

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Pascoag Grammar School

other names/site number Burrillville High School, also Pascoag Grammar High School

**2. Location**

street & number 265 Sayles Avenue  not for publication

city or town Burrillville  vicinity

state Rhode Island code RI county Providence code 007 zip code 02859

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

- entered in the National Register
  - See continuation sheet
- determined eligible for the National Register
  - See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
  - See continuation sheet.
- removed from the National Register.
  - See continuation sheet.
- other (explain)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Pascoag Grammar School  
Name of Property

Providence County, RI  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box.)

- buildings
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include any previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		total

**Name of related multiple property listings**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION: School

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: Multiple Dwelling  
WORK IN PROGRESS

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19<sup>th</sup> AND 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS:  
Colonial/Georgian Revival

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation BRICK; CONCRETE; STONE: Granite  
walls BRICK  
roof ASPHALT; METAL: Copper;  
other METAL: Iron  
SYNTHETICS: Rubber (roofing)

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 36) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION

ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

1917

**Significant Dates**

1917

1937

**Significant Person**

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

McLaughlin, Thomas S., architect

Mahoney & Coffey, builders

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### 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** 1.4 acres

#### UTM References

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1	9	2	7	5	8	4	0	4	6	4	8	9	6	0
	Zone		Easting						Northing						
2															

3															
	Zone		Easting						Northing						
4															

See continuation sheet

#### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

#### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kathryn J. Cavanaugh, Preservation Consultant, and Frederick C. Stachura (of The Historic Collaborative)

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date September 2006

street & number 197 6<sup>th</sup> Street and 190 High Street telephone 401.273.4715

city or town Providence and Bristol state Rhode Island zip code 02906 and 02809

#### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

#### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

#### Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

#### Additional items

(check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

#### Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Denise and Robert Jensen

street & number 9 Old Jenckes Hill Road telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town Lincoln state RI zip code 02865

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and amend listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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Pascoag Grammar School

Burrillville

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**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION**

The Pascoag Grammar School (originally known as Burrillville High School) is located at 265 Sayles Avenue in the village of Pascoag, Town of Burrillville, Rhode Island. Constructed in 1917, it is a 2-1/2 story, Georgian Revival style, T-plan, red brick public school building measuring 110 by 46 feet. The building stands on a raised basement and has a limestone and granite foundation; a steel structure with wood joist/stud framing, hollow core Natco backup brick, and red brick veneer exterior walls; a nearly flat roof with parapet; wood multi-light windows; and limestone trim including a substantial belt course at the 1<sup>st</sup> floor level, and another above the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor windows, as well as window lintels and sills. The symmetrical façade, fifteen bays wide, has a center entrance situated half a level above grade; the wood, multi-light, double-hung windows are separated by brick pilasters. Stair towers at the north and south ends of the building, each recessed about fourteen feet from the façade, contain secondary entrances just a few steps above grade. A three-story, 42 by 42 foot auditorium wing projects from the east (rear) elevation. In size, massing, plan, materials, and architectural detailing, it is a typical example of a Georgian Revival school building of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The school closed in 1995, and stood largely vacant (except for some town school department offices) for the next decade. In 2005–2006 new owners undertook a major rehabilitation project, intending to retain and preserve as many of the building's character-defining exterior and interior historic architectural features as possible while converting it to multi-family residential use. The results of that project are included in this narrative description.

Located just under one-half mile north of the village center at Main and High Streets, the school stands in the center of a 1.4 acre parcel of land on the east side of Sayles Avenue and the north side of Pleasant Street, overlooking Pine Street to the west. The topography of the site slopes down from west to east, fully exposing the basement level at the rear of the building. A chain link fence marks the side and rear property lines. The school is set back approximately thirty-five feet from Sayles Avenue, and approximately eighteen feet from each side lot line. Behind the school, the former playground and parking lot had been paved with asphalt for many years; these areas are being repaved and will be used for resident parking. New landscaping and walkways will be installed in front of the school building.

The original approach to the school from Sayles Avenue was both impressive and inviting. The main entrance in the center of the west façade and the side entrances in the west elevations of each stair tower exhibited the classically inspired detailing that is characteristic of the Georgian Revival: double Doric columns supporting an entablature with dentil moulding, guttae, pierced blocks and tryglyphs, metope, corona and cymatium; column bases and plinths rested upon cut granite blocks alongside shallow granite steps. Double-leaf painted wooden doors had twelve divided lights and two solid lower panels; there was a fanlight above the main entrance and

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five-light transom window above each side door. All three entrances had a shallow, decorative wrought iron balcony above each portico. The two side entrances are intact, but the main entrance was altered by construction of a connecting classroom annex (built in front of the school building in 1964, demolished in 2006), which covered most of that doorway, leaving only the original portico entablature and balcony above it. This main entrance was recently restored to its original appearance, using historic photos and physical evidence to guide the work.

Following the state school construction guidelines of the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Pascoag Grammar School was designed with ample windows to provide both fresh air and natural light to supplement the electric light in the classrooms. Most of the school's original nine-over-nine, double-hung, single-glazed wood windows on the first and second floors have survived and were repaired during the rehabilitation project (any replacement elements matched the original); the basement also had some surviving three-over-three, double-hung, single-glazed, wooden sash. These windows, separated by brick pilasters, are grouped in three sets of five bays on the façade; the rear elevation also features two sets of five bays on either side of the auditorium wing; the north and south side elevations feature one bay of windows on each floor. The stair towers each have particularly distinctive original windows on their west elevations, located between the first floor and second floor levels above the doorways: a large 6/6 double-hung, single-glazed wood sash topped by a fan light, set into an arched surround with six projecting voussoirs and a projecting keystone, all of limestone.

The simple brick-and-copper-clad cornice features an elevated, carved, centered sign board with a decorative cast concrete surround which reads "Pascoag Grammar School," the name by which this school was known from 1937–1995. This sign board is separated from the area above the second story windows by a horizontal copper drain system which runs the length of the building. The semi-flat asphalt gravel roofing system is trimmed with galvanized flashing and copper brick caps encircling the entire building. During the current rehabilitation project, all of these elements have been either repaired or replaced in kind, and preserved.

The three-story, square auditorium wing is centered on the east (rear) elevation. On both the north and south elevations, it has three original, large, round-arched windows, the equivalent of nearly two stories in height: single-glazed, wood, true-divided-light nine-over-nine double hung sash, with multi-light sidelights divided from the operable sash by heavy vertical mullions, and fan lights. Additional windows at the basement level of the auditorium wing are wood six-over-six, double-hung sash: four on the south side, three on the north. These windows were retained and repaired during the rehabilitation project. The auditorium wing also has two secondary entrances at grade on its east elevation; neither metal single-leaf door was original prior to the rehabilitation project, though the locations of the openings were original to the building. The remainder of the east elevation is a plain brick wall.

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Two sets of fire escapes, installed while the building was being used as a school, were attached to the rear of the building for emergency egress, and four window openings on the east elevation (two each on both first and second floors) contained metal fire doors. The fire stairs have been removed, but the balconies and fire doors remain, to provide outdoor space for four of the new apartment units.

The original school building contained a total of 25,992 square feet on three levels. In 1964, a one-story, red brick annex of about 5,700 square feet was built fifteen feet in front of and parallel to the original building, with a perpendicular structural link connecting to the central front entrance of the main block. The annex had a steel structure, flat roof, exterior walls of red brick veneer over concrete masonry block, and horizontal bands of aluminum-framed windows on all four elevations. The annex originally held five classrooms, but later was used as school department administration offices. This non-contributing addition was demolished in 2006 as part of the rehabilitation project.

The original first floor interior plan had six rooms of varying sizes and functions flanking a wide central corridor running north-south between the stair towers at each end. The rooms consisted of four classrooms, a teachers' lounge, and an administrative office. On the second floor, the central corridor had classrooms and the auditorium balcony on its east side, and one large classroom across the full width of the building's façade on the west side. This large room was used by the high school classes, and was subdivided sometime after the high school relocated to Harrisville in 1936. In the basement of the building were a boiler room, girls' and boys' toilets, and girls' and boys' locker rooms with showers. The auditorium wing had a gymnasium (later a cafeteria) on its ground floor (basement level) and a two-story assembly hall on the main floor, which originally had a balcony on the second floor level; at some point in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the balcony was enclosed with a skim-coated sheetrock partition wall, and converted into a small library. During the 2006 rehabilitation project, the original floor plans were modified to create a total of 18 apartments, but the essential original configuration of the school layout – a double loaded central corridor, with rooms on the east and west sides and stair towers at the north and south ends, remains intact on each floor, and the auditorium wing also retains its two-story open interior.

Vertical circulation originally was, and continues to be, provided by means of the north and south stair towers. The stairways are wood, with landings between floor levels, and simply designed with square-sectioned balusters and square newel posts with corbelled caps. At the first and second floor levels, double-leaf paneled wood and wire glass doors provide access between the stairways and the corridors. On the first floor, a half stairway in the center of the west wall originally served the main entrance, and later provided access between the original building and the annex; as a result of the current rehabilitation project, this stairway once again serves the restored main entrance.

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Prior to rehabilitation, in the main block of the school the interior walls were finished with painted plaster over wallboard; the corridors and many of the classrooms were lined with painted and varnished wood wainscoting with chair rails and baseboards. Wall-mounted blackboards, built-in wooden cabinetry and bookcases, and wood trim were prevalent throughout the building; picture rails also surrounded some of the rooms at the height of the top of the windows. Flooring was generally resilient tile, applied over hardwood. Ceilings on the first and second floors were fourteen feet high, and featured a mix of dropped ceilings, acoustical tiles, and painted plaster finishes, but in the main corridors, several of the classrooms, both stair towers, and the cafeteria, original patterned, pressed tin ceilings remained in place, featuring embossed squares and decorated cornices with various classical motifs. Most of the original wood horizontal paneled interior doors with wire glass transoms (and often their original hardware) had also survived. As part of the current rehabilitation project, most of these historic interior features – including tin ceilings, interior doors (particularly those in the corridors and stairwells), blackboards, cabinetry, and wood trim – have been retained, restored and incorporated as important design elements for the new residential units.

Character-defining features within the auditorium wing prior to rehabilitation included a proscenium stage at the east end surrounded with decorative wood trim; doorways on either side gave access to steps leading up to backstage storage/dressing room areas. Centered over the stage and carved in plaster relief were the words “Music, Art, Science,” with decorative heraldic shields between the disciplines. The coffered plaster ceiling, soaring two stories above the floor, had decorative scrolled brackets appearing to support the horizontal “beams.” Original hardwood flooring remained intact throughout. At the west end of the auditorium on the first floor were several sets of wood and glass doors leading to the main corridor; on the second floor was the enclosed former balcony, later school library. During the current rehabilitation project, the auditorium was subdivided into two residential units; its historic interior features were incorporated into the design, and special care was taken to retain the two-story character of the interior space: new partition walls only rise about 12 feet from the floor, and step back from the original arched windows on the north and south walls, while the former library in the balcony was re-opened and converted into loft bedrooms that overlook living spaces below.

A key local landmark since its construction, the Pascoag Grammar School visually dominates its surroundings: a residential neighborhood characterized by one-, two- and three-story wood-frame houses that developed between the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, primarily to house workers in local mills.

[End Section 7.]

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**LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS**

1. Pascoag Grammar School
2. Providence County, RI
3. Frederick Stachura, photographer
4. June 2006
5. Original negative on file at Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission  
150 Benefit Street, Providence, RI 02903
6. West elevation, view facing east
7. Photograph #1

1. Pascoag Grammar School
2. Providence County, RI
3. Frederick Stachura, photographer
4. June 2006
5. Original negative on file at Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission  
150 Benefit Street, Providence, RI 02903
6. East elevation, view facing west
7. Photograph #2

1. Pascoag Grammar School
2. Providence County, RI
3. Frederick Stachura, photographer
4. April 2005
5. Original negative on file at Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission  
150 Benefit Street, Providence, RI 02903
6. South elevation, view facing north
7. Photograph #3

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1. Pascoag Grammar School
  2. Providence County, RI
  3. Frederick Stachura, photographer
  4. April 2005
  5. Original negative on file at Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission  
150 Benefit Street, Providence, RI 02903
  6. Southernmost entrance on west elevation, view facing east
  7. Photograph #4
- 
1. Pascoag Grammar School
  2. Providence County, RI
  3. Jeffrey D. Emidy, photographer
  4. September 2006
  5. Original digital image on file at Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission  
150 Benefit Street, Providence, RI 02903
  6. Main entrance on west elevation, view facing east
  7. Photograph #5
- 
1. Pascoag Grammar School
  2. Providence County, RI
  3. Frederick Stachura, photographer
  4. April 2005
  5. Original negative on file at Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission  
150 Benefit Street, Providence, RI 02903
  6. Interior view looking toward main entrance, view facing west
  7. Photograph #6
- 
1. Pascoag Grammar School
  2. Providence County, RI
  3. Frederick Stachura, photographer
  4. April 2005
  5. Original negative on file at Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission  
150 Benefit Street, Providence, RI 02903
  6. Interior view of second floor hallway, view facing north
  7. Photograph #7

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1. Pascoag Grammar School
  2. Providence County, RI
  3. Frederick Stachura, photographer
  4. April 2005
  5. Original negative on file at Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission  
150 Benefit Street, Providence, RI 02903
  6. Interior view of first floor classroom cabinetry, view facing west
  7. Photograph #8

1. Pascoag Grammar School
2. Providence County, RI
3. Frederick Stachura, photographer
4. April 2005
5. Original negative on file at Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission  
150 Benefit Street, Providence, RI 02903
6. Interior view of auditorium from balcony, view facing southeast
7. Photograph #9

1. Pascoag Grammar School
2. Providence County, RI
3. Frederick Stachura, photographer
4. April 2005
5. Original negative on file at Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission  
150 Benefit Street, Providence, RI 02903
6. Interior view of rear of auditorium from stage, view facing west
7. Photograph #10

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**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Pascoag Grammar School, built in 1917 as Burrillville High School, retains a high degree of integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association, and meets Criteria A and C for listing on the National Register. Under Criterion A, it was the first building in the Town of Burrillville specifically designed and constructed for high school as well as grammar school students; it was sited in what was then the town's largest village, Pascoag, where Burrillville's first formal high school program had been instituted in 1898 in the previous grammar school building on this same site. In addition, this Pascoag Grammar School (the third of that name) represents a transitional period in the history of public education in Burrillville, when the previous 19<sup>th</sup> century system of village-oriented schools was beginning to be consolidated and modernized; and, it is also a unique survivor of those efforts, remaining in continuous educational use for nearly eight decades. Under Criterion C, the school is a typical and well-preserved example of an early 20<sup>th</sup> century Georgian Revival style public school building; the school's design met state health, safety, and programmatic standards while also embodying the values and pride of the local community.

Burrillville is located in the northwest corner of Rhode Island, in the Blackstone Valley region; it was first settled in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but formally incorporated in 1806. Like many communities in the Blackstone Valley, Burrillville's economy initially depended on agriculture, but its abundant waterways made the town eminently suited to textile manufacturing, which was introduced in Rhode Island in 1790 and dominated the state's industrial economy throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and well into the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. More than a dozen mill villages were established throughout Burrillville in this period, and as the mills themselves prospered, the villages around them likewise grew larger, with houses, schools, churches, businesses, and other services and institutions serving an ever-increasing population.

The largest and most densely populated of Burrillville's 19<sup>th</sup> century mill villages was Pascoag, which is located near the geographical center of town along the Pascoag and Clear Rivers (part of the Branch-Blackstone River system). Early industrial enterprises, such as grist and saw mills, had been established in Pascoag by the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, and in 1814 the village's first wool fulling mill was built by Daniel Sayles. (Sayles Avenue, where the Pascoag Grammar School is situated, was laid out in 1895 and named for this prominent local family of manufacturers, businessmen, and landowners.) As the 19<sup>th</sup> century progressed, Pascoag became a major center of Rhode Island's woolen textile industry; by 1852 Pascoag had eight woolen mills, including the Sheffield Worsted Mills, the Granite Mill, the Stone Worsted Mill, Lincoln Mill, and Clear River Woolen Mills, as well as six mercantile stores and a number of other buildings. In 1856, about one-third (1,082) of Burrillville's 3,538 residents lived in Pascoag, and over one-third of those worked in the mills. Like most industrial centers around the state, Pascoag experienced a large influx of foreign-born workers during the mid- and late 19<sup>th</sup> centuries,

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most notably the Irish, who began arriving in the 1840s, and French Canadians, after the Civil War. By 1900, Burrillville's population was 6,500; Pascoag remained the town's largest village, with 1,461 residents.

In 1806, the same year that Burrillville was incorporated, its first schoolhouse was built; prior to that time, any formal learning was done in private homes. (The Rhode Island General Assembly had passed a law establishing free schools in 1800, but that law was inconsistently enforced and later repealed.) By 1828, Burrillville had 11 schoolhouses, all of which were used in winter, averaging 40 pupils each (for a total of at least 440 school-age children in town, out of 2,164 residents); only one school operated in the summertime. (Bicknell, p. 674.) In 1828, when Rhode Island re-enacted the Free School Law creating a statewide public school system, Burrillville established its first formal school districts; most of these were oriented to individual mill villages, although some were also located in rural areas. Like all Rhode Island public schools, Burrillville's were funded through a mix of state appropriations, local taxes, and private donations. A School Committee was established to oversee the districts, but responsibilities for day-to-day management, operations, and budget matters were all delegated to each individual district. Pascoag, which saw its first schoolhouse built in 1824 on what is today South Main Street, a short distance south of the village center, became School District No. 11.

Public schools of this period offered an opportunity for families to educate their children free of charge, but that education was not compulsory, and only rarely did it extend a dozen years or more, as it does today. Most people started working in their teenage years to support themselves and their families (in mill villages, children as young as eight or nine years old could find work in the mill), or they married and started families of their own. Very few had the time, the resources, or even the opportunity to continue their education beyond the elementary level; the concepts of "middle school" and "high school" were virtually unknown, and a private secondary or college education was only available to the sons of the gentry or the wealthy. In addition to having limited opportunities for a formal education, those who did go to school faced a potentially challenging learning environment in the typically modest, wood-frame, one-room schoolhouses of small towns and rural areas of the time, where boys and girls of varying ages and academic levels studied together. Writing in 1856, Burrillville native Horace A. Keach colorfully reminisced about his own school days:

Most of the school houses were in dilapidated condition. ... The internal arrangements made them unfit for school purposes. Some of the scholars faced the wall, some were roasted by their proximity to the stove, while little martyrs hung with their heels dangling above the floor. No means were provided for ventilation, and if the cool air whistled in some old cranny in the crazy fabric, it was to chill and endanger those who were nearest to it. ... It seldom entered the heads of the inmates that this rude structure was made to study in, and so they mused of mischief and meditated mutiny. (Keach, p. 41.)

Whether Keach's experiences were the exception or the norm in Burrillville, conditions in the town's public schools vastly improved during the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In 1845 the office of the

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Rhode Island Commissioner of Public Schools was established, charged with overseeing the state's public school system and recommending any necessary reforms to the General Assembly. Over time, these reforms included a standardized school year and curriculum, qualification standards for teachers, and mandatory attendance for all children from the ages of six to 16. In 1872, the Commissioner proposed a number of remedies to combat illiteracy, including new laws to prevent children under 12 years of age from being employed in a manufacturing establishment, and to require all children who were employed in manufacturing establishments to attend school for at least five months of the year. As of 1906, Rhode Island required all local public school systems to provide high school education as part of a general program for equalizing educational opportunities; three years later the General Assembly amended the law to require every city and town to either maintain a public high school, or to make provision at its own expense for students to attend high schools in other communities. In 1912 the General Assembly charged the State Board of Education to enforce proper standards of heating, lighting, seating, ventilating, and other sanitary arrangements for schools; and as of 1917 every child over age eight, whether in public or private school, was required to receive an average of 20 minutes daily of physical training or physical education (Bicknell, pp. 684-690.)

Legislative mandates like these affected the design of school buildings, as did the concept that public schools, as important civic institutions, should physically embody the prosperity, pride, values, and aspirations of the community. Consequently, these buildings began to acquire a more monumental scale. Rhode Island schools of the mid- to late 19<sup>th</sup> century were typically two or even three stories in height, with multiple classrooms so that students could be grouped by age and academic level (the distinctions of "primary school" and "grammar school" – roughly akin to today's elementary and middle schools – had evolved by this time). Separate entrances and stairways for boys and girls were provided, commonly at opposite ends of a cruciform plan, which accommodated at least two, and sometimes as many as four or five, classrooms per floor. Windows increased in size and number to provide abundant natural light and fresh air; built-in heating and cooling systems were installed; and libraries and large assembly rooms (sometimes tucked into the attic level under a gabled roof) became more prevalent. Outside of urban areas, school buildings still tended to be constructed of wood and clad in clapboards or shingles, with textures and detailing typical of the prevailing architectural styles of the day.

By 1876, Burrillville had fifteen school districts and 21 public schoolhouses, two of which were in Pascoag: the Pascoag Primary School, later known as the South Main Street School, on the west side of that street, which can be seen on the 1870 map (still extant, now in residential use); and the Pascoag Grammar School (the first of that name), on the east side of Sayles Avenue, which was built in 1874 (destroyed by fire in 1893). Both buildings stood less than a quarter mile to the south and north, respectively, of the village center at Main and High Streets. The 1891 map shows them both as 2-story, fairly sizeable wood-frame buildings with a simple rectangular footprint.

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Burrillville's schools still remained highly village-oriented in this era, but change was immanent. The 1890 School Committee Annual Report noted that at least three of the town's 15 school districts, all in rural areas and smaller villages, had enrollment numbers too low to sustain the cost of providing school programs and maintaining school buildings in those districts. The Superintendent of Public Schools, apparently not for the first time, urged the Town to consider transferring all fiscal and operational responsibilities from the various individual districts to the School Committee itself, in a new "town system" of school management that would, he argued, not only be more efficient and cost effective but would also improve the condition of the schools and the quality of education for all Burrillville students. The Superintendent's report was issued in May 1890; at the annual town meeting in June, Burrillville voters approved a change from a district system to a town system of schools, effective as of April 1891. Consolidation efforts began almost immediately, with the Town providing transportation for students in some outlying areas to attend school in one of the larger villages: Pascoag, Harrisville, and Bridgeton. However, these efforts were initially resisted by some residents who feared that closing their local schools would negatively affect their property values. That debate went on for nearly a decade before several of the underutilized schools were finally closed.

Another major change in Burrillville's school system came about shortly after the new town system went into effect, with the introduction of high school classes (nearly two decades before the state actually required local communities to provide high schools). The School Committee Annual Report of 1891 observed that significant popular support for inaugurating a public high school already existed in the town, and heartily endorsed the idea, noting the idealistic and practical benefits that would ensue: young people could continue their education close to home, thus extending the benevolent influence of family over their transition to adulthood; and an "abundance of liberally educated young women" could be expected to return the town's investment by becoming teachers in Burrillville schools themselves. Since Pascoag had the largest student population in Burrillville at the time and was in a fairly central location in the town, it was a logical place in which to institute a post-grammar-school curriculum, and in the fall of 1891, a one-year course of high school studies was organized in the Pascoag Grammar School, open to students from all over Burrillville.

Two years later, the first Pascoag Grammar School suffered a disastrous fire. The School Committee, mindful of the need not only to replace that building immediately but to try to relieve chronic overcrowding in both Pascoag's and Bridgeton's grammar schools, decided that the most economical solution was to erect a new but much larger school (three times the size of the one that burned) in Pascoag, that would serve both villages as well as the town's high school students (1894 Annual Report, p. 8). The previous school site was too small and too far from Bridgeton, so a different site further to the north on Sayles Avenue was chosen, at the intersection of Pine Street, roughly halfway between the two village centers: half a mile north of Pascoag center and three-

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quarters of a mile southeast of Bridgeton center. This location also happened to be in a residential neighborhood primarily populated by mill workers who were descended from Irish and French-Canadian immigrants.

A special edition of the *Pascoag Herald* newspaper, published in June 1894, described the brand new grammar school and included a drawing of it:

The new school building is completed, and is both a credit and an ornament to the town. ... Seated on rising ground, about 70 feet back from the roadway, an opportunity has thereby been afforded to create beautiful surroundings, and with its well laid out grounds the building forms an attractive picture. The house is built of spruce and rests on a granite foundation. It is two stories in height, with a frontage of 63 feet and a depth of 59. The front gives character to the structure, and is composed of wings on each side ... faced by circular porches with Doric columns, which form the entrances into the school for girls and boys respectively. ... There are three spacious school rooms on each floor, each 32 by 28 feet, with a total seating accommodation for 332 pupils. ... (pp. 4-5)

This will be the beginning of a new era in the history of education in Burrillville. The bringing of all the children of the community together will render it possible to grade the schools to great advantage, and will make them much superior to any that have heretofore existed. This new building is a great contrast to the old red schoolhouse [Pascoag's original 1824 one-room school], and in a sense is an indication of the growth of the ideas of social responsibility and social unity (p. 43).

By 1897, the high school course had expanded to two years, and enrollment was up. In 1898 the School Committee voted to establish a formal high school program, which would continue to be located in the second Pascoag Grammar School: "Our school system can now be ranked with those of other large towns in the state and in future it will no longer be necessary for our parents to send their children out of town for a secondary education. At present we have but one course of study but it is hoped that in the near future we will be enabled to offer the several options usually offered by such schools" (1899 Annual Report, p. 7). The 1899 School Committee report also discoursed at some length on the importance of higher education in adolescence.

Around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, several of Burrillville's schools came to the end of their useful life, and in response to state requirements as well as its own growing population (which reached 6,500 in 1900, 1,181 of whom were school-age children), the Town constructed several large new school buildings in some of the more populous villages. These included the nearly identical, two-story, wood frame, Late Victorian style Bridgeton School (1897; NR listed) and Mapleville School (1898; converted to residential use), as well as the three-story, wood-frame, Harrisville Grammar School (1902, demolished 1968) and Sayles Avenue School in Pascoag (1905, built on the site of the original 1874 Pascoag Grammar School; used as a private residence since 1966), both designed in the Colonial Revival style. But as the early 20<sup>th</sup> century progressed, a new design standard for

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school buildings emerged in Rhode Island and elsewhere across the United States: a large two- or three-story brick structure standing on a raised basement, with a flat roof, a long, rectilinear plan with wide, double-loaded corridors, and an auditorium wing. Stylistic inspiration was found both in the Gothic Revival (considered appropriate for educational buildings, particularly on college campuses, for its associations with medieval scholasticism) and in variations of the Colonial Revival, such as Georgian Revival, which with its characteristic regular proportions, symmetry in both elevation and plan, and classically-inspired ornamentation, evoked orderliness, discipline, and learning.

Like its predecessor and namesake, the second Pascoag Grammar School only survived about two decades before it too was destroyed by fire: on September 21, 1916, three days before the start of the fall term. By that time the village's grammar and high school populations had once again far outgrown their building, to the point where two classes had already relocated to temporary quarters on the third floor of the Sayles Avenue School down the street; the students displaced by the fire were likewise moved elsewhere in the village until a new school could be built. This disaster gave the School Committee an opportunity both to resolve its current crisis and its chronic overcrowding issues in Pascoag, as well as to plan for the long-term future educational needs of the village. For the grammar school alone, six classrooms were needed; for the high school, one large study room, recitation rooms for each of the teachers, and a science laboratory. An assembly hall and athletic facilities were also desired, to be located on the ground floor both for safety and convenience. By the time its next Annual Report was issued in March 1917, the School Committee had concluded its planning process (which included visits to several recently constructed schools in Rhode Island and Massachusetts, which cost in the neighborhood of \$50,000 to \$60,000), and made the following recommendations for a new school in Pascoag:

... [The new school will be] a two story brick structure with a flat roof of tar and gravel. The fire danger from outside sources is small, consequently insurance rates should be less. There is no expense of painting every few years, which is a large item in itself. It makes a very fine appearing building and one of very lasting qualities. As to the interior arrangement, the first floor is planned to contain four rooms for the grades, the assembly room, and two office rooms. The second floor is to contain two rooms for the grades, the balcony of the hall, and the high school section in the front of the building. The basement floor will contain boys' and girls' lavatories, locker and lunch rooms for the boys and girls of the high school section, a large space under the hall that may be used in future as a gymnasium, and the boiler room separated by brick wall and fire-proof ceiling from the rest of the building.

The committee has based its considerations strictly upon its ideas as to the needs of our town in the present circumstances, and has recommended, not for themselves, but for all of us as town's people of Burrillville, the construction of a building that will meet the actual demands of the time, a building every part of which is really needed, and a building to which we may point with pride. ... [In addition,] we find

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that the extra charges resulting from maintaining schools in temporary quarters are nearly sufficient to pay the interest on the money invested in the construction of a new building (1917 report, pp. 5-6).

The Committee's recommendations were followed to the letter. Contracts were awarded to architect Thomas S. McLaughlin, and builders Mahoney & Coffey, Inc. in early 1917, and construction commenced shortly thereafter. (McLaughlin had offices at 87 Weybosset Street in downtown Providence; in 1917 four other architectural firms and individual architects had offices at that same address, but it is not known whether McLaughlin was affiliated with any of them. In 1926 he left Providence for Buffalo, New York. His name was not found in several indices of American architects, so little else is known about him or his body of work.) By the beginning of the school year in the fall of 1918, the new school was completed, measuring 110 feet long by 46 feet wide with a 42-by-42-foot auditorium wing at the rear, at a cost of \$63,000. The 1919 School Committee Annual Report included a photograph of the edifice (a first for these reports) and proudly described it at some length:

In the New High School Building ... we believe we have one of the most beautiful and best equipped buildings in our State. It is a two story structure of Barrington smooth faced brick, with limestone trimmings. The interior throughout is plastered with King Winsor cement upon plaster boards. All floors are hard pine. The interior wood finish is of North Carolina pine with fumed oak velvet finish. Corridors extend the entire length of the building on first and second floors, with stairwells and outside doors at each end. These stair wells are isolated from the rest of the building by steel fire doors on all floors.

The first floor contains four school rooms for the grades, size of rooms 24 by 30 feet, with a seating capacity of 42 pupils: a beautiful and spacious auditorium, with a seating capacity of 570 – 400 on the main floor, and 170 in the balcony which is entered from the corridor on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor; the committee room and office of the superintendent is located on one side of the main entrance while on the other side of this entrance is a room of the same dimensions to be used as the teachers' rest room.

The second floor has two class rooms for the grades, while the entire front section is given up to the high school department. This section has one large room, accommodating 72 pupils, which is used mainly as a study room; two smaller rooms used as recitation rooms with accommodations for 25 or 30 pupils each, and a well equipped laboratory with chemical and physical tables and apparatus.

The basement contains toilet rooms for boys and girls, recreation rooms and wardrobes for high school boys and girls, shower baths, a large room under the auditorium that may be used as a gymnasium when properly equipped, and a boiler room. ... Drinking fountains are placed in each corridor, one at each end, and also in the boys and girls rooms in the basement. ... The building is equipped throughout with electric lights, electric bells, and electric clock system. It is wired for telephones in each room, but the instruments have not yet been installed. ... Each room has an indirect radiator in the basement at the

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bottom of a heating duct for the purpose of supplying an adequate amount of fresh air (1919 Annual Report, pp. 4-8).

Although it was always intended for the use of the town's high school students plus the grammar grade pupils of Pascoag and Bridgeton, the new school was quickly dubbed "Burrillville High School;" it is identified with that name on the 1921 map. It met all current state health and safety regulations for public schools, including brick construction, multiple large operable windows, space for physical education, wide interior double-loaded corridors, spacious classrooms, sanitary facilities, and a modern steam heating and electrical plant. In form and style it also typified the early 20<sup>th</sup> century vogue for Georgian Revival and Colonial Revival public school buildings, with its rectangular, horizontal massing; red brick construction trimmed in limestone; raised basement; flat roof with parapet; symmetrical façade; center entranceway; classical porticoes and entablatures with dentil moldings; transoms over doorways; wood multi-light windows, some with fanlights. Other Rhode Island examples in this mode include Hope High School in Providence and the Andrews Memorial School in Bristol (both 1938, both NR listed).

Rhode Island's population continued to grow steadily in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as manufacturing production and foreign immigration reached their peaks. In many communities, when it came time to upgrade their school facilities, the response to an ever-growing student population was to erect separate elementary, middle, and high school buildings. Burrillville was no exception to this trend. For nearly 20 years, Burrillville High School in Pascoag served grades 5 through 12, but in 1936 a new Burrillville High School was constructed in the nearby village of Harrisville (known today as the William J. Callahan School, now a middle school), to which children of other villages could be transported by bus. The new high school was in the same design vernacular: a large, three-story, red brick, stone-trimmed, flat roofed building, and it too evinced a Colonial Revival aesthetic with multi-light windows, a center entrance under a rooftop pediment, and brick pilasters, although its detailing was more subdued.

With the town high school relocated to Harrisville, its predecessor was then converted solely into a grammar school for grades 1-8 (later K-8), and renamed "Pascoag Grammar School," which is carved into the signboard above the front cornice. The Pascoag Grammar School, the third and last of that name, continued to operate as an elementary and middle school, with few physical alterations, through the early 1960s. In 1964, town officials constructed a one-story classroom wing addition in front of the school (many Rhode Island public schools found themselves making similar changes to meet increasing enrollment and facilities upgrade requirements), but by 1966, shifts in the school population and new school construction outside of village centers resulted in Pascoag Grammar School becoming an elementary school for grades K-3; it operated as such, with an average annual student population of approximately 460, until it was closed by the Town in June 1995.

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The Pascoag Grammar School's long survival as an educational institution – nearly eight decades – appears to be unique in Burrillville, which continued to consolidate and modernize its school system throughout the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, resulting in the closure of most of the other village schools. (Some, like the Sayles Avenue and South Main Street Schools in Pascoag, and village schools in Oakland, Mapleville, and Nasonville, are now in residential use.) Of Burrillville's current two elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school, all but one date from the mid- to late 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the Callahan School has another thirty years to go before it achieves the same longevity that the Pascoag Grammar School had.

In architecture, in population origins, in village life, Pascoag shares a similar cultural and historical tradition with other Blackstone Valley communities. Although its visual character has been somewhat diluted by suburban infill and new construction in the last forty years, much remains, particularly in the immediate vicinity of the Pascoag Grammar School. The school has played an important role in both the educational history of Burrillville and the community development of Pascoag. It is also the architectural centerpiece of its neighborhood, commanding views from Pine Street and Sayles Avenue, and provides an emotional link to a past way of life for the families it once served. While closing a school can have dramatic impacts in a small village, the Pascoag Grammar School's quality of design and construction made its conversion to residential use both feasible and attractive. Its adaptive reuse as multi-family housing has maintained many of the school's character-defining historic architectural features while achieving other important community and public policy goals, such as economic development, community revitalization, and affordable housing.

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**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The boundaries of the nominated property follow the lot lines of the entire parcel occupied by the Pascoag Grammar School (A.P. 157, Lot 159). A description of this boundary follows: beginning at a point at the northwest corner of the intersection of Irving Avenue and Sayles Avenue, thence proceeding in a northern direction along Sayles Avenue to the northeast corner of property owned by Edward E. Cartier (A.P. 157, Lot 158), thence proceeding in a northerly direction along said boundary to a point bounded by property owned by the Town of Burrillville (A.P. 157, Lot 160 N/F), thence proceeding in a southeasterly direction to the easternmost corner of the playground to a point intersecting with property owned by the Town of Burrillville (A.P. 157, Lot 221), thence proceeding in a westerly direction along the playground and continuing westerly along Pleasant Street with property on the southerly side of Pleasant Street belonging to Lawrence R. St. Jean (A.P. 157, Lot 214), thence continuing in said westerly direction to the intersection with Sayles Avenue, thence proceeding in a northerly direction along Sayles Avenue to the point of beginning.

**VERBAL BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The boundaries of the nominated property comprise all of the land area historically associated with the Pascoag Grammar School, from the time of its original construction as Burrillville High School in 1917 through the closing of the school in 1995.

[End Section 10.]













EXIT

MultiPlay

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