

GARFIELD AVENUE SCHOOL/PUBLIC SCHOOL NO. 27 (current name) (2215 North Fourth Street)

ARCHITECTURAL STATEMENT:

Description: Public School No. 27 is a three-story brick masonry structure designed in the Romanesque Revival style. The plan arrangement is "I" shaped with a stairwell at each end connected by a hall. It has a slate covered hip roof with numerous gables over wings which project from the main body of the building. The major fenestration in the east front elevation is in these wings. Tall two-story arched openings provide light for the second and third floors. The round arches over these openings, as well as those on the building and highlights the openings. Decorative spandrel panels between second and third story windows are dark in color like the glass and frames; this emphasizes the height of the openings. The larger center wing which contains the entry is flanked on each side by a narrower wing with paired openings. That in the center is three openings wide, the middle one being the widest. It is capped by the largest of the round arches. The spandrel in this window is inscribed "18-PUBLIC SCHOOL-87," indicating the 1887 construction date.

(1982 photo - 56-1)

Significance: Public School #27 represents a type of school plan used frequently by Milwaukee Architect H.C. Koch. The Golda Meir School (1890) also is exemplary of this "H" or "I" design. Throughout the 1870's and 1880's H.C. Koch was second behind E.T. Mix as far as numbers of buildings under construction and dollar value of the projects. Koch is particularly known for his municipal buildings and his production included sanitariums, police stations, court houses and so on. In Milwaukee he is recognized for the City Hall (1895), the Pfister Hotel (1893) and Turner Hall (1883) among numerous other buildings. Koch was the sole designer for Milwaukee's schools from 1872 to the mid 1880's.

Public School #27 shares characteristics with other Romanesque Revival Schools constructed in the period from about 1885-1895. Broad gabled bays, round-headed windows, dormers, tall chimneys, engaged arches that define bays and division into a basement and upper story can be seen consistently. In an architect such as Schnetzky, the effect is used merely as applied ornament over a basic rectangular structure (5th Street School, formerly 13th District School #3, 1889). Schnetzky and Lieberts' Maryland Avenue School (1887) conveys the volumetric character of the Romanesque and is irregular in massing. By contrast, Koch's school has a very rational, symmetrical facade with more generous use of windows. Large arched openings that span more than one story are the striking motif here and are a hallmark seen also at the Golda Meir School (1890) and City Hall (1895). By 1895 schools such as the 31st Street School begin to reflect the influence of classicism in details such as horizontal rustication and pediments.

Integrity and Interiors: The integrity of Garfield Avenue School is excellent. Upon inspection of the facility there appeared to be no major changes or alterations to the original fabric. There is a one-story, 1960's annex which adjoins the school at the southeast corner but does not significantly detract from its appearance. The interior plan has been retained almost to the original. There remains the original woodwork, doors and trim. The molding around the doors is incised with bullseye corners. The ceilings have been covered with acoustical tiles and some of the floors are covered with carpeting or linoleum tile.