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WEISER'S INTERMOUNTAIN INSTITUTE
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SIGNIFICANCE

The former Intermountain Institute in Weiser is significant both architecturally and historically. Architecturally, it is the most monumental and sustained exercise in its community, and probably in the state, in the use of concrete as a building material. Historically, it is inextricably interwoven with the history of secondary education in Weiser; and, drawing students as it did from at least eight states and one foreign country, it assumed much more than local significance among educational institutions in Idaho. The historical as well as the architectural importance of the group has been recognized by the local association which has expressed interest in restoring and using as a museum the most pretentious of the buildings, Hooker Hall.

Concrete was a not uncommon building material in early twentieth century Idaho, in situations where buildings of both pretension and economy were wanted. But usually, the material was in the form of blocks cast to resemble stone, and laid up in the same manner. And usually it appears in buildings that are more or less unrelated though clustered in areas where "cast stone" manufacturers and masons were active. At the Institute, however, building walls were not block but were continuously-cast reinforced concrete, with only the surfaces of the structure scored to resemble masonry joints. And, the buildings were produced for a single institution over a more than twenty-year period. The result is a materially homogenous group that is moreover a visually continuous display of architecture in a broadly Neoclassical mode: that is, relying heavily on such classicizing devices as the hipped roof, the symmetrical facade, and the columned portico. At the same time, the group shows an interesting though subtle movement in style, which may be traced from the fairly straightforward Classicism of the 1907 Beardsley and 1909 Slocum Halls, through the more Bungaloid form and scale of 1919 Carnegie Library, to the Missionesque and Prairie-style characteristics of the 1924 Hooker Hall.

The school was established in the fall of 1899 to provide those children who lived too far in the country to attend high school an opportunity to obtain an equivalent education. The

school's motto was "An education and trade for every boy and girl who is willing to work for them;" all students, in addition to attending classes, worked five hours a day to pay for a part of their tuition, room, and board. Originally called the Idaho Industrial Institute, its name was changed to the Intermountain Institute in 1915 to avoid any confusion between it and the state's industrial reform school in St. Anthony.

Reverend Edward A. Paddock was the school's guiding light. He came to Weiser in 1894 and organized the Congregational Church. Later he started the Weiser Academy, which was located on the site of the present golf course. However, in 1899 he broke with the Academy to form the Institute because the Academy's faculty and trustees refused to start a program for vocational training. Reverend Paddock believed schools should educate "the hand and heart as well as the head," and the Institute's students not only followed the usual college preparatory curriculum, but also were required to take either manual training or domestic science courses. Other student obligations included a mandatory nondenominational Bible class and an hour of exercise each day either in the gymnasium, on the tennis courts, or by hiking.

The school educated over two thousand students during its thirty-four year existence, drawing pupils from at least eight states and one foreign country. The Institute usually had a waiting list which equaled its total annual enrollment of approximately one hundred, and the students stayed anywhere from one to five years. It was the biggest private enterprise in the Weiser area, and by 1914 claimed to have the largest payroll in Washington County with its expenditures exceeding two thousand dollars a month.

The depression eventually forced its closing in 1933. In 1939 the property was deeded to the public schools to be used as a vocational training school under the National Youth Administration. This federal program remained in operation until 1943, and then the city, in conjunction with the state, maintained the school as a vocational project. After World War II the Institute attempted to recover its property without success, and the buildings were used to house the high school. In 1967, when the high school moved into its present structure, the Institute was vacated, with the exception of Slocum Hall, which until recently contained a heavy equipment school.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

2. Slocum Hall, the boys' dormitory, was erected in 1909 for \$30,000. It was named after Jane Slocum, one of the three founders of the Institute and a distant relative of Mrs. Russell Sage, who declined to have a building named after her although her \$60,000 gift to the school made the construction of the dormitory

possible. The basement originally contained a swimming pool; the Institute's library and reading room were located on its first floor until 1919 when the Carnegie Library was completed.

Like all the other major buildings, Slocum Hall is constructed of reinforced, scored cast concrete. It is three stories tall on a high basement. The window heads, three tiers on either side of the entrance, are cast to resemble keystone flat arches. The roof is hipped with a laterally-running ridge and shingled hipped dormers: two facing forward, two at the rear, and one at either end. The rectangular main block has two ells. A two-story one at the south end is slightly inset to produce intersections which are filled by screened porches and approached by separate entrances.

A shallow main entry ell is centered on the facade and entered through a small, one-story gabled portico. The columns of the portico are fluted cast concrete, with metal capitals in the Corinthian order. The porch is approached by a flight of steps with curving cast bannisters. A large eyebrow dormer, now filled, is centered in the roof above the entry.

3. H. M. Hooker Memorial Hall, the Institute's administration and classroom building and the most pretentious building on the campus with its five-story clock tower, was completed in 1924 at a cost of \$100,000. It was built in memory of H. M. Hooker, a close friend of Headmaster Paddock's whose daughters, Mrs. Fannie Hooker Forbes of Westboro, Massachusetts and Mrs. Mary Hooker Dole of Oak Park, Illinois, contributed the funds for its construction. Besides offices and twenty-two "recitation rooms," Hooker Hall contained a modern auditorium as well as wood working shops in the basement. A local historical association is interested in acquiring the structure and using it as a museum.

The structure is three stories high on a tall basement, with a hip-and-ridge roof and flat sills and lintels. It is rectangular and symmetrical with outset corner bays and four multi-light transomed windows on either side of the entry pavilion. This pavilion is approached by a flight of concrete steps and contains a segmentally-arched entry with wooden double doors retaining their original hardware; the dedication to H. M. Hooker is set in stone letters in the concrete landing. The tower is flanked by pairs of hipped dormers; its open belvedere is surmounted by clock faces on all four sides.

4. The oldest building in the group, Beardsley Hall, was completed in 1907. Its reinforced concrete walls, which are scored to imitate block, are sixteen inches thick in the basement and taper to eleven inches at the roof. The building was named in honor of Reverend Bronson Beardsley of Bridgeport, Connecticut, whose widow left the Institute \$5,000 to build a memorial to her husband. It housed forty girls on the second and third stories, while the basement served as a dining hall, and the first floor contained the school's chapel. The attic was a gymnasium. On December 29, 1913, a fire gutted this dormitory, but its walls remained sound and the interior was immediately rebuilt.

It is three stories in height, while a two-story ell to the north and several small, later, utilitarian extensions beyond that; none are greater than a story in height. The main block is five bays wide with a one-story, outset, enclosed entry ell fronted by a shallow portico with a double boxed cornice on fluted cast columns; it is approached by a flight of concrete steps. The entry is round-arched and double-doored. Roofs are hip-and-ridge. Hip-and-ridge shingle-sided dormers emerge on either side of an eyebrow dormer centered over the entry, and from each end.

5. The Carnegie Library, whose collection numbered over 5,000 volumes, not only served the school, but was open to the public as well. The stacks and reading room were on the main floor; the basement accommodated a music conservatory with nine practice rooms. Three evergreens, of which only one survives, were planted in front in 1919 in honor of the three Institute students who lost their lives in World War I.

The hip-and-ridge roof of the one-story concrete structure is more steeply pitched than are those of the larger buildings. There are two shingled hip-and-ridge dormers in front and back and one at each end, and two pairs of multi-light windows between flat cast lintels and sills on either side of the entrance. The entrance is double-doored, approached by a flight of steps and fronted by a deep gabled portico with plain cast columns.

(This information has not been edited.)