**National Register of Historic Places Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. **Name of Property**

   **Historic name**  Whittier School

   **Other names/site number**  Whittier Elementary School; KHRI #209-2820-01763

   **Name of related Multiple Property Listing**  Historic Public Schools of Kansas

2. **Location**

   **Street & number**  290 South 10th Street  N/A  not for publication

   **City or town**  Kansas City  N/A  vicinity

   **State**  Kansas  Code  KS  County Wyandotte  Code 209  Zip code  66102

3. **State/Federal Agency Certification**

   As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

   I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

   In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

   _national             statewide         x    local_

   Applicable National Register Criteria:  x    A          B      x    C      ___D

   **Signature of certifying official/Title**  Patrick Zollner, Deputy SHPO  Date

   **Kansas State Historical Society**

   **State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government**

   In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

   **Signature of commenting official**  Date

   **Title**  State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. **National Park Service Certification**

   I hereby certify that this property is:

   entered in the National Register  determined eligible for the National Register

   determined not eligible for the National Register  removed from the National Register

   other (explain:)

   **Signature of the Keeper**  Date of Action
5. Classification

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Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

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7. Description

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<td></td>
<td>roof: Asphalt</td>
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<td>other: Terra Cotta</td>
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Narrative Description

Summary

Whittier School, at 290 South 10th Street in Kansas City, Wyandotte County, Kansas, was constructed between 1919 and 1922. It is a three-story building with a rectangular footprint, a flat roof behind parapet, brick walls, quarry-faced stone foundation, and a concrete structural system. Short wings extend for one bay on the east and west walls. Restrained Classical Revival styling includes dressed stone bands above masonry openings, engaged brick pilasters topped with terra cotta capitals, and a projecting terra cotta cornice. The building occupies the center of a relatively flat concrete-paved lot. Quarry-faced limestone walls surround the site; the north and south walls act as retaining walls due to the steep slope of the surrounding land from north to south. The nominated property contains the school, the land it sits on, and the limestone walls that surround the site. On the interior, double-loaded corridors arrange the second and third floors. Classrooms are located on both sides of the corridors. The east and west wings contain entrance vestibules on the first floor, and storage areas and restrooms on the upper floors. The first floor sits partially below grade and contains a mix of utility and mechanical spaces along with restrooms and classrooms.

Whittier School retains historic integrity. Historic windows are intact and covered with plywood in most masonry openings. A loading bay opening has been added to the secondary north wall. The interior has seen more changes. New openings have been punched through corridor walls to classrooms on the second and third floors, along with new punched openings between classrooms. However, the configuration of the corridors, classrooms, and cloakrooms generally remains intact. Nearly all historic classroom finishes including doors, wood flooring, baseboards, chair rails, and chalkboards have been removed. Despite these alterations, Whittier School conveys its historic use as a City Graded School property subtype from the 1920s, as defined in the “Historic Public Schools of Kansas” Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF).¹

Elaboration

SETTING AND SITE

Whittier School is located approximately one and one-half miles southwest of downtown Kansas City, Kansas. It is less than one-half mile north of Interstate 70 (Figure 1). The surrounding neighborhood contains modest single-family houses that were generally constructed around the turn of the twentieth century or slightly later, along with a small modern industrial area and warehouse to the north. The east edge of the site is bound by South 10th Street, a major north-south throughfare that connects the former town of Armourdale to Kansas City, Kansas. Directly across 10th Street to the east is Central Middle School, which opened in the early 1900s. The 1990s Whittier School, which replaced the nominated school, is located on the same large parcel as Central Middle School (Figure 2).

The historic Whittier School occupies the center of a relatively flat concrete-paved rectangular site at the northwest corner of the intersection of South 10th Street and Gilmore Avenue. The land around the site slopes significantly down from north to south. Level terraces, supported by limestone retaining walls, mitigate the topographical change within the site itself. A concrete sidewalk separates the parcel from South 10th Street to the east and a grass verge separates it from Gilmore Avenue to the south. Property lines form the north boundary. A chain-link fence atop a retaining wall defines this boundary. A retaining wall forms the west property boundary. A vacant lot to the west of this wall is part of the current

parcel but was not historically associated with Whittier School; it is not included in the boundaries of this nomination (Figure 3).

**LIMESTONE WALL SYSTEM (CA. 1920) – CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURE**

Quarry-faced limestone walls line the entire site. The walls were built before the school as part of the site work done to prepare for construction. Due to their size, the wall system is counted as a separate, contributing structure in this nomination. Each wall section is capped with a dressed stone coping. The height of the walls varies in height according to the grade of the land.

The tall north section acts as a retaining wall along the north boundary (Photo 10). The wall is lower at the east and west ends and steps up as it moves towards the center. It is approximately twelve feet tall at its highest point and about three feet at its lowest. The east section fronts South 10th Street. Regular step-downs keep the height uniform and in-line with the grade of the street as it slopes down from north to south. The wall begins south of a vehicular entrance at the northeast corner of the site and continues south for about fifty feet to a pedestrian entrance where it turns west to form the south retaining wall of the north terrace. This wall joins the north wall of the school building; it continues on the west side of the school to the west boundary. Non-historic painted tube metal railing sits on top of this section. The east boundary wall resumes south of the pedestrian opening and continues until it reaches the southeast corner of the site and turns west. The south wall section fronts Gilmore Avenue. Its shortest point is at the southeast corner where it meets the east section. From there, the wall continues west, and steps down with the grade of the street. At the center of the south wall, a dressed limestone stair leads up from a concrete pad in front of Gilmore Avenue to the flat south terrace in front of the school (Photo 9). The south wall turns north at the southwest corner of the nominated site. The extent of this wall is unknown due to the grade of the neighboring lot. The stone retaining wall has seen few alterations since it was completed. Non-historic chain link fencing sits on top of the east, south, and west sections. This is a minimal addition that does not negatively impact its integrity.


A terraced, concrete-paved lot surrounds Whittier School. Given its size, the Parking Lot/Playground site is considered a separate, contributing structure in this nomination. It extends from the footprint of the school out to the boundaries of the site on all sides. The lot is generally flat but slopes gently to the southwest. The north third of the lot sits a few feet above the south two thirds. The current configuration of the lot retains its historic tiered arrangement, along with the stone retaining wall that divides the tiers (Photos 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, & 10).

Historically, most of the site was covered with grass. Aerial images show paved walkways extending out from the southeast and southwest corners of the school before meeting at the edge of the stair in the south wall. A second paved walkway extended west to the school from the pedestrian opening in the east wall. This configuration was in place until at least 1970. The entire site was paved with concrete at an unknown date between 1970 and 1983. At that time, the upper terrace functioned as a parking lot, and the lower terrace was a playground. The entire site functioned as a playground in 1922.

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WHITTIER SCHOOL BUILDING

EXTERIOR

Whittier School is a three-story brick building with a flat roof behind parapet, a stone foundation, and a reinforced concrete structural system. A quarry-faced stone water table and dressed stone beltcourse clad the first-story walls (Photo 1). Bands of dressed stone rest at the top of the second and third story window openings. Narrow three-story wings extend for one bay from the center of the east and west walls. The wings are a few feet shorter than the main building and are clad with identical elements. Each wing has an entrance in the north and south walls. Terra cotta coping caps the parapets, and a projecting terra cotta cornice with an egg-and-dart motif decorates the top of each wall. Engaged pilasters define most bays. Other restrained Classical Revival elements include symmetrical openings, terra cotta finials aligned with the pilasters above the cornice, and terra cotta hoods above all historic entrance openings. Dressed stone sills span all masonry openings. Historic wood windows fill the masonry openings on most walls behind plywood.

Primary (South) Elevation

The symmetrical facade of the Whittier School faces south towards Gilmore Avenue (Photo 1). Engaged pilasters divide this wall into three bays. The pilasters reach up from the stone foundation to the third story before terminating just above the third story windows. Each has a terra cotta cap. A terra cotta sign above the center bay reads “WHITTIER SCHOOL” (Photo 2). Round terra cotta inserts flank the sign. Three evenly spaced openings pierce the stone foundation on the first story of each bay. The center opening of each bay contains a pair of historic windows; a single window flanks the center opening. On the second and third stories, a large masonry opening pierces each bay. A historic wood window system is in place behind plywood. These systems include five divided-lite hopper sashes with transoms. The transom openings are intact, but wood panels replaced the glazing sometime before 1991 (Photos 3 & 17). Part of the stone band in the third story opening in the east bay is missing, exposing the structure underneath.

East and West Elevations

The east and west elevations have an identical fenestration pattern. The symmetrical walls are divided into three bays and have similar decorative elements as the main south wall (Photos 3 through 6 & 8). A pair of engaged pilasters connected by a dressed stone band define each bay. The center bay of each wall projects about ten feet and corresponds to the entry wings. No openings pierce the brick walls of the bays to the north and south of this center bay (Photo 6). The upper portions of the walls have a sailor course brick outline with stone accents between the pilasters. Masonry openings pierce the stone foundation in each bay. A historic window system is in place behind plywood in those areas. The system contains three divided-lite hung sashes.

In the projecting center bays, a rectangular masonry opening pierces the first story above the beltcourse. The two upper stories each have a single masonry opening. The second story openings have a bracketed stone sill with scrollwork on the sides. Third story openings have a simple dressed stone sill and header (Photos 4 & 8). Upper floor openings historically contained three eight-over-one hung wood windows separated by wide wood mullions. Windows are in varying states of repair.

3 A photo of Whittier School taken in a 1991 survey shows that the transoms had been replaced with wood panels by that time (Figure 12).
The north and south walls of these projecting wings contain similar entrance configurations (Photos 3 & 6). Each has a recessed entry at the first story that are topped with elaborate terra cotta hoods with a flower and scroll motif. A terra cotta shield with “W” caps the terra cotta hoods. A single window opening pierces the second and third stories. The openings are filled with a pair of six-over-one hung wood windows. Like the rest of the school, plywood fills all masonry openings. The second story openings have dressed stone sills with stone brackets and scrolls. A decorative brick panel separates the second and third story windows. Third story openings have simple dressed stone sills and decorative terra cotta hoods. The third story opening on the north wall of the west wing has a different configuration than the rest. Much of that space is filled with recessed brick that is like the rest of the school. A small masonry opening pierces the top of the recessed brick. This is likely a historic configuration as the interior space directly behind the wall served as a restroom. The northwest corner of the east projecting wing and the northwest corner of the west projecting wing historically contained a copper through-wall scupper. The scupper in the east projecting wing remains (Figure 11). It is connected to a non-historic downspout.

North Elevation

Like the south elevation, the north elevation contains three evenly spaced bays separated by four engaged pilasters (Photo 7). Two through-wall scupper openings pierce the parapet in the center bay, corresponding to non-historic downspouts affixed to the masonry directly below the openings. Most of the foundation wall is obscured due to the topography of the site, making this elevation two stories over a raised basement. Three masonry openings pierce the foundation walls in each bay. Plywood or metal covers the openings. Bands of dressed stone span the walls above first and second story openings. Large masonry openings pierce the upper story bays, and like the south elevation, each bay historically contained a grouping of five windows with transoms. Wood panels replaced the transom glazing. In the east and west bays, egress doors with stone sills replaced windows in those locations, though the fire escapes have been removed. A non-historic loading dock fills the center of the first story of the center bay. The stone lintel above the west bay is completely missing, exposing the structure.

INTERIOR

Entry vestibules in the east and west wings provide primary access into the interior from ground level (lower floor) (Photo 11). Double-loaded central corridors organize the first and second floors while short hallways on the east and west sides organize the rooms in the lower floor. Two sets of open switchback stairs with plaster wing walls access all floors. Finishes are relatively uniform throughout the building. The corridors and stairs have terrazzo floors and base. In the classrooms, only the wood subflooring remains. Walls and ceilings are plaster throughout. The finished wood flooring, chair rails, and chalkboards were removed at an unknown date; although, their locations within classrooms are evident.

Wings

Each of the building’s two wings contain three levels that are set between the main floors. A landing in front of each level connects to the stairs (Photo 12). The ground floor of the wings contains entrance vestibules. The upper floors are relatively open, with two small rooms each along the north walls (Photo 19). On the second floor, the east wing is open; the west wing contains a series of smaller rooms in the north third of the space. Finishes in the wings are similar to the rest of the school.
First (Main) and Second Floors (Figures 4 & 5)

The first and second floors have nearly identical spatial arrangements, organized on a centralized double-loaded corridor (Photos 13 & 14). Three equally sized classrooms fill the north and south sides of the first floor (Photo 15). On the second floor, three classrooms fill the south side of the corridor. On the north side, a classroom fills the northwest corner, and an auditorium fills the remainder of the floor (Photo 18). A stage historically filled the east end of this space. Although it has been removed, the paint on the adjacent walls indicates where the steps up to the stage were historically located (Photo 18). The auditorium has a similar level of finish as the classrooms. All classrooms have a narrow cloak room along the corridor wall. The center classroom on each half of the floor contains two entrances from the corridor: one to the east, and one to the west. All other classrooms have one entrance. A fire in the southeast classroom of the first floor has severely damaged the finishes in that space, as well as the nearby walls and ceilings in the corridor.

Ground Floor (Figure 6)

The ground floor sits partially below grade. It is accessed from the two sets of stairs in the wings. Each stair leads down to a small landing with storage closets. Two large spaces in the northeast and northwest corners of the floor historically contained the girl’s and boy’s restrooms. An open space between the restrooms contained a boiler room and coal storage area. Three rooms along the south wall are accessed through entryways in the central room; they may have historically been a library and classrooms. Like the upper floors, much of the historic material of the ground floor has been removed. This includes toilets and sinks from the restrooms, and the boiler equipment. A 1939 sketch plan of this level shows that some of the walls in the mechanical spaces have been removed. Finishes in this space consist of concrete floors and painted plaster walls and ceilings.

INTEGRITY

Whittier School retains historic integrity. The building remains in its historic location within a residential neighborhood. The setting has not been significantly impacted by the construction of the new Whittier School, as the area across the street had historically contained a school. Many modest single-family homes continue to surround the nominated property just as they did when the building was in use. The design and workmanship of the building clearly convey its use as a Progressive-era elementary school through the use of large expanses of windows and wide hallways to circulate fresh air. Although some of the classrooms have been altered with the removal of historic materials and the addition of new passages between rooms, they still communicate their historic spatial arrangements (design). The building clearly communicates its feeling and association as an early 1920s public school in Kansas. The most common alterations to City Schools mentioned in the MPDF include the replacement of historic windows, doors, and alterations to the building and site. The exterior has seen few significant changes; all openings on the primary (south), east, and west elevations are intact, and the historic windows are in place (albeit severely damaged). Existing exterior doors may not be original, but they are historic. The addition of a loading bay opening, and removal of the fire escapes do not significantly detract from the building’s integrity.

Alterations to the site such as paving do not impact the ability of the Whittier School to convey its historic use as a City Graded School property sub-type of the City School property type, as defined in the MPDF. The school still meets the Location and Setting registration requirements. Although the MPDF does not directly address the resurfacing of playgrounds, it does acknowledge that the site may be altered. The MPDF states “Modification of the historic setting is

4 Spencer, “Historic Public Schools of Kansas,” F.34.
acceptable as long as the school retains its basic relationship to the site as visible from the front, primary façade.”

The current configuration of the lot retains its historic tiered arrangement, along with the stone retaining wall that divides the tiers. Additionally, the site is minimally visible from the front (south) elevation.

Alterations to the interior of the school have been relatively minimal. The second and third floor corridors along with the classrooms all retain their historic configuration. New openings have been punched between classrooms and into classrooms from the corridor. These new openings are easily distinguished from the historic ones, and the configuration of the spaces is still evident. Nearly all historic finishes have been removed from the interior of the school, including wood floors, chair rails, millwork, and chalkboards. As discussed in the MPDF, given the ever-changing nature of city school populations, school buildings “have experienced substantial alterations.” As the MPDF states “the interior of almost all schools have undergone modernization.” The removal of historic materials on the interior does not affect the building’s ability to convey its historic use as a City Graded School in Kansas City, Kansas.

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5 Spencer, “Historic Public Schools of Kansas,” F. 38.
6 Spencer, “Historic Public Schools of Kansas,” F. 34.
7 Spencer, “Historic Public Schools of Kansas,” F. 34.
Whittier School
Wyandotte County, Kansas

8. Statement of Significance

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

X A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

X C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)
Property is:

A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance
EDUCATION

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance
1922

Significant Dates
1922

Significant Person
(Check only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
Rose & Peterson, Architects

Period of Significance (justification)
The period of significance for Whittier School is 1922, the year the building opened. The construction of Whittier School helped alleviate over-crowding in the district, specifically within the neighborhood surrounding the school. The building also represents the educational trends of the Progressive Era.

Criteria Considerations (justification)
N/A
Summary

Opened in 1922 Whittier School, located at 290 South 10th Street, Kansas City, Wyandotte County, Kansas, is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of EDUCATION and under Criterion C in the area of ARCHITECTURE. It was the first school building in Kansas City, Kansas designed to include separate kindergarten facilities. Whittier School is an example of the City School property type (City Graded School subtype), as defined in the “Historic Public Schools of Kansas” Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF). According to the MPDF, city graded schools, such as Whittier School, represent the evolution of educational facilities during the Progressive Era from a single building for all students to multiple specialized buildings. As city school populations grew in the late nineteenth century, school districts began to build separate high school, and junior high school facilities. This resulted in the transition of the City Graded School subtype from one that served all students within a given school district, to one for students usually in grades K-5. Whittier School illustrates the trend towards specialized educational facilities to accommodate the growing elementary school population in Kansas City, Kansas. In addition to educational reforms, new ideas about the use and form of school facilities emerged during the Progressive Era. Those ideas often focused on health and safety measures, including fireproofing, ventilation, and lighting. In addition to increased safety measures, school buildings of the era often incorporated specialized rooms for arts, sciences, and a kindergarten space. Whittier School followed established architectural trends of the era, combining health and safety features with a restrained Classical Revival style and a focus on symmetrical forms and minimal detailing.

The period of significance for Whittier School is 1922 and corresponds with the construction of the school. Whittier School fits into all three of the historic contexts described in the MPDF. It follows Progressive Era educational trends outlined in the contexts of “The American Educational System (1700-1955),” “The Evolution of the Public School system in Kansas (1854-1955),” and “The Public School Buildings of Kansas (1854-1955).”

Elaboration

CITY GRADED SCHOOL PROPERTY SUBTYPE: REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS & SIGNIFICANCE

The 1922 Whittier School is an example of the City Graded School property subtype of the City Schools property type, as defined in the “Historic Public Schools of Kansas” Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF). City Schools are located in a first- or second-class city with a population over two thousand and differ from other Kansas school property types by the separation of high school, junior high school, and graded (or elementary) school students into dedicated buildings. Whittier School was constructed in 1922, within the 1854-1955 period of significance outlined in the MPDF. According to the 1920 census, Kansas City, Kansas had a population of 101,177, making it a city of the first class. When complete, Whittier School served as a dedicated elementary school serving neighborhood students in kindergarten through fifth grades.

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8 According to the 1925 Kansas City, Kansas city directory, school district contained between forty and forty-five school buildings. The Gate City Directory Co., Polk's Kansas City Kansas Directory, 1925 (Kansas City, MO: The Gate City Directory Co., 1925), 22-23.
9 Spencer, “Historic Public Schools of Kansas,” F.31-F.32.
Whittier School meets the registration requirements for the “City Graded School” property subtype of the “City School” property type. Whittier School was constructed as a public grade school, opened in 1922, and retains historic integrity. The historic architectural characteristics such as the basic exterior form, pattern of masonry openings, ornamentation, and corridor configuration are intact. The masonry openings and terra cotta ornamentation on the primary façade have not been altered; the only change is the addition of a loading bay opening on part of the secondary north wall.

Whittier School follows educational trends outlined in the MPDF contexts “The American Educational System (1700-1955),” “The Evolution of the Public School system in Kansas (1854-1955),” and “The Public School Buildings of Kansas (1854-1955).” Specifically, as a City Graded School property subtype, Whittier School is significant as an example of a building constructed during the Progressive Era educational reforms that generally followed the end of World War One.

One of the lasting impacts of the Progressive Era were the educational reforms that sought to standardize curriculums across the country. Advocates championed specialized courses for all ages, and implemented measures designed to foster a healthier learning environment. Part of those reforms was expressed in separate rooms for the arts, sciences, and trades. Most nineteenth century city schools housed all school-aged students in the same building, and within the same classrooms. As communities like Kansas City grew, school districts built separate high schools, and City Graded Schools like Whittier School evolved to serve younger students within a neighborhood. Following World War One, an increase in the number of students prompted many districts across the country to construct new facilities to accommodate the population changes. It was during this time that school districts added junior high schools to further diversify their curriculums, with the City Graded School left to serve students typically in kindergarten through fifth grade. Whittier School is an example of these trends, as it was constructed as a dedicated grade school following an increase in the number of grade school-aged children in the neighborhood, and the expansion of a nearby school for junior high students.

To increase the speed of construction, standardized plans were frequently adopted for new schools. The typical City Graded School of the era mirrored many of the characteristics of the high school and junior high schools and was executed in a more restrained scale, as it was designed to serve students in a specific community rather than the entire city. The City Graded School also had fewer specialized classroom spaces than the high school and junior high school. City schools featured classically inspired symmetrical facades with a formal entrance. Whittier School is an interesting deviation from this practice, as it does not feature a single formal entrance, instead opting for two side entrances in each wing. On the interior, schools were designed around a I, L, T, or U-shaped plan with a double-loaded corridor and at least one large auditorium or gymnasium space. Whittier School was designed around an I-shaped plan with the upper two floors of classrooms arranged around a double-loaded corridor with a modest auditorium/gymnasium space on the second floor.

11 Spencer, “Historic Public Schools of Kansas,” F.38
14 Spencer, “Historic Public Schools of Kansas,” F.32.
The first schools to be opened in what is now Wyandotte County, Kansas were established as part of religious missionary schools prior to Kansas statehood in 1861. The first public school in Wyandotte County (est. 1859) was established in 1867. In 1886, the City of Kansas City, Kansas was established. At that time, the school district contained 9 buildings, and enrollment was approximately 3,600. By 1911, that number had increased to nearly 14,000 students and the district consisted of 40 school buildings. By the early 1920s, the school district was growing so much that in 1921 residents of Kansas City approved a $1.85 million bond issue to finance construction of an average of six to seven new school buildings per year for six years. The first school building funded as part of that bond levy was the nominated Whittier School. In February 1921, the Board of Education announced plans for a $1,850,000 bond issue to fund a school building campaign. The bond issue was made possible through legislation that was passed in 1920 allowing school districts to increase levy limits and bond indebtedness. Those increases led to “significant construction of new school facilities…” throughout the state. In Kansas City, Kansas, the Board of Education said that the bond issue was necessary to address the need for additional facilities to keep pace with the growing school district population. The new Whittier School (which was already under construction) was to be the first project to receive funds as part of the campaign. It was reported that the school would cost $121,388. Other projects that were funded as part of the bond sale include at least five other elementary schools, four of which have since been replaced with new buildings. The fifth school, Whittier, remains the only extant grade school constructed through this bond issue. The bond issue also funded additions to a dozen or so other schools, including the Kansas City, Kansas High School, and smaller projects such as site work and playgrounds throughout the district.

The nominated property is the second of three extant buildings that have had the Whittier School name over the years. Named after the nineteenth century poet John Greenleaf Whittier, the first Whittier School was built in 1908. It was a three-story rectangular brick building located less than a quarter mile east of the nominated property. It is currently part of the Central Middle School complex. The first Whittier School building housed elementary students from 1908 until 1916, when the building was closed for about a year and enlarged to add junior high school facilities. During that time, students were housed in temporary buildings on the school grounds to the east (approximately where the new Whittier School stands today). By the time the renovations were completed, the population of junior high school students had grown so much that there was no room to house the elementary school students within the same building.

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17 It is likely that the board of education was established around the same time as the city of Kansas City, Kansas.
18 Morgan, ed., “Chapter XXXI: Educational Interests.”
19 “$1,850,000 Building Program Underway,” The Kansas City Kansan (2 February 1921): 12.
21 “$1,850,000 Building Program Underway,” The Kansas City Kansan (2 February 1921): 12.
22 Kansas City Kansan (30 March 1920): 2.
23 “$1,850,000 Building Program Underway,” The Kansas City Kansan (2 February 1921): 12.
district transferred some of the students to other elementary schools and housed others in temporary buildings on the
grounds of the renovated Whittier School. With a clear need for a dedicated elementary school building in the area
neighborhood, the Kansas City, Kansas Board of Education began planning for a new building. In October 1919, the site
at the northwest corner of the intersection of South 10th Street and Gilmore Avenue was condemned for use as a school
and purchased for $9,595.00. Work began shortly thereafter on the stone retaining walls that surround the site. In
November 1919, a sketch of the proposed Whittier School by architects Rose & Peterson appeared in The Kansas City
[Missouri] Star (Figure 8). Work on the rest of the site and foundation began in early 1920 and were largely complete
by early 1921 when voters approved the bond issue that helped fund the completion of the project.

One feature of the new Whittier School was a dedicated kindergarten room. It was reportedly the first school in Kansas
City, Kansas designed to include a kindergarten room “in the original plans for the building.” Previous schools in the
district typically included kindergarten facilities by way of an addition or repurposing an existing classroom. Planning a
kindergarten room in the original construction of Whitter School was in line with the Progressive Era trend towards
specialization of space in school buildings. The location of the kindergarten room is not known. As an early example of a
dedicated kindergarten room, and the first in the city, the space at Whittier School did not include many of the
distinguishing features of later Progressive-era kindergarten rooms, such as fireplaces and bookshelves. In addition to the
kindergarten room, newspaper articles of the time stated that the school would have ten classrooms, an assembly hall,
built-in closets, and terrazzo floors in the corridors. The finished Whittier School seems to have followed those plans,
with six classrooms on the main floor and four on the upper floor with the auditorium.

Work on the school continued throughout the summer and fall of 1921 with the aim of completing the building by
September in time to open for the 1921-1922 school year. A photograph of the building taken in July 1921 showed
workers preparing to begin work on the second story walls (Figure 9). The concrete roof was poured during a fifteen-
hour period at the end of August. Despite steady progress on the school up to that point, it was not finished by the time
school resumed in September. By December 1921, all work had stopped as the construction costs had exceeded the initial
bond allocation. An audit of the project, ordered by the Kansas City, Kansas Chamber of Commerce, discovered
numerous instances of wasteful and excessive spending by members of the Kansas City, Kansas Board of Education
during the acquisition and early construction phases of the project. The audit discovered that the Board of Education had
spent nearly $41,000.00 to purchase and grade the site and build the retaining walls before work on the actual school
building had even begun.

Kansan (18 December 1921): 1. The site was purchased for approximately $155,931.51 in 2022 dollars.
31 “Plan Rain of ‘Concrete’,” The Kansas City Kansan (23 August 1921): 2.
$666,304 in 2022 dollars.
In January 1922, the Board of Education issued new contracts to complete the unfinished Whittier School. The architects, Rose & Peterson, estimated the cost to complete the project at $30,172.27, not including delinquent payments for work already done. The school finally opened to the public on April 29, 1922, with an open house attended by an estimated five hundred people.

Whittier School looked and functioned much in the same way that it did from the day it opened in 1922 until the last students left in the early 1990s (Figure 12). The symmetrical south façade and classically inspired details are all in keeping with Progressive Era trends in school design. The lack of a formal front entrance is a unique diversion from the traditional building form. Large expanses of windows and the arrangement of classrooms around a wide double-loaded corridor was common among Progressive Era schools and allowed for light to fill all areas of the school, and for air to circulate freely. The use of fireproof materials such as stone, brick and concrete further increased the safety of the building. As neighborhood populations grew, school districts would often add additional classroom space, or even a larger gymnasium. Whittier School is unique when compared to most other schools in the district in the fact that it never received an addition or replacement windows. The school setting is also much as it would have been the day it opened.

ROSE & PETERSON, ARCHITECTS

The architectural firm of Rose and Peterson was established in 1909 by William Warren Rose (1864-1931) and David Burton Peterson (1875-1937). Prior to the partnership, Rose held the position of architect for the Kansas City, Kansas Board of Education, and designed dozens of school buildings in town, including the high school (non-extant), and public buildings such as the Carnegie Library (non-extant). Following the establishment of the firm, much of that work continued with the design of school buildings for the Kansas City, Kansas Board of Education. This was fueled in part by passage of the 1921 bond issue to fund the design and construction of schools throughout Kansas City, Kansas, including Whittier School. In all, Rose and Peterson designed at least twenty-five school buildings or school additions in Kansas City, Kansas between 1909 and 1925, when the firm dissolved.

Whittier School operated as an elementary school serving grades kindergarten through fifth grade for over sixty years (Figures 10 & 12). In 1985, fifth-grade classes were transferred about one mile north to M. E. Pearson Elementary School (constructed circa 1977) to alleviate overcrowding at Whittier School. Kindergarten through fourth grade classes continued at Whittier School until October 1991, when a new Whittier School was completed on land across South 10th Street to the east. All elementary school classes were transferred from the old Whittier School to the new school building at that time, and the nominated property closed.

34 “Board of Education to Finish Whittier,” The Kansas City Kansan (10 January 1922): 3.
36 Compare Figure 10 (taken 1929) with Figure 12 (taken 1991).
38 Millstein, Westheight Manor: Historic Inventory – Phase 3 Survey, 115.
CONCLUSION

Whittier School functioned as an elementary school in the Kansas City, Kansas school district from the time it opened in 1922 until the last students left in 1991, when the new, larger Whittier School was completed nearby. Whittier School meets the registration requirements and retains the character-defining features of the City Graded School property subtype of the City Graded School property type, as described in the MPDF. The building retains its integrity and continues to convey its historic use as a City Graded School. Whittier School is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of EDUCATION and Criterion C, in the area of ARCHITECTURE. The period of significance for Whittier School is 1922, reflecting the year the school opened. The school received no other alterations and looks much the same as the day it opened.
9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)


The Kansas City Kansan. Digitized articles available at newspapers.com.


The Kansas City Republic. Digitized articles available at newspapers.com.


10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property  1.3 acres

Provide latitude/longitude coordinates OR UTM coordinates.
(Place additional coordinates on a continuation page.)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates
Datum if other than WGS84: __________
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

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<th>Longitude</th>
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Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)
Commencing on the west line of Tenth Street at the point of intersection with Gilmore Avenue, thence north along the west line of Tenth Street 211 feet, thence west 265 feet more or less to the east line of Baltimore Avenue, thence south on the east line of Baltimore Avenue extended 211 feet, to the north line of Gilmore Avenue, thence east on the north line of Gilmore Avenue to beginning.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)
The boundary encompasses all the land historically associated with Whittier School.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title  Mason Martel, Historic Preservation Specialist
organization  Rosin Preservation, LLC  date  April 1, 2022
street & number  1712 Holmes  telephone  816-472-4950
city or town  Kansas City  state  MO  zip code  64108
e-mail  mason@rosinpreservation.com

Property Owner:  (complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name  KC Casa, LLC
street & number  2505 Tracy Ave.  Telephone

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:  This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings.  Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement:  Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.
Whittier School
Wyandotte County, Kansas

Additional Documentation
Submit the following items with the completed form:
Photographs
Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each digital image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to a sketch map or aerial map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn’t need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photograph Log
Name of Property: Whittier School
City or Vicinity: Kansas City
County: Wyandotte County
State: Kansas
Photographer: Brad Finch, f-stop Photography
Date Photographed: January 2022

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:
1 of 22: South (primary) elevation, looking north.
2 of 22: South (primary) elevation, WHITTIER SCHOOL sign above third-story windows, looking north.
3 of 22: South (primary) and west elevations, looking northeast.
4 of 22: West elevation, looking east.
5 of 22: West elevation, cornice detail (typical), looking east.
6 of 22: Northwest corner and entrance (typical), looking southeast.
7 of 22: North elevation, view south.
8 of 22: East elevation, view west.
9 of 22: Stone stairs along Gilmore Avenue, looking north.
10 of 22: Stone wall along north boundary, looking northwest.
11 of 22: East wing and entrance, looking northwest.
12 of 22: West stairs between first and second floors (typical), looking east.
13 of 22: First floor corridor, looking east from the west end (second floor similar).
14 of 22: First floor corridor, looking east from near the center (second floor similar).
15 of 22: First floor classroom (typical), looking southeast from the northwest corner.
16 of 22: Second floor classroom (typical), looking southeast from the northwest corner.
17 of 22: First floor classroom window along south wall (typical).
18 of 22: Auditorium, looking northeast from the southwest corner.
19 of 22: East wing, between the first and second floors, looking northeast from the southwest corner.
20 of 22: Lower level, looking southwest from the east end of the space.
21 of 22: Lower level, looking northeast from the center of the south wall.
22 of 22: Lower level, looking southeast from the southwest corner.
Whittier School  
Wyandotte County, Kansas

Figures
Include GIS maps, figures, scanned images below.

Photograph Key 1. Exterior photo key. Not to scale. (Google Maps, 2022.)
Photograph Key 2. Second (main) floor photo key. Adapted from 1939 sketch plans. Not to scale.
Photograph Key 3. Second floor photo key. Adapted from 1939 sketch plans. Not to scale.
Photograph Key 4. First (lower) floor photo key. Adapted from 1939 sketch plans. Not to scale.
Figure 1. Context map. (Google Maps, 2022.)
Figure 2. Aerial image showing the nominated Whittier School, the current Whittier School, and the Central Middle School. (Google Maps, 2022).
Figure 3. Site and boundary map. Boundary outlined with heavy dashed line (base map from Google Earth, April 2021).
Figure 4. 1939 sketch plan of the first (main) floor. (Plans from owner).
Figure 5. 1939 sketch plan of the third floor. (Plans from owner).
Figure 6. 1939 sketch plan of the first (lower) floor. (Plans from owner).
Figure 7. 1931 Sanborn fire insurance map showing the new Whittier School and the nominated Whittier School. (Sanborn Map Company, *Insurance Maps of Kansas City, Kansas, Volume 2* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1931), sheets 224 and 225.)
**Figure 8.** A 1919 sketch of the proposed Whittier School ("A Kansas School Will Cost $110,000," *The Kansas City Star*, November 4, 1919, page 3, NewsBank.com (accessed February 3, 2022)).
Figure 9. 1921 photograph of the Whitter School under construction. ("Whittier School to Be Completed by September 12," *The Kansas City Kansan*, July 31, 1921, page 21, newspapers.com (accessed January 24, 2022).)
Figure 10. 1929 Photograph of Whittier School. (Bill Radford, “Whittier Elementary School,” *Kansas Room Special Collections*, accessed March 4, 2022, https://kansascollection.omeka.net/items/show/281)
Figure 11. Copper scupper in the northwest corner of the east wing. (Brad Finch, f-Stop Photography 2022).