

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Houston High School

other name/site number Fine Arts Building

2. Location

street & town 423 West Pine N/A not for publication

city or town Houston N/A vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Texas code 215 zip code 65483

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Mark A Miles Dec 19, 2008
Signature of certifying official/Title Mark A. Miles/Deputy SHPO Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

- entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
1		structures
		objects
2		Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

Education/School

Recreation and Culture/auditorium

Current Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

Education/School

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Brick

roof _____

other _____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 7

8. Description

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 8

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions)

Education _____

Social History _____

Period of Significance

1921-1958 _____

Significant Dates

1921 _____

1950 _____

Significant Persons

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A _____

Cultural Affiliation

N/A _____

Architect/Builder

N/A _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other Name of repository: _____

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 9

Houston High School
Name of Property

Texas County, MO
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than 1 acre

UTM References

(Place additional boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

1 1/5 5/9/2/1/5/6 4/1/3/1/6/4/6
Zone Easting Northing

2 / / / / / / / / / / / /
Zone Easting Northing

3 / / / / / / / / / / / /
Zone Easting Northing

4 / / / / / / / / / / / /
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Property Tax No.

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10

11. Form Prepared By

name/title See continuation page

organization _____ date September, 2008

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state MO zip code _____

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs: Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items: (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

name/title Houston R-1 Schools, Attn: Dr. Dan Vandiver, Superintendent

street & number 423 W. Pine telephone _____

city or town Houston state MO zip code 65483

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Houston High School
Texas County, Missouri

Summary:

The Houston High School, 423 West Pine Street, in Houston, Texas County, is a two story with raised basement building constructed of brick on a concrete foundation. Except for the metal reinforcement rods in the foundation, all the material in the school was obtained locally. Its 200,000 bricks were made of clay mined in the county and fired at the local Houston Brick & Tile works. Oak and pine trees were harvested locally for the interior framing and floors. The building, based on designs developed by community residents in 1921, is of a simplified collegiate style with a projecting center entrance bay and side wings with large window openings to provide classrooms with natural light and ventilation. Architectural details are minimal with native stone used in the water table above the raised basement and for the cornice that extends across all four sides of the building. The school's entrance and windows were modified in the 1940s, and a small 1-story annex was added to the east side in 1950. These changes occurred during the period of significance for the property and the building as a whole continues to convey its significance in education.

Setting:

Located approximately 1/2 mile west of the Texas County Courthouse, the Houston High School building is part of a complex of educational buildings and sports fields housing the Houston K-12 schools system. Due to their age or to changes to their historic character, other buildings in the complex are not nominated and have been excluded from the boundaries of the nominated property. The high school, currently called the "Fine Arts Building" has a native stone fence fronting the property. This fence is counted as a contributing structure. The fence is 3 feet high and two feet thick capped with concrete. It encloses the southern perimeter of the entire school campus. The wall was completed in 1932 using local labor and native stone.

Elaboration:

The main block of the Houston High School building, constructed in 1921, measures 80' 4" east to west, and 76' 8" north to south. It is 33 feet tall. A one story addition, constructed in 1950 is attached to the east side of the building and measures 30' X 30'. The primary elevation faces south onto West Pine Street. The building has a small lawn in front, bounded by a native stone wall with concrete cap along the street.

South Elevation:

This two story building with raised basement is five bays wide. The center bay projects slightly and contains the entrance to the building. Originally, a set of stairs led to an entrance door between the first floor and basement. Around 1940, the entrance was lowered to grade and the stairs were removed. The windows in the center bay are offset from those to either side, marking stair landings on the interior. The second story of the center bay has a wide window opening with flat arch and stone sill. The opening is filled with modern windows. The third story of the center bay has a wide segmental arch window opening with shoulder blocks. The center pane of the modern window is filled with a vent, and there are fixed pane windows on either side. The cornice on this bay is slightly arched as is the parapet wall above.

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Houston High School
Texas County, Missouri

A wide stone water table separates the basement from the upper floors. The windows openings on the basement level are the same width as those on the upper floors and are each filled with 3 1/1 windows. The first floor windows on either side of the center bay have segmental arched openings and concrete sills. The original windows have been replaced with metal windows. The arches and transom areas have been filled with white painted panels and there are large fixed panes over smaller upper windows. The second floor has a flat arch with wide stone header and concrete sills. Like the second floor, these openings have been filled with three modern windows with white panels in the transom area, and fixed clear panes over small hopper windows.

West Elevation:

The west elevation has similar architectural features as the primary façade, though with simpler window openings. The elevation has a raised basement capped with a stone water table. Above the second floor is a simple cornice line topped by a stone capped parapet wall. A metal fire escape stair, installed c. 1950, extends from a door in the second floor, contains a landing for another exit on the first, and ends at the ground/raised basement level. Fenestration on this wall is irregularly spaced and varies in size and arrangement on each floor. The raised basement contains paired 1/1 windows clustered in the northern half of the façade. The second floor has one window with stone header, and a door allowing access to the landing. The third floor contains four sets of paired windows. The entablature of the cornice line acts as the header for these windows. Historic windows have been replaced with windows that have white-painted transom panels, square fixed panes, and small hopper windows. A single window, similar to the four paired sets, and a fire exit door are also located on this floor.

East Elevation:

The one story brick addition, c. 1950, is located on this elevation. The addition is simply designed with unornamented brick walls. The front (south) elevation is recessed approximately 15 feet from the façade of the main building and contains a centered entrance door. The fenestration on the east elevation of the addition consists of three window openings. Two are smaller single windows with fixed panes and hopper openings, and the third contains three windows of similar design, though taller and narrower than other windows in the addition. The second floor of the main block of the building is exposed above the addition and contains 5 sets of paired windows. Windows are of similar design to those on the façade and west elevations.

North Elevation:

The north elevation is very similar to the front, though it does not have the projecting center bay or rounded parapet wall. Windows in the raised basement have been removed, though there is a modern pedestrian door located in the center bay. Windows on the first floor have segmental brick arches containing three windows of similar design to those on the front and sides. The second floor has wide openings with flat arches and concrete sills.

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Houston High School
Texas County, Missouri

Interior:

The volume of the interior space is largely taken up by a gymnasium/auditorium in the basement and first floors. The auditorium has a stage on the east side and once had a balcony that was removed in the 1970s. The auditorium can still hold 1500 people and was historically used both for dramatic performances and social events and for basketball and other sports. The basement has a T shaped hall. The base of the T leads from the entrance and has a classroom to the east and administrative offices to the west. The top of the T runs along the south side of the gymnasium/auditorium space. On the second floor there is a wide center hall flanked by classrooms and restrooms to the east and west. The hall ends at the south wall of the gymnasium. The third floor has classrooms on three sides of a central hallway. Stairs from the lower floors are located in the center of the southern portion of the floor plate, and the hallway widens slightly in the center section. Six classrooms of various sizes and an office/teacher's lounge open onto the hallway.

The interior layout has not been altered significantly since the 1940s when the raised entrance was lowered to grade, likely for easier access to the auditorium. This change necessitated alterations to the entrance and interior stair well. Fire doors and other safety measures have been added to the interior, as have dropped ceilings with modern lighting and acoustical tile. The arrangement of classrooms and the volume of the auditorium, however, have not changed significantly since the construction of the building and 1940s alteration.

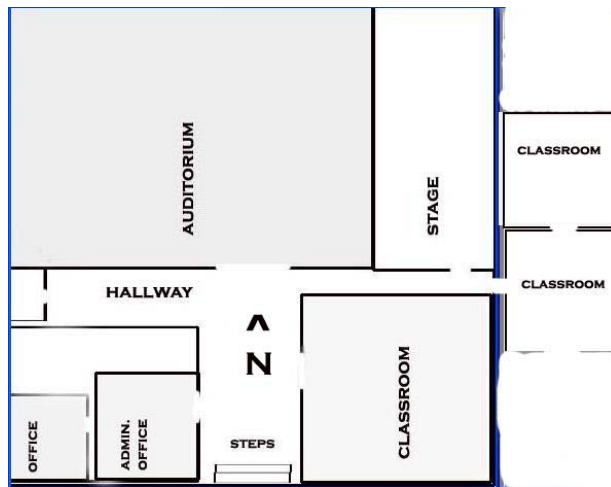
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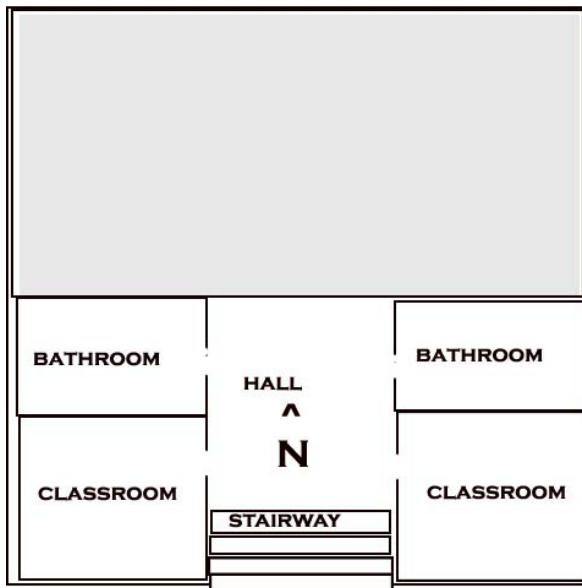
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Houston High School
Texas County, Missouri

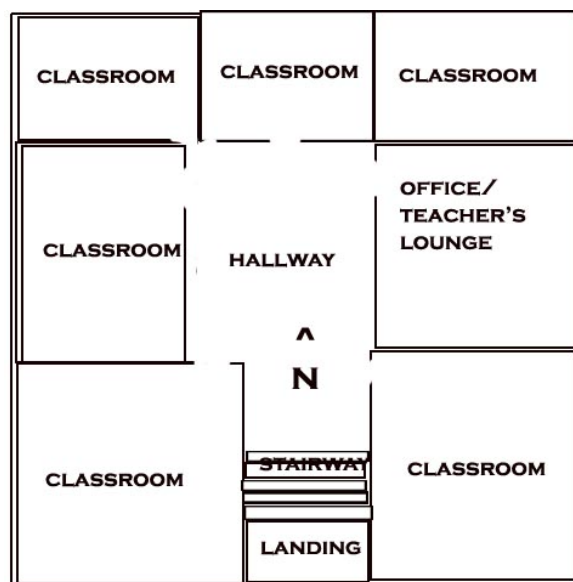
Sketch Floor Plans showing general room arrangement: Drawn by John Impey. Not to scale.



First Floor (originally the raised basement)



Second floor (originally the 1st floor)



Third floor (originally the 2nd floor)

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Houston High School
Texas County, Missouri

Summary:

The Houston High School, 423 West Pine Street, Houston, Texas County, is locally significant under Criterion A in the areas of Education and Social History. When bids from contractors to build the school far exceeded the available funds, school board president C.E. Covert rallied the community to design and build the school themselves. With few exceptions, material for the school--brick, pine and oak framing and flooring--was made or harvested locally, and labor was provided by Houston citizens and students of the vocational industrial arts class. After completion in 1921, the building became the home of Houston High School and a center of community activities. In addition to school sporting events and plays, the auditorium hosted moving picture shows, theatrical presentations, firemen's balls and political rallies. As the population of Houston grew and its educational needs changed, the high school building was later used for elementary and middle school classes and as a fine arts building, and it continues to be used today for educational purposes. The period of significance is 1921 to 1958, the date of construction through the fifty year closing date for periods of significance where activities begun historically continue to have importance but no more specific date can be defined.

Elaboration:

Houston and Texas County

In February 1843, the Missouri General Assembly attempted the organization of a new county to be called Ashley in southern Missouri out of parts of Shannon and Wright counties. This early attempt failed, but in February 14, 1845 the assembly passed a bill organizing the new county. Residents petitioned to name the county for the Republic of Texas. The name was timely and honored the attempts of the Republic to be accepted as a state, a milestone that was met in December of 1845. The name is also appropriate because Texas County is the largest of Missouri's 114 counties in land area.¹ County commissioners purchased land for the new county seat in 1846 and named the town Houston in honor of Republic of Texas president, Sam Houston. In March 1847 the commission let the bid for the first county courthouse to James Sweeny. The commission accepted the completed courthouse in December of that year.²

Houston itself was slow to grow in the early part of its history, likely due to the relative remoteness of the county. Before the Civil War, the town was home to the courthouse, and "about thirteen families and one store."³ The town was destroyed twice during the war, "and when peace was proclaimed she had not a single inhabitant, nor was there even a barn standing within her present limits."⁴ The town began to grow again after the war and incorporated in 1872. By 1885, the town supported numerous businesses including druggists, hardware stores, general merchants, a foundry, flouring and saw mills, a furniture

¹ Texas County Genealogical and Historical Society. *Texas County Heritage, Volume 1*. Rich Hill, MO: Bell books, 1989; *History of Laclede, Camden, Dallas, Webster, Wright, Texas, Pulaski, Phelps and Dent Counties, Missouri*. Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing CO., 1889, transcribed in part online by Debbie Linton and Penny Harrell, 1/26/2001 at <http://texas.mogenweb.org/goodspeed/>. Accessed September 24, 2008.

² Goodspeed transcript, n.p.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

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Houston High School
Texas County, Missouri

factory, several hotels and a newspaper. The general prosperity of the community also supported new educational facilities.

Education in Texas County and Houston

The early history of education in Texas County is murky at best. In summarizing the 1841 reminiscences of John T. Lynch, Goodspeed's 1889 history of Texas County notes, "I don't suppose that in that day [before the organization of the county] Texas County had any more population than the town of Houston has today, and public schools were unknown, as were almost any other kind of schools."⁵ More recent histories of the county mentions that a school was conducted in the courthouse in 1847,⁶ though this would have been of short duration since the courthouse was not completed until December of that year. It is more likely that school was first held in the courthouse in 1860. According to local historian Julia West Parker, the earliest school in Houston was in 1860 with David Waite of Pennsylvania teaching classes for "older children" at the Texas County Courthouse.⁷ This seems to correspond with other information in the historical record. In May of that year a new courthouse opened and the county court ordered that "the youngsters of Houston have the privilege of resorting to the house for civil mirth; when it is not otherwise occupied."⁸ This early effort at conducting school in Houston was likely a subscription school. In 1869, John Lynch taught the first free public school in the community.⁹

The current Houston K-12 buildings are located on the site of the Houston Academy, incorporated on April 22, 1871. Though little information could be found on the academy, it appears to have been a private high school. The academy operated until 1882 or 1883 when the buildings and grounds were turned over to Prof. C.W. White for use as the Houston Institute. The transfer occurred on the caveat that White would take "charge of the public schools and build up the educational interests of the town."¹⁰ It is unclear whether or not this was a public school. It may be that the Institute was a private high school, but Prof. White also oversaw the city's public elementary or common school. In 1883, White held classes in a new institute building and constructed a home nearby the following year. During the first year he had 30 students in the "academics" course of study and 120 in the common school department. His academic classes increased in size to 86 by 1888. In Goodspeed's enumeration of school statistics it is noted that in the 1887 report of Texas County schools, C.W. White and three assistants presided over the graded school at Houston that had 223 pupils enrolled and an average attendance of 193.¹¹

Whether or not the Houston Academy and its successor, the Houston Institute, were private schools, by mid-1890s the buildings and grounds seem to have converted to public use. The Institute became the basis for Houston's High School and set it in good stead for consistently high ratings in Missouri's early high school classification system. In 1909, Houston High School was one of 116 in the state that

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Texas County Genealogical and Historical Society, p. 111.

⁷ Julia West Parker. *Out of the Past*. Springfield, MO: Empire Printing, 1968, p. 39-40.

⁸ Goodspeed transcript, n.p.

⁹ Parker, pp. 39-41.

¹⁰ Goodspeed transcript, n.p.

¹¹ Ibid.

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Houston High School
Texas County, Missouri

maintained a term of 9 months or more, and employed four or more teachers.¹² This was the first year in which the state implemented its high school classification system. Schools were classified after an inspection that looked at buildings, school libraries, teacher qualifications, and several other factors. Classified schools had to meet minimum standards for the above and have a prescribed minimum course of study for each class. According to the *Missouri Report of Public Schools* in 1909, 1911, and 1912, Houston was rated as having a Second Class high school. This meant that Houston maintained at minimum a three year course of study, that its terms were at least nine months long and that it employed at least two teachers qualified to teach high school work.¹³ In 1915, Houston became a First Class high school,¹⁴ which required the school to maintain a four year course with work in English, math, science and history for 9 months or more each year and to employ at least 3 teachers qualified to teach high school work.¹⁵

Houston's public high school originally shared space with its graded elementary or common school. Even as early as 1909, it was likely that the school building was pushing the limits of its capacity. Though substantial in size, the Houston Public School (See figure 1) had a total enrollment of 326 and an average daily attendance of 260 in the 1909 school year. Of the total, 65 students were taking the high school course.¹⁶ In 1917, the total enrollment for the Houston school system was 400, 100 of which were in the high school program. These years also saw an increase in high school graduates, with 2 reported in 1909 and 19 in the 1917 school year.¹⁷

Growing enrollment strained the public school building and in 1921 school superintendent James W. Tetrick reported that the commencement exercises "packed the Lyceum theatre to the doors." The exercises marked the "closing of a four year school course by twenty five of the finest young men and women." Tetrick was also proud to report that "in the last four years, the high school has doubled its enrollment . . . [and] at present we have outgrown our current building."¹⁸ Though Houston was rightly proud of its high school course and the quality of education it provided, the need for a new school building to house the course was not easily addressed. The school had no building fund, and the school system was limited to \$15,000 in bonds for the purpose of constructing a new school building. The lowest bid for construction, however, was \$59,000.¹⁹

Undaunted by the lack of funding, school board president C.E. Covert rallied the community. In his speech at the conference called to discuss the school he said:

¹² *Sixtieth Report of the Public Schools of the State of Missouri: School Year Ending June 30, 1909*. Jefferson City: Hugh Stephens Printing Company, 1909, p.

¹³ *Sixty-Second Report of the Public Schools of the State of Missouri: School Year Ending June 30, 1911*. Jefferson City: Hugh Stephens Printing, 1911, p. 68.

¹⁴ Texas County Genealogical and Historical Society, p. 112.

¹⁵ *Sixty-Second Report of the Public Schools of the State of Missouri*, p. 67-68.

¹⁶ *Sixtieth Report of the Public Schools of the State of Missouri*, p. 91.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*; *Sixty-eighth Report of the Public Schools of the State of Missouri: School Year Ending June 30, 1917*, Jefferson City, MO: Hough Stephens Printing Company, 1917, p. 251.

¹⁸ Houston Herald, May 26, 1921.

¹⁹ Texas County Genealogical and Historical Society, p. 113.

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Houston High School
Texas County, Missouri

I'll tell you what we'll do; we'll build this high school ourselves. Every brick will be made from clay within sight of town, every piece of lumber will be cut from Texas County trees.²⁰

And it was so. To meet the demands of constructing the building with local materials, Houston citizens organized to buy machinery and establish a brick plant. A school board member bought the first \$100 share in the company and within an hour, citizens subscribed \$3,000 to the company. Bricks were made at the new refractory at \$15 a thousand compared to the market price of \$45 per thousand. Additionally, pine lumber was harvested locally at a cost of \$22.50 per thousand board foot, half the market price. Oak for the floor was harvested in the county at a cost of \$35/thousand board foot compared to a market rate of \$125/thousand. The school board hired no contractor to construct the building, but supervised the construction themselves with labor from townspeople. While this greatly reduced the cost of construction, the town still needed to raise money to pay for materials and construction. A loophole in the law governing school bonds was found and citizens were able to vote to support another \$15,000 bond issue.²¹

Though the school was able to raise \$30,000 through bonds for school construction, economy and local initiative were still the order of the day for completing and furnishing the school. The boys of the vocational industrial arts classes wired the building, installed the plumbing, and made the furniture. A boiler, costing \$10, was converted into a pressure tank for heating, and a generator purchased from a street car company was used as a power plant for the school. This plant allowed motion pictures to be shown in the finished school building. At the completion of construction, the school district had a high school building valued at \$65,000 that only cost the district \$30,000. Locals hailed it as "an imposing structure made possible by the handiwork of people who defied adversity. With little money but a wonderful faith, this high school building provided a place to educate the youth of Houston and its environs."²² The new school opened for classes in the fall of 1921.

By all indications in local records, the school was built without the assistance of an architect or professional contractor. The design of the building, however, is typical of school buildings of the 1910s and 1920s in towns across Missouri. The Houston School board may have borrowed school plans or ideas from buildings in neighboring counties, or found inspiration in photographs and designs published in Missouri's annual reports of public schools. In the 1910s, the annual *Missouri Report of Public Schools* contained photographs, drawings and often floor plans of new or proposed school buildings throughout the state. Published designs for town or larger consolidated schools shared characteristics with the final design for the Houston High School. Typically published plans featured brick, two-story buildings with raised basements and a slightly projecting center entrance bay. Most of these schools had thick water tables above the basement level and a decorative cornice below a simple or shaped parapet wall. The fronts of the buildings had large window openings to maximize natural light and ventilation for classrooms. All of these characteristics are shared by the Houston High School. Though interior arrangement varied, many schools also included a large volume of space to be used as a gymnasium and assembly area, squared classrooms lined with windows, and spaces for libraries, offices, and restrooms.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 113-114.

²² Ibid.

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Houston High School
Texas County, Missouri

Houston's high school building made room for all of these features.

Community efforts to construct the Houston High School Building were an act of recommitment to the education of the community's youth. These efforts might also have been an act of recovery from the devastation of WWI and the 1918 Spanish influenza pandemic. Research on the effects of the war and pandemic on Texas County was not available, but there are hints in the school records that the flu may have had a significant impact on Texas County schools. In preparing for the 1919-1920 school year, Texas County school superintendent J. K. Connolly wrote:

The schools of the county have now begun their year's work in earnest. A desire seems to pervade the soul of almost everyone that something must be done to overcome the loss sustained last year by repeated setbacks due to the prevalence of the influenza epidemic.²³

The statistics for school enrollment for the school years ending on June 30 of 1917, 1918 and 1918 indicate that the epidemic did have a significant impact on the school term. Though the total enumeration of school aged children in the county grew slightly between 1917 and 1918 from 6,611 to 6,617, the school enrollment dropped drastically from 6,558 to 5,805.²⁴ The pandemic peaked in the fall of 1918 and was greatly reduced in scale and effect by the summer of 1919. The 1919 school year showed some recovery with a total enumeration of school aged children in the county at 6,512 and an enrollment of 6,124.²⁵ Despite the setbacks, Superintendent Connolly found that citizens had a new respect and commitment for education in the county and a willingness to commit to its advancement. In his report to the state superintendent of schools he noted, "Verily the "Flu" has done some good."²⁶

The construction of the Houston High School building brought the community together, and community efforts were rewarded both by an expanding high school enrollment roster but also with a new center for community activities. In 1917, Texas County only had four classified high schools. Two--Houston and Cabool--were first class high schools, Licking housed a second class high school and the Summerville consolidated district No. 1 had a third class high school. Houston had the added draw of offering teacher training courses in addition to its high school course, something not available at any of the other Texas County schools.²⁷ The number of high schools enumerated by the Texas County superintendent had dropped to three by the end of the 1919 school year.²⁸ The limited opportunities for high school education, the teacher training courses, and Houston's central location and new school building pushed

²³*Seventieth Report of the Public Schools of the State of Missouri: School Year Ending June 30, 1919.* Jefferson City, MO: Hugh Stephens Printing Company, 1919, p. 55.

²⁴*Sixty-eighth Report of the Public Schools of the State of Missouri: School Year Ending June 30, 1917.* Jefferson City, MO: Hugh Stephens Printing Company, 1917; *Sixty-ninth Report of the Public Schools of the State of Missouri: School Year Ending June 30, 1918.* Jefferson City, MO: Hugh Stephens Printing Company, 1919.

²⁵*Seventieth Report of the Public Schools of the State of Missouri: School Year Ending June 30, 1919.* Jefferson City, MO: Hugh Stephens Printing Company, 1919, p. 55.

²⁶*Seventieth Report of the Public Schools of the State of Missouri,* p. 55.

²⁷*Sixty-eighth Report of the Public Schools of the State of Missouri,* p. 122-125, 132.

²⁸*Seventieth Report of the Public Schools of the State of Missouri,* p. 55.

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Houston High School
Texas County, Missouri

Houston into a center for education in the county. State high school inspectors from the Missouri Department of Education reported that just two years after the completion of the school building (school year 1923-24), the Houston school system had a total enrollment of 385. Of the total, 250 were enrolled in the four year high school course and/or teacher training classes. The high school enrollment included 108 students that were not residents of the Houston school district.²⁹ That 43% of high school students were from outside the district is a strong indication that Houston High School played a significant role in education in the community and county as a whole.

As indicated above, the high school building completed in 1921 allowed the Houston School district to greatly increase enrollment in the school system. It also provided space for additional school sporting and educational facilities. The *Missouri High School Reports for School Year 1923-24* recommended that the school continued to be rated "First Class," and outlined the educational opportunities provided at the institution. The school's 7 teachers offered 8 periods of "recitation" in algebra, plane and solid geometry, European and American history, civics and geography, economics, social history, Latin, physics, vocational agriculture, home economics, and teacher training for students in the upper three years. All students were required to take "physical culture" (apparently physical education), and could join the school orchestra. The school also had a library of 1748 volumes, most of which fell under the categories of literature (550), agriculture (400), and education (375). Categories of library books also included history and civics, sciences, and "other."³⁰

By the mid-1930s, the total enrollment of the Houston High School had dropped, due in large part to the development of new high schools in other parts of the county. The 1937 Pineymo yearbook, named for the nearby Piney River, listed 119 high school students and seven teachers. Classes included social science, English, science, teacher training, vocational agriculture, vocational home economics, music and commerce. While most of the students lived within the Houston School district, the school still drew students from the county at large. The August 31, 1934 minutes of the Houston School Board notes,

Adult students going to Houston High School who have finished their four year course that live in the consolidated district, [can attend] free of any charges of tuition but those to whom [sic] live out of the district or nonresidents to the consolidated district that are 20 years of age and also taking a post graduate course shall pay \$4.00 per month or \$36.00 per school year.³¹

Others of school age from nearby school districts could attend Houston High School for \$6.00 per term. The board also discussed small charges for non-residents riding the school bus, and other fees for those attending the school but living outside the district.

Because it originated in such an unusual act of community cooperation and self-reliance, the school building became an integrated part of the community and its educational and social activities. From the

²⁹ State Department of Education. "Houston High School," *Missouri High School Reports for School Year 1923-24*. On file at the State Archives, Missouri Secretary of States Office, Jefferson City, MO, n.p.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Board Minutes, Houston High School, 1931-1974. County and Municipal Records on Microfilm, State Archives, Missouri Secretary of States Office, Jefferson City, MO, Reel C12757, p. 58.

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laying of the cornerstone in June 1921, the school and grounds were a source of community activity and pride. The *Houston Herald* reported,

Houston witnessed a great and inspiring Masonic ceremony last Saturday when Dr. C.H. Briggs of Springfield conducted the exercises which marked the laying of the cornerstone of the new High School Building. . . The occasion brought a great crowd of Masons, their families and many other visitors to our little city . . . The cornerstone has been duly prepared and placed at the southwest corner of the building, the stone bearing the names of the Board of Education . . . In the receptacle of the stone was placed a copy of "Pineymo," latest copies of the *Houston Herald*, [and] the Holy Bible.³²

Though school buildings often become the social center for small communities, the Houston High School was from its inception meant to be both a school and a community center. Its planning included, for this reason, a "gymnasium which will seat between 800 and 1,000 [for sporting events?] . . . for other occasions will seat from 1,200 to 1,500."³³ Before the completion of the high school, community members packed into the GAR Hall or Lyceum theatre for sporting events, dances, and plays, but the new high school's interior gymnasium with stage offered a roomier and more modern venue, one that was and continues to be well used.

Houston's school system suffered financially during the Depression era. The Board Minutes that consisted in large part of monthly accounts of teachers and the salary paid, had the following written over one set of such accounts on March 16, 1934:

These accounts of teachers were canceled as the Board of Education [has] no money to pay same and they were taken over by State Teachers Relief from March to end of May as the State had fallen short of estimations.³⁴

Troubled times did not significantly prohibit the use of the school's gymnasium for school and community activities. Though the school struggled to pay staff, the school board opened its doors to a wide variety of events. Minutes showed board approval for use of the school for health and dental clinics, fire department-hosted firemen's balls, alumni association events, and even a Democratic committee political rally.³⁵ School-hosted activities still dominated, at least during the school year. For example, the High School Literary Society, established in 1937, competed in debate and speech contests and also sponsored one act plays and readings that were presented to the entire community. The group also hosted community debates such as the 1937 debate topic "Resolved: that all electric utilities should be governmentally owned and operated."³⁶ The town's basketball team also became Missouri State Champs in the 1938-1939 school year, competing with area teams in the gymnasium.

³² *Houston Herald*, June 30, 1921.

³³ *Houston Herald*, August 4, 1921.

³⁴ Board Minutes, Houston High School, 1931-1974, p. 50.

³⁵ Board Minutes, Houston High School, 1931-1974, specifically September 3, 1935, p. 84; March 20, 1936, p. 96; May 3, 1937, p. 136; and January 11, 1938, n.p.

³⁶ *Pineymo*, Houston Public School Yearbook, 1937.

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The early 1940s saw Houston High School continuing its role as a community center, with students and community members supporting the war effort. In August of 1942, the *Houston Herald* announced,

Preparations are being made for the annual Texas County singing convention, to be held at Houston school gymnasium Sunday, August 2 . . . All Texas county singers are urged to take part in this great annual singing.³⁷

In 1944, the Herald reported that the school district's \$30,000 quota for war bonds was "well over the top," that the Senior Class play had been a success, and that "A good program and a pie supper will be held Saturday, March 17 at the High School gym for the benefit of the Red Cross . . ." ³⁸ Community education and service was also an important part of the school's function as evidenced by the announcement made by Dr. D.D. Sheppard, the school's vocational agriculture instructor that "The community cannery at the Houston high school will be open from July 15 until October."³⁹

The school building was altered somewhat throughout its period of significance as the needs of the school and community changed. In the school board minutes of July 15, 1937, the secretary noted alterations to the first floor room for offices and the move of the home economics department out of the building to the second floor of the old grade school.⁴⁰ Sometime during the 1940s, the entrance of the school was altered to lower the entrance to grade and modify the interior stairwell to accommodate the new entrance. In 1950, a small addition was added to the east elevation to accommodate music and debate classes. In more recent years, a new high school was constructed and the nominated building was used as a middle school and fine arts building.

The 1921 Houston High School building remains a center for community activities eighty-seven years after it was built by the community from locally harvested materials. The auditorium is still used by the school and as a collection point for donations for the local Relay for Life that benefits cancer victims. The classrooms are still in use by the middle school, and there is an option to use the school's auditorium and stage for local theatre productions. The building has had modern windows installed since its period of significance, but the building's massing, fenestration openings and exterior walls have not been changed since c. 1950. The building retains integrity and continues to convey its significance as a center for education and community events in Houston.

³⁷ *Houston Herald*, July 23, 1942.

³⁸ *Houston Herald*, June 29, 1944.

³⁹ *Houston Herald*, May 29, 1947.

⁴⁰ Board Minutes, Houston High School, 1931-1974, p. 141.

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Houston High School
Texas County, Missouri

Historic Photographs



Figure 1: Houston Public School, 1894.

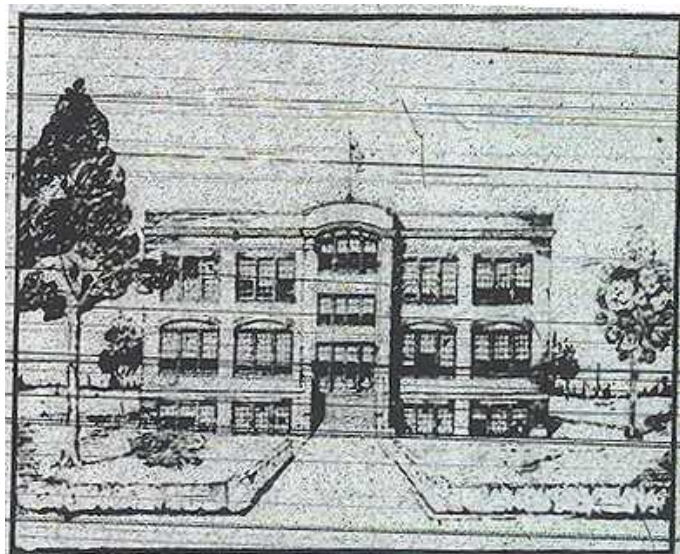


Figure 2: Drawing of Houston High School, *Houston Herald*, August 4, 1921.

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Texas County, Missouri

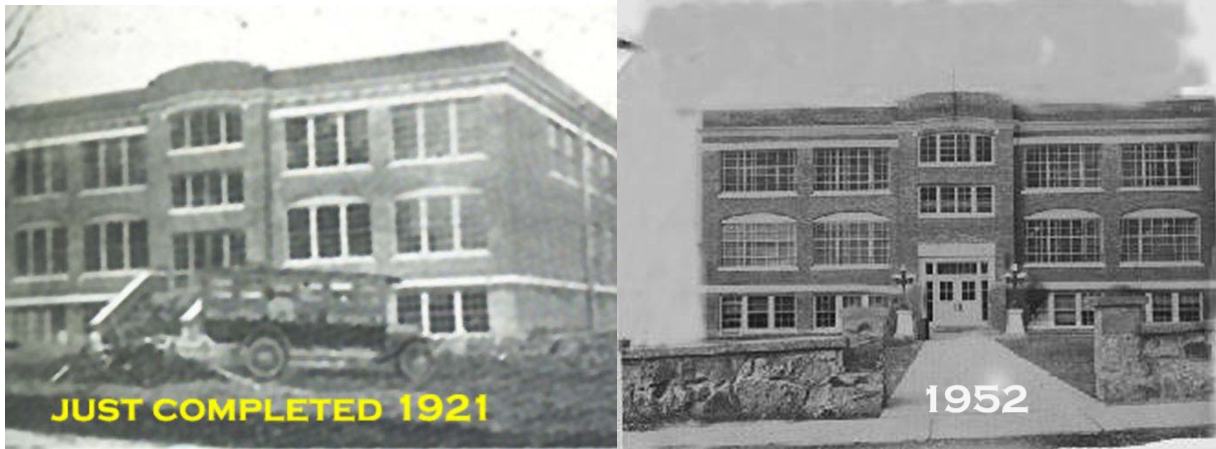


Figure 2: Houston High School before and after entrance remodeling.

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Houston High School
Texas County, Missouri

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundary is based on metes and bounds using existing roads and sidewalks. Beginning at the northwest corner of the intersection of North 1st Street and West Pine Street in Houston, Texas County, Missouri, proceed west 686 feet along the sidewalk paralleling West Pine to the intersection of said sidewalk and drive opening in the native stone fence. Turn north at a right angle and proceed 180 feet along the drive, thence west 120 feet, again turning at a right angle and proceeding South 180 feet through a secondary opening in the stone wall to the sidewalk paralleling West Pine. From this point proceed 120 feet east to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification:

The Houston High School is part of a large complex of school buildings and sports fields used by the Houston R-1 School District. Because much of the complex is newer or has been significantly altered after the period of significance, only the historic high school building is included in the nomination. Boundaries have been drawn to encompass the school building, associated front lawn and the historic stone fence fronting the property. Boundaries exclude neighboring, non-historic educational and administrative buildings and sports fields.

Form Prepared By:

1. John Impey, 1102 Augusta, Houston, Missouri (initial submission)
2. Tiffany Patterson, MO SHPO, P.O. Box 176, Jefferson City, MO 65109 (additional research/writing)

Photo log:

The following is true for all photographs:

Houston High School
Houston, Texas County, Missouri

Photographer: John Impey

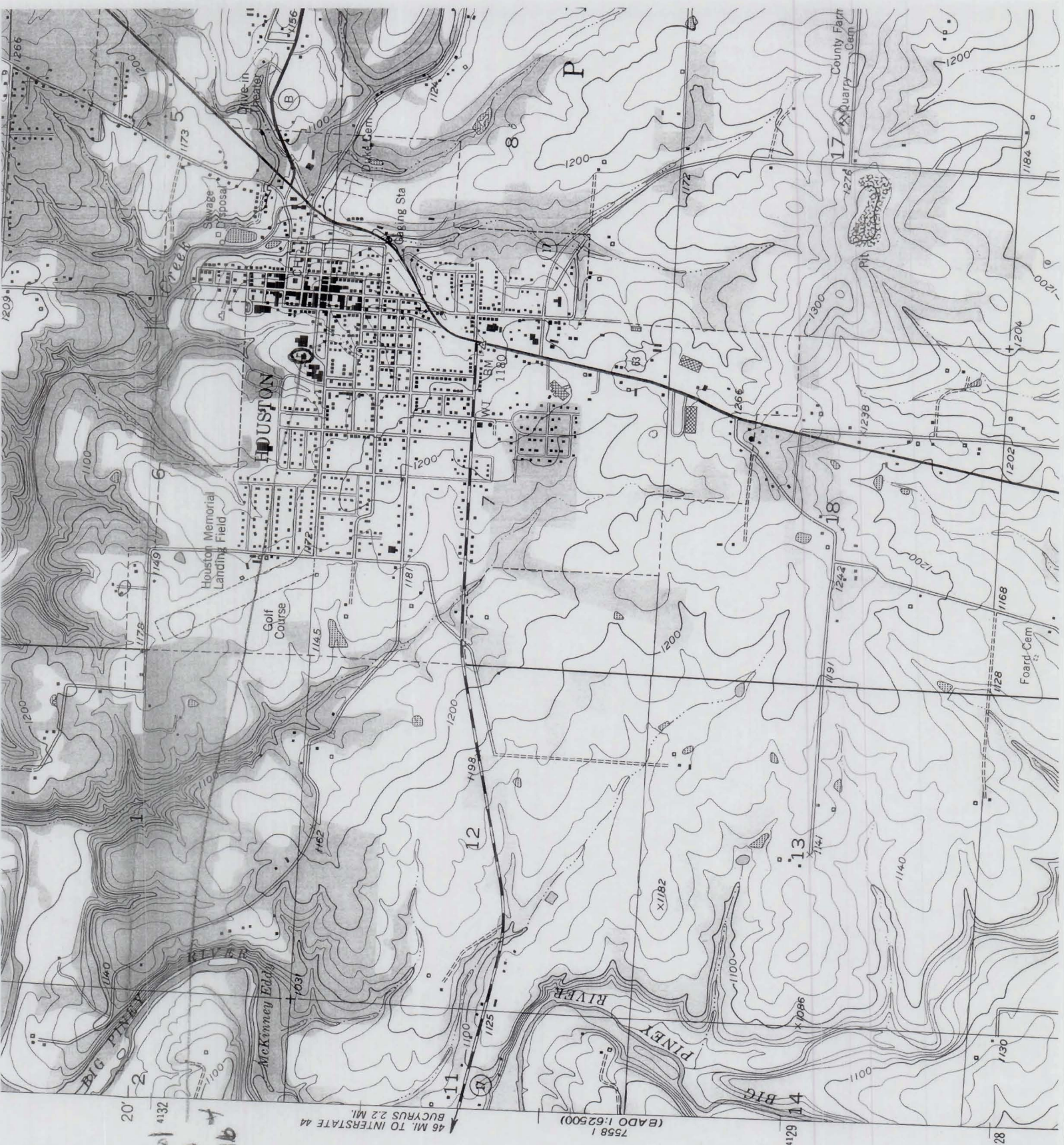
Date: June 16, 2008

Location of Negatives: On file with photographer, 1102 Augusta, Houston, Missouri

1. South elevation, from west Pine, looking north.
2. Close-up of south elevation, looking north.
3. West elevation, looking east.
4. East elevation, looking west.
5. North elevation, looking south.
6. Interior, second floor classroom, looking east.
7. Interior, gymnasium/auditorium, looking east to stage
8. Interior, gymnasium/auditorium, looking west from stage.

Houston High School
Texas County, MO
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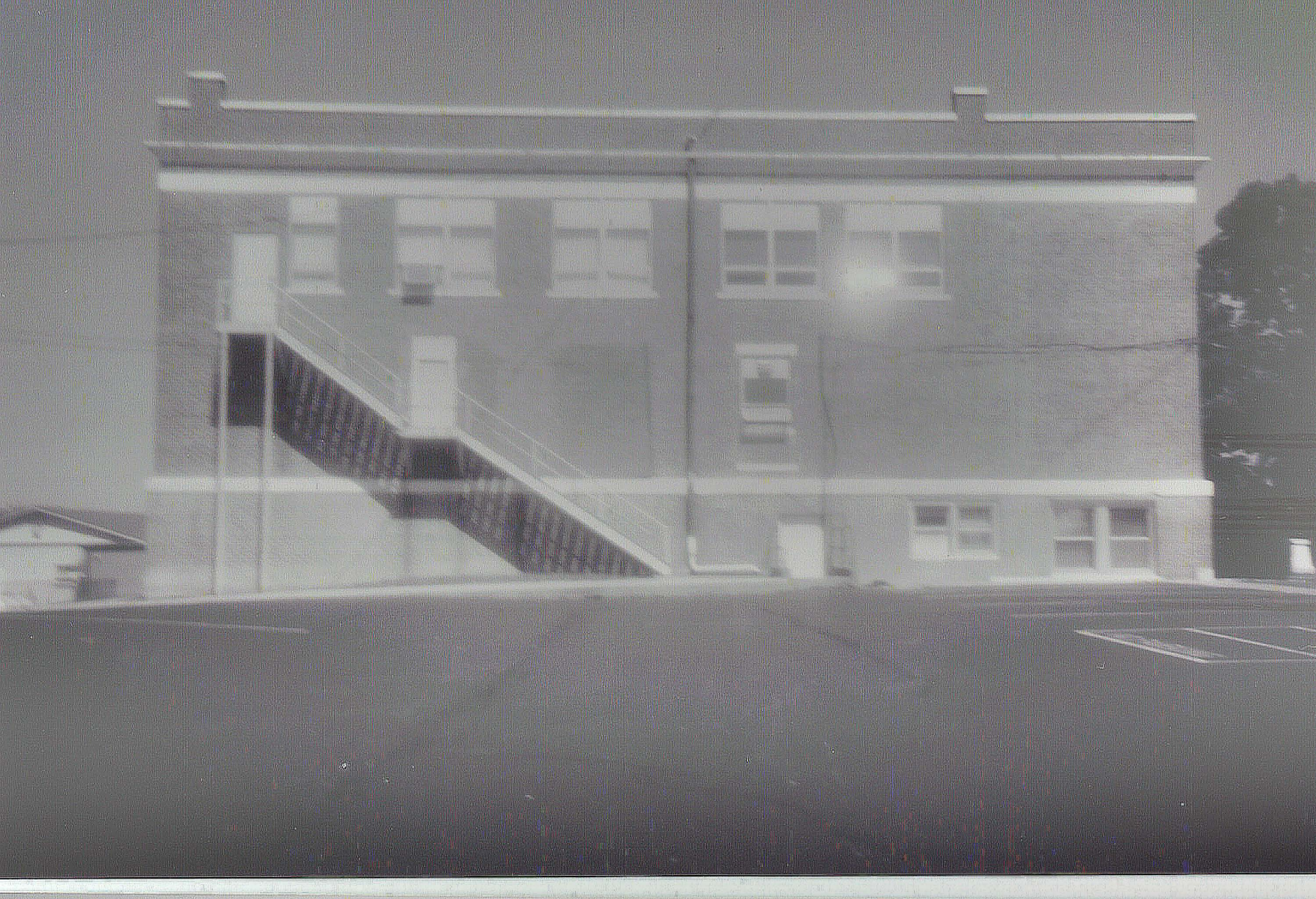
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