

WESTERN STATE NORMAL SCHOOL
(East Campus Western Michigan University)
Western State Normal School Historic District
Western Michigan University, bounded by Stadium Drive, Oliver and
Davis Streets
Kalamazoo
Kalamazoo County
Michigan

HABS MI-448
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

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Location: The Western State Normal School site is a historic district roughly bounded by Stadium Drive, Oliver and Davis streets, Kalamazoo, Kalamazoo County, Michigan (refer to attached maps).

The coordinates for the approximate center of the district are 42.286215,-85.598946 and were obtained through Google Maps in August, 2013 using WGS 84. There is no restriction on the release of the locational data to the public.

Significance: Western Michigan University was established by legislative act in 1903 as Western State Normal School, the fourth and final normal school founded by the state government in Michigan, after the ones in Ypsilanti (1849), Mount Pleasant (1892), and Marquette (1899). Its first classes were held in 1904. By the 1920s Western had become one of America's leading teachers' colleges. In 1927 it was renamed Western State Teachers College, and starting in 1934 general degree work was offered. In 1941 the school was again renamed, and became Western Michigan College of Education. An expansion program on the west campus began in 1944. Increasing enrollment and the addition of new departments and courses during the 1940s and 1950s made Western a multi-purpose institution and led to its designation as a university by an act of the legislature in 1957, and it became Western Michigan University.

Description: The Western State Normal School Historic District is the original campus of Western Michigan University. It is located adjacent to the present main campus of the university and is now referred to the university's East Campus. The district consists of the university's original 1903 20-acre campus on the summit and western slope of Prospect Hill a mile to the southwest of Bronson Park, the heart of Kalamazoo, and additional properties to the west and south obtained through several purchases between 1913 and 1923. The district is roughly bounded by Stadium Drive, Oliver and Davis streets, and is bisected along a north-south axis by Oakland Drive. The campus's earliest buildings, constructed between 1904 and 1925, are here, located east of Oakland Drive: three red-brick, Neo-Classical Revival buildings:

- East Hall (originally Administration Building, Training School, and Gymnasium; 1904 - 1909)
- West Hall (originally Science Building; 1915)
- North Hall (1925)

A fourth building followed on Prospect Hill 14 years later. It reflected a more eclectic modern style with Art Deco influences, and with the three earlier buildings, formed three sides of a quadrangle on the flattened hilltop:

- Speech and Hearing Building (originally Health and Personnel Building; 1939)

East Campus also contains several other limestone-trimmed, red brick, Georgian and Elizabethan Revival buildings, which for the most part are located along and near Oakland Drive:

- Industrial Design (Upholstery Shop) (1914)
- Walwood Union (1938)
- Spindler Hall (1940)
- Vandercook Hall (1940)
- Oakland Recital Hall (aka Little Theater) (1942)

On level ground at the far west end of East Campus along Stadium Drive are early twentieth-century recreational and athletic facilities, later International Style buildings, parking areas, and physical plant structures, some of which were added or expanded in the late 20th and early 21st century:

- Oakland Gymnasium (1925; heavily modified and partially demolished 2002)
- Waldo Stadium (1939)/Bill Brown Alumni Football Center (1998)
- Haymes Field/Bobb Stadium (1939)
- Physical Plant (1947)
- Ebert Field (c. late 1970s)
- Seelye Indoor Practice Facility (2002)

History: The Western State Normal School Historic District encompasses the school's original 20-acre property between Davis Street and Oakland Drive purchased in 1903, known as Prospect Hill, as well as additional property to the west between Oakland Drive and the present-day Stadium Drive, purchased between 1913 and 1922. Prospect Hill is the site of the school's first academic complex, consisting of its first permanent building built in 1905, and two other buildings built there between 1909 and 1925. The nationally renowned landscape firm, the Olmsted Brothers of Brookline, Massachusetts, selected the hilltop location for the original campus buildings. The firm also planned the basic concept for the early campus of a quadrangle of Neo-Classical buildings on a level hill-top podium. The early, hill-top campus buildings-- East Hall (originally adjacent administration/gymnasium and training school buildings), and West Hall, both designed by Battle Creek architect Ernest W. Arnold, and North Hall, by Turner & Thebaud-- are Neo-Classical in style and follow in a general way the Olmsted Brothers concept.

At the northeast corner of the site, an inclined railcar provided pedestrian access up Prospect Hill from the town below from 1908-1940.

The Prospect Hill buildings, plus a final building constructed there in 1939, formed the center of campus academic activity until the 1940s, while the campus property to the west of Oakland Drive contained athletic and support facilities. The two property areas together formed what is now known as East Campus, which was developed to its present form between 1903 and the

early 1940s. The early Prospect Hill buildings housed the teacher training and all other school programs and activities until after World War II.

By the 1940's, the campus' boundaries, which had essentially remained unchanged since 1922, could no longer accommodate additional expansion, so post-war campus growth took place to the west, on what has now become the university's primary campus, known as West Campus. Thus, East Campus has survived without additional construction until the 1990s, when extensive renovations and additions to athletic facilities took place. However the Prospect Hill buildings remained largely unchanged, and in 2013 the area looks much the same as it did in 1939 when the last building there was completed.

The site was listed in the National Register of historic places on August 10, 1990. It was listed in Michigan State Register on January 19, 1957.

Historian: Gregory A. Jones, AIA

Project Information: In 2013-14, documentation of the Western State Normal School was sponsored by Western Michigan University and undertaken by HopkinsBurns Design Studio, Ann Arbor, Michigan, in consultation with the Historic American Building Survey, Catherine C. Lavoie, Chief. The field measurements were taken by Eugene C. Hopkins, FAIA, Principal; Gregory A. Jones, AIA; Evan Winterson Hall, Assoc. AIA; and David B. Rochlen, Assoc. AIA, and the drawings produced by David B. Rochlen, Assoc. AIA; Evan Winterson Hall, Assoc. AIA; Jessica M. Green, Assoc. AIA; and Lisa Heine. Dietrich G. Floeter took the large format photographs and Gregory A. Jones, AIA served at the project historian.

