

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

559 - 9 1992

date entered

Richard Komatsu
Teich & Tucker

Final Copy

See instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Hillside School

and/or common Hillside School Hillside Primary School

2. Location

street & number 1581 LeRoy Avenue

n/a not for publication

city, town Berkeley 94708

n/a vicinity of

state California

code

06

county Alameda

code 001

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Berkeley Unified School District

street & number 2134 Grove Street

city, town Berkeley

n/a vicinity of

state California 94704

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Alameda County Courthouse

street & number 1225 Fallon Street

city, town Oakland

state California 94612

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Berkeley Urban Conservation Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date April 1980

federal state county local

depository for survey records Berkeley Architectural Heritage Assn., Box 1137,

city, town Berkeley 94701-1137

state CA

Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date <u>n/a</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Hillside School is a neo-Tudor, stucco and half-timbered, slate-roofed, mostly two-story building whose rambling angular plan follows the contours of its hillside site and the winding North Berkeley streets. The west facade presents a 150'-long central classroom wing running NW-SE, with a continuous bank of wood framed classroom windows on the upper floor, offices and library on the ground floor, and two second-floor square bays with dormers and half-timbered gable ends above the doors. Large wings join the ends of this main building at angles of about 120°: at the north end the auditorium projects forward (W) of the main building, with a tall wall of windows & ornamental stickwork in its gable end which is about 60' high at the peak. There is a gabled entry hall and 2-story polygonal bay in the angle between the auditorium and main building. Behind the south end of the central block is a high-gabled 3-story classroom wing, its south wall all windows; at the back of this wing is a 1-story, L-shaped, 3-room addition (1963). South of the central block on the downward slope of the hill is the kindergarten/primary wing, a sort of miniature repetition of the main building, with a gabled dormer over the arched entrance and a large main classroom with west-facing gable & big bay window. Entrances to kindergarten & auditorium wings are low, deep-set gothic arches with heavy wooden doors, in 1½-story gable ends. All gable ends are trimmed to varying degrees with half-timbering, stickwork, and wood finials. Slate roofs of wings & dormers form a complex pattern of peaks.

The entire building was extensively reinforced and rebuilt in 1934-5 (kindergarten), 1936 (central portion), and 1937-8 (auditorium), faithfully following the style and materials of the original building. Roof of the south classroom wing was somewhat rearranged, & some parapet levels changed. The small dormer toward the north end of the main wing was added so slates would not fall on the exit in an earthquake. As a result Hillside was the only one of the older Berkeley schools not affected by the earthquake work of the mid-1970s when the others were demolished, vacated, or completely rebuilt. The bottom story of the main building was originally a recreation basement with the same wall of tall wood-framed windows as the upper floor. In 1963-4 the basement was remodeled for offices and library, and some of the window area closed off. At the same time, 3 classrooms were added inconspicuously at the back of the east wing. (This work was done by Walter Ratcliff's son.)

Notable features of the interior are the auditorium, the woodwork and detailing in the hallways, and the use of windows and wood in the classrooms. The auditorium, about 40' x 55', has hardwood floor, beamed dark wood ceiling with skylights and (incomplete) chandeliers. The west wall has a huge wood-framed, lattice-paned window, 16' x 22' high, floor to ceiling, protected by a wood balustrade; there is a spectacular view of the Bay. The stage at the east end is presently closed off by a temporary wall so the backstage area can be used as a woodshop. French doors on the north wall open onto a small patio.

Hallways follow the same irregular angles as the exterior plan. Second floor halls have skylights, unpainted wood moldings and wood framed bulletin boards, working transoms above the doors. Details include brass stair corners and studs on the wide banisters (to discourage sliding), metal and amber-glass light fixtures, and a floral terra cotta drinking fountain given in memory of two pupils in 1928. On the main corridor, 3 classrooms face east and 4 face west, all with full walls of operable wood-framed windows. Room 18, former teachers' lunchroom has a Batchelder tiled fireplace. Two west rooms have unusual glassed-in cloakrooms & conference rooms.

(SEE CONTINUATION SHEET)

PHK-6-300A
(11/78)

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South of the kindergarten wing there is a temporary bungalow in what was the kindergarten playground. Main playground is in the loop of Buena Vista Avenue west of the school; there is a small landscaped area just in front of the school with lawn and flagpole and large evergreen trees. Other sides of the school face up-sloping hillsides; small patio north of auditorium, mountain and native plant garden east of central wing, with a pathway up to La Loma Avenue to the east.

Examination of 1933 photographs show that cast stone shields and rosettes over the exterior doors and stone chimneys and finials were lost to Field Act work in the 1930's. However, the original slate roof remains, the original wood sash and trim remain, and many of the interior and exterior light fixtures are still in place and functioning. Original doors, wainscoting, and other millwork bear the signs of 50 years' wear and tear but are in remarkably good condition. Exterior stucco, original brick steps, and concrete paving are in excellent condition.

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Beside Hillside, Ratcliff's civic and educational commissions in the mid-1920s included Mills College (1923), Pacific School of Religion, additions to Anna Head School, and the Berkeley Day Nursery (the latter two of which are listed in the National Register of Historic Places). By the early 1930s, the effects of Depression and Ratcliff's increasing absorption in his Fidelity Mortgage business caused him to retire virtually from the practice of architecture, making Hillside School one of his last Berkeley works.

In 1934-38 Hillside received extensive reinforcing and rebuilding to comply with the Field Act, regarding earthquake safety in public schools; some external ornamentation was removed but in general the building's appearance was faithfully preserved. There was a large budget item for millwork, which included reconstructing the beamed and paneled auditorium ceiling around the new bracing—something that would no longer be financially feasible. Building codes, budgets, and changing fashions in education mean that there are very few schools like Hillside left. Its intact woodwork, windows, slate roof, and original light fixtures are rare anywhere, and unique in the Berkeley schools.

Like all the public schools, Hillside has been through changes in educational theory. Originally K-6, it is K-3; enrollment was 225 when it opened in 1926, about 450 when the addition was made, and 195 in 1982. Traditions continue: the active PTA, founded in 1902, claims to be "one of the oldest in Northern California"; neighborhood pageants and dance festivals in the Hillside Club continued into the 1950s; and in recent years parents and staff and neighbors have responded to recurring proposals to close the school with something very like the cursading spirit of the Hillside Club Mothers demanding a school "suited to the little children and the hillside,"

FHR-8-300A
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B.J.S. Cahill and W. Batcliff, "City of Berkeley's New Public School Buildings," Architect and Engineer, May, 1916. Leslie Freudenheim, Building with Nature: Roots of the San Francisco Bay Region Tradition, 1974. Berkeley Courier, August 7, 1926. Berkeley Gazette, April 3 and May 6, 1925; August 9 and 26, September 15 and 17, 1926; October 20, 1934; Interviews with Marian Altman (Principal), Barbara Smith (school secretary), Lorraine Hays (early alumnus), FTA file at Hillside.