

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

**National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form**

This form is used for documenting property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (formerly 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information.

New Submission                       Amended Submission

**A. Name of Multiple Property Listing**

Historic Public Schools of Kentucky

**B. Associated Historic Contexts**

The American Education System (1700-1975)  
 The Public Education System in Kentucky (1800-1975)  
 The Public School Buildings of Kentucky (1800-1975)

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date – December 2024

**D. Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR 60 and the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation.

\_\_\_\_\_                      State Historic Preservation Officer                      \_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature of certifying official                      Title                      Date

Kentucky Heritage Council/State Historic Preservation Office  
 State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

\_\_\_\_\_                      \_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature of the Keeper                      Date of Action

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

Historic Public Schools of Kentucky  
Name of Multiple Property Listing

Kentucky  
State

Table of Contents for Written Narrative

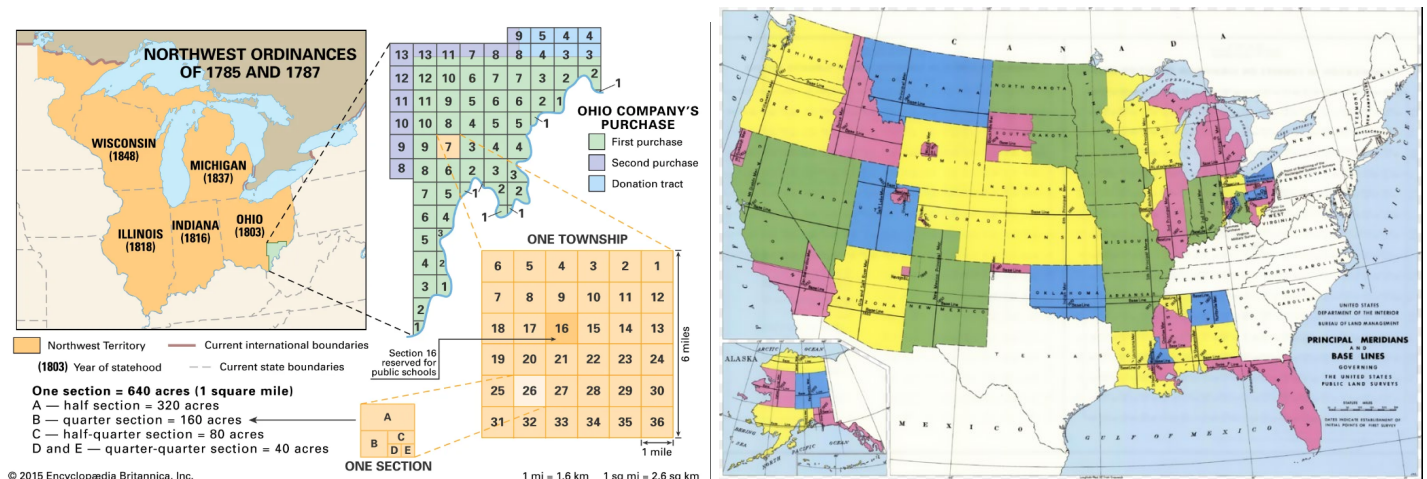
	<b>Page Numbers</b>
<b>E. Statement of Historic Contexts</b>	<b>3</b>
The American Education System (1700-1975)	3
The Public Education System in Kentucky (1800-1975)	5
Early Education in Kentucky	5
Early Education of Black Kentuckians	7
Early Twentieth Century Education in Kentucky	8
Early Twentieth Century Education of Black Kentuckians	8
Mid-Twentieth Century Education in Kentucky	11
Mid-Twentieth Century Education of Black Kentuckians	13
The Beginning of Modern Education in Kentucky	14
The Public School Buildings of Kentucky (1800-1975)	15
<b>F. Associated Property Types</b>	<b>20</b>
One- and Two-Room Schoolhouses	21
Property Type Description	21
Property Type Significance	22
Registration Requirements	22
Late 19 <sup>th</sup> and Early 20 <sup>th</sup> -Century School Buildings	22
Property Type Description	23
Property Type Significance	28
Registration Requirements	29
Rosenwald Schoolhouses	29
Property Type Description	29
Property Type Significance	30
Registration Requirements	31
Post-War School Buildings	31
Property Type Description	31
Property Type Significance	35
Registration Requirements	36
<b>G. Geographical Data</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>I. Major Bibliographical References</b>	<b>38</b>

## E. Associated Historic Contexts

### *The American Education System (1700-1984)*

The American education system, consisting of a free, non-sectarian public education, dates back to the Colonial period and was something that was uniquely American.<sup>1</sup> The earliest instances of formal education in Colonial America was rooted in the church and the new American ideals, with the focus being on teaching children to read and write so they could read the bible and understand democratic principles.

The concept of public education was enhanced following American independence, when the early educational models were combined with the Founding Fathers' philosophies, namely Jefferson's idea for allocating land for educational purposes. This concept was realized through the Land Ordinance of 1785 which, among other things, states "there shall be reserved the lot No. 16 of every township, for the maintenance of public schools."<sup>2</sup> As such, in the early decades of American independence, rural community schools were mandated across the nation, however, with the primary focus being agrarian in much of the New World, the value of a decent and sustained education was not prioritized. This was the beginning of the public education system in America, a system that would expand exponentially and change significantly as America industrialized in the nineteenth century.



### Illustration of Public Land Survey System and "lot No. 16." States in Color Surveyed as per Northwest Ordinance

Early efforts to popularize and establish the idea of free public education happened in the 1830s with Massachusetts establishing the first state board of education by law in 1837.<sup>3</sup> Horace Mann, the main proponent of this early effort, was not only the first Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education, but he fostered the idea of free public schools in America. In the following year, Henry Bernard created a state board of education in Connecticut where he served as the Secretary to the Board, a role he also held in Rhode Island.<sup>4</sup> Bernard was particularly influential as he authored books on school architecture in 1842, was the first US Commissioner of Education in 1867, and published the *American Journal of Education*, where the cause of public education of all American citizens was heavily promoted. These early efforts established the American idea of free public

<sup>1</sup> National Register of Historic Places, Historic Public Schools of Kansas Multiple Property Documentation, Kansas, National Register #64500921.

<sup>2</sup> United States Continental Congress, Rufus King, William Samuel Johnson, and Continental Congress Broadside Collection. An ordinance for ascertaining the mode of disposing of lands in the Western Territory: Be it ordained by the United States in Congress assembled, that the territory ceded by individual states to the United States, which has been purchased of the Indian inhabitants, shall be disposed of in the following manner. [New York: s.n., 1785] Online Text. <https://www.loc.gov/item/90898224/>.

<sup>3</sup> National Register of Historic Places, Historic Public Schools of Kansas Multiple Property Documentation, Kansas, National Register #64500921.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

education as a right of citizenship. It was during this time that control was given to local authorities to oversee the establishment, promotion, and implementation of public educational systems.<sup>5</sup>

The first graded American public schools as we understand them today occurred in Boston. English Classical School was established in Boston in 1821 and the city's first elementary school, the Quincy Grammar School, was established in 1848.<sup>6</sup> The recognized Latin School was found by many early American settlers to be incapable of preparing boys to become merchants and mechanics so, in 1827, Massachusetts passed a law that required a high school in all towns of more than 500 families. By the mid-nineteenth century, there were 321 high schools in the country with over half of them being in Massachusetts, New York, and Ohio, and the first midwestern examples occurring in St. Louis, Chicago, and Burlington, Iowa between 1853 and 1863.<sup>7</sup>

In 1874, the Michigan Supreme Court confirmed a community's right to levy taxes to finance education; by the turn of the century, there were over 20,000 public high schools in America. Further expansions of the public school system's offerings followed in the early twentieth century with the addition of manual and domestic training courses in the curriculums and the addition of federal support for vocational training after the passage of the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 which promoted courses in agriculture, industry, and domesticity.<sup>8</sup>

By the early twentieth century, there were stark inconsistencies between educational opportunities in urban/industrial areas and their rural counterparts. The advancements that led the early American educational movement were centered in heavily populated cities and the rural schools, while experiencing some progress in the late nineteenth century, were largely "backwood, poorly financed, and poorly taught."<sup>9</sup> This disparity was addressed at the federal level, namely in creation of the National Commission on County Life in 1908, which specifically highlighted the problem with rural schooling, and the United States Bureau of Education's 1919 publication of *Rural Education*, a bulletin calling out issues faced around the country in rural schools.<sup>10</sup> After all of the discussions on how to address the inequalities in the American public school systems, school consolidation was emphasized as one of these solutions.

While many rural states had begun reorganizing their schools along county lines, in an effort to further consolidation, the country as a whole saw large-scale transitions in the public educational system. This era, known as the Progressive Era, is categorized as a time when there were efforts to standardize the educational system and equalize the prior disparities. This movement came to a head following WWI as the population grew. While the Great Depression slowed construction for a time, the fervent construction of schools across America was renewed by New Deal Era programs, most notably the Works Progress Administration (WPA). This era led to the construction of schools across the country as well as new access to federal funds to improve existing buildings and promote an equitable and successful educational system that spanned both rural and urban environments. By the end of the 1930s and the New Deal era, new school buildings had either been constructed, or existing ones had been improved in nearly every county in Kentucky.<sup>11</sup>

The years following World War I and the years following World War II marked the points in America's history with the largest expenditure on school construction. While the population of school-aged children and enrollment

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> William E. Drake, *The American School in Transition*. (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1955), 225.

<sup>10</sup> Guilliford, Andrew. *America's Country Schools* (Washington D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1984); Foght, H.W., *Rural Education*, (Washington D.C.: United States Bureau of Education, 1919.)

<sup>11</sup> Kennedy and Johnson.

was at a relatively steady incline, these periods saw the biggest push for new and better schools.<sup>12</sup> In the mid-twentieth century, the federal government became increasingly concerned with addressing the need for public school facilities to educate a swelling number of school-age kids. In the early 1950s, school systems across the country surveyed existing facilities, largely driven by Title 1 of Public Law 81-815.<sup>13</sup> While one of the driving factors of the Impact Aid Program, which is what this federal code facilitated, was to acknowledge the educational shortcomings being witnessed on federal land, namely in war housing, following the end of WWII.<sup>14</sup> These surveys demonstrated that, in nearly every state across the country, there was a severe shortage of suitable educational facilities.

The years immediately following WWII saw a new era of public school construction. This era saw varying trends in American cities that is reflected in the approach to the public school system. First, access to automobiles, growing families, and various urban and racial relations led to a mass suburbanization in every American city. Thus, during the decades following WWII, suburban schools were being constructed at very high rates. It is important to note that this was the case only around larger cities, those which experienced widespread suburbanization and growth, as opposed to cities of marginal size. In Kentucky, only the largest cities experienced this phenomenon, such as Louisville and Lexington, but for many cities and towns within the Commonwealth, this was not the case.

Moreover, a new focus on functionality and the ability to accommodate a larger student body led to the physical appearance of schools built during this time period to drastically differ from previous years. During the early years of school consolidation, schools housing many students were constructed to accommodate new approaches to education yet with relatively small footprints, building with two and three stories to use the site efficiently. In the age of suburbanization, schools were built to serve the entire range of community interests, not just education. These buildings and their sites tended to be more sprawling, one or two-story buildings with the undecorated designs of Modernism and with more emphasis on the interior layout. This new era of public school construction and public educational is what we recognize as the modern school movement and is largely what continues into the twenty-first century.

### *The Public Education System in Kentucky (1800-1975)*

#### Early Education in Kentucky

Unlike many of the New England states, which had elaborate systems of common schools in the early 1800s, Kentucky's schools lacked a significant statewide organization and strong support among the general public. This placed the burden of public education upon self-taxing local districts, who functioned independently of one another. These attitudes especially affected black Kentuckians adversely, who received inadequate funding from local school boards in a parallel "separate but equal" school system after Emancipation. Tensions existed within the state between factions with varying views toward education. A minority advocated for generous funding for public education up through high school. Their views were met with great resistance, as Kentucky was largely an agricultural and rural state, and much of the general public held the view that education beyond the 8<sup>th</sup> grade was unnecessary. Local school boards faced several issues—from a lack of public will toward investing in education and facilities, growing disparities between urban and rural schools, and society-wide racial inequalities—all which challenged local boards throughout the entire historic period.

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<sup>12</sup> American Association of School Administrators, *Planning America's School Buildings* (Washington D.C.: American Association of School Administrators, 1960); National Register of Historic Places, Historic Public Schools of Kansas Multiple Property Documentation, Kansas, National Register #64500921.

<sup>13</sup> National Archives And Records Administration. Code of Federal Regulations: Federal Assistance Under Public Law 815, 81st Congress, As Amended, In Construction Of Minimum School Facilities In Areas Affected By Federal Activities, 45 C.F.R. 1971. Periodical. <https://www.loc.gov/item/cfr1971099-T45CIP114/>.

<sup>14</sup> National Association of Federally Impacted Schools, "Impact Aid's 60 years: 1950-1970," Electronic Document, <https://www.nafisdc.org/impact-aid-resources/about-impact-aid/history/impact-aids-60-years-1950-1970/>

Intellectually, Americans saw the idea of free public education as a positive activity that supported liberty for white males. Early attempts to establish public education in Kentucky occurred in the form of land-grant county seminaries. Under this system, land was reserved for the building of educational facilities, but the support and cost of constructing and maintaining these academies was supposed to be provided by private entities, and they were never meant to be free to all children. As a result, these early academies were exclusionary at their core and were largely reserved for children from wealthy families. These early seminaries failed due to a combination of corruption and the elitist nature of the institutions and Kentucky sought to remedy the serious issues around educational availability in the Commonwealth.<sup>15</sup>

The next attempt at the establishment of a system of public education came at the urging of Governor Gabriel Slaughter, who in 1816, stressed the importance of establishing free educational facilities for all children, despite familial wealth. Slaughter's successor, Governor Adair, passed the Commonwealth's first meaningful legislation regarding its education system. In it, a Literary Fund was established which reserved half of the profits from the Bank of the Commonwealth to be spent on public education only.<sup>16</sup> This effort did not distribute funds from the state to local school boards, but used funds to erect a state educational framework. The act provided for the appointment of an educational committee to develop a plan for public education throughout the state. The committee's findings, outlined in what was known as the Barry Report, named after one of the authors, Lieutenant Governor William T. Barry, were based on research of several other states' successful public educational systems and recommended "state support for education augmented by local contributions, an appointed state superintendent of schools, and a free system of common schools open to rich and poor alike" where "Kentucky's colleges and academies would support the entire program by training teachers, and the schools, in turn, would receive state support."<sup>17</sup> While at this point, Kentucky was on the verge of establishing an effective and functional public education system, several issues such as political in-fighting, lack of political determination, the rerouting of proposed funding from education to infrastructure projects, and the failure of the Bank of the Commonwealth led to this idea's demise.

As Kennedy and Johnson mention in *Kentucky Historic Schools Survey: An Examination of the History and Condition of Kentucky's Older School Buildings*, "most historians of educational history attribute the beginnings of Kentucky's common school system to the dispersal of the Federal Surplus in 1837."<sup>18</sup> This federal support led to the first, real common school legislation in Kentucky, despite the earlier attempts. The federal surplus funds allotted \$1,433,757 to Kentucky, which led to the legislature to establish the 1838 Act that officially established a system of public schools. Although a State Board of Education was established with this legislation, the state did not rob decision-making power from local districts. Counties continued being responsible for approving their own local taxes for education, dividing their counties into districts, appointing school officials, hiring teachers, establishing curricula, building schools etc., which ultimately led to a non-standardized statewide educational system.<sup>19</sup>

Following the 1838 Act, the state once again failed to see meaningful results from the optimistic expectations set forth therein. This failure was in part due to the lack of oversight from the state, the lack of implementation at the local level, and once again due to misallocation of state funds. Due to these shortcomings, the establishment of common schools and the advancement of any significant policies in the state were relatively nonexistent. The statewide public education system in Kentucky remained largely absent for over a decade until more aggressive legislation was enacted to fund and enforce the system that was supposed to already be in place.

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<sup>15</sup> Kennedy and Johnson, 2002.

<sup>16</sup> Mathias, Frank F. "Kentucky's Struggle For Common Schools, 1820-1850." *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 82, no. 3 (1984): 214–34. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23380339>.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 217.

<sup>18</sup> Kennedy and Johnson, 2002:15.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

Movement toward a statewide public school system occurred in the mid-nineteenth century with two major educational victories: the establishment of a statewide property tax of 2 cents on every one hundred dollars to go toward the state's common schools, and the 1849 constitutional convention.<sup>20</sup> At this point, there was a large desire for a public school system in Kentucky. The newly implemented property tax, plus annual interest on the school fund and other various income, could finally fund a viable public school system in Kentucky. As such, the 1849 constitutional convention "recognized the necessity of including strong amendments to the state constitution with regard to common schools," and as a result, Article 11 of the new 1850 Kentucky Constitution "held the common school fund inviolable for the purposes of sustaining a system of common schools throughout Kentucky."<sup>21</sup> Further legislation made primary and secondary education free for all white children in Kentucky.

As the turn of the twentieth century approached, early signs of what would become the school consolidation movement began to take shape in Kentucky, particularly around more urban areas, as the populations grew. This movement became more prevalent in the early decades of the twentieth century, as ease of travel advanced and school curriculums and offerings grew. The idea to have a common school, centralized, and able to serve a large population of Kentucky's children, has its roots in late nineteenth century ideologies.

### Early Education of Black Kentuckians

After the major funding issues were largely addressed and newly enacted state law effected the rights of white children in Kentucky to a free education, little changed over the next half century in white schools. Prior to the American Civil War, however, there few provisions for the education of black children, none of which were included in the public education legislation that aided their white counterparts. While the education of enslaved persons was not prohibited, their prospects were limited. For the most part, enslaved persons had to rely on their enslavers to offer improvised classes in reading, writing, and math, or, on rare occasions, receive education from their slaveholders in hopes of hiring them out. Moreover, some enslaved persons and free black people were fortunate enough to attend private institutions, largely associated with black churches. Despite these few options, black children in Kentucky had very few opportunities for educational advancement.<sup>22</sup>

Following emancipation, black Kentuckians began to organize their own schools, in large part with assistance from the federal Freedmen's Bureau and benevolent northern groups. In the first few years after the Civil War, black Kentuckians established over 200 schools. Despite being minimally funded, having poorly paid teachers, and having terms limited to no more than three months, over 10,500 students were being served in the Commonwealth. Similar to the paltry options for both freedmen and enslaved persons before the war, most of these institutions were supported by local religious organizations, often operating out of a church. In 1871, the Freedmen's Bureau assistance was discontinued and little changed until 1874 when a common school system was established for black Kentuckians.<sup>23</sup>

The school law of 1874 formally established a common school system for black children in Kentucky, which, while racially segregated, had an organizational structure similar to the white schools. However, unlike white school districts, the black school districts were unable to make major decisions for the district, as the black trustees had to turn to the county commissioners, who were white. Additionally, black school district trustees were responsible for establishing black schools a 'suitable' distance from all white schools, hire teachers, and manage school funds.<sup>24</sup> The latter proved to be increasingly difficult for black school districts. Similar to the white schools, funding came primarily from taxes on black-owned property, but it did not benefit from the state funds, like the white counterparts. As a result, black schools were funded solely from black property taxes, which, due to social inequalities and disenfranchisement of black Kentuckians, was paltry and insufficient.

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<sup>20</sup> Mathias 1984; Kennedy and Johnson, 2002.

<sup>21</sup> Kennedy and Johnson: 17.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid: 19.

Less than a decade later, Kentucky was threatened by a federal lawsuit to either integrate the school system or to match school funding in the state for both white and black schools. As a result, the legislature, with the support of the Commonwealth's voters, chose to pass legislation to equalize school funds for segregated school systems. White Kentuckians made it known that they would rather share funding than integrate schools.<sup>25</sup>

### Early Twentieth Century Education in Kentucky

The largest change to the Kentucky school system was implemented in 1908 when the system went from being managed on the district level to being administered at the county level. In this new system, organization was completely altered, lending nearly all of the responsibilities to the county superintendent and the county board of education. While districts still existed, their role was downplayed; district administration was reorganized to serve the counties. This entire reorganization sought to provide a new sense of order, effectiveness, and functionality to the state school system. This decentralization ushered in Kentucky's Progressive Era.<sup>26</sup>

In addition to the reorganizing Kentucky's educational system, there was a new interest in standardizing the education of the field's professionals, the teachers and administrators. Also, efforts to standardize curricula and courses of study gained ground. In the nineteenth century, teachers were hired at the local level with no statewide standard for accreditation based on education or professional experience. Activists holding Progressive ideals sought to require licensing for teachers and to improve qualifications for administrators. In the early twentieth century, two formal schools for teachers were established in Kentucky, certification tests were created and required for potential new teachers, and a baseline of educational credentials were required for any new hires. Moreover, additional pay was available to teachers who sought to further their professional development.<sup>27</sup> Other qualifications and certifications were also implemented at the high-level positions, such as superintendents, in an attempt to ensure that only trained personnel would be in some of the Commonwealth's most influential educational positions, which had been dominated by other local interests previously.

One of the most important changes that the 1908 act initiated was the requirement for all counties to have at least one high school by 1910. It was previously commonplace, especially in the rural counties throughout the state, for children to finish school after eighth grade, with many counties lacking even a single high school should a child want to pursue additional education. While this was a state-wide requirement, it did not apply to black school systems. Many municipalities refused to establish high schools for their black students, forcing bright students to travel long distances to attend a high school in a nearby county.

Continuing with Kentucky's progressive legislation surrounding its educational system, in 1912 a law was passed to require all children between 6 and 16 to attend school. Despite the optimistic intentions of Progressives, this mandate proved to be against the wishes of many Kentuckians, who did not share this view of educational necessity for their children.

During the progressive era, all educational funding continued to rely on property taxes in the local districts. Inconsistencies in the economies of some counties in Kentucky led to disparities in the financial expenditures in their local districts. As such, some counties were able to build elaborate, large-scale school buildings and afford the most qualified teachers, while others struggled to get by with inferior facilities and inexperienced staff.

### Early Twentieth Century Education of Black Kentuckians

During the progressive era, while public schools available to white Kentuckians grew, flourished, and changed considerably for the better, the same cannot be said for the schools available to black Kentuckians. These issues were inexorably due to the return to a racially segregated, inequitable, and unjust system in the post-reconstruction years, but differing reasons were provided to justify the unequal offerings. The duties typically fell to the newly

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.



established county officials to distribute funding, supposedly in an equitable fashion, but many districts claimed a lack of black students as the primary cause behind their failure to provide proper educational facilities, while others just simply set aside a meager sum for the black community compared to that offered to the white causes. White school officials would only agree to pay for a school if the black community would build the school themselves, placing a disproportionate burden on the African American community. Inequalities were prevalent throughout the state, not only in rural areas where officials claimed a lack of black residents as the reason behind the deficient support. Even in early 1900s Lexington, the black community had an equal number of students to be educated as the white community had, but the school system built only three buildings for African Americans, while erecting 8 to educate students from the white community.<sup>28</sup>

In the early twentieth century, the consequences of unequal funding continued to plague the black community. Further, when black students were able to attend a school, they were left wanting for adequate facilities, books, and adequate numbers of teaching staff. This is not to say, though, that the quality of black education was commensurate with the poor level of funding. Despite this unequal set of resources, the African American community produced doctors, lawyers, teachers, and other professionals. Due to the high importance placed on producing leaders for their communities, all members—students, parents, and teachers—worked in collaboration to achieve as much with the meager resources they were allotted. The status of teacher was extremely high in the black community, leading students and parents alike to give them support, which in turn, enabled students to achieve far beyond the level of funding.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, from 1900-1930, the illiteracy rate dropped among black residents in Kentucky, in part, because educational facilities were made more available than during the nineteenth century. Reading achievements among Kentucky's black residents outperformed that of white residents. The illiteracy differential also supports the narrative that where facilities are available, students of any sort thrive. African Americans not only placed a value on education, a greater proportion of Blacks lived in Kentucky's cities than white students did. This enabled a higher percentage of Black students to have access to schools than their white counterparts. Because Kentucky's black residents were a more urban population, their educational performance exceeded that of their rural equivalents.<sup>30</sup>

As the progressive era ushered in a new age of school offerings, availability, and standardization, this was not always beneficial to Kentucky's black students. Superintendents had been established and were now required to receive proper educational training to ensure that Kentucky's public schools were appropriately run, including establishing curricula for the various schools throughout the state. With a focus on practicality and the era's prevailing racist tendencies, curricula in black schools centered on offering "training for careers as servants or laborers" in order to create valuable members of society, while "education to develop a critical mind was thought to be wasteful and dangerous."<sup>31</sup> Similarly, secondary education for black students concentrated on establishing "industrial and domestic skills" while white students "focused on college preparatory courses."<sup>32</sup> To further highlight the inequalities, black schooling often ended in the tenth grade while white students regularly received an education through twelfth grade.

As previously mentioned, the cost of constructing educational facilities for black students was among the largest hurdle the black communities faced. Funding from the state or local municipalities was mostly nonexistent so these communities often had to turn to other means for financing. In some cases, the black communities were able to come up with the funds and labor to erect facilities on their own, but in many cases, outside funding was required to supplement the meager tax contributions. Sometimes this outside funding came from local companies/individuals who saw a self-interest in providing for the black community, but other times the money

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

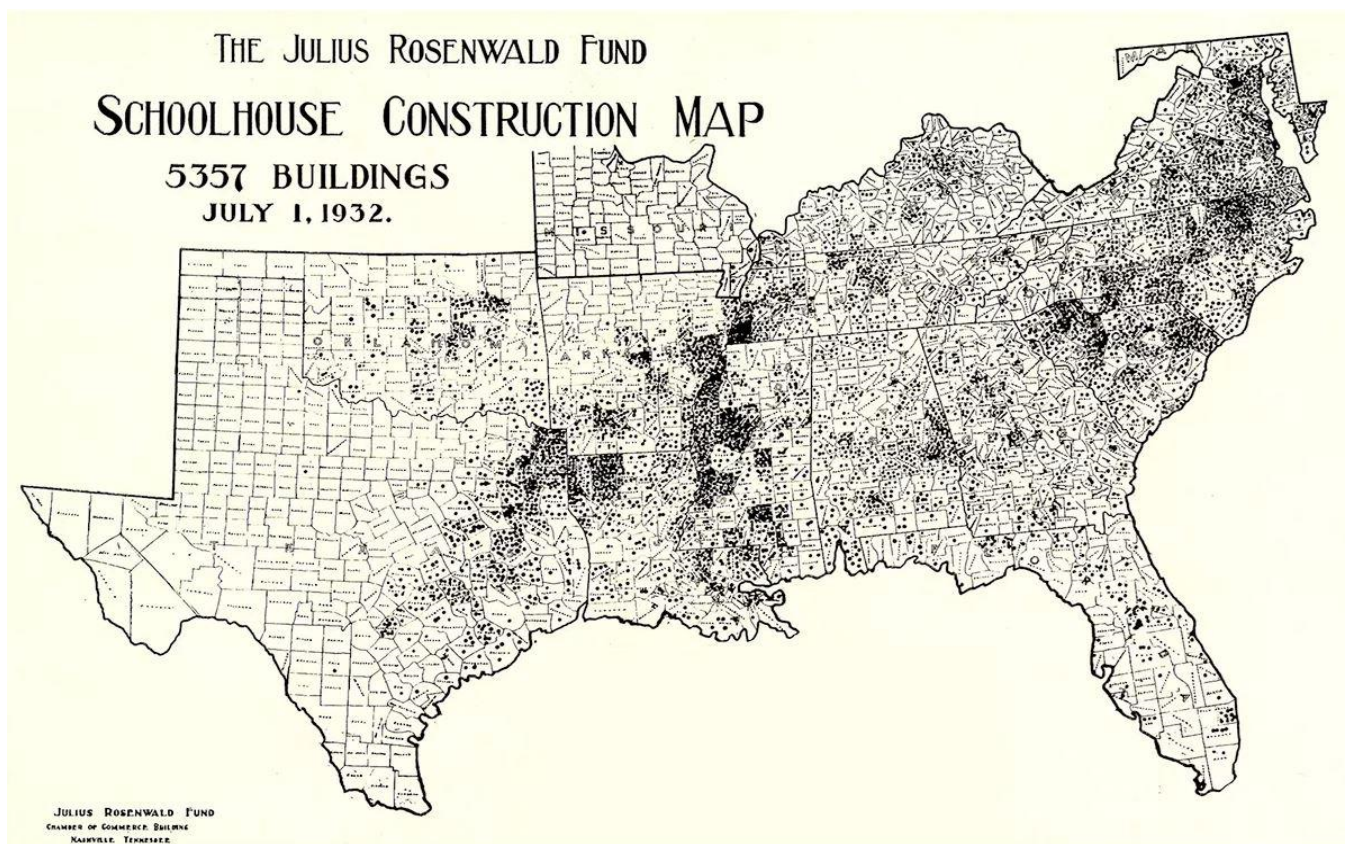
<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Wright, George C. *A History of Blacks in Kentucky: In Pursuit of Equality, 1890-1980*. Volume 2. Frankfort, Kentucky: The Kentucky Historical Society, 1992.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid; Kennedy and Johnson: 24.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid: 24-25.

came from wealthy outsiders. Of the latter, no one is more famously celebrated than Julius Rosenwald, a Chicago businessman and entrepreneur who was the president of Sears, Roebuck and Company in the early 1900s.<sup>33</sup> Rosenwald, a progressive who liked to use his money for progressive causes across the country, met Booker T. Washington, well-known black educator, former enslaved person, and one of the founders of the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, in 1911 and realized that their passion for progressive projects and education aligned. From 1912 until 1916, Rosenwald, with support and leadership from Washington and Tuskegee, donated enough money to build over 300 schools in and around Alabama. After Washington passed, Rosenwald established the Rosenwald Fund in 1917 to assist southern black communities with the establishment and construction of schools. The fund continued to grow and reach countless black communities throughout the South. In addition to requiring black communities to match funds to get the grant money, it “stipulated that all assisted schools remain in session at least five months, and that the buildings be properly maintained and equipped once completed.”<sup>34</sup> Additionally, the fund supplied money for the housing and training of teachers, specified that all buildings became the property of the local school system upon completion, and sent formalized plans along with each grant approval. Between 1920 and 1928, the Rosenwald Fund spent over \$350,000 a year on schools. The fund stopped providing grants for school building in 1932, the year Rosenwald died, but throughout its existence, it funded over 5,300 educational facilities in black communities throughout the South (Figure 1).<sup>35</sup> During this era in Kentucky, the Rosenwald Fund funded 158 schools and other education-related facilities.<sup>36</sup>



*Map of all the Rosenwald schools as of 1932 (Fisk University, John Hope and Aurelia E. Franklin Library Special Collection, Julius Rosenwald Fund Archives).*

<sup>33</sup> National Park Service, “The Rosenwald Schools: Progressive Era Philanthropy in the Segregated South (Teaching with Historic Places)”. Electronic Document, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/the-rosenwald-schools-progressive-era-philanthropy-in-the-segregated-south-teaching-with-historic-places.htm#:~:text=Public%20schools%20in%20the%20South,students%20between%201913%20and%201932.> 2023.

<sup>34</sup> Kennedy and Johnson: 26.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Turley-Adams, Alicestyne. *Rosenwald Schools in Kentucky, 1917-1932*. Frankfort, Kentucky: The Kentucky Heritage Council, 1997.

### Mid-Twentieth Century Education in Kentucky

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, Kentucky regularly “ranked near the bottom on the national scale of scholastic achievement.”<sup>37</sup> One of the steps taken throughout the Commonwealth to address the concerns around public education was the 1934 School Code, which sought to organize all preexisting legislation and new relevant legislation into a single resource, something that would assist in addressing the ongoing difficulties. One of the most important aspects of the school code was the change to school administration. Whereas before 1934, there were three kinds of districts: county, city, and independent, after the passing of the school code, separate city districts were made a thing of the past. This had widespread implications throughout Kentucky. Before the passing of the school code, the three types of districts were relatively self-explanatory, with the county districts covering the more rural parts of the state, while the city and independent districts served the metropolitan areas and towns, respectively. In this earlier system, the disproportionate wealth, population, and subsequent taxes generated in the more densely populated areas of Kentucky led to their ability to maintain superior schools. The higher taxes allowed for nicer facilities, higher paid teachers, and educations that rivaled those found in other American cities, while the rural county schools lacked the same financial support, so their buildings and, in some cases, their personnel, were below par. Moreover, in many poorer, rural communities, children were still expected to help around the house and farm, thus their education often took a back seat to the needs of the family. The 1934 School Code, in addition to other changes, sought to remedy this stark discrepancy.<sup>38</sup>

The 1934 legislation was an early step into the school consolidation movement that occurred across the country throughout the twentieth century. Despite the early school consolidation movement tracing its origins back to the late nineteenth century, particularly in Kentucky’s cities and towns, this later consolidation movement had more pervasive impacts. The 1934 School Code resulted in many of the city and independent districts being forced to merge with the county districts, as they could not meet the requirements set forth by the legislation. The legislation sought to remedy financial disparities between the county and independent districts, to raise the quality of education provided in the rural parts of counties. Many rural schools lacked teachers of specialized courses and lacked financial support for suitable buildings. Consolidating districts into a centralized location pooled more taxpayers into a stronger economic block. While this new model initially increased local costs because it called for construction of new school facilities, it ultimately led to more efficient delivery of the educational service for Kentucky’s school-aged children.<sup>39</sup>

The statewide movement to consolidate schools was supported by a key feature that was evolving in the 1930s: Kentucky road infrastructure and access to automobiles. During this time, the Commonwealth was experiencing an expansion in navigable roads, connecting the state’s most rural areas to nearby towns and cities. The increasingly affordable automobile and motorbus also made travel more possible for thousands of people who had been confined to their immediate region. Eastern Kentucky students did not see their schooling impacted by consolidation immediately, as roadbuilding in that part of the state was a greater challenge until after World War II. While the introduction of transportation for students added a new financial burden on Kentucky’s public school districts, this was alleviated slightly by the late 1940s when districts realized it would be more cost effective to operate their own busses instead of relying on private companies. The early wave of school consolidation in Kentucky proved to be effective. In less than twenty years, from 1936 to the early 1950s, the number of one-teacher schools in Kentucky dropped from over 5,000 to just over 3,000.<sup>40</sup>

During this period of school consolidation in Kentucky, New Deal-era relief programs brought multiple sources of aid. The Works Progress Administration (WPA) oversaw the use of federal funds to construct new schools, additions to existing facilities, and other associated buildings and structures. These building projects were almost

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<sup>37</sup> Kennedy and Johnson: 27.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Kennedy and Johnson.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. Butler, Wendell P. *History of Education in Kentucky*. Commonwealth of Kentucky Education al Bulletin, Volume 31, Number II. Frankfort, Kentucky: Kentucky Department of Education, 1963.

entirely centered on Kentucky's rural areas. This funding paid for larger schools to replace the one- and two-room schools, assisting consolidation efforts. Not only were schools built, but also cafeterias, gymnasiums, and other substantial buildings were erected, serving education during the day and as community centers after hours. In the 1930s, Kentucky undertook over 1700 education-related building projects, with the federal government contributing nearly 40% of the total construction costs, which helped the state to accomplish its new school mandates.<sup>41</sup>

The nation's entry into World War II interrupted this growth in Kentucky's public education. During the war years, not only did access to labor and materials stop the construction of education-related buildings, but the rationing of gas made transportation to and from the new consolidated schools increasingly hard. The lure of higher-paying jobs drew the more qualified teachers away from their vocation and the war effort drew many young men and women into service for their country. As a result, "the war years were a time of zero growth in school consolidation and, in some cases, an actual recession of gains made in professional teaching qualifications."<sup>42</sup>

Following the war, Kentucky witnessed a renewed interest in the public education system. One of the first hurdles to overcome was the disparity between the schools in wealthier, more populated centers, and the poorer, rural schools. Some underprivileged districts lacked the funds necessary to provide essential services, such as constructing adequate buildings, providing transportation, and maintaining a satisfactory educational program. Per the ratification of the 1891 Kentucky Constitution, school funding was distributed based on the number of school-aged children in any given district. In an effort to relieve some of the inequalities that remained after consolidation, the state in 1942 distributed 10 percent of its state school fund to school systems based on need. Following the War, the state increased this to 25 percent, for districts with pressing needs. However, by the early 1950s, it was evident that these measures were insufficient.<sup>43</sup>

The sanctioning of the Minimum Foundation Program in 1954 sought to finally address the ongoing inequitable distribution of funds throughout Kentucky's school systems. This program had several purposes, from "removing the stipulation that state school funds must be used for salaries" and could instead be used on "any 'public school purpose'" and to acknowledge "the need for certain administrative and special instructional personnel" to eliminate "a system which allocated funds for pupils who did not attend school" and to offer "special and vocational education."<sup>44</sup> The program was funded based on four considerations. The first three—employee salaries, expenses, and capital outlay—was determined by "a specific amount per classroom unit with a state minimum salary schedule." The fourth—transportation—was designed "to reflect the actual cost of operating the transportation system."<sup>45</sup> Ultimately, this program allowed for money to be utilized in the ways that best suited the Commonwealth's districts and its students. It provided "better-trained teachers; encouraged a salary schedule that rewarded additional college preparation and continuation in the profession; provided for consolidation of schools with modern equipment and buildings; and facilitated the closing of small inferior operations. It expanded curriculum offerings and literally paved the road to school by providing an efficient and dependable pupil transportation system."<sup>46</sup>

The Minimum Foundation Program "combined state and local tax dollars to fund the schools...to provide a minimum level of funding that the legislature believed was adequate for all schools to operate; distributed

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Kennedy and Johnson: 29.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid; Klotter, James C. editor *Our Kentucky: A Study of the Bluegrass State*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000.

<sup>44</sup> Kennedy and Johnson: 30; Doyle, Edwina, Ruby Lawson, and Anne Armstrong Thompson, editors. *From Fort to the Future: Educating the Children of Kentucky*. Lexington, Kentucky: Images Press, 1987; Guess, Arnold *Financing Kentucky's Elementary and Secondary Education Program*. Journal of Education Finance, Volume 4, Spring, pp 443-449. Champaigne, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1978: 443.

<sup>45</sup> Guess: 443-444.

<sup>46</sup> Doyle et. al.: 311.

equitably throughout the state.”<sup>47</sup> This program’s success was predicated on two things being true: “Property in the state had to be assessed at 100 percent of its fair market value, and the program had to be adequately funded,” but neither condition was met in Kentucky.<sup>48</sup> In order for local districts to participate in the program, they had to produce “a required minimum sum through local tax levies,” however, “while most districts levied the maximum rates, some districts with a great deal of taxable property were, of course, able to levy less and still produce their required local effort,” allowing for unfair advantages to continue to favor the larger districts, as the smaller districts, who needed the funds the most, were often the victims of the most fraudulent property assessments.<sup>49</sup> So, while the Minimum Foundation Program was instrumental to the ongoing consolidation movement, allowing for funding to move from a per capita concept to a more equitable system, in some ways it furthered the inequalities between the smaller districts and their larger counterparts.

These steps were all necessary in the school consolidation movement. Rural county schools were struggling to get by prior to the consolidation efforts, with substandard schools persisting only to serve a small, localized population. For example, in Breathitt County alone, a rural county in the eastern part of the state, in the mid-1940s, there were 98 grade schools, with a majority of them only accessible via foot or horse.<sup>50</sup> These issues were what the consolidation movement was seeking to address. The goal of providing centralized schools, accessible transportation, and standardized educational programs, was not realized equally throughout the Commonwealth.

#### Mid-Twentieth Century Education of Black Kentuckians

In the early decades of the twentieth century, black students in Kentucky were relegated to sub-par facilities, Rosenwald schools, and “separate but equal” school buildings and educational opportunities, that were far from equitable. Offerings, in general, were much more plentiful for white students than they were for black students. Black students were often expected to travel long distances to get an education, especially if they expected that education to go past basic elementary school. In 1947, there were only 62 public high schools for African Americans in Kentucky, with only 13 of those being county facilities in a state with 120 counties.<sup>51</sup> The 1954 Supreme Court decision, “Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka Kansas,” ruled that the “separate but equal” doctrine had failed to achieve its goals, requiring public school systems across the country to desegregate “with all deliberate speed.”<sup>52</sup> However, in Kentucky, much like the rest of the South, schools were slow to implement any lasting changes and were often only forced to do so after pressure from the black community and legal actions were sought.

In 1955, the Kentucky Department of Education, formally instructed all school districts to comply with the Supreme Court ruling, but, as before, many districts were resistant to any real meaningful changes to the status quo. Districts and school officials dug their feet, citing existing overcrowding issues and a desire to work slowly so as to not upset the white population. In Louisville, public school demographics and numbers in Louisville changed dramatically in 1956, motivated by the US Supreme Court decision calling for integration of public schools.

The public school system in Jefferson County was burdened with providing schools for the white families moving from the inner city to unincorporated areas of the county. For the first time, the Louisville City Schools and Jefferson County School System dealt with jurisdictional issues. Some families living in newly annexed subdivisions near city schools were required to send their children to county schools, sometimes miles from home.

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<sup>47</sup> Day, Richard E. *Bert Combs and the Council for Better Education: Catalysts for School Reform*. The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society, 109 (1) 27-62: Available at: [http://works.bepress.com/Richard\\_day/4](http://works.bepress.com/Richard_day/4)

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Dawahare, Debra H. *Public School Reform: Kentucky’s Solution*, 27 University of Arkansas Little Rock L. Rev. 27 (2004). Available at: <https://lawrepository.uarl.edu/lawreview/vol27/iss1/2/>.

<sup>50</sup> Brother, Janie-Rice, “The WPA Builds: Big Rock School, Breathitt County, Kentucky,” in *Gardens to Gables*, June 26, 2018. Electronic Document, <https://www.gardenstogables.com/the-wpa-builds-big-rock-school-breathitt-county-kentucky/>, accessed September 2024.

<sup>51</sup> Douglass School, Lexington, Fayette County, Kentucky, National Register #98000933

<sup>52</sup> Wright.

Parents complained to city leaders, and local media observed, "This spectacle - County school buses traveling through City streets to pick up City residents to deliver to County schools which themselves are in the city limits - would appear to be the ultimate in confusion."<sup>53</sup> Desegregation efforts were not begun in Louisville until 1956, beginning a process that would take nearly two decades and a lawsuit to institute a busing program to remedy the ineffective attempts at integration. The city and county public schools merged in 1975, but did not fully desegregate until 1978, when mandated by a Court Order. One county east of Louisville, in Shelbyville, when the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) met with the local school board to discuss integration after the Supreme Court's and the Kentucky Department of Education's rulings, the Superintendent said they "had not even seriously discussed the matter."<sup>54</sup>

By 1965, 95 percent of districts throughout Kentucky had complied with the order to desegregate, thus effectively marking the end of the dual school system in the Commonwealth. However, stark disparities between educational opportunities and experiences between white and black students remained, albeit in starkly different ways for those in the cities compared to those in rural Kentucky. In the rural regions of Kentucky, black schools were nearly all closed and the displaced students were forced to transfer to formerly all-white schools. This led to a disproportionate affect on the black community with a loss of their own facilities, a longer transit to school, and, in many cases, it led to the loss of employment for all black teachers and faculty, as many were not given new positions at the newly-integrated schools. In the cities, much like in the counties, many of the black schools were closed and the displaced students were expected to transfer to facilities in surrounding neighborhoods. This had a far-reaching impact, because in many of the cities, the white and black populations were segregated residentially, so when the black students were sent outward to neighboring schools, resulting in a loss of community cohesion. These communities lost a source for professional role models and some semblance of identity and culture.<sup>55</sup>

In addition to the loss of community, physical educational facilities, and professional role models, the black students in Kentucky's urban areas were, in many cases, left with substandard school experiences due to disinvestment in education within the historic core of American cities. "White flight" is the term used to explain the abandonment of the inner city by white residents or new houses in the suburbs. This phenomenon began following World War II, when returning white soldiers armed with G.I. Bills and access to affordable housing loans moved away from the urban core. This physical migration of Kentucky's urban white population corresponded with the disinvestment of the inner-cities, including the schools. Thus, black students were left with inferior facilities as their white counterparts were moving to the suburbs, neighboring counties, and enrolling in newly built suburban schools or finding private schools to attend.

Some historians peg the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement at 1954, with the historic *Brown v Board of Education* ruling. One of the major steps toward Civil Rights was a requirement for equality in education. Access to equality in housing options, too, became a marker of attainment of Civil Rights. While the depopulation of the inner city by whites provided some greater housing opportunity for African Americans, the cost was a subsequent devaluing of the schools that now opened their doors to black students.

### The Beginning of Modern Education in Kentucky

The modern era in public education in Kentucky was a continuation of the trends that were set forth in the earlier decades, namely the school consolidation, widespread suburbanization in the Commonwealth's cities, and issues with desegregation and the promotion of equitable educational opportunities. In many cases, the cities' suburbs had educational facilities that mirrored those being constructed in the surrounding counties. While funding was still set up in the previously organized independent and county district system, the approach to these facilities was similar between county and suburban. In both cases, the schools were constructed in centralized locations to serve the surrounding area, whether that was regional or by nearby neighborhoods, and they were developed on large

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<sup>53</sup> Takes Long Way Courier-Journal, November, 1957, no page.

<sup>54</sup> Wright: 199

<sup>55</sup> Kennedy and Johnson.

plots of land, which was much more plentiful in the counties and was often set aside for such use in the suburbs. These schools were also constructed in the more sprawling, utilitarian, and unadorned styles and forms that were prevalent in the mid-to-late-twentieth century and featured substantial surrounding land for parking, recreation, outbuildings, and other purposes. Between 1960 and 1975, of all of the Kentucky public school buildings that are still in use as such today, there were nearly 370 constructed, primarily in rural counties and the cities' suburbs, where populations and needs dictated.<sup>56</sup>

Conversely, the inner-city schools struggled during these initial years. While many of the schools shuttered after desegregation and disinvestment, many others were laboring to stay open and able to serve their students. In some places, such as Louisville, in an effort to further integrate schools throughout Jefferson County, busing was enacted around 1975. This method was set up to assign "home schools" to students that were on the other side of town and in neighborhoods and communities that were not their own, with the hopes of fostering more ethnic diversity than would occur through attendance to the nearby neighborhood school. However, due to the nature of the busing plan and the willingness of many white families to send their children to private schools, this plan disproportionately affected the black students. Often, the inner-city schools remained overcrowded and underfunded, especially in an era where a focus was often on the growth and expansion of a city, not necessarily the existing infrastructure and resources that were previously available.

By 1975, many of the issues that plagued Kentucky's public school system persisted, however widespread school consolidation was extensive and seeing success throughout the Commonwealth. Eventually, further strides were made when, in 1989, the Kentucky Educational Reform Act was passed, bringing with it "one of the country's most student-centered education approaches," school accountability "for student performance," an "equalizing (of) funding distribution across districts," and a bolstering of "local control and governance."<sup>57</sup> The suburbanization and subsequent white flight that occurred in the 1950s through the 1970s drastically changed the educational landscape in Kentucky; something that is visible in the built environment and that can inform how schools were built, where they were built, and how others evolved to meet the Commonwealth's growing needs.

### *The Public School Buildings of Kentucky (1800-1975)*

The earliest school buildings in Kentucky were associated with the area's first white settlers, some of which appeared before formal statehood in 1792. These school buildings were often among the first structures built in a newly settled area, consisting of single room log buildings or other utilitarian buildings which served other purposes besides providing an educational facility. These early multi-purpose buildings were soon replaced with more substantial buildings purpose-built for education. Due to the ancillary nature of these early makeshift structures, there are no known extant structures remaining today.<sup>58</sup>

The trend of constructing simple one-room log or frame school buildings continued through the early-to-mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, especially in Kentucky's rural counties. During these years, buildings of modest construction suited the local communities, as schooling was often seen as secondary to working around the house and farm and the schools were only in operation during the summer and fall months.<sup>59</sup> These buildings were additionally

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<sup>56</sup> Kentucky Department of Education, Kentucky Facilities Inventory and Classification System, electronic document, <https://education.ky.gov/districts/fac/Pages/Kentucky%20Facilities%20Inventory%20and%20Classification%20System.aspx>, 2023.

<sup>57</sup> The Kentucky General Assembly, *KERA: Where We Started, Where We've Been and Where We Can Go...* Presentation given on June 6, 2023, Electronic Document, chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/CommitteeDocuments/28/26514/6Jun2023%20-%20KERA%20Presentation.pdf>, accessed September 2024.

<sup>58</sup> For an in-depth discussion of these earliest schools, their designs, the methodologies and ideologies utilized, one should visit Chapman, James Virgil and V.O. Gilbert. *School Architecture of Kentucky*. Volume 10, Number 2. Frankfort, Kentucky: Kentucky Department of Education, 1917. This provides insight on how the construction of educational buildings in the early twentieth century was attempting to remedy those methods and styles utilized in the early days of the Commonwealth.

<sup>59</sup> Kennedy and Johnson.

widespread throughout the Commonwealth because they were utilitarian in construction and thus required very little financial funding from the communities themselves.<sup>60</sup>

By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, in rural Kentucky, log buildings and humble frame structures were phased out and replaced by frame and clapboard buildings. These were more substantial, albeit still relatively modest in their design. Kennedy and Johnson describe this phenomenon by noting that,

In the time period between 1881-1901, the number of frame one-room schools grew from 2,138 to 6,752, while log schoolhouses declined from 3,360 to 1,238 (Hartford 1977, 17). The shift in construction techniques suggests the desire to improve the quality of school environments, in order to foster better learning. During the post-Civil War era, there was increased attention given to the idea of providing a suitable learning environment that was well-lighted, warm, and easily ventilated (Hartford 1977, 16). Standards for school buildings were promoted by professional educators to improve building design including: ten square feet of space per student; a minimum of four windows; one or more fireplaces with safety flues; and a minimum height standard of ten feet from floor to ceiling (Hartford 1977, 17).<sup>61</sup>

Rural Kentucky schools progressed to the more permanent frame buildings of the mid- to late-19<sup>th</sup> century, yet, despite the fact that many of them resembled each other in form, plan, and lack of applied ornament, there were no standardized plans widely used. Instead, these schools all bore a resemblance to one another out of the desire to erect utilitarian structures on modest lots to shelter the students. In many cases, these schools were reminiscent of other community buildings, such as rural churches, insofar that they were practical, had minimal interior subdivision of rooms, and featured little-to-no architectural ornamentation, differing from churches in the absence of steeples. These school buildings were largely front-gabled structures that featured a single room, with the occasional anteroom, and were one-story tall. Moreover, the sites on which these buildings were constructed were frequently similar, in that the sites were usually chosen for a lack of utility elsewhere, meaning that they were inadequate locations for dwellings and/or agriculture. Also, in most cases, the land was donated by the community or local municipality, and often lacked room for outdoor activities. Despite the seemingly inherent shortcomings of these early school buildings, in rural Kentucky, this building type lasted into the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>62</sup>

Kentucky public schools built during the early twentieth century began to differ from their rural counterparts. The earliest public schools in cities during the nineteenth century also tended to be one-room facilities. However, as population and funding for schools grew, urban schools began to diverge from rural schools. School buildings began to be multi-level facilities constructed in brick. These large, often high-style rectangular buildings were built in centralized locations to accommodate the school-aged kids. School districts in cities had higher property tax income per square mile and they had a much larger pool of children to serve. Some of these early 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings remain, although several have been adaptively reused to serve new functions, such as housing and office space. Some key examples are the NR-listed Portland Elementary School (1853), Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School (1866), the Fifth Ward School (1854), the Dudley School City #3 (1881), and the Central Colored School (1873), the first public school for African Americans in Louisville.<sup>63</sup> In almost every case, these buildings had to be immediately and frequently altered and added to in order to continue to accommodate the continuously growing student body.

In the years shortly before and then largely after WWI, the Progressive movement and the perceived economic efficiencies of combining many small schools into one larger campus, resulted in the construction of larger

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. The information in this paragraph was largely gathered from Hartford, Ellis Ford. *The Little White Schoolhouse*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1977.

<sup>62</sup> Kennedy and Johnson.

<sup>63</sup> Portland Historic District, Portland, Jefferson County, Kentucky, National Register #80001615; Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School, Portland, Jefferson County, Kentucky, National Register #82002719; Fifth Ward School, Louisville, Jefferson County, Kentucky, National Register #78001353; South Hill Historic District, Lexington, Fayette County, Kentucky, National Register #78001323; Central Colored School, Louisville, Jefferson County, Kentucky National Register #76000901.



schools across Kentucky. These schools, whether in rural or urban settings, looked akin to 19<sup>th</sup> century schools in Kentucky's largest city, with an emphasis on grandiosity, style, and scope. Progressive era theory initially focused on regulating teacher qualifications and curricula, emphasizing improvement through the standardization of education across the Commonwealth. Those ideas also began to influence school construction.

These buildings, similar to their earlier urban counterparts, were constructed in various high-style architectural designs, evoking a historic and traditional style that was meant to display stateliness that symbolized classical education. These buildings tended to be large-scale, brick buildings with impressive and heavily ornamented facades that expanded outward more than what was allotted on the smaller urban lots of the nineteenth century. These schools were often symmetrical and, in some cases, had wings on either side of the main building, but in all cases, they featured impressive entryways, elaborate rooflines, and classical detailing. While many of these buildings have been lost over the years in favor of newer, modern consolidated schools, some still remain, such as the Athens School (1927), the Augusta School (1900), the Anchorage School (1911), Ludlow High School (1902), the Charles D. Jacob Elementary School (1912-1933), and Frankfort High School (1925).<sup>64</sup> During this same era, some rural school buildings utilized their own takes on educational architecture, employing architectural styles that were reminiscent of more fortified structures with elements of rustic architecture sprinkled in. While other Progressive Era and early Consolidation Movement schools were emblematic of classical architecture and ancient learning, these school buildings were designed to convey resiliency and to be symbolic of strongholds for knowledge and education, while still emphasizing craftsmanship and grandiosity. Two such examples of this style that remain are the Hazel Green Elementary School (1901), and the New Haven Elementary School (1920).

The large-scale buildings that were being constructed during the early decades of the twentieth century were more expansive than their predecessors. While the earlier school facilities tended to be large rectangular buildings, the schools built during this period often expanded on that form with "H" type, "U" type, "T" type, "V" type, "E" type, "L" type, and "I" type designs.<sup>65</sup> These new designs offered a way for architects, with input from educators, to accentuate learning and the newer amenities that school buildings were expected to have, such as gymnasiums, cafeterias, libraries, and auditoriums. Adding extensions to the rectangular footprint also gave greater exposure of the children to natural light and to cross ventilation possibilities, both of which health reformers advocated. The idea was for the building to foster the new emphasis placed on the quality of education and how the physical space plays an active role in the students' ability to learn. In addition to large windows, prominent design features of this era include raised basements for newer utilities and building systems, and taller ceilings.<sup>66</sup>

Rosenwald Schools and associated education-related buildings were also pervasive during this period in Kentucky public school history. These buildings did not follow a particular set of designs or even an overall consistent style, as their construction was overseen, and partially funded, by the local community. As such, these buildings differ in style, form, and layout. Many of these buildings were modest frame structures, featuring few rooms and simple construction methods. However, some communities were able to construct more elaborate school houses. In every case, these buildings were one-story tall, but the interior layout and exterior ornamentation differed by site. Three excellent examples of Rosenwald Schools that demonstrate the variety of styles employed, are the Jefferson Jacob School (1918), the Cadentown School (1923), and the Mays Lick Negro School (1920).<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Augusta Historic District, Augusta, Bracken County, Kentucky, National Register #84001385; Anchorage Historic District, Anchorage, Jefferson County, Kentucky, National Register #80001554; Charles D. Jacob Elementary School, Louisville, Jefferson County, Kentucky, National Register #12000044; South Frankfort Neighborhood Historic District, Frankfort, Franklin County, Kentucky, National Register #82002698.

<sup>65</sup> Kennedy and Johnson; Moseng, Lloyd Raymond. *Space Distribution in Junior High School Buildings*. Lexington: Master's Thesis, University of Kentucky, 1937.

<sup>66</sup> Kennedy and Johnson.

<sup>67</sup> Jefferson Jacob School, Prospect, Jefferson County, Kentucky, National Register #12000449; the Cadentown School, Lexington, Fayette County, Kentucky, National Register #06000213; the Mays Lick Negro School, Mays Lick, Mason County, Kentucky, National Register #100002160.

As America sunk into the Great Depression, school buildings throughout Kentucky took a radical shift in construction, style, and design. While the progressive era had led to the construction of many new school buildings and consolidation within many school districts, the early years of the Depression halted construction due to the sinking local tax collections. The highly stylized buildings of the earlier period were still desired, but in most cases these buildings were not economical to construct. As of 2023, no more than 40 Kentucky school buildings constructed between the years of 1929 and 1939 are still in use.<sup>68</sup> Buildings constructed during this decade were only possible through the financial boost of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal and programs like the Works Progress Administration (WPA) which gave grants to municipalities to erect public facilities.

WPA education-related construction projects primarily focused on Kentucky's rural regions, in areas where building updates, the addition of education-related facilities, or the wholesale construction of new schools was not otherwise possible. In addition to new school buildings, the WPA projects also focused on constructing gymnasiums, auditoriums, trade training facilities, and shops. Moreover, the WPA projects catered to both white and black communities, giving some semblance to the idea of equal opportunity education. Stylistically, these buildings favored popular styles of the time, such as Art Deco, while also introducing a new type of construction design, popularly referred to as "WPA Moderne."<sup>69</sup> This style was influenced by the day's modern designs, but it sought to remain as cost-effective as possible. These buildings utilized locally-sourced, readily available material in a way that parallels the construction of camps and parks by the National Park Service and Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) using natural materials to link the building to its surrounding landscape of the WPA. These buildings lacked architectural ornamentation, had traditional interior layouts, and became social anchors within the community for which they were built. While some of these buildings have been lost over time, especially after World War II when large-scale consolidation reached Kentucky's rural regions, there are several WPA-era school buildings that remain, such as the Farmers School (1938), the Burning Springs School (1930s), the Wolf County School (1937-1942), and the Big Rock School (ca. 1937).<sup>70</sup>

The country's participation in World War II further stalled new public school construction. However, following the War, the school construction was revolutionized by an era of prosperity and the so-called "baby boom." Kentucky's rural and county school districts continued to emphasize consolidation in their efforts to accommodate the tidal wave of young students. Consolidated schools allowed for a more substantial and effective school building to be constructed as districts grappled with serving a growing population. The ongoing improvement of Kentucky's road infrastructure, made it easier for busses to transport students to and from school. The US Supreme Court decision, *Brown v. Board of Education*, gave school districts new impetus to build structures to accommodate the newly desegregated student body. And within the architectural profession, ideologies emerged that prioritized creating a functional learning environment inside the school over the structure's exterior architectural expression.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Kentucky's few larger cities saw an increase in suburban construction fostered by World War soldiers using their GI Bills and the perceived tensions of the traditional city center. As African Americans campaigned for greater civil rights, urban centers began to be seen as places of racial tension and suburbs as idyllic areas without racial strife. Kentucky's cities grew away from their historic centers, which resulted in the construction of new suburban schools and a consequent neglecting of many decaying historic schools at the center of towns. In many cases, school boards set aside large plots of land for educational buildings, creating school and recreational complexes for the new suburban schools.

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<sup>68</sup> Kentucky Department of Education, Kentucky Facilities Inventory and Classification System, electronic document, <https://education.ky.gov/districts/fac/Pages/Kentucky%20Facilities%20Inventory%20and%20Classification%20System.aspx>, 2023

<sup>69</sup> Kennedy and Johnson.

<sup>70</sup> Janie-Rice Brother has done an amazing job documenting WPA schools as she comes across them while conducting aboveground cultural resource surveys in Kentucky. Her blog, [www.gardenstogables.com](http://www.gardenstogables.com), was utilized to highlight these existing buildings. These are all still extant, though current function or utilization is unknown.

The approach to new school construction in the mid-twentieth century and beyond was intentional on creating a space that fostered student learning, allowed for future physical growth, and on occupying land that facilitated the outward expansion of the facilities themselves as well as other contributing features that were a necessity to growing schools. These buildings tended to employ the “finger-plan,” which consisted of a central focal point, likely containing the main entrance and administrative areas, with wings extending outward to accommodate specific scholastic, community, and recreational needs. Moreover, these “fingers” made future expansion much easier, especially when compared to the difficulty of adding onto the turn of the century, large-scale brick Revival schools. These buildings were designed in a more modern style with an emphasis on affordability, adaptability, and efficiency.

In both the rural county mid-century schools and their suburban counterparts, one of the defining features to the new school ideologies was the existence of a plot of land large enough to accommodate the school and all associated resources. Moreover, with the increased reliance on automobile transportation, these schools needed to be constructed along major thoroughfares to allow for ease of travel for students, teachers, and public transportation. These goals were easily accomplished, as both rural regions and newly-developed suburbs had ample land that could be converted to educational use and new state and county roads were consistently being constructed or improved throughout the Commonwealth. The exterior resources that were deemed a necessary part of any school construction included ample surface-level parking spaces for teachers and, next to high schools, students, recreational space for a variety of growing school and community programming, and for sporting facilities that had become paramount to school success and identity, as well as the wellbeing of students.

These schools utilized contemporary technologies, modern styling influences, yet also relied on natural light. The sprawling buildings have become easily recognizable as maintaining a style all of their own. These schools can be seen in every city, suburb, and county in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. There have been little to no new school buildings built in the old styles since the mid-twentieth century, especially in Kentucky’s cities. Instead, with the ease of transportation, these facilities were constructed on the outskirts of the city centers in areas that were along major thoroughfares, thus making them easier to access via automobile, and they were built in areas where land was plentiful. Moreover, most school construction in Kentucky’s urban areas consist of alterations to existing buildings and the retrofitting of a school on a lot that is not conducive to that function, which often means a reduction in the available amenities that the school can offer. During a time when the construction of schools in cities was almost non-existent, these suburban and rural educational facilities reimaged the landscape of public school architecture and the nature of public education as a whole.

## **F. Associated Property Types**

An understanding of Kentucky’s public school buildings can be gained through use of reconnaissance surveys, existing historical documentation, records maintained by the Kentucky Department of Education, and a variety of other readily available desktop resources. As such, the variety of public school facilities, characterized by their location and age, can be illustrated via the available information. The existing data, coupled with reconnaissance surveys and in-depth desktop reviews, allows one to comprehend the breadth of the existing resources and to help identify the common features, styles, forms, trends and other recognizable characteristics that exist in the public school buildings across the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

The first and foremost requirement for listing in the NRHP under this Multiple Property Nomination is that the buildings must have been constructed as a public school, or education-related structure, for a public school in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. According to the 2023 update to the *Kentucky Facilities Inventory and Classification System (KFICS)*, there are a total of 1094 public school buildings in operation in Kentucky, of which, 475 were built after 1975. While that results in more than 600 schools old enough to consider under this MPDF, the total can be much higher, as any building that once served as a public school building, though no longer owned by the local school board, can be considered. Many significant buildings that fall within this Multiple Property Nomination have been preserved and adaptively reused over the years, many of which are already listed individually or as Contributing resources to a historic district. Other buildings, while having not

undergone any active rehabilitation efforts, are still functioning resources within their communities, just with different uses. In many cases, the repurposing of such buildings serves as an avenue for continued preservation of some of Kentucky's significant resources.

As established by the historic contexts above, the public schools in Kentucky did not evolve in a strictly chronological progression. Rural one-room schools were among the earliest in the state, but they continued to be constructed well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, even after they had ceased to be the ideal learning environment. At the same time, schools of a different sort were emerging in the state's major metropolitan areas to meet the varied urban needs. The one-room schools were relatively similar in style, form, and construction throughout rural Kentucky, while city school buildings, many of which were constructed simultaneously, were wholly different from their rural counterparts and, in some cases, similar to other city schools, typically reflecting national trends in school planning and design. However, the individual city buildings often differ from one another in size, form, and style.

This section is designed to assist in identifying which Property Type each public school building in Kentucky falls under. As such, the Property Types listed here are thematically broad, however this is intentional to avoid any redundancies or uncertainties around which Property Type each specific resource might fall under. For example, if the Property Types were more specific in assigning particular periods or movements of school construction, such as early consolidation movement and early urban schools, there could be ambiguities surrounding which type a particular school, such as an urban school that was built in the early years of the consolidation movement, might best fit under. Moreover, if this document separated Property Types by specific architectural styles or types of construction, then similar duplications could occur. Therefore, this Multiple Property Nomination is broad in its application of Property Types, while still highlighting the importance of various categories of schools within its statement of significance.

Each Property Type will be described and a statement of significance will be provided. This will help assign schools to the appropriate Property Type and help identify the significance of each individual resource as it exists in the larger context. Finally, each Property Type will have unique Registration Requirements associated with it. These requirements essentially act as the basis for assessing each resource's integrity and as the prescriptions on what integrity and features each resource must retain to be eligible for listing under the Multiple Property Nomination. This Registration Requirement is there to assist in quick determinations of eligibility by clearly stating what features and aspects a building must retain to meet the minimum requirements. These Registration Requirements are specific to each Property Type.

There are a total of **four** distinct Property Types discussed in this document: **One-to-Two-Room Schoolhouses**, which discusses the earliest public school buildings in the Commonwealth, **Late 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup>-Century School Buildings**, which encompasses everything from early, multi-level urban schools, the schools from the earliest adaptation of consolidation efforts, the schools and associated resources constructed by the WPA, and the resources associated with the more established Consolidation Movement, to name a few, **Rosenwald Schools**, which are unique and specifically identifiable examples that fall outside any other established Property Type, and **Post-War School Buildings**, which includes all school buildings and facilities that were constructed after WWII, during a time of mass suburbanization, wide-spread consolidation, and desegregation as well as a large-scale changing of expected school offerings, a growth in population, and technological advances, revolutionizing both ease of access as well as curriculums; a rare phenomenon that impacted school construction and growth across the Commonwealth, in densely-populated urban centers and rural counties alike. These Property Types aim to cover all manner of public school buildings constructed in Kentucky from its founding through 1975.

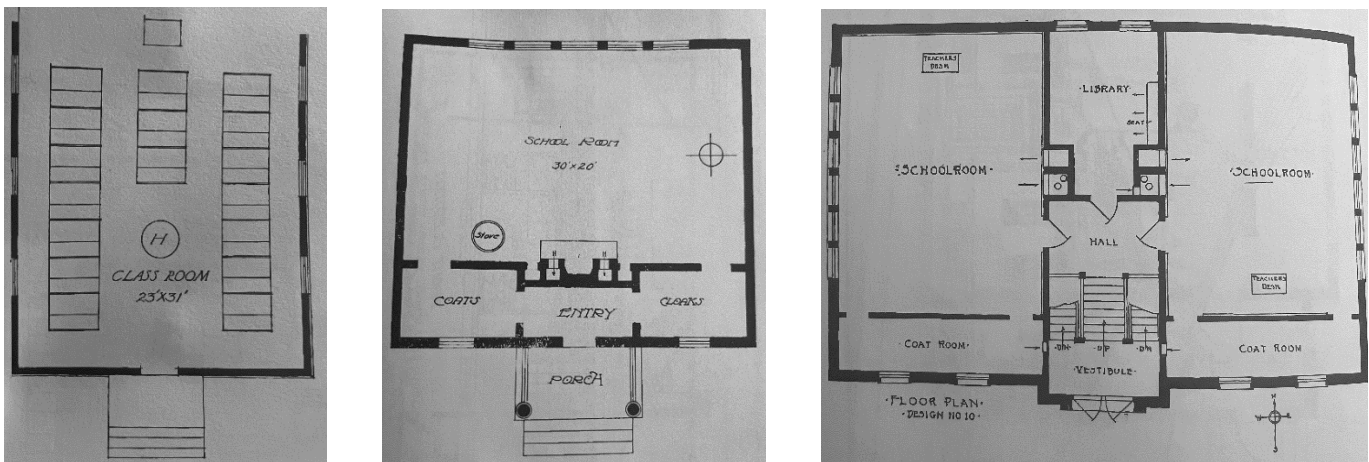
### **Property Type: One- to Two-Room Schoolhouses**

#### Property Type Description

In Kentucky, as with many other states in the country, a universal form of early one-room schoolhouses were constructed in both rural and urban areas. These earliest buildings were typically rectangular in plan with one open room, although they sometimes had anterooms for storage and/or supplies. These buildings were typically

one-story in height, had a front-gable roof, were of simple log or wood frame construction, and were oriented toward the road. Due to the level of funding and architectural investment, these buildings were inherently simple and utilitarian, lacking in stylized architectural ornamentation. They sometimes had chimneys, but some schools did not as school was not held during winter months. Fenestration tended to include a central entryway on the main façade and simple window openings along the non-street-facing facades. Larger versions of these buildings with varying designs and forms could occasionally be found.

One of the defining features of the one-room schoolhouses was the lack of ornament or architectural style. In form, these buildings were similar to one another and other one-room schoolhouses throughout the region. As such, this lack of style is actually a defining characteristic of these buildings. Alterations on such transient structures as these were not actively executed, as they may not have been intended to last a long time. When local schools were consolidated, the school board would declare these buildings surplus property. If circumstances required alteration or addition to one of these buildings, they might be expanded, as the St. Elmo School was in Christian County (built 1895, expanded 1915). It is also possible that the school board would abandon an older school and build a new one to serve the same population.



Examples of one and two-room schools in Kentucky.<sup>71</sup>

### Property Type Significance

One- to two-room schoolhouses are significant as the earliest remnants of public education in Kentucky. These resources were once situated across the Commonwealth, and the nation at large, in both rural communities and urban city centers. The utilitarian and simplistic style applied to these buildings is indicative of many aspects of these resources' history. The inherent communal nature of these buildings led to an open floor plan, similar to early community churches and other meeting places. Similarly, since these were buildings served by and built by a very localized community, their sponsors often lacked the funds to construct something more elaborate or substantial, and they were often built by non-professional builders instead of skilled tradespeople. In the early days of public education in Kentucky, these buildings were instrumental in the establishment, planning, and development of local communities as they were the only facilities created to serve the needs of the children. While across the Commonwealth these buildings were replaced as needs, technology, and an ongoing and growing consolidation movement swept through Kentucky and its public education system, the earliest schoolhouses remain significant for the legacies they began by establishing a building for education and in the roles they played in initiating a community's stability and development.

### Registration Requirements

The Registration Requirements for one-to-two-room schoolhouses in Kentucky are relatively simple. For a resource to be eligible under this Property Type, it must remain extant and identifiable as a one- to two-room

<sup>71</sup> Chapman, James Virgil and V.O. Gilbert. *School Architecture of Kentucky*. Volume 10, Number 2. Frankfort, Kentucky: Kentucky Department of Education, 1917

schoolhouse. Unlike later educational buildings, these resources were not designed to accommodate large-scale additions or alterations to facilitate a drastic change in need, offerings, or rise in population. Instead, these buildings were characteristically transitory in nature, intended to serve the immediate needs of the area. Because of this, material intactness is far less important than the resource's continued existence, as the vast majority of these have been lost due to their ancillary and utilitarian nature. Properties of this Property Type eligible for listing in the NRHP through this Multiple Property Nomination are significant under Criteria A and/or C in the areas of education and/or architecture, respectively.

### **Property Type: Late 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup>-Century School Buildings**

This Property Type encompasses a wide variety of public education buildings that could potentially be otherwise separately categorized; however, they are included in a single discussion to avoid ambiguities that may arise from both a continually changing statewide stance on public education best practices, resulting in the absence of a single established ideology dominating across the state during much of this time period, and from a differing in hypotheses surrounding the circumstances of each resource's origin. As such, this is the only Property Type that is wholly characterized by its time period rather than the physical characteristics therein. That being said, while the era is the main establishing factor, there are various physical attributes that exist therein that are instrumental in establishing a resource's inclusion and eligibility under this Property Type.

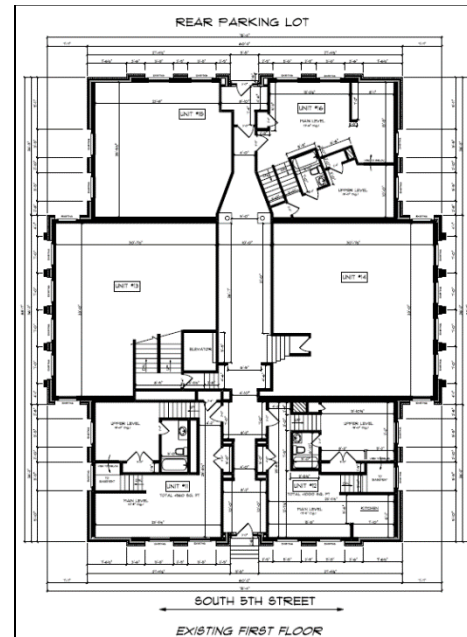
#### Property Type Description

In urban areas of Kentucky, multi-level educational facilities were being constructed as early as the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. These facilities could be supported by higher tax revenue and were needed where the student population was higher than rural situations. The earliest versions of these were primarily rectangular in plan and were two-to-three-stories in height. Most of these schools that survive are primarily brick buildings that were typically symmetrical in design with centralized entryways, clear delineations between the different levels, architectural detailing throughout, and heavily adorned cornices and rooflines. These buildings sometimes had wings built on either side. These wings had a functional purpose, of separating educational offerings into discrete spaces, but their appearance also seems the product of aesthetic carefulness.

At the time of construction, these buildings were momentous undertakings that were meant to be both utilitarian in form, but also aesthetically appealing. As such, these buildings tended to be ornamental Revival Styles, such as Classical Revival and Renaissance Revival, harkening back to a time that emphasized educational advancement. Many of these buildings were altered in a decade or two after they were constructed, sometimes altered multiple times, to keep up with the growing needs. Extra stories might be added to the building, but more frequently, additions were constructed off the side or rear of the main block. Early additions often matched the original building in massing, style, and shape while additions that occurred in the years nearing the mid-twentieth century tended to focus more on functional and economical practicality as opposed to grandiose design and style.



*Bloom Elementary School (1896) in Jefferson County.*



*The Fifth Ward School (1854) in Jefferson County exterior facades and current first-level floor plan. NR #78001353*

The school consolidation movement began around the turn of the century in Kentucky and tended to affect areas of Kentucky outside of the major urban areas, including county schools, smaller towns, and smaller suburban enclaves that existed outside of the key cities. This era of school construction was initiated in part by the improvements happening statewide to Kentucky's infrastructure, making short regional travel feasible, and by progressive voices calling for schools to offer more than the basic curriculum. After consolidating, the new school would begin to serve a larger geographic region. This era of school construction can be seen in the building of larger, more substantial buildings throughout Kentucky, and not only in the major cities, but also in the smaller towns. These buildings needed to be much more extensive in size to not only accommodate the rise in students and the additional offerings, but they were also intended to serve the public at large as a community center, thus fostering a sense of communal connections, a way to assimilate the growing immigrant population to the ideals of the American democratic system and way of life, and to highlight the importance of education. Similar to the multi-level urban schools of the late nineteenth century, these buildings were two-to-three-stories in height, often of brick construction, and stylistically impressive. They could be built with gymnasiums, auditoriums, and cafeterias within to foster a more complete educational experience and to serve the community. This era also includes the early Progressive Era in Kentucky and consolidated schools that did not fit the typical mold, as described above in Section E.

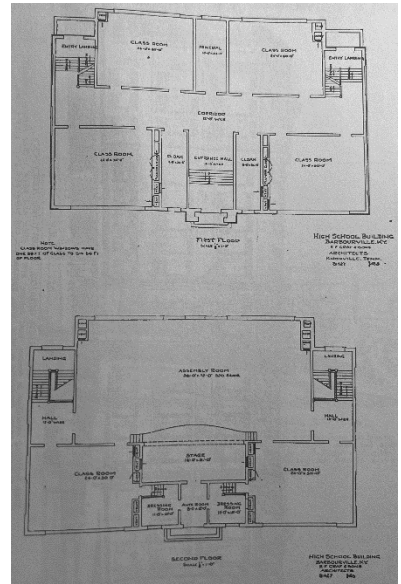
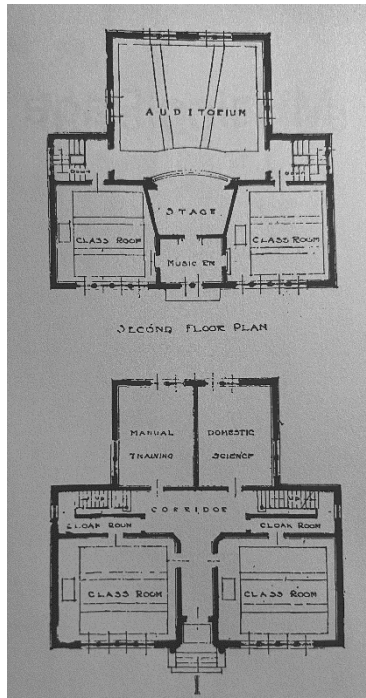
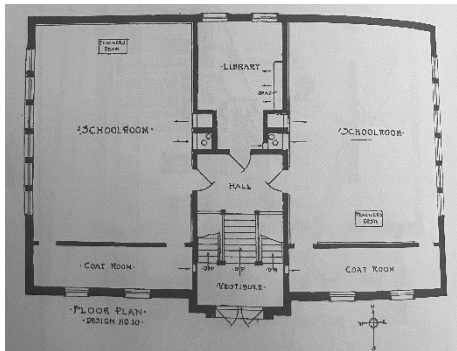
Similar to the multi-level urban schools of the late nineteenth century, schools during the early consolidation era were constructed in high styles with an importance placed on ornamentation. Many consolidated schools had rural settings, and typically were built on more generous-sized lots than early rural schools or early urban schools. They tended to be a little more sprawling than the city schools of the late nineteenth century were, whose lots did not accommodate their future growth as well. By contrast, consolidated schools tended to be constructed on larger parcels and with wings that allowed for growth and a variety of programming. These buildings tended to exhibit the styles popular for school architecture at the time of construction, such as Colonial Revival, Gothic Revival, Romanesque Revival, and Greek Revival. It was important for these buildings to not only be physically emblematic of the importance of education by conveying the symbolism of traditional and historically democratic education, but they were designed to embody a sense of a community institution. As such, in addition to the more typical embellishments that were usually prevalent in these styles and in the earlier city schools, these buildings had grand elements interwoven in their design such as cupolas, columns, parapets, and intricate stonework.

Alterations to these schools are prevalent and typically include mid-to-late century additions that were deemed necessary as the student body grew and as technologies, courses, and community needs evolved. In many cases, these alterations occurred off the rear of the building so as not to affect the grandiose nature of the entrance and

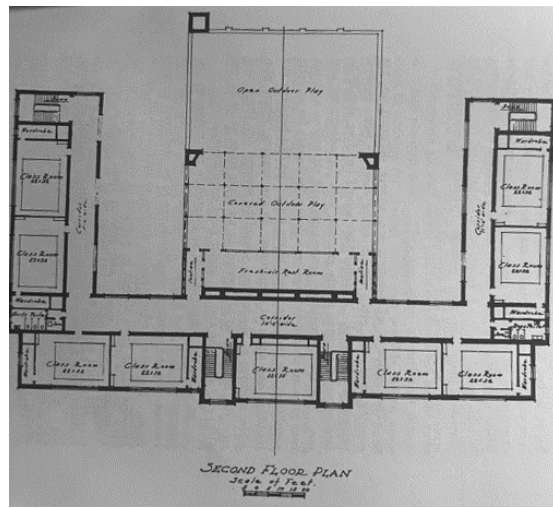
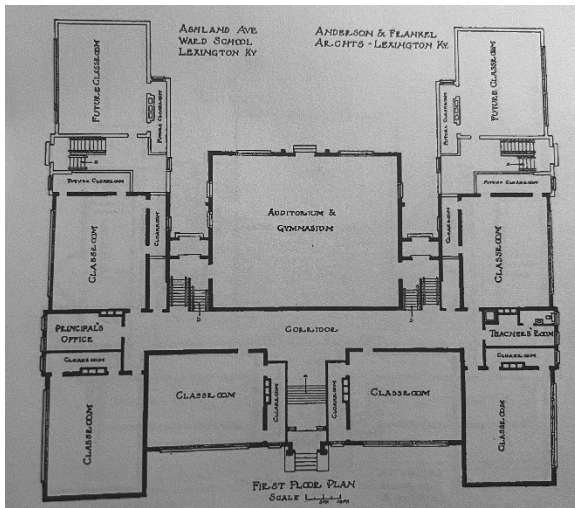
façade. Many of these buildings' main facades remain the focal point while the secondary and tertiary facades are a jumble of small and large-scale alterations and additions.



*Augusta School (1900), NR #84001385 in Bracken County, Rogers Clark Ballard School (1914) NR #83003697 in Jefferson County, and the Frankfort High School (1925), NR #82002698 in Franklin County.*







Examples of different floor plans from the Early School Consolidation Movement.<sup>72</sup>



Attucks High School (1916), NR #12001199 in Christian County and the Anchorage School (1911), NR #80001554 in Jefferson County.



New Haven Elementary School (1920) in Nelson County.

Another kind of school that falls under this Property Type are schools built by New Deal-era programs such as the WPA, which in many cases can also be considered an early consolidation school, as they served to bring up-to-date educational facilities to rural Kentucky, and tended to serve a larger area than the school it replaced. In

<sup>72</sup> Chapman, James Virgil and V.O. Gilbert. *School Architecture of Kentucky*. Volume 10, Number 2. Frankfort, Kentucky: Kentucky Department of Education, 1917

Kentucky, between 1930 and 1939, there were over 1,700 education-related building projects completed as part of the WPA.<sup>73</sup> While not all of these undertakings were new construction projects, there were scores of schools built by the WPA throughout the Commonwealth. The WPA schools, as well as their substantive additions to existing schools, were done as part of the ongoing, and newly invigorated consolidation movement. As such, they were designed to stand the test of time and to accommodate students from the surrounding region and to fill the needs that the previous one and two-room schoolhouses could no longer handle. These buildings, while larger than their predecessors, were still, in many cases, somewhat modest, as they served smaller communities. They tended to be one- to two-stories tall, sometimes with a raised foundation or a half-story on top of a one-story building. Since they were inherently associated with the consolidation movement, they often had amenities as part of their construction, such as gymnasiums and cafeterias, things that were novel for a smaller rural school. The schools spanned the gamut of form and design, as they were built to serve the needs of their respective communities and did not adhere to widespread plans or designs. Other than being built by the WPA, being substantial in size, facilitating the consolidation movement, and serving the community, the WPA school construction projects differed architecturally from one to another.

WPA-funded schools were constructed and designed in the typical Rustic Style, or in what has been coined as the WPA Moderne.<sup>74</sup> These buildings focused on utility and functionality while also fostering a sense of place. While these buildings were more modest than the lavish multi-story and large-scale consolidation buildings that occurred throughout Kentucky, their emphasis on the Rustic/Moderne Style and more elaborate construction methods were characteristic of the overall consolidation ethos: meaning that they stood out among the rural communities, offered amenities that benefited the area as a whole, and were architecturally impressive, albeit not in the high-style nature of its pre-Depression era large schools were. This WPA Style was influenced by Art Deco, a style that was largely popular at the time, but it deviated in the utilitarian nature of the construction. These WPA-funded schools sought to make the projects as affordable as possible, thus abandoning excess ornamentation and opting for local materials, hence several of these buildings being constructed of local stone. Furthermore, these buildings tended to stand out as they were built of sustainable materials and constructed by local craftsmen. While their forms and plans varied, the overall intentionality of design and style is prevalent. Most of these buildings have been minimally altered outside of routine maintenance and the replacement of some exterior materials. Due to the nature and locations of these buildings, similar to the one-room schoolhouses, when needs surpassed what the school could offer, a new, regionally consolidated school was often built, leaving the WPA-funded resources to be repurposed or potentially lost.



<sup>73</sup> Brother, Janie-Rice. "The WPA Builds: Burning Springs School, Clay County, Kentucky." In *Gardens to Gables*. February 2, 2019. Electronic Document, <https://www.gardenstogables.com/the-wpa-builds-burning-springs-school-clay-county-kentucky/>, accessed September 2024.

<sup>74</sup> Gowans, Alan. *Styles and Types of North American Architecture*. New York: Harper Collins, 1993.



*Big Rock School (1937) in Breathitt County, Burning Springs School (1930s) in Clay County, Wolfe County High School (1942) NR #13000477 in Wolfe County, all WPA schools. \*Photos courtesy of Gardens to Gables.<sup>75</sup>*

### *Education-Related Resources*

Education-related resources for schools built during this era can be diverse, ranging from purpose-built buildings that were constructed concurrently with the schools, to mid-century additions, to late-twentieth century recreational additions and the construction of sports facilities. Some of the earlier multi-story urban schools grew substantially with large-scale additions every 3-4 decades, while other schools got by with the occasional recreational additions to the property, but not necessarily the school itself. Moreover, in addition to constructing scores of schools, the WPA also funded the construction of education-related buildings, such as gymnasiums, cafeterias, auditoriums, and agricultural buildings. All of the education-related buildings, structures, sites, and resources that were built by and for one of Kentucky's public school systems are considered significant elements of their parent property, as they contributed to the educational mission of the building, including the meeting of continuing needs and growth of the schools, despite the date of addition or construction. These resources, which include sports facilities, free-standing new builds, classroom additions etc., were integral to the schools' ability to serve their respective communities and to keep up with the requirements of the time.



*Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School (1866) in Jefferson County. NR #82002719 showing a 1915 addition in the background and a 1954 new building built next to it to serve the school's growing needs.*

### Property Type Significance

Late 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup>-Century School Buildings are significant as they mark an era of fundamental change in Kentucky's public education. This era marks the point when Kentucky, both in the rural parts of the

<sup>75</sup> Brother, Janie-Rice, *Gardens to Gables*.

Commonwealth as well as the smaller towns and cities, where significant funding was being reserved for public education and when there was a noteworthy focus on ensuring that each educational facility provided the appropriate offerings. Moreover, this era marks the point when larger facilities were being constructed in order to serve a greater population. This can be seen in both the cities as well as the more rural portions of Kentucky. In the cities, urban neighborhoods were growing significantly, and with this growth came a rise in school-aged children, so large schools were built to cater to this ever-growing population. In the smaller towns and the rural parts of the Commonwealth, improvements to Kentucky's infrastructure and the increasing ease of travel led to the rise in centralized schools that could serve a greater populace. This movement is similar to the later consolidation movement that furthered these aims by constructing huge county schools, however, this era tended to still apply the earlier trends of school architecture and design to their buildings. In small towns and early peripheral municipalities, grand feats of construction were still in vogue while in the more rural parts, as seen in WPA schools as well as early consolidation schools, more permanent buildings were constructed with an emphasis placed on the longevity and survival of the school buildings, as opposed to the transitory nature of the previous one-and-two-room schoolhouses. This era shows the statewide emphasis and importance placed on education and the early trends of constructing substantial school buildings to meet growing populations and educational needs.

### Registration Requirements

Schools that meet this Property Type will be eligible for listing in the NRHP under this Multiple Property Nomination if they meet these Registration Requirements. These schools should retain a significant amount of material intactness, as one of the core features of these schools was the stylistic influences used and the permanence of the buildings' constructions, especially compared to those of the previous era. While it is typical for these buildings to have some replacement materials to remain relevant, in-use, and up to code, such as replacement windows, alterations to meet ADA requirements etc., these are seen as necessary and will not disqualify the resource from inclusion in the NRHP. Moreover, it is somewhat common for these resources to undergo large-scale additions as enrollment surpassed capacity and these sympathetic additions will meet these registration requirements. Only large-scale unsympathetic alterations and additions to the buildings, or other substantial modifications that result in the considerable loss of integrity, will nullify the eligibility of these resources under this Multiple Property Nomination. Such disqualifying changes must result in the resource's inability to convey its significance under this Property Type, such as removing all or most of the building's character defining features, large-scale unsympathetic additions that detract from the original building's significance or appearance, or the relocation of a resource. Instances of acceptable changes can be seen in the repurposing of a former school building into a new use, as long as overall integrity is not compromised, additions that allow a school to properly convey an era in Kentucky's educational history such as to accommodate newer curriculum and facility requirements, such as the addition of a cafeteria, or unsympathetic changes that occur on non-street-facing facades. Properties of this Property Type eligible for listing in the NRHP through this Multiple Property Nomination are significant under Criteria A and/or C in the areas of education and/or architecture, respectively.

### **Property Type: Rosenwald Schoolhouses**

This Property Type is separated from other Property Types with overlapping time periods because of their distinctiveness, not necessarily surrounding the styles, character, or design of the resources themselves, but instead the circumstances surrounding their establishment and construction. Rosenwald schools were built exclusively by and for African Americans throughout the American south with money provided in part from initiatives and grants established by Booker T. Washington and Julius Rosenwald and that was matched by the local community for whom the school would serve. As such, these resources are separated into a category of their own, denoting their significance and exceptional history.

### Property Type Description

Kentucky's Rosenwald Schools were constructed between the years 1917 and 1937. These schools were partially financed through assistance from the Rosenwald Fund, and by the local school board. These buildings served the African American population and in the twenty-year history, 158 schools and education-related buildings were

constructed throughout Kentucky. The appearance of these buildings differed from location to location, based on the resources made available by the two funding partners. While the buildings that emerged all tend to be rather simple—one-story buildings that highlight functionality over splendor—there were several stock plans local builders could draw upon that guided the style, form, and plan. Many of the buildings were of frame construction, however some were built of brick. Similarly, while many resembled the simple gable-front aesthetic, others were square with hipped roofs. Ultimately, the significance of these buildings lies in their existence as a Rosenwald School and the history associated with the grassroots perseverance and strong sense of community apparent in the Commonwealth’s African American population.

These buildings tended to lack overt style simply because they were designed with utility and economy in mind as opposed to the grandiose designs of the larger facilities elsewhere in the state. While they are related to one another in their purpose and simplicity, their overall forms and styles were designed individually, without any notion of continuity throughout the Commonwealth. Unfortunately, many Rosenwald schools and associated buildings have been lost over the years, particularly after desegregation of Kentucky’s public schools. As such, the extant buildings lack any substantial additions and still tend to retain the overall form and style of their construction. Some alterations are expected, as many of these buildings were of simple frame construction and were left unoccupied and neglected after racial integration of schooling occurred in a locality. Thus, replacement exterior materials are commonly found on former Rosenwald Schools that were repurposed.



*Jefferson Jacob School (1918), NR #12000449 in Jefferson County and the Mays Lick Negro School (1920), NR # 100002160 in Mason County, both Rosenwald Schools.*

### *Education-Related Resources*

Education-related resources Rosenwald Schools should also be included in this Multiple Property Documentation, as they were a key part in the Rosenwald School program and the efforts to provide education to America’s southern Black population. The Rosenwald program not only built schools, but it also aided in the construction of school-related outbuildings, such as shops, as well as teachers’ homes. Should any of these education-related resources be identified, then they will also be able to be considered for listing under this Multiple Property Documentation.

### Property Type Significance

Rosenwald Schools, and their associated buildings, represent what many believe to be the “most important initiative to advance Black education in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>76</sup> These resources are not only significant to the local communities which they served, but they are necessary to understanding African American education in Kentucky during the Jim Crow era. These schools were so instrumental, that it is estimated that “by 1928, one-third of the South’s rural Black school children and teachers were served by Rosenwald Schools.”<sup>77</sup> These schools are significant under the Areas of Significance, Education and Ethnic Heritage: African American. Moreover,

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<sup>76</sup> National Trust for Historic Preservation, “Rosenwald Schools.” Electronic Document, <https://savingplaces.org/places/rosenwald-schools#:~:text=Attending%20a%20Rosenwald%20School%20put,of%20community%20identity%20and%20aspirations.,> accessed November 2024.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

these resources are frequently threatened and only a small percentage still remain today, making identification and preservation even more important.

### Registration Requirements

In order for a Rosenwald School to be eligible for listing in the NRHP under this Multiple Property Documentation, they must simply be extant. Due to the fact that the overwhelming majority of these buildings have been lost over the years, especially following the desegregation of Kentucky's school system and the subsequent obsolescence of these buildings, identification, documentation, protection, and preservation is of the utmost importance.

### **Property Type: Post-War School Buildings**

The school buildings that fall under this Property Type, while they are seemingly categorized solely due to the era within which they were constructed, are actually characterized by the prevalent public school ideologies of the time, and not separated due to the period itself. This period exemplifies the ongoing consolidation movement, the consequences of the widespread suburbanization of Kentucky's urban areas, the active desegregation of schools across the Commonwealth, and the overall reconfiguration of educational best practices for a constantly changing social, scholastic, and technological landscape in the mid-twentieth century.

As with earlier Property Types, this categorization was in-part chosen to eliminate any ambiguities surrounding the nature of how these resources fit into the previously established model of public education in Kentucky. For instance, during this period, suburban schools on the outskirts of Kentucky's metropolitan areas were very similar in application, purpose, and design as those in the rural counties. This similarity is rooted in the overarching consolidation systems and ideologies for successful educational facilities, as they pertain to architectural design, as opposed to the drastically different circumstances of their establishment and the demographics and communities they were built to serve. As such, it is appropriate that all these resources are discussed collectively.

### Property Type Description

Following World War II, several factors influenced the construction of schools outside of Kentucky's major city centers. Kentucky school boards continued to consolidate their county's school buildings, which meant a reduction of the number of schools overall, and required students to travel greater distance to get from home to school. Fortunately, roadways were improved and a dramatic increase in the availability of automobiles and busses helped accommodate this greater travel for students. In 1952, the first year of Baby Boomers entered school, and each year after that until 1970, schools had to accommodate an increasing number of school-aged children than what was normal prior to WWII. Another new population swelled schools in the 1960s: African Americans. The Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision resulted in the desegregation of schools and construction of larger facilities. Also, new ideologies regarding the education environment, such as open classrooms and windowless buildings, affected school construction. The impact of these changes was that county and rural schools tend to be much larger and sprawling buildings on huge parcels, allowing for increased space for parking and additional land for recreational activities and the associated resources than was normal for rural schools built prior to WWII.

These schools embraced many Modernist architectural aesthetics, such as abandoning application of historical ornament and adoption of non-traditional floor plans. Buildings tended to be primarily one-to-two-stories tall with a central entryway and focal point and sprawling wings to either side. This "finger plan" was intentional, as it allowed for the school to construct additions or alterations easily, as opposed to the larger schools from the turn of the century. The architectural goal was to provide buildings that could best foster learning and with adaptability to meet future needs. In addition to the overall design of the schools, a special emphasis was placed on the materials and fenestration of this era, as educational theory of the time sought to scale the space to best suit children and their learning. As such, light was accentuated as an important feature, something that prevented the cramped feeling of the earlier buildings, so the schools of this era tend to have prominent ribbons of windows along most exterior walls.

The design of these schools, while very intentional and a part of an effort to synthesize architectural design and educational theory, were simple in plan and ornament. Materials used are consistent with the modern architectural styles, utilizing materials for their cost-effectiveness and availability, instead of for their grandiosity. The schools constructed tended to have flat-roofs, rectilinear volumes, and exterior walls covered in brick veneer or concrete with ribbons of metal windows and security doors.

One distinctive feature of late 1950s and 1960s school design was the employment of curtain wall construction. Curtain wall construction erects buildings with steel frames that give freedom to the exterior walls to be lighter materials because they do not perform a load-bearing function. Architects in the corporate world had begun to explore this form prior to WWII and it defined new downtown construction after WWII. Schools adopted it with very distinctive colorful plasticized panels, often paired with large plate glass windows in aluminum frames.

The Modernist de-emphasis in applied ornament often meant that the only non-functional addition to a school building was the modest signage displaying the school's name. Moreover, these buildings continued to stress the importance of offering multiple uses within the facilities and in maintaining that they should also serve as community centers. As such, auditoriums, cafeterias, and gymnasiums were a part of nearly every design, while ancillary spaces for wood shops and home economics classrooms were available for the schools' growing offerings. These extra-curricular spaces were often designed in a way that, should they be offered to the community after school hours, they could easily be shut off from the main part of the school.



*The Pulaski County High School (1967) in Pulaski County showing a sprawling campus with several associated resources and a school building with multiple additions; Eubank Elementary School (1956) in Pulaski County; Cub Run Elementary School (1948) in Hart County; and Livingston County Middle School (1958) in Livingston County showing the finger-like wings and additions and the gymnasium off the simple style school.*

Beginning in the 1940s and stretching for the next several decades, American cities, including those in Kentucky, began to experience a large-scale wave of suburbanization, with many residents moving to newly constructed neighborhoods on the outskirts of town. The reasoning is multi-faceted, owing to veterans returning from war and using the GI Bill to purchase homes for their growing families, the increased availability of the automobile and

ease of travel throughout the cities. Cultural reasons added to this movement away from central cities, with white people fleeing to avoid having their children schooled with blacks. This centripetal movement from city centers led to a division between urban and suburban identities. Regardless the individuals' motivations, every major population center experienced these patterns, with new neighborhoods accommodating the educational needs of the new residents. In most cases, new neighborhoods, developments, and suburbs had large plots of land designated for schools. These sites provided plenty of space for sprawling school facilities and the necessary land for the associated outbuildings, recreational facilities, and sports fields.

Following World War II, very few new schools were constructed in Kentucky's urban areas. This was during a time that educational dollars were being spent in the suburbs and on new schools along the respective cities' major thoroughfares. In the late-nineteenth-early-twentieth centuries, it made sense to build schools in the heart of the cities, among the densely packed population, but as people began to spread out, especially in bigger cities, these schools were no longer seen as ideal. Instead, new schools tended to be constructed in the newer suburbs, or in areas on the cities' outskirts, allowing them to fit the new ethos of sprawling schools on larger plots of land. Furthermore, the idea of a neighborhood school had changed by the 1950s-1960s, as desegregation and suburbanization changed how students were assigned a school, and as independent schools were intentional on remaining separate and avoiding consolidation into the many county systems.

The suburban schools, much like the rural and county schools from the same period, were constructed in the Modern Style with a heavy emphasis on the ability of the building to cater to student needs. New educational ideologies suggested that new schools needed to accommodate an ever-growing number of students, provide ample space and additional opportunities for constantly developing offerings, and that the building could help facilitate a learning environment through certain design features, such as separate wings and increased natural light, which were frequently employed. So, as a result, the suburban schools mirrored those that were constructed during the mid-twentieth century in Kentucky's counties.

These buildings were predominantly constructed in plain versions of Modernist styling, with adaptations appropriate to educational functions. The Modernist design was more concerned with the school's form and function and less with stylistic ornamentation. There are some consistencies that become part of the school design vocabulary, such as the use of ribbons of windows to bring natural light into a building, and an emphasis on horizontal lines because the physical plant sprawled on one floor rather than containing many students within a multi-level volume. The forms of these schools included "fingers" and wings branching off the central portion of the building, typically containing the entryway and administrative offices. As needs change, many of these schools have undergone alteration over the years, sometimes in ways that are consistent with the original design intent. These post-WWII buildings could be easier to remodel than were their earlier ancestors. Schools from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century were conceived as a single piece; when building needs changed, additions could be quite dissonant to the original structure. The Modernist buildings, by contrast, were designed and built in a way that later alterations could be recognizable but more compatible, even if they had a different vocabulary. These larger school complexes seemed to have been built not as a final word, but as the beginning of a conversation, one in which alterations were expected. Because these schools were either being constructed in rural Kentucky, where available real estate was abundant, or in newly-developed suburbs, they were constructed on large lots. As such, there was ample opportunity for additions, alterations, and the accompaniment of recreational facilities, outbuildings, and large surface parking lots. In suburban developments, these large lots were typically set aside for such purposes, often as part of the overall design of the suburb as a whole.





*Eastern High School (1949) in Jefferson County is a school serving one of Louisville's east-end suburbs. Note the E-Plan of the original building and the large number of additions over the years plus the Modern design of the original building.*



*Clays Mill Elementary School (1954) in Fayette County is a school serving one of Lexington's suburbs. Note the "finger-plan" in the sprawling layout and the Modern style.*



*Fort Wright Elementary School (1970) in Kenton County is a school serving one of Covington's suburbs; Highland Elementary School (1966) in Davies County is a school serving Owensboro's suburbs. Note the emphasis on linear design and bands of windows for natural light.*

### *Education-Related Resources*

Similar to the late-nineteenth-and early-twentieth-century schools, post-WWII education-related constructions can have diverse forms, ranging from purpose-built buildings constructed at the same time as the associated school. They could also take the form of a modern addition on one of the school's wings to accommodate growing needs. They could also be associated recreational and sporting facilities, and simple supplementary buildings to

meet passing needs. One of the key differences between buildings from this era as opposed to the earlier period was the emphasis placed on recreation and sports. By the mid-twentieth century, it was not only readily apparent that physical activity was a necessary adjunct to traditional education. Further, organized school sports had grown in popularity such that winning in organized sporting contests between schools would serve as a point of community pride and somehow demonstrate the overall benefits of public schooling. Because of this, recreational and sporting facilities were given a much greater emphasis on any school's property. Thus, these facilities become significant symbols of their parent schools, of a community's commitment to public education. All of the education-related buildings, structures, sites, and resources that were built by Kentucky public school systems are considered significant, as they contribute to the educational mission of the school. These resources, which include sports facilities and additions to the main building, were integral to the school's ability to serve its respective community. These facilities demonstrate an evolving vision of what local education means.



*Aerial of the Paducah Tilghman High School (1955) showing several educational additions over the years and the ca. 1960 Memorial Football Stadium.*

### Property Type Significance

Post War buildings are a significant Property Type because they not only tell the greater story of Kentucky public education as it progressed after World War II, but each school is also likely to be significant to the local county or municipality which it served. This period marks an era of a lot of change in Kentucky, and America at large, covering large-scale societal, political, and technological changes such as white flight and widespread suburbanization, desegregation of schools following *Brown v. Board of Education*, and the implementation of the Federal Highway system and expansion and improvement of infrastructure throughout the Commonwealth. Despite the varying causes for the construction of schools, they share a new ideology surrounding the style, methods, and intentions to be implemented in the design of this era of school building. These schools are physical representations of the seemingly new-age ideologies surrounding school architecture and the necessity and benefits around large-scale school consolidation. These school buildings were designed in a sprawling style with an emphasis on accommodating future additions that, by this point in Kentucky's educational history, was deemed as an eventuality instead of an uncertainty. These schools were designed to grow alongside the populations they served, whether they were county schools who served a large portion of a rural Kentucky county, or suburban schools that served the constantly growing suburban enclaves around Kentucky's largest cities. Moreover, these schools were designed in a more Modern style, emphasizing natural light and a lack of ornamentation, as well as on large lots that could accommodate frequent additions, both to the building itself and to the grounds for such necessities as parking lots and recreational facilities. This era in Kentucky's educational history is instrumental

in understanding how Kentucky evolved with changing ideologies, as many of the practices developed during this time period continue into the twenty-first century.

### Registration Requirements

The Registration Requirements for Post-War School Buildings in Kentucky focus primarily on the buildings' abilities to continue to convey the significance of this Property Type, and not with their lack of alteration or change over the years. Post-War School Buildings in Kentucky, whether they were for suburban neighborhoods or serving a rural county, were designed to evolve and change with time as needs, offerings, and uses changed. This fact alone lends the integrity discussion of these resources to focus more on how these buildings evolved and how that growth fits into the narrative in Section E, and less on how the materiality of the school has changed. These buildings inherently demonstrate little workmanship, when compared to the high-style schools of previous eras, and they were designed in styles that highlighted functionality over ornamentation, so alterations, even those to main facades, are not detrimental to the school's eligibility within this Multiple Property Nomination. For these schools to remain eligible, they must be able to convey the style in which they were designed, even if those stylistic influences have been overshadowed by alterations or additions, because these changes are deemed a character defining feature of this Property Type. Properties of this Property Type eligible for listing in the NRHP through this Multiple Property Nomination are significant under Criteria A and/or C in the areas of education and/or architecture, respectively.

## G. Geographical Data

The geographic boundaries of the Historic Public Schools of Kentucky Multiple Property Nomination are the borders of the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Moreover, this Multiple Property Documentation Form includes all public school buildings built prior to 1975.

## H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

The Historic Public Schools of Kentucky Multiple Property Nomination arose after discussions with several school districts throughout Kentucky who sought to take advantage of tax credits to repair and preserve their aging buildings. A large part of this process relied on the 2002 *Kentucky Historic Schools Survey: An Examination of the History and Condition of Kentucky's Older School Building*. This document was sponsored by the Kentucky Heritage Council (KHC), which serves as Kentucky's State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). It intended to "assist local school districts, preservationists, developers, local governments, and concerned citizens, when deciding to renovate, maintain, or reuse historic school buildings."<sup>78</sup> Moreover, this report was designed with a main objective of assisting in the nomination of school buildings in the future. This report compiled a comprehensive historic context on the history of education and a detailed analysis of historic educational buildings and their evolution over the years in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Furthermore, KHC utilized a broad, crowd-sourced survey methodology to collect data on the historic public schools throughout the state.

To further build on the information presented in the *Kentucky Historic Schools Survey*, this nomination utilized current Kentucky public school data presented in the Kentucky Facilities Inventory and Classification System (KFICS). The KFICS, most recently updated in October 2023, "allows the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) to assess their K-12 public school buildings 'physical condition and educational suitability'" by presenting, in tabular format, valuable information on each of the facilities, such as the year built, number of additions, condition assessment etc.<sup>79</sup> This list only includes facilities that are currently in use as a public school in Kentucky and that any associated outbuildings that may be on site are not listed separately. Therefore, there are no known resources listed in the KFICS that fall under the two Property Types, One- to Two-Room Schoolhouses or Rosenwald Schoolhouses because those have been decommissioned. That being said, there are 87 facilities in the KFICS that fall under the Property Type Late 19th and Early 20th-Century School Buildings and 532 facilities that fall under the Property Type Post-War School Buildings. There are a total of 475 facilities that fall outside the contextual period of this Multiple Property Nomination.

In order to attempt to further shine light on historic resources that are included in this Multiple Property Nomination, the Kentucky Heritage Council Survey Database was consulted. To do so, a query of the database for the word "school" was made and the results were sorted to remove any obvious resources that fall outside the parameters of this Multiple Property Nomination, such as religious schools or universities. These results show that of the total 1304 survey numbers listed in the database, covering 1250 historic resources (accounting for 9 resources with duplicate numbers and 45 that have been demolished), a total of 1010 are believed to fall within this Multiple Property Nomination, assuming they are still standing. Furthermore, by utilizing the historic names associated with the historic resources, it is believed that there are at least four previously identified resources that could fall within the Property Type One- to Two-Room Schoolhouses and at least 36 previously identified resources that fall within the Property Type Rosenwald Schoolhouses. Moreover, of the resources that are believed to fall within this Multiple Property Nomination, a total of 3 are a part of a National Register-Listed Complex, 4 are Pending for listing in the NRHP, 92 are Individually Listed in the NRHP, and 99 are Contributing Resources within NRHP-Listed Districts. This information is based on the limited data given in the database and includes buildings that have been demolished, education-related buildings, religious facilities, former public school buildings that have been sold, former school buildings that are now serving different purposes, university

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<sup>78</sup> Kennedy, Rachel and Cynthia Johnson, 2002.

<sup>79</sup> Kentucky Department of Education, Kentucky Facilities Inventory and Classification System, electronic document, <https://education.ky.gov/districts/fac/Pages/Kentucky%20Facilities%20Inventory%20and%20Classification%20System.aspx>, 2023.

buildinges etc. While this MPDF's author has attempted to narrow the list down to get an accurate count based on the information provided, these numbers are an educated guess based on the available information provided by the SHPO.

Lastly, this effort conducted a reconnaissance windshield survey of a select sample of public school buildings throughout Kentucky in an effort to supplement previously collected data. This survey was used to establish integrity standards, confirm property types, and document the current conditions of Kentucky's public educational historic resources. As more school districts, or individual schools, seek to be added to this Multiple Property Listing, a detailed survey will be required to document that particular resource in greater detail.

Overall, this nomination seeks to cover all extant public school buildings throughout the Commonwealth of Kentucky. It should be noted that this also includes any buildings that were originally built for use in public education but may have since changed functions. This approach and goal informed the layout of this nomination and the methodologies employed. As such, the resources identified above helped establish the breadth of the contexts, the extent of the documentation, and the organization of the property types. Finally, the scope of the survey area seems self-explanatory. Only extant public school buildings in the Commonwealth of Kentucky were considered and the state as a whole served as the defining geographical boundary of all the information presented herein.

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