East Greenbush Central School

East Greenbush Central School opened in September 1940, consolidating students from surrounding communities to learn in one modern complex for the first time. The class of 1941 included students who had previously attended twelve different schools. Nicknamed the "Million Dollar School," the Central School accommodated seventy-two teachers and nine hundred students. It was shaped like a giant letter E to provide sunlight to every classroom, with elementary, junior high, and senior high students in separate parallel wings. The school had its own fleet of buses to transport students from five towns on fourteen routes. In 1973, the Central School was repurposed and renamed Citizen Edmond Genet Elementary School.

▲ **GRAND ENTRANCE**
The front entrance tower originally had tall glass-block bands, a polished metal-trimmed awning, and multipane glass entry doors and windows. In 1961, the Columbia High School Key Club raised money for new "Columbia High School" letters for the awning. Source: Milestone Heritage Consulting.

New Deal School

Construction was funded by the Public Works Administration, or PWA, a Great Depression-era "New Deal" federal agency created by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1933 to address the national economic plight after the stock market crash of 1929. New Deal programs revived the economy, creating jobs for millions of Americans, improving and building transportation infrastructure, parks, and public buildings—including schools. These programs lifted the nation out of economic depression and left a legacy of beautiful utilitarian buildings like the East Greenbush Central School.

▲ **RELIEF SCULPTURES**
The school building's façade includes ten relief plaques depicting aspects of school life, including Academic Studies, Athletics, Citizenship (shown here), Graduation, Kindergarten, Manhood, Manual Arts, Parent Interest, Social Life, and Womanhood. Source: Milestone Heritage Consulting.

◀ **LAYING THE CORNERSTONE**
Rensselaer County Central School District No. 1 Board of Education president Arthur Monthie trowels mortar at the school's cornerstone-laying ceremony on Saturday, October 7, 1939. Architect J. Russell White, second from right in light coat and hat, looks on. Source: East Greenbush Historian.

Architecture and Architect

The Central School's architectural style is called "Stripped Classical Modernism," a distinctly American version of the Art Deco style combining streamlining, classical forms, and applied decoration that was common in PWA-era buildings. The school's architect was J. Russell White, best known for his Washington Park Lakehouse in Albany and a designer of many other regional PWA-funded schools. East Greenbush Central School was the largest of his Rensselaer County schools, which included those in Nassau and North Greenbush.

▲ **ARCHITECTURAL RENDERING**
This 1939 illustration of the East Greenbush Central School, prepared by architect W. Parker Dodge, chief draftsman and designer for J. Russell White's architectural firm, is a beautiful example of the art of architectural rendering. Source: Mosaic Associates Architects.

◀ **ORIGINAL AUDITORIUM**
This photo of the East Greenbush Central School auditorium is one of a set taken by school architect J. Russell White's firm to document the completed project. The auditorium, which seats 1,350 students, remains in much the same original condition today. Source: Mosaic Associates Architects.

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