

Forest Grove Historic Resource



1728 MAIN STREET - Central School

Description:

This is a one story public building (school) with a composition shingle covered cross-gable roof. It is a brick building richly ornamented with bold, tall multi-paned windows. The primary facade of the building presents three gable ends: a richly ornamented central gable with the primary entryway and two laterals (one at each end of the facade).

The building was added to by installing a wing from the rear elevation creating a T-plan building. The architecture respects the architecture of the original building but presents different fenestration with the use of much larger individual panes in the multi-paned bays. Pilasters rising from the ground to intersect the entablature define each of the bays on the new wing.

History:

Central School at 1728 Main Street, completed in 1931, is significant architecturally and historically. It is a fine example of a twentieth-century historic period Revival style with Georgian elements. Alterations/additions have been limited primarily to the rear (west) side of the building. Historically, Central School and its site, occupied by previous school structures, have contributed to the educational development of Forest Grove since 1855 when the Forest Grove school district split from the Cornelius district.

Central School stands on the site of an 1865 school, a long, one-story, rectangular, wood-frame building with two classrooms, erected by the Trustees of Tualatin Academy and known as the "Young Ladies Seminary." In 1874 the Forest Grove School District purchased the lot and school building from Tualatin Academy. In 1882 the school district added a third classroom to this building.

Crowded conditions encouraged the school district to erect a new school on this site in 1885. Architects Bradley of Forest Grove and White of Portland assisted Alfred Lee construct a two-story, wood-frame school building with four classrooms, facing Main Street. Two additional rooms were added to this school in 1890, under the supervision of contractors Garmon and Jerome. Additional enlargements were made over the years that more than doubled the size of the original 1885 school building. Until 1905, older students received their education at Tualatin Academy, however, as a result of enlargements to Central School the first high school class graduated from the wood-frame Central School in 1911.

In 1930 the Forest Grove determined that a new school needed to be constructed to keep pace with swelling student enrollments. The 1885 school building was demolished in 1930 and the present brick structure constructed the following year. Architects Higgins and Biederman designed the school and J.S. Loynes, long-time Forest Grove building contractor, constructed it (Eric Stewart, "Old Newspaper Reveals Central's 128-Year History," Forest Grove News Times, September 8, 1993; Margaret Gilbert, "For Central--A Centennial," Forest Grove Times, May 1, 1985).