National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Technical Preservation Services

ITS
NUMBER 40

Interpreting
The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

Subject: Corridors in Historic School Buildings

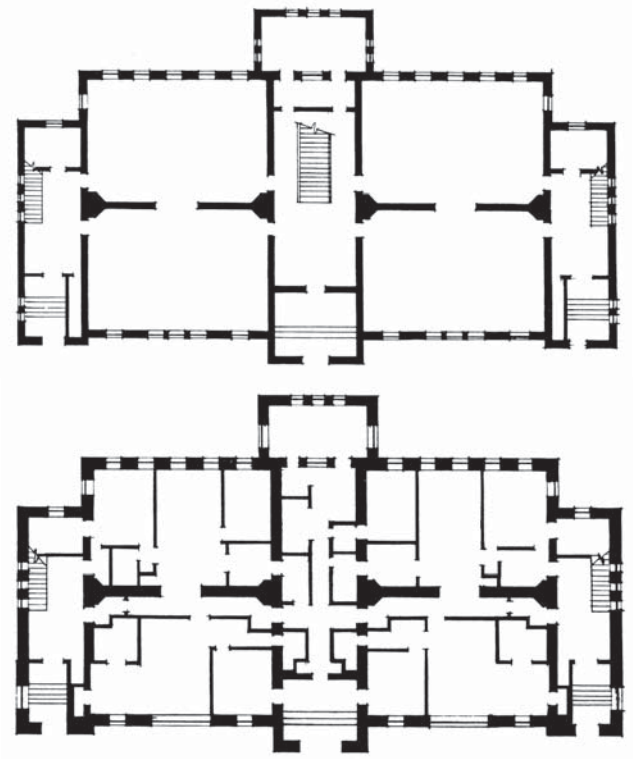
Applicable Standards: 2. Retention of Historic Character

Issue: Corridors are almost always character-defining features of historic buildings. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation require the retention of such features, and the Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings caution against treatments that alter major interior spaces or the sequence of spaces.

Corridors in historic schools figure very prominently in the overall layout. They not only serve as the principal circulation features, but are often major public spaces as well. When such structures undergo rehabilitation for new use, it is important that corridors be retained. Radically altering these primary circulation spaces by reducing them in length or width, blocking them with elevators or other new features, or otherwise diminishing them may cause a project not to meet the Standards for Rehabilitation.

Application 1 *(Incompatible treatment):* A three-story school, with a four-story central bell tower built in 1886 underwent rehabilitation for residential apartments. Around 1936 the building had been converted to a pocketbook factory, and after 1970 it served as a storage facility. Despite this history of multiple reuse schemes, the building retained its historic layout, with a central corridor, freestanding stair, and four classrooms off the hall on each floor. Two end towers also contained stairs and provided separate entrances for boys and girls.

In the rehabilitation, the historic central-hall plan all but disappeared, the central staircase was removed, apartment units were inserted into the hallway, and a new corridor perpendicular to the original central hall was installed. The circulation through the interior spaces was changed. While the historic central entrance remains, access through the building is now through a narrow corridor rather than a spacious hall. Not only has the wide historic corridor been lost, but the entire sequence of spaces in the building has been radically altered. As a result, the project does not meet the Standards for Rehabilitation

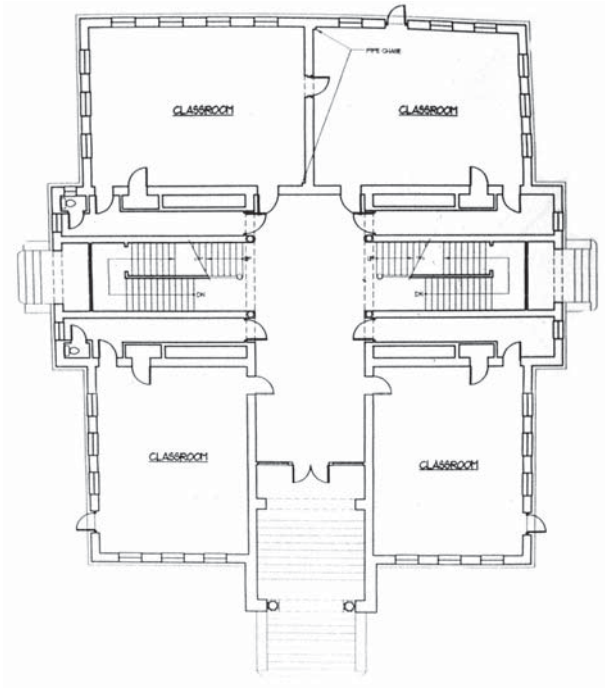


Top: *1886 school building prior to rehabilitation.* ***Middle:*** *Floor plan of first floor prior to rehabilitation.* ***Bottom:*** *Floor plan of first floor after rehabilitation. Central stairway has been removed and classrooms and hallway subdivided into apartments.*

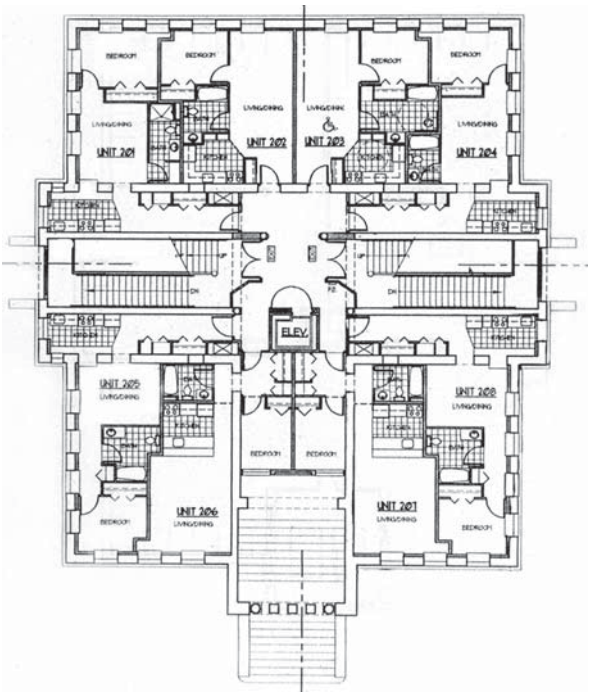
Application 2 *(Compatible treatment):* A very similar project had a different outcome. This 1901 school building was undergoing a conversion into affordable housing. As in the first example, the building featured a wide center hall. It was not only the main circulation space, it was also the principal interior feature. The initial proposal called for the insertion of rooms and an elevator into the hallway immediately inside the entrance. This treatment would not only have closed off the main entrance to the building, but also would have reduced the hallway to almost one half of its original length.

Faced with the determination that the project would not meet the Standards for Rehabilitation, the owner modified the proposal by deleting the new rooms from the hallway and by moving the elevator to a new location between the two classrooms at the end of the hall. As a result, the main entrance and hallway remain unimpaired, and the project meets the Standards for Rehabilitation.

1901 school building prior to rehabilitation.



Floor plan prior to rehabilitation.



The initial rehabilitation plan proposed the insertion of rooms and an elevator in the central hallway immediately inside the main entrance.

After rehabilitation. In order to meet the Standards, the main entrance hallway was retained intact, and the elevator was relocated between two classrooms at the end of the hallway (see arrow).

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