

## 26 MADEIRA AVENUE

DATE: 01.05.15

TO: NEW BEDFORD HISTORICAL COMMISSION

PREPARED BY: ANNE LOURO



## LOCATION

This property encompasses an entire city block between Madeira and Belleville Avenues and Hathaway and Earle Streets.



## STYLE CLASSIFICATION AND DESCRIPTION

The Sarah D. Ottiwell School was constructed in 1918 on land purchased by the city for the purpose of a new school house in the northern section of the City. Built in the Italian Renaissance style; it was designed by well known local architect Louis E. Destremps and constructed by New Bedford contractor B.F. Smith Co. The land cost was \$17, 586; the building contract was \$166,953; and the architect fees were \$5,843.

The Italian Renaissance style became popular in the early twentieth century; particularly for architect-designed landmarks in urban cities prior to World War I. This style of architecture had not been utilized for previous city school buildings, or by Destremps as illustrated by his earlier city contracted school buildings, such as the Jireh Swift and Betsy B. Winslow schools.

Typical of the Italian Renaissance style, the building has a stucco finish and an unusual use of a false roof overhang that showcases the style's typical tile roofing and brackets. Constructed as a single story rectangular building, the slope of the site gives an appearance of two stories on the east façade. This façade has the most interest with a grand colonnaded entry that forms an arcade with a solid roofline parapet above. The west façade entry on Madeira Avenue is a relatively simple arched doorway accented by classical columns. An interesting feature is the use of fresco panels above the door entries. The frescos feature children, befitting of a school building which they inhabited.

The window openings are small and the original windows have been replaced. Photographic evidence of roof light monitors made up for the window light deficiency, and they have been removed.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

The City ceased use of the Ottiwell School in 2010, with the opening of the new Lincoln School. The City then entered into a five year lease with the Alma del Mar charter school, which under the agreement, the charter school uses the space for free but must pay for upkeep of the property. Alma del Mar purchased the property from the city this past year and prior to purchasing the property explored the options of renovating, expanding, or new construction. Please refer to building surveys and reports for current building conditions.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

New Bedford's transformation from whaling to textile economy was extraordinary. The transition from the late 19<sup>th</sup> to early twentieth century saw New Bedford's population increased 300 percent; from 26,845 in 1880 to 96,652 in 1910. The promise of steady employment in the city's textile mills attracted thousands of immigrants to this urban center. The mills and subsequent housing were located in the north and south ends of the city and therefore the immigrant populations were the densest in these locations. This new demographics developed socio-economic neighborhoods where they opened businesses, social clubs and built churches. The City responded to this increase in population by dedicating infrastructure resources to quickly developing neighborhoods in the form of new roads, water and sewer, and new school buildings.

The 1915 City School Department Report noted the need for the purchase of portable school buildings in the north section of the city to alleviate school crowding in that area. In June 1916 the City Council voted to acquire a 2 acre lot bounded by Diman (Madeira Ave), Hathaway, Earle Streets and Belleville Avenue for the purpose of erecting a one story sixteen-room school house thereon, as recommended by the School Board. The City Property Committee selected Louis E. Destremps as the architect.

The new school building was expected to open in 1917, however the 1918 School Report notes that "the building delayed due to trouble procuring materials, transportation, etc., caused by activities of the war." The building was completed and accepted by the City Property Committee on November 29, 1918 and opened the following year with 15 rooms accommodating 600 students. Upon its completion it was the most expensive city elementary grade school with a city assessed value of \$197,000.

---

## SARAH D. OTTIWEL

Sarah D. Ottiwell was born in New Bedford in 1849 and began teaching in New Bedford schools at the age of seventeen. She served as a teacher in various schools, became the principal at the Lund's Corner School when it opened, and in 1876 became the long time assistant to the principal of the High School. When she retired in 1911 she was the oldest teacher in Massachusetts. She died on February 1, 2011, and her passing as well as her funeral service was widely reported in the local newspaper.

Upon Sarah's death, tributes were made to her dedication to the youth of the city and her commitment to their education and well being. Having taught for over sixty years, it was noted that she had taught three generations of children, beginning with school rooms lit with whale oil and in school buildings that no longer existed upon the time of her passing. Hundreds of people attended Sarah's funeral and the descriptions and comments demonstrated both her students' and colleagues' great affection towards her. After the funeral there was discussion of commemorating a bronze plaque in her name at the High School. No doubt, that when a new school building was being planned soon after her passing, that the community and School Department would petition for it to be named in her honor.

---

## LOUIS E. DESTREMPES

Louis E. Destremps was born in Montreal, Canada in 1875 and immigrated to New York City with his parents. His family subsequently moved to Fall River during which time Louis decided to forgo college and instead study architecture under the tutelage of his father who had his own practice. At the age of twenty two he left father's office and went to work in Newport for Andrews & Withers. After some time in New London and back in Fall River, Destremps came to New Bedford in 1905 and opened an office in the Masonic Building.

Destremps established himself as one of the city's premier architects and designed numerous public and private buildings including the Star Store, Third District Court, Car Barn, St. Hyacinth Church, Orpheum Theatre and numerous city school buildings.

## PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Recently conducted building assessments demonstrate the need for a high level of rehabilitation to make the building structurally sound and meet current building codes. To accommodate its current and future needs, the charter school plans on constructing a new two story, 45,000 square foot building which will allow them to expand enrollment to encompass a full K-8 grade span and to serve 450 scholars.

The new building will be located on the east section of the property, close to Belleville Avenue which will allow an agreement for the Madeira Feast to utilize the western portion for their activities. Please refer to Site Plans for further information.

## PHOTOGRAPHS



West Façade- Madeira Avenue Entrance



East Façade-Belleville Ave.



South Façade- Earle Street



Historic Photo-date unknown.  
Note rooftop light monitors.



View from corner of Hathaway St.  
and Madeira Ave.



Typical arched door entry with fresco.



Typical fresco