

City of Detroit

CITY COUNCIL

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Proposed Higginbotham School Historic District

8730 Chippewa Street

Final Report



(Photo dated 2009)

By a resolution dated January 14, 2020, the Detroit City Council charged the Historic Designation Advisory Board, a study committee, with the official study of the proposed Higginbotham School Historic District in accordance with Chapter 21 of the 2019 Detroit City Code and the Michigan Local Historic Districts Act.

The proposed William E. Higginbotham School Historic District consists of a single contributing building located at 8730 Chippewa Street, approximately nine miles northwest of downtown. It is

situated on approximately three and one-fifth acres of land just two blocks south of Eight Mile Road, the city's northern boundary, in the Eight Mile-Wyoming neighborhood. It is oriented eastward towards Johnson Recreation Center and Joe Louis Playfield, City of Detroit recreation facilities. Higginbotham School was built to house African American kindergarteners through eight graders by the Detroit Public Schools in 1926-1927 and expanded in 1944 and 1946. It was determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under the *Public Schools of Detroit Multiple Property Submission* in 2011 and included in the *20th Century Civil Rights in Detroit Reconnaissance and Intensive Level Survey, 2019*.

BOUNDARIES

The boundaries of the proposed William E. Higginbotham School Historic District, outlined in heavy black on the attached map and corresponding to the legal description below, are as follows:

On the north, the northern line, as extended east and west, of part of lot 274 of the Detroyal Gardens Subdivision, Liber 35, Page 77, Wayne County Records;

On the east, part of the eastern line, as extended north and south, of part of the vacated alley east of the vacated Wisconsin Street;

On the south; the centerline of Chippewa Street; and

On the west, the centerline of Indiana Street to the point of beginning.



[Legal description: Beginning at the southwest corner of lot 284 of “Detroyal Gardens Subdivision No. 1” as recorded in Liber 2, Page 27 of Plats, Wayne County Records, thence N 00D 00M 24S E 427.78 ft. along the east line of Indiana Street, 50 ft. wide, thence N 89D 58M 00S E 324.33 ft., thence S 00D 00M 24S W 427.78 ft. to the north line of Chippewa Avenue, 50 ft. wide, thence S 89D 58M 00S W 324.33 ft. to the point of beginning. Boundaries also include the east half of Indiana Street adjacent and the north half of Chippewa Street adjacent. (Legal description: E WISCONSIN ALL 205 THRU 214 275 THRU 284 PART OF 274 215 152 THRU 162 PART OF VAC WISCONSIN AVE VAC ALLEY ADJ DETROYAL GARDENS SUB L35 P77 PLATS, W C R 16/364). Commonly known as 8730 Chippewa.]

Boundary Justification

The boundaries described above include the William E. Higginbotham School building and cover the parcel associated with the school building.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

William E. Higginbotham School meets National Register **Criteria A** as locally significant for its Community Planning and Development, Education and Ethnic Heritage: Black, and Social History: Civil Rights. Higginbotham School served as Detroit’s all Black elementary school for over eighty years. This was a result of both *de facto* segregation practiced in Detroit and of the *de jure*¹ segregation that resulted from federal housing policies. Redlining denied African Americans access to Federal Housing Administration (FHA) home mortgage funding and the Detroit area banks supported racial neighborhood covenants that limited where Blacks could live within the city of Detroit. The influence of national events and federal policy on community growth and segregationist policies is specifically reflected in the school’s first thirty years. Higginbotham School also meets National Register **Criteria C** for its architecture; it is one of only a few Mediterranean Revival-style structures built for the Detroit Board of Education.

Period of Significance

The period of significance, **1926-1955** reflects the construction period of Higginbotham School as well as the years that federal policy influenced enrollment in the school. Redlining denied African Americans access to Federal Housing Administration (FHA) home mortgage funding and the Detroit area banks supported racial neighborhood covenants that limited where Blacks could live within the city of Detroit. Newly arrived African Americans Detroiters came together in the Eight Mile-Wyoming area of Higginbotham School. In 1934 the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), the first New Deal program funded a nursery school in Higginbotham. The influence of national events and federal policy on community growth and segregationist policies is specifically reflected in Higginbotham School’s first thirty years.

HISTORY

William E. Higginbotham School was built at the northern outskirts of the city of Detroit during a

¹ *De facto* refers to practices that happen in reality. *De jure* refers to things that happen according to law.

period of enormous growth in area, reaching 139 square miles through annexations completed in 1926, and population, topping 1.5 million residents as recorded in the 1930 census. This growth was the result of industrial expansion propelled by automobile production at the major plants such as the the Packard Plant in 1903, the Dodge Main Plant in 1911, and the Highland Park Ford Plant in 1914, leading to the explosion of the automobile industry with which Detroit became so much identified. The opportunity for jobs spurred an estimated 1.6 million southern African Americans to migrate north in the first Great Migration, and Detroit was the destination for many. According to the *20th Century Civil Rights in Detroit Survey*,

Detroit's African American population stood at just under 6,000 in 1910. By 1920 it had increased over 611% to 40,828. The Detroit Urban League estimated that in 1920 alone an average of 1,000 African American migrants arrived in Detroit each week, causing the city to "experience the largest relative growth in African American population of all the large industrial cities" in America...The African American population doubled from 40,838 to 81,831 between 1921 and 1925. (Quinn Evans, 2019)

In order to provide public education to the children of the newcomers to Detroit, eighty elementary schools, twelve intermediate or junior high schools, and seven senior high schools were built for the Detroit Board of Education between 1920 and 1931. An additional sixteen schools were built between 1920 and 1926 in the adjacent townships prior to their annexation to the City of Detroit. As of 1922 only one of these Detroit Public Schools was majority African American; Sidney D. Miller Intermediate School (later High School), although other Detroit schools were integrated.² Miller Intermediate School served as a high school for African American Detroiters from 1934 to 1957 and is located at 2322 DuBois Street, near the African American neighborhoods on the east side of Detroit.³ Miller Intermediate/High School was a predominately African American school beginning in the 1920s.

The Eight Mile-Wyoming neighborhood was a historically working-class African American neighborhood that was settled in the early 1920s by a small group of African Americans who migrated to Detroit and settled on this former farmland. Restrictive covenants that limited settlement of African Americans in White neighborhoods did not exist in the Eight Mile area because of its remote location. In the early 1920s, Henry G. Stevens, a Detroit philanthropist and Detroit Urban League (DUL) president, purchased a great deal of land in the Eight Mile-Wyoming area. Stevens sold the land to real estate developers who subdivided the land for land contract sale to African American families. The DUL initiated the effort to provide land to African Americans and enabled homeownership when it simply was not an option for them in most of Detroit.

African American students in the Eight Mile-Wyoming area originally attended a small red brick one-room schoolhouse named Lockport School. Once Lockport School became inadequate for the

² Jeffrey Mirel, *Rise and Fall of an Urban School System: Detroit, 1901-1981*. Second Edition, The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, MI, 1999. p. 187.

³ Sidney D. Miller School (1918) educated nationally-known political and civic leaders such as Mayor Coleman A. Young, Charles Diggs Jr., two Olympic gold medalists, and the music program produced jazz musicians Kenny Burrell, Milt Jackson, and Yusef Lateef. Miller remained a middle school for 50 years and closed in 2007. The Sidney D. Miller School is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and is a City of Detroit historic district (2010).

students, the local school board of Greenfield Township made arrangements to have the students attend Birdhurst School at 20445 Woodingham Drive (no longer extant). Birdhurst School began to accommodate both African American and White children in 1920. Birdhurst School was first constructed by the Greenfield Township School District in an all-White area. When White parents objected to integrating the school, Birdhurst was closed and African American students were forced to go back to the one-room Lockport School.

Following the Eight Mile-Wyoming area's annexation to Detroit in 1925-6, and after an attempt to build an integrated school south of Pembroke Street, the *de facto*⁴ segregation line, Higginbotham School was built in 1926-27. Higginbotham School was designed for kindergarten through eighth-grade classes, and was constructed to serve the African American residents of the segregated neighborhood. The new school had an interracial staff and the building initially included fourteen classrooms, a conservatory, gymnasium, and power plant, providing the students with a modern curriculum in a clean, safe facility. The Higginbotham School playground was north of the school building extending from the school building to Norfolk Street.

In October 1929, the stock market crashed and nearly twenty-eight percent of the 400,000 automobile-related jobs in the Detroit metropolitan area were soon after eliminated. As with the rest of the nation, the effects of the Depression materialized slowly but irrevocably in Detroit through the 1930s. The impact of the Depression on the Detroit Public School system led to a transformation of educational policies in Detroit that could not have been more complex. Detroit was the hardest hit major city in the nation during the Herbert Hoover years; unemployment, along with soaring tax delinquencies caused widespread City public debt for public works and public schools; unpaid taxes went from 15% in 1930-1931 to over 35% by 1933, which was one-third higher than any other major American city.⁵

In 1934, a nursery school was established in the Higginbotham School building by the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), the first New Deal program instituted to help the needy and unemployed. A year later, FERA was incorporated into the Works Progress Administration (WPA), the largest New Deal Agency created by executive order by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to stem the tide of the Depression. After 1934, the eighth graders at Higginbotham School were sent to the predominantly White Post Intermediate School located at 8200 Midland, between Cloverlawn and Greenlawn streets, resulting in a drop in enrollment at Higginbotham to about 350 students.

In 1941, six blocks west of Higginbotham School, a six-foot-high concrete block wall was constructed to separate the existing African American neighborhood from a White one being privately developed with FHA bank loan insurance. The wall, which came to be known as the Birwood Wall, extended along the alleyway southward from Eight Mile Road to Pembroke Street, roughly one-half mile long. This symbol of segregation partially exists to this day, emboldened with colorful murals.⁶

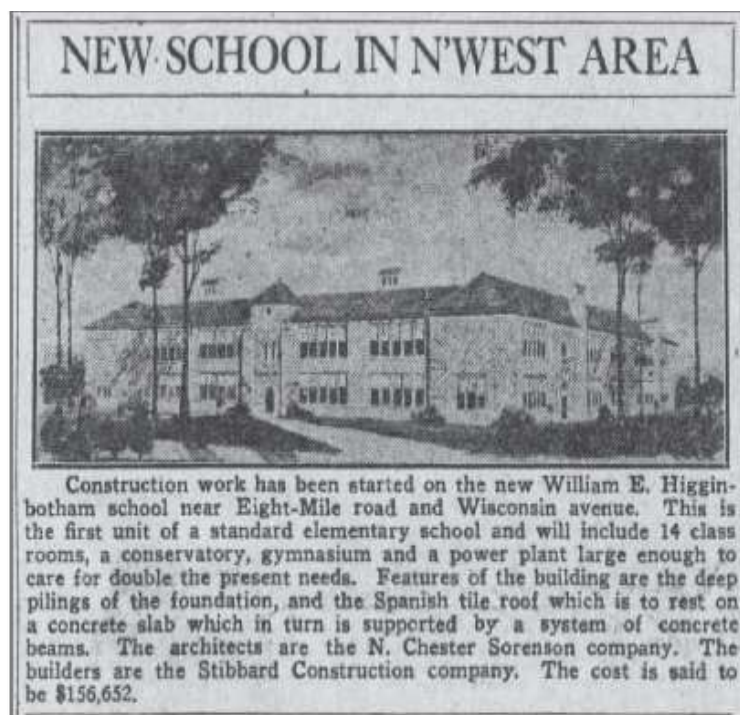
⁴ *De facto* means a practice that exists in reality, even though the practice is not officially recognized by laws.

⁵ Sidney Fine, *Frank Murphy: The Detroit Years*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, MI, 1975.

⁶ Gerald Van Dusen, *Detroit's Birwood Wall: Hatred and Healing in the West Eight Mile Community*, 2019, p. 116.

Detroit was transformed as a result of World War II, beginning with the outbreak of the war in Europe jolting Detroit's unprecedented industry boom. As billions of dollars of military equipment rolled off Detroit assembly lines, the Detroit area once again moved to the nation's center stage as "The Arsenal of Democracy." By November 1943, more than 867,000 people were employed in the city, with the majority working in the manufacturing industry.⁷ During the 1940s there was a second influx of African Americans into Detroit as work in the defense plants was plentiful. The Black population of Detroit more than doubled in the 1940s, from 149,119, about 9 percent of the total population to 303,721, more than 16 percent.⁸

In the war years, the Detroit Public Schools high school curriculum was transformed with the emphasis being placed on vocational instead of academic instruction. The vocational track was established during the Depression to help the children of the rural populations migrating from the South find jobs after graduation. Throughout the 1940s, school leaders expanded vocational programs to meet the enormous demands of the war industries, and completely reorganized the high school program. Vocational programs were employed for all high school students during the World War II era, both Black and White.⁹



Detroit Free Press, July 17, 1927

There were several temporary war housing projects constructed in the Eight Mile-Wyoming area in the late 1940s. The wartime housing emergency was created by a lack of manpower and materials shortages. Because of the thousands of new workers that moved to Detroit during the war, federal and City of Detroit planning officials sought open land throughout the city for the construction of temporary wartime housing. During the Second World War, the Federal Public Housing Authority (FPHA) and the Detroit Housing Commission (DHC) built hundreds of permanent public housing units and thousands of temporary units such as Quonset

huts.¹⁰ The Eight Mile-Wyoming area was the site of wartime housing for African Americans after the Carver Progressive Association and the Eight Mile Road Civic Improvement Association negotiated with Michigan's FHA housing administrator, Raymond Foley. These two Eight Mile-

⁷ Earl L. Bedell and Walter E. Gleason, "Detroit Public Schools In the War," Industrial Arts and Vocational Education, March, 1943.

⁸ Mirel, p. 153.

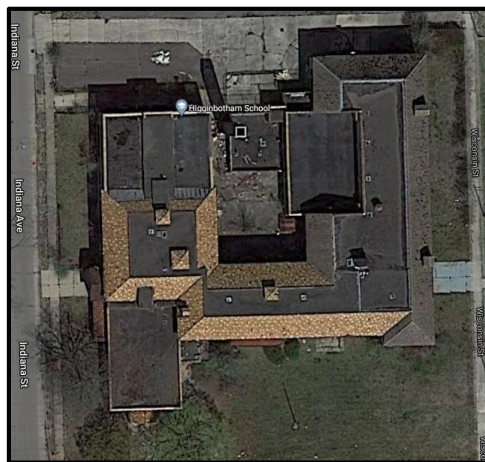
⁹ Mirel, p. 156.

¹⁰ Surgue, Thomas J., *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1996, p. 69-71.

Wyoming civic associations advocated for their neighborhood. The federal government would build temporary veteran's housing in a small portion of the area, but Black property owners were granted the ability to apply for FHA home mortgage loans to construct single family residences on the remaining land. This successful community advocacy was rare for the post World War II period and a real victory for the Black community.¹¹

One of the largest war housing sites in Detroit was the 285 single-family homes constructed for African Americans, the Robert Brooks Homes. Private Robert H. Brooks (1915-1941), an African American, was officially declared the first U. S. Armored Forces casualty of World War II. Brooks died at Fort Stotsenburg in the Philippines when the Japanese attacked the base. The Robert Brooks Homes were located along Wyoming Street south of Eight Mile Road. The United States Department of Public Welfare financed the Robert Brooks Homes in 1944, and they were vacated from government use in 1955.

Fifteen-acres of land directly across from Higginbotham School, on the east side of Wisconsin Street, was a site cleared of some of the homes of African Americans and used as veterans' temporary housing in 1945-46. By 1949 many of the lots on the site were consolidated and Quonset huts constructed. This tract was for temporary war housing for African Americans, interspersed among existing homes on the site.¹² A letter from the Detroit Housing Commission to the Detroit City Council described that ten and-a-half-acres of the site were developed with city-owned Quonset huts, each containing two families. The Detroit Housing Commission began the removal of the Quonset huts in late 1953 and later, that tract was known as the Norfolk-Wisconsin Playfield.



Higginbotham School had a series of additions constructed over the years. The original school building faced Wisconsin Avenue, and was a rectangular structure. In 1928, just a year after opening, an addition was constructed that extended west along Chippewa Avenue. The differing colors of Spanish clay-tiles on the roofs reveal the distinction in these two eras of construction. In 1944 another addition was completed that included an auditorium, six classrooms, and gymnasium/lunchroom. The auditorium has a separate entrance facing Chippewa Street. A final addition (called the “second addition” on the site plan) to Higginbotham School was constructed in 1946 as the population of the area swelled with families of returning World War II veterans. This addition featured homemaking rooms, and another kindergarten classroom was added. In post-World War II years the student population continued to increase, Higginbotham School was heavily overcrowded. Because of the influx of students, a three-room temporary annex was constructed just north of the Higginbotham School along Indiana Avenue.

In the fall of 1947, Post Intermediate School's seventh and eighth grade African American students were reassigned to Higginbotham due to over-crowded class sizes. Higginbotham parents objected

¹¹ Van Dusen, p. 57.

¹² DTE Aerial Photograph Collection, map dated 1949, https://digital.library.wayne.edu/dte_aerial/index.html.

due to the overcrowding at Higginbotham, and the school board announced plans to reopen Birdhurst School for the students in the area. By 1947, Birdhurst School was in poor condition due to its closure as a school over fifteen years prior. A *Detroit Tribune* article titled “Discrimination or Convenience” from September 13, 1947 suggested that the school board was trying to funnel all African American students into Birdhurst and Higginbotham schools, while Louis Pasteur Elementary and Post Intermediate were reserved for Whites. African American parents, supported by Detroit Branch of the NAACP and the Carver Progressive Club (an African American social action group), protested the Birdhurst School’s poor conditions and the segregationist policies of the Detroit Board of Education. The neighborhood group picketed in opposition to the plan for almost two weeks, and no children attended either school. The protests lead to the formation of a liberal-labor-African American alliance, Save Our Schools, in 1948. The outcome of the Higginbotham School strike was the school board’s commitment to rehabilitate the school and study the issue of segregation in Detroit public schools, the latter unresolved.¹³

The history of Higginbotham School is closely tied to the property to the east. In the late 1940s, most of the properties on the block to the east of Wisconsin Street were acquired by the City of Detroit for parkland. Just at that time, the post-World War II housing crisis caused the need for temporary war housing in Detroit. The Higginbotham School playground (the school grounds ran from Chippewa Street north to Norfolk Street) remained a playfield at that time. However, to the east, most of the property bounded by Wisconsin Street to Norfolk Street to Cherrylawn Street to Chippewa Street was acquired by the city and used as temporary war housing occupied by Quonset huts. In 1955, that site east of Higginbotham School was finally developed as a playfield with baseball diamonds, basketball court, swimming pool, and a field house. Named the Joe Louis Playfield in 1955, it became a community asset.

Higginbotham School developed talented students who were noted residents of the community. One of the most significant was jazz musician **Major Quincy Holley Jr.** (1924-1990) who went on to become an internationally known jazz bassist who played with Ella Fitzgerald, Charlie Parker, Oscar Peterson, and Woody Herman. **Sophia Holley Ellis** (b. 1927) is the sister of Major Holley, jazz musician mentioned above. Ms. Ellis was an educator and instructor who received the Educator of the Year award from the U.S. State Department in 2006. Other significant Higginbotham students included **Pat Flowers** (Ivelee Patrick Flowers, 1917-2000), jazz pianist and singer who worked with Fats Waller in New York City and recorded popular songs as well as long-term piano appearances at Baker’s Keyboard Lounge, the Country Club of Detroit and other Detroit area locations. **John Edward Anderson Sr.**, was a United States Air Force technical sergeant, Tuskegee Airman. **Edward Crook** (1929-2005), was a U. S. Army ballplayer. **Sam Donahue** was a Sargent Major in the United States Army, and later volunteered his time with the 8 Mile Old Timers Club. **Teri Thornton** (Shirley Enid Avery, 1934-2000), jazz singer who recorded in the 1960s and also performed on the *Ed Sullivan Show*, and others. **Burniece Avery** (1908-1993), stage actress and author of the book *Walk Quietly Through the Night and Cry Softly* (1977) on her family’s experiences migrating to the Eight Mile Wyoming neighborhood. **Vondie Curtis Hall** (b. 1950) actor, screenwriter and television director who starred in the television show, *Chicago Hope*, the movie *Romeo & Juliet* (1996), and the television series *ER*, among many others. **Dr. Ray Johnson**, educator now with the Karasi Development Group, is the former chair of the

¹³ Jeffrey Mirel, *Rise and Fall of an Urban School System: Detroit, 1901-1981*. Second Edition, The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, MI, 1999. p. 81.

Neighborhood Service Organizations board of directors. **Bennie White Jr. Ethiopia Israel** (b. 1937), is a Detroit artist known for painting a mural tribute to Malice Green in 1992 as well as a portrait of Shelton Johnson that hung in the Johnson Recreation Center.

The 1950 U.S. Census reported the peak population of Detroit at almost 1.85 million, and thereafter Detroit's population began declining. By 1952, as the post-war growth of the city wound down, the temporary wartime housing in the neighborhood of Higginbotham School was removed, the school population declined, and the temporary annex was vacated in 1955. By 1966 academic performance at Higginbotham was below national standards and most students were steered into vocational curricula. The building housed the High School of Commerce in the late 20th century and in 2006 it became a charter school, renamed the W. E. B. DuBois/Aisha Shule Preparatory Academy, for grades six through twelve, until it closed in 2013. Today the Higginbotham School is owned by the City of Detroit and is part of the Planning & Development Department's "Vacant Historic School Buildings Reuse Plan." The boundaries of the school property changed when the Joe Louis Playfield, the Higginbotham School playground, and the Johnson Recreation Center were sold in 2020.

Its Namesake and its Architect

Higginbotham School was named after architect William E. Higginbotham (1858-1923), one of the partners of Malcomson & Higginbotham, the architectural firm selected by the Detroit Board of Education as its architect for thirty years, 1893-1923. Detroit born and educated, Higginbotham began his training at the age of nineteen as a draftsman with architect John V. Smith of Detroit. He stayed under Smith's employ until 1885, when he went into practice by himself. Higginbotham joined William George Malcomson (1858-1937) in 1890 in a partnership that lasted thirty-three years.

Specializing in school architecture, the partnership of Malcomson and Higginbotham designed more than three-quarters of Detroit's public school buildings erected prior to 1923. The firm of Malcomson and Higginbotham designed many other major buildings in Detroit, as well as other educational structures at the University of Michigan, Eastern Michigan University, and Flint, Michigan. C. William Palmer joined the partnership from 1921 through 1923, his name reflected in the firm Malcomson, Higginbotham & Palmer, during those few later years. In 1923, Higginbotham passed away in Atlanta, Georgia at the age of sixty-five. The firm continued after Higginbotham's death, although the name changed through the years as different partners joined the firm.

Although school architecture took on a more institutional look after 1910, Malcomson & Higginbotham recognized that, while there was growing concern for the cost of school buildings, architecturally attractive schools could cost little more than unadorned ones and still satisfy educational, health and safety, and community needs. They designed school buildings in a variety of architectural styles, including the Medieval sub-styles of Collegic Gothic, Arts and Crafts, and English Tudor. Several architects that had worked for Malcomson & Higginbotham continued designing architecturally significant schools after their association with the firm ended, including N. Chester Sorensen, the architect of Higginbotham School. The building contractor for Higginbotham School was the Stibbard Construction Company of Detroit.

Chester Sorensen worked for Malcomson and Higginbotham briefly in the early 1920s before forming his own firm. Afterwards, he went on to design school buildings in several different architectural styles for the Board of Education under his own name. The Neo-Georgian style Bagley School (1930), the Neo-Gothic/Art Deco style Arthur School (1930), the Art Deco style Chadsey High School (1931), and the Neo-Georgian style Western High School (1935) are examples of his work for the Detroit Board of Education. Other notable commissions of Sorensen's were the Rackham Golf Course clubhouse (1924) and Peace Lutheran Church (c. 1927).

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The William E. Higginbotham School faces east onto Wisconsin Avenue, a vacated street, on the northwest side of Detroit. Its U-shaped footprint occupies the parcel which is located approximately nine miles northwest of downtown. This is a one and two-and-a-half story brick building, with a flat-centered, Spanish tile hip roof, that was constructed in 1926-27 and expanded in 1944 and 1946. The school's most significant architectural features are focused on the off-center entrance bay and reflect the Mediterranean style. Higginbotham School appears to be in good condition on the exterior and retains a high degree of historic integrity.

Higginbotham School is oriented eastward towards the Johnson Recreation Center and Joe Louis Playfield, City of Detroit recreation facilities, with a secondary façade (containing the auditorium entrance), facing southward toward Chippewa Avenue. A surface parking lot is adjacent to the school building on the north and another on the east, across the vacated right-of-way of Wisconsin Avenue, connected to the Johnson Playfield. The asymmetrical front façade of the building faces Wisconsin Avenue and its entrance occupies the second of six bays from the south end.

Higginbotham School had a series of additions constructed. The original school building faced Wisconsin Avenue, and was a rectangular structure. In 1928, just a year after opening, an addition was constructed that extended west along Chippewa Avenue. The differing colors of Spanish clay-tiles on the roofs reveal the distinction in these two eras of construction. In 1944 another addition was completed that included an auditorium, six classrooms, and gymnasium/lunchroom. The auditorium has a separate entrance facing Chippewa Street. A final addition (called the "second addition" on the site plan) to Higginbotham School was constructed in 1946. The school once contained Pewabic pottery tiled drinking fountains, installed in 1937 as a gift of the class of 1923.

Higginbotham School is one and two-and-a-half stories in height and has a reinforced concrete structure that supports a concrete slab-and-beam roof structure. The Higginbotham School is faced in beige brick set in a common bond pattern. The Wisconsin Street entrance bay of Higginbotham School projects slightly from the rest of the front façade. It is set off by a pattern of stacked, concentric, quoin-like tile squares with outlines of brown brick running along its side and top edges. This same running concentric tile pattern lines the corners of the building as well. Double-doors with patterned lights (surrounds are now brightly painted) and a round arched transom above comprise the entrance; a metal balconette and large, curvilinear-arched, multi-light window are

above at second-story level. Panels of ornamentation extend from the flanking column capitals of the entrance, rising to the height of the second-story window, and are topped with miniature engaged obelisks. To the north of the entrance section is a brick bell tower rising from the ground; it is topped with a side-facing, tiled, gable roof above double louvered openings rising above the roofline. The last bay on the north end of the front façade is divided from the one next to it by a second bell tower.

Windows are arranged into groupings of five, four-over-four wood sash windows (although one window in each classroom has been replaced by a modern anodized aluminum window to facilitate emergency egress), the first-story window grouping has a continuous stone sill course. According to a 2008-2009 survey of Detroit public school buildings, wood sash windows are quite rare, as they have been replaced on the vast majority of schools in the city during the early 21st century.

A cartouche occupies the second-story end of the Chippewa Avenue façade, above a grouping of three windows on the first floor. The cast stone cartouche features the lamp of knowledge, stars, fleur-de-lis and ceramic tile inserts. Decorative scrolls and classical motifs surround the cartouche. The ell of the south elevation is set back, and a five-sided, one-story entrance bay projects from its western end. Portions of the school building's roof are hipped and portions are flat.

Entering through the primary (east) entrance, the main office sits to the right, with a former classroom immediately on the left, on the southeast corner of the building's floor. A hallway extending to the north contains music and art rooms and provides access to a combined gymnasium and lunch room. The hallway extending to the west, towards the auditorium, provides access to science rooms (originally including a ground-level conservatory which has since been removed) and a library; further west is an ell containing kindergarten rooms. The projecting auditorium has a separate, dedicated entrance. Throughout the building, walls are defined by a base and several courses of glazed block, with painted concrete masonry units or plaster above. Original wood built-in cabinets and other fixtures remain in many classrooms.

On the exterior as well as the interior, much of the historic appearance of the building remains. Other than the elimination of its conservatory (formerly at the south façade), the building has received no major alterations since 1946.

CRITERIA

The proposed Higginbotham School Historic District appears to meet the National Register Criteria A and C:

- A) That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; and
- 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.

List of Contributing and Noncontributing Resources

The proposed Higginbotham School Historic District consists of a single contributing building resource.

COMPOSITION OF THE HISTORIC DESIGNATION ADVISORY BOARD

The Historic Designation Advisory Board has nine members, who are residents of Detroit, and two ex-officio members. The appointed members are Melanie A. Bazil, Naomi Beasley Porter, Carolyn C. Carter, Keith A. Dye, Louis Fisher, Zene Fogel-Gibson, Theresa Hagood, Calvin Jackson, and Joseph Rashid. The ex-officio members, who may be represented by members of their staff, are the Director of the City Planning Commission and the Director of the Planning and Development Department. Ad hoc members for this study are Russell Baltimore, Assistant Director of Design for the City of Detroit, and Dwight Smith, a neighborhood resident.

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