built around the same time as the Academic Building and the Shop Building. They were rebuilt in 1984 and bleachers were installed around the same time. Due to the fact that they have been rebuilt, the tennis and basketball courts are non-contributing features.

Football Stadium

The football field and the bleachers (Football Stadium) were completed in 1940. It was built within a part of the site that had previously been a quarry. Its siting in a deep hollow shelters the field from onshore winds as well as making football games visible from the Esplanade. There is a flagpole at the north end of the field and a relief frieze by artist Sargent Johnson on the retaining wall at the south side. The frieze, which is called *Athletics*, was designed and executed in 1942. It is described in more detail below in the New Deal Art section. Concrete bleachers are located along the east and west sides of the football field. Metal doors along the base of the bleachers provide access to locker rooms, toilet rooms, and offices. Painted signage on the east side of the bleachers reads: “Of all victories, the first and greatest is for a man to conquer himself”- a quote long attributed to Plato. East of the bleachers is the faculty parking lot. At the south side of the parking lot, a multi-tiered ramp provides access to the Esplanade. The Football Stadium is a contributing feature.

George Washington High School

Name of Property
State

San Francisco, California

County and

The Esplanade

The Esplanade is a U-shaped promenade that includes a primary east-west section that traces the alignment of Anza Street from the Academic Building to the 30th Avenue gate, as well as two intersecting north-south legs that flank the Football Stadium. The east-west portion is bounded by low concrete walls punctuated by consoles and benches. There are also several planters containing trees and shrubs. The Esplanade has traditionally been the premier venue for important ceremonies and events at GWHS. The north-south sections flanking the Football Stadium are much more utilitarian in character, with asphalt paving and no formal landscaping. The Esplanade is a contributing feature.

Running Track and Soccer Field

According to Miller & Pflueger's original master plan, the southern third of the GWHS campus was set aside for a future baseball field. However, this feature was never built. An aerial photograph taken in 1946 indicates that the southern third of the campus remained undeveloped, with social trails criss-crossing an expanse of dry grass and brush. An aerial photograph taken a decade later shows an oval running track under construction. This track, which was completed in 1957 or 1958, has a pole-mounted scoreboard at the east end. Bleachers were installed on the north side in 1962. A soccer field was installed within the infield area in 1992. At the same time, the track was resurfaced and named for Don Barksdale. In 2006, two wheelchair lifts were installed as part of the bleachers. There is a modular classroom building of unknown origin at the northeast corner of the track, a one-story equipment storage building at the southeast corner, an athletic building on the south side, and a substation structure at the southwest corner. None of these are contributing features.

New Deal Artworks²

George Washington High School possesses an extensive collection of public artworks commissioned by the Federal Art Project (FAP) of the Works Projects Administration (WPA). Major works from this important New Deal-era arts program include fresco murals painted by Ralph Stackpole, Robert Boardman Howard, Victor Arnautoff, Lucien Labaudt, and Gordon Langdon, as well as a huge relief frieze by Sargent Johnson. Architect Timothy Pflueger selected these artists and recommended them to the Board of Education for this project.

Robert Boardman Howard's Bas-reliefs at the Main Entrance

Bas-reliefs likely sculpted by Robert Boardman Howard greet students and visitors entering George Washington High School through the main entrance on 32nd Avenue. Busts of Thomas Edison, George Washington, and Walt Whitman are placed above the doors and underlined by the words "Invention," "Statesman," and "Literature." While these artworks are not usually listed among those commissioned for GWHS, Pflueger described them as being cast from

² This section is based on text originally written by cultural historian Donna Graves.

George Washington High School

Name of Property
State

San Francisco, California

County and

models of Howard's design.³ Other sources, including the Smithsonian American Art Museum and the San Francisco Art Commission, attribute these works to painter Victor Arnautoff. Howard may well have also been responsible for the other abstract bas-reliefs that appear on various portions of the exterior of the buildings, but no documentation about them has been found.

Victor Arnautoff's *The Life of George Washington*

Once inside the school, viewers encounter the largest and most prominent of the New Deal-era artworks at George Washington High School: a visual history lesson titled *Life of George Washington*. The project was awarded to Victor Arnautoff, a Ukrainian-born artist who studied fresco technique with Diego Rivera in Mexico. The approximately 1,600-square-foot mural cycle spans the north and south walls of the stairway and lobby entrance at 32nd Avenue. Arnautoff described the imagery on the south wall as illustrating the "formation of [Washington's] personality and personality in action."⁴ The future president is depicted in his early career as a surveyor, followed by his activities as a scout, messenger, and officer of the revolutionary militia. The scenes are organized chronologically, beginning at the vestibule with Washington standing in the foreground using surveyor's tools; in the background is a scene of African Americans working the fields in front of Washington's Virginia estate, Mount Vernon. Arnautoff used rocks, plants, and two tree trunks reaching from the bottom to the top of this panel to organize the subsequent sections above the stairs. The next scene includes Washington portrayed as a scout and as a messenger wearing a dark coat or buckskins with a coonskin cap, surrounded by elaborately garbed soldiers and Native Americans – many bearing firearms. The tableau at the south wall of the lobby atop the stairs shows Washington standing near a table with Benjamin Franklin and two other figures, pointing with his right hand to a map and with his left hand gesturing toward a group of buckskin-clothed frontiersmen depicted standing over a prone, lifeless Native American. The frontiersmen are the only figures in these colorful murals painted in *grisaille*, or gray monochrome, perhaps to indicate that they are "ghostly figures of the imagination," as contemporary art critic Alfred Frankenstein surmised.⁵

The section on the north side of the vestibule, stair, and lobby portrays Washington's personality in "action" according to Arnautoff. Above the stairs are the scenes of stamps being burned and tea dumped in Boston Harbor, British soldiers opening fire on colonists, and revolutionaries raising Liberty poles. The chaos of these scenes, which the *San Francisco Chronicle* described as "Breughellesque," is organized by diagonal linear elements composed of

³ Therese Poletti, *Art Deco San Francisco: The Architecture of Timothy Pflueger* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008), 143. Timothy Pflueger, Typewritten manuscript of an article sent to Mr. J.E. Jellick of the Portland Cement Association for publication in *Architectural Concrete*, February 24, 1936.

⁴ Victor Arnautoff, "Frescoes of Geo. Washington School," *Architecture and Engineering* (April 1936), 17.

⁵ Alfred Frankenstein, "Arnautoff Completes..." *San Francisco Chronicle* (June 21, 1936), D6.

George Washington High School

Name of Property
State

San Francisco, California

County and

poles, ropes, and chains.⁶ At the top of the stairs, Washington appears on horseback accepting command of the Revolutionary Army. The north wall of the lobby depicts Washington standing with riding crop in hand, and a young African American man holding the reins of his horse. Washington is interacting with an overseer who points to African Americans picking cotton, shucking corn, and hauling loads, while three white male workers build wooden casks. Alcoves off the north side of the lobby show Washington in Congress and at Valley Forge; welcoming Lafayette, Von Steuben, and Pulaski; and Revolutionary Army soldiers accepting the surrender of Hessian soldiers at Trenton in 1777. On the south side, alcoves depict Washington's farewell to the military and an "endless discussion" with Jefferson and Hamilton.⁷

In addition to the frescoes, the main lobby contains a bronze statue of George Washington. It is a replica of the sculpture by Jean-Antoine Houdon that was commissioned by the Virginia legislature and installed in 1792 in the rotunda of the Virginia State Capitol in Richmond.⁸ Houdon's piece has served as a model for countless other reproductions. Nothing else is known about the statue, or the marble sculpture of Washington in the corridor between the administrative office suite and the auditorium, except that the latter was fabricated by the A. Frilli sculpture studio in Florence, Italy.

Historian and Arnautoff biographer, Robert Cherny, describes a "counter-narrative" to the then-standard high school treatment of the founding fathers and westward expansion that places African American, Native American, and working-class revolutionaries at the center of the major compositions of the *Life of George Washington*. High school curricula in the 1940s did not address the inconsistency between the founding fathers' adherence to the concept that "all men are created equal" and the fact that many of them, including George Washington, profited from the ownership of African Americans as chattel slaves. Likewise, the figure of the dead Native American with the ghostly frontiersman moving over him provided students with an image that challenged the common perspective that westward expansion filled territory that had been empty and underutilized.⁹

Library Frescoes by Gordon Langdon, Lucien Labaudt and Nelson Poole

Frescos by Gordon Langdon, Lucien Labaudt, and Nelson Poole are painted on the interior and above the entry to the second-floor library in the Academic Building. Like Arnautoff's, these paintings were conceived and implemented in 1936 during the school's initial phase of construction. Langdon's *Modern and Ancient Science* (4' x 10') appears above the doors to the library and depicts the experimental physicist Robert Millikan in academic robes on the left and

⁶ Pieter Brueghel "The Younger" was a Flemish painter noted for his gruesome depictions of Hell. Alfred Frankenstein, "Arnautoff Completes..." *San Francisco Chronicle* (June 21, 1936), D6.

⁷ Victor Arnautoff, "Frescoes of Geo. Washington School" (Unpublished manuscript), 17.

⁸ Tracy L. Kameron and Scott W. Nolley, "Rediscovering an American Icon: Houdon's Washington," *Colonial Williamsburg Journal* (Autumn 2003).

⁹ Electronic communication between authors and Arnautoff biographer, Robert Cherny, February 9, 2017.

George Washington High School

Name of Property
State

San Francisco, California

County and

a classically robed figure holding a scroll and compass on the right. Between these large seated figures, stands a smaller figure of the Goddess of Curiosity (modeled on Langdon's wife) turning to look the viewer in the eye as he manipulates a painted mechanism visually connected to the actual alarm bell and siren horns emerging from the wall.¹⁰

On the east wall of the library, Lucien Labaudt's *Advancement of Learning through the Printing Press* (5'6" x 27') is an almost surreal collage of large facial portraits and smaller-scaled full figures. The faces depict prominent men in the history of religion, politics, literature, and science, including Junipero Serra, Abraham Lincoln, Edgar Allan Poe, and Thomas Edison floating above people engaged in various activities related to the printed word. At center, a sheaf of papers tumbles out of a press in which the actual wall clock is embedded. Johannes Gutenberg stands reading one of the newly printed sheets just to the right of the press, for which he is credited as the inventor.

Ralph Stackpole's *Contemporary Education* (5'6" x 27') depicts scenes at a contemporary high school, featuring students whose notably varied skin tones presumably represent a racially and ethnically diverse student body. The left half of the painting is populated by female students who are reading, typing, sewing, and cooking at the central stove, which incorporates the actual wall clock. The right portion shows male students engaged in shop class, working a ham radio that incorporates an actual speaker, and reading.

Sargent Johnson's Athletic Field Frieze

Work on George Washington High School's athletic fields followed the completion of the Gymnasium and the Auditorium in 1940. Landscaping and other site improvements got underway in 1940-41, and in 1942, following the completion of the football field and bleachers, Sargent Johnson executed a large relief frieze titled *Athletics* at the north end of the playing field. The frieze comprises four panels, each 12 feet high and 185 feet in length. Arrayed in a style reminiscent of classical Greek friezes, figures of physically fit young men and women are engaged in golf, track events, boxing, archery, football, tennis, basketball, diving, and rowing. References to the Olympic Games appear in five interlocking rings and a torch. The artwork was made of cast stone executed in 6-by-14-foot sections.

Dewey Crumpler's Response Murals

Dewey Crumpler's "Response" murals were painted in 1974 in reaction to earlier student protests against Victor Arnautoff's *Life of George Washington*. In 1967-68, African Americans attending George Washington High School did not see the counter-narrative but rather, found the depictions of enslaved African Americans shucking corn, picking cotton, and loading barges as servile and humiliating. Crumpler's mural series consists of three Masonite panels measuring 6' x 15', 12' x 16', and 6' x 15'. Painted with acrylics, the formal title of the work is *Multi-Ethnic*

¹⁰ Alfred Frankenstein, "Arnautoff Completes..." *San Francisco Chronicle* (June 21, 1936), D6.

George Washington High School

Name of Property
State

San Francisco, California

County and

Heritage: Black, Asian, Native/Latin American. Installed at the west end of the hall leading from the Academic Building to the Auditorium, the three murals depict individuals such as César Chávez, Emiliano Zapata, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, Ho Chi Minh, and Ruth Asawa, as well as mythical figures and others who represent everyday African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, and Asian Americans. The three murals share a fiery red background and the compositions are visually linked by a sinuous element that begins as a snake held in an eagle's mouth in the Latino/Native American mural, becoming a dragon's tail in the Asian American mural, and then ends as a broken chain link in the African American mural.

Alterations

As mentioned previously, George Washington High School has undergone relatively few alterations. Since 1933, building permits for public school construction have been issued by the State of California and not the San Francisco Department of Building Inspection (DBI). However, the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) did not make these records available to the author. As a result, the following catalog of alterations is based on a handful of building permit applications on file at DBI, a summary of alterations provided by SFUSD staff, and an account of the school's construction and alterations provided by the George Washington High School Alumni Association (GWHSAA). Most of the work completed over the years consists of general maintenance and repairs, mechanical and systems upgrades, life/safety and accessibility upgrades, energy conservation, and the installation of portable classrooms, offices, and sheds throughout GWHS grounds.

There are five alteration permits on file at DBI dating to the first 35 years of the school's existence:

- October 3, 1962: Alterations and underpinning to portable classrooms, for temporary use only (Building Permit #271539).
- April 5, 1963: Relocate portable classrooms to George Washington High School (Building Permit #250163).
- June 23, 1964: Alterations to existing classrooms, including carpentry, plumbing, and electrical (Building Permit #268795).
- November 16, 1966: Non-structural alterations to electronics shop (Building Permit #3010000).
- June 8, 1970: Installation of two new portable classroom buildings on the school site (Building Permit #344825).

A summary of alterations provided to the author by SFUSD staff focuses on facility improvements completed after school bonds were approved by voters in 1988, 1990, 1994, 2003, 2006, and 2011. These projects concentrated on classroom modernization and improvements to life/safety and accessibility, including installing ADA-compliant ramps and

George Washington High School

Name of Property
State

San Francisco, California

County and

doors (1990), exterior door replacement (1988 and 1994), exterior painting (1989, 1990, 1993, and 1996), unspecified landscape and site improvements (1992 and 1996), and window sash replacement (1989, 1996, and 1997).

In 2011, the GWHSAA published a thoroughly researched account of the school's construction and alteration history:

- 1964: Most west-facing windows were replaced and the school was repainted.
- 1972: Boilers were converted to gas.
- 1984: The shop building was renamed the A. E. Lubamersky Industrial Arts Center, and new signage was installed.
- 1984: The tennis courts were resurfaced and bleachers at the west side of the courts were installed.
- 2006–09: Extensive alterations were completed following the passage of Proposition A in 2003, including the removal of prefabricated classrooms installed in 1962, classroom improvements, installation of accessible ramps from the Esplanade to the auditorium; construction of two wheelchair lift towers on the north side of the track, and interior and exterior painting.
- 2010: The football field and the south field were converted to artificial turf.

The most notable changes to George Washington High School include the replacement of many of the original doors and windows in the 1990s and the 2000s, and interior classroom upgrades completed in the 2000s, including selective door and tile replacements. The most notable changes to the site include the construction of the track in 1958, the construction of a soccer field in 1992, and the installation of a several portable buildings from the 1960s onward.

Integrity

To be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places a property must retain integrity. The seven aspects that define integrity are: location, design, materials, workmanship, setting, feeling, and association. The following sections analyze the integrity of George Washington High School under each of the seven aspects.

Location:

George Washington High School retains the aspect of location because it has not been relocated.

Design:

George Washington High School retains the aspect of design because the complex has kept nearly every element of its original design, including its site layout and footprint, height and

George Washington High School

Name of Property
State

San Francisco, California

County and

massing, fenestration pattern, and PWA Moderne ornament. Within the interior, George Washington High School retains virtually all of its original design features in the most important spaces, including the main entrance lobby, administrative office suite, library, corridors and stairs, auditorium, gymnasium, and cafeteria.

Materials:

George Washington High School retains the aspect of materials because nearly all of its original materials, including its painted concrete walls, terra cotta and cast stone accents, and cement plaster ornamental detailing have been retained and preserved. The only original materials that have been changed are the steel windows and doors, many of which have been replaced with aluminum counterparts. However, the replacement doors and windows closely resemble the originals and do not detract from the building's design. Within the interior, many of the original materials remain, particularly in the most important public areas, such as the main lobby, corridors and stairs, administrative office suite, library, auditorium, gymnasium, and cafeteria.

Workmanship:

George Washington High School retains the aspect of workmanship because it retains all of its fine artistry and handiwork on both the exterior and the interior of the building. On the exterior, it retains all of its cement plaster ornament, its metal entrance canopies, and terra cotta and cast stone trim. Within the interior, it retains its original terrazzo flooring (lobby), tiled wainscoting (stairs and corridors), decorative light fixtures (lobby), and wood paneling and casework (library and corridors). Most important, it retains all four of its New Deal-era murals and the three "Response" murals by Dewey Crumpler.

Setting

George Washington High School retains the aspect of setting because the campus has changed very little aside from the build-out of the southern third of the campus, where the running track and soccer field were built in 1958 and 1992, respectively.

Feeling:

George Washington High School retains the aspect of feeling because it continues to look and feel like a public high school from the New Deal Era. Though SFUSD has modernized the campus, including upgrading its buildings to comply with contemporary code requirements, it has taken pains to avoid removing or altering important features that would negatively impact the facility's historical appearance.

Association:

George Washington High School retains the aspect of association because it would be recognizable to anyone who ever attended the school during the period of significance.

George Washington High School

Name of Property
State

San Francisco, California

County and

Character-defining Features

The character-defining features of the George Washington High School complex include all exterior elevations, including but not limited to, their form, massing, structure, architectural ornament, and materials. Due to the size and complexity of the complex, the author has provided separate lists for each building and major landscape component.

Academic Building

- The Academic Building's footprint and overall height and massing;
- Flat roof with skylights;
- All exposed portions of the exterior façades, including the painted concrete exterior walls, terra cotta and cast stone decorative detailing, and cement plaster bas-relief motifs;
- The window openings, although not the aluminum sashes themselves;
- The remaining original steel industrial windows flanking the main entrance on 32nd Avenue;
- The main entrance, including the concrete stair, cast stone piers, metal canopy and busts, though not the aluminum doors themselves;
- The other original entrances, including the curved metal canopies and pipe railing balustrades, but not the doors themselves, except for the two remaining historic doors on the east façade facing the Esplanade;
- General layout of the Academic Building and the materials of the following spaces: main entrance lobby (including Arnautoff murals, George Washington statue, terrazzo stairs and flooring, handrails, tiled wainscoting, and Art Deco light fixtures), corridor adjoining the administrative office suite (including Memorial Clock and other class gifts, display cases, tiled wainscoting, George Washington sculpture, and Dewey Crumpler murals), library (including the Langdon, Labaudt, and Stackpole murals, paneling, casework and clocks);
- All remaining tiled wainscoting in corridors and stairs;
- All remaining original wood doors throughout academic building;
- All remaining stairs.

Shop Building

- The Shop Building's footprint and overall height and massing;
- Flat roof and skylight;
- All exposed portions of the four exterior façades, including the painted concrete cladding, cement plaster and terra cotta ornament, and four figural sculptures;
- Grid-like fenestration pattern, including all remaining steel industrial windows;

George Washington High School

Name of Property
State

San Francisco, California

County and

- The main entrance on the north façade, including the surviving metal doors;
- The concrete bridge connecting the Shop Building to the Academic Building.

Auditorium

- The Auditorium's footprint and overall height and massing;
- The stepped flat roof with fly tower;
- The two exposed façades, including the painted concrete exterior and cement plaster and terra cotta ornament – in particular the north façade with its full-height colonnade;
- The fenestration pattern on the north façade, including the original steel windows and vents;
- The original metal doors within the colonnade;
- The main auditorium space, including the telescoping plaster walls and proscenium arch and plywood seating;
- Lobby and finishes, including wood doors, curved plaster walls, and metal pipe railings.

Gymnasium

- The Gymnasium's footprint and overall height and massing;
- The flat roof and skylights;
- The three exposed exterior façades, including the painted concrete cladding and cement plaster and terra cotta ornament;
- The grid-like fenestration pattern, including all remaining steel industrial windows;
- The original entrances on the north façade but not the doors themselves;
- The upper gymnasium with hardwood flooring and exposed steel truss roof.

Music Wing Addition

- The Music Wing Addition's footprint and overall height and massing;
- The stepped flat roof with skylight;
- The painted concrete exterior cladding with terra cotta ornament.

Site

- Football field and bleachers;
- Sargent Johnson's *Athletics* frieze on the south side of the Football Stadium;
- Remaining lawn and planting strips along 32nd Avenue;
- Esplanade in front of the Gymnasium and Auditorium, including concrete walkways, benches, and balustrades;

George Washington High School

Name of Property
State

San Francisco, California
County and

- Courtyard space at south end of academic building.

Non-character-defining exterior features include all post-1974 alterations to the complex and the site, including all non-historic aluminum windows and doors on the exterior of the buildings; all remodeled bathrooms, classroom interiors, and utilitarian back-of-house spaces; all sheds, modular classroom and office buildings, the soccer field and the running track, the tennis and basketball courts, and the faculty parking lot and the driveway along 30th Avenue.

George Washington High School
Name of Property
State

San Francisco, California
County and

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☐ B. Removed from its original location
- ☐ C. A birthplace or grave
- ☐ D. A cemetery
- ☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☐ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

ART

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

EDUCATION

Period of Significance

1935 to 1974

Significant Dates

1935, 1936, 1940, 1952, 1974

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Miller & Pflueger

Timothy Pflueger

Milton Pflueger

George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

George Washington High School is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C, with a period of significance of 1935 to 1974. It is significant under Criterion A (Events) for its association with the Public Works Administration (PWA), a federal New Deal agency established by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1933 to combat the Depression. San Francisco was awarded several major PWA projects – including for the construction or expansion of 11 public schools: George Washington High School, Abraham Lincoln High School, Samuel Gompers Trade School, James Denman Junior High School, Marina Junior High School, Portola Junior High School auditorium, Glen Park Elementary School, Francis Scott Key Elementary School, Lawton Elementary School, Patrick Henry Elementary School (now Downtown High School), and Visitacion Valley Elementary School. Most of these schools were constructed on the city’s fast-growing southern and western periphery, where merchant builders were in the process of building thousands of functionally identical rowhouses. George Washington High School is also significant under Criterion A for the role that it has played in educating high school students in San Francisco’s incredibly diverse Richmond District for almost a century.

George Washington High School is eligible under Criterion C (Design/Construction) as a property that embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, and method of construction. Designed in the PWA Moderne style with hints of the contemporary International and Hollywood Regency styles, its design includes many references to the first U.S. president, George Washington, and his Mount Vernon estate in Virginia. Its principal designer, Timothy Pflueger (1892–1946), is widely recognized as a “master” architect in San Francisco and Northern California. Known for his early embrace of the Art Deco style in the late 1920s, Pflueger eagerly adopted the Streamline Moderne style in the mid-1930s. George Washington High School is one of four public schools (all in San Francisco) that were designed by Pflueger. In addition to GWHS, Pflueger also designed Alamo Elementary School (1926–altered), Theodore Roosevelt Junior High School (1930), and Abraham Lincoln High School (1940). Finally, as home to four outstanding New Deal–era murals and a colossal outdoor frieze, George Washington High School is significant under Criterion C as a property that embodies high artistic values. All five artworks were sponsored by the Federal Art Project (FAP). The artists who executed these projects, including Victor Arnautoff, Ralph Stackpole, Sargent Johnson, Lucien Labaudt, and Robert Boardman, make George Washington High School one of the most important repositories of New Deal artworks in San Francisco. Finally, the 1974 “Response Murals” by Dewey Crumpler provide a valuable counterpoint to Victor Arnautoff’s *Life of George Washington*. These murals assert Black, Latino, Asian, and American Indian resistance to the dominant Anglo-American narrative perceived in the New Deal murals.

George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Pre-construction History: 1867 to 1933

In 1867, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors designated a tract described as consisting of “150 feet on Thirtieth and Thirty-first avenues between A Street and Point Lobos Avenue” as a “school reservation.” It was one of nearly 100 plots set aside for future public use by the Outside Lands Committee. San Francisco Block Books published in 1901, 1906, and 1910 indicate that while the 150’ x 240’ school reservation belonged to the City and County of San Francisco, the remainder of the four block-site that would eventually become George Washington High School belonged to over 30 other individuals and corporations.¹¹ To the north of A (now Anza) Street the site consisted of several small homesteads and cottages, while the land south of A Street belonged to an investor named Sarah Sinclair and the realty/development firm of Sol Getz & Sons.

The earliest Sanborn Maps to cover these blocks were made in 1913. They indicate that this part of the Outer Richmond District was still overwhelmingly rural. North of Anza Street, the future site of George Washington High School had only four dwellings and a barn. Meanwhile, there were no buildings on the future campus site south of Anza Street. At the time, the San Francisco School Board was leasing the school reservation site to the proprietor of a “red rock quarry.” Eight small buildings and structures associated with the quarry, including a pair of shops, two rock bins, a tool shed, and a cabin, were arrayed around the site and in the undefined right-of-way of 31st Avenue. A 1923 photograph indicates what the site looked like when it was a quarry (**Figure 2**).

Residential development exploded in the Outer Richmond District after World War I, and the need for a new high school in the area quickly became apparent. In 1925, the School Board began expanding the original 1867 school reservation to fill out the four-block area bounded by Geary Boulevard to the north, 30th Avenue to the east, Balboa Street to the south, and 32nd Avenue to the west. With the exception of six house lots at the northeast corner of 32nd Avenue and Balboa Street, the School Board successfully acquired the entire four-block site. The board purchased the final lot in 1935, several months after construction had begun on the Academic Building. Around the same time, the School Board requested the Department of Public Works to vacate a two-block stretch of 31st Avenue between Geary Boulevard and Balboa Street, as well as a section of Anza Street between 30th and 32nd Avenues. These rights-of-way were then merged with the recently acquired parcels into a single “superblock.” All of these lots and vacated street rights-of-way were subsequently consolidated into one lot designated as Assessor Parcel No. 1574/001.¹²

¹¹ The San Francisco Original Handy Block Book (San Francisco: Hicks-Judd Company, 1910), 684-85.

¹² San Francisco Office of the Assessor-Recorder, Assessor’s Maps.

George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Construction History: 1933 to 1963

San Francisco voters approved a school bond on the December 19, 1933 ballot to fund the design and construction of three new public schools, including what was to become George Washington High School.¹³ Design work began in late 1933, with the prominent architectural firm of Miller & Pflueger placed in charge of the design and Walter L. Huber as the structural engineer for the new proposed high school in the Richmond District. The design had to comply with the 1933 Field Act, which the California legislature had just passed in response to the Long Beach Earthquake of that year. The Field Act, which enacted the first statewide seismic standards in the U.S., called for much stricter engineering standards for public schools in the state of California.

Clearing and site grading began in February 1934 and construction began on November 4, 1934.¹⁴ The \$734,000 Academic Building was completed first in December 1935. It was followed two months later by the Shop Building, which was completed in February 1936. The Academic Building originally contained 45 classrooms, 30 special-purpose classrooms and laboratories, administrative offices, a library, a cafeteria, and ROTC training rooms.¹⁵ The dedication ceremony was held on August 23, 1936. By this time, all four of the federally funded murals in the Academic Building had been completed. Photographs taken in 1936 show the newly completed Academic Building looking very much like it does now (**Figures 3-4**).¹⁶

Work also began on the sporting facilities, and by 1938 – if not earlier – the tennis and basketball courts were completed. These features appear on a series of aerial photographs taken by the Works Progress Administration in 1938 (**Figure 5**). The tennis and basketball courts were followed shortly by the Gymnasium, the football field, and the accompanying 5,000-seat bleachers, which were all were completed in February 1940.¹⁷

The 1,900-seat Auditorium, the fourth building in the complex, was dedicated on November 11, 1940.¹⁸ Several months later, in the summer of 1942, Sargent Johnson's relief frieze, *Athletics*, was installed on the retaining wall on the south side of the football field.¹⁹ Memorial Clock, donated by the Class of 1946 to honor GWHS students killed in World War II, was installed in the hallway outside the school's administrative office suite in October 1948.²⁰

¹³ "Lee Expresses Joy at School Bond Issue," *San Francisco Chronicle* (December 20, 1933), 2.

¹⁴ "Sunset Area High School Needs Show," *San Francisco Chronicle* (February 15, 1934), 19; and "Fete for New S.F. School Set," *San Francisco Chronicle* (October 19, 1934), 32.

¹⁵ Timothy Pflueger, Typewritten manuscript of an article sent to Mr. J.E. Jellick of the Portland Cement Association for publication in *Architectural Concrete*, February 24, 1936.

¹⁶ "Talented San Francisco Artists Complete Fresco Projects," *San Francisco Call-Bulletin* (June 20, 1936).

¹⁷ "Washington High School Opens Gym," *San Francisco Chronicle* (February 18, 1940), 3-H.

¹⁸ "S.F. School is Dedicated," *San Francisco Chronicle* (November 12, 1940), 12.

¹⁹ George Washington High School Alumni Association, "George Washington High School's History and Traditions" (San Francisco: unpublished manuscript, 2011), 3-4.

²⁰ George Washington High School Alumni Association.

George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

A permit for the Music Wing Addition was issued by the State of California in April 1951. It was completed in April 1952, marking the last major component of George Washington High School.²¹ This addition was designed by Milton Pflueger – Timothy’s younger brother – who took over the firm after Timothy’s untimely death on November 20, 1946.

Build-out of the sporting facilities at the south end of the campus began in the late 1950s when the Board of Education built a track and field complex consisting of a track, long-jump facilities, and a storage shed between 1957 and 1958. Bleachers were added in 1962.²² Swelling school enrollment during the postwar era necessitated the installation of two modular classrooms in the south courtyard of the Academic Building in 1962. Three more portable classrooms were added in 1963 in what was the original faculty parking lot – an area located just south of the Gymnasium.²³

Public Art Program at George Washington High School: 1935 to 2022²⁴

Federal Art Project

New Deal-era artworks at George Washington High School were sponsored by the Federal Art Project (FAP), a department of the Works Progress Administration. Created through the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935, the FAP operated from 1935 until 1943. It was one of several other New Deal public art programs, including the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP – 1933 to 1934), the Department of the Treasury’s Section of Painting and Sculpture (renamed the Section of Fine Arts in 1938) – 1934 to 1942); and the Treasury Relief Art Project (TRAP – 1935 to 1938). Together with the Federal Music Project, the Federal Theater Project, and the Federal Writers’ Project – a series of cultural programs collectively called “Federal One” – the Federal Art Project supported visual artists in a variety of media and brought their work to communities across the nation. The work of the FAP fell into three main areas: production of artwork, art education, and art research – culminating with the Index of American Design. During its eight years of existence the Federal Art Project sponsored murals and other public art for thousands of federal construction projects, including in schools, hospitals, courthouses, and libraries.²⁵

George Washington High School Murals

Murals were the most plentiful public art form commissioned under New Deal visual art programs. Murals could be planned as part of new construction projects funded by various New Deal agencies or executed as adornments to existing buildings. In fact, murals created by Mexican artists employed by their own government were a significant inspiration for federal support to American artists.²⁶

²¹ San Francisco Building Permit #135871, Issued April (date unclear).

²² George Washington High School Alumni Association.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ This section is based on text written by cultural historian Donna Graves.

²⁵ “Historical Note” Federal Art Project, Photographic Division Finding Aid. Smithsonian Institution.

<http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/federal-art-project-photographic-division-collection-5467/more#biohist>, accessed 30 August 2016.

²⁶ Masha Zakheim, *Coit Tower, San Francisco: Its History and Art* (Volcano, CA: Volcano Press, 2009), 12.

George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Murals by four Bay Area artists were completed on-campus by the time George Washington High School opened in August 1936.²⁷ All of the murals at GWHS were created through the medium of fresco, in which ground pigments are applied to wet plaster laid directly on a wall. The Mexican muralists so admired by many Bay Area artists had revived this ancient technique. In the *San Francisco Chronicle* in 1935, Victor Arnautoff directly credited Diego Rivera for his own interest in fresco: "Rivera is partly responsible for my becoming a mural painter. When I was a student, I intended to become a sculptor, but when I touched wet plaster, I somehow lost interest in sculpture. I like the big scale of fresco and the technical exactness of the medium."²⁸

Frescos must be quickly painted in sections while the plaster is still wet. When dried, the color is integral to the wall and changes can only be made by over-painting or chipping out the original section. At approximately 1,600 square feet, Arnautoff's *Life of George Washington* was a monumental undertaking, described at the time as "probably the largest fresco assignment ever executed in this city by a single artist."²⁹ Two assistants, George Harris and Gordon Langdon, have been noted as working with Arnautoff on this project.³⁰ Assistants performed tasks such as grinding pigments and spraying water to keep wet plaster moist.³¹ They were also allowed to paint smaller background details.

Early responses to Arnautoff's murals were celebratory, citing it as a visual history lesson for students and other viewers (**Figure 6**). At the time, George Washington was lauded as a proud example of what it meant to be an American. More recently, San Francisco historian Robert Cherny has described how Arnautoff's depictions of African Americans and Native Americans challenged their common erasure in school textbooks: "In depicting Mount Vernon, Arnautoff literally marginalized Washington and put enslaved African Americans in the center of one of the scenes." Cherny reads a powerful subtext into the section showing Washington pointing to the frontier. "...Arnautoff's counter-narrative makes it dramatically clear that the way west was over the body of a dead Indian."³² That perspective was presumably not obvious to students who made it a GWHS tradition to meet under the "Dead Indian," the "sleeping guardian" of the school's main lobby.³³

In the 1960s, Arnautoff's murals became a source of outspoken anger from African American students who found the depictions of enslaved African Americans shucking corn, picking cotton, and loading barges as servile and humiliating. "Sure, we picked cotton," stated Daryl Thomas, President of the Washington Afro-American Club in May 1968. "That's part of our history, but we would also like some

²⁷ "Talented San Francisco Artists Complete Fresco Projects," *San Francisco Call Bulletin* (June 20, 1936).

²⁸ "San Francisco Artists," *San Francisco Chronicle* (September 1, 1935), D3.

²⁹ Alfred Frankenstein, "Arnautoff Completes..." *San Francisco Chronicle* (June 21, 1936), D6.

³⁰ "'When?' Is a Native's Work," *San Francisco Chronicle* (March 29, 1940) describes Harris's involvement. Langdon is described as assisting on the murals in George Washington High School Alumni Association, "George Washington High School's History and Traditions" (2011), 4–5. <http://sfgwhsalumni.org>.

³¹ Zakheim, 19–20.

³² Robert Cherny, "Victor Mikhail Arnautoff, the House Un-American Activities Committee, and Stanford," *Sandstone & Tile* (Stanford Historical Society, fall 2013), 6–7.

³³ "The Background of George Washington," *The Surveyor*, Vol. XV (June 1947).

George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

recognition of the great contributions of black people to the sciences and history.”³⁴ By October of that year, the focus of student protest had evolved toward the removal of the murals, leading school officials to cover the offending scenes with sheets of paper according to one account.³⁵ However, a questionnaire returned by nearly half of the student body reportedly showed that less than 20 percent of students voted to have the murals removed while 61 percent agreed that “supplementing them” with additional depictions of African American history was the preferred remedy.³⁶

In 1968, the Afro-American Club identified a young African American painter named Dewey Crumpler as their preferred candidate to paint murals in response to the *Life of George Washington*. Only 19 years old at the time, Crumpler had just graduated from Balboa High School. According to Crumpler, members of the San Francisco Arts Commission were concerned that Crumpler did not have enough experience and held up the commission for several years. Taking advantage of the lull, Crumpler traveled across the country to look at murals by artists he admired, including several works by Diego Rivera. Crumpler also visited Mexico City, where he met the famed Mexican muralist Alfaro Siqueiros. Crumpler showed his sketches of the proposed GWHS murals to Siqueiros, who provided valuable guidance on how to paint within an architectural space.³⁷ In 1974, six years after the controversy erupted, Dewey Crumpler’s murals were installed at the west end of the main hall of GWHS. Formally called *Multi-Ethnic Heritage: Black, Asian, Native/Latin American*, the so-called “Response” murals depicted struggles for equality by African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, and Asian Americans.³⁸

Controversy over the Arnautoff murals re-emerged in 2017, for many of the same reasons that sparked opposition in the late 1960s. On June 27, 2019, the San Francisco Board of Education voted to destroy the murals in response to complaints from some students and their parents. The decision to destroy the murals sparked a massive outcry, culminating with an open letter signed by artists, historians, art historians, and others. The George Washington High School Alumni Association filed a lawsuit against the San Francisco Unified School District and the Board of Education to stop the destruction. Several high-profile individuals came out against the destruction, including actor Danny Glover (a GWHS alumnus) and artist Dewey Crumpler. In June 2022, the Board of Education voted to reverse its 2019 decision and keep the murals – for now.³⁹

Sargent Johnson Athletics Frieze

As mentioned, the second phase of bond-funded work began after completion of the Academic Building in 1936, including the Gymnasium and the football field and bleachers. Well-known San Francisco artist Beniamino Bufano was initially selected to produce the accompanying artwork, which was described as

³⁴ Phil Garlington, “Resentment Over High School Mural,” *San Francisco Examiner* (May 21, 1968), 3.

³⁵ Donald Canter, “High School Controversy: Black Students Want Murals Out,” *San Francisco Examiner* (October 24, 1968), 3.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Telephone interview with Dewey Crumpler by Donna Graves, February 16, 2017.

³⁸ George Washington High School Alumni Association, “George Washington High School’s History and Traditions” (2011), 4–5. <http://sfgwhsalumni.org>

³⁹ Sarah Cascone, “In a Reversal, the San Francisco School Board has Opted not to Remove a Controversial George Washington Mural from a High School,” <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/san-francisco-school-board-george-washington-mural-reversal-2136020>, accessed April 15, 2025.

George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

a “heroic frieze” to decorate a retaining wall on the south side of the football field. Early in 1940, rumors began circulating that Bufano had included likenesses of union organizer Harry Bridges and Soviet leader Joseph Stalin in his sketches. In response, the local office of the Federal Art Project fired Bufano, ostensibly for taking too much time to complete his work.⁴⁰ The Board of Education, whose approval of the final artwork was required alongside that of the Arts Commission, passed a resolution in April 1940 claiming that it was satisfied with Bufano’s design and requested that the FAP explain why a new design was necessary.⁴¹ However, by June, Sargent Johnson, who had been a protégé of Bufano’s, had already received final approval from the Board of Education for his new design.⁴² The *Athletics* frieze was installed in 1942.

Concise History of George Washington High School: 1936 to 2025

The dedication ceremony for George Washington High School on August 23, 1936 featured remarks by Mayor Angelo Rossi, Superintendent of Schools Joseph P. Nourse, and Elizabeth Morcombe, a representative of the California Congress of Parents and Teachers. The event recognized the completion of the first phase of the campus, which was designed to accommodate 1,500 students, with final plans for accommodating 3,000 pupils announced to occur once the rest of the complex was completed.⁴³ Students arrived for classes two days later.⁴⁴ GWHS’s inaugural class consisted of entering tenth-graders from the neighborhood, as well as older students who had transferred in from Lowell, Galileo, and Polytechnic High Schools, all of which suffered from overflow enrollment.⁴⁵

Entering students faced several challenges: furniture had not been secured, so they reportedly were forced to stand or sit on the floor; gym classes were held in classrooms; and the library was without books except for one set of encyclopedias. The din of construction noise from the new gymnasium and auditorium accompanied the first two years of classes. Ernest J. Cummings served as GWHS’s first principal; William Weiland was vice-principal and later dean of boys; Edith Pence was first dean of girls.⁴⁶

GWHS’s first commencement took place December 16, 1937, when 148 students participated in a graduation ceremony at the High School of Commerce. No formal graduation exercises were scheduled after that until June 1938, when a ceremony for another 233 students was held at the Veterans’ Memorial Opera House on June 7.⁴⁷ The *San Francisco Chronicle* proudly reported that nearly all students graduating from the “newest and most modern of San Francisco’s high schools” were

⁴⁰ “Project Fires Bufano,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (March 16, 1940).

⁴¹ “Education Board Wants Answers to Bufano Ouster,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (April 24, 1940).

⁴² “School Board Approves Substitute for Bufano,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (June 26, 1940), 14. Johnson had studied with Bufano at the California School for the Arts. In 1935, the two artists shared the first sculpture prize of the 55th annual exhibition of the San Francisco Art Association; “12 Sculptors, Painters Share Art Awards,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (February 13, 1935), 12. The award jury included William Gaw, Gottardo Piazzoni, and Ralph Stackpole.

⁴³ “High School Dedication Slated Today,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (August 23, 1936), 9.

⁴⁴ “School Dedication Set: George Washington High to be Opened Sunday,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (August 17, 1936), 28.

⁴⁵ “Dr. Lee Replies to Critics of School Plans,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (February 7, 1935), 24.

⁴⁶ “The Background of George Washington,” *The Surveyor*, Vol. XV (June 1947).

⁴⁷ “Public School Classes Here to End Tomorrow,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (June 17, 1937), 7; “Washington High School to Graduate 233 June 7,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (May 26, 1938), 30.

George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

continuing their studies or had found employment (noteworthy, given the ongoing impact the Depression had had on youth employment).⁴⁸ Students who went on to further education made up more than half of the graduating class. Most enrolled in universities, secretarial colleges, and business and technical schools; a handful entered schools of art and music.⁴⁹

George Washington High School was an exemplar of what was then called a “comprehensive high school,” a trend begun earlier in the twentieth century to integrate academic curricula with commercial and vocational education. In contrast to the “common school” of the nineteenth century, these new facilities offered a diversified curriculum that attempted “to accommodate the differentiated roles that students would play in their later lives.”⁵⁰ In addition to traditional classrooms, GWHS in its final form housed learning spaces dedicated to “home economics,” with stoves and sewing machines; training quarters for the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC); a music unit; and a separate shop building designed to accommodate automobile, machine, electrical, cabinet, and pattern shops.⁵¹

Some educational reformers worried that the “comprehensive” structure would reinforce separation by social/economic class. In response, they encouraged extracurricular activities that might foster social cohesion such as newspapers, athletics, ROTC, and various other clubs.⁵² Within a few years of its founding, George Washington High School boasted an array of rallies, parties, concerts, “family dinners,” and receptions that offered occasions to knit the student body together.⁵³ By the late 1940s, the GWHS Handbook described several clubs, including the Motion Picture Projectors Club, Floral Arts Club, Camera Club, French Club, and clubs organized by the YMCA and YWCA.⁵⁴ Assemblies were another “extracurricular activity to develop social unity,” according to Urban and Waggoner’s *American Education: A History* (2009).⁵⁵ Although the authors do not make this claim, assemblies may well have elevated the importance of auditoriums in school design during this era of school design and construction.

Described as a school that would eventually serve 3,000 students, George Washington High School’s enrollment was only 1,740 in 1946. However, continuing residential development in the Outer Richmond District during the late 1940s and early 1950s caused school enrollment to continue growing. In a 1958 article titled “Three Cheers for George Washington High!” *Readers Digest* described GWHS as a national model that educated 2,676 students. Quoting University of California President Robert Gordon Sproul, who dubbed GWHS “the best academic high school in the state,” the article touted the school as

⁴⁸ “Public School Classes Here to End Tomorrow,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (June 17, 1937), 7; “Washington High School to Graduate 233 June 7,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (May 26, 1938), 30.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Wayne J. Urban and Jennings L. Wagoner, Jr., *American Education: A History* (New York and London: Routledge, 2009, fourth edition), 271, 234.

⁵¹ Chas. H. Sawyer, “The George Washington High School” *Architect and Engineer* (April 1936), 33.

⁵² Urban and Wagoner, 272

⁵³ “The Background of George Washington,” *The Surveyor*, Volume XV, June 1947.

⁵⁴ *Washington Eaglet: Handbook* (San Francisco: George Washington High School, n.d.), 55–57.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 273

George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

a place of “intellectual maturity” and “imaginative teaching,” as well as a sports powerhouse.⁵⁶ By the early 1960s, the student population grew enough to bring the number of portable classrooms installed on-site up to five.⁵⁷ In 1978, GWHS joined all of San Francisco’s high schools in switching from a 3-year to 4-year curriculum.⁵⁸

When GWHS opened in 1936, it was overwhelmingly white, with small numbers of Asian Americans (predominantly Japanese Americans), Arab Americans, and Latinos. Journalist Spencer Michels compared his experience of the school in the mid-1950s with what he observed nearly three decades later.⁵⁹ As early as 1958, *Readers Digest* described the “vivid heterogeneity” of the student body, made up of “Scandinavian, Chinese, Irish, Slavic, Polish, French, Negro, Japanese, German and Greek—all Americans, but some only second generation.”⁶⁰ By 1982, Michels reported that GWHS’s student population was more than 50 percent Asian American (predominately Chinese American), 22 percent African American, 16 percent white, and 2 percent Latino. High student turnover and large numbers of students with “limited” English were described as being significant challenges. Honors and advanced placement classes, unknown in the 1950s, created “built-in segregation of serious students” according to Michels.⁶¹ In the most recent demographic survey, GWHS was 58 percent Asian American, 16.9 percent Latino, 11.3 percent white, 4.1 percent African American, 9 percent two or more races, 0.3 percent Pacific Islander, and 0.2 percent Native American. In spite of the fact that 47 percent of the students come from economically disadvantaged households, GWHS is an academic powerhouse, with 87 percent of its graduates going on to post-secondary education.⁶²

Concise History of Public Schools in San Francisco: 1847 to 1940

Public education in San Francisco dates back to 1847, when the first school opened on Portsmouth Square during the Gold Rush. Three years later, the Free School Ordinance divided the city into seven school districts and allowed local taxes to be levied to support public schools. San Francisco’s first public high school was established in 1856, and the first free kindergarten in the western United States opened in San Francisco in 1878.⁶³ Compulsory education laws, massive immigration from outside the U.S., and internal migration from rural to urban settings led to an explosion in school enrollment in California and across the nation during the late nineteenth century. As the school system became more formalized and the numbers of students grew, the teaching workforce expanded and teachers’ organizations grew as

⁵⁶ Frances V. Rummell. “Three Cheers for George Washington High!” *National Parent-Teacher Magazine* excerpted in *Reader’s Digest* (March 1958), 86.

⁵⁷ George Washington High School Alumni Association, “George Washington High School’s History and Traditions” (2011), 4–5, <http://sfgwhsalumni.org> accessed August 20, 2016.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Spencer Michels, “Washington: Alma Mater Revisited,” *San Francisco Sunday Examiner and Chronicle* (February 28, 1982), 16, 18–19.

⁶⁰ Rummell, 86.

⁶¹ Michels, 16.

⁶² “George Washington High School,” <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/california/districts/san-francisco-unified-school-district/george-washington-high-school-3258>, accessed April 15, 2025.

⁶³ “Finding Aid to the San Francisco Unified School District Records 1854–2005, Biographical/Historical Note” (San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library, 2005), 3–4.

George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

well. By the 1910s, members of San Francisco teachers' associations were active in state and local campaigns affecting schools and child welfare alike.⁶⁴

Educational reform efforts during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were part of the overall Progressive movement to address government corruption, as well as economic dislocation and social turbulence brought about by rapid industrialization and mass immigration. Schools were seen as vehicles for inculcating moral values, specifically in foreign-born children. As San Francisco civic leader John Swett argued, "Nothing can Americanize these chaotic elements and breathe into them the spirit of our institutions but the public schools."⁶⁵ Statements such as these probably would have offended many members of San Francisco's large Irish, Italian, and German immigrant communities, who found more sympathetic ears in Democratic Party officials who dominated the School Board for most of the last quarter of the nineteenth century.⁶⁶

Progressive campaigns for educational reform included expansion and reorganization of curriculum, improving teacher education, and changes in how schools and school districts were administered.⁶⁷ Assessments of San Francisco's school system in 1911 and 1917 found major deficiencies in both educational instruction and facilities.⁶⁸ These critiques fueled a "good government" campaign for selecting school board members and a movement to appoint the superintendent of schools rather than having it be an elected position. Amendment 37, a citywide initiative calling for these measures, failed in 1918, but it passed with a narrow majority of voters in 1920.⁶⁹

Reorganizing school systems to add junior high schools was another feature of progressive educational reform efforts. Junior high schools were adopted in California starting in 1909, and by 1913, three San Francisco grammar schools had been converted to serve seventh through ninth grades with modified schedules and a curriculum designed for children in early adolescence. Dr. Joseph A. Gwinn, the first superintendent hired by the newly appointed School Board, championed the transformation from an "8-4" system (eight years in elementary school then four in high school) to a "6-3-3" program that placed seventh through ninth graders in junior high and tenth through twelfth graders in high school.⁷⁰ By 1929, the city had nine operating junior high schools and several more in the planning stage.⁷¹

The proliferation of schools in San Francisco's western neighborhoods followed logically as residential and commercial development spread into those parts of the city. San Francisco's "Outside Lands" – most

⁶⁴ Ibid., 3.

⁶⁵ William Issel and Robert W. Cherny, *San Francisco, 1865–1932: Power, Politics and Urban Development* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 102.

⁶⁶ Issel and Cherny, 104.

⁶⁷ Wayne J. Urban and Jennings L. Wagoner, Jr., *American Education: A History* (New York and London: Routledge, 2009, fourth edition), 227.

⁶⁸ Sonnier Francisco, *Historic Context Statement: Golden Age of School Construction, San Francisco, California* (San Francisco Planning Department, 2009), 29.

⁶⁹ Francisco, 30.

⁷⁰ Francisco, p. 32.

⁷¹ Lee Stephen Dolson, Jr., *The Administration of the San Francisco Public Schools, 1847 to 1947* (Berkeley: PhD Dissertation, 1965), 455.

George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

of which would eventually become the Sunset and Richmond Districts, as well as Golden Gate Park and parts of the Potrero and Mission Districts – consisted of thousands of acres of sand dunes, thickets of willows and oaks, and coastal sage scrub.⁷² San Francisco experienced a major building boom in these areas after the 1906 Earthquake and Fire, and again during the 1920s as part of a nationwide building boom. Infrastructure improvements, such as graded streets and streetcar tracks, as well as the mass adoption of private automobiles, spurred residential development in what had previously been the city's outlying areas.⁷³

School location decisions were subject to political pressures as well as objective calculations of need.⁷⁴ Abraham Lincoln High School was earmarked for the Sunset District at the behest of parent and civic organizations who argued that the "fast growing region" deserved a secondary school. Superintendent Lee stated at a meeting held at Parkside School in February 1934 that "If the \$3,000,000 bond issue pending with the government and providing for the George Washington High School in the Richmond District can be approved, the Sunset will be the next thing on the expansion program."⁷⁵

The period between the world wars has often been called the "Golden Age" of San Francisco school construction.⁷⁶ Approximately 50 new school buildings were erected in the 1920s and 1930s, including several built with assistance from the PWA and/or the WPA.⁷⁷ John Reid Jr., who served as the city architect from 1919 to 1927, designed many of these facilities. Other prominent Bay Area architects to design San Francisco public schools in this period include Miller & Pflueger, Bakewell & Brown, and Weeks & Day.⁷⁸

San Francisco School Construction Bonds: 1917 to 1938

San Franciscans voted four times in two decades to fund the expansion of their school district's physical plant. In November 1917, \$3.5 million dollars were authorized to address overcrowding. In part, this was a long-term hangover from the devastation wrought by the 1906 Earthquake and Fire, which destroyed 29 schools. Slightly a decade following the disaster, more than 170 classes were reportedly still being held in "temporary shacks, lunchrooms, basements, corridors, rented rooms, stores and auditoriums."⁷⁹ In December 1917, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that the bond funds would be spent on several new elementary and high schools.⁸⁰

⁷² Mary Brown, *Sunset District Residential Builders, 1925–1950: Historic Context Statement* (San Francisco Planning Department: 2013), 19.

⁷³ Brown, 21.

⁷⁴ Dolson, 482–83.

⁷⁵ "Sunset Area High School Need Shown," *San Francisco Chronicle* (February 15, 1934), 19.

⁷⁶ The term appears to have first been used in "Civic Architecture: San Francisco's Public Schools," San Francisco Architectural Heritage Newsletter (1988, XVI:3), 5. It is the title of a recent study conducted for the San Francisco Planning department by Sonnier Francisco, "Historic Context Statement: Golden Age of School Construction, San Francisco, California" (San Francisco Planning Department, 2009).

⁷⁷ Figure for the 1920s from "Civic Architecture," San Francisco's Public Schools."

⁷⁸ "Civic Architecture."

⁷⁹ "School Bond Election to be Held Tuesday," *San Francisco Chronicle* (October 28, 1917), 8.

⁸⁰ "Board Locates First Schools to Be Erected," *San Francisco Chronicle* (December 5, 1917), 10.

George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

In 1922, voters were asked again to “invest in the future of the children of San Francisco” because “today’s school children will be San Francisco’s men and women of tomorrow.”⁸¹ Mayor James Rolph Jr. described the bond measure as an issue of equity. “Every neighborhood must be given an equal opportunity with every other neighborhood. We must not have good buildings here and poor buildings elsewhere.”⁸² After the overwhelmingly positive November election results, city agencies scrambled to coordinate planning and expenditure of the \$12 million devoted to building 30 schools. “The plan for the rehabilitation of the schools is the most gigantic ever attempted in San Francisco. It is comparable only to the Civic Center project,” stated Rolph.⁸³ The bond also funded a study of educational needs based on the city’s growing population so that future schools could be sited in the most appropriate locations.⁸⁴

A 1933 bond measure approved \$3 million for school projects inspired, at least in part, by safety concerns highlighted by a fire at the Fremont School. Arguments for replacing older wood-frame schools for just this reason had been made for more than ten years, according to the *San Francisco Chronicle*. In addition to replacing fire-prone buildings, the Board of Education planned to use the campaign to make “readjustments of school districts, and in some cases consolidations.”⁸⁵ The measure also contained funds for three new schools, including George Washington High School, Marina Junior High School, and Lawton Elementary School.⁸⁶ Voters approved the bond on December 19, 1933.⁸⁷

Another impetus behind this bond was provided by the Field Act, a state law passed in April 1933, one month after a major earthquake shook Southern California and turned 230 schools into rubble or otherwise rendered them unfit for occupation. The Field Act also established the Office of the State Architect, which then assumed regulatory overview and permitting for school construction throughout California – a role that it continues to have to this day.⁸⁸

In 1938 another bond issue proposed borrowing \$2.8 million to construct a dedicated building for San Francisco Junior College (now San Francisco City College), as well as gymnasiums and auditoriums for several elementary, junior, and high schools. This bond included funds to complete several components of the growing GWHS campus, including an auditorium, a gymnasium, a football field, and a running track.⁸⁹ Six other bond issues appeared on the September ballot, but only the \$2.8 million school bond passed. For the first time, these bonds depended on a grant from the federal Public Works Administration (PWA), which provided 45 percent of the total construction costs. Without support from Washington, even if approved by voters, the local bonds could not have been offered for sale.⁹⁰

⁸¹ “Future of S.F. is at Stake at Polls Tuesday,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (November 19, 1922), 10.

⁸² James Rolph Jr. “Rolph Appeals to S.F. to Vote School Bonds,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (November 19, 1922), 10.

⁸³ “First Steps Taken on Big School Plans,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (November 25, 1922), 3.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ “Rossi Makes Final School Bond Appeal,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (June 27, 1933), 11.

⁸⁶ “Women Urge Approval of School Bonds,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (December 10, 1933), 9.

⁸⁷ “Lee Expresses Joy at School Bond Issue,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (December 20, 1933), 2.

⁸⁸ California State Safety Commission, “The Field Act and Public School Construction: A 2007 Perspective.”

⁸⁹ “Work to Cost Ten Millions on Bond Issue List,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (June 15, 1938), 6.

⁹⁰ Earl Behrens, “Schools Win: Market Line Bond Issue Defeated,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (September 28, 1938), 1, 11.

George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Concise History of the Public Works Administration: 1935 to 1943

The Public Works Administration (PWA) was a federal agency signed into law on June 16, 1933 under Title II of the Federal Emergency Relief Act (FERA). Not originally envisioned as a work relief program, the PWA's initial purpose was to stimulate demand for construction materials by providing a combination of grants and loans to state and local governments to finance large-scale and necessary public works projects. Headed by Harold Ickes, the PWA provided 30 percent of the cost of labor and materials to the project sponsor and loaned the remainder if necessary. The interest rate was 4 percent to avoid competing with private banks. The PWA's contribution was later elevated to 45 percent. To be approved for PWA funds, a project sponsor had to represent a federal, state, or local government jurisdiction and demonstrate that the project was both necessary and economically viable. The project sponsor also had to comply with all federal regulations for procurement, labor, etc.⁹¹ Vetting of non-federal (state and municipal) projects was slow and laborious, but nearly every approved project was eventually built – a testament to the PWA's rigorous review process.

There was not a clear division between the PWA and its main competitor, the Works Progress Administration (WPA), though the PWA was supposed to confine its activity to projects costing more than \$25,000. In San Francisco, most PWA projects were public buildings as opposed to streets, parks/playgrounds, and other less-complex infrastructure projects upon which the WPA focused. San Francisco was a major beneficiary of the PWA, in part because voters had already approved several school bonds, meaning that it already had the matching funds and the ability to start construction as soon as possible. As a result, the majority of all PWA projects in San Francisco were public schools. The tally included eight elementary schools: Buena Vista, Francis Scott Key, Glen Park, Horace Mann, Lawton, Patrick Henry, Starr King, and Visitacion Valley; three junior high schools: James Denman, Marina, and Portola (auditorium only); and three high schools: Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, and Samuel Gompers Trade School. San Francisco Junior College (San Francisco City College) was also a PWA project.

The PWA also funded several major government buildings in San Francisco, including the new U.S. Mint at Hermann and Buchanan streets, the new Federal Office Building in the Civic Center, and the Appraisers Building in Jackson Square.⁹² The PWA also funded several major infrastructure projects, including raising the height of O'Shaughnessy Dam in Yosemite National Park to increase the water supply of the Hetch Hetchy water system, and building the Cow Palace in Visitacion Valley, new pier sheds at Piers 35 and 37 on the Northern Waterfront, the Pulgas Water Temple at Crystal Springs Reservoir in San Mateo County, the Richmond-Sunset Sewage Treatment Plant in Golden Gate Park, and completing substantial improvements to Mills Field – now San Francisco International Airport.

⁹¹ Robert D. Leighninger, Jr. *Long-Range Public Investment: The Forgotten Legacy of the New Deal* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), 9.

⁹² William Mooser, Jr., Branch Manager, W.P.A., *Report on Progress of the Works Program in San Francisco* (San Francisco: Works Progress Administration, San Francisco Branch, 1938).

George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Timothy Pflueger, Architect: 1892–1946

Timothy Pflueger is one of the most remarkable architects to have come from San Francisco during the twentieth century (**Figure 7**). In spite of facing several significant hurdles, including the Depression and World War II, Pflueger created an outstanding body of work during his relatively short career. Attesting to the quality of his work, dozens of Pflueger's buildings still stand in San Francisco and other communities throughout Northern California. Trained in the architectural pedagogy of the École des Beaux Arts, Timothy Pflueger eventually embraced a daring modernist aesthetic that incorporated influences of Chinese, Persian, and pre-Columbian Mexican architectural and artistic traditions. Long known as a supporter of the fine arts, Pflueger frequently collaborated with well-known sculptors, muralists, lighting designers, and other artisans and craftspeople, including Diego Rivera, Ralph Stackpole, and Arthur Mathews. Pflueger was also an adopter of modern technology, embracing contemporary building materials, including aluminum, Lucite, and sheet metal.

Timothy Ludwig Pflueger was born September 26, 1892 in San Francisco. His German immigrant parents, Otilie and August Pflueger, both arrived in San Francisco in 1890. August Pflueger was a merchant tailor, and from 1904 on the family lived above his shop at 1015 Guerrero Street in the city's Mission District. While not poor, Timothy Pflueger was raised in modest circumstances in a working-class neighborhood filled with immigrants from Ireland, Germany, Scandinavia, Italy, and France. Although frugal and religious, Timothy's parents were well-educated and cultured, and they did not neglect their children's exposure to the arts, including paying for piano lessons and art and drafting lessons for young Timothy. On the other hand, Timothy had comparatively little formal education, going only as far as high school. Like many boys in the Mission District, Timothy went to work as soon as he could so he could help his family and learn a trade.⁹³

Pflueger showed an early interest in drawing and painting, which helped to get him a job as an architectural draftsman at the age of 14. This was in 1906, when the demand for skilled renderers and delineators had surged after the great earthquake and fire. When he was 16, Pflueger began working in the office of James Rupert (J.R.) Miller and George T. Colmesnil, an up-and-coming architectural firm heavily involved in the reconstruction of San Francisco after the disaster.⁹⁴ The partners quickly recognized Pflueger's unusual talent, and they encouraged him to join the San Francisco Architectural Club, a young architects' organization that offered night classes based on the methods and pedagogy of the École des Beaux Arts in Paris.⁹⁵

Timothy Pflueger steadily burnished his skills in the nurturing environment of Miller & Colmesnil, and in 1912, at the age of 20, he was given his first solo project, a small country church in Portola Valley. Our Lady of the Wayside, which still stands, is designed in the Mission Revival style, combining features of

⁹³ Therese Poletti, *Art Deco San Francisco: The Architecture of Timothy Pflueger* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008), 3–5.

⁹⁴ Poletti, 8.

⁹⁵ Poletti, 11.

George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

several different Spanish Colonial buildings in California, including Mission Dolores, Mission San Gabriel, and Mission San Carlos Borromeo.⁹⁶ Our Lady of the Wayside was widely praised by the local architectural press for its simplicity, honesty, and effective use of the Mission Revival style. Consequently, Pflueger's bosses began giving him more high-profile jobs, including designing the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company building (now the Ritz-Carlton Hotel), a Beaux-Arts-styled office building that still stands at the northeast corner of Stockton and Pine streets on Nob Hill.⁹⁷

Miller & Colmesnil dissolved in 1913, but Pflueger stayed on as an employee of J.R. Miller's for another six years, assisting him on a variety of projects. In 1917, after the U.S. entered World War I, Pflueger was drafted into the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. He spent the next year and a half laying out military training camps, including facilities in Washington, D.C. and San Juan, Puerto Rico.⁹⁸

Pflueger resumed working for Miller upon his return to San Francisco in 1919. Miller soon promoted him to the position of chief draftsman. Then, in 1920 – the same year Pflueger received his architectural license – Miller elevated him to the position of junior partner. With the local economy booming during the 1920s, Miller & Pflueger had the opportunity to design a number of prominent buildings. The firm's work in the early part of the decade all adhered to Miller's historicist aesthetic, including the Castro Theater (1921) at 429 Castro Street and the San Francisco Mining Exchange (1923) at 350 Bush Street. The Castro Theater was Pflueger's first movie palace, a building type that would make him famous. Although the exterior is designed in a straightforward rendition of the Spanish Colonial Revival style, the interior is a fanciful caravanserai of Spanish, Greek, Roman, and Middle Eastern influences.

The Castro Theater project earned Miller & Pflueger several other high-profile theater commissions – mainly from the Nasser Brothers – the proprietors of the Castro Theater and a chain of theaters in Northern California. The Nassers gave Pflueger a free hand with their commissions, allowing him to develop fanciful interior spaces that would transport moviegoers to far-off lands before the curtains had even parted. Indeed, the Nasser Brothers hired Miller & Pflueger to design all of their theaters, including The Alhambra (1925) in San Francisco; three theaters in Tulare, Oroville, and Chico (1926–27); the Paramount (1931) in Oakland; the Alameda Theater (1932) in Alameda; and the New Mission Theater, a remodel of an existing 1917 neighborhood theater in San Francisco's Mission District (1932).

The Castro Theater caught the attention of many prominent San Franciscans, including the directors of the Pacific Telephone & Telegraph Company, who decided to hire Miller & Pflueger to design a high-rise office building in San Francisco's South of Market area. After securing the commission, Pflueger developed several concepts for San Francisco's first true "skyscraper." Not caring for any of his initial designs, Pflueger sought inspiration in the 1922 Chicago Tribune Tower competition.⁹⁹ One of the entries – submitted by Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen – dispensed with the traditional Beaux-Arts tripartite base, shaft, and capital scheme in favor of a Gothic-inspired approach using continuous

⁹⁶ Poletti, 26–7.

⁹⁷ Poletti, 27.

⁹⁸ Poletti, 30.

⁹⁹ Poletti, 61-5.

George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

vertical lines, no horizontal divisions, and rooftop setbacks to emphasize the building's towering height. Pflueger's 1923 design for the Pacific Telephone & Telegraph Building was another important breakthrough for the young architect because it marked the beginning of his embrace of modern design.

The wider U.S. architectural profession began to take notice of Timothy Pflueger following the completion of the Pacific Telephone & Telegraph Building in 1925. Five years later, Pflueger would make his second major contribution to San Francisco's skyline with the Medical-Dental Office Building (1929) at 450 Sutter Street. Along with Howe & Lescaze's PSFS Building in Philadelphia, 450 Sutter is probably the most innovative skyscraper built in the United States during the 1920s. Discarding the heavy masonry cladding of the Telephone Building, Pflueger sought inspiration in the underlying steel frame and wrapped the Medical-Dental Building in a taut terra cotta and glass skin, with delicate spandrel panels ornamented with Mayan-inspired designs. The windows wrap around the corners of the building, contributing to its lightweight and very modern appearance. Pflueger, a lover of dramatic flourishes, designed a richly appointed lobby for 450 Sutter. The lobby, one of the most photographed architectural spaces in San Francisco, is finished in black marble and gilded stucco embossed with Mesoamerican pictographs recalling a Mayan temple.¹⁰⁰

The Medical-Dental Building was completed just a few months after the Stock Market Crash of 1929. The ensuing Depression ushered in a period of very little new construction in San Francisco. Fortunately, Miller & Pflueger's growing reputation allowed them to keep afloat during the Depression. Theaters and office buildings continued to comprise a major part of their work, including an addition and a remodel of the Pacific Stock Exchange (1930), the El Rey Theater in San Francisco's Mt. Davidson Manor neighborhood (1931), and the Paramount Theater in Oakland (1932). Miller & Pflueger also designed several nightclubs and cocktail lounges, including the Bal Tabarin (now Bimbo's 365), Le Cirque Room in the Fairmont Hotel, the Patent Leather Lounge in the St. Francis Hotel, and the Top of the Mark in the Mark Hopkins Hotel – all in San Francisco. All but the Patent Leather Lounge still exist in some form or other.

Miller & Pflueger also designed several public buildings and structures in San Francisco during the Depression, including Roosevelt Junior High School (1930), George Washington High School (1936), the Transbay Terminal (1937), San Francisco Junior College (now San Francisco City College – 1940), Abraham Lincoln High School (1940) (**Figure 8**), and a parking garage beneath Union Square (1942). Much of the firm's work from the latter half of the 1930s shows a gradual evolution away from the Art Deco aesthetic of the 1920s toward a more austere aesthetic in keeping with contemporary European modernism. George Washington High School, designed in the PWA Moderne style, is one of the best examples demonstrating the growing abstraction of Pflueger's later work. This transformation toward abstraction picked up speed following the retirement of the more traditionally minded J.R. Miller in 1937. From this point on, the firm became known as Timothy L. Pflueger & Associates.

¹⁰⁰ Poletti, 79-80.

George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

In 1939, Timothy Pflueger was appointed to the Board of Architects in charge of designing the Golden Gate International Exposition (GGIE) on Treasure Island. As part of his duties, Pflueger designed the Federal Building, the California State Building, the California Auditorium, and the Court of the Pacific. Pflueger's work at the GGIE represented his continuing evolution toward modernism. During World War II, Pflueger worked for the U.S. government, designing the U.S. Army General Depot in Ogden, Utah; various Army transmitter buildings and broadcasting studios; and several housing projects for defense workers. His final project was a remodel of the I. Magnin's Co.'s flagship store at the southwest corner of Geary and Stockton Streets in San Francisco's Union Square. This ultra-modern building was under construction when Timothy Pflueger died of heart failure on November 7, 1946, following his daily swim at the Olympic Club.¹⁰¹ Following his death, the firm was taken over by Timothy's younger brother, Milton Pflueger, who renamed it Pflueger Architects.

PWA Moderne Style in San Francisco: 1930 to 1940

George Washington High School is designed in the PWA Moderne style with some Hollywood Regency and International influences. The PWA Moderne is a subset of the Streamline Moderne style, which itself emerged out of the Art Deco style. The Art Deco style became widely known after the 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes in Paris, where it was showcased in the design of several exhibit halls, as well as many of the exhibits within. The Art Deco style consciously charted a new stylistic vocabulary based on low-relief geometrical designs—including parallel “speed” lines, chevrons, zigzags, and stylized vegetal motifs. Turning their backs on the classical traditions of ancient Greece and Rome, artists and architects working in the Art Deco style looked to non-western sources for inspiration, including ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, Africa, Mexico and Central America, as well as modernist European artistic movements such as Cubism.

By the end of the 1930s, the idealization of the machine as a symbol of technological advancement gradually led toward the simplification and refinement of the Art Deco style. This increasingly machine-based aesthetic ultimately became known as the Streamline Moderne style. This new style evolved along several different paths, ranging from the literal application of the aerodynamic vocabulary of airplanes, ocean liners, and automobiles to the “stripped classicism” popular with U.S. government institutions. In the United States, this latter style became known as “PWA Moderne,” in part because it was favored by the New Deal public works agencies established during the administration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

The dominant characteristics of the Streamline Moderne style include planar surfaces; horizontal moldings called “speed lines”; vertical pulvinated or “reeded” moldings; curved canopies above entrances and windows; ribbon and porthole windows; brushed metal or aluminum trim, light fixtures, and hardware; structural glass block windows; and extruded aluminum hand rails and balustrades. The Streamline Moderne style was employed for nearly every building type imaginable, including

¹⁰¹ Poletti, 218.

George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

government buildings, airports, train stations, schools, factories, houses, movie theaters, and commercial storefronts.

The Streamline Moderne style is relatively common in San Francisco, in part because the city experienced a substantial building boom at the end of the 1930s. In San Francisco, the Streamline Moderne style was used for all major building types, chief among them public schools funded by the PWA, including Francis Scott Key Elementary School (**Figure 9**), Visitacion Valley Elementary School, George Washington High School, Abraham Lincoln High School, and Samuel Gompers Trade School. Examples that are not schools include the Transbay Terminal (demolished), the U.S. Mint, and the Henry Doelger Building at 9th Avenue and Judah Street in the Inner Sunset District. The best-known Streamline Moderne building in San Francisco is probably the Aquatic Park Bathhouse, which embodies all of the style's characteristics, including its curved volumes, porthole windows, extruded aluminum railings and balustrades, and curved canopies. The Streamline Moderne style was also popular with local merchant builders, who built an untold number of "modernistic" rowhouses throughout the West of Twin Peaks District – most notably in Miraloma Park.

Artists' Biographies¹⁰²

Victor Mikhail Arnautoff: 1896–1979

Victor Arnautoff painted his mural cycle, *Life of George Washington*, in the main lobby of the Academic Building at George Washington High School. Born in 1896 in the Tokmak district of the Zaporizhia Oblast of southern Ukraine, Victor Mikhail Arnautoff served in the Imperial Russian Cavalry and the White Siberian Army as a young man, which prevented him from returning to Ukraine after the monarchy was overthrown during the Russian Revolution (**Figure 10**).¹⁰³ Victor arrived in San Francisco in 1925 on a student visa to pursue studies at the California School of Fine Arts (now the San Francisco Art Institute).¹⁰⁴ Among Arnautoff's instructors was Ralph Stackpole, who encouraged him to study mural painting in México with Diego Rivera. Arnautoff assisted Rivera on major mural commissions in Mexico City and Cuernavaca.¹⁰⁵ He returned to San Francisco in 1931, and three years later, he was selected to serve as project director for the group of artists working on murals for Coit Tower, which was funded by the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP). Arnautoff contributed his own fresco titled *Urban Life* to the project.¹⁰⁶ In 1936, he painted *Life of George Washington* in the main lobby of George Washington High School.

In addition to GWHS and Coit Tower, Arnautoff received other federal commissions to execute murals in several post offices around Northern California and Texas, including South San Francisco, Pacific Grove,

¹⁰² This section is based on text originally prepared by cultural historian Donna Graves.

¹⁰³ Robert Cherny, "Victor Mikhail Arnautoff, the House Un-American Activities Committee, and Stanford," *Sandstone and Tile* (37:3, 2013), 4.

¹⁰⁴ Gene Hailey, ed. *California Art Research* (San Francisco: California Art Research Project, Vol. 20, 1936), 109. Says his studio at 790 Montgomery Street, 110.

¹⁰⁵ Robert Cherny, 5. According to *California Art Research*, Vol. 20, 110, Arnautoff completed his first public commission, a fresco for a Russian Church on Fulton Street.

¹⁰⁶ Masha Zakheim, *Coit Tower, San Francisco: Its History and Art* (Volcano, CA: Volcano Press, 2009), 67.

George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

and Richmond, California; and Linden and College Station, Texas. Working for the State Emergency Relief Administration (SERA), Arnautoff created a mural for the Presidio Chapel in San Francisco.¹⁰⁷ A WPA-funded profile of the artist described Arnautoff as believing that the placement of “frescos in public buildings is a forward step of great importance for the education of those who are unable to find art interest in other forms.”¹⁰⁸ Arnautoff also painted several murals for non-public clients, including at the Old Cathedral of the Holy Virgin on Fulton Street in San Francisco and the Palo Alto Clinic. He taught at the California School of Fine Arts, Stanford University, and the California Labor School, an organization that reflected his political views as a member of the Communist Party, which he joined in 1938. Arnautoff retired from Stanford in 1962 after 24 years on the faculty. Two years later, he returned to his home town of Mariupol in Ukraine. Arnautoff continued to exhibit and produce public art works in Mariupol, including three major mosaic murals that were installed in a school, an airport, and the Communications Building. In 1970, he moved to Leningrad, where he died in 1979.¹⁰⁹

Sargent Johnson: 1888–1967

Sargent Johnson, who created the relief frieze *Athletics* at the south end of the football field at George Washington High School, was born in Boston to a Swedish American father, Anderson Johnson; and an American mother of African and Cherokee descent, Lizzie Jackson Johnson (**Figure 11**). Sargent Johnson was raised by his maternal aunt, May Howard Jackson, a sculptor who specialized creating in busts of African American subjects. Her early influence set young Sargent on his way toward becoming an artist. As early as 1915, Johnson came to San Francisco to study art, first at the A.W. Best School, and then at the California School of Fine Arts (now the San Francisco Art Institute). At the California School of Fine Arts, he worked with Ralph Stackpole, Maurice Stern, and Beniamino Bufano. Johnson was a member of the Communist Party for much of his life. Even though he could “pass” as a white man, Johnson consciously embraced his African American heritage, believing that the fine arts could improve the place of African Americans in twentieth-century America. Johnson became a leading figure in the “New Negro” movement, which consciously embraced W.E.B. DuBois’s goal of fostering racial pride through cultural self-expression, economic independence, and progressive politics.¹¹⁰ Johnson became the first African American artist in California to draw national attention, exhibiting at New York’s Harmon Foundation, which supported African American artists nationally and organized major exhibits associated with the Harlem Renaissance.¹¹¹ Much of his early work consisted of busts, drawings, and sculptures that celebrated black Americans’ African roots.

During the Depression, Sargent received several commissions from the Federal Arts Project (FAP) and other New Deal–era public arts programs. The Public Works of Art Project (PWAP) funded his first New

¹⁰⁷ New Deal Art Registry, <http://www.newdealartregistry.org/artist/ArnautoffVictor/>.

¹⁰⁸ *California Art Research*, Vol. 20, p. 120.

¹⁰⁹ Electronic communication between authors and Arnautoff biographer, Robert Cherny, February 9, 2017.

¹¹⁰ “Sargent Johnson,” San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, <http://sfmoma.org/explore/collection/artists/365>, accessed April 5, 2015.

¹¹¹ Anne Evenhaugen, “African American Art and the Harmon Foundation” Smithsonian Institution blog, <https://blog.library.si.edu/2013/02/african-american-art-and-the-harmon-foundation/#.V747Y2W1OLE>, accessed August 24, 2016.

George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Deal project in 1937, which consisted of carving several wood relief panels for the California School of the Blind in Berkeley.¹¹² He then went to work with his old mentor, Beniamino “Benny” Bufano, on a series of metal sculptures in San Francisco, including “Sun Yat-Sen” in St. Mary’s Square (1937), the “Peace Sculpture” at San Francisco International Airport (1938), and a group of animal sculptures for the new Sunnysdale Housing Project (1938). However, it was the Aquatic Park commission that earned Johnson his enduring reputation as a giant in the San Francisco art world. On this project, Johnson supervised a team of 45 artists to create a series of marble mosaic murals and sculptures decorating a new public bathhouse built on the city’s Northern Waterfront. However, after the City decided to lease most of the building to a private casino operator, Johnson walked off the job leaving one tile mosaic unfinished at the second-floor level.¹¹³

Johnson’s work at Aquatic Park attracted the attention of the architect Timothy Pflueger, a member of the Board of Architects in charge of the Golden Gate International Exposition. Pflueger hired him to execute commissions for the GGIE, including several sculptures in the Court of Pacifica. Impressed with Johnson’s abilities, Pflueger was instrumental in reassigning the relief frieze at George Washington High School from Bufano to Johnson. As a result, Bufano never spoke to his erstwhile protégé again.

Johnson later recalled that the New Deal arts programs were the high point of his career, enabling him to create in new materials and on a massive scale in well-equipped studios.¹¹⁴ Sargent Johnson continued to exhibit after World War II, gaining fresh inspiration from his extended travels to Mexico. Beginning in 1945, and continuing through 1965, Johnson made a number of trips to remote villages in Oaxaca, where he learned how to use the local black clay to make pots and figures. When he was not in Mexico, Sargent Johnson lived very frugally in an apartment at 1507 Grant Avenue on Telegraph Hill. He continued to make art for the rest of his life, dying in San Francisco on October 10, 1967, after suffering a heart attack.¹¹⁵

Robert Boardman Howard: 1896–1983

Sculptor and painter Robert Boardman Howard, the likely creator of several bas-relief friezes at George Washington High School, was among the creative offspring of the prominent Bay Area architect, John Galen Howard. His siblings included painters Charles and John Langley, and the architect Henry Howard. Robert Boardman Howard studied at the College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland and the Art Students League in New York. After serving in the U.S. Military during World War I, he remained in Europe and continued his studies in Germany and France. He returned to San Francisco in the early 1920s and began creating architectural ornaments. In 1928, he received a commission to paint graphic maps of the Bay Area on the Key Route ferries.¹¹⁶ Howard worked with architect Timothy Pflueger and the sculptor Ralph

¹¹² Carol Pogash, “Berkeley’s Artwork Loss Is a Museum’s Gain,” *New York Times* (February 20, 2012).

¹¹³ National Park Service, *Aquatic Park Bathhouse: A Palace for the Public*, onsite interpretive plaque.

¹¹⁴ Tim Kelley, Christopher VerPlanck, Alfred Williams, *San Francisco Citywide African American Historic Context Statement, 1579–2014* (San Francisco: San Francisco Planning department, 2015), 75.

¹¹⁵ “Sargent Johnson: A Bay Area Artist,” The African American Registry http://www.aaregistry.org/historic_events/view/sargent-johnson-bay-area-artist, accessed April 5, 2015.

¹¹⁶ Aline Kinstler, “Howard Trio’s Exhibit Draws Attention,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (March 18, 1928), D8.

George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Stackpole on several artworks for the San Francisco Stock Exchange, where he worked with his future wife sculptor Adeline Kent, as well as on Oakland's Paramount Theater. Howard's other New Deal-era commissions include bas-reliefs for the Livermore, California Post Office and Berkeley High School.¹¹⁷

Gordon Langdon: 1910–1963

Gordon Langdon, the creator of the mural *Modern and Ancient Science* above the entrance to the library at George Washington High School, is the least well documented of the artists who created art for George Washington High School. In her book on Coit Tower, Masha Zakheim wrote: "Gordon Langdon emerges as an almost mythical figure who came, remained briefly, and then moved on."¹¹⁸ Born in San Francisco, Langdon studied art at the California School of Fine Arts and reportedly shared a studio with Ralph Stackpole during the Depression. In addition to George Washington High School, Langdon contributed a scene titled *California Agriculture and Industry* to the mural cycle at Coit Tower. Langdon abandoned his art career after serving in the U.S. military during World War II. He spent his remaining years working and living in Palo Alto.¹¹⁹

Lucien Labaudt: 1880–1943

Lucien Labaudt, creator of the mural *Advancement of Learning through the Printing Press* in the library at George Washington High School, was born in Paris in 1880. Labaudt began his career as a clothing designer in France and England, and he was almost entirely self-taught as a painter. He immigrated to the United States in 1906, settling briefly in Nashville, Tennessee, before coming to San Francisco in 1910. In San Francisco, he resumed costume design, but he also painted and taught at the California School of Fine Arts. Labaudt opened his own commercial art school, the California School of Design, in the 1920s. By this time, Labaudt was exhibiting regularly in San Francisco and occasionally in galleries and museums in New York and Paris. In 1933, the Palace of the Legion of Honor mounted a major retrospective exhibit of his paintings.¹²⁰ His other New Deal-era works include the painting, *Powell Street*, which flanks a stairwell in Coit Tower, a series titled *San Francisco Scenes* at the Beach Chalet, and several murals in the Federal Courthouse in Los Angeles.¹²¹ Labaudt worked in two Bay Area shipyards during World War II. He was killed in a 1943 plane crash while on assignment for *Life* as an artist/war correspondent.¹²² His widow, Marcelle Labaudt, who taught alongside her husband at the California School of Design, founded the Lucien Labaudt Gallery in San Francisco after his death. She specialized in giving younger or relatively unknown artists their first exhibitions, operating the gallery until 1980.¹²³

¹¹⁷ Poletti, 97.

¹¹⁸ Zakheim, 85.

¹¹⁹ AskArt.com Gordon Langdon cites source Edan Hughes Artists in California, 1786–1940. New Deal Art Registry, <http://newdealartregistry.org/artist/LangdonGordon/>.

¹²⁰ *California Art Research*, Vol. 19. Abstract from WPA Project 2874 (San Francisco: 1937), <https://archive.org/stream/californiaartres19hail#page/n7/mode/2up>.

¹²¹ New Deal Art Registry, <http://newdealartregistry.org/artist/LabaudtLucien/>.

¹²² "Oral history interview with Marcelle Labaudt, 1964," Archives of American Art. <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-marcelle-labaudt-11986>.

¹²³ Ibid.

George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Ralph Stackpole: 1885–1973

Ralph Stackpole, the creator of the mural *Contemporary Education* in the library at George Washington High School, was born to a working-class family in the small town of Williams, Oregon on May 1, 1885 (**Figure 12**). Ralph Stackpole left school to become a laborer after his father's early death. In 1903, he moved to San Francisco to study at the Mark Hopkins Institute (later the California School of Fine Arts and then the San Francisco Art Institute) under sculptor Arthur Putnam and painter Gottardo Piazzoni. After the 1906 Earthquake and Fire, Stackpole took classes at the École des Beaux Arts in Paris.¹²⁴ He returned to San Francisco and by the following decade, he had built a reputation as a major figure in San Francisco's visual arts world. His public commissions included sculptures for several buildings at the 1915 Panama Pacific International Exposition (PPIE). In 1928, Stackpole began a fruitful relationship with architect Timothy Pflueger, who enlisted him to help develop the arts program for the San Francisco Stock Exchange and to sculpt a pair of heroic figures for its entry. They worked together again on Oakland's Paramount Theater, the Golden Gate International Exposition, George Washington High School, and a sculpture for the Department of the Interior headquarters in Washington, D.C.¹²⁵ During World War II, Stackpole was appointed to the U.S. Commission on Fine Arts, the first member from the West Coast. In 1949, he moved to France, where he died in 1973.

Dewey Crumpler: 1949–

Dewey Crumpler was the artist who painted the three "Response" murals in the main corridor of George Washington High School. Crumpler was born in 1949 in Arkansas but he was raised in San Francisco (**Figure 13**). In high school, Crumpler won an award for a piece on poverty that was shown to great acclaim in an exhibit at the San Francisco Civic Center. He was only 19 and a recent graduate of Balboa High School when he was selected in 1968 by the Afro-American Club at George Washington High School to paint several murals in response to Victor Arnautoff's *Life of George Washington*. As mentioned, African American students at GWHS had objected to the depiction of slaves in the murals and wanted a more positive representation of African American cultural and scientific achievements. The project was put on hold for several years, during which Crumpler earned his BFA at the San Francisco Art Institute in 1972 and his MA at San Francisco State University in 1974. He painted the three Response murals in 1974, which depicted Latinos and Native Americans, Asian Americans, and African Americans in a heroic light reminiscent of the Mexican muralist tradition. He later went on to earn his MFA at Mills College in 1989.¹²⁶ In addition to the Response murals, Dewey Crumpler has painted 15 other major murals throughout the Bay Area. He has also exhibited his work widely in galleries and museums.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Kevin Starr, *The Dream Endures: California Enters the 1940s* (Oxford University Press, 2002), 151.

¹²⁵ Poletti, 89–91. New Deal Art Registry, <http://www.newdealartregistry.org/artist/StackpoleRalph/>.

¹²⁶ "Dewey Crumpler," San Francisco Art Institute website: <http://www.sfai.edu/bios/dewey-crumpler>, accessed April 20, 2017.

¹²⁷ Interview with Dewey Crumpler by Donna Graves, February 16, 2017.

George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Public School Design and Construction in San Francisco: 1850 to 1930

During the first decades of the city's existence, San Francisco's public schools were typically housed in buildings constructed for other purposes, including commercial buildings, churches, and even private dwellings. Post-Gold Rush San Francisco, especially after the Second Vigilance Committee of 1856, was dominated by conservative businessmen who disliked taxes, and infrastructure, including streets, sewers, parks, and schools, all suffered as a result. Nevertheless, a growing population of families in the 1860s increased the demand for public schools. By 1865, there were 37 public primary and secondary schools in San Francisco accommodating around 8,000 students.¹²⁸

Early Public School Design in San Francisco: 1865–1890

Public school buildings erected in San Francisco during the latter half of the nineteenth century were usually of wood-frame construction, three or four stories high, and designed in a utilitarian vocabulary incorporating a modest amount of Italianate ornament. A rare and excellently preserved example of this type is the Irving M. Scott School at 1070 Tennessee Street in Dogpatch. Designed by Thomas J. Welsh and built in 1895, the Irving M. Scott School (originally the Potrero School), which is City Landmark No. 138, is one of the only surviving Victorian-era schools in San Francisco. It is a wood-frame building massed as a cube that contains two full floor levels above a raised basement. The basement contains storage and the upper floors contain classrooms, a principal's office, and a central stair. The classrooms have oversized windows that are designed to admit as much natural light as possible into the building's interior. The windows are also operable and were historically used to regulate indoor temperatures. Like most Victorian schools in San Francisco, the Irving M. Scott School did not have a central heating system, and the bathrooms were located outside in small one-story buildings that were linked to the main building by covered walkways.

The Progressive Era: 1890–1906

The Progressive movement of the late nineteenth century began to change how Americans thought about education. Among other things, the movement led to the professionalization of teaching, the application of business/bureaucratic management methods to school administration, and the standardization of school design. School enrollments surged because of Progressive Era reforms, including the passage of child labor laws and compulsory education statutes in most northeastern, midwestern, and western states. In response, most large American cities, including San Francisco, scrambled to build new schools to accommodate growing enrollments and replace outdated facilities.¹²⁹

During the 1890s, the San Francisco Board of Education launched a campaign to build several new public schools. Many of the city's Victorian schools were reportedly in "wretched" condition, with little or no heat or running water, sewage leaks, and other sanitary and safety issues. Fire was also an ever-present danger with older wood-frame buildings, as evidenced by the destruction of Girls' High School on Scott

¹²⁸ George Mullany, "New Goals of Public Education," *San Francisco Chronicle* (1939), 5.

¹²⁹ Dale Allen Gyure, *The Chicago Schoolhouse* (Chicago: The Center for American Places at Columbia College Chicago, 2011).

George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Street by fire in 1896.¹³⁰ The School Board decided to replace it with a new, state-of-the-art, three-story-over-basement, masonry building. Designed by Thomas J. Welsh, the new Girls' High School was designed in the Richardsonian Romanesque style and built of brick. Its raised basement contained mechanical rooms, a janitor's room, storerooms, two classrooms, a science laboratory, and a recitation [examination] room. Meanwhile, the first floor contained a reception hall, principal's office, library, "museum," four classrooms, and lavatories. The second floor contained six classrooms and a "retiring room," and the third floor contained a large assembly room.¹³¹ The growing number of special-purpose rooms at Girls' High School signaled the expanding mission of public schools, as they evolved from teaching basic skills to a small number of students toward providing instruction in a range of subjects to a much larger segment of society, including vocational skills, arts and music, and the hard sciences.

Throughout the rest of the 1890s and into the first decade of the twentieth century, the San Francisco School Board replaced many of its older wood-frame "firetraps" with new masonry buildings that were similar to Girls' High School. Unfortunately, many of these new schools succumbed to the 1906 Earthquake and Fire. In the disaster, 29 of the city's 74 public school buildings – including Girls' High School – were destroyed. Many others were rendered temporarily or permanently unusable. The School Board hurriedly set up temporary programs in the refugee camps and quickly built 36 temporary schools accommodating 8,000 children.¹³²

In 1907, Mayor Edward R. Taylor established the Bureau of Architecture, and appointed Newton Tharp to be the first City Architect. Just two months later, the School Board announced plan to build 44 new schools, including 16 "Class A" buildings of reinforced concrete and 28 "Class B" schools of wood-frame construction. City Architect Tharp rejected brick construction, given how poorly unreinforced-masonry buildings had fared in the 1906 Earthquake. All of the new schools were to be modern in every way, with central heating and ventilation and indoor plumbing. Tharp prioritized four new high school buildings, including replacements for Girls' High School, Lowell High School, and Polytechnic High School, as well as the all-new High School of Commerce. A good example of Tharp's post-quake schools is the former High School of Commerce at 170 Fell Street. Built in 1908, this three-story-over-basement, reinforced concrete, brick-clad high school is designed in the Renaissance/Baroque style. Lowell High School, now San Francisco City College's John Adams Campus, is another excellent example of a post-quake school. Built in 1911 at the northwest corner of Masonic Avenue and Hayes Street, the former Lowell High School is a typical American high school from the early twentieth century. Constructed of concrete with brick facing, the building has a 'U'-shaped plan enclosing a central courtyard. Its exterior is designed in a restrained Renaissance/Baroque vocabulary with a modest amount of applied ornament.

¹³⁰ "Money Wanted for Schools and Jails," *San Francisco Chronicle* (February 15, 1896), 15.

¹³¹ "Girls' High School," *San Francisco Chronicle* (June 27, 1892), 3.

¹³² City and County of San Francisco, *Municipal Reports: The San Francisco Earthquake and Fire of April 1906* (San Francisco: 1907).

George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Golden Age of School Construction: 1915 –1930

The election of James Rolph as the mayor of San Francisco in 1911 signaled the beginning of an unprecedented 19-year period of infrastructure development in the city. Rolph was a progressive Republican who enjoyed strong bipartisan support from many sectors of San Francisco's population. His varied infrastructure projects included a new City Hall, the Civic Auditorium, the Hetch Hetchy water system, the Panama Pacific International Exposition, the Municipal Railway, Twin Peaks Tunnel, and many roadbuilding projects. His road and transit improvements opened up the vast areas in the western and southern parts of the city to residential development. The rapid development of these areas, including the Sunset, Parkside, and Richmond districts on the West Side; and the Excelsior, Crocker-Amazon, Portola, and Outer Mission districts in the southeast part of town, led to demands for new schools to educate children of homebuyers in these areas.

Not long after he was elected, Mayor Rolph appointed John Reid Jr. as the new City Architect. Reid immediately found himself confronted with the need to build several new schools and rebuild many of the city's older schools. The School Board still operated 17 obsolete Victorian-era schools and several "temporary" schools built in the aftermath of the 1906 Earthquake. With Reid's assistance, Mayor Rolph oversaw the placement of two school construction bonds on the local ballot in 1917 and 1922 to fund the work. Desperate for better schools, San Franciscans eagerly approved the bonds, ushering in the "Golden Age of School Construction." City Architect Reid designed about half of the approximately 50 schools built in San Francisco between 1920 and 1930, with the newly organized Board of Education awarding the rest to various private architecture firms.¹³³

The schools built during Reid's tenure were almost all designed in regional styles appropriate to California's climate and landscape, including the Spanish Colonial Revival, Italian Renaissance, and Mediterranean styles. In conformance with modern building and life/safety codes, all were built of "fireproof" concrete construction with durable stucco finishes and terra cotta and cement plaster trim. Some of the best examples include Mission High School (1925–27), which is San Francisco Landmark No. 255; the new High School of Commerce (1926), which is San Landmark No. 140; and Balboa High School (1928–34), which is San Francisco Landmark No. 205.

Many of the new schools designed by John Reid Jr. were much larger than their predecessors. In contrast to Victorian and Edwardian-era schools, which typically consisted of a single block sited at the center of a paved lot, Reid's schools were typically composed of multiple buildings or wings with adjoining ballfields and hardscaped sporting facilities. Since World War I, educational leaders had advocated for the incorporation of physical education into the school curriculum. This required larger sites to accommodate these sprawling facilities. Accommodating ballfields, tracks, and courts was not so challenging in outlying neighborhoods where land was still available, but it was much more difficult to achieve in built-up parts of the city, giving administrators the choice of either assembling sites in inner-

¹³³ "Message of His Honor, Mayor Rolph," *The Municipal Record* (San Francisco: January 7, 1926), 4.

George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

city neighborhoods through condemnation proceedings—never a popular thing to do—or relocating the school to an outlying neighborhood where the land was available.

Another factor in the growth in size of American public schools during the 1920s was the invention of the “comprehensive” school model, which combined academic, vocational, arts and music, sports, and home economics departments under one roof. As the complexity of public schools grew, City Architect John Reid Jr. and various contract architects designed sprawling multi-building complexes that often included an “academic” building, a gymnasium, an auditorium, and a shop/industrial arts building. Typically linked together in an “h,” “L,” “U,” or “O”-shaped plan, each component was expressed as a separate building, even though they abutted each other and were linked by internal corridors. Balboa High School, the first high school built in the Outer Mission District, occupies approximately five city blocks. It has an O-plan with academic wings extending out along Onondaga and Cayuga avenues; an auditorium on Otsego Avenue; and a gymnasium and sports fields occupying a swath of land bounded by Oneida, Cayuga, Seneca, and Otsego avenues. One of the largest school campuses in San Francisco, it is even larger when combined with the adjoining James Denman Middle School campus on Oneida Avenue.

By the end of the 1920s, San Francisco, which had once been known for having one of the worst public school systems in the nation, now had what many considered to be second-to-none. In 1923, St. Louis architect William B. Ittner praised San Francisco’s commitment to building not only functional but beautiful schools: “The creation of an environment, healthful and beautiful, has been the architectural keynote and the school buildings are a sincere expression of the joy, health and beauty that should belong to our school children.”¹³⁴

City Architect John Reid Jr. did not take a salary, instead receiving a commission equal to 6 percent of construction costs. Although there was no evidence of actual wrongdoing, Reid was Mayor Rolph’s brother-in-law, which made him a lightning rod for critics. Facing mounting criticism, Reid resigned his post in 1927 to quash accusations of nepotism. Reid’s resignation left a void at the Office of the City Architect. Charles Sawyer, Reid’s replacement, did not design many new civic buildings himself, leaving that to private firms that contracted with the City. The 1929 Stock Market Crash also dealt a major – if temporary – blow to San Francisco’s school construction campaign. Ten days after the crash, Board of Education President Daniel C. Murphy issued a statement calling into question San Francisco’s continued ability to build “the fine type of schools” that the city had grown accustomed to during the 1910s and 1920s.¹³⁵ Although the San Francisco chapter of the American Institute of Architects argued that the City should continue “providing school buildings of enduring quality and design,” the primary question on everyone’s mind was where the money would come from.

Nonetheless, several schools that had already been designed and funded before the Stock Market Crash were built in the early 1930s, including Miller & Pflueger’s Theodore Roosevelt Junior High School (now

¹³⁴ Don Andreini, “Civic Architecture: San Francisco’s Public Schools,” *Heritage Newsletter*, XVI:3 (September 1988), 7.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Roosevelt Middle School), which was built in 1930. Roosevelt Middle School, designed in an unusual and unlikely fusion of the Art Deco and Dutch Expressionist styles, is universally recognized as one of San Francisco's best-designed public schools. Even though it was not a New Deal project, in terms of its architectural qualities and advanced styling, it foreshadowed the continuation of the Golden Age of San Francisco School Construction into the 1930s, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal public works programs picked up the mantle.

George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

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San Francisco, California
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George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Government Records and Repositories

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San Francisco Office of the Assessor-Recorder. Property records on file for Assessor's Parcel 1574/001.

San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library. Historic photographs of George Washington High School.

San Francisco Public Library. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for San Francisco.

San Francisco Unified School District. Maintenance Records on file for George Washington High School.

George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☒ Other

Name of repository: San Francisco Unified School District

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 15.88

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 37.779583 | Longitude: -122.492078 |
| 2. Latitude: 37.779663 | Longitude: -122.490256 |
| 3. Latitude: 37.776177 | Longitude: -122.489996 |
| 4. Latitude: 37.776108 | Longitude: -122.491857 |

Or

George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☐ NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundaries of the National Register property encompass the entirety of Assessor Parcel No. 1574/001, which is bounded to the north by Geary Boulevard, to the east by 30th Avenue, to the south by Balboa Street, and to the west by 32nd Avenue.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The proposed boundaries encompass the campus of George Washington High School, including the high school itself, the Esplanade, the Football Stadium, the basketball and tennis courts, the running track and soccer field, and the surrounding perimeter landscaping. Although not all of these features are contributing elements to the National Register property, the entirety of the campus is generally compatible and it provides an appropriate setting for the contributing elements.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Christopher P. VerPlanck
organization: VerPlanck Historic Preservation Consulting
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city or town: San Francisco state: California zip code: 94127
e-mail: chris@verplanckconsulting.com
telephone: (415) 606-0920
date: June 25, 2026

George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property:	George Washington High School
City or Vicinity:	San Francisco
County:	San Francisco
State:	California
Name of Photographer:	Christopher VerPlanck
Date Photographed:	April 12, 2025
Location of Original Digital Files:	530 Rockdale Drive, San Francisco, CA 94127
Number of Photographs:	25

CA_San Francisco County_George Washington High School_0001

Overall perspective of west (primary) façade of Academic Building, camera facing south

CA_San Francisco County_George Washington High School_0002

Detail of west (primary) façade of Academic Building, camera facing east

CA_San Francisco County_George Washington High School_0003

Detail of primary entrance of Academic Building, camera facing east

CA_San Francisco County_George Washington High School_0004

South (rear) façade of Academic Building (left) and Auditorium and Music Wing Addition (right), camera facing north

George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

CA_San Francisco County_George Washington High School_0005
North façade of Gymnasium (left), Auditorium (center), and Academic Building (right), camera facing south.

CA_San Francisco County_George Washington High School_0006
East façade of Academic Building, camera facing west.

CA_San Francisco County_George Washington High School_0007
Detail of rear entrance on east façade of Academic Building, camera facing west.

CA_San Francisco County_George Washington High School_0008
North façade of Auditorium and Sargent Johnson's frieze, *Athletics*, camera facing southwest.

CA_San Francisco County_George Washington High School_0009
North façade of Gymnasium and Esplanade, camera facing south.

CA_San Francisco County_George Washington High School_0010
South (rear) and east façades of Gymnasium, camera facing northwest.

CA_San Francisco County_George Washington High School_0011
East façades of Music Wing Addition (left) and Auditorium (right), camera facing west.

CA_San Francisco County_George Washington High School_0012
South (rear) façades of Auditorium and Music Wing Addition, camera facing north.

CA_San Francisco County_George Washington High School_0013
South and east façades of Shop Building, camera facing northwest.

CA_San Francisco County_George Washington High School_0014
North and west façades of Shop Building, camera facing southeast.

CA_San Francisco County_George Washington High School_0015
Football Stadium, camera facing southwest.

CA_San Francisco County_George Washington High School_0016
Sargent Johnson's *Athletics*, camera facing south.

CA_San Francisco County_George Washington High School_0017
Tennis courts, camera facing northwest.

CA_San Francisco County_George Washington High School_0018
Track, camera facing northwest.

CA_San Francisco County_George Washington High School_0019
Lobby and Victor Arnautoff's *Life of George Washington*, camera facing west.

CA_San Francisco County_George Washington High School_0020
Victor Arnautoff's *Life of George Washington*, camera facing northeast.

CA_San Francisco County_George Washington High School_0021
Corridor in Academic Building, camera facing east.

CA_San Francisco County_George Washington High School_0022
Dewey Crumpler's *Response Murals*, camera facing west.

George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

CA_San Francisco County_George Washington High School_0023
Lucien Labaudt's *Advancement of Learning through the Printing Press*, camera facing east.

CA_San Francisco County_George Washington High School_0024.
Stair in Academic Building, camera facing west.

CA_San Francisco County_George Washington High School_0025
Gymnasium interior, camera facing west.

George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Photo Key for George Washington High School

Source: Google Maps; annotated by Christopher VerPlanck

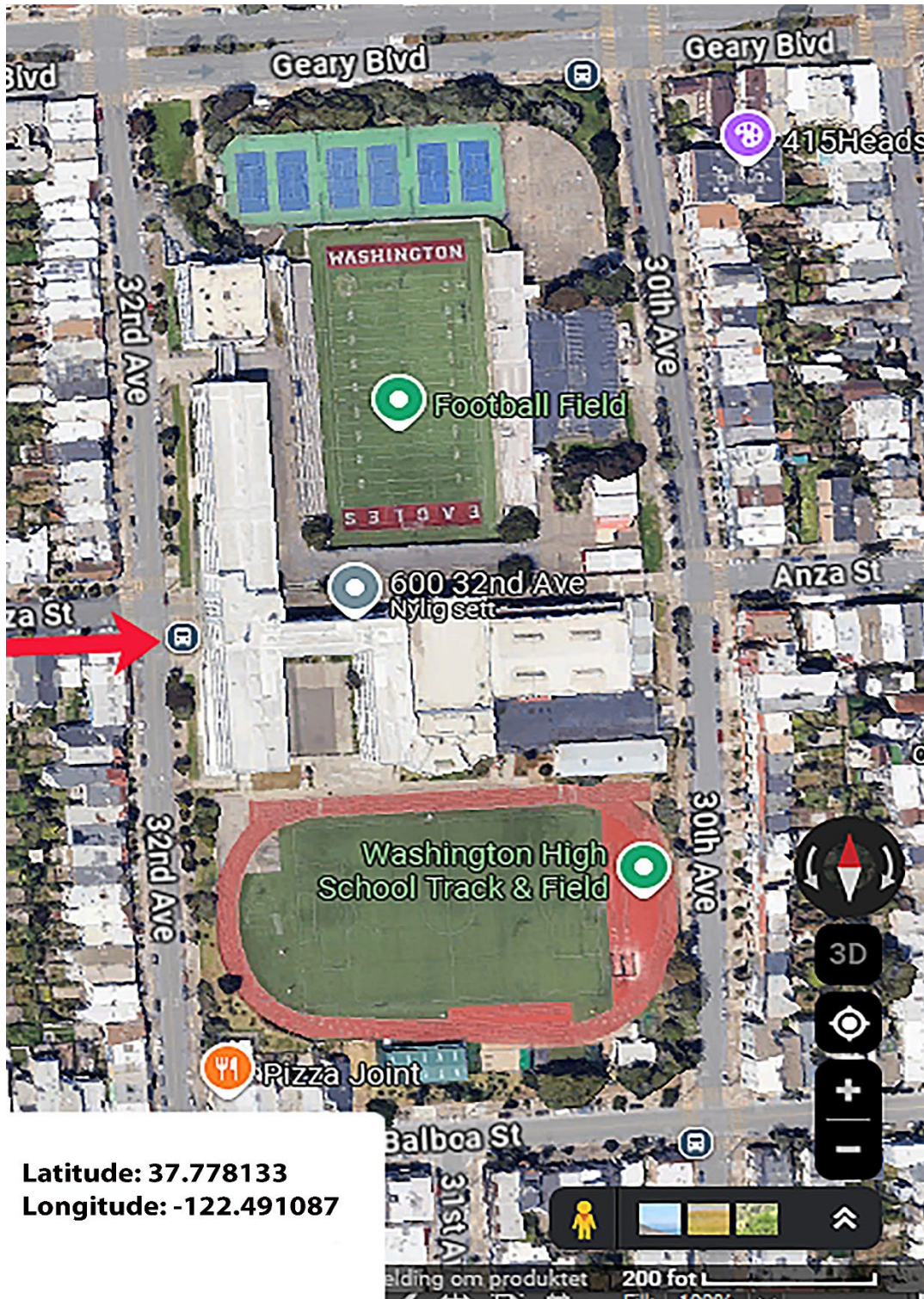


George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Location Map 2: Aerial showing location of George Washington High School

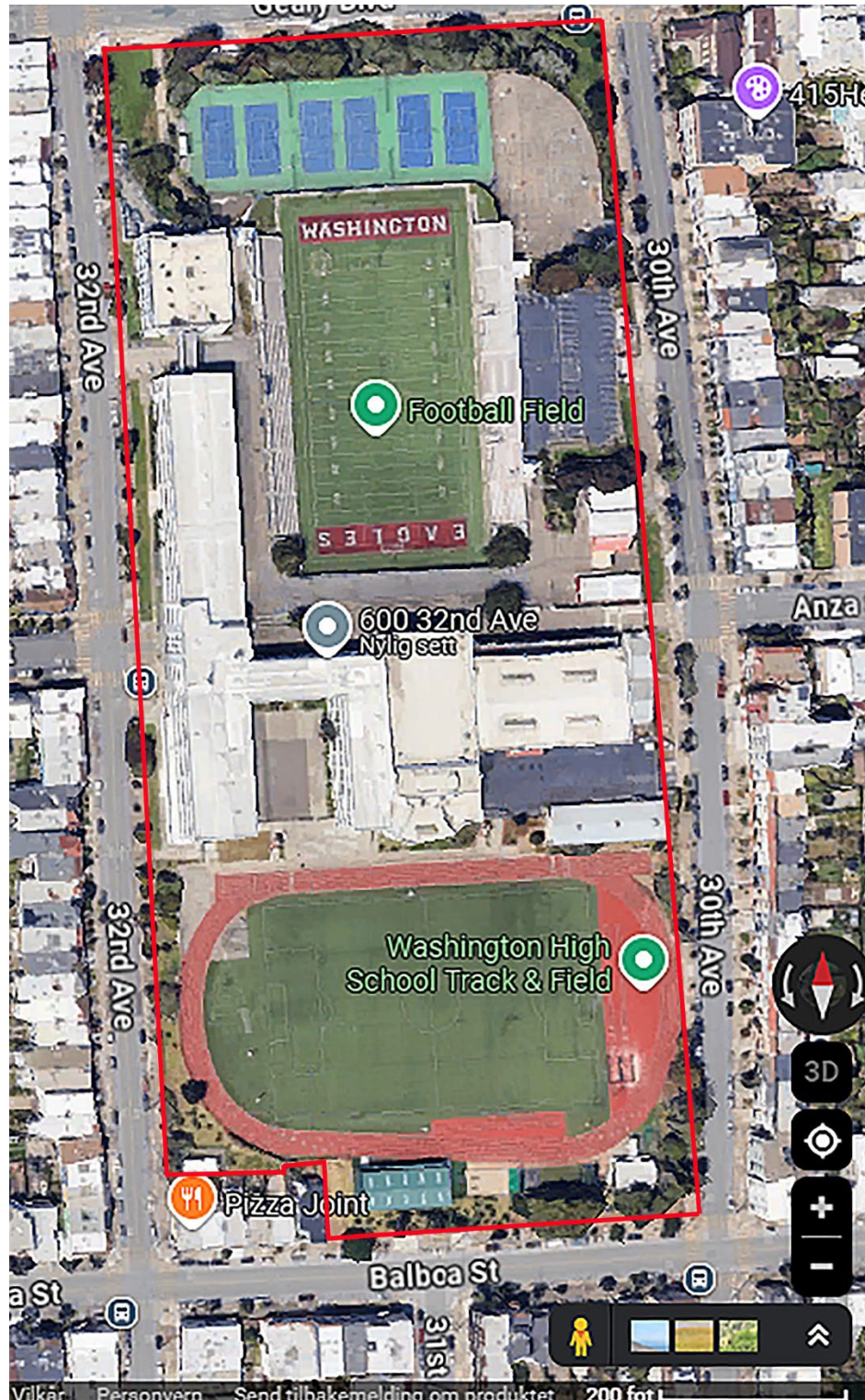
Source: Google Maps; annotated by Christopher VerPlanck



George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Location Map 3: Aerial showing Area Proposed for Designation
Source: Google Maps; annotated by Christopher VerPlanck



George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Location Map 4: Aerial showing Contributing (blue) and Non-contributing (red) Resources
Source: Google Maps; annotated by Christopher VerPlanck



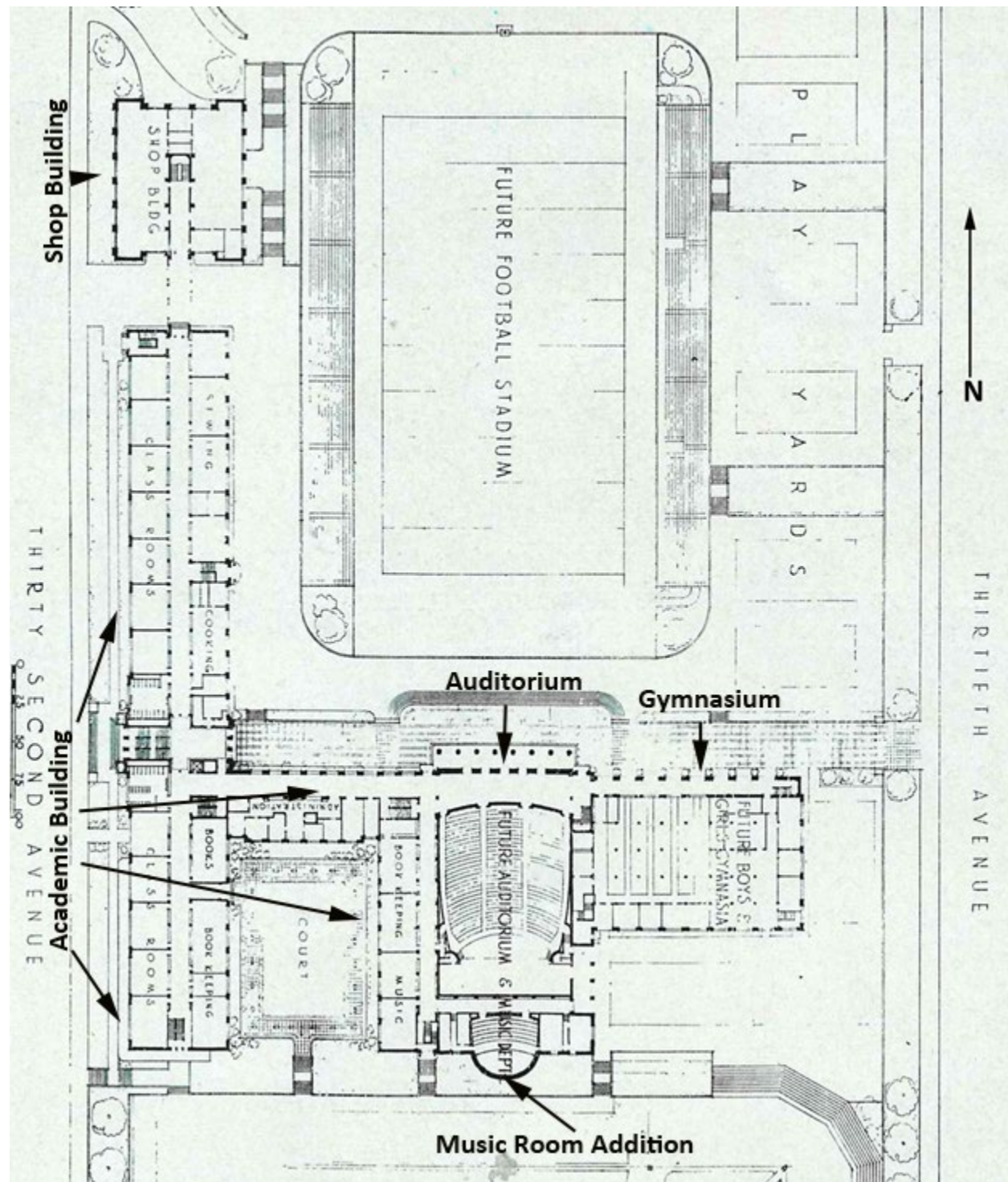
George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Additional Information: Historic Maps and Photographs

Figure 1. 1935 site Plan showing the central part of George Washington High School

Source: Timothy L. Pflueger Papers, The Bancroft Library; annotated by Christopher VerPlanck



George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Additional Information: Historic Maps and Photographs

Figure 2. 1923 photograph showing future site of George Washington High School

Source: OpenSFHistory / wnp36.03038



George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Additional Information: Historic Maps and Photographs

Figure 3. 1936 photograph showing a portion of the west (primary) façade of George Washington High School
Source: San Francisco Public Library, San Francisco Historical Photograph Collection AAD-4913



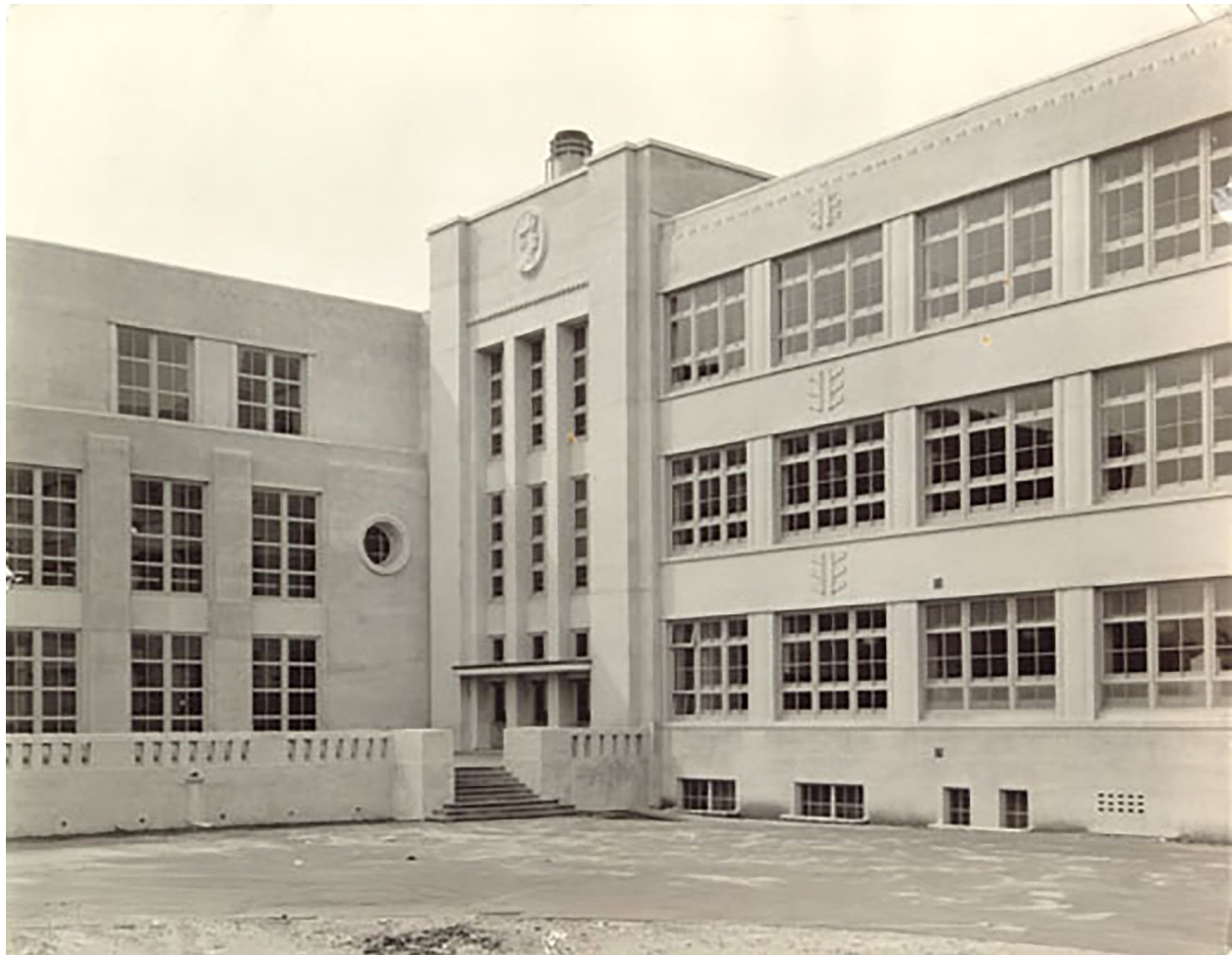
George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Additional Information: Historic Maps and Photographs

Figure 4. 1936 photograph showing a portion of the east façade of George Washington High School

Source: San Francisco Public Library, San Francisco Historical Photograph Collection AAD-4911



George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Additional Information: Historic Maps and Photographs

Figure 5. 1936 photograph showing a portion of the west (primary) façade of George Washington High School

Source: David Rumsey Map Collection



George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Additional Information: Historic Maps and Photographs

Figure 6. 1936 photograph showing a portion of the main lobby and Victor Arnautoff's mural *The Life of George Washington*, George Washington High School

Source: San Francisco Public Library, San Francisco Historical Photograph Collection AAD-4942



George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Additional Information: Historic Maps and Photographs

Figure 7. Ca. 1935 photograph of Timothy Pflueger

Source: John M. Pflueger



George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Additional Information: Historic Maps and Photographs

Figure 8. Abraham Lincoln High School
Source: Christopher VerPlanck



George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Additional Information: Historic Maps and Photographs

Figure 9. Francis Scott Key School

Source: Christopher VerPlanck



George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Additional Information: Historic Maps and Photographs

Figure 10. Victor Arnautoff, 1941

Source: Self-portrait



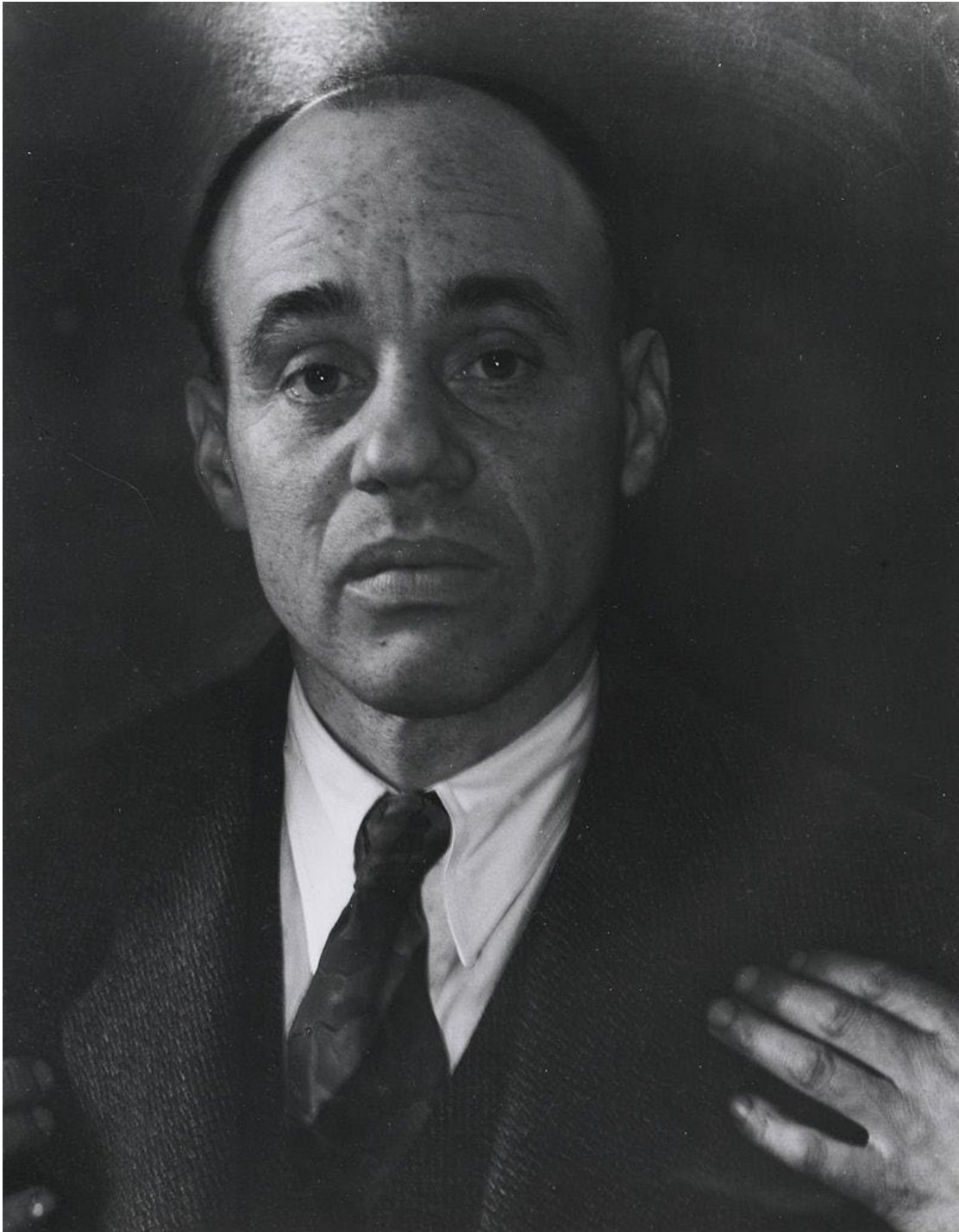
George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Additional Information: Historic Maps and Photographs

Figure 11. Sargent Johnson, 1934

Source: Consuelo Kanaga



George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Additional Information: Historic Maps and Photographs

Figure 12. Ralph Stackpole (right) with Diego Rivera, Ca. 1939

Source: San Francisco Public Library



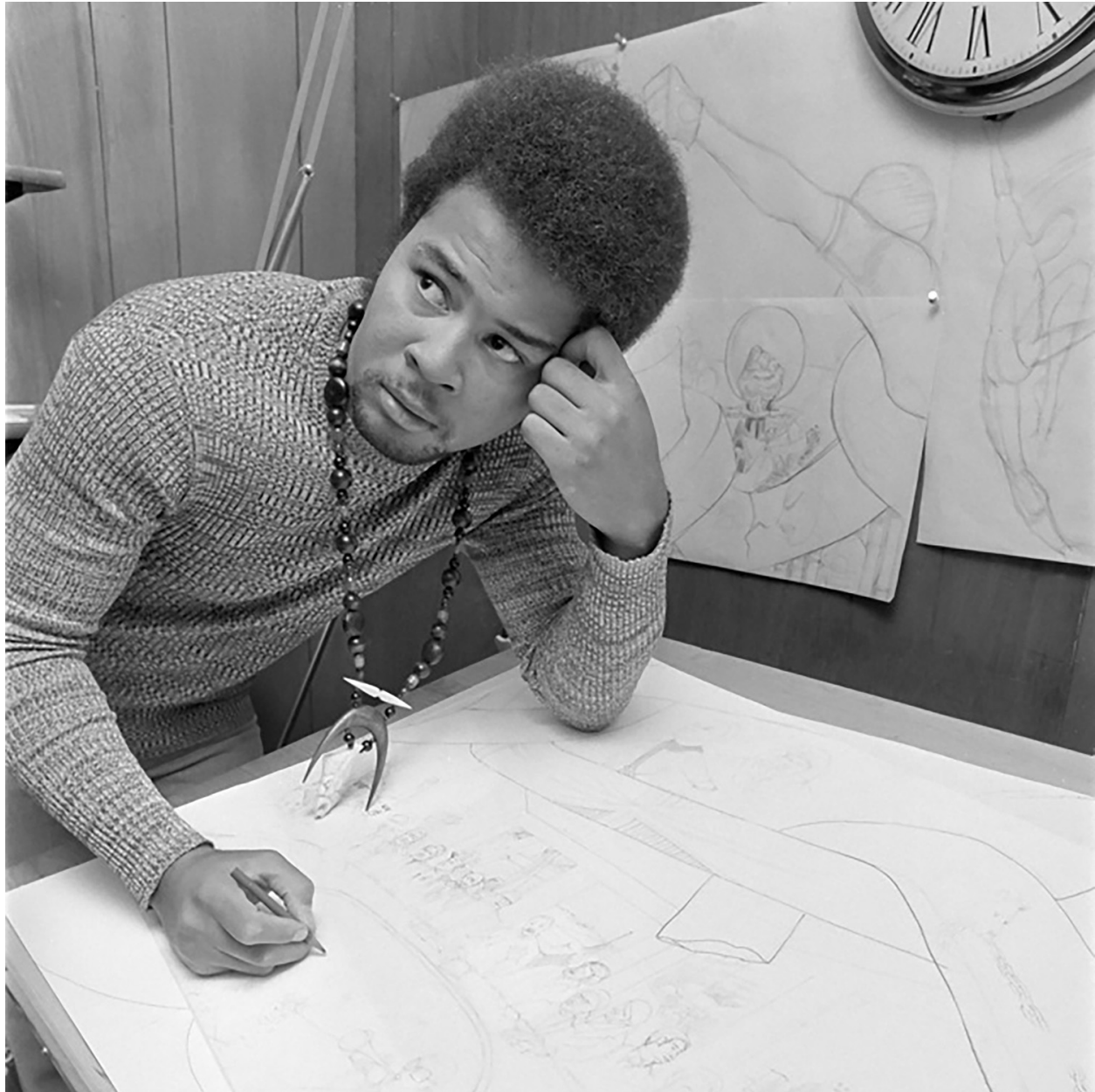
George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Additional Information: Historic Maps and Photographs

Figure 13. Dewey Crumpler, 1970

Source: San Francisco Public Library



George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Photo 1. Overall perspective of west (primary) façade of Academic Building, camera facing south.



George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Photo 2. Detail of west (primary) façade of Academic Building, camera facing east.



George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Photo 3. Detail of primary entrance of Academic Building, camera facing east.



George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Photo 4. South (rear) façade of Academic Building (left) and Auditorium and Music Wing Addition (right), camera facing north.



George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Photo 5. North façade of Gymnasium (left), Auditorium (center), and Academic Building (right), camera facing south.



George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Photo 6. East façade of Academic Building, camera facing west.



George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Photo 7. Detail of rear entrance on east façade of Academic Building, camera facing west.



George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Photo 8. North façade of Auditorium and Sargent Johnson's frieze, *Athletics*, camera facing southwest.



George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Photo 9. North façade of Gymnasium and Esplanade, camera facing south.



George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Photo 10. South (rear) and east façades of Gymnasium, camera facing northwest.



George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Photo 11. East façades of Music Wing Addition (left) and Auditorium (right), camera facing west.



George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Photo 12. South (rear) façades of Auditorium and Music Wing Addition, camera facing north.



George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Photo 13. South and east façades of Shop Building, camera facing northwest.



George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Photo 14. North and west façades of Shop Building, camera facing southeast.



George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Photo 15. Football Stadium, camera facing southwest.



George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Photo 16. Sargent Johnson's *Athletics*, camera facing south.



George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Photo 17. Tennis courts, camera facing northwest.



George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Photo 18. Track, camera facing northwest.



George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Photo 19. Lobby and Victor Arnautoff's *Life of George Washington*, camera facing west.



George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Photo 20. Victor Arnautoff's *Life of George Washington*, camera facing northeast.



George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Photo 21. Corridor in Academic Building, camera facing east.



George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Photo 22. Dewey Crumpler's *Response Murals*, camera facing west.



George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

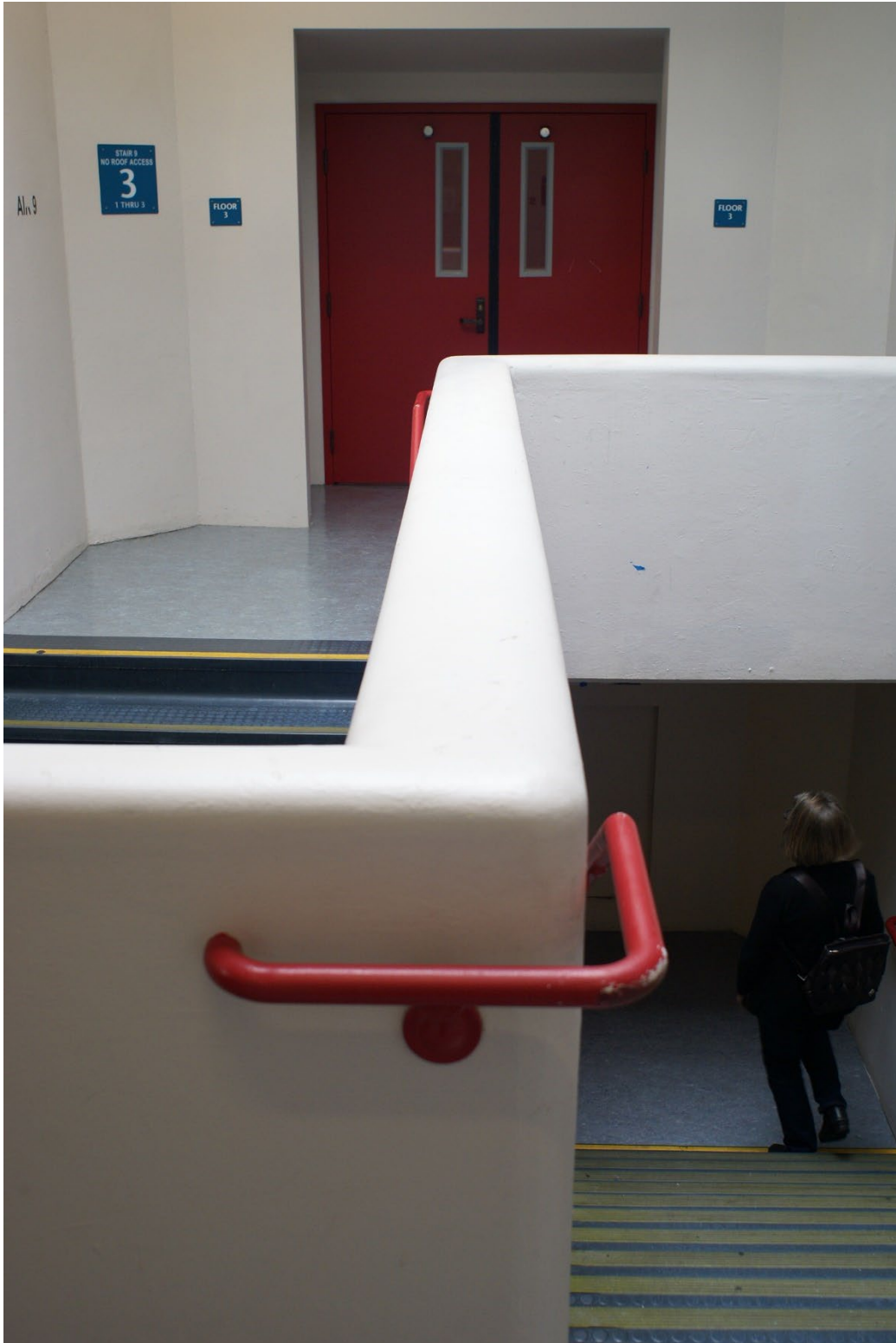
Photo 23. Lucien Labaudt's *Advancement of Learning through the Printing Press*, camera facing east.



George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

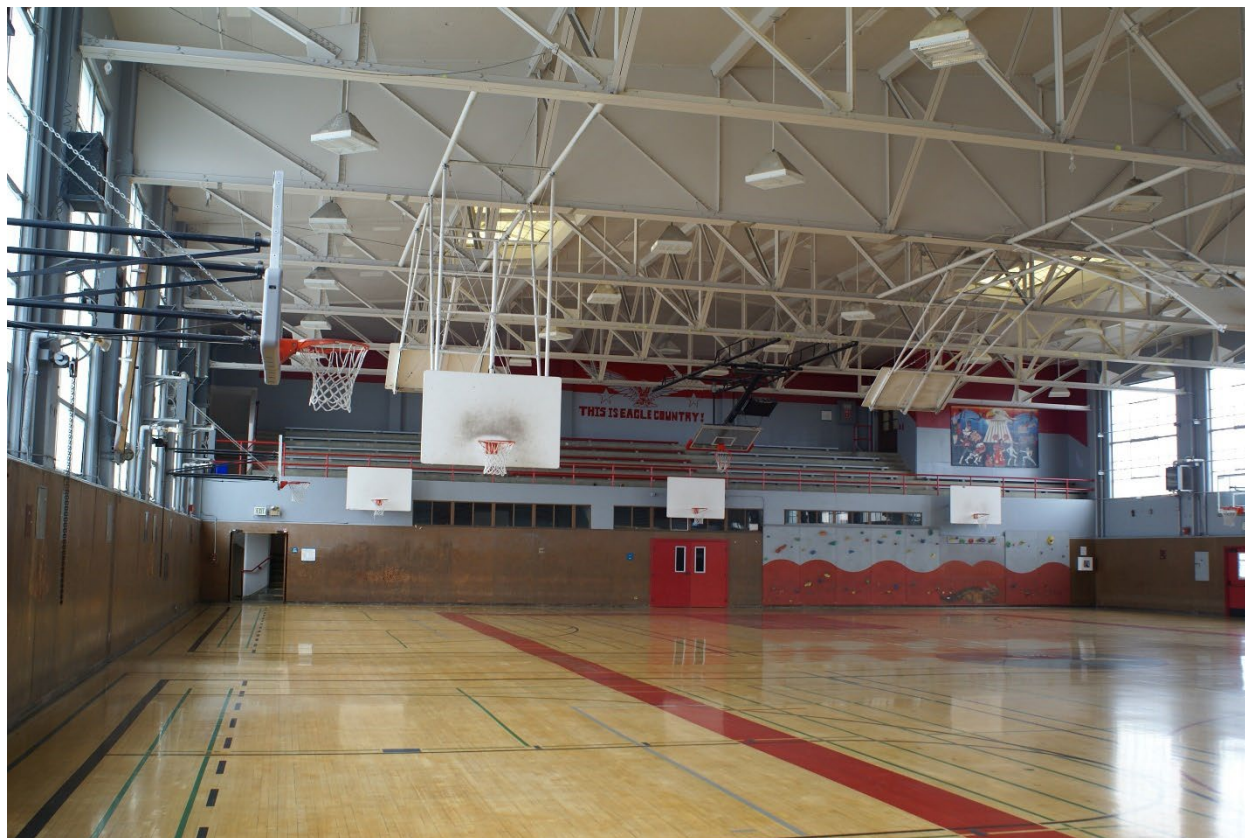
Photo 24. Stair in Academic Building, camera facing west.



George Washington High School
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

Photo 25. Gymnasium, camera facing west.



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Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.