The evolution of the Kansas public education system is traced from the early settlers to the present. An accompanying article examines the styles and significance of the state’s historic school buildings, five of which are being nominated to the National Register.

Coverage on pages 5-16
Governor Kathleen Sebelius announced the appointment of Jennie Chinn as executive director of the Kansas State Historical Society. “Jennie Chinn has a great deal of knowledge and experience with the Kansas Historical Society,” said Governor Sebelius. “I am so pleased to appoint someone with such strong ties who will continue to ensure the heritage and culture of Kansas will be preserved and shared for years to come.”

Chinn, Topeka, served the KSHS as director of education and outreach since 1991 and, during that time, served as interim executive director for several months. She has raised nearly half a million dollars in funds for the KSHS and more than one million dollars in additional funds in partnership with other agencies. Between 1982 and 1991, she was the state folklorist with the KSHS. She is also an adjunct instructor in the Department of English at Washburn University.

Chinn served as staff to the 125th Anniversary of Kansas Statehood Commission and the Kansas Territorial Sesquicentennial Commission. She is the author of Kansas: A Journey of Discovery, a book to be published in 2005. She received her undergraduate degree from University of California at Berkeley in 1973 and her Masters degree in folklore and mythology from University of California at Los Angeles in 1985.

Chinn replaces Mary Allman-Koernig, who resigned. Terry Marmet served as acting director since February.

After more than 43 years of public service, and 34 years at the Kansas State Historical Society, Richard (Dick) Pankratz is retiring. His last day at work is December 17.

Dick joined the KSHS staff in 1970 as the historic sites survey director; he was the agency’s first full-time staff person dedicated to the historic preservation program, established by the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act. When the Historic Preservation Department and Archeology Department were combined in 1993, Dick became the director of the Cultural Resources Division.

Dick has been the editor of Kansas Preservation since its inception. This issue marks the last of his 153 issues.

He has attended all but one of the 112 meetings of the Historic Sites Board of Review, written dozens of National Register nominations, reviewed tens of thousands of projects under state and federal laws for the protection of historic properties, and mentored many archeology and preservation professionals.

Dick is respected for his ability to recall facts about past projects and issues relating to the division and agency. We will greatly miss him and wish him the best in his retirement.
Most Kansans are likely unaware that there are approximately 60 historic districts in their state that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. These districts range in character from downtown commercial districts to residential neighborhoods. Kansas’ historic districts also include county courthouse squares, such as in Doniphan and Woodson Counties; and several historic industrial districts, such as the Warehouse and Jobbers District (Old Town) in Wichita or the Leavenworth Industrial District near downtown Leavenworth. Historic districts in Kansas also include farmsteads and ranches, such as the Pioneer Bluffs Ranch near Matfield Green or the Wheatland Farm near Chapman.

Even those who are aware of the historic districts may not know that property owners within these districts can apply for federal and/or state income tax credits to offset some of the costs of rehabilitating their buildings. A federal program for income-producing buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places or buildings contributing to register-listed districts provides a federal income tax credit equal to 20 percent of the property owner’s qualifying expenses for a qualified rehabilitation project. A similar state program provides a 25 percent state income tax credit for any register-listed building, whether it is used for a business or private residence.

The federal tax credit program was established in 1977, but only in recent years have larger numbers of Kansans begun utilizing the program. The state program, begun in 2001, has added incentives for historic properties that may or may not have qualified for the federal program in the past, thus spurring a surge in tax credit applications for both programs over the past three years. To date, over 150 projects have utilized the state tax credit program. Ninety-two of those have been in historic districts.

The most active historic district in the state is the residential neighborhood known as Old West Lawrence. The district was added to the National Register in 1972 and includes over 100 contributing properties. However, while it is the most active district for historic tax credits in Kansas, only 20 projects have come out of the district to date. A number of these projects involve multiple applications for a single residence over several years.

Other districts have high numbers of tax credit projects, but these numbers still represent a small percentage of the total number of historic buildings that could utilize these programs. The historic district along Poyntz Avenue in downtown Manhattan has produced 12 tax credit projects out of a total of 49 buildings in the district. The residential neighborhoods of Potwin Place in Topeka (with 100 contributing properties) and Westheight Manor in Kansas City (with over 300 contributing properties) have each produced 11 projects.

Other Kansas historic districts with high numbers of tax credit projects include the Downtown Lawrence Historic District, the Holliday Park Historic Districts I & II in Topeka, the East Douglas Historic District in Wichita, and the Downtown Newton Historic District II. Other districts across the state have produced a handful of tax credit projects in recent years, but the opportunity exists for thousands of other property owners to take advantage of these programs for the rehabilitation of their historic buildings.

For more information on historic districts or to find out about districts in your area, please visit the KSHS website at www.kshs.org. Through an online database at kshs.org/resource/national_register/index.php you can search for Register-listed properties and historic districts in your community. You may also call the Cultural Resources Division at (785) 272-8681 Ext. 240 or e-mail cultural_resources@kshs.org to find out more about historic districts and funding sources available to historic properties in Kansas.

This article was prepared by Katrina Klingaman, who coordinates the federal and state historic preservation tax credit programs for the Cultural Resources Division.

Correction

In the “Sources” list at the bottom of page 10 in the September-October issue of Kansas Preservation, the first entry, Anne Marvin’s “The Fertile Domain,” should have been identified as a doctoral dissertation.
The Kansas Historic Sites Board of Review held its regular quarterly board meeting on Saturday, November 6, 2004, at the Kansas History Center in Topeka.

The board welcomed one new member, Nancy Horst, the Cowley County register of deeds, who was appointed by Governor Kathleen Sebelius to replace Nancy Prawl, who retired as register of deeds in Brown County.

Three board members were reappointed: Craig Crosswhite, Jetmore; John Hoopes, Lawrence; and David Sachs, Manhattan.

The board reelected Craig Crosswhite as chairman and J. Eric Engstrom, Wichita, as vice-chairman.

Unless otherwise noted, all of the properties identified below were approved for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

Eight theaters were considered together with a multiple property context statement entitled “Historic Theaters and Opera Houses of Kansas.” The approved theaters are the Crest Theater, 1905 Lakin Avenue, Great Bend, Barton County; the Plaza Theater, 404 Neosho Street, Burlington, Coffey County; the Chief Theater, 122 East Main, Coldwater, Comanche County; the Palace Theater, 223 East 6th Street, Kinsley, Edwards County; the Northrup Theater, 116 North Main, Syracuse, Hamilton County; the Overland Theater, 7204 West 80th Street, Overland Park, Johnson County; the Midland Theater, 212-214 West 8th Street, Coffeyville, Montgomery County; and the Granada Theater, 1103-1019 Minnesota, Kansas City, Wyandotte County.

(Look for an article in an upcoming issue of Kansas Preservation.)
The Sennett and Bertha Kirk House at 145 West Fourth Avenue in Garnett, Anderson County, was approved for nomination as an example of Colonial Revival residential architecture. The house was built in 1913 from plans prepared by the firm of George P. Washburn, one of the more prominent early twentieth century Kansas architects.

The Brenner Vineyards Historic District is a discontiguous district located on the townsite of Doniphan in Doniphan County. In addition to the St. John the Baptist Church, the district includes parcels associated with the Jacob Brenner and Adam Brenner wineries. The two wineries were productive and prosperous in the second half of the nineteenth century, when this region of Doniphan County was noted for its vineyards and wine industry.

The First Congregational Church at 502 South National in Fort Scott, Bourbon County, was approved for its architectural significance as an excellent example of the Gothic Revival style. Built in 1873, the building is now owned by the Historic Preservation Association of Bourbon County.

The Staatz House, located at 1824 Wolf Road in northeastern Dickinson County, dates to 1867. The vernacular stone structure was erected by German Lutheran immigrant S. W. Staatz, who came to Dickinson County in 1856.

The Versteeg-Swisher House was constructed in 1888 by Dutch brickmaker Nicholas Versteeg at 506 South Campbell in Abilene, Dickinson County. Although the house is considered an excellent example of the Gothic Revival style, it displays stylistic influences from both the Queen Anne and the Italianate.

Located at 1335 College in Topeka, Shawnee County, the Solomon A. Alt House was built for a local minister in 1909. The building was approved for its architectural significance as a free classic example of the Queen Anne style. It is an example of the “comfortable house” category with its open, free flowing floor plan and well lit, spacious rooms.

One property, the Lincoln School at 803 Division in Atchison, Atchison County, was approved for the state register. It is the last extant public building in Atchison that was built for and served the African American community. It was also at the center of the drive to integrate the city school system without litigation.

The next review board meeting is February 26, 2005, at the Kansas History Center. Questions about the agenda should be directed to staff at (785) 272-8681 Ext. 240.
Free education for all citizens is the noble, founding premise of the American education system. A free, non-sectarian public education was a uniquely American concept dating to the Colonial period. America’s educational system as we know it took hold during the nineteenth century. The industrialization of America resulted in a shift from the agrarian foundation of the colonies to a more productive, urbanized society that recognized the importance of public education. Though not initially popular, the question of free public education had largely been settled by 1860 and the concept established as an American ideal.

The roots of free education in Kansas precede establishment of the Kansas territory. The first documented schools were located at Indian Missions in Wyandotte City in 1844 and the Kaw Mission in Council Grove in 1851. These early schools, the first documented to educate white children, were the forerunners of the territorial schools spurred by the wave of settlement resulting from passage of the 1854 Kansas Nebraska Act. Early settlers were unified in their desire for schools. Schools were established in Leavenworth and Lawrence in 1855. Local papers advocated free education for all citizens. The Historic Schools of Kansas two-part feature is based upon a Multiple Property Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places titled “Historic Public Schools of Kansas.” The first segment of the feature traces the origins of the state’s public education system. The second part, beginning on page 9, follows the evolution of the structures in which generations of Kansans have been educated – the historic public schools of Kansas.
schools in the new territory, and few issues seem to have had the level of unanimous support as the importance of a free education. The first Kansas school law was established by the first territorial legislature. Article II of the Statutes of the Territory of Kansas in 1855 provided for the establishment of common schools in each county, open free of charge to children between ages 5 and 21. The Continental Congress (1785) set aside Section No. 16 of each township for public schools of the township, and in 1848 Congress adopted the policy of granting two sections (Nos. 16 and 36) in each township to the schools of a new state. The sale of these lands, as well as other lands granted to state institutions (totaling approximately 2,900,000 acres of land statewide), provided the basis for a permanent endowment fund to support the common schools of the state.

A Solid Foundation

The territorial period laid the foundation for the education of Kansans for years to come. Although laws were refined and the educational system grew tremendously after statehood in 1861, the basic premise of free education for all residents, state aid for education, and the concept of local school districts were all rooted in the early settlement period. The State Constitution of 1861 (Article 6, Section 2) clearly established public education as a responsibility of the state. For the first twenty years of statehood, schools reflected the rapid growth of the new state.

A significant blow was felt in 1879 with the repeal of the one mill levy, established by the 1861 constitution to provide state aid for local schools. The history of the repeal is unclear. It is variously blamed on the railroads, which were major contributors to the tax fund; on an emerging sense of regionalism (poorer, sparsely inhabited districts in the west did not generate sufficient tax dollars comparable to the east); and even on the construction of the west wing of the state capitol (a one-half mill levy for the construction proved to be insufficient for its completion).

Following the 1879 repeal, Kansas schools received no state aid for nearly 60 years, except the proceeds from the permanent endowment. Local school systems experienced significant growth between 1880 and World War II despite the absence of state support. It was during this period that most of our existing historic schools were built. There were 217 school districts in 1861, the first year of statehood. The number of districts grew rapidly with the new state, reaching a peak of 9,284 in 1896. Each school typically had a separate school district. The first movement toward consolidation of school districts began before the end of the nineteenth century. The first consolidated school in Kansas was the Lorraine School in Ellsworth County (1898), followed by Burns Union School in Marion County, and Milton School in Sumner County.

The persistent challenge of consolidation is traced to two primary factors: first and foremost was the absence of legislation mandating consolidation, and second was public opinion against consolidation. The permissive nature of early consolidation legislation may have been tied to the fact that there was no state aid to schools throughout this period. Additionally, just as small towns fight today against the loss of their schools, most communities ignored attempts at consolidation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The rural school was not strictly a phenomenon of the larger cities. The Canfield County High School Act was passed by the legislature in 1886 providing for the establishment of a county high school open and free to all. The law was less than successful; ten years after its passage, only three new schools had been established. The first county high school opened in Chapman (Dickinson County) in 1889.

One of the most effective pieces of educational legislation in the first quarter of the twentieth century was the Barnes Act of 1905. The law applied to all counties not having a county high school and all cities except those cities of the first class (population of more than 15,000). The law allowed a tax levy to establish a free high school; by 1906 forty-three counties had adopted the law. The Barnes Act was repeatedly challenged by railroads, businesses, and individuals, but it was upheld. In 1890 there were 55 public high schools, and by 1918 public high schools numbered 598, including those offering one-, two-, three-, and four-year courses.

Establishment of High Schools

The demand for quality educational opportunities was strongest in the population centers. Cities set the standard by which smaller towns measured their own schools and, thus, can be credited for such emerging trends as the development of rural and community high schools after the turn of the century. The materialization of the high school was not strictly a phenomenon of the larger cities. The Canfield County High School Act was passed by the legislature in 1886 providing for the establishment of a county high school open and free to all. The law was less than successful; ten years after its passage, only three new schools had been established. The first county high school opened in Chapman (Dickinson County) in 1889.

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Brenda Spencer of Preservation Planning and Design prepared this two-part feature under contract to the Kansas State Historical Society. Spencer conducted a reconnaissance level survey of 500 historic schools, developed a National Register multiple property nomination for Historic Public Schools of Kansas, and prepared National Register nomination forms for five individual schools. The project was funded in part by the National Park Service. The second part of this feature on historic public schools explores the structural evolution of public school buildings. All photos were taken by the author unless otherwise noted.
School Law in 1923. High schools were established in cities and towns throughout the state by 1940.

Advancements in curriculum grew primarily out of the high school movement. State legislation contributed to curricula expansion with the Manual Training Act of 1903 and the Normal and Industrial Training Acts of 1909 and 1911. High schools eventually took over the normal training (preparatory training), allowing those departments to be dropped from the colleges and universities. The addition of manual training and industrial arts curricula emerged in part to combat the reputation that high schools were merely the poor man’s college. By the first decade of the twentieth century, city high schools had evolved into four-year schools, the predecessor of today’s high schools.

A next step was the emergence of junior high schools, originally designed as a means to bridge the gap between the grades and the high school, in preparation for more extensive courses of study. The first junior high school in Kansas opened in Neodesha in 1913.

Kansas was one of the last states to provide state funding for schools in the twentieth century. The State Aid Act or School Equalization Act was passed in 1937. The legislature established the state’s first sales tax, and a portion of the two-cent tax was allocated for state aid to schools, designed to aid the weaker school districts and provide funding for elementary schools. Equalization and funding for the state’s high schools came nearly twenty years later, in 1955.

**District Reorganization and Unification**

With adequate state funding finally secured for public schools, serious attention turned once again to the issue of district reorganization. Consolidation of rural school districts had been an issue for more than fifty years. Statistics for the 1938-39 school year clearly illustrate the problem: 84 percent of the total school districts in the state were one-teacher schools, and those schools were educating only 19 percent of the state’s school children. It was recognized that no amount of state aid could provide equal educational opportunities to all school children without extensive reorganization. The next twenty years brought about the elimination and reorganization of a number of districts, due in part to the emerging reliance on the automobile and the improvement of roads and highways.

Despite increased funding and attempts at equalization and reorganization, continuing problems—overlapping districts, separate treatment of elementary and high schools, and continued inequalities of rural schools compared to their city counterparts—ultimately led to the most comprehensive school legislation in the history of the state. By 1963, the
number of school districts had dropped to 2,023; but there were still eleven different types of district organization with elementary and high school districts remaining separate. Legislation was passed in 1963 dividing the entire state into school districts that provided education for grades 1-12. The state was divided into 106 units (by county with the exception of Johnson County which was divided into two units) and each was to formulate the boundaries for one or more unified districts. The act was the first legislation to unify elementary and high school districts. The Kansas Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the school district unification with a ruling in 1965. Two additional unification laws were passed in 1965 and the last of the non-unified rural school districts were disbanded by 1969. The 1963 legislation, with revisions and expansions in 1965, established the basic school district pattern that remains in use today with unified districts in charge of all schools in a given district. There are currently 304 unified school districts in the state. The same decade that saw consolidation of rural schools also brought a constitutional revision that altered the basic system of state and local education that had been in place since the territorial period. The 1966 constitutional amendment established the organizational structure for the Kansas Board of Education that remains in effect today.

**Baby-boom Expansion**

During the twentieth century, two primary forces, changes in school-age populations and economic conditions, were responsible for significant transitions in the country’s educational system. An increase in the number of school-age children following World War I resulted in a building boom of schools during the 1920s. Although school expansion was brought to a halt by the Great Depression, New Deal Era programs provided a significant boost to education across the nation through the provision of federal funds for the construction and improvement of school facilities. World War II resulted in another temporary downturn in school construction as the nation’s efforts were focused on war-time industry. The post-WWII baby boom spurred a large increase in the number of school-age children, again creating an immediate need to build additional and larger schools. The modern school facility as we know it dates to the period of school construction that began in response to the post-WWII baby boom.

**Endnotes**

2. Gulliford, 40.
5. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid, 185-186.
12. Landrum, 245.
13. Wright, 146.
17. Heim, 100.
As of the 2002-2003 school year, there were a total of 1,408 school attendance centers in the state of Kansas including 357 high schools, 42 junior high schools, 174 middle schools, and 835 elementary schools. Of these existing school facilities, 46 percent (643 schools) were built prior to 1955; 340 existing schools were built before WWII; and 303 were built in the period 1942-1955. All 105 counties have at least one existing school that was constructed before 1955, and 94 have at least one pre-WWII school. A reconnaissance survey of 500 school buildings estimated that nearly two-thirds of the schools surveyed were eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

The development of a multiple property nomination will facilitate listing public schools in Kansas on the National Register. It eases the burden of establishing the significance of individual properties by establishing the significance of historic schools as a class of buildings. Buildings are not required to currently be used as public school facilities, although existing schools are eligible for listing. The five individual schools being nominated are: Eugene Ware Elementary School in Fort Scott, Long Island School, Lyons High School, Shallow Water School, and Topeka High School. Brenda Spencer has a second contract to prepare nominations for ten additional schools.

The development of public school buildings in Kansas does not follow a clear chronological progression and, therefore, schools are best classified by their locations. Early legislation distinguished between the common schools and the city schools and among schools in cities of the first, second, and third class. Cities of the first class are those with populations over 15,000; cities of the second class have a population between 2,000 and 15,000; and cities of the third class have a population between 250 and 2,000.

The categories of country schools, town schools and city schools are used to define the property types of Kansas public school buildings. The term country school is fairly self-explanatory, referring to one- and two-room schools in rural areas. Town schools are not as clearly defined; they are generally located in third-class cities. Communities of this size generally had one school or sometimes one grade school and one high school. City schools generally are those schools in first- and second-class cities. These cities typically had a number of grade schools and at least one separate high school. Most large cities also had one or more junior high schools.
In the state’s early days, public schools were rivaled only by churches as the most important structures in cities and towns. Schools typically cost the most money, touched the most people’s lives, and were viewed as the institution that perpetuated civilized society. School buildings were a testament to a community’s commitment to education. Early settlers located their school buildings prominently on hills or near roads or railroads to attract new residents with these symbols of prosperity and stability.

The design of Kansas’ schools, like other building types, followed architectural developments across the nation. Ben Graves, author of the book *School Ways – The Planning and Design of America’s Schools*, notes that despite local autonomy in school matters, schools are startling in their nationwide similarity. The earliest public school buildings in Kansas included both one-room country schoolhouses and large city schools. The design of rural schools was heavily influenced by available materials and early settlers, while schools in the populated areas tended to reflect traditional design influences.

Kansas experienced its first major building boom in the 1880s, a time that saw the construction of numerous school buildings. Prominent early Kansas architects included John G. Haskell of Lawrence, James C. Holland of Topeka, George P. Washburn of Ottawa, William T. Proudfoot and George W. Bird of Wichita. In the first quarter of the twentieth century, Charles Shaver of Salina, Arthur R. Mann of Hutchinson, Henry W. Brinkman of Emporia, Thomas W. Williamson of Topeka, and Lorentz Schmidt of Wichita joined the ranks of established architects in the state. David Sachs and George Ehrlich’s *Guide to Kansas Architecture* notes that local architects tended to design a variety of building types in their hometowns with work focused on a specific building type spread across a wider geographic area.

All of these prominent Kansas architects designed public school buildings; some did so primarily in their hometowns, but others like Thomas Williamson and Arthur Mann built careers on the design of school facilities.

Public school design was influenced by a variety of factors, including locale, available materials, economics, federal and state legislation, educational advancements, architectural and educational journals, and design standards, as well as established architectural trends. Guidebooks for school design and the later school building standards had an impact on all types of public school buildings from country schools to the largest city schools. These standards illustrate the emergence of common building types and the simultaneous evolution of the various types of school buildings: country schools in rural areas, and grade and high schools in towns and cities.

**Early Kansas Schools (Pre-1900)**

The country or rural school was also called the one- or two-room schoolhouse. The simple form of the country school reflected its function. Even before the standardization period, a common plan emerged for the country school and is still distinguishable in the remaining schoolhouses that dot the landscape today. This basic form is attributed to a combination of factors, including the early guidebooks and the influence of the early settlers. The basic plan was a simple rectangular form, typically with three windows on each side and a single door (sometimes flanked by windows) on the front. A brick or stone chimney was in the center or rear of a
Even before the standardization period, a common plan emerged for the country school and is still distinguishable in the remaining schoolhouses that dot the landscape today.

gable roof, depending on the location of the stove inside. The front entrance was often covered by a small hip or gable roof extension, typically adorned with a cupola or bell tower. Exterior style varied with local taste. The most common architectural stylistic influences in Kansas included Gothic Revival, Queen Anne, and Romanesque. Stylistic influences were manifested in the details of windows, doors, and the bell tower. Although frame schoolhouses were most common, stone and brick schoolhouses were built throughout the state. Shortly after statehood, the Kansas Department of Public Instruction offered suggestions on schoolhouse design.

One of the earliest documented architect-designed schoolhouses in Kansas was constructed near Lawrence in the late 1870s (later known as Sunnyside Community Center). The design, by Topeka architects Haskell and Wood, was published in the 1879-80 Second Biennial Report of the State Superintendent.

The first schools in most towns were typical one-room schoolhouses, much like the country schools. As small communities developed, the number of local children was the primary impetus for growth beyond the one-room schoolhouse. Most communities with “town schools” would now be categorized as rural, but in the early years of statehood there was a clear distinction between rural areas and small towns. The towns, and town schools, were seen as a threat to the agrarian way of life. Many farmers saw little need for any schooling beyond “the three R’s.” The emergence of the town graded school further distinguished small communities from rural areas.

The first city schools were constructed simultaneously with the first country schoolhouses. Lawrence was the location of the first graded school and the first high school in the state of Kansas, both in 1857. The first city schools were constructed in response to rapid growth. The early graded schools in cities were typically four-, six-, or eight-room structures, often with rectangular and central-tower plans. Greek Revival, Italianate, and Romanesque were the prominent architectural styles among early city schools.
The Progressive Era (1900-1930)

The Progressive Era is typically defined as the period from 1900–1920, but in Kansas the influence extended to the Depression. It was in this period that the standardization movement emerged, significantly affecting numerous aspects of the education system. The standardization movement is defined by an attempt to equalize teacher qualifications, textbooks, and schools. Its influence was seen in all schools, regardless of locale.

The evolution of the country schoolhouse resulted from advancements in educational philosophies. As city schools became the norm in population centers, the Progressive Movement advocated standardization of school instruction. This effort compared the country school to its city counterparts and led to the standardization of schoolhouses as well as school instruction. The Progressive Era also resulted in the appearance of specialized study (science, home economics, agricultural, industrial, and manual training), which influenced the design of schools in cities and towns.

A significant number of the existing town schools were constructed in the 1920s. Leading architects and educators developed school design books and standard plans that resulted in a consistent image of town schools, as was already the case with country schools. Although the standard plans did accommodate variations in exterior ornamentation, there was far less variation in the appearance of the town schools than seen in the city schools of the same period. The typical floor plans were T-, I-, L-, or U-shaped with a double-loaded corridor and central gymnasium. Despite advancements in curriculum resulting from the standardization movements, the designs of town schools were relatively simple with classrooms and common spaces designed to be flexible. For example, most gymnasiums were designed with bleachers on two or three sides and a stage on one end so they could function as both gym and auditorium. The gym also functioned as the cafeteria in many of these schools. Town schools were generally designed with standard classrooms, with the exception of home economics and art. Vocational and industrial training classrooms (and sometimes home economics) were often added as separate buildings in the rear of the school or across the street.

The typical town schools were symmetrical in design with a central entrance that was usually the architectural focal point of the building. Each school was typically two stories with a basement and a flat or low-pitched roof with a parapet. Stylistically, these buildings are
classified as Progressive Era or Commercial Style. Most are red brick. The most common stylistic influence in Kansas was Collegiate Gothic; other popular influences included Classical, Colonial and Mission/Spanish Revivals, and Beaux Arts.

The city schools tended to embody the planning principles of the Progressive Era, but were generally more elaborate in their ornamentation. The first two decades of the twentieth century brought a transition in stylistic influences. Classical references were common with Classical Revival, Beaux Arts, Colonial, and Mission/Spanish Revival styles dominant among the designs. By the end of World War I, Collegiate Gothic emerged as a dominant style for city schools. This period resulted in the first attempts to develop an architectural expression for schools. Monumentalism became the norm as growing communities designed schools as testaments to their devotion to education.

In city schools, plans reflected the expanded functions of schools; H-, T-, I-, and U-shaped plans became the norm and double-loaded corridors emerged. The buildings typically featured symmetrical facades with grand entrances and ornate foyers or lobbies. The flat or low-pitched roofs had ornate parapets. The gymnasium, auditorium, and cafeteria became common features in city schools. Gymnasiums and auditoriums were located for ease of public access and many schools were built with two gymnasiums, one for boys and one for girls. This period in school design is recognized for the development of the academic classroom and an emphasis on safety and sanitation.

The Progressive Movement influenced the design of grade schools and high schools alike, and led to the emergence of the junior high school and the addition of kindergarten to the grade school curriculum. There were few obvious distinctions among the appearance of grade school, junior high, and high school buildings, although city high schools did tend to be designed on a grander scale. City high schools were usually centrally located because they served an entire city, while grade schools and junior high schools were located to...
serve neighborhoods. Most city grade schools were designed with both auditoriums and gymnasiums. Kindergarten rooms were frequently distinguished by special treatments or forms and were embellished with interior features such as fireplaces and tiled drinking fountains. Grade schools typically had standard classrooms, seldom customized for specific use with the exception of art and music rooms. Junior high schools were essentially smaller versions of city high schools with classrooms designed to reflect specialized uses.

New Deal Era (1930-WWII)

Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal established the Work Progress Agency (WPA) and the Public Works Administration (PWA) to increase employment in the wake of the Depression, resulting in one of the greatest periods of school construction. The WPA (later Works Projects Administration) and the PWA (originally the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works) had a significant and unprecedented impact on public schools across the nation. Educational buildings represented the majority of projects funded through both programs. The New Deal programs funded improvements to public schools as well as the construction of new schools and school facilities, raising the expenditure level to that of the mid-1920s. Schools constructed between the Depression and WWII reflected a change in architectural styles. Just as the Progressive Era introduced the modern high school in terms of school facilities, the New Deal Era introduced modern architectural styles. The Moderne and Art Deco styles emerged as the dominant influences during this period. These schools are considered the first “modern” school buildings, more simplistic in form with flat roofs and limited ornamentation. Although the New Deal Era is credited with the emergence of the modern movement in design of schools, some schools designed through WPA and PWA programs maintained the architectural tenets of the Progressive Era. Varying architectural references included Collegiate Gothic, Colonial Revival, and Mission/Spanish Revival.

Where city schools often fully embraced these emerging new styles, town schools were often Progressive Era structures with Art Deco or Moderne stylistic details. Town high schools gained popularity toward the end of the Progressive Era, and many were constructed through the PWA and WPA programs in the 1930s. The county, rural, and community high schools varied stylistically from the typical town graded school, reflecting a transition from the Progressive Era to the Modern Era. The plans reflected the Progressive Era doctrine, many including specialized spaces like science laboratories and separate gymnasiums and auditoriums. These high schools typically had flat roofs with ornamentation limited to entrances and sometimes simple cornice bands.

The Modern School (WWI-Present)

Just as the Industrial Revolution led to the emergence of the public education system as a national priority and the Progressive Era led to the standardization of school design, the years following WWII are the period in which our modern education system took form. The post-war baby boom dictated prompt construction of larger schools. Significant new dollars were invested in school construction, but excessive ornament was seen as a waste of money. Following WWII, school design focused again on plan forms rather than architectural style; new varieties included finger or wing plans, open and flexible plans, and campus plans with multiple connected buildings. School design continued to be curriculum-based, but rather than public monuments the schools became more community-centered.

In the 1950s and 1960s, city schools began to be located near residential neighborhoods rather than in city centers. The growth in city schools was due primarily to the post-war baby boom, but it also reflected increased student populations from annexation and consolidation. The advent of suburban schools brought not only changes in locations of schools, but also drastic changes in their appearance. New construction materials and techniques provided inexpensive, lightweight construction that featured wide flexibility for interior spaces. Sprawling...
one-story facilities became the norm. This new style of buildings dictated larger sites; therefore, most new schools were built on the outskirts of cities or in rural areas, a pattern that remains the norm. Today’s schools continue to be distinguished not by architectural style but by plan designs. This design trend is found in all types of schools: elementary, junior high, and high schools in both towns and cities.

As population shifted from towns to the larger cities, town schools succumbed to consolidation pressures. With the mandatory consolidation of the 1960s, many town schools were closed. In some towns, the consolidation movement led to one town retaining its elementary school, while high school or even junior high school students attended schools in neighboring towns. Ironically, the modern school consolidation movement resulted in a return to rural schools. Many consolidated schools were built in rural areas that were centrally located among several small communities. Like suburban city schools, the modern consolidated rural schools generally lack

Topeka High School (1930) is an outstanding example of the Collegiate Gothic, which emerged as a dominant style among public schools following WWI. The school was designed by Thomas W. Williamson of Topeka. Widely recognized for its grand tower, the school is an early example of the modern school plan with separate gymnasium, auditorium, and cafeteria, each with its own entrance, and specialized classrooms clustered by use. (Plan courtesy of the Topeka High Historical Society)
architectural distinction. In some cases, when new consolidated high schools have been built, former rural high schools and graded schools continue to be used as elementary or junior high schools. Other new consolidated rural schools serve all grades at a centrally-located site, although often in separate buildings or wings.

Because schools are an integral part of community life, the loss of schools through consolidation results in a severe economic and psychological blow to communities. Declining populations are the primary force behind consolidation; however, the desire for modern school facilities ranks high among proponents of construction of new rural consolidated schools. As populations continue to decline and to shift, many city and town schools that survived the consolidation of the 1960s are now facing closure.

While abandoned city schools are often torn down or sold for adaptive use, many of the abandoned town schools stand vacant or are used for storage; most are in various stages of disrepair. There are, however, several town schools being converted to private uses as residential apartments, churches or church schools, and commercial structures. A recent trend is the use of Internet auction sites to market closed schools. At least two schools located in small Kansas towns (Bazine in Ness County and McCracken in Rush County) have been sold to eastern companies who plan to use the buildings for distribution centers.

The project was designed to facilitate listing of historic schools on the National Register of Historic Places. Listing makes properties eligible for financial incentives potentially beneficial to existing public schools and vacated structures alike.

Endnotes
1 Statistics, including building dates of construction for all schools in the state by district and building, are provided in the Principal’s Building Report, available on-line through the Kansas State Department of Education’s web site.
5 Ibid, 22.
6 Gulliford, 169.
As an intern in the archeology lab at the Kansas State Historical Society, I had the opportunity to process a box of artifacts from the 1970 archeological investigation at the Fort Hays bakery. Few have looked at these artifacts since they were found 34 years ago. It was like being given a treasure box; there was an exciting prospect of what I might discover lurking at the bottom of the box.

I anticipated that the artifacts would give me clues as to what the bakery was like; however, the artifacts were things one would never think belonged in a bakery. This box contained children’s shoe soles, beautiful pieces of earthenware dishes, window glass, blue glass from a medicine or poison bottle, champagne and beer bottle fragments, two halves of a glass toiletry bottle, military insignia, bullet cartridges, and a variety of bones. Why were these items in a bakery? There were a few items in the box that one would expect to find in a bakery: a piece of a cook stove, a soda water bottle, and a weight from a scale. After cleaning and cataloguing the various, seemingly random objects, I was confused by what most of these items were doing in the bakery. This confusion led me to ask what role the bakery played in the soldiers’ lives.

Fort Hays was founded as Fort Fletcher on October 11, 1865, but its name was changed to Fort Hays in 1866. The post was moved to its present location on June 23, 1867. The fort was established to protect settlers from American Indians and vice versa. When the railroad was established near Fort Hays in 1867, it brought supplies such as lumber, hardware, doors, windows, and plaster from the eastern United States. The soldiers distributed the supplies to other forts southwest of the railroad that could not get these supplies easily.

When the soldiers were not protecting settlers or transporting supplies, their daily lives were rather monotonous. After reveille in the morning, they performed regimental formation and battalion drills and participated in target practice. Two or three soldiers were picked each day for guard duty. Every soldier was assigned a “civilian” job like chopping wood, gardening, or baking bread to help the fort run smoothly without hiring extra civilian workers. During their small amount of free time, “Books, newspapers and occasional letters, were a pleasing reserve,” wrote De B. Randolph Keim, author of Sheridan’s Troopers on the Border: A Winter Campaign on the Plains.

The bakery, according to the report of the War Department Surgeon General’s Office of 1868-1869, “is a stockade building, plastered with mud, roofed with shingles, and contains a well-constructed brick oven.” A coal pit was uncovered on the south side of the structure during the 1970 excavation. Inside the bakery, along with the large brick oven, were a dripping pan and dough troughs. The bakery was controlled by the Fort Hays Council of Administration. The council’s duty was to keep records of post funds, and the bakery was a main source of income. The army ration provided a set amount of flour for each soldier. The flour was turned over to the bakery and baked into bread, which was sold to the companies at prices fixed by the council. The bakery saved the fort $305 a year.

Each company was in charge of providing food to its own soldiers. Soldiers ate at their company mess hall behind their barracks. Food was prepared by soldiers selected from within the company without regard to previous cooking or baking experience. Because bread was made by different soldiers daily, it varied in flavor and texture.
Often the flour had weevils in it before it was used. An officer wrote in January 1885: “The bread has been uneven in quality, sometimes good and other times poor, apparently insufficiently baked and without taste or flavor. A Board of Officers on this bread, its investigation lasting over several days so as to get at different bakings in succession, is recommended to be convened.” Apparently, he did not enjoy the surprise of the bread’s differing tastes from day to day.

Officers usually had their own cooks, so they did not have to eat the fort’s bakery bread often, although when scouting with soldiers away from the fort, they had to pack bakery bread for provisions. General George Armstrong Custer, while encamped near the fort in 1867, 1869, and 1870, affirmed that some bread issued to his regiment in 1867 had been baked and boxed in 1861! During this time, some people believed that stale bread was better for digestion than fresh bread. Clearly, General Custer did not appreciate the benefits of stale bread.

Soldiers enjoyed having dinner away from the fort, as the post food was dull and repetitive. Mrs. G.A. Custer wrote, “Our young officers sometimes came home at night from the post, after an evening’s hospitality, full of boyish delight, for a pie or cake baked on purpose for them and almost ludicrously grateful for the ministration to appetites long unused to dainty gratification.” Soldiers ate hash, stew, bakery bread, salt pork, and beans. Fortunately, their rations also included coffee and sugar.

During peaceful, settled times, officers’ families lived on the post, and it was not unusual for friends and relatives to visit often for long periods of time. The children’s shoe soles and the two halves of the toiletry bottle that might have contained perfume undoubtedly came from the officers’ families.

The soldiers were also fortunate enough to be located close to Hays City, which allowed them to escape garrison life. Soldiers would go to Hays City to drink and gamble in the saloons. Because the government provided their shelter and meals, soldiers could spend their pay frivolously on drinking, gambling, and other entertainment. Drinking at the fort was prevalent. The post chaplain in 1879 stated that drunkenness was a frequent occurrence, which accounts for the many beer bottle fragments and perhaps the champagne bottle fragments.

In December of 1875, the bakery was destroyed by fire. The fort created a temporary replacement in another building. Military officials made no other efforts to construct a separate building for a permanent bakery site until 1877, when a stone bakery was built.

None of the artifacts I processed showed any evidence of having gone through a fire, so they must have been put in the new bakery after it was built in 1877. Why would people leave shoe soles, bullet cartridges, bones, and other random items in a bakery that was being used? The logical explanation is that the site was not being used as a bakery but as a dump a few months or more before the fort was abandoned in 1889. Therefore, the bakery was chosen for a dump site because it was not near any central fort activity.

Recommended for Additional Reading:
KSHS Offers E-newsletter

The Kansas State Historical Society recently introduced a monthly electronic newsletter containing information, special announcements, offers, and coupons. New subscribers will be eligible to win a KSHS, Inc., household membership. 

An on-line form can be found at www.kshs.org. After submission, subscribers will receive an electronic acknowledgement that they have been added to the list. This acknowledgment also will contain information about how to confirm and how to unsubscribe. 

KSHS, Inc., household/family memberships are valued at $50 for a one-year subscription. Household members receive four issues of Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains; four issues of Kansas Heritage, the popular history magazine; and five issues of Kansas Kaleidoscope, A Fun Magazine for Kids. In addition, members receive free admission to the Kansas Museum of History and the Kansas State Historic Sites, a 20 percent discount on Museum Store purchases, and invitations to special openings and meetings. 

Zollner Omitted

Sharp-eyed readers may have noted that one name was not included on the list of Cultural Resources Division staff printed on page 23 of the September-October issue of Kansas Preservation. Inadvertently omitted was Patrick Zollner, architectural historian. His telephone number is (785) 272-8681 Ext. 257, and his e-mail address is pzollner@kshs.org. Patrick is the contact for grant-funded National Register nominations and surveys and also carries out various project reviews involving historic resources.