

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 Property

**DRAFT**

Historic name: Washington Elementary School

Other names/site number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

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

## 2. Location

Street & number: 96 MacMillan Avenue

City or town: Ventura State: California County: Ventura

Not For Publication:  Vicinity: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

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#### 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:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 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

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>3</u>	<u>          </u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>          </u>	sites
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	structures
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	objects
<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION: school

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS

Mediterranean Revival

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Foundation: CONCRETE, Walls: STUCCO,  
Roof: ASPHALT

### 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.)

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#### Summary Paragraph

Washington Elementary School is located in a residential Ventura neighborhood. The property consists of three contributing buildings—Main Building, Auditorium, and Bungalow—and a contributing playground site on the east side of the street on a five-acre parcel south of Main Street and north of San Nicholas Street. A mature lawn in front of the Main Building and Auditorium consists of grass, trees, and shrubs. Mature trees and shrubs are located sporadically throughout the property, including along Hurst Avenue to the east. Concrete walkways lead from the sidewalk to the Auditorium and to the entrance of the Main Building. A parking lot at the south end of the parcel spans the area in front of the Bungalow. The property retains all aspects of historic integrity sufficient to convey its significance.

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#### Narrative Description

##### Overview

The Main Building is one and two-story, 27,500-square-foot building designed by Mott Marston in 1925. Marston designed additions for the building in 1926 and 1929 resulting in the O-shaped plan with a central courtyard as nominated. The Main Building was remodeled by prominent

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local architect Harold E. Burket to comply with the Field Act in 1934. The firm of Fisher and Wilde completed another remodel in 1957. The Auditorium Building is located to the north of the Main Building. It was designed by Harold Burket in 1941 according to Public Works Administration guidelines. It is an 8,500-square-foot building with a one-story cafeteria on the east end of the building. A 1,700-square-foot building is located to the south of the Main Building. Originally designed by Mott Marston as the Kindergarten Bungalow for Sheridan Way School, the building was moved to this location in 1953 where it is referred to as the Bungalow. An undeveloped grass playground extends from the east elevation of the Main Building to Hurst Avenue, with a paved play area extending from the south elevation of the Main Building to the south property line.

## **Main Building**

### *Exterior*

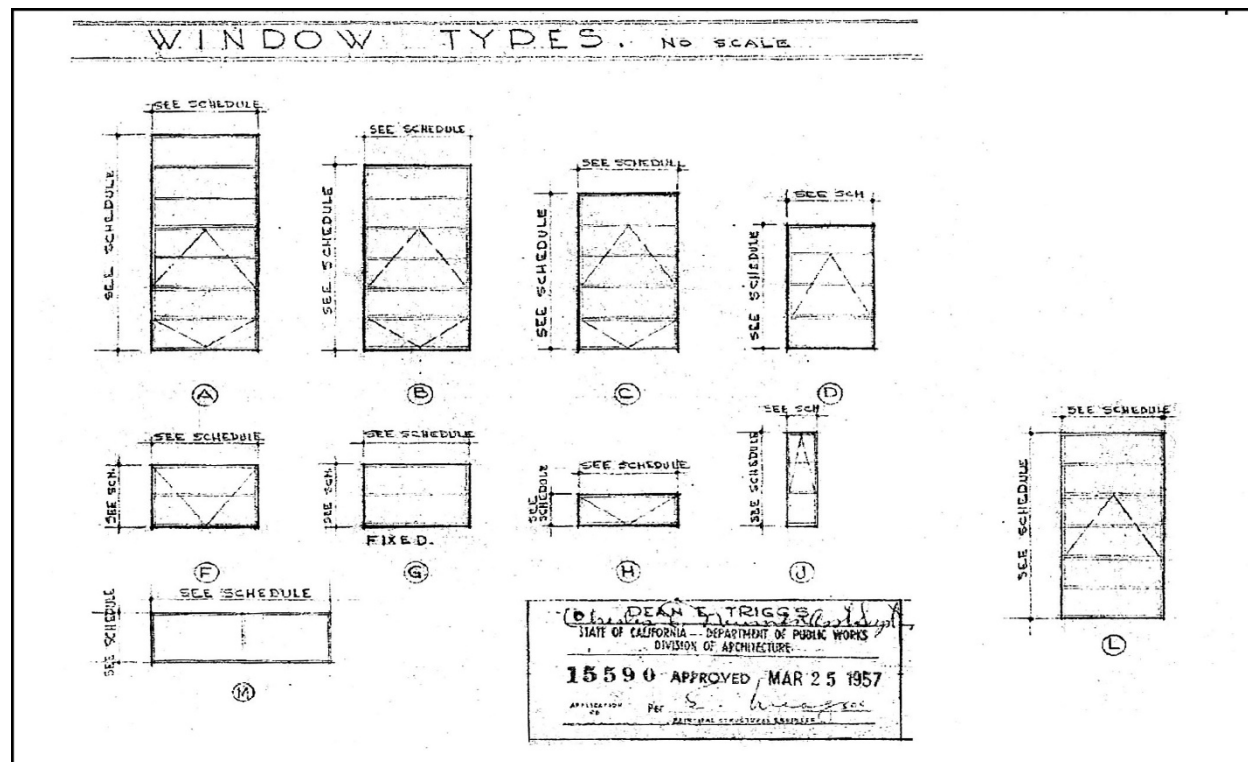
The Main Building of Washington Elementary School is a one and two-story building with a rectangular plan built around a central courtyard, creating an “O” shape. The building appears to be one-story from MacMillan Avenue. Due to the site grade, a lower story is visible on the south and east elevations. The west section of the building was built in 1925, with an addition to the south completed in 1926. A large addition to the north of the 1926 addition and east of the original building completed the circle and created the central courtyard in 1929. The building is primarily of brick construction that was covered with smooth shotcrete in 1934. The roof was originally clad in a mixture of composition and red, clay-tile shingles. Since 1957, roof cladding is entirely composition.

The primary (west) façade faces MacMillan Avenue and has a symmetrical configuration, with a side-gable roof intersected by a central front gable containing the main entrance and flanking front gable wings at each end. Half-round vents are located on the center of the roof of each wing. There is a slightly elaborated cornice along the roofline that at one time contained dentil molding details and has since been given a more streamlined appearance. The central gable containing the entrance is accessed by two, wide concrete steps with a landing, followed by an additional set of four concrete steps. Square, concrete planters flank the lower set of stairs. The steps lead to the entry which is recessed into a rectangular opening with the words “Washington School” above a simple concrete surround. The entrance contains a pair of glazed doors with sidelights and a glazed transom above, a result of the 1957 remodeling that attempted to give the school a more modern appearance by removing what remained of the decorative surround. Two sets of five tall steel windows flank the central entrance. This style of window is found on all elevations. The large, steel-frame windows mostly have six rectangular lights, with some variation from two to seven lights, with variations of fixed sashes, awning sashes, and lower hopper sashes (**Figure 1**).

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Figure 1 Schedule of windows from 1957 Washington School plans



The cross-gable wings are each punctuated by a steel window inset within a larger rectangular opening. The window is divided into four lights with a lower operable sash. The windows originally included a large surround with a decorative segmental arch above. These were removed as part of Burket's 1934 remodel.

The south elevation of the main building contains the original 1925 construction to the west and the 1926 addition made by Marston to the east. The side-gable roof has the same cornice as on the front with two more half-round vents centered on the roof. The roof of the 1925 section is slightly lower than that of the addition and there is an additional half-round vent on the center of that portion of the roof. Continuing the symmetry of the primary façade, the south elevation of the original building has a central entrance flanked by bands of windows. As the site grade is lower toward the east, a lower story begins on this elevation and the bands of windows are located on the upper story. The entrance is accessed by a set of eight concrete steps with a solid concrete balustrade. The arched opening is slightly recessed with solid double doors with a glazed transom. The flanking windows match those on the primary façade, arranged in groups of four rather than five. A utility entrance located on the lower story to the east of the steps consists of metal doors with square vents. To the east of this door is a rectangular window with two vertical lights. Two additional windows are located to the east below the classroom windows on the upper story.

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The 1926 portion of the elevation has a side-gable section to the west with a cross gable to the east. In the side gable section, there are five windows identical to those on the front on the upper level. The lower level has four windows aligned with those above to the west and an entrance in the fifth bay. Since 1957, the altered entrance contains a solid wood door with a wood frame and glazed transom above. Removable shade structures have been added along the central portion of both the 1925 and 1926 portions of this elevation. The front-gable end is a solid wall with no fenestration except for a decorative tile vent in the gable end.

The east elevation of the Main Building is entirely two stories except at the north end where the grade begins to rise. The south end consists of Marston's 1926 addition and the north end is another Marston addition completed in 1929. The entire east elevation has a side gable roof with a small cornice and two half-round vents. The 1926 portion at the south has four windows matching those on the other elevations on the upper level and three aligned with them on the lower level. Below the north window is an entrance with the same dimensions as the windows. It is a solid wood door with a wood frame, altered in the same way as the one on the south elevation, and capped by a square glazed transom. To the north of this door, another entrance is wider with double doors and a narrow, glazed transom. Above the door is a metal balconette screening a slider sash window.

The 1929 portion of the east elevation has a central section of windows. There is a band of five matching those on the other elevations on the upper level just north of the 1926 section with another five aligned below on the first story. North of this there is an additional set of four windows on the upper level, with an entrance and three windows aligned below. As with the other entrances, the door appears to have been altered and has a large, square transom above. North of this is another entrance accessed by a set of eight concrete steps with narrow metal railings. The entrance consists of double doors with an upper rectangular transom. There is no fenestration on the upper level.

The north end of the east elevation has a single entrance door on the lower level with three windows to the north as the site grade slopes upward. The upper level has two vertical windows not quite centered above the door and a band of four windows matching those on other elevations to the north. The north end of this wing has a projecting, three-sided bay with a half-hipped roof punctuated by pairs of windows in each bay. The bay projects from a front-facing gable with a shed-roof porch with an arched opening to the west. The porch shelters two glass doors on the west elevation of the wing accessed by a porch with three arched openings and concrete steps spanning two of the opening to the north with a ramp leading to the south opening. A half-round vent is centered on the roof above the porch.

The remainder of the north elevation is capped by a side-gable roof with a narrow cornice and three half-round vents placed symmetrically. There is a band of four windows at the east end of the elevation. West of these are two narrow windows with a tilt-out central section. West of these windows is an entrance located in a recessed rectangular opening, a wooden door with a glazed upper panel and transom above accessed by a small stoop of three concrete steps. Two windows are located to the west of the door. One is a single narrow window matching the pair to the east

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and the other is a unique taller window that is slightly smaller than the standard window on other elevations. A covered walkway to the Auditorium is located west of that window sheltering the entrance. This entrance is recessed with a slight decorative detail in the framing concrete. It has a pair of wooden doors with glazed upper panels and a glazed transom above. West of the entrance is a band of four windows matching those on the other elevations.

### *Interior*

The interior of the building has had some finishes, lighting, doors, and restrooms altered, primarily in 1957. The configuration of classrooms remains generally unchanged.

Upon entering the main entrance from MacMillan Avenue, the door leads to a vestibule with a high vaulted ceiling with exposed beams. The walls are plaster and floors are patterned concrete. To the north are the administrative offices with an open service window and door to the east. The office area has four rooms and wood floors. The hallway is oriented from north to south with one classroom on the west side north of the administration area, and two on the west side to the south of the entrance. There are two classrooms on the east side of the hallway, with a teachers lounge and restroom at the north end of the hall, and a conference room to the south. Most classrooms have wood floors and acoustic-tile ceilings. Florescent lights have been added in the hallways. With large windows allowing plenty of daylight, most classrooms retain the opaque glass pendant lights from 1926.

The south hallway has the courtyard to the north and three classrooms to the south. The courtyard contains what would have been the east (rear) elevation of the 1925 building prior to the additions. The fenestration pattern on that side is similar to that of the west façade. The west side of the courtyard has three large windows on the upper story and smaller windows below. Two entrances to the courtyard on the north and south sides are accessed by sets of concrete steps since it is slightly below grade. The courtyard is paved with asphalt in poor condition.

The east hallway has the courtyard to the west and three classrooms and a stairwell to the east. It ends in a large room designed to be a kindergarten in 1929. The north hallway has a stairwell at the east end and connects with the west hall at the west. The courtyard is located to the south and a classroom and restrooms to the north.

The lower level has an L-shaped plan with a south and east corridor. The south hall has a small bookroom to the north and a transformer room, teachers' lounge and two classrooms to the south. The east hallway has the courtyard to the west and the stairwell and two classroom to the east. There is a restroom and storage at the northeast corner.

### **Auditorium**

The Auditorium is a one-story building with a rectangular plan. It is capped by a front-facing gable roof covered in composition shingles with red clay-tile coping. The concrete building features attached pilasters on the corners of the primary (west) façade. The primary façade contains a central entrance sheltered by a shed roof porch with red clay-tile cladding. The word



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“Auditorium” is spelled out on the fascia just below the shed roof. A large circular vent is centered above the entrance in the gable end. The entrance to the Auditorium consists of a pair of double doors with two glazed upper panels. Divided-light windows flank the entrance. There is a small room attached to the northwest corner of the building that is part of Burket’s original plan. It has a shed roof, and its west façade is punctuated by a slider sash window.

The south elevation of the Auditorium has a narrow cornice and no overhang. There is a two-over-two double hung sash window near the west corner. To the east there are three windows, each paired casements with twelve lights. The covered walkway to the Main Building is located east of these windows and shelters the south entrance to the Auditorium. The entrance is a wood door with glazed upper panels. Another covered walkway with a red clay-tile covered shed roof spans the lower half of the south elevation east of the walkway. It shelters a single solid wood door at the west and continues along the south elevation of the one-story cafeteria on the east elevation of the Auditorium. The cafeteria has a flat roof with a narrow fascia. Its south elevation has a central entrance consisting of a double wood door with glazed upper panels, flanked by multi-light casement, sash windows with wood casings.

The east elevation of the Auditorium consists primarily of the one-story cafeteria, with the main gable roof of the Auditorium visible above. The clay-tile coping and circular vent in the gable end are visible. The cafeteria has a row of six, evenly spaced windows along the elevation with an entrance at the north end. The windows are two-over-two double-hung sash and the entrance contains a simple wood door.

The north elevation is not easily accessible as it is close to the north boundary of the parcel. The one-story portion of the elevation has three two-over-two double-hung sash windows on the east end, with three more spaced closer together to the north. There is an entrance located to the west of the windows at the west end of the cafeteria. On the north elevation of the main Auditorium building there are three multi-light casement sash windows spaced evenly. The shed roof room at the northwest corner has two small slider-sash windows on its east elevation.

The interior of the Auditorium has rows of built-in seating facing a stage toward the east at the west end of the building. The one-story section to the east contains a cafeteria with concrete floors and an acoustic tile ceiling.

## **Bungalow**

The former Kindergarten Bungalow is a one-story building located to the south of the Main Building. It has a rectangular plan and is capped by a front-facing gable roof clad in composition shingles. The west elevation faces MacMillan Avenue and the parking area without an entrance and is not accessible from this side as there is a fence and hedges on the east end of the lot.

The north façade contains the main entrance to the building. It is located near the west corner and consists of a wood-paneled door sheltered by a small awning. It is accessed by a set of three concrete steps with a simple metal balustrade. To the east of the entrance is a group of five large

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multi-light wood frame windows. Each window is divided into three sections with eight lights in each frame. Near the east corner is a pair of six-over-six double hung sash.

The east elevation has a semi-circular vent in the gable end with corner returns. Fenestration consists of a single six-over-six double-hung sash window to the north with a pair of six-over-six double-hung sash windows to the south. There is an additional square window with four lights near the south corner.

A fenced-in play area is located along the south elevation of the Bungalow. The center of the elevation has an entrance consisting of double metal doors with a transom divided into five lights above. It is accessed by a concrete stoop with six steps and a balustrade on the south side. A six-over-six double-hung sash window is located to the east of the entrance, with an additional window on the west side of the entrance.

As noted, the west elevation does not have an entrance. A large, three-sided bay window is capped by a partial hipped roof. The roof also has corner returns and a semi-circular vent in the gable end. The bay window contains a central group of two three-part windows like those on the north façade, flanked by single windows on the angled sides of the bay.

The building interior was first remodeled when it was moved to this location from Sheridan Way School in 1953, for use as a library and offices. The interior was remodeled again in the 2000s and features two classrooms and a restroom.

## **Integrity**

### *Location and Setting*

The Main Building and Auditorium remain in their original location. The Bungalow was moved to this location from another school and has been part of the campus since 1953, during the period of significance. Therefore, the school retains integrity of location. The setting of the school has not changed; it has had a residential neighborhood to the west and large field to the east since it was initially constructed and therefore retains integrity of setting.

### *Design, Materials, and Workmanship*

The design, materials, and workmanship of the Auditorium and Bungalow have remained intact as they were not part of the 1957 remodeling. The Main Building has had three remodeling efforts that impacted its design, materials, and workmanship in different ways. The features specific to the Mott Marston design of the school have mostly been removed, including the elaborate entrance, window surrounds, and brick cladding. Harold Burket is primarily responsible for the more streamlined version of the Mediterranean style. The major change in design between Burket's remodeling and the Fisher and Wilde renovations of 1957 is the removal of the door surround. Despite these changes, the Main Building still retains integrity of design, materials, and workmanship dating to the period of significance associated with Burket's remodeling of the school.

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*Feeling and Association*

All three buildings retain integrity of feeling. The Main Building and Auditorium retain their association with education in Ventura, impact of the Field Act, and, in the case of the Main Building, Marston's design. The Bungalow building retains integrity of association as it represents the evolution of education in Ventura as an example of buildings moved between campuses to meet the needs of the district. Additionally, they are good examples of the work of architect Harold Burket and continue to reflect the association with his work.

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## 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

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION

ARCHITECTURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1925-1957

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1925

1934

1941

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Marston, Mott

Burket, Harold E.

Fisher and Wilde

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**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.)

Washington Elementary School is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion A in the area of Education for its association with the history of education in Ventura and the impact of the Field Act on 1930s school design. At the local level of significance under Criterion C in the area of Architecture the school is eligible as a good and rare example of an educational building redesigned in response to earthquake safety concerns in the city of Ventura. Additionally, it is a good example of the work of locally prominent architect Harold E. Burket who specialized in schools and other institutional buildings throughout Southern California. The period of significance begins in 1925 with construction of the Main Building, continues through significant dates of 1934 when the building was remodeled post-Field Act and 1941 when the Auditorium was completed, and closes in 1957 when the Main Building was further remodeled to give the school a more modern appearance. Washington Elementary School does not need to meet Criteria Consideration B: Moved Properties because the moved building, the Bungalow, was moved during the period of significance and is of less significance than the remaining (unmoved) buildings, the Main Building and the Auditorium.

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

### *Ventura City Schools*<sup>1</sup>

The number of families that moved to Ventura during the 1920s and 1930s overwhelmed the existing school system and numerous new school facilities were constructed as a result. In 1926, “a large increase in attendance” at Mill School House led to three teachers using the building, “originally a one-teacher school.”<sup>2</sup> The school district decided to replace the Mill School House with a new four-room school, completed the following year.<sup>3</sup> Avenue School was constructed at 2747 North Ventura Avenue the same year, and a new wing was added to Ventura Union High School.<sup>4</sup> E. P. Foster School (20 Pleasant Place, altered) followed in 1930. In addition to the Washington School remodel (1934) and Auditorium (1941), local architect Harold E. Burket designed Lincoln School at Ann and Santa Clara Streets (1931, demolished), Montalvo Elementary School (1936, extant), a classroom addition at Sheridan Way School (1950, extant), the PWA Moderne-style auditorium of Ventura High School on Main Street (1939, extant), and Will Rogers Elementary School (1950, extant).

<sup>1</sup> Excerpted from *City of Ventura Historic Context Statement*, prepared by Historic Resources Group for the City of Ventura, March 2022.

<sup>2</sup> “County Builds Many Schools,” *Ventura County Star*, December 15, 1926.

<sup>3</sup> “County Builds Many Schools,” *Ventura County Star*, December 15, 1926; “Complete Mill School Early,” *Ventura County Star*, January 4, 1927.

<sup>4</sup> Advertisement, *Ventura County Star*, October 25, 1927.

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The wave of postwar residential development as the city expanded eastward required the building of many new elementary schools, a second high school campus, and Ventura Community College. Postwar schools were typically one-story, with a series of connected classrooms open to an outdoor corridor. The style was distinctly modern, employing steel post-and-beam construction with flat or low-pitched shed rooflines. Key elements of the new California school design were fresh air circulation and “school room day-lighting.”<sup>5</sup> Solutions such as off-set clerestories, window walls, and skylights were often employed in the school designs featured in *Architectural Record* in the late 1940s.<sup>6</sup>

As described in the *Los Angeles Unified School District Historic Context Statement, 1870-1969*, “postwar schools were designed to feel decentralized, non-hierarchical, approachable, informal, and child-centered [in scale].”<sup>7</sup> In California, three main plan types emerged during this period: the finger-plan school, the cluster-plan school, and the open-plan school. Ventura’s postwar schools followed these trends.

Finger-plan schools were designed to resemble a tree with a central corridor (the trunk) and wings extending like branches. Finger plan schools in Ventura include Loma Vista School (300 Lynn Drive, altered), Sheridan Way School (573 Sheridan Way, altered), Anacapa Junior High School (100 S. Mills Road, altered), and Buena High School (5670 Telegraph Road, designed by noted Santa Paula-based architect Roy C. Wilson, extant).<sup>8</sup>

By the late 1950s, the popularity of the finger-plan school began to decline.<sup>9</sup> Cluster-plan schools began to replace the tree trunk and branch model, resulting in more compact plans of stand-alone buildings around a shared central courtyard. Classrooms still had large expanses of windows, but views now included the courtyard and other classrooms that yielded a more communal feeling. DeAnza Junior High School (2060 Cameron Street, extant) and El Camino School (501 College Drive, extant) are good examples of this type of plan.

Local architect Harold E. Burket was at the forefront of school lighting and ventilation design, as evidenced by his work at Will Rogers Elementary School (316 Howard Street, extant) and Our Lady of the Assumption School (3167 Telegraph Road, 1956, extant). As featured in the *Los Angeles Times*, Burket’s design for Will Rogers called for “solar electric eye robots” to control vertical louvered window panels to provide “measured daylight” for school rooms. The system, the first installed in the nation, was designed by Minneapolis Honeywell at Burket’s request.<sup>10</sup> Burket’s use of skylights at Our Lady of the Assumption School represents another evolution in his interest in the day-lighting of schools. His use of operable windows on two sides of each

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<sup>5</sup> *School Planning: The Architectural Record of a Decade* (New York: FW Dodge Corporation, 1951), 394-397.

<sup>6</sup> *School Planning: The Architectural Record of a Decade*, 394-397.

<sup>7</sup> Sapphos Environmental, Inc., *Los Angeles Unified School District Historic Context Statement, 1870-1969*, March 2014, 78.

<sup>8</sup> “Ventura Board Joins Plea for County-Wide Meeting on Future of College,” *Oxnard Press-Courier*, November 29, 1957.

<sup>9</sup> Sapphos Environmental, Inc., “Los Angeles Unified School District Historic Context Statement, 1870-1969,” March 2014, 87.

<sup>10</sup> “Sun to Regulate Light in New Ventura School,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 17, 1950, A7.

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classroom and the assembly space and at the ends of the circulation corridor are evidence of his interest in innovative school design.

### *Washington Elementary School*

Washington Elementary School was completed in 1925 to serve the rapidly expanding Midtown area of Ventura. At one time was the far eastern boundary of the city, further expansion to the east resulted in the area's later "midtown" identification. Midtown is located approximately two miles north of Ventura Beach and one mile east of downtown Ventura. The school building is situated on the east side of MacMillan Avenue, south of Main Street and north of San Nicholas Street.

The site for the school was set aside during the subdivision of the San Buenaventura Tract in the 1920s. The original owner and subdivider of the tract was Gilpin W. Chrisman, a rancher and real estate developer originally from Missouri. Chrisman purchased land in Ventura between 1874 and 1901, when he moved to Los Angeles. Upon returning to Ventura in 1920, he began to develop his land, the first portion being the San Buenaventura Tract. The first phase of the subdivision, considered the city's first subdivision, created lots on the new street Chrisman Avenue as well as lots on Thompson Boulevard and Main Street. The east side of the tract was divided into twenty-two family farm lots with MacMillan and Hurst Avenues created to provide access to the one-acre lots. During the second phase of subdivision in 1924, the farm lots were further divided into city lots and the east-west streets Santa Barbara, San Nicholas, and Santa Ynez were created.<sup>11</sup>

The owner of the land purchased for the school site was Mrs. Mary Skinner of Los Angeles who owned several acres in Ventura County.<sup>12</sup> Although MacMillan Avenue had yet to be opened, the city saw that with the rapid increase in the number of families in the tracts in the vicinity it would not be long before a grammar school would be needed in that section. A proposition for a \$25,000 bond was supported by voters to pay for the land and the cost of paving the streets. Mrs. Skinner asked for \$14,000 for the five-acre site.<sup>13</sup>

By November 1924, the city had chosen the architect and name for the new school. Los Angeles architect Mott Marston was well-known in Ventura County in the 1920s. Born in San Francisco in 1883, he moved to Los Angeles sometime around 1910 when he was working as a draftsman for an architectural firm.<sup>14</sup> He began to specialize in schools, winning first prize in a contest sponsored by the American Institute of Architects (AIA) for his design for Fullerton Union High School in 1919.<sup>15</sup> In 1920, he was in the process of drawing plans for Moorpark High School when he was selected by the Pleasant Valley school district to expand a school in Camarillo.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Sol N. Sheridan, *History of Ventura County* (Chicago: S.J. Clarke, 1926), 323.

<sup>12</sup> Bureau of Land Management Records, <https://glorerecords.blm.gov/details/patent/default.aspx?accession=687151&docClass=SER&sid=ghzuyefy.4t2>.

<sup>13</sup> "City to Buy School Site," *Morning Free Press*, March 13, 1923.

<sup>14</sup> United States Census Bureau, 1910.

<sup>15</sup> "Prize for Plan," *Los Angeles Times*, September 28, 1919, 81.

<sup>16</sup> "Pleasant Valley Votes \$50,000 Bond." *Ventura Weekly Post and Democrat*, May 21, 1920, 1.



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The completed design was featured in *Pacific Coast Architect* as part of a Spanish tile advertisement.<sup>17</sup> In 1922, he was selected to design another grammar school in Camarillo.<sup>18</sup> In 1923, his drawing for the new school for the Mound School District was featured on the front page of the *Morning Free Press*.<sup>19</sup> All were designed in the Spanish Colonial Revival style with symmetrical arched openings and clay-tile roofs. The board chose the name Washington at the time Marston presented his plans in November 1924.<sup>20</sup>

Washington School was planned to suit the “largest and finest site in the city” at a cost of \$50,000. The plans called for seven school rooms with equipment for fourteen. From the very start it was intended to be expanded, as the growth of the city was so pronounced it had been hard to keep up with demands for education.<sup>21</sup> The following month, Marston returned to Ventura for additional meetings and the contract for the construction was awarded to L.C. Rudolph with his winning bid of \$42, 746. The painting was awarded to Alhambra Wallpaper and Paint Company, plumbing to Ventura Hardware and Plumbing Company, and wiring to Conklin Electrical.<sup>22</sup> Rudolph had made errors in computing his costs and decided he could not complete the project for that amount.<sup>23</sup> More bids were accepted and this time the low bidder was P.A. Belanger at \$43,449.<sup>24</sup>

The building permit for a fourteen-room school building was issued on February 16, 1925. The permit specified that the building would be two-and-a-half stories (24 feet high) with dimensions of 151 by 82 feet. It would have brick chimneys and a composition and tile roof. Excavation of the site was expected to begin the day the permit was issued.<sup>25</sup> Marston revealed more details about the building at the occasion of the cornerstone ceremony in March 1925. It would have six classrooms, a kitchen, library, teachers’ restroom, and suite of offices for the principal. Two classrooms would have the ability to be combined into one to use as an auditorium. Like the May Henning School, completed two years prior, concrete floors would ensure the school was fireproof. The cornerstone was filled with a roster of teachers, photographs of students, Boy Scout magazines, and two local newspapers. Following the ceremony, the contractor and officials had dinner at the Pierpont Inn.<sup>26</sup>

By July 1925 the school was nearing completion. The Board of Education opened up bids to complete the sidewalk and fence.<sup>27</sup> The tile roof was also to be installed in July.<sup>28</sup> At the end of the month the superintendent, A.L. Vincent, declared that the new school was the finest in the

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<sup>17</sup> Advertisement for Simons Large Spanish Tiles, *Pacific Coast Architect*, 1924, 28.

<sup>18</sup> “Select Architect for New School,” *Morning Free Press*, July 18, 1922, 1.

<sup>19</sup> “Mound School District Will Soon Have Fine New School Structure,” *Morning Free Press*, June 13, 1923, 1.

<sup>20</sup> “New School to be Called Washington,” *Ventura Daily Post*, November 11, 1924, 1

<sup>21</sup> “Fine School to be Built Immediately,” *Morning Free Press*, November 20, 1924, 1.

<sup>22</sup> “Rudolph Gets Contract for New School,” *Ventura Daily Post*, December 10, 1924, 1.

<sup>23</sup> “School Contract to be Awarded Tonight,” *Morning Free Press*, January 27, 1925, 1.

<sup>24</sup> “Bids Received to Build New School,” *Ventura Free Press*, January 30, 1925, 1.

<sup>25</sup> “Washington School Work Started Today,” *Morning Free Press*, February 16, 1925, 1.

<sup>26</sup> “School Progress is Related at Corner Stone Ceremony,” *Morning Free Press*, March 31, 1925, 1.

<sup>27</sup> “Legal Notice,” *Morning Free Press*, July 17, 1925, 6.

<sup>28</sup> “City Briefs,” *Ventura Weekly Post and Democrat*, July 17, 1925, 3.

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county and could equal any school in any state. The school would accept grades kindergarten through fifth with Miss Grace Howard as the first principal.<sup>29</sup> In August, the school grounds were graded with the front lawn planted and playground apparatus installed at the rear.<sup>30</sup> One week later the school opened with all neighborhood children below sixth grade and living on the east side of Crimea Street attending Washington Elementary School.<sup>31</sup>

Although expected, the problem of overcrowding was an issue even before the school was officially dedicated. The board scheduled a meeting to discuss the problem in the beginning of February 1926, one week before the dedication ceremony was planned.<sup>32</sup> The Sunday afternoon dedication program opened with a singing of *America* and a plaque presented by the Sons of the Golden West to be placed at the main entrance.<sup>33</sup> At the April board meeting, members agreed that \$40,000 in new school bonds would be required to provide an addition to the school with four more classrooms and a two-room kindergarten.<sup>34</sup> Marston returned to Ventura at the end of the month and by May had the plans prepared for the school expansion.<sup>35</sup> Bids were opened in September, with Stiles Company as the low bidder.<sup>36</sup> Meanwhile, the new school year had begun and there were not enough seats for the students. Half-day sessions were established with grades split according to student names. Rather than continue with a split schedule while waiting for the addition to be completed, two temporary buildings were contracted at the end of September.<sup>37</sup> In October, the completion of the addition was estimated to be a month and a half away, with no follow-up article to confirm the completion. The addition, located to the southeast of the main building, was two stories finished in the same brick as the original building.<sup>38</sup>

Based on a 1927 photograph, the main building had an elaborate central entrance with a parapet and arched opening. The wings also featured arched surrounds around the rectangular windows. There was an additional arched entranceway on the south elevation. Although the first addition is visible in the photograph, its details are not apparent.

Despite the addition, when school started again in August 1927, concerns about overcrowding returned. Of all the schools in Ventura County, Washington School showed the biggest increase in enrollment. Sessions were cancelled on the first day of school because the number of students could not be accommodated.<sup>39</sup> The school board again proposed a school bond election, this time for \$100,000 for new buildings as well as an addition to Washington School.<sup>40</sup> Architect Mott Marston returned to Ventura in July to go over the plans. This included additions of three more

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<sup>29</sup> "New School Finest in Ventura County," *Ventura County Star*, July 24, 1925, 3.

<sup>30</sup> "Grading of School Grounds Completed," *Ventura County Star*, August 21, 1925, 1.

<sup>31</sup> "Grade Schools to Open Aug 31," *Ventura County Star*, August 25, 1925, 1.

<sup>32</sup> "Grammar School Crowded: Hard Problem is Facing Board," *Ventura County Star*, February 9, 1926, 1.

<sup>33</sup> "School Dedication Program Arranged," *Ventura County Star*, February 13, 1926, 8.

<sup>34</sup> "City Growth Makes School Board Act," *Morning Free Press*, April 14, 1926, 1.

<sup>35</sup> "Plan Additional School Buildings," *Morning Free Press*, May 12, 1926, 3.

<sup>36</sup> "Stiles Co. is Los Bidder on Additions," *Ventura County Star*, September 3, 1926, 1.

<sup>37</sup> "School to Have Full Sessions," *Ventura County Star*, September 24, 1926, 1.

<sup>38</sup> "School Additions Nearly Finished," *Ventura County Star*, October 26, 1926, 2.

<sup>39</sup> "Schools Crowded as New Term Starts," *Morning Free Press*, August 29, 1927, 1.

<sup>40</sup> "\$100,000 School Bond Election is Planned Here," *Ventura County Star*, March 9, 1928, 1

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classrooms and a kindergarten.<sup>41</sup> Requests for bids for a brick addition and wood frame kindergarten went out in September 1928.<sup>42</sup> After the initial round of bids was rejected, in November the contract was awarded to Los Angeles contractor A.H. Strauser for \$25,700.<sup>43</sup> The lowest bidder, Strauser was also experienced, as the builder of seven schools in Los Angeles.<sup>44</sup>

Although it was announced that the construction of the addition started in November 1928, the building permit was not issued until January 1929. The proposed building was two stories with dimensions of 25 by 146 feet, a concrete foundation and tile roof. This L-shaped addition was located to the north of the previous addition, forming a central rectangular courtyard. It opened in May 1929, providing much needed space for the 614 students enrolled at the school.<sup>45</sup>

Also in May, the board determined to move principal Grace (Howard) Withers to Sheridan Way School because they felt they needed a man to lead Washington School.<sup>46</sup> The new principal, Mark Stanley, stayed for less than a year before resigning to take a job in Oceanside.<sup>47</sup> Teacher Clophine Dooley became temporary principal in 1930 before being appointed permanently.<sup>48</sup> Dooley's mother had been the principal of her school growing up in Bakersfield (also named Washington School). Dooley was considered an innovator in education, making some of the earliest attempts to develop programs for gifted children and bringing the theater, arts, and the Spanish language into the curriculum. Her curiosity about child behavior led to her study of mental health and she created the Ventura Mental Health Association. She remained principal of Washington School until her retirement in 1960.<sup>49</sup>

In efforts to balance buildings and students across the school district, the board frequently made decisions to move school buildings from one campus to another. In September 1930, it was decided that the shop building located at Lincoln School should be moved to Washington School.<sup>50</sup> The building permit to move the building at a cost of \$495 was issued on September 25, 1930. The building was then remodeled in order to be used as a cafeteria.<sup>51</sup>

On March 10, 1933, an earthquake centered in Long Beach had a devastating impact on Southern California. The city of Ventura was not immediately impacted by the quake, reporting that just one man was injured when a pane of glass fell in.<sup>52</sup> For Los Angeles schools, the damage was extensive and prompted a reconstruction program to examine the structural integrity of all campuses. As a result of the quake, the state of California passed the Field Act, which directed

<sup>41</sup> "Plan Additions to Two Local Schools," *Ventura County Star*, July 27, 1928, 1.

<sup>42</sup> "Notice to Contractors," *Ventura County Star*, September 25, 1928, 8.

<sup>43</sup> "Reject Bids for School Buildings," *Ventura County Star*, October 15, 1928, 2.

<sup>44</sup> "School Bids are Awarded," *Ventura County Star*, November 8, 1928, 14.

<sup>45</sup> "Long Desired Room Obtained," *Ventura County Star*, May 2, 1929, 6.

<sup>46</sup> "School Body to Transfer 1 Principal," *Ventura County Star*, May 10, 1929, 1.

<sup>47</sup> "Mark Stanley Quits Post Here," *Ventura County Star*, August 28, 1930, 1.

<sup>48</sup> "Seek School Principal," *Ventura County Star*, September 3, 1930, 1.

<sup>49</sup> "Curiosity Fueled Teacher's Travels," *Ventura County Star*, April 22, 1984, 60.

<sup>50</sup> "Addition to School Built," *Ventura County Star*, September 4, 1930, 8.

<sup>51</sup> "Remodel Building for a Cafeteria," *Morning Free Press*, October 24, 1930, 1.

<sup>52</sup> "Little Damage in Ventura is Done by Quake," *Ventura County Star*, March 11, 1933, 1.

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the State Division of Architecture to develop and enforce regulations to ensure buildings were better protected against earthquakes.<sup>53</sup> While the schools in Los Angeles required immediate action, the damage in Ventura was minimal and there was less urgency. In August 1933, Washington School was ordered to be closed and remain closed until it could meet the requirements of the state ruling. Students would be moved to other schools while architect Harold Burket worked on plans to make the school earthquake-proof.<sup>54</sup>

Harold Escher Burket was born in Nebraska in 1891.<sup>55</sup> He studied architecture at the University of California, Berkeley and graduated in 1916. His first known commission in the Ventura area was Pleasant Valley Baptist Church in Camarillo. This may have been when he met and married the daughter of Adolfo Camarillo, the son of Juan Camarillo. In March 1928, Harold and his wife moved to Ventura where he established his firm.<sup>56</sup> In 1930, Burket's work was included in an AIA/Santa Barbara Chapter exhibit in memory of the late George Washington Smith.<sup>57</sup> Simultaneously, Burket's design for a small house won an award in competition conducted by the Long Beach Architectural Club.<sup>58</sup> In 1932, Burket became the President of the Santa Barbara Chapter of the AIA.

Burket's designs often reflected the changing architectural tastes of the period, from the Spanish Colonial Revival Community Presbyterian Church and Zig Zag Moderne Firestone Tire Store in the 1920s, to the P.W.A. Moderne Ventura Post Office and the Streamline Moderne Great Eastern Department Store of the 1930s and 1940s. Burket had a particular interest in school design—specifically the importance of light and air to a healthy learning environment—as evidenced in his many schools in Ventura County. Burket is perhaps best known for his larger institutional commissions such as an addition to the Ventura County Courthouse (c. 1955-56) and the E. P. Foster Public Library (1959). One of Burket's signature design details in his Mid-Century Modern style buildings is his use of large simple, geometric wooden grid details on windows and as screens. Burket adapted this architectural language for his design of Our Lady of the Assumption Church in Ventura. Burket died in 1972.

Burket was already well known in Ventura by the time of the 1933 earthquake, and his popularity increased after the quake. Just days after the event it was reported that despite the massive destruction in Long Beach, two schools designed by Burket, Seaside and Longfellow made it through with minimal damage. In addition to the schools, apartment buildings The Sovereign, The Artaban, and Casa Bonita remained in excellent condition and were still inhabited. Suydam Baking Company, housed in a building of Burket's design, was one of the few bakeries functioning in Long Beach after the quake. He observed that Class A construction

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<sup>53</sup> "A Slow Fuse," *Ventura County Star*, February 9, 1950, 32

<sup>54</sup> "Closing Order on Washington School Given," *Ventura County Star*, August 8, 1933, 1.

<sup>55</sup> Biography of Burket excerpted from the *City of Ventura, Historic Context Statement* prepared by Historic Resources Group for the City of Ventura, March 2022.

<sup>56</sup> "Return to County," *Oxnard Daily Courier*, February 13, 1928, 3.

<sup>57</sup> "Architects Exhibit Conducted," *Los Angeles Times*, July 13, 1930, D10.

<sup>58</sup> "Design Achieves Dignity," *Los Angeles Times*, December 7, 1930, D4.

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suffered little damage, and that buildings that had employed strengthening materials had withstood the shocks.<sup>59</sup>

Burket traveled to Long Beach later that month to confer with officials and inspect the damage.<sup>60</sup> The strength of his buildings and interest in the issue may have resulted in his appointment to the State Architectural Board in April 1933.<sup>61</sup> As the most well-known local architect, with schools in Long Beach that had survived the earthquake, Burket was the obvious choice for the rebuilding of Washington School. Paul E. Jeffers was the structural engineer. More details about the remodeling were reported when the government granted the school board \$5,100 toward the work. Superintendent Van Dellen had requested \$6,000 for the bracing project that was estimated to have a total cost of \$22,000. It involved a change to the entire exterior of the building, removing all cladding and spraying on a concrete mixture with a special gun. The hollow tile lining in the hallways would be reinforced, while the classrooms would be braced from floor to ceiling by steel frames. It was hoped the work could be completed before the spring term of 1934.<sup>62</sup>

The state architect would not approve Burket's plans until a soil test was completed, making a spring completion impossible.<sup>63</sup> Plans were approved in mid-January 1934 with the hopes of completing the work before summer.<sup>64</sup> The call for bids noted that all work would be completed according to the rules of the FEA Public Works, in particular with PWA bulletin 2.<sup>65</sup> The project was awarded to Contracting Engineers, Inc. of Los Angeles with a low bid of \$24,790.<sup>66</sup> A few days later the contractor said there was an error in their numbers and asked for a \$3,000 increase; they were held to their initial bid and work started on March 14, 1934.<sup>67</sup> Two days later it was noted that the school looked "nude" as all the exterior cladding had been removed.<sup>68</sup> This had happened even though the building permit for the work was not issued until March 31, 1934.

Work continued throughout the summer of 1934 with the final bids for the painting of the school going out in July.<sup>69</sup> During the summer, a "youthful gang" of kids under the age of 11 used their vacation time to break seventy-one windows in the school that had to be repaired.<sup>70</sup> During the summer of 1936, school projects included the addition of a driveway, repainting of the music room, re-roofing of the cafeteria, and new paint on the floors of the main building. The patio was also "cemented" in order to prevent rain from seeping in.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>59</sup> "Schools Built by Local Man Withstand Quake," *Ventura County Star*, March 13, 1933, 3.

<sup>60</sup> "Burket Confers with Officials," *Ventura County Star*, March 17, 1933, 2.

<sup>61</sup> "Harold Burket Named to State Architect Board," *Ventura County Star*, April 27, 1933, 1.

<sup>62</sup> "Grant of \$5100 Made by US for Work on School," *Ventura County Star*, December 1, 1933, 1.

<sup>63</sup> "State Orders Soil Tests for School Project," *Ventura County Star*, December 27, 1933, 1.

<sup>64</sup> "School Work Plans Okehed," *Ventura Weekly Post and Democrat*, January 19, 1934, 1.

<sup>65</sup> "Bid Notice," *Morning Free Press*, January 24, 1934, 3.

<sup>66</sup> "7 Bids Opened on Washington School Repair," *Ventura Weekly Post and Democrat*, February 9, 1934, 2.

<sup>67</sup> "Board Holding Contractor to Original Bid," *Ventura County Star*, February 14, 1934, 1.

<sup>68</sup> "Washington School 'Nude'" *Ventura County Star*, March 16, 1934, 1.

<sup>69</sup> "Specifications Drawn," *Morning Free Press*, July 17, 1934, 3.

<sup>70</sup> "Youthful Vandals Attack School," *Morning Free Press*, July 29, 1934.

<sup>71</sup> "Goodbye Vacation! School is On!" *Ventura County Star Free Press*, September 13, 1936.

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As enrollment continued to grow, and the practicality of a freestanding cafeteria that required children to go outside in inclement weather became apparent, the board began to discuss the need for a combination Auditorium/Cafeteria to accommodate 400 students. Harold Burket was again the obvious choice for this project, but funding could not be provided until 1940.<sup>72</sup> None of the initial bids for the project were accepted and Burket prepared a new set of plans and specifications.<sup>73</sup> The board accepted the low bid of \$40,267 and George Macleod began construction in September of 1940. The building permit called for a one-story building with three rooms measuring 66 by 128 feet. Construction of the Auditorium was completed in 1941.

The 1940s were a relatively quiet time in Washington School history. In August 1947, a building permit was issued to contractor Harold E. Shugart Company to line four classrooms and the cafeteria with acoustical material. Electrical work was updated at the end of 1947. In an effort to solve the hazards of traffic in front of the school, parking was added at the southern end of the property in 1948.<sup>74</sup> In 1949, Shugart was issued another permit to install acoustical material in ten more classrooms.

In 1950, the school board issued an order to survey all buildings to determine whether they were in compliance with the Field Act. It was noted that Washington School had been one of the first old schools in the entire state to be remodeled to meet the Act.<sup>75</sup> A building known as the Kindergarten Bungalow designed in 1929 by Mott Marston at Sheridan Way School was moved to Washington School in 1953.<sup>76</sup> It was put on wheels at the beginning of July and the building permit for the move was issued on July 13, 1953. The building permit for the remodeling of the building as a library and office was issued to contractor A.B. Elliott in August 1953. In March 1954, the board allocated more funds for the rehabilitation of Washington School as it was the second oldest of the ten elementary schools in their district. The plans called for a completely new entranceway, new lighting system, window fixtures, floors, and other items to be completed during summer vacation.<sup>77</sup>

It was not until January 1956 that rehabilitation plans moved forward. The firm of Fisher and Wilde was selected as the architects. Their initial estimate of \$84,000 was so high that the board debated building a new school rather than rehabbing the old one.<sup>78</sup> It was determined that if the cost of repairing was less than sixty percent of the cost of the new building, then it would be the better option. The cost of refurbishing was estimated at \$120,000 while the cost of a new building was estimated at \$250,000. There was also the question of whether the school was structurally sound enough to warrant the renovation; reports from the architect as well as the state assured them that it was. The board voted to retain Fisher and Wilde to modernize the restrooms, provide a new roof and renovate all floors, walls, doors, and windows. Work was

<sup>72</sup> "New School Assured," *Ventura County Star Free Press*, April 27, 1938, 1.

<sup>73</sup> "Bids Rejected for School Auditorium," *Ventura County Star Free Press*, July 22, 1940, 1.

<sup>74</sup> "Car Problem Solved," *Ventura County Star Free Press*, February 21, 1948, 4.

<sup>75</sup> "Ventura Board Orders Survey of Buildings," *Ventura County Star Free Press*, February 17, 1950, 1.

<sup>76</sup> The building was first referred to as the "kindergarten bungalow" in the *Ventura County Star* (August 26, p. 12) when was moved to the site in 1953 and continues to be called a bungalow.

<sup>77</sup> "School Renewal OKd in Ventura," *Ventura County Star Free Press*, March 12, 1943, 1.

<sup>78</sup> "High Cost of Repairs Cited by School Board," *Ventura County Star Free Press*, January 10, 1956, 9.

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scheduled to start in the summer.<sup>79</sup> Once again rehabilitation was delayed, and bids for the project were not opened until April 1957. The “facelifting” was to include a new entryway, new window casings, refinished floors and various other repairs to be ready by the fall.<sup>80</sup> Santa Barbara contractor Kenneth C. Urton was awarded the contract for the Fisher and Wilde plans at a cost of \$107,400.<sup>81</sup>

The firm of Fisher and Wilde was led by Darwin Edward Fisher and Roy G. Wilde. Fisher was born in Harper, Kansas.<sup>82</sup> He earned a degree in Architecture from University of Southern California in 1941 and then went on to serve as an architect for the U.S. Navy at Pearl Harbor from 1941-1945. Fisher moved to Ventura in the early 1950s and worked in the office of Harold Burket.

Roy Gregory Wilde was born to a house-builder father in San Francisco in 1919. By 1930, the family had relocated to Los Angeles where residential construction was booming. By 1940, Wilde was employed as a draftsman. During World War II he served in the U.S. Army. By 1953, Wilde had moved to Ventura where he was working as a designer for Harold E. Burket. In 1955, Wilde formed a partnership with Darwin Fisher, whom he likely met during their time together in Burket’s office. Burket closed his architectural practice and retired in June 1964.<sup>83</sup> The firm of Fisher & Wilde designed a number of commercial, educational, and institutional projects throughout Ventura County. They are best known for the Ventura County Welfare Building (1957), Pacific Telephone Company Office Building (1958), Hueneme High School (1959), Texaco Office Building (1959) St. John’s Hospital Nursing Home (1960) and the H.P. Wright Library (1966). Fisher & Wilde was also widely recognized for their restoration work on Ventura City Hall (originally the Ventura County Courthouse). In 1971, the firm received Southern California Gas Co.’s Balanced Power Award for the Bank of A. Levy.

Although the rehabilitation of Washington School started in May 1957, it was not completed in time for the new school year. A plumbing strike caused a delay of more than a month and the 450 students were required to return to a schedule of split classes.<sup>84</sup> A review of the drainage system prompted a further delay, and the school was not reopened until October 12, 1957.<sup>85</sup>

During the 1960s and 1970s, Washington School experienced events shared across much of the country. In the spring of 1983, school maintenance workers noticed cracks in the building and alerted the district. They hired structural engineer W.D. Crouch of Santa Paula to conduct a study of structural safety of the school. The report was presented to the superintendent in June and by

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<sup>79</sup> “Ventura Board to Renovate not Demolish,” *Ventura County Star Free Press*, February 14, 1956, 9.

<sup>80</sup> “State Approves Ventura Plans to Renew Washington School,” *Ventura County Star Free Press*, March 26, 1957, 9.

<sup>81</sup> “Ventura Board Oks \$107,400,” *Ventura County Star Free Press*, April 26, 1957, 1.

<sup>82</sup> Fisher and Wilde biographies excerpted from the *City of Ventura, Historic Context Statement* prepared by Historic Resources Group for the City of Ventura, March 2022

<sup>83</sup> Application for Membership Emeritus submitted by Harold E. Burket, American Institute of Architects, June 1, 1964.

<sup>84</sup> “Washington School Work is Delayed; Two Sessions Seen,” *Ventura County Star Free Press*, August 13, 1957, 9.

<sup>85</sup> “Back in Business,” *Ventura County Star Free Press*, October 16, 1957, 13.

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July the board had determined that the school could not be reopened in the fall. Soil tests also indicated a low density, which was the cause of the settling. The options were abandoning the school, ordering corrective work at a cost of \$300,000 to \$500,000 or rebuilding at \$750,000.<sup>86</sup> The official estimate in February 1984 was \$480,000 just to strengthen the foundation.<sup>87</sup>

The school remained vacant while officials figured out what to do with the building. In 1993, the district designated the school as surplus, clearing the way for the sale of the property.<sup>88</sup>

Faced with the prospect of demolition, a group of local residents quickly organized to form “SOS: Save Our School.”<sup>89</sup> Their efforts included research of the history of the school, one of the oldest in the city, with hopes of getting it designated as a historic site.<sup>90</sup> The district ordered additional reports to determine the possibility of reusing the building, and the consultants determined that it would be more cost effective to demolish rather than install the piling required to support it.<sup>91</sup> Neighborhood groups continued to fight for the school and find a way to make it useful for the community and by 1999, there was some hope as a Christian school hoped to lease the space while renovating it. The unique arrangement involved the church repairing and renovating the building while paying \$2,000 a month for a 20-year lease.<sup>92</sup>

Ventura County Christian School students and parents began cleaning and repairing the school immediately.<sup>93</sup> Efforts were made to complete the Auditorium in time for the first graduating class to have the ceremony ready by June 2001.<sup>94</sup> The school started a fundraising campaign for the \$5,000,000 needed for renovations, and also expanded from a high school to a K-12 school in 2004.<sup>95</sup> They remained tenants in the former Washington School until their lease expired in 2023, leaving the school vacant.

## Conclusion

Washington Elementary School is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance. Under Criterion A in the area of Education, the property, one of the oldest extant city elementary schools, represents the evolution of education in Ventura. Built and expanded as a response to the rapid growth of Midtown resulting from the development of subdivisions during the 1920s, Washington Elementary School was the first school in Ventura repaired and remodeled to conform with safety standards established by the Field Act passed in the wake of the 1933 Long Beach Earthquake. The Auditorium building is a result of the 1940s design and construction programs established in response to the Depression. In the 1950s, the

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<sup>86</sup> “Quake Scare: Washington School may be shut down,” *Ventura County Star Free Press*, July 7, 1983, 1.

<sup>87</sup> “Trustees Given Bad News on Quake-proofing Costs,” *Ventura County Star Free Press*, February 16, 1984, 2.

<sup>88</sup> “Trustees Hope to Sell Properties,” *Ventura County Star Free Press*, January 14, 1993.

<sup>89</sup> “School a Treasure,” Letter to the Editor by Rick and Jenny Salazar, *Ventura County Star*, September 12, 1996.

<sup>90</sup> “Neighbors Fight to Reclaim School,” *Ventura County Star*, November 18, 1996, 3.

<sup>91</sup> “Washington School Better Razed Than Repaired, Consulting Firm Finds,” *Ventura County Star*, February 26, 1997, 4.

<sup>92</sup> “Washington Campus Deal Close to Completion,” *Ventura County Star*, April 10, 1999, 22.

<sup>93</sup> “High School Students Prepare New Campus,” *Thousand Oaks Star*, October 25, 1999, 47.

<sup>94</sup> “Glimpse of Washington School,” document provided by Ventura County Christian School.

<sup>95</sup> “Ventura County Christian High School Says Goodbye to 12 Seniors,” *Ventura County Star*, June 6, 2004, p. 29.



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main building was remodeled again, rather than replaced, in response to the postwar emphasis on modernization and efficiency. Under Criterion C in the area of Architecture, Main Building and Auditorium embody the distinctive characteristics of the Mediterranean Revival style as applied to education buildings, streamlined for the needs of earthquake safety. Architect Harold E. Burket designed the Auditorium to match the Main Building he remodeled to meet the requirements of the Field Act. The buildings retain character-defining features of the style such as symmetrical elevations, attached pilasters, red clay-tile details, a central courtyard, arched openings, and decorative cornice details. As the first school in Ventura to remodel in response to the state mandate, the decisions made by Burket had an impact on how other schools mitigated safety concerns through design. Two of Burket's schools located in Long Beach (along with multiple apartment buildings) remained relatively undamaged following the quake, a fact that received widespread recognition and resulted in his appointment to the State Architectural Board responsible for reviewing plans for Field Act compliance. His work at Washington Elementary School came at a pivotal time in his career and he went on to complete multiple school and civic buildings significant to the history of Ventura.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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*Ventura Daily Post*. Multiple articles cited, 1924-1926.

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**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: Ventura Unified School District Library

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 5.4

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 34.278347

Longitude: -119.275691

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

The boundary consists of the entirety of the parcel number 073019113 as defined by the Ventura County Assessor (Map 1).

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The original parcel set aside for Washington School prior to construction in 1923 and historically associated with the property.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Laura Taylor Kung, Senior Architectural Historian, and Shannon Davis, Director, Architectural History

organization: ASM Affiliates

street & number: 20 North Raymond Avenue, Suite 220

city or town: Pasadena state: CA zip code: 91103

e-mail: [lkung@asmaffiliates.com](mailto:lkung@asmaffiliates.com)

telephone: (626) 793-7395

date: November 2023; Revised February 2024; October 2024

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**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: Washington Elementary School

City or Vicinity: Ventura

County: Ventura

State: California

Photographer: Stephen Schafer, Laura Voisin George, or Laura Taylor Kung

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Date Photographed: 2023, as indicated individually

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 20 Distant view from Santa Barbara Street, view to east (Voisin George, March 2023)
- 2 of 20 Mature trees and lawn in front of Main Building, view to the northeast (Schafer, August 2023)
- 3 of 20 Mature trees and lawn in front of Main Building, view to the southeast (Schafer, August 2023)
- 4 of 20 Detail of west façade of Main Building, view to the east (Schafer, August 2023)
- 5 of 20 Overview of south elevation of Main Building, view to the north (Voisin George, March 2023)
- 6 of 20 Oblique view of south and east elevations of Main Building, view to the northwest (Voisin George, March 2023)
- 7 of 20 Distant view of east elevation of Main Building, view to the west (Kung, June 2023)
- 8 of 20 Distant view of addition on northeast corner of Main Building, view to the south (Voisin George, March 2023)
- 9 of 20 West end of north elevation of Main Building, view to the southeast (Voisin George, March 2023)
- 10 of 20 Vestibule and front entrance to Main Building, view to the west (Voisin George, March 2023)
- 11 of 20 Overview of classroom in Main Building, view to the southwest (Voisin George, March 2023)
- 12 of 20 Overview of central courtyard in Main Building, view to the northwest (Kung, June 2023)
- 13 of 20 West façade of Auditorium, view to the east (Schafer, August 2023)
- 14 of 20 Oblique view of south elevation of Auditorium, view to the northeast (Voisin George, March 2023)

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- 15 of 20 Distant view of south elevation of Auditorium, view to the northwest (Voisin George, March 2023)
- 16 of 20 Interior view of Auditorium, view to the southwest (Voisin George, March 2023)
- 17 of 20 North façade of Bungalow, view to the southeast (Voisin George, March 2023)
- 18 of 20 Oblique view of east elevation of Bungalow, view to the southwest (Kung, June 2023)
- 19 of 20 West elevation of Bungalow, view to the southwest (Schafer, August 2023)
- 20 of 20 Interior view of classroom in Bungalow, view to the northwest (Voisin George, March 2023)

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

**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

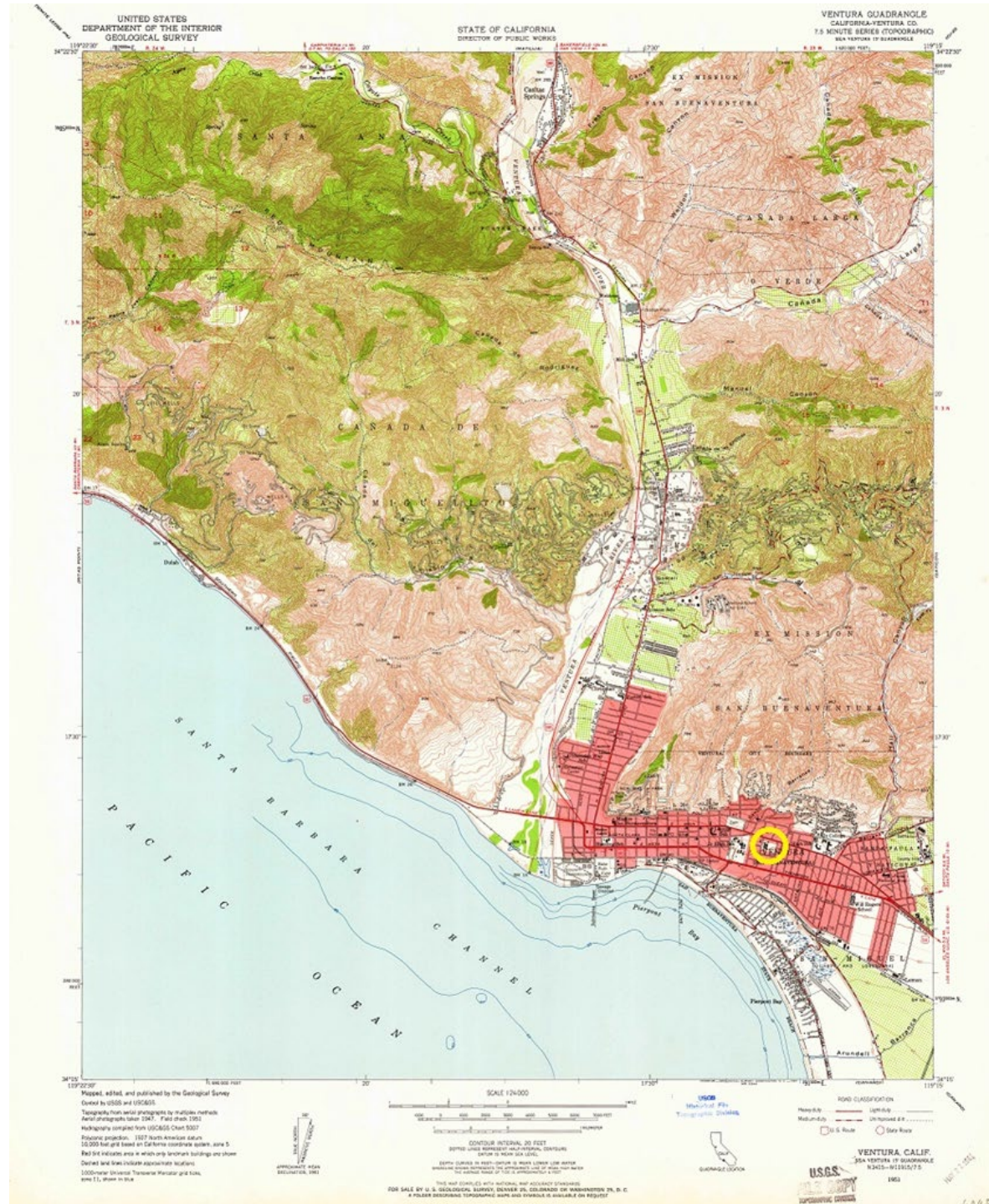
The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201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

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### Location Map

USGS, Ventura Quad, 1951





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### Boundary Map

Ventura County Assessor, 2023

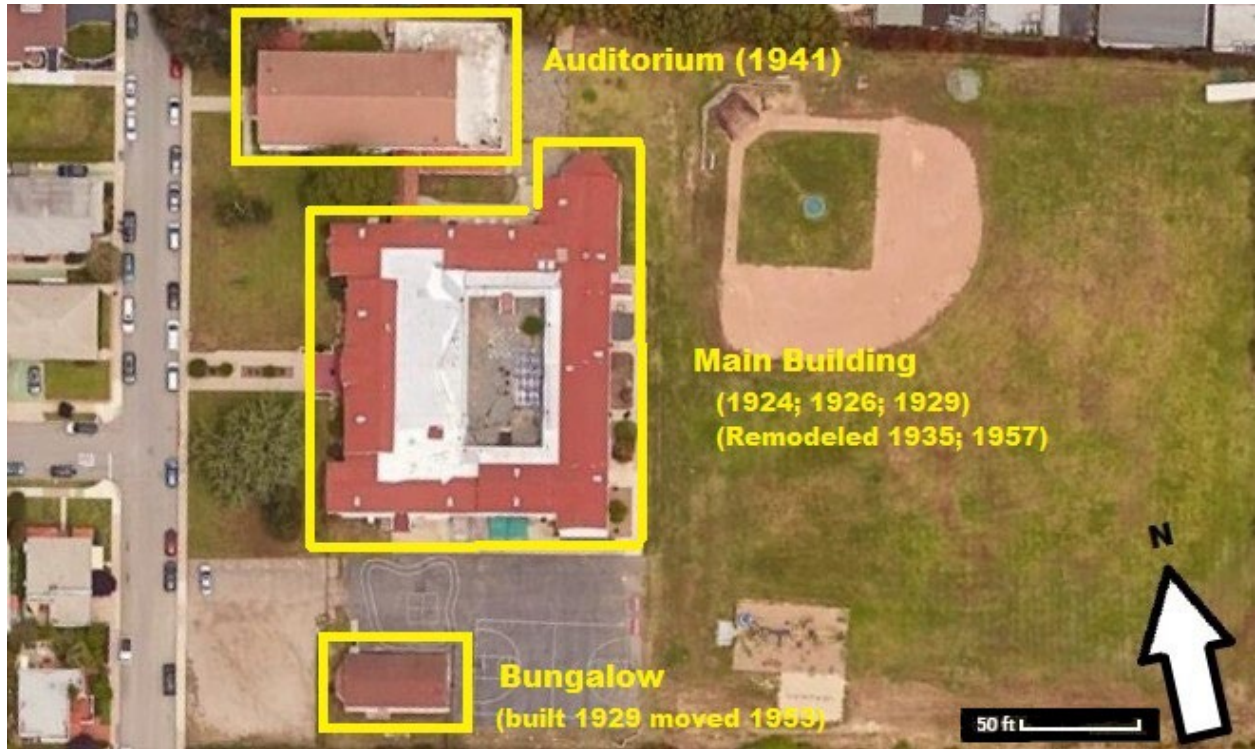




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**Sketch Map**

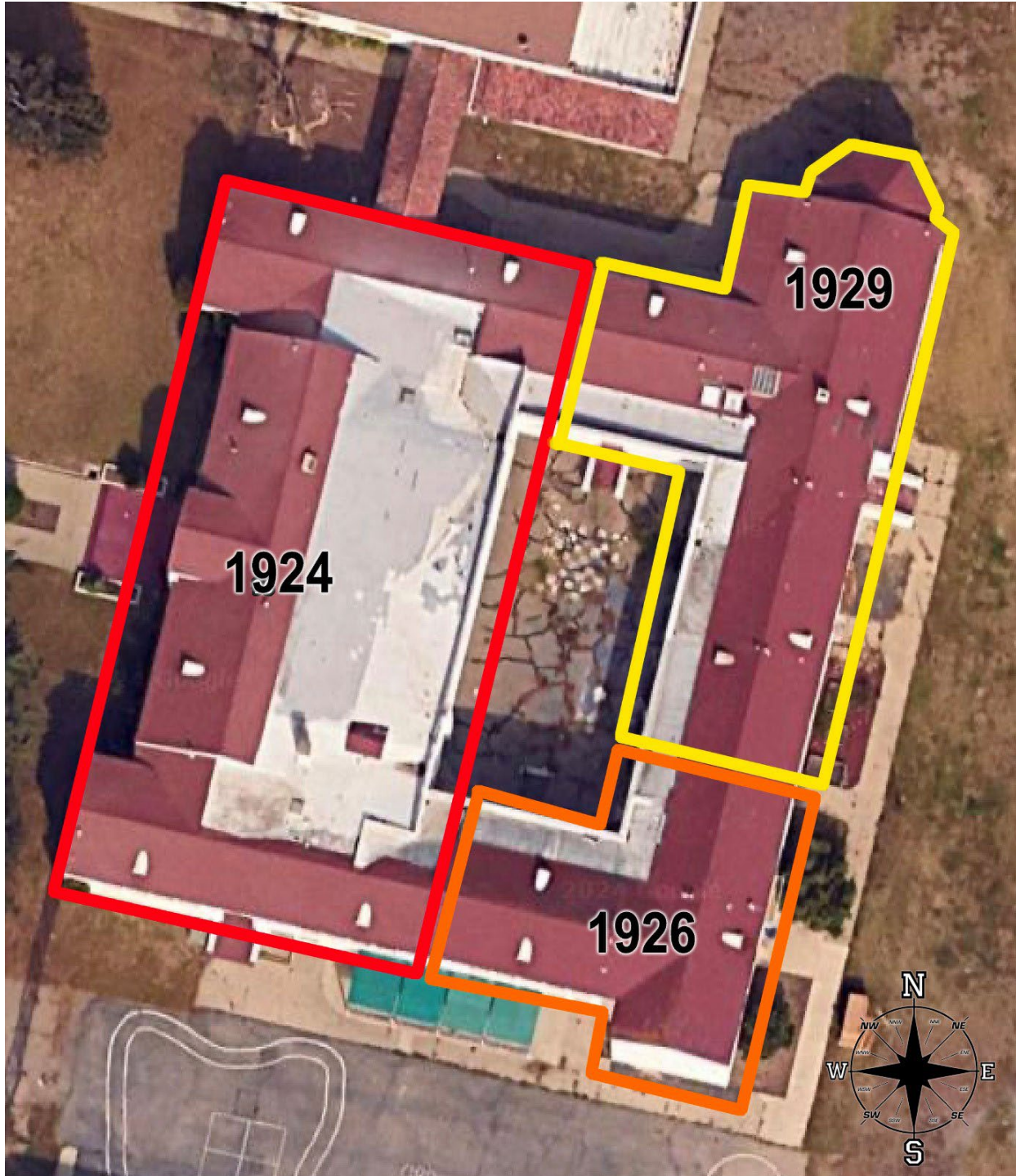


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**Sketch Map: Detail**

Main Building addition dates





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**Photo Key: Exterior**

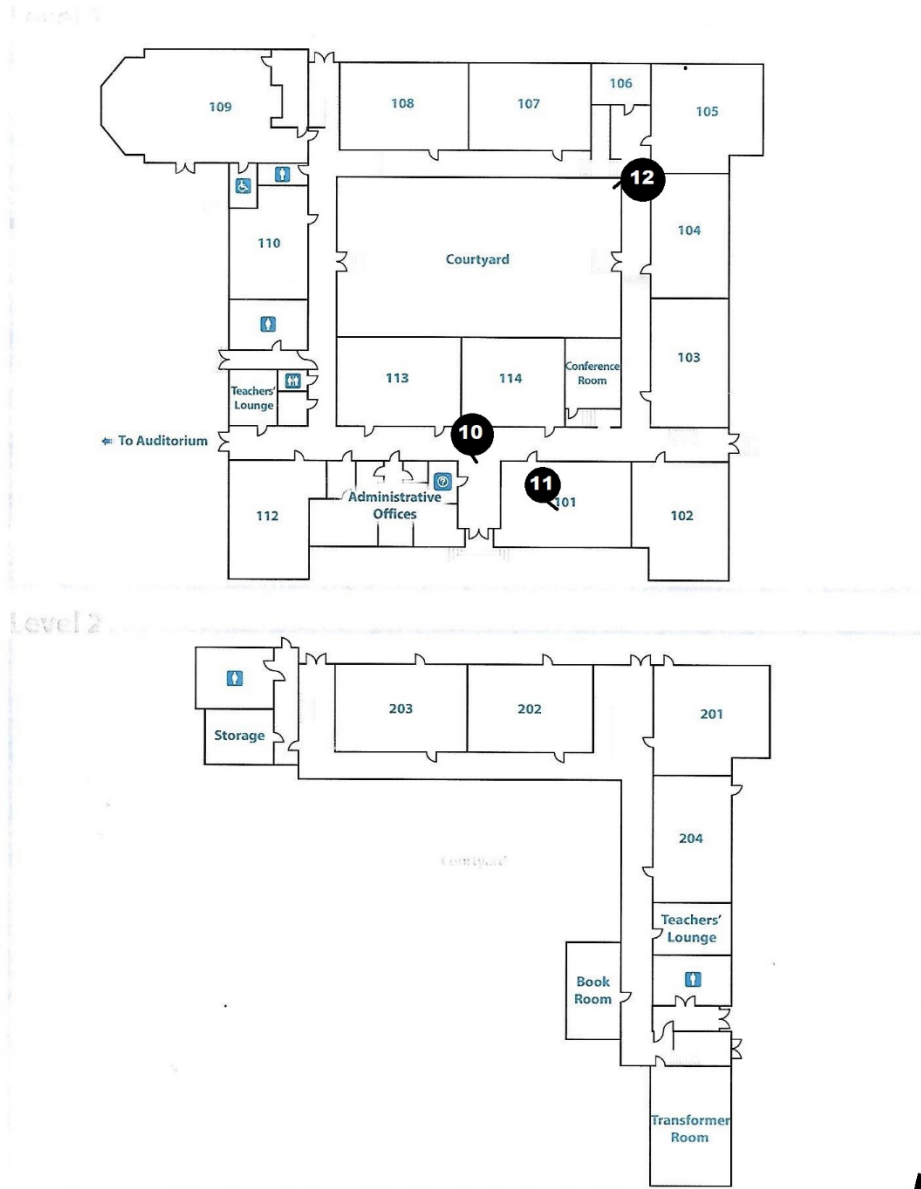


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**Photo Key: Interior**

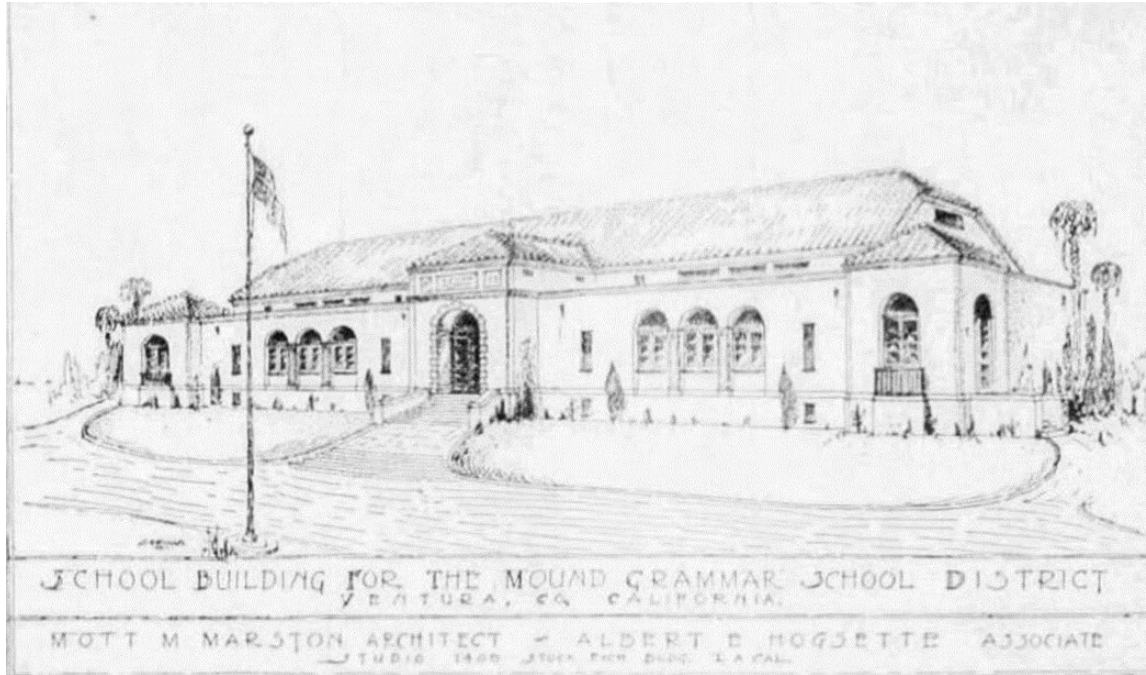
**Washington School Campus**



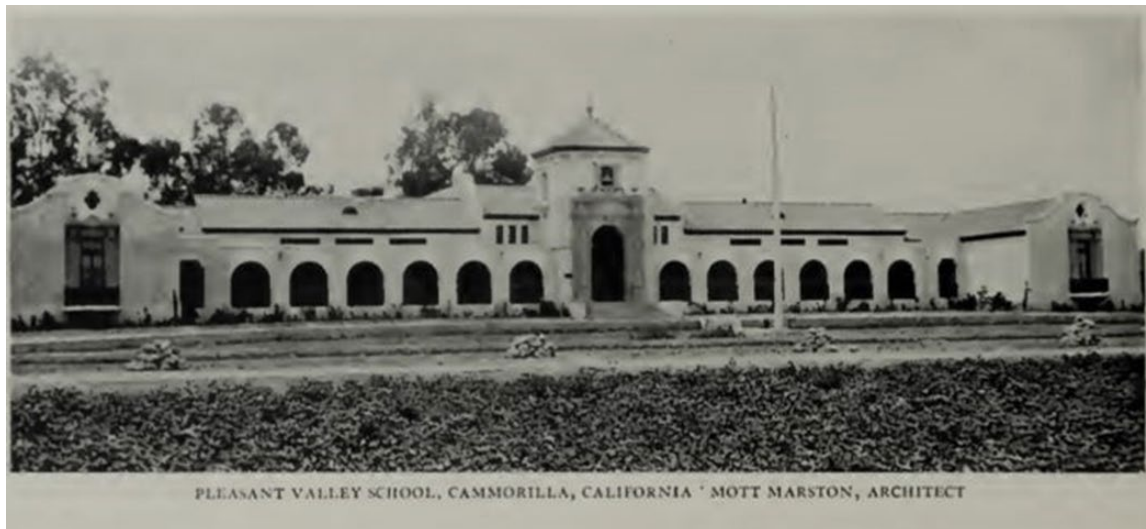
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**Figure 2** Mott Marston's plan for Mound Elementary School, *Morning Free Press*, 1923



**Figure 3** Mott Marston's Pleasant Valley Elementary School in tile advertisement, *Pacific Coast Architect*, 1924





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**Figure 4** Washington Elementary School, circa 1927, from collection of Allyn Satler



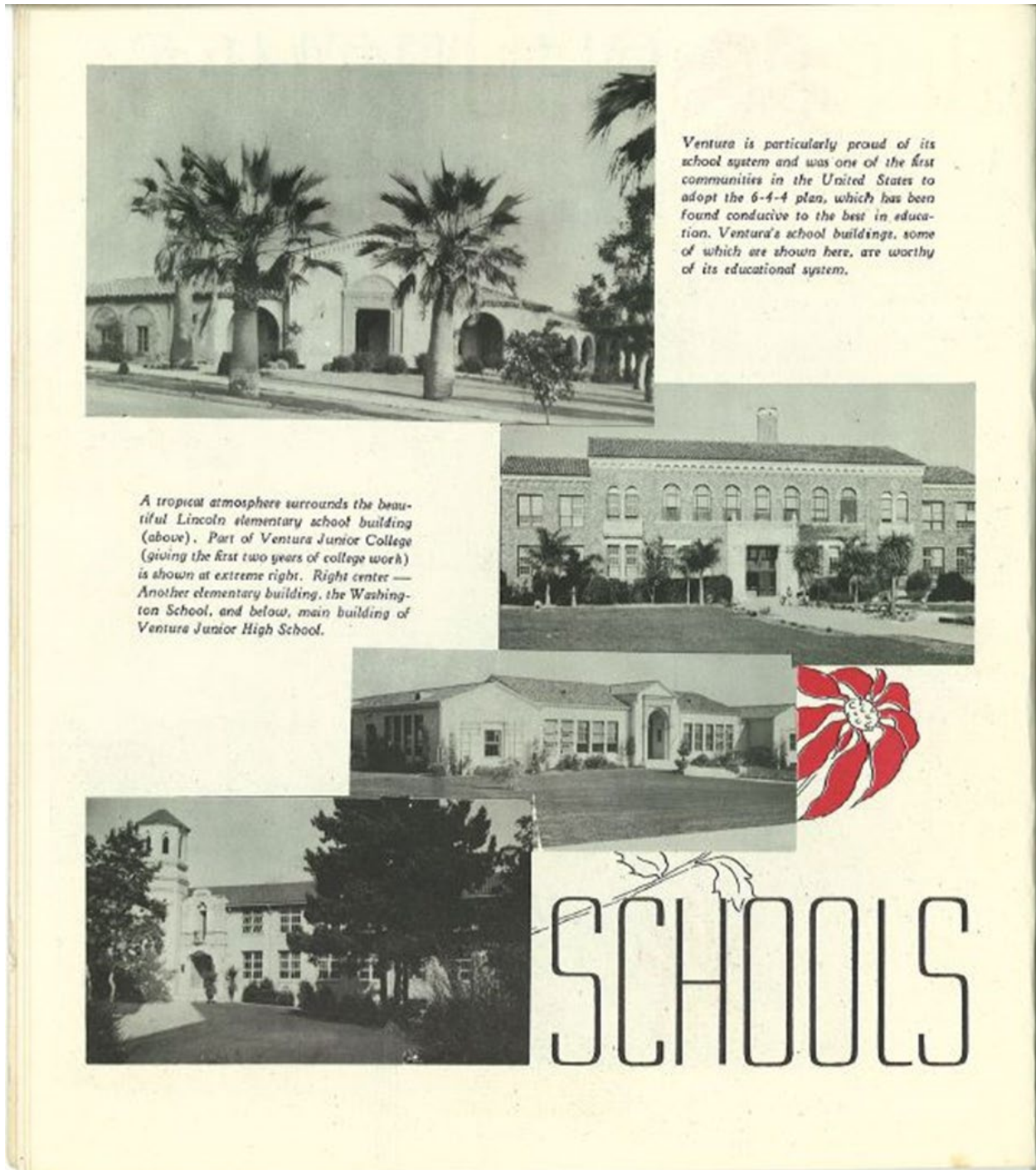
**Figure 5** Washington Elementary School, circa 1940s



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**Figure 6** Ventura Chamber of Commerce brochure showing local schools, circa 1940;  
Washington Elementary School is the third image down the page

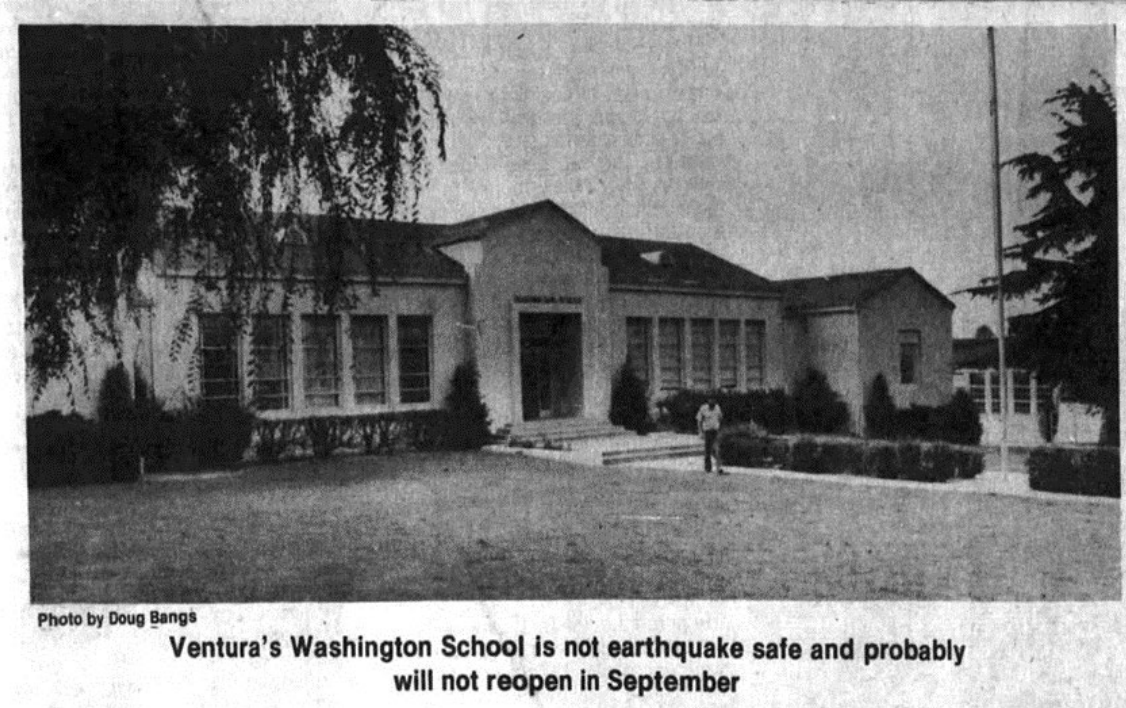




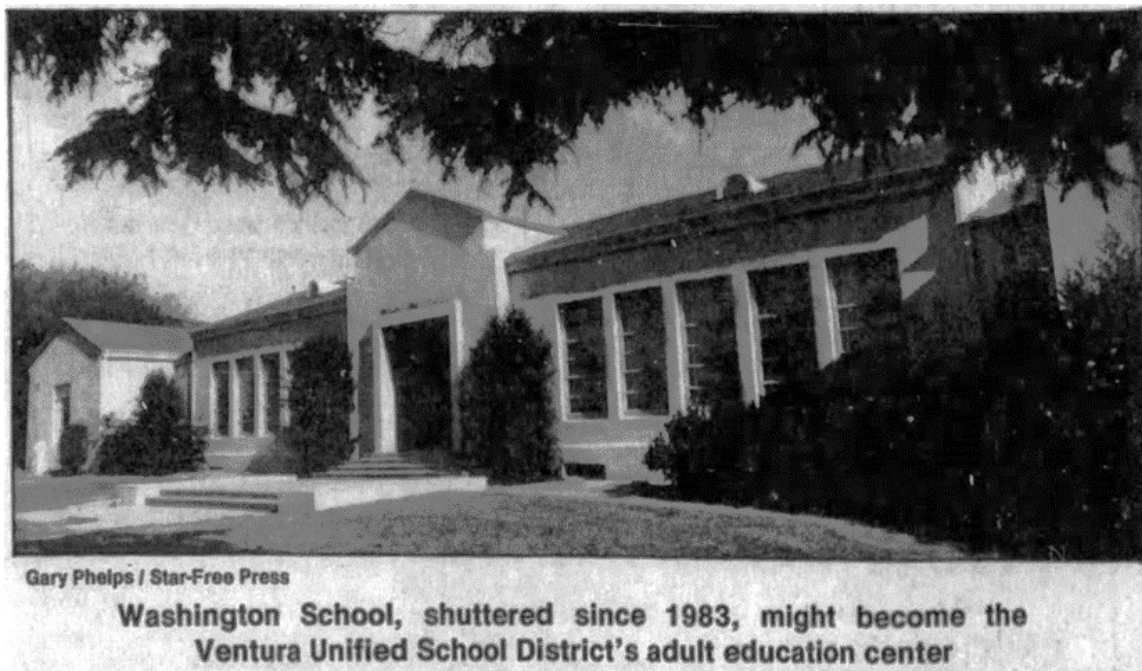
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**Figure 7** Washington Elementary School the day it was closed, *Ventura County Star Free Press*, July 7, 1983



**Figure 8** Washington Elementary School, 1987, *Ventura County Star Free Press*, January 27





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**Photo 1** Distant view from Santa Barbara Street, view to east (Voisin George, March 2023)



**Photo 2** Mature trees and lawn in front of Main Building, view to the northeast (Schafer, August 2023)



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**Photo 3** Mature trees and lawn in front of Main Building, view to the southeast (Schafer, August 2023)



**Photo 4** Detail of west façade of Main Building, view to the east (Schafer, August 2023)





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**Photo 5** Overview of south elevation of Main Building, view to the north (Voisin George, March 2023)



**Photo 6** Oblique view of south and east elevations of Main Building, view to the northwest (Voisin George, March 2023)



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**Photo 7** Distant view of east elevation of Main Building, view to the west (Kung, June 2023)



**Photo 8** Distant view of addition on northeast corner of Main Building, view to the south (Voisin George, March 2023)





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**Photo 9** West end of north elevation of Main Building, view to the southeast (Voisin George, March 2023)



**Photo 10** Vestibule and front entrance to Main Building, view to the west (Voisin George, March 2023)



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**Photo 11** Overview of classroom in Main Building, view to the southwest (Voisin George, March 2023)



**Photo 12** Overview of central courtyard in Main Building, view to the northwest (Kung, June 2023)





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**Photo 13** West façade of Auditorium, view to the east (Schafer, August 2023)



**Photo 14** Oblique view of south elevation of Auditorium, view to the northeast (Voisin George, March 2023)



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**Photo 15** Distant view of south elevation of Auditorium, view to the northwest (Voisin George, March 2023)



**Photo 16** Interior view of Auditorium, view to the southwest (Voisin George, March 2023)





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**Photo 17** North façade of Bungalow, view to the southeast (Voisin George, March 2023)



**Photo 18** Oblique view of east elevation of Bungalow, view to the southwest (Kung, June 2023)



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**Photo 19** West elevation of Bungalow, view to the southwest (Schafer, August 2023)



**Photo 20** Interior view of classroom in Bungalow, view to the northwest (Voisin George, March 2023)

