

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

1 NAME

HISTORIC Clara Barton School  
6507 75th Street  
AND/OR COMMON Clara Barton Center for Children (present name)

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER Clara Barton Center for Children  
7425 MacArthur Boulevard  
CITY, TOWN Bethesda VICINITY OF CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 8th  
STATE Maryland COUNTY Montgomery

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY OWNERSHIP STATUS PRESENT USE  
 DISTRICT  PUBLIC *leased*  OCCUPIED  AGRICULTURE  MUSEUM  
 BUILDING(S)  PRIVATE  UNOCCUPIED  COMMERCIAL  PARK  
 STRUCTURE  BOTH  WORK IN PROGRESS  EDUCATIONAL  PRIVATE RESIDENCE  
 SITE PUBLIC ACQUISITION  ENTERTAINMENT  RELIGIOUS  
 OBJECT  IN PROCESS  ACCESSIBLE  GOVERNMENT  SCIENTIFIC  
 BEING CONSIDERED  YES: RESTRICTED  INDUSTRIAL  TRANSPORTATION  
 YES: UNRESTRICTED  MILITARY  OTHER  
 NO

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Montgomery County Telephone #: 217-2500

STREET & NUMBER 101 Monroe Street  
CITY, TOWN Rockville VICINITY OF 20850 STATE, zip code

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, LIBER #: 434  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. FOLIO #: 40  
STREET & NUMBER Department of Assessment and Taxation  
51 Monroe Street, 3rd Floor  
CITY, TOWN Rockville, MD 20850 STATE

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE  
DATE  
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS  
CITY, TOWN STATE  
FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

M:35-51

CONDITION

- EXCELLENT
- GOOD
- FAIR

*outside*

- DETERIORATED *inside*
- RUINS
- UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

- UNALTERED
- ALTERED *interior*

CHECK ONE

- ORIGINAL SITE
- MOVED

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

100-10-1000-1000

(e) (b) (7) - (c) (1) - (d) (1) - (e) (1) - (f) (1) - (g) (1) - (h) (1) - (i) (1) - (j) (1) - (k) (1) - (l) (1) - (m) (1) - (n) (1) - (o) (1) - (p) (1) - (q) (1) - (r) (1) - (s) (1) - (t) (1) - (u) (1) - (v) (1) - (w) (1) - (x) (1) - (y) (1) - (z) (1)

Clara Barton School (1928), located on a 4.4 acre site with adjoining play area, is set back 150 feet from MacArthur Boulevard, 76 feet from 75th street and 85 feet from the rear property line. This building still reflects its original character as a solidly-constructed straight-forward, economical structure with a dignified disposition. Its exterior is intact although its former main facade has been obstructed by a modern building and access corridor. The interior, which has been gutted (1988) for renovations, does not represent the school's original appearance.

Clara Barton School is a two-story, masonry construction with a red brick exterior. The building is a roughly rectangular block (14,754 square feet; 204,396 cubic feet) with small brick rear room. The edifice has flat walls and few articulations and details save for its white courses, stone dentils and some decorative Art Deco brick work. Its severe geometric, somewhat box-like character is defined by its rectangular format, squared corners, flat walls and flat roof (with Art Deco-style one stepped articulation).

Brick, although more expensive and durable than wood, was a relatively economical material when compared to stone. Stone decorative work was used sparingly. Brick also conveniently and economically provided its own decorative system through its natural coloration and textural qualities.

Department of Assessment and Reporting

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CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION (CONTINUED)

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The planar quality of the structure is reiterated in the treatment of the large window surface. Large, expansive windows (including 3 groups of 5 large windows, as well as smaller groupings on each floor of the long facades) were intended to maximize light in classrooms dependent upon natural light coming from only one direction. Records indicate that window size was reduced in the 1960s.

The former main entrance of this building, located on the short side of the building, faces MacArthur Boulevard and the Potomac River. Today, the main entrance leads to a glass corridor connecting Cutler's 1928 school with the modern, one-story wing (11,330 square feet; 165,784 cubic feet) dating from 1966-7. Unfortunately, these modern additions have destroyed the view of the main entry, what was once the most architecturally important area of the building.

In general, Cutler gave the main entrance of this sober school a more monumental treatment. In doing this, he respects both traditional and Art Deco principles of composition. The facade is articulated by three simple divisions, the traditional tripartite composition, focused upon the center. The tripartite is reiterated by the three windows of each section. The skyline (recalling the roof) is stepped in the Art Deco fashion with the center raised by one step. Simply treated light-hued ornamental stone work (probably limestone) demarks the tripartite composition by framing the center section with decorative quions and by terminating each end with stone in the upper corners (along the roof line). Early on, the center of the tripart was further emphasized by a arched entry porch (now destroyed).

Above the three windows of the main portal is the most outstanding of the building's decorative work: a stone (probably limestone) panel with a low relief diamond in its center and four triangles in its corners. Although simple and never overdone, the stone work of Clara Barton School is an important aesthetic element which creates a visual foil and contrast to the dominant red brick. By giving such emphasis to the entrance facade and by orienting the entry to the boulevard, Cutler endowed this school with a "public" character befitting civic architecture.

Records indicate that Clara Barton's interior plan was symmetrically disposed along a central long hall. Originally, there may have been as many as twelve classroom-size rooms (with six on each floor) with twelve foot high ceilings (giving each room a spacious quality). First floor rooms still have their own exterior doors.

## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION (CONTINUED)

Later records reveal that the first floor consisted of three classrooms (713 square feet each), an all purpose room with stage (30' X 54'; 1,620 square feet, roughly double the size of a classroom), boys' room, girls' room, and administration center. One of the classrooms on the second floor was used as a library.

In the mid-1960s, major changes and modernization called for a new addition (mentioned above) and rehabilitation of Cutler's original school building. During the 1966-7 period, Bucher-Meyers & Associates, Architects, remodeled the existing building at a cost of \$9.61 per square foot. This included making the all purpose room into two classrooms (approximately 800 square feet to meet minimum space requirements of the 1960s), modifying existing classrooms, lowering ceilings and light fixtures, and modernizing bathrooms.

Modernization also included razing the two-story annex built of a simple wood frame construction. The cafeteria was located on the first floor and the kindergarten on the second. The site of this building was leveled for the new parking lot (1966-7). External changes also included adding a service drive for kitchen and boiler room, and a new access driveway (24' wide with a minimum turning radius of 50') designed to handle bus and car traffic.

## COMMENTARY

At this time (1988), the exterior of Clara Barton School is still intact. Future additions should not in any way change or obstruct the view of this building. The exterior should be maintained as an historic monument.



## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (CONTINUED)

As Cutler brought standards of professionalism and an academic vision to his work, he transformed county school architecture. He appears to have been a practical architect who could design relatively restrained, yet dignified buildings with little decoration and no extraneous elements. Cutler's architecture was not one of pretense or extravagance. His designs of the 1920s for Montgomery County schools are usually fairly simple and seemingly economy-conscious. At the same time, his schools depart from earlier traditions in local school architecture. They are devoid of the domestic scale, detailing and associations of the early 20th century Montgomery County school house.

Clara Barton School exemplifies the spirit of Montgomery County's new academic vision. Its size, style and disposition abandon the early 20th century educational architecture of Montgomery County: the school house. Although this school is not huge, it is not house-like. Despite its straight-forward appearance and lack of expensive ornamentation, it possesses the character of an institution. The treatment of Clara Barton School is modern and is not derived from a specific traditional style. In fact, the ornament of this school (simple Art Deco geometric designs) shows a concern for presenting a "modern" image. In effect, Clara Barton School represents the transformation of Montgomery County school architecture from the rural school house to the modern civic institution.

The new image which this building presents ---- the image of a solid and stable institution that is both tradition and modern ----- is the visual equivalent of major reforms in the public school system during the post-World War I period (which eventually culminated in the development of a 12 year system with junior and high schools).

The name selected for this school is also of historic significance. Clara Barton School was originally called Glen Echo-Cabin John School after its geographic locality. During this period, most schools were named after their locations. The school was later renamed Clara Barton School. It was named after a woman, Clara Barton, the founder of the American Red Cross. Barton's home is located in Glen Echo, not far from the school that bears her name. The renaming of this school shows the growing concern for local history and civic pride characteristic of the 1930s in Montgomery County.

Clara Barton School operated as an elementary school until 1974. It is still owned by the county, but is now leased to the Clara Barton Day Care Center.

NOTES

1. For more information on Howard Wright Cutler, see Karin M.E. Alexis' manuscript (1988) on educational architecture in Montgomery County, 1900-1945 (Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission and Maryland Historic Trust). Valuable information on Cutler is found in the Archives of the American Institute of Architects (RG 803, Box 221, Folder 71).

## MAJOR REPOSITORIES

Archives, The American Institute of Architects;  
Central Records, Montgomery County;  
Division of Construction, Montgomery County

Library, Education Department of The United States  
of America, Washington, D.C.

For information on this school, its architect, and the development of educational architecture in Montgomery County, 1900-1945, see Karin M.E. Alexis' manuscript (1988) on educational architecture in Montgomery County (Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission and Maryland Historic Trust).

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

see attached

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CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY

14,754 square feet (building) 4.4 acre site

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

MacArthur Boulevard; Cabin John Parkway; 75th Street; Arden Road;

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE

COUNTY

STATE

COUNTY

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME / TITLE KARIN M.E. ALEXIS, PH.D., ART & ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

ORGANIZATION

DATE

JUNE 1988

STREET & NUMBER

2449 Villanova Drive

TELEPHONE

280-1107

CITY OR TOWN

Vienna, Virginia

STATE

22180

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust  
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
(301) 267-1438