



Peerless Places

Montrose School

Each day, thousands of commuters on Rockville Pike drive past a white stucco building with a green metal roof. Surrounded by shopping malls, towering high-rises, and bustling roads, this diminutive building—Montrose School—evokes a unique era in local educational history and plays a special role in Peerless Rockville Places.

Maryland's public education system was established in 1860, and by 1868, a one-room school building had been constructed south of Montrose and Randolph Roads. Spurred by the completion of the B&O Railroad in 1873, the local population grew substantially. By 1879, the village of Montrose had the largest population between Bethesda and Rockville, boasting a general store, blacksmith shop, and post office. The one-room schoolhouse, however, was no longer adequate to serve its enrollment of more than 50 children.

In 1908, the Montgomery County School Board appointed Thomas C. Groomes to design a two-room school building in the Montrose vicinity. Completed in 1909, Montrose School sported a stylish gabled façade and offered classes for first to seventh grade. It featured the latest in educational architecture, including air vents in the masonry foundation, a hipped roof with improved air circulation, tall windows for maximum indoor illumination and ventilation, and high window placement to help ensure full attention from the students. Other modern amenities included kerosene hurricane lamps affixed to the walls and pot-bellied coal burning stoves in each classroom; an outside hand pump provided well water, and outdoor boys' and girls' rest rooms. Increased modernization, including electricity and indoor plumbing were added throughout the early to middle decades of the 20th century.



Montrose School operated until 1960, when it was converted to a facility for special education. The site was abandoned by the school system in the early 1970s and was used for storage by the State Highway Administration (SHA). The building was destined for demolition because of its deplorable condition—a leaky roof, broken windows, peeling paint, and damaged plaster. In the late 1970s, Peerless Rockville made the case to SHA to save Montrose School because of its significance with educational history and the village of Montrose. SHA agreed to sell the building to Peerless for one dollar.

Over the next two years, Peerless raised money for rehabilitation and renovation to remove inappropriate alterations and meet code requirements. Care was taken to retain all original materials and architectural features. Equally important, Peerless found an appropriate adaptive use for Montrose School, which has housed a variety of tenants during the past two decades.

Montrose School continues to serve the local communities as an historic icon and a reminder of the value of local preservation.

Peerless Rockville continues to preserve Montrose School. Earlier this year, the chimneys were repaired to ensure maximum energy efficiency and the deteriorating patterned tin roof was replaced to prevent water damage to the building. In the future, Peerless Rockville plans to raise enough funds to paint the exterior, repair windows, and make other improvements.

The Peerless Places series highlights Rockville's historic sites. Contact us for more information.

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