

Roosevelt School  
Name of Property

Story County, Iowa  
County and State

## 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.)  
Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or a grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION

ARCHITECTURE

### Period of Significance

1923-1959

### Significant Dates

1923

### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

### Architect/Builder

Kimball Bailie & Cowgill  
Elvin and Company

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

### 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 # \_\_\_\_\_

### Primary Location of Additional Data

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

Name of repository:

United States Department of the Interior  
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**8. Narrative Statement of Significance**

*Architect/Builder (continued):*  
Architects Rudi and DeKovic

***Summary Paragraph***

Roosevelt School in Ames, Iowa, is locally significant under Criteria A and C of the National Register of Historic Places. Historically, from the time that it was first built in 1923 until its closure in 2005, Roosevelt School played a central role in the social, cultural, and educational life of northwest Ames and formed the anchor for the development of the surrounding 1920s-1950s residential neighborhood, serving as an elementary school, community center, park, and playground. The school also reflects important social ties between what was then Iowa State College and the wider community of Ames. Through Roosevelt School, Iowa State College faculty shared their professional expertise by serving on the school board's building committee and designing and overseeing the construction of the school. In addition, college faculty, staff, and students lived in the neighborhood surrounding the school, sending their children to the school the college helped build. Today, Roosevelt School retains its architectural and functional continuity with the neighborhood for which it was built. Architecturally, Roosevelt School embodies the distinctive features of influential Progressive-era schoolhouse architects, such as William B. Ittner. Unlike the stifling square boxes that characterized nineteenth-century schoolhouses, schoolhouses built during the 1910s and 1920s permitted ample sunlight, fresh air, and open space for the innovative subjects and learning conditions advocated by Progressive educators. Architectural style continued to be important to Progressive school architects, who believed schoolhouses "should represent the noblest architectural creations in the community."<sup>4</sup> Roosevelt School, with its Beaux Arts symmetry, patterned brickwork, and stone ornamentation, remains a well preserved example of the education and community ideals informing schoolhouse architecture in 1920s Iowa. The building is also considered architecturally significant for representing the work of the local architectural firm of Kimball, Bailie and Cowgill and specifically of architect, A.H. Kimball of that firm. The period of significance for the property is 1923-1959, representing the historic span of the school's operation from its construction in 1923 through 1959, which is the current closing date for National Register consideration for a historic property. During this period, Roosevelt School functioned as the elementary school for the city's Second Ward. The significant date is 1923 when Roosevelt School was constructed.

The following is largely taken from *A Proposal to Designate Roosevelt School as a Local Historic Landmark*, compiled in 2005 by Clare Cardinal-Pett, Tom Leslie, A.I.A., and James Pritchard, Ph.D. Additional information was provided by Wesley Shank, A.I.A. and Professor Emeritus of Iowa State University, David Gradwohl, Ph.D. and Professor Emeritus of Iowa State University, and a reconnaissance survey of Ames completed by William C. Page in 1992.

***Roosevelt School and Residential Growth in Ames, 1920s-1950s***

The City of Ames began in 1858 with the location of a campus for an agricultural college by the State of Iowa on the west side of Squaw Creek in Washington Township in Story County. Ames was platted as a railroad stop east of the creek and the campus in 1864. The city annexed the campus and the area in between in 1892. The college was originally known as the Iowa State Agricultural College and Model Farm but was designated in 1898 as the Iowa State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts (referred to herein as Iowa State College). On July 4, 1959, the name was officially changed to Iowa State University of Science and Technology and is currently referred to simply as Iowa State University or ISU.<sup>5</sup> While Ames was originally

<sup>4</sup> William B. Ittner, "School Architecture That Encourages Wider Use," *Addresses and Proceedings of the Sixtieth Annual Meeting of the National Education Association*, Volume LX (1922), 1483.

<sup>5</sup> Dorothy Kehlenbeck, compiler. *The Iowa State College: Chronology of important events of the first 100 years* (Ames, Iowa: Library, 1958); Earle D. Ross, *A History of the Iowa State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts*. (Ames, Iowa: The Iowa State College Press, 1942).

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platted because of the railroad, its development from a town to a city and its continued vitality to the present day are due in large part to the presence of the university and its students and faculty.<sup>6</sup>

During the Progressive Era of the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, Ames was propelled "into state prominence as a center of higher education." This reform movement was "led by college-trained professionals" and "sought to implement reform programs and policies conceived and developed in U.S. colleges."<sup>7</sup> "The expansion of markets for Midwestern agricultural produce and a stable price system brought with it a period of great prosperity."<sup>8</sup> Because of this prosperity, more students were able to attend college, and as a result, the population of Ames grew as well increasing by about 74% in the first decade of the twentieth century. This growth continued even through the Great Depression years, with a "boom time" for Ames in the years between the two world wars.

With the city's population expansion, came expansion of its physical limits, with suburban growth beginning in earnest with the annexation of the college campus in the early 1890s. Actual development of suburban plats for residential living was enhanced first by the extension of streetcar lines out from the city center in the 1890s-1910s and later by the advent of the automobile as the popular choice for personal transportation beginning in the early twentieth century. After World War II, the housing shortage for returning military personnel and their booming families resulted in the popularity of tract housing on suburban plats far from the city center that were accessible because of automobile. The College Park Addition, which was platted in 1893, was a suburb laid out soon after the Ames and College Railroad was put into service providing streetcar access to this plat. College Park Addition First North was also accessed by streetcar service; however, both plats developed at a slow rate "and required a long time for the lots to be developed."<sup>9</sup> However, by the 1920s, dwelling construction in these additions was advancing and the location of Roosevelt School in their vicinity in the early 1920s signals some vision on the part of the school board that this area would continue to grow. By placing the school in this outlying area, the school would itself serve as an attraction for residential settlement. In the process, the school would essentially help provide its own growing student enrollment but would also take some pressure off the overcrowded schools elsewhere in the city.

Roosevelt School received its first classes of students in January 1924. The "strictly modern" Second Ward School, as the school was first known, was the result of a community-wide effort that began almost a year and a half earlier. On September 23, 1922, the Ames Board of Education met to discuss "the crowded condition of the school buildings and the necessity of taking steps to submit to the voters of the city the proposition of a building program."<sup>10</sup> Professor T.R. Agg, Dean of Engineering at Iowa State College and chairman of the school board's building committee, publicly promoted a school bond issue as a prudent use of public money, by "attempting to provide reasonable, sensible, educational facilities for the children of Ames."<sup>11</sup> Other Ames community groups followed suit, including the Parent-Teachers Association, civic clubs of Ames, the board of directors of the Chamber of Commerce, the Lions Club, the Rotary Club, and the art division of the Women's Club. All viewed the construction of a new schoolhouse as a vital service to the booming population of Ames in the early 1920s.<sup>12</sup>

On February 8, 1923, the bond issue passed, allowing the board to move ahead in the construction of a schoolhouse in the Second Ward.<sup>13</sup> Few homes existed in the vicinity of 9<sup>th</sup> Street and Northwestern Avenue in 1923. The board was able to

<sup>6</sup> William C. Page, *Historical and Architectural Resources of Ames, Iowa, Reconnaissance Survey, Volume II*. (Report prepared for Department of Planning and Housing, City of Ames, Iowa, 1992), 29-31.

<sup>7</sup> Page, *Historical and Architectural Resources of Ames, Iowa*, 32.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, 91.

<sup>10</sup> September 23, 1922, page 321-2, Secretary's School Record, Volume 3 (July 1915-October 1925), Independent School District, Ames, Iowa.

<sup>11</sup> "Ames Will Vote on School Bond Issue Tomorrow," *Ames Daily Tribune*, February 7, 1923. From Iowa Site Inventory Form No. 85-00574, State Historic Preservation Office, Des Moines, Iowa.

<sup>12</sup> Iowa Site Inventory Form No. 85-00574.

<sup>13</sup> November 22, 1922 -- February 12, 1923, pages 329-39, Secretary's School Record, Volume 3 (July 1915-October 1925), Independent School

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purchase a site for \$6,000 and consisting of 12 lots in two blocks providing sufficient space for a school building and outdoor playground and activity areas.<sup>14</sup> Of the five architects vying for the job, the board commissioned Iowa State College professor and architect Allan H. Kimball of Kimball Bailie & Cowgill, an Ames architectural firm, to draw up the plans.<sup>15</sup> A month later, the board accepted Kimball's plans for the new school. Kimball's school design called for "a two-story brick structure with cornices and doorways trimmed in white stone." The school would contain 16 classrooms, "and in all respects the building will be strictly modern." It would be fireproof, and all floors would be concrete overlaid with maple flooring. Two large playrooms, one for boys and one for girls, would be provided in the basement.<sup>16</sup> R.C. Elvin & Co. of Minneapolis won the bid for general contractor at a proposed cost of \$92,160.<sup>17</sup> The completion deadline was set at January 1, 1924, and generally appears to have been met given that the building opened as Roosevelt School on January 28, 1924.<sup>18</sup> The first year's enrollment of 329 students included kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> grade (two classes each).<sup>19</sup>

Roosevelt School created a release valve for the Ames school district during a period of intense population growth. In 1921, Ames had four elementary schools: Beardshear School at 9th and Carroll; Central School at 5th and Clark; Lincoln School at South 2nd Street and Kellogg; and Welch School at South Hyland.<sup>20</sup> Along with numerous additions and alterations to existing schools underway or in the planning stages, Roosevelt School was designed to accommodate 500 elementary students in a school district that was bursting at the seams. After the First Ward Welch School burned down just before the start of the fall semester in 1923, many students had been forced to attend school in half-day shifts or in various temporary locations, such as Iowa State College campus buildings and area churches. When Roosevelt School opened, the elementary students were moved from the old Central School, making room for more junior and senior high school students in that building.

Once built, Roosevelt School formed the anchor for the development and expansion of the surrounding neighborhood. With the construction of the Ames & College Railway streetcar line in 1891, Iowa State Agricultural College students, faculty, staff, and administrators started moving into the downtown area, mixing with non-college locals, and creating the cultural diversity of the downtown neighborhoods that still exists.<sup>21</sup> The street railway's successor, the Fort Dodge, Des Moines & Southern Railway interurban line, continued connecting town and campus from 1907 until 1929.<sup>22</sup> The residential area just north and west of the historic core of Ames grew in proportion to a dramatic Iowa State College enrollment increase after World War I. Indeed, between 1917 and 1927, fall enrollment at the college doubled.<sup>23</sup> The neighborhood south of Roosevelt School, platted in 1893 and 1900 (including the area south of the east-west rail lines), was named College Park, suggesting a link for this residential neighborhood to the college. The neighborhood west of the school and the Chicago & Northwestern railroad tracks was platted in two stages, first as "Chautauqua Park" in 1910 and then as "Ridgewood" in 1923.<sup>24</sup> *Ames Daily Tribune* advertisements for lots in Ridgewood let potential home buyers know, "a new grade school is now being built at the entrance

District, Ames, Iowa. The bond issue also allowed the board to build and equip additions to the existing Beardshear and Welch schools.

<sup>14</sup> "Plans for New School Accepted by Directors," *Ames Daily Tribune*, March 28, 1923; "Award Contract for New School; Start Work Soon," *Ames Daily Tribune*, May 5, 1923.

<sup>15</sup> While the original blueprints for Roosevelt School list only the name of the architectural firm (Kimball, Bailie & Cowgill), an April 30, 1923, article in the *Ames Daily Tribune* specifically named "Professor A.H. Kimball" as the architect for the project.

<sup>16</sup> "Plans for New School Accepted by Directors," *Ames Daily Tribune*, March 28, 1923.

<sup>17</sup> "Award Contract for New School; Start Work Soon," *Ames Daily Tribune*, May 5, 1923.

<sup>18</sup> An article in the *Ames Daily Tribune* dated January 10, 1924, noted that the Second Ward School "may be named Roosevelt School," with the name of 9th Avenue to be changed to Roosevelt Avenue; "Roosevelt School is Opened this Morning," *Ames Daily Tribune*, January 28, 1924.

<sup>19</sup> "Roosevelt School is Opened this Morning," *Ames Daily Tribune*, January 28, 1924.

<sup>20</sup> *Ames City Directory*, January 1, 1922. Boone, Iowa: Mrs. M.W. Leaverton, Publisher, 1921, p. 96.

<sup>21</sup> At first called the "Motor Line," the train soon became affectionately known as the "Dinkey," sometimes also spelled "Dinky." Ames & College Railway Dinkey, Ames Historical Society (accessed at [http://www.ameshistoricalsociety.org/exhibits/dinkey/dinkey\\_photos.htm](http://www.ameshistoricalsociety.org/exhibits/dinkey/dinkey_photos.htm) on April 29, 2009).

<sup>22</sup> Quick Facts about Ames, Iowa, Ames Historical Society (accessed at [http://www.ameshistoricalsociety.org/ames\\_facts.htm](http://www.ameshistoricalsociety.org/ames_facts.htm) on April 29, 2009).

<sup>23</sup> Page, "Historical and Architectural Resources of Ames, Iowa," 38.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, 67.

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to Ridgewood's Addition."<sup>25</sup>

Although some Ames residents at the time considered the site at 9<sup>th</sup> Street and Northwestern Avenue "too far out in the country," Roosevelt School acted as a beacon, attracting new residents, whose houses quickly filled the empty lots. Indeed, as Sanborn fire insurance maps and aerial photographs show, the school was a harbinger of residential development between Grand Avenue and Squaw Creek. With good access and a brand new public school, the area became a popular choice for college faculty. Indeed, Hodge Avenue was nicknamed "Professor's Row."<sup>26</sup>

Today the area is commonly referred to as the "Roosevelt Neighborhood." Roosevelt School served as not just an elementary school, but also as a community center, park, and playground. The social fabric of the neighborhood has changed very little, and many ISU faculty, students, staff, and administrators still live in the area. Even with the closure of Roosevelt School in 2005, the playground at the school continues to attract neighborhood children.

***Roosevelt School and Iowa State College (now Iowa State University)***

Roosevelt School represents important social ties forged between the campus community at Iowa State College and the broader Ames community during this period of growth. For example, T.R. Agg, a long-time Dean of Engineering was a member of the Ames Board of Education in 1923. As chairman of the building committee and then president of the board, Agg helped direct a fast-paced school building boom, supported by an Ames electorate that passed bond issue after bond issue with overwhelming support and voter turn out.<sup>27</sup>

Agg was chairman of the building committee when the board chose the Ames architectural firm of Kimball, Bailie & Cowgill to design Roosevelt School, with the local newspaper specifically naming A.H. Kimball of that firm as the architect for the school design.<sup>28</sup> Allan Holmes Kimball was founding head of the Iowa State College Department of Architectural Engineering and Rural Structures from 1917 until his death in 1946. He also served as Supervising Architect of Iowa State College's campus from 1915 to 1946. In addition to numerous campus buildings, Kimball designed many buildings in Ames, including the 1923 portion of the Iowa Highway Commission building in Ames, Saint John's Episcopal Church, Collegiate Methodist Church, several fraternity and sorority houses, and the 1930 Crawford School.<sup>29</sup> Also, the 1939-40 addition to the Ames Public Library, which more than doubled the size of the building, was the work of Kimball and his then-partner, Charles F. Bowers.<sup>30</sup>

Originally from California, A.H. Kimball held degrees from the University of California and Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He studied architecture in France, England, and Italy and then taught architecture at the University of Illinois for one year before joining the ISC faculty of engineering as professor of structural design. He was also president of the Iowa Chapter of the AIA in 1918, 1919, and 1920. In 1950 an award was established in his honor for students in architecture at Iowa State University, based on outstanding service to the department community.<sup>31</sup>

In the early 1920s, Kimball's partners were Robert Mills Bailie and Clinton Cowgill. Bailie was an Iowa native from Storm Lake and a graduate of the University of Illinois, where he had been one of Kimball's students. After graduation, he worked

<sup>25</sup> *Ames Daily Tribune*, various days, June 1923.

<sup>26</sup> For example, George Snedecor, Iowa State College's world famous pioneer in statistics, lived at 807 Hodge Avenue from 1922 until 1936.

<sup>27</sup> Grace Bauske, "Ames Community Schools," in *Ames Community History* (1964). History Files, Ames School District Office.

<sup>28</sup> "Fourteen Bids Received on Second Ward School," *Ames Daily Tribune*, April 30, 1923.

<sup>29</sup> H. Summerfield Day, *The Iowa State University Campus and Its Buildings* (Ames: Iowa State University, 1980).

<sup>30</sup> "Library's Well-Run Institution," *Ames Daily Tribune*, November 17, 1954. [Charles F. Bowers was at the time an Associate Professor in the Department of Agricultural Engineering and held a B.S. from North Dakota Agricultural College (1926). He came to Iowa State College in 1928.]

<sup>31</sup> Wesley Shank, *Iowa's Historic Architects*. University of Iowa Press, 1999, 96-7.

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for Proudfoot, Bird and Rawson for four years and then joined the faculty at Iowa State College. Cowgill was born in Sterling, Kansas, and studied at the University of Illinois. He began teaching at Iowa State College in 1920. In 1928, Cowgill left to become the first head of the Department of Architectural Engineering at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.<sup>32</sup>

***Roosevelt School and Schoolhouse Architecture in the Progressive Era***

Roosevelt School is a good example of Progressive-era schoolhouse architecture in Iowa. Very generally, the Progressive Era (lasting roughly 1890-1930) defines a period of intense cultural response to the rapid industrialization and urbanization of the United States. Progressives could be found in nearly every profession of the time but very prominently in education. Broadly, Progressives sought, through systematic application of their expertise, to ameliorate of the worst effects of urbanization and industrialization on society. Progressive educators saw in their profession the means to mold self-reliant citizens for the modern age. Innovations in education, such as kindergarten and physical education, were based on a new educational theory, expressed most fully by John Dewey of the University of Chicago and Columbia University. Dewey believed the public school was "the chief remedy for the ills of society." "The school," Dewey reasoned, "should be a place where children are working rather than listening, learning life by living life, and becoming acquainted with social institutions and industrial processes by studying them." Through the use of muscles, sight, feeling, and hearing, and the employment of energy, originality, and initiative, children learned by doing. The theory was broad enough to be interpreted freely by professional educators, who advocated and created all sorts of teaching methods and learning conditions for schools.<sup>33</sup> Playgrounds, gymnasiums, and swimming pools proliferated in schools across the country. School laboratories and workshops allowed scientific experimentation and manual training to produce citizens ready for the industrial world. Because educators viewed these new learning conditions as necessities and not luxuries, the country's old school buildings quickly became obsolete.<sup>34</sup>

The nineteenth-century schoolhouse, in general, had a square boxy shape often with a prominent bell tower like a church steeple. It could be an uncomfortable place to spend any amount of time, being uninsulated and drafty and lacking adequate light and fresh air. After the turn of the twentieth century, three architects, John J. Donovan, Dwight Perkins, and William B. Ittner, emerged as leaders in innovative school design. As City Beautiful advocates, they felt that buildings should enhance their surroundings; as modern schoolhouse proponents they believed that school design should facilitate modern learning conditions.<sup>35</sup> The so-called "City Beautiful Movement" grew out of the Reform movements of the late nineteenth century and was strongly influenced by the World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893. The core belief of the City Beautiful Movement was that in creating a beautiful city, its inhabitants would be inspired to moral and civic virtue. The Reform movement itself, which "had been largely concerned with corruption in local government, exploitation of the laboring classes by big business, improvement in housing conditions in large cities, and other social causes, quickly embraced the concept of the city beautiful as an American goal."<sup>36</sup> The advocates of the City Beautiful sought to improve urban areas through aesthetic beautification, which would have a number of effects:

- 1) Social ills would be swept away, as the beauty of the city would inspire civic loyalty and moral rectitude in the impoverished;
- 2) American cities would be brought to cultural parity with their European competitors through the use of the European Beaux-Arts idiom; and
- 3) a more inviting city center still would not bring the upper classes back

<sup>32</sup> Shank, *Iowa's Historic Architects*, 14, 47.

<sup>33</sup> Arthur S. Link and Richard L. McCormick, "Progressivism," From *The American History Series*, edited by John Hope Franklin and Abraham S. Eisenstadt (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1983, 90); Ellwood P. Cubberley, *Public Education in the United States: A Study and Interpretation of American Educational History* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1919), 359-60.

<sup>34</sup> Link and McCormick, "Progressivism," 24; Albert M. Deyoe, *Suggestions and Plans for Iowa Schoolhouses and Grounds* (Des Moines: Department of Public Instruction, 1916), 7.

<sup>35</sup> Deiber, *Town Schools for Iowa*, 12.

<sup>36</sup> Julie K. Rose, *City Beautiful: The 1901 Plan for Washington, D.C.* (University of Virginia Web Page, American Studies, 1996), 2.

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to live, but certainly to work and spend money in the urban areas.<sup>37</sup>

According to William B. Ittner: "A school architect who does not keep in constant touch with changes in educational objectives, with new types of organization and administration, and with the evolution and enrichment of the curriculum cannot successfully plan schools."<sup>38</sup> The most striking innovation of the new schoolhouse was in its layout. Instead of the massive square buildings of the previous century, modern schools had open floor plans that were L, I, or U shaped, with a main entrance that was the architectural focal point of the building. Another feature was the combined-use room, with moveable furniture and folding partition walls that helped to rid schoolhouses of much wasted space.<sup>39</sup>

In Iowa, Progressive educators saw a great need for public schoolhouse reform. As Henry Sabin, the State Superintendent of Schools in Iowa from 1888 through 1892 and 1894 through 1898 observed: "All over the state are school grounds, bare, dreary and desolate, without a tree to shelter the children from the winter's blast or the summer's sun . . . Outhouses with doors off the hinges, clapboards off the sides, defiled and defaced, a disgrace to a civilized community." He described the schools themselves as "poorly ventilated, poorly heated, and poorly maintained, which he related to school children's ill health."<sup>40</sup> Nearly twenty years later, Albert M. Deyoe, state superintendent of public instruction, reported similar findings, that there were "many schoolhouses in Iowa, including one-room buildings, that should be condemned as unfit for use for school purposes."<sup>41</sup> Thus in 1916, Deyoe produced a bulletin of suggestions and plans for building better schoolhouses, which incorporated many of the desirable conditions and equipment that all modern schoolhouses required, and included explicit advice on site selection, arrangement of rooms, window amount and placement, ventilation, stairways, corridors, blackboards, cloak rooms, seating, toilets, and drinking fountains.<sup>42</sup> World War I temporarily halted school construction in Iowa and elsewhere; however, construction resumed in earnest in the 1920s, with the Roosevelt School in Ames among the new school buildings in the state. In its design, the Ames Board of Education and architect, A.H. Kimball, certainly took note of the standards articulated by leading school architects and Iowa's own education officials. When it opened in 1924, Roosevelt School provided Ames schoolchildren with the city's first modern schoolhouse.

Besides being fireproof, Roosevelt School met numerous conditions considered essential in designing the modern schoolhouse, particularly in providing students with ample sunlight, fresh air, and room to play. The school was sited on the original property in such a way to make plenty of room for outdoor recreation space and play equipment.<sup>43</sup> Inside, the raised basement contained two playrooms – one for boys and one for girls – on the east and west sides. Such spaces were deemed essential in the socialization and physical development of children.

The school's original banked 12-over-12 double hung sash windows on the east and west walls provided abundant natural light and allowed for sufficient blackboard space on the window-less walls. All but four south-facing classrooms received either the morning or afternoon sunlight thought best for schoolchildren. The "blind" bays of the south façade emphatically blocked light from that direction, as south light was considered too constant for students and teachers could not regulate the

<sup>37</sup> Rose, *City Beautiful*, 2-3.

<sup>38</sup> W.B. Ittner, "The School Plant and the School," *The Journal of the National Education Association* 11:1 (January 1922), 5-6: Several factors drove the transformation of schoolhouses from collections of classrooms to total learning environments in the 1910s and 1920s. As Ittner wrote: "By far the most pronounced cause in the educational awakening has been the revelations of the world war" . . . which forced "the attention of all concerned to the seriousness of the neglect of certain fundamentals in education. Hence the recent marked attention upon health, recreation, manual occupations, and citizenship." These new demands, Ittner believed, required richer and more thoughtfully organized educational facilities than had been built in the past.

<sup>39</sup> Deiber, *Town Schools for Iowa*, 12.

<sup>40</sup> Quoted in Dorothy Schwieder, *Iowa: The Middle Land* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1996), 122.

<sup>41</sup> Deyoe, *Suggestions and Plans*, 8.

<sup>42</sup> Deyoe, *Suggestions and Plans*, 7: Perhaps looking to the Iowa Highway Commission, which just one year earlier had been given control over bridge design for the state, the department of public instruction advocated for its own "special state school building architect to whom all plans and specifications for school buildings shall be submitted for approval."

<sup>43</sup> Deyoe, *Suggestions and Plans*, 10.

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shades “to prevent injurious pencils of light coming into the room.” North-facing windows, which never admitted direct sunlight, were avoided in Roosevelt School as well. Thus windows in the four classrooms in the north wing of the school faced east or west. The three school offices were located with windows on the undesirable south and north walls. As suggested, windows in each classroom were banked (placed as close together as possible) and tall, starting from less than four feet from the floor and reaching nearly the ceiling. It was believed that this particular window size and placement lessened “shadows that may otherwise be formed and also prevent[ed] any passing objects from destroying the direct interest of the children.” Double shades on the windows allowed teachers to “meet the rays of the sun” throughout the school day. As recommended, all classrooms received, for a part of each day, some direct sunlight as a disinfectant.<sup>44</sup>

Ventilation played a prominent role in designing the modern learning environment of Roosevelt School, as well. In addition to an abundance of windows, the building featured an internal ventilation system, which provided supply and return air to each classroom and helped block out cold drafts. Steam heat was supplied to the classroom radiators from a coal-fired furnace vented by a central chimney stack.<sup>45</sup>

Other modern features of Roosevelt School included: indoor toilets segregated by sex on the first and second floors; drinking fountains instead of the unsanitary shared drinking cups of the past; coat rooms inside each classroom; slate blackboards of sufficient size and height for each grade; and picture rail moldings in each classroom for hanging art work and other visual education aids.<sup>46</sup> An auditorium was provided on the west side of the main floor close to two outside entrances. The auditorium was made from two combined-use classrooms separated by folding partition doors during classroom use. The two rooms thus could be converted into one large room to serve as a school auditorium for public programs and gatherings. A stereopticon (early slide projector) outlet is shown in the 1923 plans just below the blackboard on the blind south wall of the auditorium.<sup>47</sup> Such efficiency of plan encouraged the wider use of the school by the community that school architects, such as Ittner, and other education officials advocated.<sup>48</sup>

***Roosevelt School as Community Asset***

In 1900, a nationwide movement sought to beautify school buildings and grounds in order to refine the behavior and taste of the pupils. Although more visible as a national trend, Iowa’s schoolhouses reflected this goal in widely varying degrees.<sup>49</sup> By the 1920s, most believed as William B. Ittner did, that new schoolhouses should represent “the noblest architectural creations in the community.” If a school’s “interior plan is rich, well-balanced, and proportioned,” Ittner elaborated, “the exterior should evidence these qualities.” In so doing, the architect believed, schoolhouses would “constitute community assets both educationally and architecturally.”<sup>50</sup>

Roosevelt School generally exhibits the Beaux-Arts style that was *de rigueur* for institutional buildings throughout the Midwest in the 1920s. This style derived from the neo-classical (but eclectic) teachings of the École des Beaux Arts in Paris, and was a global indicator of taste and monumental dignity. From about 1850 until 1930, international students studying at the École were the primary vectors of its dissemination throughout Europe and the United States. Often termed “neo-classical revival” or linked to the City Beautiful movement, the Beaux-Arts approach relied primarily on the plan to generate

<sup>44</sup> Deyoe, *Suggestions and Plans*, 20-1; 26.

<sup>45</sup> Kimball Bailie & Cowgill, Architects, Ames, *Plans for Second Ward School for the Board of Education, Ames, Iowa*, 1923.

<sup>46</sup> Kimball Bailie & Cowgill, Architects, Ames, *Plans for Second Ward School for the Board of Education, Ames, Iowa*, 1923; Deyoe, *Suggestions and Plans*, 20, 26.

<sup>47</sup> Kimball Bailie & Cowgill, Architects, Ames, *Plans for Second Ward School for the Board of Education, Ames, Iowa*, 1923.

<sup>48</sup> Ittner, “School Architecture That Encourages Wider Use,” 1483.

<sup>49</sup> Keach Johnson, “The State of Elementary and Secondary Education in Iowa in 1900,” *Annals of Iowa* 49:1, 2 (Summer/Fall 1987): 27-8.

<sup>50</sup> Ittner, “School Architecture That Encourages Wider Use,” 1484.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

Roosevelt School  
name of property

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symmetrical, balanced, highly rhythmic building masses. Known as a *parti*, the basic plan of a Beaux Arts building will typically include a central hall on axis with the main entry, flanking wings that are symmetrical, a fenestration pattern that focuses attention on the central bays, and a relentless articulation of detail and building mass.<sup>51</sup>

The Beaux Arts infiltration into the Midwest came largely through Chicago, in particular during the decades following the 1893 Columbian Exposition. This fair was the crowning glory of American neo-classicism, and its influence was both vast and immediate. In Iowa, the firm of Proudfoot and Bird (later Proudfoot, Bird and Rawson) picked up influences from Chicago architect Daniel Burnham, designing neo-classical buildings throughout Des Moines and Iowa. Among their early works were courthouses for Dallas, Polk, and Jasper Counties (1902, 1906, and 1911 respectively; all still extant), Des Moines' City Hall (1910), and large churches throughout central Iowa. By far their greatest collection of Beaux Arts monuments, however, was at Iowa State University. Here, their buildings included: Beardshear Hall (1906), Engineering Hall (1900), Alumni Hall (1904), the Campanile (1922), and Parks Library (1928).<sup>52</sup>

Neo-classical was the style of choice for most institutional buildings in Iowa in the early 1900s, but Ames was, because of these examples, a major concentration. The inherent monumentality of the style and its connotations of both European respectability and urbane dignity lent themselves to a variety of programs that aspired to civic importance. Schools, libraries, and post offices, along with courthouses and university buildings, adopted these principles throughout the state from roughly 1890 until the mid-1930s. While ornamental programs ranged from English Gothic to Romanesque, the basic principles of Beaux Arts teaching are evident in civic buildings of the era including Proudfoot and Bird's Roosevelt High School (Des Moines, 1922). Closer to Roosevelt School, Ames' Chicago and Northwestern Railway Passenger Station (designed by Chicago architects Frost and Granger, 1900) and its Post Office (a rare later Beaux Arts scheme by Louis Simon, 1935) both display neo-classical composition and detail.<sup>53</sup>

School districts, of course, did not have the wealth of the railroads, county government, or universities. By necessity, schools and libraries reverted to a stripped-down version of the style that has its own unique hallmarks. Roosevelt School's plan is a classic Beaux Arts layout, with a broad central hall on axis with its front door, symmetrical massing, and regular fenestration on its main facades. Its detail, of white stone, is particularly good and remarkably well preserved for a building of its vintage. Entablatures, fascias, dados, and plinth rails all serve to give the building its overall neo-classical character, while leaving large expanses of less expensive brickwork to cover much of the exterior. The central entry bay features entablatures and finials surrounding the door that are characteristic of more monumental buildings of the style. The entry to Roosevelt School was indeed a source of pride to school officials and the community and functioned as the backdrop for formal class photographs throughout its history. The blind bays at the extreme east and west ends of the south façade (the function of which are described above) are elaborated with brick diamond pattern and relief, providing emphasis at the corners and continuing the rhythm of the central bays' fenestration. Practically, these blank end walls allow the flanking classrooms to "turn the corner" while giving them the same room shape and window layout as the classrooms in the center bay.<sup>54</sup>

The future of Roosevelt School is in question given its current vacant status. Ames Smart Growth Alliance (ASGA), a community non-profit, has mounted an effort to try and save the school from demolition and is promoting its renovation as an elementary school or other adaptive reuse. The current nomination is part of this ASGA effort.

<sup>51</sup> Clare Cardinal-Pett, Tom Leslie, and James Pritchard, "A Proposal to Designate Roosevelt School 1000 W. 9th Street, Ames, IA as a Local Historic Landmark," submitted on behalf of the Roosevelt Neighborhood and Residents of Ames, June 13, 2005.

<sup>52</sup> Shank, *Iowa's Historic Architects*, 127-31; Cardinal-Pett, Leslie, and Pritchard, "A Proposal to Designate Roosevelt School."

<sup>53</sup> Shank, *Iowa's Historic Architects*, 131; Cardinal-Pett, Leslie, and Pritchard, "A Proposal to Designate Roosevelt School." See also David Gebhard and Gerald Mansheim, *Buildings of Iowa* (New York: Oxford University Press/Society of Architectural Historians, 1993), 161, 163, 229-30.

<sup>54</sup> Cardinal-Pett, Leslie, and Pritchard, "A Proposal to Designate Roosevelt School."