

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

Historic name Courville, Elizabeth, School

Other names/site number Courville, Elizabeth, Elementary School

2. Location

street & number 18040 St. Aubin St. not for publication

city or town Detroit vicinity

State Michigan code MI county Wayne code 163 zip code 48234

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Signature of certifying official

Date

Michigan State Historic Preservation Officer
Title

Michigan State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

entered in the National Register _____

determined eligible for the National Register _____

determined not eligible for the National Register _____

removed from the National Register _____

other (explain:) _____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal
- private

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- building(s)
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
1		Objects
2	0	Total

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

Public Schools of Detroit, Michigan

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/school

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/school

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Late Gothic Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: Concrete
walls: Brick

roof: Asphalt
other: Stone, tile

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

Elizabeth Courville School is a symmetrically-arranged, two-and-a-half-story brick building facing west onto St. Aubin Street on the city's northeast side in the Grixdale neighborhood, approximately seven miles from downtown Detroit. It is situated on the southern end of a long, narrow city block that includes a playfield to the north. Collegiate Gothic in style with Arts and Crafts overtones, it has side-gabled roofs with flat decks, blind two-story niches, Tudor-arched windows, and crenellated parapet walls. In plan, the footprint of the original 1921 building resembled an "E," but its 1929 addition to the rear created an irregular footprint. An Art Moderne display sign on the grass near the southwest corner of the school contributes to its significance. Although the building is now vacant, it is in excellent condition and its architectural integrity is intact.

Narrative Description

Elizabeth Courville School is located within a residential area populated with small scale, single family houses built between the 1920s and 1940s. It has a broad, grass turf lawn in front of its front façade along St. Aubin Street that follows around to its south elevation along Nevada before terminating at the fenced school parking lot. Nevada forks southwest at Lumpkin Avenue, the eastern boundary of the Courville School site, forming an irregularly shaped right-of-way at the southern end. The two entrances on St. Aubin and the one on Nevada are accessed off straight line sidewalks. An Art Moderne style display sign is located at the southwest corner of the site. The white display area is set in a black metal frame and its pink and blue base is divided horizontally into three by metal ribs. It contains the words, FINE ARTS, WRITING, READING/MATH, in a variety of lettering styles.

Built at one time, the front façade of Courville School is faced with buff-colored, English bond brick with occasional brown and pale orange accents. Its symmetrical massing displays receding and projecting wall surfaces. The central section of the front façade is covered with a steeply pitched side-gabled roof with a flat deck, its end-walls each rising into a brick vent with a gabled chimney hood. Three two-story, tab-framed, subdivided window units flanked by two-story, elongated, blind niches with frontal gables occupy this central section. The two-story entrance pavilions are tucked into the front façade just beyond the central section. Each is composed of a double-door width, Gothic-arched vestibule with grape vines in the architraves and the name, "Elizabeth Courville School," in calligraphic letters below the second story windows. The entrance sections are topped with crenellated parapets.

To each side of the central section and the cross-gabled end bays are regularly fenestrated bays and a less steeply pitched gable roof. Projecting from these and the central roof are small, craftsman-influenced, hip roofed dormers. In the spandrels between the first and second story windows are patterns of three Xs flanked by Os, the Os each having a blue-colored, diamond-shaped tile in its center. The end-bay to the south features a conservatory with a pair of openings with tracery above; around the corner to the south elevation is a second conservatory. All openings are now covered with steel security panels.

The original "E" plan allowed for the auditorium to occupy the space behind the taller, central section and the gymnasium to occupy the space across the lateral hallway from the auditorium in the rear of the building. The boiler room was in the basement; its chimneystack projects from the back of the building. It matches the brick of the school building and is square in plan, tapering towards the top with chamfered edges.

An addition was built in 1929, extending the building to the east along Lumpkin Avenue and adding a second gymnasium, auditorium, and other specialized rooms. Its exterior design complements the earlier building in the color of the brick, its Gothic style, and its entrance bearing the dates on top of the flanking buttresses, "AD 1929," and the name, "ELIZABETH COURVILLE SCHOOL."

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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Ethnic Heritage

Period of Significance

1922 - 1929

Significant Dates

1922, 1929

Significant Person

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

African American

Architect/Builder

Malcomson, Higginbotham, & Palmer

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 grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance reflects the construction dates of the building.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

Malcomson, Higginbotham & Palmer, architects of Courville School, designed Hosmer and Guyton Schools according to the same plans. All were decorated with Pewabic tile on the interior and exterior, and all are extremely handsome examples of the Collegiate Gothic style as applied to a standardized plan. Therefore, Courville School meets National Register *Criterion C*. It also meets *Criterion A* because of its association with Detroit's African American history from the 1920s. It was then the only neighborhood in Detroit without deed restrictions that would have prevented African Americans from building their own homes.

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

African American students from Conant Gardens living west of Ryan Road comprised part of the student population of Courville School beginning with their move into the area in the early 1920s. Atkinson School was the other elementary school that Conant Gardens children attended. Conant Gardens is an area of northeast Detroit bounded by Seven Mile Road, Ryan Road Nevada and Conant Avenues. It was unusual in that there were no restrictive covenants forbidding people of color from purchasing lots in the property deeds, so that African Americans could purchase lots and build new homes, beginning in the early 1920s.¹ Other students attending Courville School included first generation white immigrants from Eastern European and Middle Eastern countries living east of Ryan.

This school was named after Elizabeth Courville (1862-1916), a Detroit teacher and principal. The first, twelve room unit was opened in January 1923 with 387 students from kindergarten through sixth grade. Its total cost was \$140,525. To respond to increasing enrollment, a twenty-two room was added several years later at a cost of \$292,673. In 1929, a fourteen room addition was completed, at a cost of \$182,753. At this time, the building had, in addition to regular classrooms, two gymnasiums, two auditoriums, two playrooms, two conservatories, two kindergartens, two art rooms, two open window rooms, along with a library, lunchroom, kitchen, showers, Special A room, and Girls' Special B room.

By 1961 the building had four kindergartens, fourteen self-contained classrooms, and twelve platoon homerooms, in addition to various specialized rooms. Enrollment peaked at 1,809 in 1953, and was reduced in 1956 when the seventh and eighth grades were transferred to Nolan and Cleveland Junior High Schools. The student population increased steadily during the early 1960s, concurrent with the demolition of a nearby public housing facility and its replacement with new, single-family homes.

Malcomson, Higginbotham & Palmer, architects of Courville School, designed Hosmer and Guyton Schools according to the same plans. All were decorated with Pewabic tile on the interior and exterior, and all are extremely handsome examples of the Collegiate Gothic style as applied to a standardized plan. Therefore, Courville School meets National Register *Criterion C*.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

9. Major Bibliographical References

¹ Conant Gardeners, p. 15.

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: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 12.08
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	<u>17</u>	<u>328818</u>	<u>4699221</u>	3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

E ST AUBIN 1566 THRU 1595 CADILLAC HEIGHTS SUB NO 2 L34 P10 PLATS, W C R 9/162 E ST AUBIN 284 THRU 256 AND VAC ALLEY ADJ MAPLEVIEW SUB L35 P78 PLATS, W C R 9/161

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The boundaries described above include the entire parcel historically associated with Courville School.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Deborah Goldstein
organization City of Detroit Historic Designation Advisory Board date March 25, 2009
street & number CAYMC, 2 Woodward Avenue, Suite 204 telephone (313) 224-3487
city or town Detroit state MI zip code 48226
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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive black and white photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property:

City or Vicinity: Detroit

County: Wayne

State: MI

Photographer: Timothy Boscarino

Date Photographed:

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

1 of ____.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, PO Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9

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Bibliography

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Detroit, City of, Buildings and Safety Engineering Department. *Building Permit Card Index*. Permit #31676, May 25, 1922; Permit #594A, March 4, 1936.

Sanborn Map Company. *Detroit, Mich*. Vol. 22, Sheet 05. Pelham, NY: Sanborn Map Company, 2003.