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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM



NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name: (FRANCIS L.)CARDOZO SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL  
other names/site number: CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL

2. Location

street & number: 13th & Clifton Streets, N. W. not for publication: N/A  
city or town: Washington vicinity: N/A  
state: District of Columbia code: DC county: N/A code: 001 zip code: 20009

3. State/federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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 \_\_\_ nationally  statewide \_\_\_ locally. ( \_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

*Robert L. Mallett* 8/27/93  
Signature of certifying official DC SHPO Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria. ( \_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

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:)

*John A. Savage* 9/30/93

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Jr* Signature of Keeper Date of Action



**FRANCIS L. CARDOZO SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL  
WASHINGTON, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

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**8. Statement of Significance**

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**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.)

- 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)

**ARCHITECTURE  
EDUCATION  
ETHNIC HERITAGE/BLACK  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE  
PHILOSOPHY  
SOCIAL HISTORY**

**Period of Significance:** 1914-1950.

**Significant Dates:** 1916; 1950.

**Significant Person** (Complete if Criterion B is marked above): N/A.

**Cultural Affiliation:** N/A.

**Architect/Builder:** Ittner, William B. / Dall, William.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**FRANCIS L. CARDOZO SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL  
WASHINGTON, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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(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: Charles Sumner School Museum and Archives.

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**10. Geographical Data**

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Acreeage of Property: 9.0 acres.

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	18	324000	4309700	3	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.						

Verbal Boundary Description: Square 2870, Lot 804 (old lot 28) in the District of Columbia.

Boundary Justification: Original building lot in its entirety.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title: Tanya Edwards Beauchamp / architectural historian (Based on research reports prepared by Antionette E. Lee / historian for District of Columbia Public Schools)

date: August 1993

street & number: 930 Leigh Mill Road

telephone: 703-759-3796

city or town: Great Falls

state: Virginia

zip code: 22066

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**Additional Documentation**

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**Submit the following items with the completed form:**

**Continuation Sheets**

**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.

**Photographs**

- Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional items** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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**Property Owner**

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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

**name:** District of Columbia Public Schools  
Office of the Superintendent

**street & number:** Presidential Building, 415 12th Street, N. W.      **telephone:** 202-724-4222  
**city or town:** Washington      **state:** District of Columbia      **zip code:** 20004

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**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. 470 et seq).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the 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, P.O. Box 3717, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Francis L. Cardozo Senior High School  
Washington, District of Columbia

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Narrative Description

The Cardozo Senior High School building is located on a prominent ridge just north of Florida Avenue, the original boundary of Washington City. It occupies a nine acre site (Lot 804 in Square 2870) bounded by 11th and 13th Streets and Florida Avenue and Clifton Streets, N. W. The building is sited at the highest point of Lot 804, fronting on Clifton Street. The elevation of the site falls away abruptly to the south with the athletic field and stadium occupying the lower portion of the site.

Throughout much of its history, the Central High School building has been regarded as a showplace. From its location on a terraced site of nearly nine acres, the school offers outstanding views of monumental Washington, Arlington, and the broad Potomac River valley. The setting is a designed landscape of extraordinary integrity, unifying the stadium with the building above through a series of balustraded terraces providing for scenic overlooks. The site is similar to that of nearby Meridian Hill Park, 15th, 16th, W and Euclid streets, N. W., a property listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The landscape design treatment is aesthetically linked with that of Meridian Hill Park. Both recall the terraces designed by Frederick Law Olmsted for the U. S. Capitol, responding with verve to the unique character of their siting above the monumental core of the National Capitol.

William Ittner designed the building in the Collegiate Gothic style, a style which was popular in school building design during the first three decades of the twentieth century. The style had various advantages for large school buildings. It was considered appropriately scholastic in character. It provided for large window surfaces, which could be made as high or wide as necessary. It was also cheaper to build than a Colonial revival style school because it did not require heavy cornices, balustrades, pediment, or a high pitched roof.<sup>1</sup> Facing Clifton Street, the main elevation of the three story building is articulated by a central projecting pavilion sheathed largely in limestone, which is given prominence by a loggia with three entrances and a sculpted frieze at the parapet. The central portion is flanked by two long recessed sections sheathed in brick with limestone trim. These sections provide for secondary entrances. On the ends are pavilions with blank red brick walls facing Clifton Street. The Clifton Street elevation and the other three are characterized by broad banks of 6 over 9 light sash windows arranged in groups of two, four, and five windows.

Limestone trim and tile work enliven the otherwise dark red brick building. Limestone trim is used as belt courses to divide stories, as if to underscore the building's horizontality. Limestone is also used in the window and door surrounds and in the corners of towers and end pavilions to emphasize their projection from the main building line. A decorative limestone railing is placed above the tower parapets and a cut-out limestone design in the parapet also occurs above end pavilions and above several of the window groups. Limestone is employed in the stair railings at the main and secondary entrances.

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<sup>1</sup> James O. Betelle, "Architectural Styles as Applied to School Buildings," The American School Board Journal, Volume 58 (April 1919), p. 75.

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At the rear, the building extends down through the basement and ground floors. At the basement floor, the projecting section contains the heating and ventilating systems, the armory, rifle range, and swimming pool. In the upper stories, the projecting sections indicate the location of shops for technical training and the boys' and girls' gymnasium. This section is sheathed in limestone and flanked by slightly projecting towers. The low-rise projecting blocks at the rear are punctuated by brick pilasters, and ornamented with decorative tile plaques. The roofs over the shops are crowned with raised skylights. In the central section at the rear, doorways with decorative limestone surround and pilasters lead from the boys' gymnasium to the top tier of the stadium. The stadium is constructed of granite tiers that descend to the lowest level of the site, the athletic field. Decorative limestone railings lead from the upper levels of the site to and around the top of the stadium. At the southern end, granite steps with limestone railings lead to Florida Avenue. The east side of the site is landscaped with a grassy stepped terrace. A staircase emanates from each of the two side entrances and descends down the terrace. Brick and stone trimmed retaining walls surround the landscaping on this side of the building. On the west side of the building near Clifton Street a flat, grassy lawn is enclosed with a retaining wall. Beyond the lawn are fenced-in tennis courts. Beyond the tennis courts, at the lower level, is a parking lot. From there, stairs lead to the stadium.

While the exterior treatment of the school was similar to that of other school buildings that William Ittner designed, the sculptural panels at the frieze of the central pavilion of the Clifton Street elevation are unique to the building. Executed by sculptor George Julian Zolnay, the 50' x 8' frieze is divided into three panels. The central panel represents academic studies, the left panel business training, and the right panel manual training. Zolnay used the likenesses of Snowden Ashford, William B. Ittner, William Dall, and principal Emory S. Wilson in appropriate situations. Ashford and Ittner are portrayed in the manual training panel in the two figures depicting mechanical drawing. Dall's likeness is in the same panel as the student of mechanics. Wilson is the model for the student of history in the academic studies panel. Zolnay believed the frieze served as an important educational device because through viewing it, the student would "understand better the meaning and dignity of the studies which they are pursuing."<sup>2</sup> The building floor plan is laid out with a large auditorium in the center that rises from the first floor through the third. The classrooms are arranged around the perimeter, separated from the auditorium on the east and west sides by open courts. The capacity of the auditorium is 2,000 and at the building's completion, was considered the largest space for community use in the city. Beneath the auditorium, at the ground floor, is a lunchroom large enough to accommodate 800 at a single seating. From the lunchroom, doors lead to the landscaped interior courts. In the central pavilion of the Clifton Street elevation, at the second floor, is the library, and at the third floor, a music room and lecture hall outfitted with terraced seating. The building was noted for its excellent facilities and for attention paid to decorative detail. When complete, the building was the first District public high school to incorporate an indoor swimming pool. The corridors throughout the entire building are wide enough to accommodate hanging pictures and glass cases for trophies. The school library room is lined with oak paneling and boasts a carved stone mantle. Several original drinking fountains survive. They are designed with porcelain basins backed by individually designed decorative color tile *bas relief* panels.

The property remains in its original use with its original owner and retains a high degree of architectural integrity in both building and site features.

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<sup>2</sup> "Frieze Novel Decoration for Central High School," Sunday Star, October 31, 1915.

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Francis L. Cardozo Senior High School  
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Summary Statement of Significance

Francis L. Cardozo Senior High School (Central High School) is a building of national significance in the development of an appropriate building form for schools as their use was expanded in the United States in the first quarter of the twentieth century to serve community as well as educational needs. It is the work of William B. Ittner, a nationally prominent architect of innovative, prototypical school buildings responsive to the changed functions of public schools. It serves as a microcosm of public school history in the Nation's Capital, reflecting the evolution of the schools from a racially dual to a unified system. Central was renamed to honor Francis L. Cardozo and black students were admitted in 1950, on the eve of desegregation in the District of Columbia. Although this occurred less than 50 years ago the exceptional local significance of this change merits recognition in the listing of the Francis L. Cardozo High School in the National Register of Historic Places.

Like Franklin School (1866) before it, Cardozo was a showcase school of national importance in the development of an appropriate building form for the evolving educational programs of the public schools. Designed by William Ittner, a nationally prominent school architect, it is a building of extraordinary architectural significance characterized by a large site incorporating extensive recreation areas, flexible design facilitating future expansion, open plan allowing for natural lighting and ventilation, and restricted building height. Brilliantly sited above the monumental city on one of the terraces carved by the Potomac in prehistoric times, the building is set within a designed landscape of exceptional distinction which links the building with the athletic facilities below through a series of balustraded terraces, stairs and scenic overlooks and fully exploits the dramatic qualities of the steep site with its extraordinary views of the city, the Potomac River and the Virginia shore beyond. It is significant as an expression of the new educational philosophy of the time which endeavored to serve both educational and community needs and, in addition to covering academic subjects, looked after the students' health and social welfare, instilled skills and values for a successful adulthood and taught profitable use of leisure time. In addition to classrooms and an auditorium, the indoor running track, a large lunchroom, manual training workshops, domestic science rooms, science laboratories, classrooms intended for business education, arts and crafts studios, a music room, a large general library, an armory, and a rifle range. The auditorium was located on the main floor rather than on the uppermost floor so that it would be convenient for community use without disturbing school routine. The building plan served as a prototype for the design of subsequent public schools in the District of Columbia. Historically, the building serves as a microcosm of D. C. public school history, reflecting the evolution of the schools from a dual to a unified system. Cardozo Senior High School was named for and memorializes the career of Francis L. Cardozo, a prominent late nineteenth century black educator who studied at the University of Glasgow and served as principal of several D. C. Public schools, including the M Street High School. The graduates of the school were important figures in the nation and in the District of Columbia and include J. Edgar Hoover, former Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

History of the Schools that Occupied the Building

The Cardozo Senior High School building at 13th & Clifton Streets, N. W., was constructed 1914-16 as Central High School. At the time Central High School was built, the public schools of the District of



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Columbia were racially segregated. Central High School was intended for white students, while Dunbar High School, constructed at the same time on First Street, N. W., was for black students. Central served as a white school until 1950 when shifting demographic patterns in the District and the opening of new high schools elsewhere in the city caused its enrollment to dwindle. At the same time, the black high schools were overcrowded. In 1950 the D. C. Board of Education transferred the Central High School building to Cardozo High School, then housed in crowded conditions at the old Business High School building located at 9th Street and Rhode Island Avenue, N. W. Starting in the fall of 1950, the building was called Cardozo High School. It retained this name after the D. C. public schools were integrated in 1954. Thus the first half of the history of the building is associated with Central High School, while its story of the past thirty-eight years is connected with Cardozo High School.

Central High School traces its origins to 1876 when the Advanced Grammar School for Boys was inaugurated at the old Thompson School building. Later, the boys' school was moved to the Franklin School building and renamed Boys' High School. By the early 1880s, the two high schools were in need of larger accommodations. Private contributions were raised for a new coed school. In 1881, D. C. Public Schools officials persuaded the U. S. Congress to appropriate funds to build a new high school on city property at 7th and O Streets, N. W. In the fall of 1882, the new high school building for both girls and boys, named Washington High School, was opened. It was a three-story red brick building. At its opening, the Washington High School was regarded as a model high school. However, while the building was large, there was little space for athletics and social organizations. Many graduates of Washington High School entered the normal school. Others enrolled in the nation's leading colleges and universities, including Cornell University, Bryn Mawr, Johns Hopkins, Dartmouth, and Harvard University. Its graduates became leading professionals in the District of Columbia in the fields of law, medicine, business, diplomacy, and architecture.

By the late 1880s, Washington High School had become overcrowded and a new wing was constructed. In 1890, the demand for a high school education was so great that adjunct high schools were created. Washington High School was designated the Central Adjunct or Central Branch. The Eastern Adjunct or Capitol Heights Branch opened at the Peabody School. The Western Adjunct or Georgetown Branch opened at the Curtis School. By 1892-93, the names of the schools became Central, Eastern, Western, and Business high schools and high school was now a four-year program. By 1902, manual or technical training was separated out from Central and placed in the William McKinley Technical High School. It might be noted that even with separate schools devoted to business and technical education, Central continued to offer courses in these subjects.

In the early twentieth century, Central High School offered a wide array of activities beyond required classes. Social and academic clubs, sports teams, and cadet companies were an integral part of the high school experience. In 1904 the Central High School Alumni Association was formed. In 1906 the first issue of the annual year book, the Brecky, was published. Even with the creation of the adjunct high schools, the old Central High School building was seriously overcrowded. The 1908 Schoolhouse Commission voiced the opinion that the building was "ill-adapted to high school purposes." The commission recommended that a new high school be constructed "a little nearer the edge of the city, preferably at some location in or near Columbia Heights, convenient to both systems of car lines."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Report of the Schoolhouse Commission Upon a General Plan for the Consolidation of Public Schools in the District of Columbia. 60th Congress, 1st Session, Document No. 338, p.35.

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In 1909 the D. C. Board of Education set aside funds to purchase a site north of Florida Avenue and west of Georgia Avenue. By 1912 famed St. Louis architect William B. Ittner was engaged to draw up plans for the new Central building. One year later, in March 1913, as his last act as president of the United States, William Howard Taft signed the appropriations for the new school. Also in that year, William Ittner completed plans for the school. Symbolic of the broader functions that public schools served, the new Central High School building included a stadium, athletic field, swimming pool, gyms, armory, tennis courts, greenhouse, library, and auditorium. One year later, in 1914, the Sherman tract, located between 11th and 13th Streets, Florida Avenue, and Clifton Street, was purchased. The cornerstone was laid in March 1915 and, in 1916, the building opened for students. Because Central offered academic, technical, and business training, it was referred to as a "composite high school." The old Central building was adapted to a variety of educational purposes. It was demolished in 1951 to make way for the new Shaw Junior High School.

Central High School enrolled over 3,000 students through much of the 1920s. When junior high schools were created in the mid-1920s and many ninth grade students transferred to them, Central's freshman enrollment declined. During the 1930s new senior high schools, such as Coolidge, Roosevelt, and Wilson were constructed in northwest Washington and siphoned off students who otherwise would have attended Central. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s Central's enrollment declined to barely 1000 students. In an attempt to bolster the student population, the D. C. Board of Education transformed the building in 1948 into Central Junior-Senior High School by incorporating students from Powell Junior High School. By the late 1940s an estimated 47,000 students had been educated at Central. Among its illustrious graduates were J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the F. B. I.; Dr. Alfred Sze, Ambassador to the U. S. from China; Dr. Hobart Corning, Superintendent of the D. C. Public Schools; and Brice Clagett, Associate Justice of the Municipal Court of Appeals. Actress Helen Hayes studied there.

Efforts to keep a respectable number of students at Central High School were unsuccessful. In 1950, the Board of Education, facing vastly overcrowded black schools and emptying white schools, determined to convert Central, Roosevelt, or Wilson Teachers' schools to a black school. The Board decided that Central High School would be converted. Central High's last day was June 13, 1950. The remaining Central students were transferred to Roosevelt High School.

Cardozo High School was the new occupant of the Central building. As an institution, Cardozo High School traced its beginnings to 1888 when a two-year non-college preparatory program was introduced in the black high school, then under the leadership of principal Dr. Francis L. Cardozo. A graduate of the University of Glasgow, Cardozo was a black educator who served as principal of several D. C. public schools. The non-college program prepared students for careers in business and as office workers. The business and academic programs coexisted in the same building, even after the high school for black students moved to the M Street High School in 1891, and to Dunbar High School in 1916. In 1928 the business program was separated from Dunbar, named in honor of Cardozo, and moved to the old

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M Street High School. In 1933 Cardozo High School moved to the former Business High School located at 9th Street and Rhode Island Avenue, N. W. Business High School moved to a new structure, Theodore Roosevelt High School, completed in 1932 at 13th and Upshur Streets, N. W. By 1949, enrollment at Cardozo High School exceeded the building's capacity by 800 and operated on a triple shift. Its facilities were so limited that loss of its accreditation was imminent.

Although Cardozo High School's program focused on business education, it also offered college preparatory courses and many of its graduates went on to higher education. By the time Cardozo High School moved into the Central building, it was still predominantly a business school. Expanded facilities permitted the school to bolster its technical and academic programs as well as its student activities and after-school clubs. By the 1960s, with the abolition of the track system, Cardozo High School became a comprehensive senior high school.

**Architect of the School Building**

At the time the Central High School building was designed and constructed, Snowden Ashford was Municipal Architect for the District of Columbia. Ashford held this position from 1909 to 1921. Earlier, from 1895 to 1909, he had served as Assistant Inspector and Inspector of Buildings, where he had overseen municipal architecture. Ashford favored Elizabethan and Collegiate Gothic styles for the school buildings he designed. It is not clear why Ashford was not selected as the architect of the Central High School building. It is possible that his workload, which included the design of the new Dunbar High School, was so onerous that he was unable to undertake Central at the same time. It is more likely that the education community in Washington was so intent on constructing a building of national distinction that it would settle for no less than an architect of national reputation. The education community correctly identified William B. Ittner of St. Louis as the nation's premier school building architect.

Ittner was born in St. Louis in 1864. His father was a brick manufacturer, no doubt a factor in his preference for and versatility with the material. He graduated from the Manual Training School at Washington University and then enrolled at Cornell University in the class of 1887. After graduation, he enhanced his architectural training with European travel and study. He returned to St. Louis in 1888. Ittner began his architectural career with the firm of Eames & Young. One year later, he established his own firm. In 1897 Ittner was appointed Commissioner of School Buildings for St. Louis, a position he held until 1910. In 1910 he was appointed Architect of the St. Louis Board of Education. Between 1910 and 1916, Ittner designed all the public school buildings in the city of St. Louis. While working in this capacity, he designed school buildings for other communities as well. His work outside St. Louis expanded in 1917, when he formed his own firm, William B. Ittner, Inc. In all, he designed over 500 school buildings in more than 100 communities in 29 states. He also served as a consultant for comprehensive school programs for communities such as Buffalo and Niagara Falls, New York and Birmingham, Alabama. Although best known for his school buildings, Ittner also designed the Missouri Athletic Association building and the Scottish Rite Cathedral in St. Louis and the State Reformatory at Algoa, Missouri. Ittner was active in professional organizations. He served as President of the St. Louis Architectural Club in 1897 and as president of the Architectural League of America in 1903. He was elected a fellow of the American Institute of Architects in 1891, served as its Treasurer from 1924 to 1926, and was made a life member in 1927.

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William B. Ittner's Approach to the Design of Public School Buildings

William B. Ittner's claim to preeminence in the field of school building design is based not only on the sheer quantity of buildings he designed, but also the quality of their design. Many observers considered them to be both beautiful and efficient. "He conceived the modern school as a splendid civic monument, to become a potent factor in the academic development of the community, as well as a practical building to answer the present-day educational demands."<sup>4</sup> In a tribute to her late husband, Marie Anderson Ittner wrote that he was "influenced by the informality, domestic character and subtle charm of the English Renaissance."<sup>5</sup> In his 1925 retrospective on Ittner's work, Guy Study wrote, "In recent years when the demands of the modern school increased and construction costs mounted, the work of the late nineteenth century in England had been drawn upon for inspiration; but it is the early work of the Elizabethan and Jacobean architects that seems to have delighted him most."<sup>6</sup> This style prevented his schools from bearing an institutional look. On the other hand, Ittner's schools could never be mistaken for domestic buildings.

Brick was Ittner's material of choice, having studied Eton College and Hampton Court Palace and described them as "symphonies in color." Guy Study gave Ittner credit for an almost mystical relationship with the material. "Always using the material at hand, demanding no extraordinary fine quality of brick, yet with almost uncanny intuition and with the art of a conjurer, he is able to produce an effect in his brick walls that is lovely and rich in color, soft in texture and sparkling with life."<sup>7</sup> Several deviations from brick occurred. For example, Central Technical High School in Columbus, Ohio was constructed of limestone because it was part of a civic center design. Stucco was employed in several of Ittner's southern schools. Elements of Ittner's school design include large sites where extensive recreation areas could be incorporated, flexibility of plan so that buildings could be easily altered and expanded, and restricted heights of buildings. The open plan allowed for natural lighting and ventilating.

Ittner's fame additionally derived from his grasp of the changed functions of public schools. Many of his schools were located in industrial cities where the factory system had displaced small shop hand industries. As a result, young people "lost contact with the materials and processes of industry, a contact which was of the greatest possible educational value when trades were not minutely subdivided and when the worker was perforce both artist and artisan."<sup>8</sup> Urban schools took on many roles formerly handled by the family or the small shop. As Michael A. Mikkelsen stated in the *Architectural Record*, the school "ceases to be an isolated institution intended for the child only. Its work is...correlated with that of other educational

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<sup>4</sup> Guy Study, "The Work of William B. Ittner FAIA," *Architectural Record*, 57 (February 1925), p. 99.

<sup>5</sup> Marie Anderson Ittner, *William B. Ittner: His Service to American School Architecture*, January 1941, n.p.

<sup>6</sup> Guy Study, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

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and welfare agencies in the community.<sup>9</sup> The objective of schools was not only to cover academic subjects but to look after the students' health and social welfare; instill skills and values for a successful adulthood, and teach "profitable use of leisure time."<sup>10</sup> Schools were intended to serve both educational and community needs.

As translated into the school building, these objectives resulted in facilities that extended beyond classrooms and an auditorium. With the Central High School building, Ittner provided several gymnasias, a swimming pool, an indoor running track, a large lunchroom, manual training workshops, domestic science rooms, science laboratories, classrooms intended for business education, arts and crafts studios, a music room, a large general library, an armory, and a rifle range. The auditorium was located on the main floor so that it would be convenient for community use without disturbing school routine. Also characteristic of Ittner's schools, the building is set within a landscaped setting defined by terraces.

#### Design and Construction History

In mid-1912, the engineer Commissioner of the District of Columbia contacted William B. Ittner notifying him that the appropriations bill, including funds for the new Central High School, had become law. The general outline of the project included accommodations for 2,500 pupils and a stadium. By late in that year, Ittner reported that a preliminary study was complete. Early the following year, Snowden Ashford reminded Ittner that the drawings need be approved by the District Commissioners only. While submitting the designs to the Commission of Fine Arts might be desirable, such review might result in tampering with the design. Ashford warned Ittner that the Commission might enforce a Georgian style design.

The construction process commenced in early 1914 when the construction contract was awarded to the lowest bidder, William Dall of Cleveland, Ohio. His bid was \$981,450. George Hyman of Washington was awarded the contract for grading the property. Municipal Architect Snowden Ashford supervised the building construction. By mid-1914, excavation was completed and brick from the Occoquan workhouse kilns were being unloaded at the 10th Street storage wharf. Hundreds of onlookers attended the cornerstone laying ceremony. By October 1916, the building was completed and opened its doors to students. The dedication was held in February 1917, a day-long event marked by speeches which lauded the facilities the new school provided.

#### Reactions to the Central High School Building

Central High School was one of the major municipal buildings constructed in the District of Columbia for its time. Because of its size and prominence, the building elicited reactions from local citizens, from the local press, and from the national press. The projected size of the building, larger than any high school building in the city, provoked concern among members of citizens' associations in the Columbia Heights area. District Commissioner Oliver P. Neuman favored a smaller building for the site so that funds might be diverted to a new high school in the eastern part of the city. Upon completion of the building, these fears were quieted. District residents were also caught up in the popularity of the Colonial Revival style,

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<sup>9</sup> Michael A. Mikkelsen, "The Edward Lee McClain High School, Greenfield, Ohio and the Central High School, Washington, D. C.," Architectural Record, 42 (November 1917), p. 422.

<sup>10</sup> Guy Study, op. cit., p. 97.

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or what was referred to as Georgian. Central High School's architectural style, Collegiate Gothic, was called into question. Municipal Architect Snowden Ashford defended Ittner's design by noting that Washington, D. C. was not a colonial city, and, in his opinion, the colonial style in District public buildings was inappropriate. The *Evening Star* rapturously applauded the building. In September 1916, as the finishing touches were being applied, the daily described it as "not only the finest school building in this city, but, indeed, one of the finest in the world." Undoubtedly, the Central High School building would become one of the city's showplaces.<sup>11</sup>

The association of William B. Ittner with the Central High School building brought it to the attention of the architectural community nationwide. In the November 1917 issue of the *Architectural Record*, Michael A. Mikkelsen wrote a lavishly-illustrated article on Ittner's Edward Lee McClain High School in Greenfield, Ohio and Central High School in Washington, D. C.<sup>12</sup> In this article, the author applauded both buildings as possessing beautiful, logical, and clearly expressed plans. "The language of the design is consequently modern and American, although written in the Renaissance alphabet, and is calculated to stir the imagination of the child."<sup>13</sup>

Evaluation of the Building in the Context of D. C. Public School Buildings

While many public school buildings in the District of Columbia are significant for their representation of various phases in the development of public education in the District of Columbia and of the D. C. school building as architecture, the Cardozo Senior High School building is in a class by itself. Historically, the building embodies the origins of the high school as an institution in the District of Columbia. It was the sixth building in the District constructed as a high school (the others were the first Central High School building (demolished), the M Street High School (today known as Perry School), Western High School (today known as the Ellington School of the Arts), McKinley Technical High School (later Shaw Junior High School), and Business High School (demolished). However, no previous school was larger, occupied a more prominent location, or incorporated as broad a range of academic and non-academic activities.

Municipal Architect Snowden Ashford was not the architect of the Central building, but its design was fully in concert with his own preference for the Elizabethan and Collegiate Gothic styles for public school buildings in the District. The adaptation of the Collegiate Gothic style to a District high school building had not been accomplished prior to Ittner's work on Central High School. No doubt Ittner's design for Central influenced Ashford's design for the Collegiate Gothic style Dunbar High School, also completed in 1916. The Dunbar structure was commanding in size, but its restricted site resulted in meager landscaping and limited space for sports facilities. During the same time period, Ashford provided designs for the Park View School, a version of the Central building down-sized for an elementary school. The Park View building was completed in 1916. Several years later, toward the end of his career as Municipal Architect, Ashford designed Eastern High School, completed in 1923. Eastern was designed in the Collegiate Gothic style, accommodated a full range of academic and non-academic activities, was organized around a floor plan similar to that of Central, and was located on a site sufficiently large for a stadium

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<sup>11</sup> "New Central High to be Ready Oct. 2," *Evening Star*, September 17, 1916, p. 9.

<sup>12</sup> Michael A. Mikkelsen, *op. cit.*, pp. 420-441.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 441.

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and athletic fields.

The Cardozo Senior High School building is significant as a school building of its time, when the public schools assumed responsibility for much more of a child's life than just academic requirements. In addition, no other school building in the District of Columbia was accorded more attention by the national press. Its architect, William B. Ittner, was acknowledged the leading architect in the nation in the design of school buildings. His association with the project brought the building instant reknown. At the local level, while some observers may have preferred a building in a different style, none could argue with the building's outstanding appearance or the comprehensiveness of its facilities.

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DCA: District of Columbia Archives  
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MLK: Washingtoniana Division, Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Library  
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**SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD**

NRIS Reference Number: 93001015 Date Listed: 9/30/93

Francis L. Cardoza Senior High School Washington DC  
Property Name: County: State:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Multiple Name

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This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

*for* Patricia Andrus  
Signature of the Keeper

10/4/93  
Date of Action

=====  
Amended Items in Nomination:

The Level of Significance had to be clarified; State significance is checked, but the nomination says the building is of national importance. Glen Leiner of the DC SHPO has clarified that the building is being nominated at the State Level of Significance. The building is being nominated for its historical and architectural importance. One selected Area of Significance, Philosophy, is not justified in the nomination. Philosophy is being deleted as an Area of Significance.

**DISTRIBUTION:**  
National Register property file  
Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)