Research Design: Granite High School  South Salt Lake City, Utah

Emily Cebrowski

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I. Introduction

Granite High School is located at 3450 South 500 East in South Salt Lake City, a suburb south of Utah’s capital Salt Lake City. The Granite High School campus is currently owned by Granite School District, a local public school district. Granite High School was the first publicly chartered high school outside of the cities of Salt Lake and Ogden (Gooderham, 1977). In 1906, the high school opened existing as three separate locations across the valley, consolidated in 1907 as the “Scott School” the campus was located north directly north across the street from the current campus. In 1908 the school was renamed “Granite High School” and in 1910 the new campus was constructed at the current location (Gooderham, 1977). Granite high school remained a functioning high school with several additions and renovations until 2009 when the Granite District Board voted 4-3 to shut the school down citing the districts need to cut their 2009-10 budget by $3.4 million (Orton Park, & Bruce, 2009).

Most of the Granite High School Campus is currently closed to the public; however the 1979 Girls Gym building is presently being utilized as a donation warehouse for refugees by Granite School Districts Department of Educational Equity in partnership with the Utah Refugee Center (Granite School District, 2009). Property under contract with Garbett Homes pending South Salt Lake City’s Planning Commission and City Councils approval (Goodson, 2016).)

Garbett Homes is a local builder headquartered in a historic building across from the Utah State Capitol in Salt Lake City. Garbett Homes bill themselves as creating “innovative homes, utilizing the latest in green technology and design, at an affordable price” and have been building homes for 30 years (Garbett Homes, 2016). Garbett Homes plans to build an 80-unit single family residential subdivision on a portion of the property with construction to begin in 2018. (Lilly, 2016) The remainder of the property has been labeled by Garbett homes as “Schools/Open Space” and “New Historical” however exactly what this portion of the plan encompasses unknown. The property existed as a public-school campus for over 100 years and is currently zoned R-1-Single Family Residential. (Lilly, 2016)
II. Current Condition

Due to the campus’ age and dangerous construction materials, including asbestos, all but one of the buildings are closed to the public. The two current threats to this historic campus is vandalism and lack of maintenance. Ground level windows have been boarded up and interior courtyards have been fenced off to prevent public access. Granite School District formerly spent hundreds of thousands of dollars a year to maintain Granite School High school (Granite School District, 2015). District spokesman Ben Horsley said this budget has been cut down in recent years to “bare bones minimum to maintain security” (Goodson, 2016). Granite School District’s own Police Department monitor the site, which is equipped with alarms but vandalism is visible in broken windows on the second level and accumulation
of trash and clothes inside doorways and between building corridors (Goodson, 2016). The proposed new construction of this site will immediately impact a portion of the campus, the Girls Gym, baseball fields, southwest parking lot, stadium, and football field will be removed before construction begins. The north side of the campus including the auditorium/gym, science building, and old Jr. High building will remain intact until the city and landowner can agree on future development.

Figure 2: Current Condition, 1970’s addition of Lunch Room/Classrooms, building Facing East toward parking lot, image captured Nov. 12, 2016
III. Significance

Granite High School is currently publicly owned with a contract for private sale, pending approval. The campus consists of five buildings, three structures, and multiple objects. The 1919 Science Building, 1928 Jr. High (later attached to the Science Building), and 1939 Auditorium and Gym are contributing under Section A. The historic function of Granite High School is education/school and its current function is unoccupied/temporary storage facility. Because Granite High school has multiple additions, and buildings were added over the years there is more than one architectural style represented on the campus. The main building or “Science Building” constructed in 1919 and the Junior High Building constructed in 1928 are in the Neoclassical style (Utah State Division of History, 2016). The Auditorium and Gym was paid for in part by the Public Works Administration (PWA) program, constructed in 1939 is in the PWA Moderne style (Gooderham 1977:175).

The Science Building was constructed at a cost of $67,090 using Steel Truss with a brick exterior (Sanborn, 1950). The Junior High Building was constructed at a cost of $93,402 by General Contractor Burnston Brothers Company (Gooderham 1977). The Junior High Building was constructed with a brick exterior, Pilast-D walls, featured electric lights, and steam heat from the campus heating plant (Sanborn, 1950) Exterior details of both buildings are typical of the neoclassical style and include a symmetrical façade, uninterrupted cornices, pilasters, and terra cotta details (Utah State Division of History, 2016).
Figure 3: Exterior of Science Building, building faces West toward 500 East, image captured Nov. 12, 2016

Figure 4: Exterior of Junior High Building, building faces West toward 500 East, image captured Nov. 12, 2016
The Auditorium and Gym was constructed at a cost of $272,950 with 45% paid by the PWA fund (Gooderham 1977). The project architect was Miles E. Miller and Company with John Burnston as contractor (Utah Digital Newspapers, Salt Lake Telegram 1939). Construction materials consist of Steel Truss, reinforce on still columns in walls, hot air ducts and blower, with a brick exterior (Sandborn, 1950). Exterior details and architecture are typical of the PWA Moderne style featuring a symmetrical façade, a flat roof, plain narrow cornices, vertical molded ornamentation, art deco decorative motifs, and framed entrances (Utah State Division of History, 2016).

Figure 5: Exterior of Auditorium/Gym, building faces North toward 3300 South, image captured Nov. 12, 2016

This property qualifies for the National Register listing based on Criteria A and C. Area of significance Education, Architecture. Period of Significance 1910 to 2009. The Granite High School Campus is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of Education because it represents a move for communities
outside of Salt Lake City to invest in monumental educational structures, signaling a change from a purely agrarian focus and demographic to a more urban population. The Granite High Campus represents the time in the history of the Salt Lake Valley that deemed education past the eighth grade as important. It also represents the time when education in Utah was moved from parochial to public because it was part of the transitional period. The Granite High School Auditorium, constructed in 1939 is locally significant under Criterion C in architecture because it one of few remaining PWA educational building projects in Salt Lake County.

IV. Historical Background

The history of Granite High School runs parallel to the development of public school in Utah. Prior to 1890 all schools in Utah were parochial, primarily ran by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints as Ward Schools (Gooderham, 1977). Initially these Ward Schools were paid for by the parents of attending students and although most of the students were church members all were invited to attend (Gooderham, 1977). Throughout the latter half of the 19th century the Utah Territory began to be occupied by a more diverse set of people primarily attracted by the mining industry (Gooderham, 1977). In 1869 the Utah territory schooled 13,000 children in 226 schools (Gooderham, 1977:17). By 1887 Clarence E. Allen initiated the push for free public education in the Utah territory. Allen, a former educator, was sent to Utah as a mining engineer by Eastern mining interested to oversee the Bingham mine (Gooderham, 1977). Although Allen’s 1887 bill was defeated another bill was passed the next year by Heber J. Grant allowing schools to be funded by homeowner taxes within the Ward School boundaries (Gooderham, 1977). In 1889 Allen rewrote his bill with the support of an Uintah County democrat. The bill was renamed after his partner and passed; the “Collett Bill” provided public education for all children in the Utah Territory. Gooderham, (1977) It took about two years to convert the Ward Schools into a public-school system, with multiple districts consisting of one or more former Ward Schools (Gooderham, 1977).
Once the new school districts were created the county superintendent, Oscar Van Cott was responsible for supervising the new public school system. Van Cott found the new public school system lacking voicing the following concerns in an 1896 report: some districts were not running the full 10 months allotted, due to boundaries some students were not attending the school closest to their home and had to travel unreasonable distances to attend school, high schools were needed to prepare students for University (Gooderham, 1977). Van Cott suggested that the various school districts be consolidated so more consistency in public education could be achieved. Although Van Cott's recommendations were initially opposed a group of supporters continued to work on consolidating the school district in Salt Lake County. In 1902 the Mormon Church formed three new religious stakes from the Salt Lake County Stake (Gooderham, 1977). With the split and resulting Salt Lake, Granite, and Jordan Stakes the school district split seemed more natural to the valley’s citizens. In 1904 the Salt Lake County Board of Commissioners voted to create the Salt Lake, Granite and Jordan School Districts. Granite School District was made up of 22 formerly smaller districts and covered an area of about 300 square miles, north of the Jordan river, from the Eastern Wasatch Mountain Range to the Western Oquirrh Mountain Range (Gooderham, 1977).

Four years after the formation of the Granite School District the first high school was opened in the district, this high school consisted of three sections, one in Granger, one in former District 39 and one located at the corner of Simpson Ave and Lake Street called Granite High (Gooderham, 1977). The next year in 1907, the three sections consolidated in a temporary location at the Scott School located on the north side of 3300 South and 500 East North of the current campus across 3000 South (Gooderham, 1977). The Scott School was opened with the intention of opening a new Granite High School and featured 9th and 10th grade high school curriculum developed by the University of Utah (Gooderham, 1977). Some debate ensued about where the new high school campus would be located. Most members of the community believed the location of the Scott School was a properly centralized location
however other fought for the school be located more east or west of its current location (Utah Digital Newspapers, Salt Lake Herald, 1909). In 1909 the current property located at 3300 South and 500 East in South Salt Lake City was purchased for $6,550 (Gooderham, 1977) The first Granite High School building opened in 1910 consisting of 12 rooms and a small auditorium/gym for a construction cost of $38,215.15 (Gooderham, 1977).

Due to the history surrounding granite stone in the Salt Lake Valley, specifically as a construction material for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints temple in Salt Lake City, there are many myths behind why new high school was named “Granite”(Gooderham, 1977). The second principal of Granite High Adam S. Bennion, who served from 1913-1917, wrote the following about the name “Granite”.

“The granite from our Cottonwoods is solid and substantial-so much so that it constitutes the foundation upon which some of the finest buildings in our stat stand... The high school that bears the name of Granite is characterized by those same enduring qualities and, in training it gives the students, is laying the foundation for some of the best characterized persons in our state” (Gooderham, 1977)

The sentiment behind the name proves inspirational to the degree that students in the early years of Granite high carried a huge granite boulder as a rostrum at pep rallies and the class of 1929 donated a monument of Granite to be displayed on the grounds (Gooderham, 1977). However, the real reason behind the name Granite High is less symbolic. Granite School District was named got its name because it occupied the same general geographic area as the LDS Granite Stake, the new high school was in turn named after the school district.

Granite High continued to grow in both student enrollment and classrooms. In a December 1914 report, Superintendent C. H. Skidmore reports that “old subjects” are being taught across the district including
reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic, grammar, geography, history, civics, and hygiene. But “new subjects” were also being introduced such as music, art, nature study, hand work, agriculture, home industrial work, manual training, sewing, and cooking (Gooderham, 1977). To accommodate the growing population of the Salt Lake Valley additions were made to Granite High over the next decade, the Science Building was constructed in 1919 along with additions to the 1910 building, a boiler house was added in 1921, and a new Mechanical Arts building in 1925 (Utah’s Digital Newspaper Salt Lake Telegram, 1919).

In the later part of the 1920’s the Granite School District continued to have a problem with overcrowded schools. It was decided that Jr. High schools would be constructed to educate students in 7th, 8th and 9th grade (Gooderham, 1977). Granite Junior High was constructed for this purpose in 1928 on the Granite High School Campus. This school was utilized as a Junior High then later connected to the Science Building as part of the High School Campus. The transition is evident on the exterior of the addition due to the change in brick design and masonry techniques. It is also visible on the interior of the school as the main hall floor swoops slightly downward between the Junior High Building and the addition linking it to the Science Building.

As the population of the Salt Lake Valley continued to grow the school district continued to struggle with overcrowded schools. In 1938, Granite School District superintendent called the overcrowding situation at Granite High school “injurious to scholastic possibilities of individual students” (Utah’s Digital Newspaper. Salt Lake Telegram, 1938). The board of education for Granite School District was assisted with their overcrowding issue by President Roosevelt’s Public Works Administration or PWA. Formed in 1933 the PWA helped fund numerous projects in Utah including waterpower projects, street and highway improvement projects, the constructions of bridges and culverts, sewer and municipal water systems (including one in South Salt Lake where Granite High is located), and the construction of 57 educational building projects (Arrington, 1983). Granite School District took advantage of this program
by building additions to two elementary schools (Holladay and Monroe), a new Jr. High School (Irving Jr. High School renamed Olympus Jr. High), a new high school library in Magna (Cyprus High School), and a new gym and auditorium on the Granite High campus in 1939 (Gooderham, 1977).

During the 1950’s enrollment at Granite High school continued to increase. warranting a new Industrial Arts building in 1959 at the cost of $212,409 (Utah’s Digital Newspaper, Murray Eagle, 12958). In 1975 the final construction projects at Granite High were completed, a girl’s gym/swimming pool and a cafeteria for the cost of $1,128,540 (Gooderham, 1977). As the population of South Salt Lake aged during the 1980’s and 1990’s the population on the west side of the Salt Lake Valley grew. Granite School district found themselves in a position they had not been in before at Granite High, a decreasing student body. Attempting to relieve overcrowding in west side schools Granite School District began bussing students from Granger and Taylorsville High School boundaries into Granite High. This influx of new students from the growing west side of the valley sustained the student population at Granite high through the 1980’s and 1990’s. In the early 2000’s student enrollment was at an all-time low resulting in a 2005 School Board vote to make Granite High an “alternative” school that students could opt into (Toomer-Cook, 2007). The board of education hoped that charter groups would come into the campus as “academies” specializing in subjects like performing arts. After one year, only 300 students opted in and the district realized that its efforts to keep Granite High open were failing (Toomer-Cook, 2007). In 2009, Granite School District Board of Education voted 4-3 to shut down the school (Orton, Park & Bruce, 2009). For just over 100 years Granite High served as a place of higher learning in the Salt Lake Valley educating several generations of young people.
V. Research Questions

Question 1:

How does the evolution of buildings and changing design speak to the ideals of the surrounding community and nation? Specifically, how does the neo-classical style of the science building reflect Pre-World War One (WWI) society as compared to the Post-WWI PWA Moderne Style of the Auditorium/Gym? How did the design of the neo-classic science building and PWA Moderne style of the auditorium/gym influence architecture in the surrounding community?

Hypotheses:

The neoclassical style of the science building reflects pre-WWI functionalism in the community while the post-WWI PWA Moderne style reflects the community’s openness to new ideas and structuralism.

Question 2:

What does the 1939 gym construction say about gender inequality as the larger portion is labeled as the Boys gym with a smaller less significant area for the girl’s gym? What are the disparities between educating girls and boys regarding physical fitness until 1975 when the girl’s gym was built? How did views surrounding female athleticism change over time?

Hypothesis:

Competitive sports at Granite High followed the general trend of the Nation. In 1939 females were not encouraged to compete but after the feminist movement of the 1960’s women were encouraged to participate in competitive sports.
Question 3:

Regarding the construction of the auditorium/gym, what building techniques contributed to the balcony space becoming unusable due to safety issues and how did the modification of Miles E. Miller & Co original design without a balcony contribute to its eventual failure?

Hypothesis 3:

The building design changes made by the Granite School District Board of Education after construction had begun negatively impacted the integrity of the auditorium balcony, leaving it unusable in future years.
Question 4:

What does the overall campus layout, including all buildings, and building phases say about high school education in Utah from a historical standpoint? Is the placement of buildings intentional, unintentional or a combination of both based on construction dates and local/national culture?

Hypothesis:

The landscape placement of the Science Building facing 500 E, the Gym/Auditorium facing 3300 South, and Girls Gym facing northward toward the main campus was intentional. This placement
spoke to the image that the School District was attempting to portray as well as societies changing feelings about female athletics and gender inequality.
VI. Methodology

The methodology used to complete this research design will vary slight from research question to research question.

For Research Question One I plan to investigate public billings in Utah built before and after WWI, I will study project designs and blueprints. Additionally, I will survey surrounding community’s architecture and look for reoccurring themes. Finally, I plan a historical document search about Pre and Post-WWI cultural attitudes and what role they played in period architecture.

To answer Research Question Two I plan on comparing the layout of the gym at Granite High to other Utah public school gyms built during the same time period. Additionally, I will collect ethnographies of female’s athletes who attended Granite High. I also plan to study secondary sources on gender inequality during the relevant time periods.

For Research Question Three I plan to conduct an in-depth engineering survey of the standing structure and comparing them to the historical blueprints and architect modifications. I will also compare the gym/auditorium at Granite High to other similar structures built during the time in question. Finally, I will compare other public structures designed by Miles E. Miller and Company, architect and John Burnston, contractor.

For my final research questions, I plan to conduct a comprehensive ground survey of the entire campus, including recording the building location and diameters with Total Stations and GPS units. I will compare the landscape layout to other highs school landscape layouts in Granite School District and throughout Utah. Finally I will research the district building documents and board of education hearings where new buildings, additions, and modifications were discussed.

VII. Conclusion
High School in Utah has only been around for about 100 years and already much of the original architecture is gone. Historic campuses like Murray, East, Jordan and Granger High have been shut down, torn down, or replaced in recent years. What we lost by removing those historic structures we still have on the campus of Granite High. Granite High offers us buildings as artifacts that we can use to better understand the historical past of public high school education in Utah. By combining the material culture found at Granite High with historic records and ethnography’s we can understand more about the history of public high school in Utah than studying records alone. Portions or all of Granite High School are at risk for removal, just this week Granite School District announced a request for bids to demolish the historic campus. Once the artifacts are destroyed extracting their story will be more difficult which is why the study of this important part of Utah history must be done now.
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