

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Old Baton Rouge Junior High School (1922) is a two-story, brick, limestone, concrete, and terra-cotta institutional building in the neo-Gothic style. The school is located in a mixed residential-commercial area near the Baton Rouge central business district. Despite the loss of its historic interiors, the building retains its National Register eligibility.

The Old Baton Rouge Junior High School consists of a central lobby, two lateral classroom wings, and a rear polygonal auditorium. The interior is almost completely modern and of little architectural value. The school's importance rests upon its exterior styling, which is derived from sixteenth century English sources. The design is mainly late Gothic, but it also has two early Renaissance features.

Gothic features include:

1. The central Tudor arched entrance with its decoratively carved stone spandrels.
2. The large oriel window which surmounts the entrance. It features panel teas relief shields and crenellations.
3. The twin polygonal towers which flank the entrance. These are surmounted by ogee molded caps with finials. Beneath each cap is a set of teas relief panels showing tracery patterns.
4. The crenellation work which surmounts the entire entrance pavilion as well as other portions of the building.
5. The two-tier gabled buttresses which divide the building mass into bays.
6. The sets of large casement windows within the bays.

English Renaissance features include:

1. The use of quoining.
2. The three round gables which are surmounted by obelisks.

The building is well-crafted as can be seen in the use of carved stone and English bond brick construction.

#### Assessment of Integrity

Despite the loss of the historic interior, the school still retains its full exterior articulation, which is the basis of its significance.

Specific dates	1922
Builder/Architect	Edward F. Neild (Architect) Caldwell Bros. (Contractors)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)  
Criterion C

The Old Baton Rouge Junior High School is locally significant in the area of architecture as an outstanding local example of eclectic architecture and as the work of a noteworthy practitioner. The context for evaluation is Baton Rouge.

The school epitomizes one of the leading tendencies in twentieth century eclectic architecture--i.e., the use of historic styles for symbolic purposes. In this case a secondary school was built in the sixteenth century English Gothic style. Because it evoked the academic quadrangles of Oxford and Cambridge, this style became identified with academic institutions. Old Baton Rouge Junior High is a good example because its quiet lines and choice of details evoke this academic style very well. It stays relatively close to the late medieval precedents, which is not the case with most other schools or most other "Gothic" buildings in the Baton Rouge area.

The school is also significant as an example of the work of Edward F. Neild, one of Louisiana's leading architects of the twentieth century. In fact, his stature as an architect later went beyond the boundaries of the state.\*

Neild was born in Shreveport in 1884. He rose to prominence in the 1920's, '30's, and '40's designing many of Shreveport's most important buildings. These include the nine-story Henry C. Beck Building, the Municipal Building, the Caddo Parish Courthouse, the massive exhibit center at the Shreveport fairgrounds, the Veterans Administration Hospital in Shreveport, and many of the Caddo Parish school buildings.

Neild's rise to national prominence began in 1928 when Judge Harry Truman visited Neild's recently completed Caddo Parish Courthouse. Truman was impressed and engaged Neild to design the Jackson County Courthouse in Missouri. This formed a lasting friendship between Truman and Neild which led to other commissions. Neild died in 1955 while working with a Kansas City colleague on the design for the Truman Memorial Library in that city. He also designed courthouses in Phoenix, Arizona; Ruston, Louisiana; and Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Stylistically Neild was an eclectic architect mainly rooted in the axial Beaux Arts tradition who gradually turned to modernism in the late-1920's. The Old Baton Rouge Junior High School was built in 1922 and represents the early eclectic phase of his work. This is significant because by far the greater portion of his extant buildings represent the later modernist phase of his work.

\*State or national significance is not claimed for the building for two reasons:

1. It is not considered the finest example of Neild's work. In addition, the interiors are modern.
2. Neild achieved national prominence only within the last fifty years.

#### Major Bibliographic References

Historical data submitted by Allen Broussard, Federal Aid Coordinator, City of Baton Rouge - Parish of East Baton Rouge, including copies of school board minutes, construction contracts, conveyance records, legislative records, etc.

Information on Edward F. Neild supplied by Scott Smitherman of Sandahl Associates (the lineal descendant of Neild's architectural firm)

Edward F. Neild Obituary. Shreveport Journal, July 7, 1955.

