Oregon Historic Site Form

Meek School
4039 Alberta Ct
Portland, Multnomah County

LOCATION AND PROPERTY NAME

address: **4039 NE Alberta Ct** ☐ apprx. addrs

Portland ☐ vcnty **Multnomah County**

historic name: **Meek School**

current/ other names: **J.L. Meek Professional Tech. High School, Alberta Court School**

Optional Information

assoc addresses:
(former addresses, intersections, etc.)

location descr:
(remote sites)

block nbr: ____ lot nbr: ____ tax lot nbr: ____

township: ____ range: ____ section: ____ 1/4: ____

zip: ____

PROPERTY CHARACTERISTICS

resource type: **Building** height (# stories): **1**

elig. evaluation: **eligible/significant**

primary constr date: **1953** (c.) ☐ secondary date: **1985** (c.) ☐
(optional--use for major addns)

primary orig use: **School**

secondary orig use: **Education-Related**

primary style: **International**

secondary style:

primary siding: **Standard Brick**

secondary siding:

plan type: **School (General)**

comments/notes: **No Ranking.**

total # eligible resources: **1** total # ineligible resources: **1**

NR status:

NR date listed: (indiv listed only; see Grouping for hist dist)

orig use comments:

prim style comments:

sec style comments:

siding comments:

architect: **Irving Smith**

builder:

GROUPINGS / ASSOCIATIONS

survey project name or other grouping name: PPS Historic Building Assessment 2009 | Survey & Inventory Project

farmstead/cluster name:

external site #: 270
(ID# used in city/agency database)

SHPO INFO FOR THIS PROPERTY

NR date listed:

ILS survey date: **6/26/2009**

RLS survey date: **6/26/2009**

Gen File date:

106 Project(s)

South elevation front entry

ARCHITECTURAL / PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

(Include expanded description of the building/property, setting, significant landscape features, outbuildings, and alterations)

Description Summary

Situated in a primarily residential neighborhood in Northeast Portland, Meek Professional Technical High School is located at 4039 NE Alberta Court. Originally the Alberta Court (Meek) Elementary School when it was constructed in 1953, this Modernist Vernacular style building (270A, B) is situated on a 5.4 acre grass and asphalt-covered campus. Clad in red brick, the wood frame structure sits on a poured concrete foundation. The single story building is covered by flat and slightly pitched roofs. The L-shaped plan houses classrooms, a cafetorium, a library, a music room, and an administrative office.

Architectural Description

Situated in a primarily residential neighborhood in Northeast Portland, the Meek Professional Technical High School is located at 4039 NE Alberta Court. Originally constructed in 1953, the Alberta Court (Meek) Elementary School is a Modernist Vernacular style building sited on a 5.4 acre grass and asphalt-covered campus. The playground, play shed (270C), and playfields are located directly north and northwest of the school. The parking area is located directly west of the building.

The single story school is oriented on an east-west axis. The L-shaped school building is covered by flat and low pitched gable roofs. Clad in red brick, the wood frame building sits on a poured concrete foundation. The primary entrance to the building is distinguished by a buff-colored concrete wall. The projecting eaves of the roof create a covered approach to the entry. The double-leaf metal doors are flanked by horizontal multi-pane glass panels. Fenestration consists of a mixture of six-light metal frame hinged windows and three-pane metal frame hinged windows. Single and double-leaf metal doors are found on all the elevations.

The interior layout of the school consists of an L-shaped plan. The entry is into a wood paneled lobby. A double-loaded corridor extends to the north and west. Tubular fluorescent light fixtures are suspended from low acoustic tile ceilings. The ceilings are lowered in some sections of the building. The floor is covered with linoleum tile.

The cafetorium is located in the north wing of the building. The space retains most of its original layout and stage, but the installation of acoustic tiles resulted in a change in ceiling height. Benches and tables recess into the wall facilitating the use of the room as a cafeteria.

The classrooms are primarily rectangular. Standard features include wood built-in cabinets, closets, and bookcases. Other finishes consist of linoleum tile floors and unpainted wood framing and molding. There are tubular fluorescent light fixtures suspended from acoustic tile clad ceilings. The ceilings are lowered in some classrooms. There are fewer built-ins in the 4 classrooms that were added to the north wing in 1958.

The building is heated by a single steam boiler located in the boiler room at the east end of the building. The radiators have metal covers and are located in the hallways and classrooms. Cool air is pushed through the building's vents by compressor-powered fans.

Alterations/Integrity

The original school consisted of a rectangular classroom building with a slight rectangular projection that housed the boiler. In 1958, the cafetorium, 3 classrooms, and the music room were added to the north end of the building. In 1975, a library and an additional classroom were added to the west side of the school (Meek Facility Plan). While the 1953, 1958 and 1975 classrooms have different ceilings, number of built-ins, and window treatment, they are minor differences. The materials and features are compatible. Overall, there have been minimal modifications to the building's hallways, classrooms, exterior cladding, roof lines, and fenestration. The Meek Professional Technical High School retains a high degree of integrity.

HISTORY

(Chronological, descriptive history of the property from its construction through at least the historic period [preferably to the present])

Statement of Significance

In response to growing residential development in Northeast Portland the district acquired the property at 4039 NE Alberta Court in 1949 for $30,652. Originally named Alberta Court, the school was renamed in honor of pioneer Joseph Meek (Portland Chronology Binder; Snyder 1979: 241). Constructed for $254,790 in 1953 the school was built during a period of modernization and new construction initiated by Portland Public Schools (PPS) after World War II. In 1945, the citizens of Portland approved a ballot measure that provided $5,000,000 over five years to construct, improve, and rehabilitate its public school buildings (Portland Public Schools 1945: 2). The ballot measure enabled PPS to respond to the explosive growth in school-age children that had occurred in the city as a result of the arrival of defense plant workers and their families, as well as the deferred maintenance arising from the lack of funds during the depression (Portland Public Schools 1945: 2-3). Beginning with this initial bond measure, PPS embarked on an effort to improve its school facilities through renovations, additions, and new construction of over fifty schools between 1945 and 1970.

For the new building program, PPS schools adopted the call of architects and school planners across the country for new types of schools. Nationally known architects including Richard Neutra, the Walter Gropius led Architects Collective, and the Perkins Will architectural firm promoted new school types that reflected both evolving educational practices and design philosophies (Ogata 2008: 567-568; Perkins and Cocking 1949: 238-246). Emphasizing the need for economy and rapid construction, the designers adopted new materials that were standardized and mass produced including steel, plywood, glass block, and aluminum. In many buildings, architects achieved flexibility through the building's structure by employing non load-bearing partition walls and zoned ventilation and heating systems. Folding walls and moveable cabinets provided additional flexibility intended to enable teachers to rearrange rooms based on lesson plan and activities (Ogata 2008: 568).

Although many of the architects for schools in Portland continued to design their schools to be extensible, designers turned away from the two-story schools with centralized massing popularized by Naramore and Jones. Instead many architects adopted the principles of the Modern movement and its regional variant, the Northwest Regional style, choosing to express functional areas through massing and materials to create innovative forms (McMath 1974: 628). Classrooms featured extensive built-ins that included sinks, slots for bulky rolls of paper, and coat storage. Many buildings incorporated interior courtyards which facilitated access to the outdoors and expanded the opportunities for passive ventilation and daylighting, a hallmark of the Northwest style.

For the design of Meek Professional Technical School, architect Irving Smith adopted the building program and principles that dominated the discourse for school design during the second half of the twentieth century. A native of Iowa, Smith worked practiced in Portland for over 33 years. After graduating from the University of Oregon, Smith did graduate work in architecture at M.I.T. Smith was employed in Los Angeles and Honolulu before returning to Portland in 1922. In the 1920s Smith was employed by School District No. 1, Lewis I. Thompson, and the firm of Morris H. Whitehouse and Associates. Smith worked with many other prominent Portland architects including the office of A.E. Doyle and Whitehouse, Stanton & Church, and the U.S. District Engineer's office. Smith worked with Pietro Belluschi for many years at both the Doyle office and its successor firm - Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. Smith established his own firm in 1952 but is best known as a draftsman and a chief of production (Ritz 2002: 365).

As a good example of mid-century school planning that retains its integrity with its floor plan, interior finishes, fenestration, and cladding, Meek Professional Technical High School is recommended as eligible for the NRHP. The school was built in response to the residential development in northeast Portland during the PPS program of post-war construction and is eligible for the NRHP under Criterion A. Although designed by a successful architect in Portland, archival research does not indicate that the school was a major commission or that he was considered a significant designer of the period. However, the building is a good example of the use of finger plan type to facilitate rapid construction of new buildings after World War II and is also eligible for the NRHP under Criterion C.

RESEARCH INFORMATION

(Check all of the basic sources consulted and cite specific important sources)

- ☐ Title Records
- ☐ Census Records
- ☐ Property Tax Records
- ☑ Local Histories
- ☑ Sanborn Maps
- ☑ Biographical Sources
- ☑ SHPO Files
- ☐ Interviews
- ☐ Obituaries
- ☑ Newspapers
- ☐ State Archives
- ☑ Historic Photographs
- ☐ City Directories
- ☐ Building Permits
- ☐ State Library

Local Library: Multnomah County Library
University Library: Portland State University Library
Historical Society: Oregon Historical Society
Other Repository: PPS Archives

Bibliography: Bibliography

McMath, George. "A Regional Style Comes to the City." In Space, Style and Structure: Buildings in Northwest America. Ed. Thomas Vaughan, 467-499. Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1974.

_____. "The Wood Tradition Expands" 528-647.

Ogata, Amy F. "Building for Learning in Postwar American Elementary Schools." Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, Vol. 67, no. 4, December 2008: 562-591.

Perkins, Lawrence B and Walter D. Cocking. Schools. New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1949.

Portland Public Schools Chronology Binder.

Portland Public Schools. Repairing, Rehabilitating and Modernizing the School Plant. Portland: Portland Public Schools. Office of the Superintendent, 1945.

_____. Meek Technical School. Facility Plan.

_____. Meek Technical School. Facility Profile.

Ritz, Richard. E. Architects of Oregon. A Biographical Dictionary of Architects Deceased – 19th and 20th Centuries. Portland: Lair Hill Publishing, 2003.

Snyder, Eugene E. Portland Names and Neighborhoods. Their Historic Origins. Portland: Binforrd & Mort Publishing; 1st edition 1979.

ENTRIX
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South elevation front entry


North elevation rear entry

South elevation front entry


South elevation front entry


West elevation addition

Alliance High School @ Meek
Professional Technical High School
Exterior Photos
ENTRIX, 2009

Front entry hallway (and office)

Cafetorium facing north

Library

Classroom built-ins

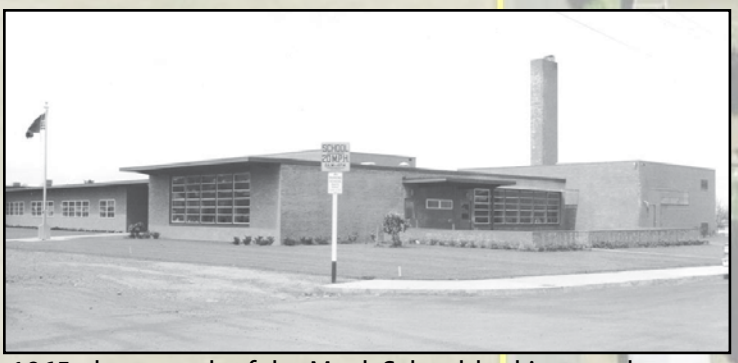
Classroom built-ins

Alliance High School @ Meek
Professional Technical High School
Interior Photos
ENTRIX, 2009

Alliance High School

4039 NE Alberta Ct, Portland OR, 97211

View Site in Google Maps



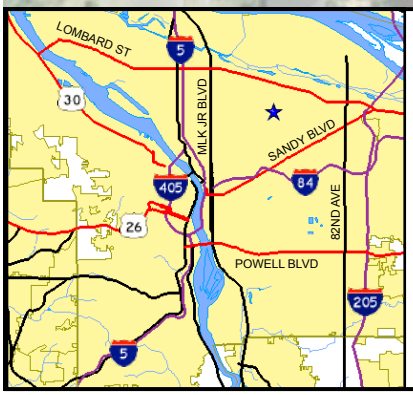
1965 photograph of the Meek School, looking northwest.

NE 39th Ave

NE 41st Ave

NE Alberta Ct

Aerial photo © 2009 Metro, Portland OR Imagery Date: July 12, 2007



Historical Significance and Building Integrity

- Contrib: High Significance
- Contrib: Moderate Signif.
- Non-Contributing

N

0’ 50’ 100’ 200’

Building Periods

1. Original Building (270A), 1953
2. Addition (270A), 1958
3. Addition (270B), 1958
4. Addition (270A), 1975
5. Addition (270C), 1975

1 MEEK SCOOL – 1ST FLOOR
SCALE: 1" = 30'-0"

KEYNOTES:

A. THE 1953 ENTRY TO THE SCHOOL IS DELINEATED BY A CONCRETE PANEL ON THE SOUTH ELEVATION.

B. AN L-SHAPED CORRIDOR PROVIDES CIRCULATION FOR THE SCHOOL. FINISHES CONSIST OF LINOLEUM TILE FLOORS, WOOD AND METAL FRAMING AND MOLDING, AND WOOD CLASSROOM DOORS.

C. THE CAFETORIUM FEATURES FOLDING TABLES AND BENCHES THAT RECESS INTO THE WALL. FINISHES INCLUDE A LINOLEUM TILE FLOOR, WOOD DOORS, AND DOUBLE PANE, HINGED METAL WINDOWS.

D. THE CLASSROOMS ARE PRIMARILY SQUARE OR RECTANGULAR. FINISHES INCLUDE LINOLEUM TILE FLOORS, PAINTED BUILT-INS AND FURNISHINGS, CLOSETS, WOODEN DOORS AND UNPAINTED WOOD FRAMING AND MOLDING.

E. THE 1958 WING PROVIDES SPACE FOR 3 CLASSROOMS AND A MUSIC ROOMS. FINISHES ARE SIMILAR THOSE IN THE MAIN WING BUT THERE ARE MINIMAL BUILT-INS.

F. ADDITION IN 1975

GENERAL NOTES:

1. THE SINGLE STORY, WOOD FRAME SCHOOL IS CLAD WITH BRICK VENEER.

2. FENESTRATION CONSISTS PRIMARILY OF VERTICAL THREE LIGHT, METAL FRAME, HINGED WINDOWS.

PPS

MEEK SCHOOL – 270
4039 NE ALBERTA CT 97211

PPS HISTORIC ASSESSMENT

ENTRIX
Down to Earth. Down to Business.™

FAT PENCIL STUDIO

DRAWING: ANNOTATED PLAN

DATE: Sept. 4, 2009