

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: Eliot School

other name/site number: n/a

2. Location

street & number: 4242 Grove

not for publication: N/A

city/town: St. Louis

vicinity: N/A

state: Missouri county: Independent City code: 510 zip code: 63107

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: Public - local

Category of Property: building

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u> </u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: St. Louis, Missouri, Public Schools of William B. Ittner

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4. State/Federal Agency Certification

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As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria.

 See continuation sheet.

W. L. Blackwell 16 July 1992
Signature of certifying official G. Tracy Mehan III, Director Date

Department of Natural Resources and State Historic Preservation Officer
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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5. National Park Service Certification

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I, hereby certify that this property is:

 entered in the National Register _____
 See continuation sheet. _____
 determined eligible for the _____
 National Register _____
 See continuation sheet. _____
 determined not eligible for the _____
 National Register _____
 removed from the National Register _____
 other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper Date
of Action

=====

6. Function or Use

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Historic: EDUCATION Sub: school

Current : EDUCATION Sub: school

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7. Description

=====

Architectural Classification:

Classical Revival

Other Description: N/A

Materials: foundation STONE/granite roof CERAMIC TILE
walls BRICK other TERRA COTTA

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

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8. Statement of Significance

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Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: local.

Applicable National Register Criteria: C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) : N/A

Areas of Significance: ARCHITECTURE

Period(s) of Significance: 1898

Significant Dates : 1898 _____

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Ittner, William Butts

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

X See continuation sheet.

9. Major Bibliographical References

X See continuation sheet.

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 -- Specify Repository: Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: approximately 1 acre

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

A	<u>15</u>	<u>742860</u>	<u>4283240</u>	B	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
C	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	D	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

☐ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: X See continuation sheet.

Boundary Justification: X See continuation sheet.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: Cynthia Hill Longwisch, Research Associate

Organization: Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc. Date: 4/19/90

Street & Number: 917 Locust 7th Floor Telephone: 314-421-6474

City or Town: St. Louis State: MO ZIP: 63101

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Section number 7

ELIOT SCHOOL

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SUMMARY: The William B. Ittner-designed Eliot School is located at 4242 Grove, St. Louis, Missouri, in City Block 2426. The 1898 Classical Revival design school is located on a roughly triangular-shaped lot at the intersection of North Florissant, Carter and Grove Streets. The three-story school is built of red brick with original red clay tile roof. An example of the H-Plan Elementary Schools property type, a center block with a perpendicularly-set wings at either end forms the distinctive H-shaped plan in which a center corridor is flanked by classrooms. Eliot School retains its original materials throughout, sustaining virtually no exterior alterations and appearing very much as originally built. The front and sides of the property feature an iron fence with original gates and stone-topped brick pillars. The front schoolyard is a grassy enclosure ornamented with several large trees and numerous small evergreen shrubs, while the rear yard is covered with asphalt and enclosed in chain-link fencing for use as a playground. Dominantly sited in a north-side residential neighborhood, the school and its setting remain essentially unchanged since 1898.

NARRATIVE: Eliot School is comprised of a ten-bay central block flanked by wings each two bays wide, forming an H-shaped plan; a one-story kindergarten room of hexagonal shape projects from the center of the rear elevation. The red brick of the school is laid in red mortar, with limestone trim, red granite ashlar foundation and red clay tiles on the hipped roof. A red terra cotta cornice rims the building, featuring a bead-and-reel molding interrupted regularly by lions' heads; brick dentilling and three corbeled courses just beneath complete the cornice. A terra cotta sill course at the second story tops three courses of corbeled brickwork. Limestone lug sills ornament the first and third story windows. In the center block, second story windows have round arches, each arch infilled with brick featuring three raised headers for decorative effect. Other center block windows are surmounted by jack arches; all are six-over-six panes with double-hung wood sash. Windows in the wings feature pressed-brick rectangular surrounds, forming vertical panels.

The first story, from the foundation to the second-story sills, is rusticated with the exception of the center rear elevation. Jack arches are incorporated into the brickwork over the windows; the main entrance features a round stone arch from which the rustication radiates. The foundation is of red ashlar granite, some quarry-faced and some dressed. The foundation of the kindergarten is brick. A single brick chimney rises at the rear elevation, each side featuring paired round-arched vents. A gabled center dormer on the rear elevation houses a vent. The exterior is in very good condition and remains unaltered. The size of the trees in the front schoolyard appears to be the only notable change in the aspect of the building since construction. Board of Education Annual Reports note that quicksand was encountered on the

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site during construction, forcing the building crew to sink foundations down to bedrock. At this time, the exterior is intact and in good condition

Few alterations have been made to the interior of Eliot School. The kindergarten room has been partitioned front to back to form two rooms. On the first floor, the northwest classroom is now used for office space; otherwise, the room usage is the same as originally planned. Hallways have granitic mosaic floors in random pattern; classrooms feature hardwood floors, and marble baseboards are present throughout. Original pendant light fixtures illuminate the building; they feature milk-glass shades in the form of somewhat flattened spheres. The entrance to the kindergarten is highlighted by a stained and leaded glass transom and sidelights, the transom depicting a little girl with scissors and books. As with most St. Louis public schools, the interior of this school is in need of some repair work, primarily cosmetic repair to the plaster walls, but for the most part the interior is in good condition and retains its integrity with the exceptions noted.

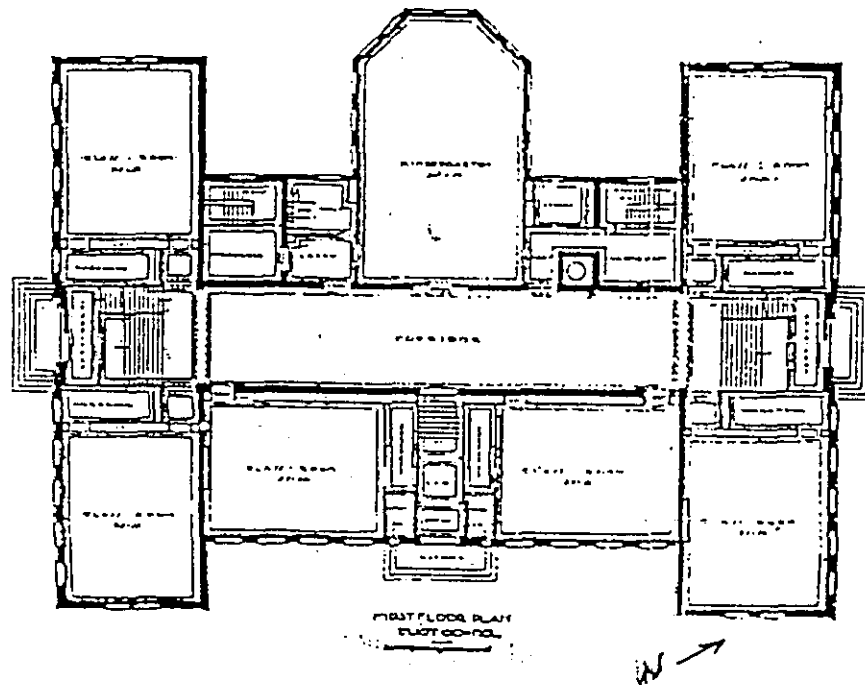
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First Floor Plan, Eliot School, 1898 (St. Louis Board of Education).

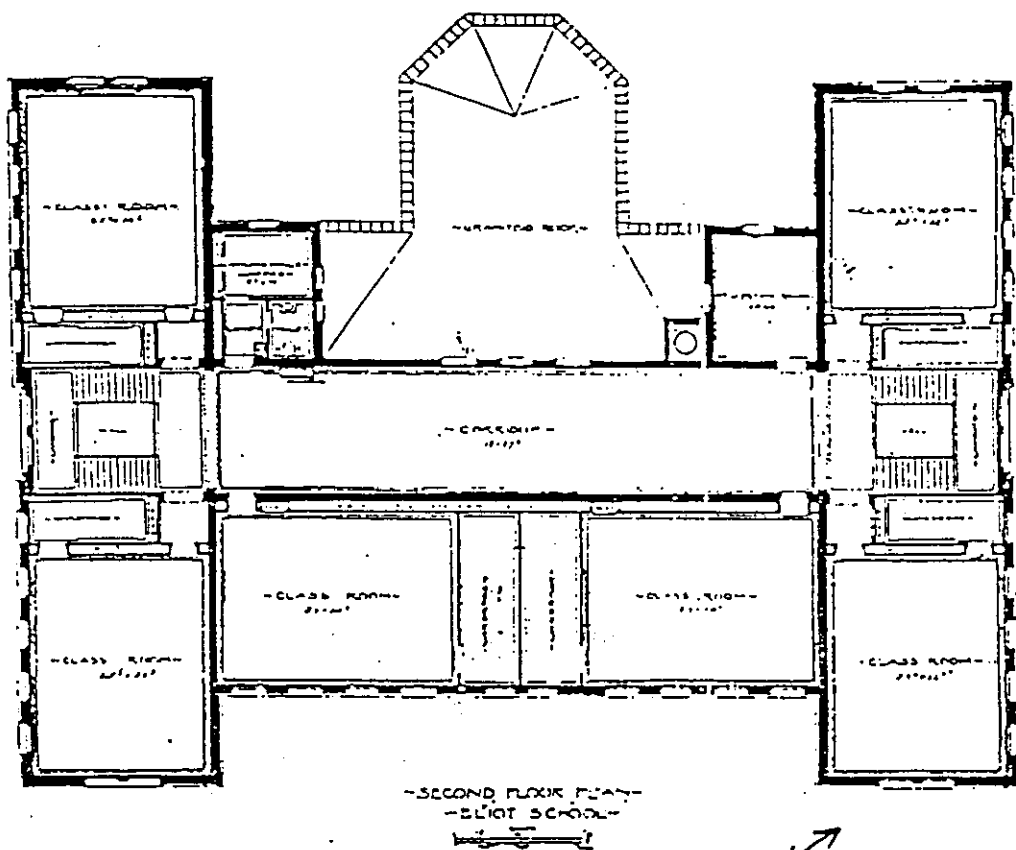
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Second Floor Plan, Eliot School, 1898 (St. Louis Board of Education).

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SUMMARY: The Eliot School in St. Louis, Missouri is significant under Criterion C for its architecture and architect. St. Louisan William B. Ittner, F.A.I.A., executed the Classical Revival school as one of two nearly identical designs that were his first projects as Commissioner of School Buildings for the St. Louis Board of Education. Ittner determined to improve upon public school design and spent most of his professional life engaged in the endeavor. The school is an example of the H-Plan Elementary Schools property type; the H-plan represented Ittner's first cautious step toward a new type of school layout. The evolution of Ittner's ideas can be traced chronologically through his public school buildings. These represent the expression of concepts that gradually solidified into Ittner's philosophy of school design, culminating in the "open plan," or E shape. This philosophy eventually revolutionized St. Louis school design as Ittner and St. Louis became known for innovative schools (see "St. Louis, Missouri, Public Schools of William B. Ittner" MPS).

NARRATIVE: The permit to build Eliot School was issued in March of 1898, along with the permit for Sherman School, which was actually the first to be completed; Sherman is located in the Shaw Certified Local Historic District and has been discussed in the nomination document for that district. The C. Stafford Building and Construction Company built Eliot School for \$100,284. It was named for William Greenleaf Eliot (1811-87), Secretary and President of the School Board and founder of Washington University. Approximately three hundred students attend grades kindergarten through five at the school.

Eliot School represents one of the first steps William Ittner took to improve physical conditions for elementary school students. Older City schools were typically blocky in design, with poorly-lit corridors, ineffective lighting and inadequate heating and ventilation systems, among many shortcomings. Probably the most strongly considered single factor in previous St. Louis school design had been economy; however, Ittner had additional priorities, and some of these are apparent in his first efforts.

Most important to the new Commissioner was getting the physical layout of the school right. In this early, H-shaped attempt, a center corridor runs the length of the center block, with rooms on either side (Figures 1 and 2). Wings provide corner rooms with natural light from two sides and the kindergarten is so situated as to receive light from three sides. The corridor is still relatively dim, leaving some rooms with natural light from one side only, an ultimately unsatisfactory situation. Ittner, obsessed with the lighting problem, endeavored to obtain a uniform wash of natural light in as many rooms as possible and during as much of the day as possible. The architect built three other schools in 1898 using this basic H plan: besides Sherman, Monroe is listed in the Benton Park National Register District and

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Jackson is included in this Multiple Property nomination. The architect was forced to build several schools in quick succession to help alleviate a situation of serious overcrowding - hence his use of a plan that was still substantially undeveloped.

The physical systems of schools were a priority for Ittner. With Eliot School, as his others, he was most concerned with adequate ventilation, heating and sanitation. Ventilation was of particular interest in an era of less than perfect hygiene and rampant outbreaks of many contagious diseases, including influenza and tuberculosis. The forced-air system that provided a change of the entire volume of air in the classroom about every seven minutes utilized a boiler for heat, rather than a furnace.¹ The old furnace systems had proven expensive to maintain and inadequate for the job. Eliot and the other schools built in 1898 provided another boon to students in the form of indoor plumbing. Sanitary toilets were installed in several locations in the schools, replacing outhouses. Clean indoor fountains replaced the schoolyard hydrant with its communal dipper. Such amenities are regarded as necessities today; in 1898 these innovations were nothing short of revolutionary. The architect was evidently pleased with his efforts to modernize these systems, appearing satisfied with their efficiency in his comments in the 1903-04 Annual Report of the Board of Education.

The principle of beauty, Ittner felt, was important in a school. It was hoped that students exposed to beauty, graciousness and cleanliness at school would develop an appreciation and love for these qualities that were often absent from late-nineteenth century working-class homes. Eliot School's classical detailing and handsome proportions provided a place of learning that exposed children to these new ideas and instilled pride for their school. Eliot and its early sister schools were able to imbue respect; Eliot is delineated with such fine details as lions' heads at the cornice, arched window heads and a well-framed entrance. Ittner started out well in his choice of style for these early efforts, establishing a solid reputation among conservative St. Louisans before attempting his later, more flamboyant designs.

Well-tended grounds enhanced the school buildings in Ittner's opinion; though not a landscape architect, he encouraged the Board to purchase ample grounds whenever possible. Earlier schools were virtually all built right on the sidewalk line, with a small, dirt playground at the rear - very early schools often lacked even that amenity. Several of William Ittner's early schools were built on lots already owned by the Board and earmarked for schools; these lots were often really too small and he was forced to omit a lawn. Although he was not successful until after the turn of the century in getting money to pay gardeners, Ittner tried to provide tastefully landscaped grounds to the extent allowed by space and budget. The front schoolyard at Eliot illustrates

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this. The evergreen foundation plantings and deciduous shade trees spaced on a flat lawn are typical of early Ittner landscaping. The plantings provide a welcome contrast to the neighboring streets lined with front-yardless brick dwellings.

It is interesting to note that Eliot School, a model of modern institutional design when it opened, still functions as a viable school after ninety years of continuous operation, remaining in remarkably good physical condition with few alterations.

ENDNOTES

- ¹St. Louis Board of Education, Annual Report, 1903-04, pp. 195-96.

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"Facts Concerning One Hundred Years of Progress in the Public Schools of St. Louis," Public School Messenger 35. St. Louis: St. Louis Board of Education, 1938.

Ittner, Marie Anderson. Footprints. St. Louis: John S. Swift, 1955.

_____. "William B. Ittner: His Service to American School Architecture," American School Board Journal (January 1941).

St. Louis Board of Education, Annual Report, 1903-04, pp. 195-96.

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"Facts Concerning One Hundred Years of Progress in the Public Schools of St. Louis," Public School Messenger 35. St. Louis: St. Louis Board of Education, 1938.

Ittner, Marie Anderson. Footprints. St. Louis: John S. Swift, 1955.

_____. "William B. Ittner: His Service to American School Architecture," American School Board Journal (January 1941).

St. Louis Board of Education, Annual Report, 1903-04, pp. 195-96.

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Verbal Boundary Description: Eliot School is located at 4242 Grove on a lot comprising approximately the north one-half of City Block 2426, as follows: At the intersection of North Florissant Avenue and Glasgow Avenue, proceed in a northwesterly direction along the south right-of-way of North Florissant to its intersection with Carter Avenue; then proceed in a westerly direction along the south right-of-way of Carter to its intersection with Grove; then proceed in a southwesterly direction along the east right-of-way of Grove approximately 270 feet; then proceed in a southeasterly direction along the north property line of 4222 Grove to its intersection with the right-of-way with Glasgow Avenue; then proceed northeasterly along the right-of-way of Glasgow to its intersection with the right-of-way with North Florissant Avenue, the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification: The boundary described above encompass that portion of the city lot which has been historically associated with the property.

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The following information is the same for all photographs:

1. Eliot School
4242 Grove
2. St. Louis [Independent City], MO
3. Cynthia Longwisch
4. April 1990
5. Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc.
7th floor, 917 Locust
St. Louis, MO 63101

Photograph #1: Primary elevation; camera facing west

Photograph #2: Rear elevation; camera facing southeast

ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI, PUBLIC
SCHOOLS OF WILLIAM B.
ITNER

Eliot School
4242 Grove
St. Louis, MO
ZONE 15
EASTING 742860
NORTHING 4283240

ROCK-SPRING SCHOOL
3974 Sarpy
St. Louis, MO
ZONE 15
EASTING 739720
NORTHING 4279180

Jackson School
1632 Hogan St.
St. Louis, MO
ZONE 15
EASTING 743620
NORTHING 4280880



1:250,000 FEET
(MO.)
T. 3 N.

T. 2 N



#1 ST. LOUIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF WILLIAM B. ITTNER
ELIOT SCHOOL, 4242 GROVE, ST. LOUIS, MO
PRIMARY ELEVATION; CAMERA FACING WEST



ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF WILLIAM B. ITTNER
ELIOT SCHOOL, 4242 GROVE, ST. LOUIS, MO
REAR ELEVATION; CAMERA FACING SOUTHEAST

2