

WESTERN STATE NORMAL SCHOOL, SPEECH & HEARING
BUILDING

Western State Normal School Historic District

Western Michigan University, bounded by Stadium, Oliver and Davis
streets

Kalamazoo

Kalamazoo County

Michigan

HABS MI-448-D

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

National Park Service

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1849 C Street NW

Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

WESTERN STATE NORMAL SCHOOL, SPEECH AND HEARING BUILDING

HABS No. MI-448-D

Location: The Speech and Hearing Building is located on Oakland Drive, Western Michigan University campus, Kalamazoo, Kalamazoo County, Michigan (refer to attached maps).

The coordinates for building are approximately 42.286024,-85.597744 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: The Speech and Hearing Building (1939) is the last of the four buildings that were built on the Prospect Hill, the original campus of Western State Teachers College (the present-day Western Michigan University). The building's architect was Lewis J. Sarvis, of Battle Creek, who designed numerous other educational buildings throughout the state. Originally called the Health and Personnel Building, it housed the college's pioneering program for treatment of speech disorders, and training of professionals in that field of treatment, created by Dr. Charles Van Riper. The program grew in size and importance, and established Western Michigan University as an internationally recognized leader in treatment and education related to speech disorders.

Description: The Speech and Hearing Building at Western Michigan University is a three-story red brick structure with limestone trim and a hipped slate roof. Windows are six-over-six wood double-hung units. It is 154 feet long by 64 feet wide with a gross area of 21,238 square feet.

It is an Eclectic Modern style building, with simplified and detailing. The roof has no overhang, giving the structure simple modern massing. The building has modernized versions of Georgian details such as quoins/pilasters at corners, and window details that recall details on other Georgian style buildings on the site. A two-story open porch (now enclosed) near the northwest corner is more literally Georgian/Colonial Revival style. The two main entry doors, and to a lesser extent the north lower level entrance, reflect an Art Deco influence with the use of geometric decorative motifs. The main entry features a three-story limestone door and window surround with geometric details incised into the limestone, and iron window grilles with rectangular and triangular patterns.

The building's interior also reflects an Art Deco influence. Stairway balustrades, cast iron newel posts and floor tile patterns having geometric ornament and arrangements. Some anecdotal accounts suggest that the interior floor patterns were selected to reflect Native American design motifs.

Surviving original floor finishes are terrazzo and vinyl asbestos tile, with many rooms subsequently receiving wall-to-wall carpet. At the building's main lobby is finished with clear finished vertical wood panels with curved profiles, further reflecting Art Deco influences. Walls are painted plaster. Ceilings are painted plaster or non-original lay-in ceilings. Original doors were stile and rail wood doors with clear finishes. Doors have either a single solid wood panel or single glass light. Later door additions were contemporary wood flush doors. Interior door frames are generally unornamented flush hollow metal frames. Interior window trim is generally wood with terrazzo stools. Hallways and rooms have a simple Art Deco style wood base with a molded top. Some rooms have a wood chair rail. Many classrooms retain their original black slate blackboards. Bathrooms are finished with gray granite on walls and toilet partitions. Light fixtures are generally non-original fluorescent luminaires, although lobby fixtures appear to be original pendant-hung Art Deco style fixtures.

History: Originally known as the Health and Personnel Building, the building's construction was funded by the Depression-era Works Progress Administration. When it opened in 1939, the building housed the university's Health Services examining and treatment rooms, an infirmary and the Psycho-Educational and Speech Correction Clinics and offices. It included rooms where students who were ill could spend the night. At the south end of the third floor, Dr. Charles Van Riper, a pioneer in the treatment of speech disorders, operated a speech clinic and correction program that he had founded in 1936. Dr. Van Riper's program was the first in the nation to be accredited for this type of treatment, and attracted people from all over the world to Western Michigan University for treatment. The program continues to this day as the Department of Speech, Language and Hearing, and remains a leader in treatment of speech disorders and training of practitioners in the field.

By the 1970s the program had grown to occupy the entire building, as well as part of West Hall located immediately to the north. In 1971 the building was renamed The Speech and Hearing Center to reflect its use. The department continued to occupy the building until 1995, when it moved to the University Medical and Health Clinic.

The building was vacated in 2003.

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.