Notre Dame high school building added to National Register of Historic Places

By Barbara Tetraault
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BERLIN — At one time the former Notre Dame high school building seemed destined for demolition. An arson fire had destroyed part of the structure and the property had become an eyesore.

But the renovated property, which has been converted into a 33-unit senior housing complex, has now been placed on the National Register of Historic Places according to the N.H. Division of Historic Resources. The building is significant both as a center of education and for its architecture.

Olivia Beleau, senior project manager for AHEAD which now owns the building, said her organization went through a review process in order to qualify for Historic Tax Credits for the renovation. Part of that required the building to be nominated and become listed on the National Register. That goal is now achieved.

Originally constructed as the George E. Burgess School in 1905, rebuilt after a fire in 1917 and added on to in 1949 and 1953-54, the building is an example of an early-twentieth-century urban public elementary school that was adapted and expanded for use as a Catholic high school and convent.

Closed during the Depression when enrollment at all Berlin schools dropped, the Burgess School was

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The building was originally constructed as the George E. Burgess School in 1905 and was rebuilt after a fire in 1917. It served as Notre Dame High School from 1942 to 1972.

money to remediate the hazardous materials in the building. Tri-County Community Action Program took over management and developed a $7.78 million project to convert the building into senior housing. But TCCAP ran into fiscal problems and the Littleton-based organization AHEAD (Affordable Housing Education Development) took over in December 2014. This winter the project was completed and currently more than a third of the units are rented.

Beleau said AHEAD will be displaying artifacts from Notre Dame High School in the building. The organization will also install a plaque on the building designating its placement on the National Register of Historic Places this fall.

Administered by the National Park Service, which is part of the U.S. Department of the Interior, the National Register of Historic Places is the nation’s official list of cultural resources worthy of preservation and is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate and protect our historic and archaeological resources.

For more information on the National Register program in New Hampshire, visit www.nh.gov/nhdhr or contact Peter Michaud at the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources at 603-271-3483.

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