

FORM B – BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

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Photograph



Locus Map



Recorded by: Joshua Dorin

Organization: Wellesley Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): July 2014

Town/City: Wellesley

Place: (*neighborhood or village*): The Fells

Address: 293 Weston Road

Historic Name: John D. Hardy Elementary School

Uses: Present: Elementary School (K-5)

Original: Elementary School (K-6)

Date of Construction: 1923

Source: Wellesley Townsman

Style/Form: Colonial Revival

Architect/Builder:

1923 Building: Charles M. Baker (architect)

John W. Duff, Inc. (builder)

1925 Addition: Charles M. Baker (architect)

B.W. Neal, Inc. (builder)

1957 Addition: James H. Ritchie and Associates (architect)

Franchi Construction Company (builder)

Exterior Material (of 1923/1925 schoolhouse):

Foundation: Concrete

Wall/Trim: Water-struck brick

Roof: Asphalt Shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

None

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Additions in 1925, 1956-57, and mid-1990s (see below)

Condition: Average

Moved: no |x| yes | | **Date:**

Acreage: 329,749 sq. ft. (7.57 acres)

Setting: Located on the eastern side of Weston Road approximately 600 feet south of Worcester Street (Route 9)

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☐ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.
If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.

Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

The original portion of the John D. Hardy Elementary School was constructed in 1923 and consists of a one-story rectangular brick structure of Colonial Revival style. Its general design was intended to complement the residential development that occurred in Wellesley during the 1920s (as were the other six elementary schools constructed in the town over the next fifteen years: Kingsbury, Sprague, Brown, Perrin, Warren, and Hunnewell).

At the center of the front façade is the former main entrance to the schoolhouse, consisting of a set of large double doors (non-original) that are flanked on each side by square fluted wooden Greek Doric pilasters supporting a small triangular pediment. A hexagonal ornamental lantern hangs above the doorway. Atop the gabled roof, in line with the main entrance, is an octagonal wooden cupola that rests on a square wooden platform and is topped with an octagonal metal dome and a weathervane. An ornately designed wooden balustrade railing was removed from the platform many years ago. There may have also been a bell that hung inside the cupola.

At the northern and southern ends of the front façade are forward projections of approximately six feet in length, each topped with a triangular pediment of similar design, albeit larger, to the pediment above the main entrance. The most notable characteristic of the two projections is their asymmetry. While the northern projection is flat-faced with a set of five uniform windows, the southern projection includes a large seven-sided bay window that extends from the ground to the fascia.

On the south-facing side of the original schoolhouse is the single-door entrance to the kindergarten classroom, as well as a double-door entrance that opens to the end of the main corridor. Both doors are not original. Other significant changes to the 1923 structure include the replacement of all of the original 12-over-12 wooden-framed windows with single glazed metal-framed windows.

When the Hardy School first opened, its interior consisted of only three classrooms (each housing two grades) and a kindergarten, all located along the front side of the school. Two of those classrooms, along with the original vestibule inside the main entrance, have since been combined to form the current library. In addition, the northern-most classroom has been combined with the original teachers' room to form the Special Education office.

At the rear of the building was a playroom that was used for assemblies, gymnastics, and lunch (now the main office, nurse's office, and teachers' room). In addition, there was a kitchen (now the custodian's office) at the northern end of the schoolhouse. The only parts of the first floor that have not changed use over the years are the boys' and girls' bathrooms.

There is no basement in the original schoolhouse with the exception of the boiler room and storage room under the northern end of the building. An unfinished attic is accessible in the custodian's office.

In 1925, an additional three classrooms were constructed at the northern end of the building to alleviate overcrowding (see Historical Narrative below). In 1956-57, a two-story structure consisting of eight more classrooms and a multi-purpose room (a gymnasium with a stage) was added to the rear of the original building at its southeastern end. In the mid-1990s, four "temporary" modular classrooms were constructed beyond the latter addition and remain in use two decades later.

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HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.

Built in 1923, the John D. Hardy Elementary School was the first modern schoolhouse located in the Fells district. Constructed to accommodate the recent explosion in the population within the Fells – an area of the town that had avoided significant residential development up to the late 1910s – the Hardy School replaced the one-room Fells School (now the Fells Branch Library) that was located on the opposite side of Weston Road and had served the district since it was built in 1858.

The earliest discussions regarding the construction of additional school accommodations in the Fells began in late 1921 following several years of significant population growth as a result of the subdivision of several large tracts of land on both the north and south sides of the old Worcester Turnpike (now Route 9). In a remarkably short amount of time, hundreds of families had moved to Wellesley – especially to the Fells – as the rise of the automobile had made the town one of the most highly desirable commuter suburbs of Boston.

This wreaked havoc on school enrollment. Almost immediately, the Fells School – which had already been dealing with overcrowding for years – required additional space. The only solution at the time was to send students living in the Fells to the old Hunnewell School at the corner of Central Street and Weston Road. Requiring so many children to walk more than a mile to school, however, was not ideal. (The implementation of busing in Wellesley was still a few decades away.) Town officials quickly realized then that additional school accommodations were needed within the Fells.

Initially, discussions centered on building an addition to the Fells School, but a committee appointed to study the issue recommended in early 1922 the construction of a new schoolhouse instead. One month later, at the Annual Town Meeting in March 1922, voters passed a request for \$56,000 for this purpose and followed that with the appropriation of an additional \$25,000 in November 1922 at a Special Town Meeting.

The Building Committee of the “new Fells School” (as Hardy School was originally known) consisted of some of Wellesley’s most prominent citizens: John T. Gorman, Benjamin Proctor Jr., Lockwood J. Towne, William Howard White, and its chair, John Dudley Hardy. Of those members, the most notable is not Hardy, but Proctor, an ambitious young architect who would be called upon throughout the 1920s and 1930s to design some of Wellesley’s most well-known structures, including the Perrin, Kingsbury, and Warren Elementary Schools, the Community Playhouse, the Sprague Memorial Clock Tower, the headquarters of the Babson Statistical Organization on Prescott Street, and the Wellesley Trust Company building (now Bank of America) and the Belvedere Apartments (now Boston Private Bank) at the corners of Abbott Road and Washington Street.

Designed by Charles M. Baker, an M.I.T.-educated architect with offices in Boston and Framingham, the new Fells School was similar in style to many of his other Colonial Revival buildings, which included two schoolhouses constructed in 1916 in Framingham and North Easton that are currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Baker was also the associate architect under Proctor of the Kingsbury School in 1923-24. (See Architectural Description above.)

When the new Fells School opened in September 1923, it consisted of three split-grade classrooms, each capable of accommodating up to 40 students. There was also a separate classroom for the kindergarten that could accommodate another 40 students. (It is worth noting that a kindergarten classroom was still a relatively new feature at this time; for years, many students of kindergarten age that lived in the Fells did not go to school and instead spent their time playing unsupervised outside in the streets, fields, and woods. It was only during the 1910s and early 1920s that educators and parents first understood the critical importance of early-education to the successful development of young children.)

Unfortunately, the new Fells School faced problems with overcrowding immediately after opening. In fact, it is reported that on the very first day the school opened, more students showed up than there were seats. Although extra desks were acquired that day, there was already a need for additional classrooms within the new Fells School by the end of the first year because of the continuing influx of new residents with their school-age children to the Fells. Even the kindergarten had to move back into the old Fells School in the fall of 1924 until the completion of a three-classroom addition to the new Fells School in September 1925, thus giving each grade its own classroom.

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In June 1924, prior to the construction of the addition, the townspeople had voted to rename the new Fells School after John D. Hardy, the Building Committee chairman of the original part of the schoolhouse who had died unexpectedly a month before at the age of 63. Although not a native of the town, Hardy – an executive at a shoe manufacturing company in Boston – had moved to Wellesley in the 1890s and quickly became deeply engaged in Town affairs. (He was also one of the first residents in the Belvedere Estates -- at 10 Livermore Road – and was active in real estate development in that part of town.)

The 1925 addition to the Hardy School, unfortunately, did not alleviate the problem of overcrowding. For the next quarter-century, class sizes were beyond ideal, even despite the opening of nearby Sprague and Perrin Schools in 1924 and 1932, respectively. Students and teachers would just suffer until 1951 when entire classes from Hardy were first bused to the (relatively uncrowded) Kingsbury Elementary School. A year later, the vacant Phillips Junior High School became the primary spillover school. All of the classes would reconvene under one roof in October 1957 following the completion of an eight-classroom addition to the Hardy School.

Today, in 2014, the John D. Hardy Elementary School has continuously served as an elementary school for students living in the Fells for the last 91 years, and is currently Wellesley's oldest schoolhouse still in use.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

- *Wellesley Townsman*: 25 November 1921; 24 March 1922; 31 March 1922; 1 December 1922; 8 December 1922; 27 August 1923; 23 November 1923; 11 January 1924; 23 May 1924; 30 May 1924; 27 June 1924; 5 December 1924; 26 December 1924; 9 January 1925; 6 February 1925; 1 May 1925; 4 September 1925; 4 March 1932; 22 December 1939; 4 September 1952; 1 December 1955; 15 November 1956; 31 October 1957
- 1931 Semi-Centennial Booklet
- *Boston Globe*: 24 October 1942
- Online Database of the National Register of Historic Places [<http://www.nps.gov/nr/research/>]

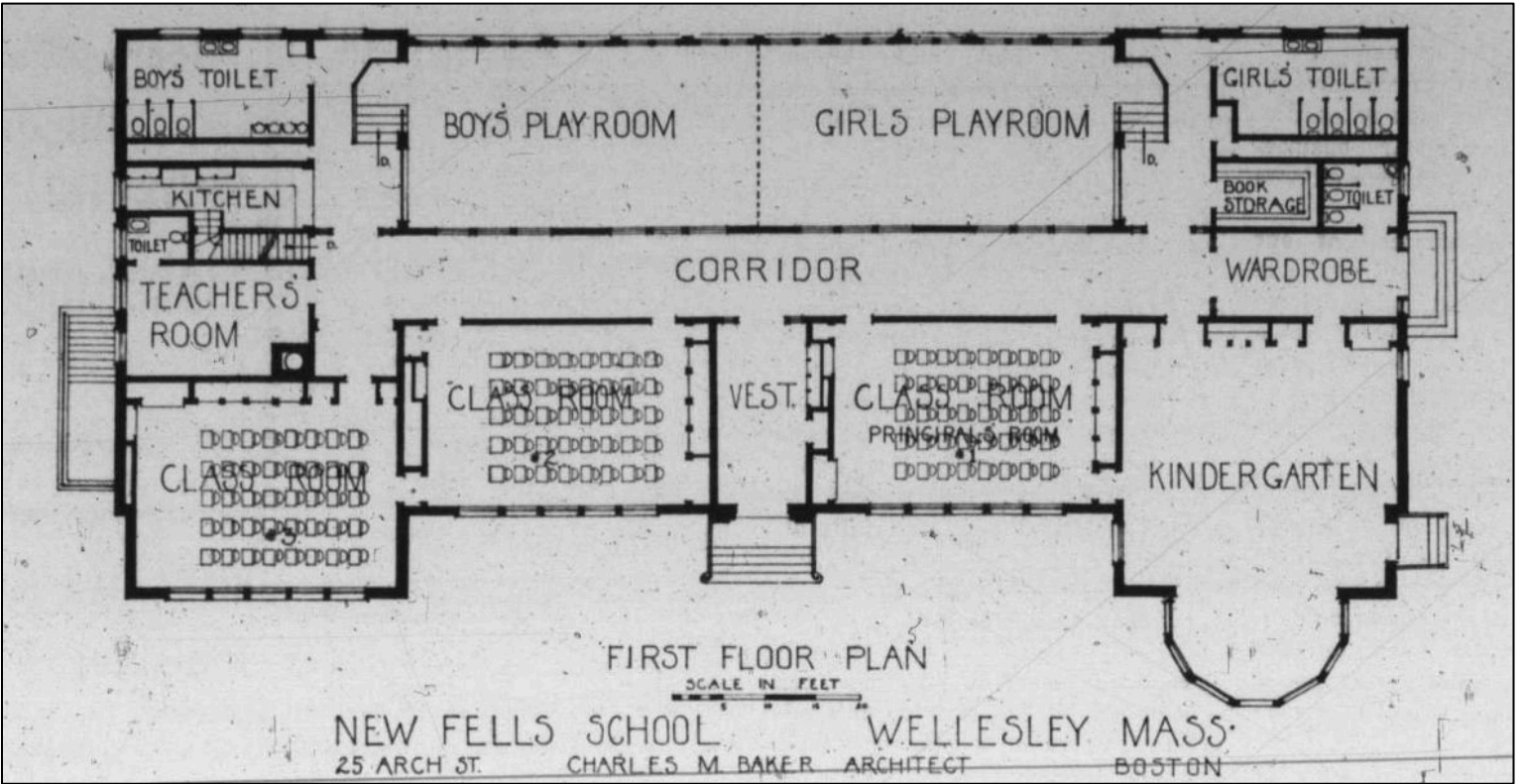
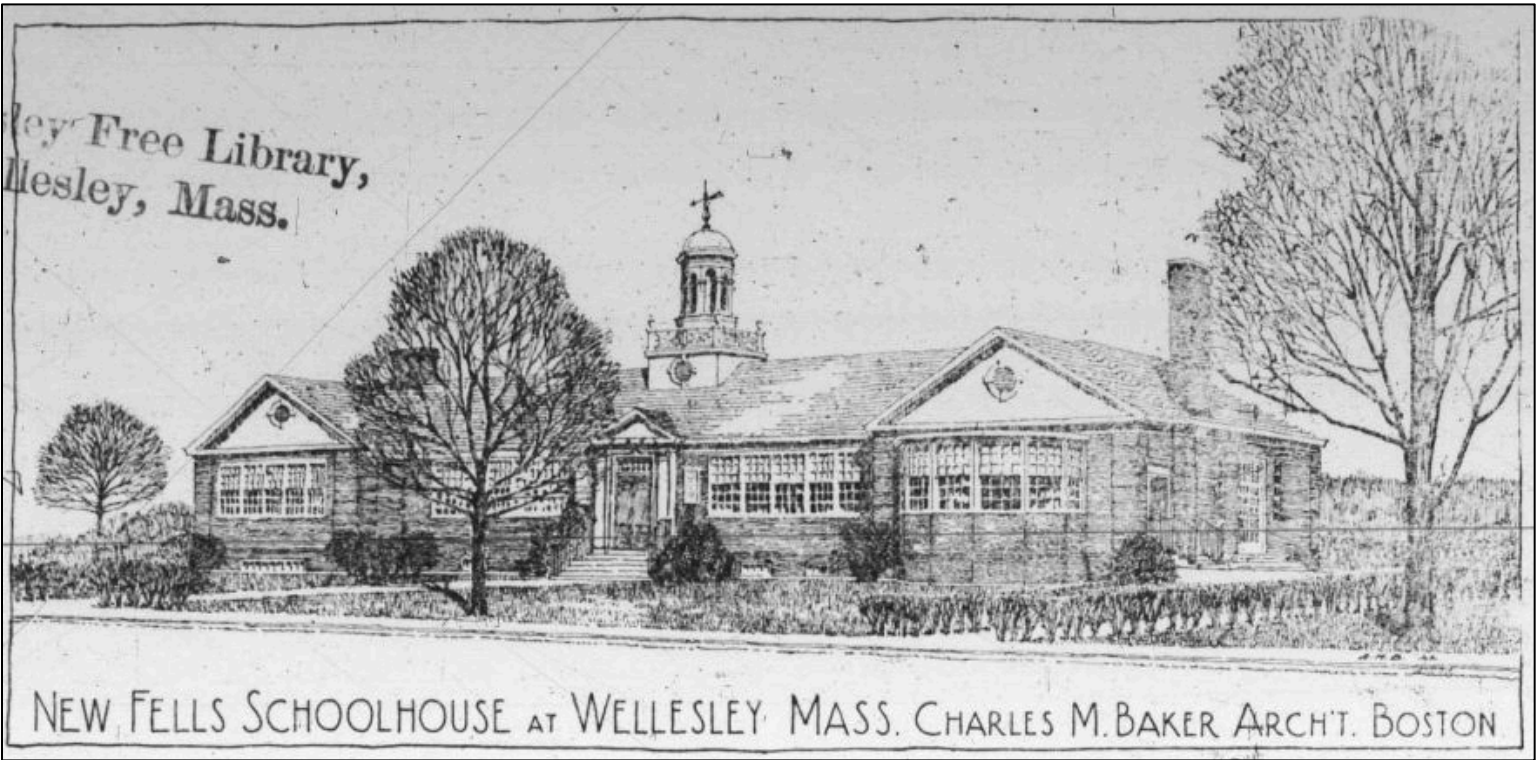
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Sketch and floorplan from December 1, 1922 issue of Wellesley Townsman

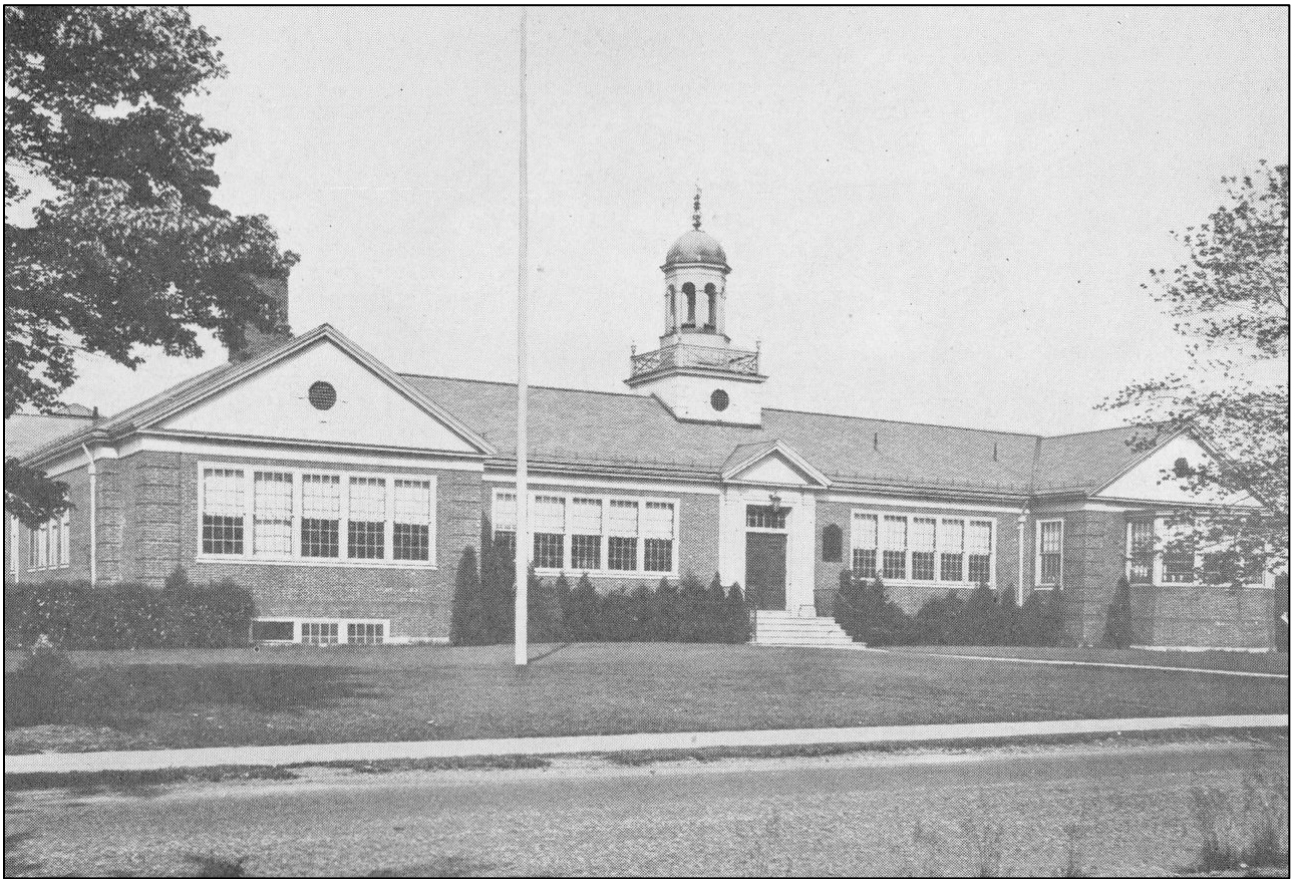
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(Above) John D. Hardy
Elementary School

(Left) Fells School, now
the Fells Branch Library

Source: 1931 Semi-
Centennial Booklet

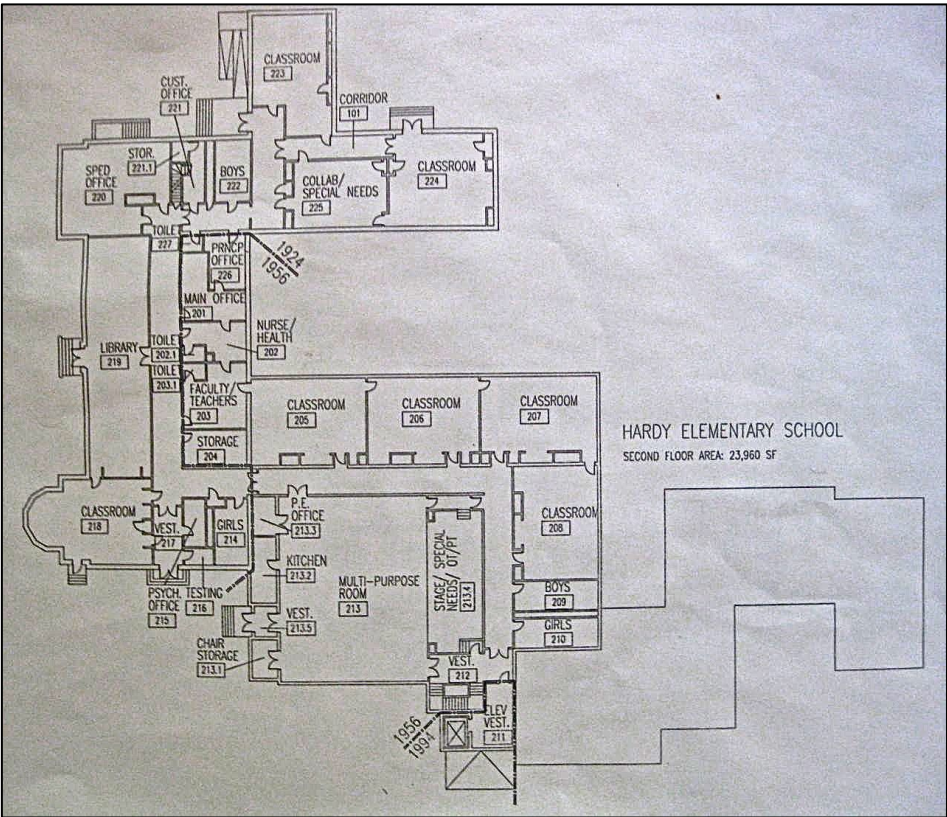
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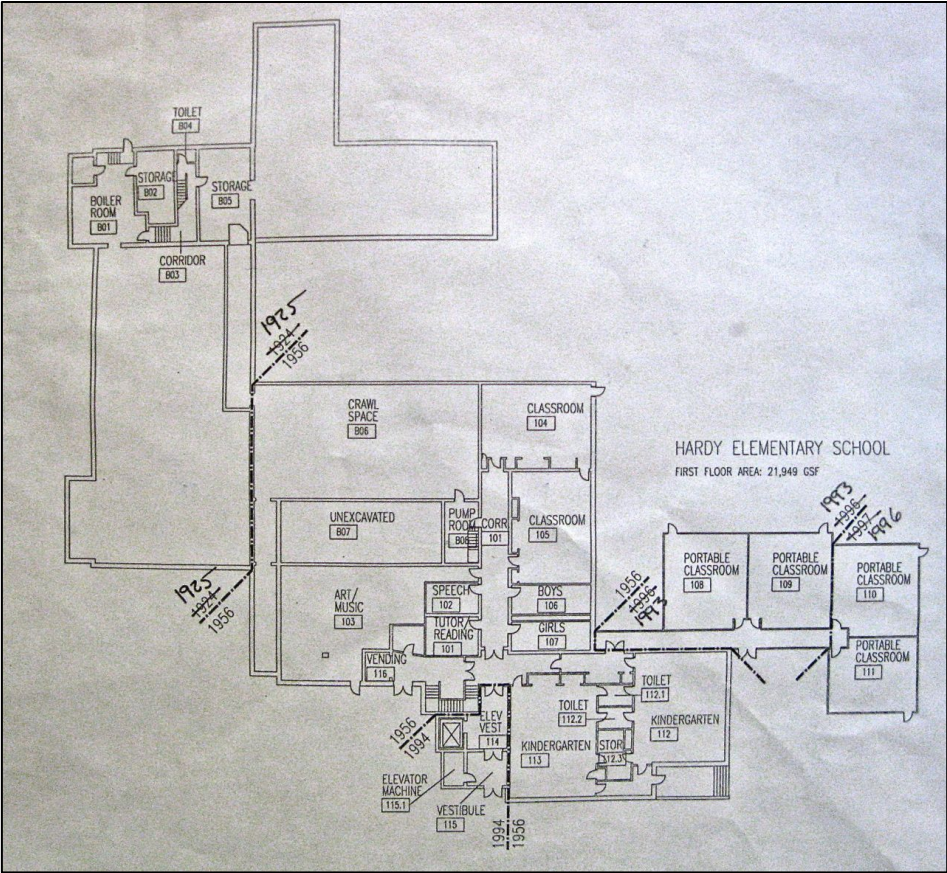
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Floorplan of Hardy Elementary School in 2014
(Note that several of the dates shown are incorrect.)



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Southern projection of front façade (Exterior of kindergarten)



Kindergarten entrance and side entrance to main corridor
Continuation sheet 7

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(Top) Current main entrance located at northern end of the schoolhouse in 1925 addition

(Middle) Rear of school showing 1957 addition and mid-1990s modular classrooms

(Bottom) Main corridor in 1923 portion of schoolhouse

