Susan B. Anthony School
(School No. 27)
First Street and Central Park
Rochester
Monroe County
New York

HABS No. NY-5722

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Mid-Atlantic Region, National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106

# HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

## SUSAN B. ANTHONY SCHOOL HABS No. NY-5722

(School No. 27)

Location: First Street and Central Park, Rochester, Monroe County, New York

Present Owner: Housing Opportunities Inc.
242 Andrews Street
Rochester, New York 14604

Present Occupant: Vacant

Significance: The Susan B. Anthony School No. 27 is significant because it is named after Susan B. Anthony, who was born in Rochester and a leader in the Women's Suffrage Movement, and because it was designed by architects J. Foster Warner and Edwin S. Gordon, each of whom have other major building credits in Rochester and the Western New York area. The building is typical of many early neighborhood elementary schools erected at the turn of the 20th Century.

## PART 1 HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of Erection: 1883 through 1918. The first school building was erected on the site in 1883. In 1886 an addition was erected. In 1900 the first school was replaced. Additions were constructed in 1906 and 1918.

2. Architect: Architect for the 1900 structure and first addition in 1906 was J. Foster Warner. (1859-1937) Warner was architect for many buildings in Rochester and Monroe County including: several other public elementary schools, East High School; West High School; Monroe Country Court House; the Granite Building; George Eastman House; Wilson Soule House; and the Sibley Tower Building. Warner was the son of architect Andrew J. Warner (1833-1910) whose noted works include: The Power Block, Rochester City Hall; Erie County Municipal Building; Corning City Hall; and Rochester Free Academy.

   The 1918 addition was designed by Edwin S. Gordon (1867-1932) who worked for J. Foster Warren for eight years before starting his own practice. In 1912 he was appointed architect for the Rochester Board of Education. Some of the works of Edwin Gordon include: Corpus Christi Church; Blessed Sacrament; First Church of Christ Scientist. He later formed a partnership with William Kaebler and were architects for Rochester City High Schools; Monroe, Madison, Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin. After 1921, Gordon and Kaebler were architects for University of Rochester buildings including Cutler Union, Eastman Theater and the School of Music among a few of their major credits.

3. Original and subsequent owners: The original owner was the City of Rochester School District. In June of 1982 the property was conveyed to the City of Rochester. In November of 1986 the property was sold by the City to Housing Opportunities Inc., a nonprofit development Corporation, for one dollar.

4. Builders, Suppliers:
   a. Builder: No information available.
   b. Suppliers: No information available.

5. Original plans and construction: No drawings or plans of the original building have been located. Plans attached to this survey document were supplied by the City School District and depict the building including the original building and subsequent additions.

There are ornamental plaques in the building describing the chronology of the construction, the architects, and names of Board of Education members who helped to guide the project development.

6. Alterations and additions: City School District records indicate two additions, one in 1906 and one in 1918, were built. The addition in 1906 was demolished to make room for the 1918 boiler room addition. Both the boiler room and north wing were added in 1918. At undetermined dates, various construction changes occured. About 68% of the original wood windows were removed in the 1970's and replaced with single pane aluminum windows.

B. Historical Context:

1. The original building was constructed in 1900 as an elementary school for a cost of $45,144. It was constructed on the foundations of an old school building. It was known as School # 27 until 1906 when it was renamed the Susan B. Anthony School in honor of the Rochester suffragette. The addition built in 1918 cost $188,666. The structure was used an an elementary school until June 1982 when it was closed by the Rochester City School District because of declining enrollment. Since that date it has been vacant.

2. In the first half of the 20th century, the school served primarily the children of Italian descent. In the mid-sixties, the school population became increasingly black and Hispanic. Today the site is located in a neighborhood which is 60% black, 27% Hispanic and 13% other. While the neighborhood is predominately residential, it contains several neighborhood commercial strips and the City of Rochester's public market. Most of the housing in the neighborhood is small, cottage-type frame housing built for the working class.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The school was constructed as a neighborhood elementary school in the Central Park area of the City which developed as an ethnic area serving the early textile industries. The building and later addition was a significant structure with primary facades facing First Street and Central Park detailed with Romanesque features characteristic of many turn of the century public buildings.

2. Condition of the fabric: The structure was evacuated as a school in the early 1980's and was left unheated for nearly five years. Deterioration of interior finishes caused by water and freezing temperatures occurred. The exterior brickwork is in fair condition but is discolored by dirt and grime, and has vines on portions of the east facade which have damaged the mortar. The boiler building and chimney are in fair condition but do not have design detail consistent with the original structures.

B. Oescription of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The original building is a two story building with crawl space and attic. The dimensions of the structure are 182 feet along First Street and 76 feet along Central Avenue. The first addition added along Central Avenue was 30 feet by 32 feet. The second addition is two stories plus a full basement, but no attic. This addition takes the form of an "L" next to the original structure. It is 140 feet facing First Street and 105 feet deep.

2. Foundations: The foundation of the buildings are primarily a random coursed ashlar pattern using a Medina sandstone. The 1918 addition has concrete foundation walls around the north and west sides of the structure. The foundation walls are about two (2) feet thick. At the top of the foundation course is a 6" limestone belt course which runs around the building perimeter at the first floor line.

3. Wall Construction: The wall construction varies from 12" to 20" thick. The exterior brick detailing is very intricate particularly along the First Street and Central Avenue facades. The brick colors are predominately red-orange with yellow quoins, arches, patterns and trim. There are stone sills at all window openings and a cast stone coping around the parapet of the 1918

addition. The principal entrance at First Street features stone columns, brick arches, and carved ornamentation. The entrance at Central Park features a rusticated brick wall with roman arch and keystone. There are also roman arches in the small second floor windows over the entry. All window openings in the original building feature jack masonry arches.

4. Structural systems, framing: The structural systems used in the construction are masonry load bearing walls and wood joist floor framing. Floor joists are 2 x 10 and 2 x 12 at various spacings according to span conditions. The roof framing for the original structure includes rafters with heavy timber column and beam supports. The rafters extend over the exterior masonry walls and are cut for decorative look-outs. The roof over the 1918 addition is framed with roof rafters which are sloped to provide drainage to roof conductors. Masonry parapet walls with cast stone caps form the perimeter of the roof.

5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: A major porch is located at the building entrance off First Street. The porch is constructed using stone columns and masonry arch. The porch is relatively narrow, about 3 feet deep, and is raised on stone steps with four risers above sidewalk grade to the entrance door.

6. Chimneys: The existing chimney is part of the boiler structure and will be demolished. The chimney is a radial brick masonry design, tapered from an octagon form about 8 1/2 feet at the base to a circular form with 5 1/2 foot diameter. The chimney is about 75 feet high. Steel straps near the top of the chimney were installed in recent years because of deterioration of mortar and cracks in the brick.

7. Openings:

   a. Doorways and Doors:
   There are six (6) major entrances to the building, including: one along Central Park; three on First Street; one on the north side of the 1918 addition and one on the west side. There are four other secondary entrances to the building. The major entrance doors were constructed of wood with glass lites in the doors. The secondary doors are now hollow metal style.

b. Windows and Shutters:
There are no shutters on the buildings. The windows utilized in the buildings are varied. Approximately 32% of the windows appear to be original wood windows. Some of these were 1/1 double hung sash windows. Some feature three sash with leaded glass in the top fixed sash, and the lower two operable. In the original building, the windows were typically set in separate masonry openings. The 1918 addition has both single and multiple window openings. Some of the multiple window openings include as many as six separate window frames and sashes.

Approximately 2/3 of the original windows were replaced by the school district about 10-15 years ago. The replacement windows are mill finished aluminum single glazed single hung sash. These windows will be removed and replaced with aluminum windows designed with more energy efficient characteristics, with thermally broken frame and sash, and double glazing.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering:
The original building features a hip style roof with certain flat roof sections. The Central Park west addition, and the gymnasium roof are gable style. The 1918 addition has a flat roof, pitched only to interior roof drains.

The sloped roof areas are covered with asphalt shingles over asphalt based felts. The flat roof areas are covered with asphalt coated felts.

b. Cornice, eaves: The cornices are detailed with masonry designs and rustications. The eaves on the sloped roof areas feature overhangs with decorative rafter ends. Gutters are attached to fascia boards at the rafter ends.
The 1918 addition has a low parapet wall with cast stone coping.

c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: There are eight dormers located on the roof. The dormers are triangular shaped with circular arch windows.

A wood cupola is featured on the roof of the original structure. It functioned as an access opening to the roof and as a tower for a school bell.

Several large masonry towers are also located above the roof. The towers were used as part of the original ventilation system for the building.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor Plans: Floor plans prepared in 1928 are included as exhibits to this survey. Revisions to the plans were made on several occasions. The plans illustrate basement, first floor and second floor plans.

2. Stairways: There are several stairways included in the building. Four stairways serve as primary exits and connect all floor levels. Other stairs are used as intercommunicating stairs between two levels, or to provide access to grade, or mid levels. The primary exit stairs are constructed of metal and concrete or terrazzo and have metal pipe hand rails. Several of the secondary stairs are constructed of wood. The north central stair of the original building feature oak newells, square spindles and shaped oak handrail.

3. Flooring: The flooring used in the building is primarily strip maple flooring laid over floor sheathing. Some concrete and terrazzo is used in the corridor areas of the 1918 addition. Ceramic tile is used in several of the primary exit stairs.

4. Wall and Ceiling Finish: The wall finish in the school is plaster except in the auditorium space where brick is used. The ceiling finish includes stamped metal ceilings and plaster. Some acoustical panel ceilings were added at a later date.

5. Openings:

   a. Doorways and doors: The doorways in the school include oak frame and metal. Most of the doorways to classrooms and toilet rooms are constructed of oak, and include glazed transom panels with two over two obscured lites. The doors are also constructed of oak and are detailed with recessed panels. Metal doorways are used for exit doors and smoke separation partitions.

   b. Windows: Windows on the exterior walls feature oak casings and mullion covers. The windows are set in from the inside of the wall. The wall detail used bullnose corners at the head and jamb. There are interior windows used for transoms, sidelights, and room dividers.

6. Decorative features and trim: Decorative features and trim are found throughout the building. Significant features include three fireplace mantles, oak trim arches, oak base and chair rails, built in oak cabinets, and radial slate panel blackboards.

7. Hardware: Hardware used includes some original brass locks. However, many of the door locks were replaced with newer mortise locks. Most of the hinges are brass butts.

8. Mechanical Equipment

   a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: The heating used in the building was coal fired hot water with cast iron radiators. The boilers located in the boiler room were later converted to use natural gas fuel.

      There was no air conditioning system used in the school. Ventilation systems included a large fan unit located in the basement of the original building which provided fresh tempered air, distributed to various classrooms by brick chases which terminated in the attic area and ventilation tower.

   b. Lighting: Much of the lighting found in the school is not original. New ceiling hung fluorescent fixtures were installed and wired using exposed metal conduit.

   c. Plumbing: Plumbing fixtures were limited generally to common areas, separated for boys, girls and staff. Some later additions included water fountains and specialized sinks.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The building was set on the corner of First Street and Central Park in a residential area of small wood frame homes. The building grew along First Street because of the availability of property.

2. Historic landscape design: There is little remaining of any original landscape design. Some arbor vitae and yews are grouped behind the auditorium. Most of the trees along First Street are in poor condition.

3. Outbuildings: A transportable classroom was erected on the site in the 1970's. The building of wood construction and was used for additional classroom space. The building will be demolished.

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## PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Original Architect of Drawings: Drawings of the original building not available. Some drawings of the 1918 addition are available from the City of Rochester School District, 131 West Broad Street, Rochester, NY 14604.

B. Early Views: None found.

C. Interviews: Rochester Landmark Society

D. Bibliography:

1. Primary and Unpublished sources

   a. City School District-Architecture Department

2. Secondary and Published Sources

   a. The Warner Legacy in Western New York, Betsey Brayer, The Landmark Society of Western New York, c. 1984.

E. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated: Kaebler, Miller, Meyer and Ungar Architects.

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## PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Susan B. Anthony Cooperative will recycle the structure into a 36 unit limited equity cooperative for low/moderate income residents. A limited equity cooperative is one which restricts the increase in equity so that when a unit resells, it is affordable to another low/moderate-income family.

The project will consist of 9 one bedroom units, 17 two bedroom units and 10 three bedroom units. The boiler room and gymnasium will be demolished in order to provide sufficient open space for the residents.

The project is being developed by Housing Opportunities Inc., a nonprofit development corporation. When sufficient units have been sold, it will be conveyed to a cooperative corporation. Financing is provided by the Federal 312 Loan Program, the State of New York Housing Trust Fund and the City of Rochester.

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sba/sba

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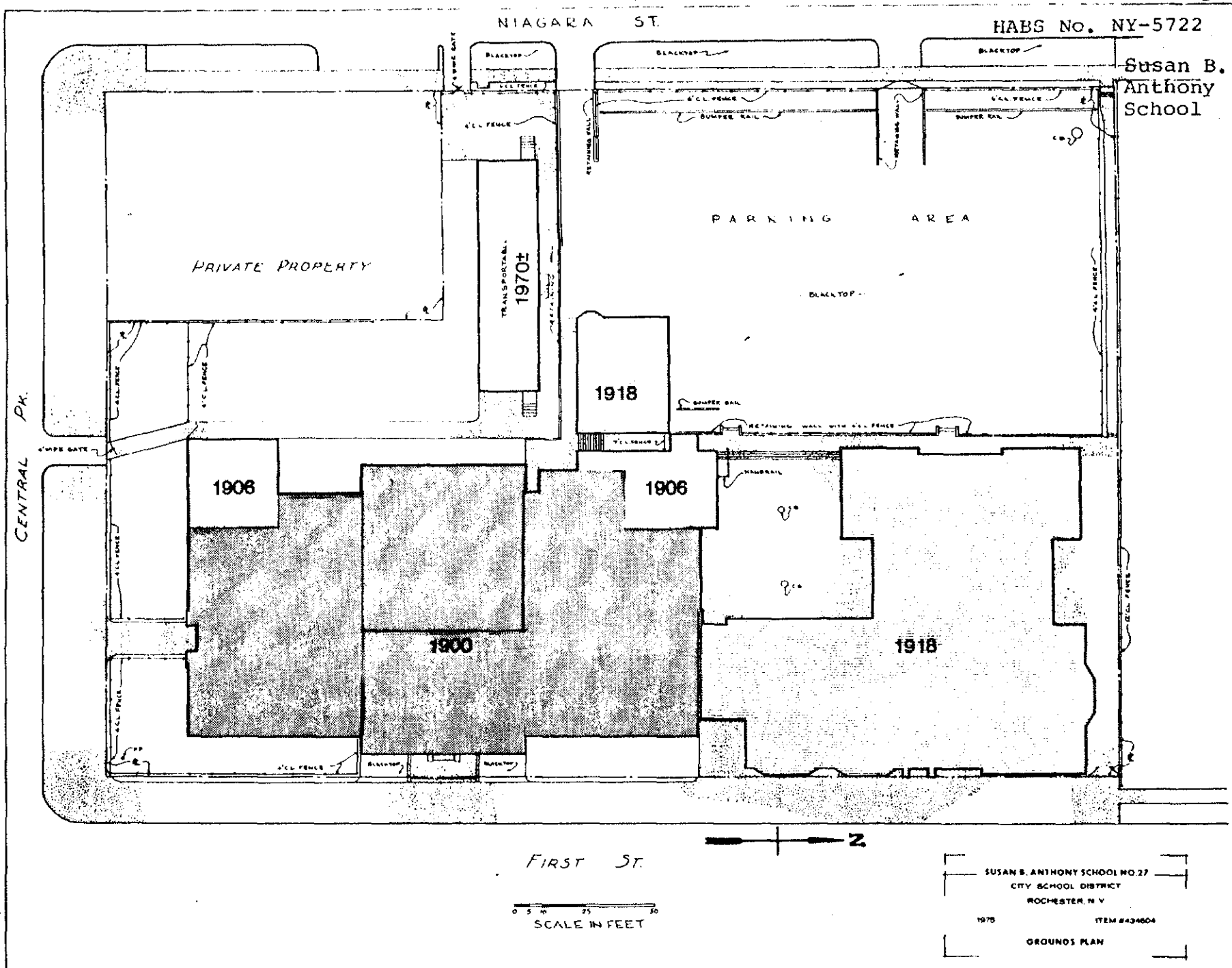
Susan B. Anthony School

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