

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Switzer School Buildings

other name/site number West Side Jr. High and Switzer Primary Unit

2. Location

street & town generally bounded by Madison Avenue and Summit Street, 18th-20th streets N/A not for publication

city or town Kansas City N/A vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Jackson code 095 zip code 64108

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Mark A. Miles
Signature of certifying official/Title Mark A. Miles/Deputy SHPO

October 29, 2009
Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

☐ entered in the National Register.

☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined eligible for the

National Register

☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined not eligible for the

National Register.

☐ removed from the National Register.

☐ other, (explain:) _____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

(check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
5	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
5	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION: school
EDUCATION: library

Current Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN: Italian Renaissance Revival
LATE 19th and 20th CENTURY REVIVALS: Neo-Classical
MODERN MOVEMENT: Art Deco
Other: Constructivist

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone
walls brick
glass
roof asphalt
other

Narrative Description

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

☒ See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 7

8. Description

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

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

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1899-1958

Significant Dates

1899, 1926, 1939

1956, 1958

Significant Persons

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Smith, Charles A., architect

Curtis & Cowling, architects (see attached for additional data)

☒ See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 8

Primary location of additional data:

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

Kansas City School District; Kansas City Public Library

☒ See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 9

Switzer School Buildings
Name of Property

Jackson County, MO
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 4.5 acres

UTM References

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

1 1/5 3/6/2/0/4/0 4/3/2/8/0/8/0
Zone Easting Northing

2 1/5 / / / / / / / / / /
Zone Easting Northing

3 1/5 / / / / / / / / / /
Zone Easting Northing

4 1/5 / / / / / / / / / /
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property.)

see continuation sheet

Property Tax No.

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

see continuation sheet

☒ See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Cydney E. Millstein and Mary Ann Warfield

organization Architectural and Historical Research, LLC date April 30, 2009

street & number 1537 Bellevue Avenue telephone 816.472.4154

city or town Kansas City state MO zip code 64108

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

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

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

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

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

Property Owner

name/title Kathryn Walker, Westside Housing Organization and Garrison Development Company

street & number 919 W. 24th Street telephone 816.421.8048

city or town Kansas City state MO zip code 64108

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

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

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Switzer School Buildings

Jackson County, Missouri

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Summary

Switzer School Buildings consists of five brick educational buildings generally located in the 1800-2000 block of Summit Street and Madison Avenue in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri. Ranging from two to four stories in height and designed in various architectural styles, the Switzer School complex contains the following buildings designed by the following architects: Switzer (South), designed in the Italian Renaissance Revival style by Charles A. Smith and constructed in 1899 (1829 Madison Avenue); West Side Jr. High, designed with classical affinities by Charles A. Smith and constructed in 1926 (1838 Summit Street); Switzer School Addition, a PWA Art Deco building affiliated with architect Nate W. Downes and built in 1939 (1829 Madison Avenue); West Side Jr. High Industrial Arts Addition, designed in the Constructivist tradition by Curtis and Cowling and constructed in 1956 with an addition in 1962 (20th and Madison); and Switzer School Primary Unit, a Constructivist design by Peterson and Mantel Architects completed in 1958 (900 W. 18th Street). An earlier Switzer School building on the site, Switzer (North), was razed in 1939. As they stand today, the five separate, but linked buildings comprising the Switzer complex are in good condition and retain integrity. Their character-defining features, exterior materials and interior spaces are representative of their period of historic significance.

Switzer School is located in the historic West Side neighborhood that was originally home to a large Swedish, German and Irish population. Today the West Side is the home of a large Hispanic community, mainly housed in mid-to-late 19th and early 20th century single and multi-family residences. The current Hispanic population occupies the same residential properties occupied by the original ethnic groups, as mentioned above. To the east and north of Switzer are single-family homes dating from the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries; to the west is a large housing development. The Irene H. Ruiz Public Library is located to the south.

Elaboration

Switzer (South) 1829 Madison Avenue

This 2 1/2 story brick Italian Renaissance Revival building was constructed in 1899 and designed by Charles A. Smith, Kansas City architect. Measuring eight bays wide by eight bays deep, the earliest extant building of the Switzer complex is characterized by typical idioms of the architectural style it represents. Projecting wings flank a central recessed core. The base is rusticated, while the upper story wall surfaces are smooth. A partial-width entry porch features coupled Doric columns set on a continuous brick and stone plinth, and a wide sheet metal denticulated entablature embellished with a stylized geometric and circular motif at the frieze. The original classically detailed balustrade, as drawn by Smith in the original plans and appearing in historic images of the building, is no longer extant. A series of concrete steps, divided at the center by a metal pipe railing, reaches the double-leaf entrance that has been boarded up for security. The original plans illustrate the main entry consisting of wooden apron doors with paneling and glass set below paired operable transoms and flanked by sidelights. Extant, paired, monumental arched windows set between brick Doric pilasters are trabeated and capped in stone. The remaining windows at the wings of the main façade are also elaborately framed. Those of the first story feature architrave surrounds while the second story units are framed with brick pilasters echoing the treatment of the central arched window. Fenestration of the central core is comparably modest in articulation with brick lintels and stone lugsills. Although all window openings

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now feature non-original aluminum-framed units, they match the original three-part design at the wings and the one-over-one configuration at the central bays. Ground floor or basement windows, originally multipaned, are also boarded shut. Continuous stringcoursing and banding at the wings, delicately scaled denticulation at the roofline and a prominent sheet metal cornice with multiple brackets further articulate the main façade.

Mostly obscured by the adjacent addition, the north façade is generally articulated by fenestration, the design of which reflects the windows of the wings of the main or west façade. The first story openings feature architrave surrounds. Windows at the second story are enframed by brick pilasters. All windows are currently boarded up. A brick chimney with brick pilasters is located to the east of the peak of the roof. As in the main façade, the ground floor is rusticated and features multipaned windows now boarded shut. A single-leaf wooden paneled door with multipaned transom is located at the far east bay of the ground floor.

The south façade is similarly articulated with architraved fenestration at the first floor and window units flanked with brick pilasters at the second story. Paired one-over-one windows crown the original double-leaf entrance featuring a molded entablature surround, operable transoms and multipaned sidelights.

Smith's original design for the rear or east façade of Switzer also remains intact. Like the windows of the other facades, the first story windows feature architrave surrounds and brick pilasters flank the second story units. Basement windows, set in the rusticated base, are multipaned. A coal chute is placed toward the far south bay of the basement floor. The school is connected to West Side Jr. High (see description of this addition below) by a concrete bridge at the south.

Other features of Switzer (South) include hipped roofs, centrally placed, hipped dormers at the west and east facades, and a limestone retaining wall at the west property line. Only one of the original four chimneys, as illustrated in Smith's drawings, remains. A stone bridge connected this 1899 building with the Switzer North, the first building constructed for the school in 1881 and razed in 1939.

As originally designed, Smith's plans for Switzer called for a central corridor on all floors. The basement featured girl's and boy's toilets, coat rooms off the entry at the west side of the building, with a boiler room and coal room at the rear. The first and second stories featured four classrooms each (the room at the southeast corner of the first floor was designated "kindergarten" with the principal's office set at the center of the north side). See Figures 1-5.

West Side Jr. High, 1838 Summit Street

The second building in the complex designed by Charles A. Smith, West Side Jr. High was constructed in 1925-1926. Connected to Switzer School by a concrete bridge at the north, the tan colored brick L-shaped, three-story building extends from Summit Street to Madison Avenue, with the main façade facing east on Summit. Because of the grade change, the building is three stories at the east and four stories at the west. Measuring 180 feet wide by 80 feet long, West Side Jr. High was joined to Switzer

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School so that students of both schools would be able to use the multiple gymnasiums, assembly room with stage, branch library and swimming pool featured in West Side Jr. High.

Asymmetrical in overall design, West Side Jr. High, at the Summit Street façade consists of a three-story main block with a two-story unit at the south façade. All windows, except for the first story original six-over-six, double hung sash units, have been boarded up. The central entry bay of the main block slightly projects.

The main façade faces east and features a non-original double-leaf metal door set in a recessed opening and framed in a cut stone trabeated surround. The words "PUBLIC LIBRARY" are carved into the frieze of the entablature. Crowning the main entrance is a single window with a molded stone surround with curvilinear consoles on each side. Crowning the entrance bay is a large window with a cut stone, architrave surround flanked by blind arches.

Two pairs of window units are featured at the first through third story on either side of the entrance bay. The exception is at the second story, south bay, where two units with blind arches are featured. All fenestration features stone sills.

Two monumental arched windows are placed at the east façade of the assembly room (the two-story unit to the south of the main building). As illustrated in Smith's drawings, the windows are tripartite, multipaned, double-hung, crowned by a fanlight and divided by rounded, molded mullions. The far south bay of the auditorium section features three window units configured like the units of the three-story unit to the north. A secondary single-leaf door is located at the far south bay; its design matches that of the original, as per Smith's drawings. A ground floor double-hung window, placed to the south of the door, has been infilled (the wide stone lintel is intact).

The south façade of the auditorium wing features two single-leaf doors placed at the 3rd and 6th bays, moving west to east. The door at the western bay has been covered with plywood, while the eastern door is original and has a security grate. All fenestration, placed at the ground floor level (covered for security), features wide stone lintels. The upper story above the stage floor line reads as a masonry wall with contrasting brick bands adding texture.

The west façade of the auditorium wing is similar to the east façade, where two monumental arched windows are placed at the top floor. Like those of the east façade, they have been covered with plywood. Moving north to south, the ground floor features an original opening that was replaced with a vent and a single-leaf door that has been covered with plywood. At all levels, the original fenestration openings are intact and feature wide stone lintels and sills. The original units, as per Smith's drawings, were six-over-six, double-hung sash. The foundation of the west wing and the southern bay, ground and first stories, is limestone. The foundation merges into a prominent limestone retaining wall at the base of the surface parking lot sited immediately to the east. Its construction by the WPA presumably coincided with the erection of the 1939 addition.

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The south façade of the main block (which contains the swimming pool or natatorium, gymnasium and classrooms) is largely intact from the original design. Generally, all windows are six-over-six, double-hung, wood sash. Fenestration at the basement level features wide stone lintels often set in pairs. The windows placed at the far-east bays of the basement are industrial sash with operable units at the center. First story units at the first through fifth bays (moving east to west) have been covered with plywood. Cut stone stringcourses separate the first and second and third and fourth stories. The double-hung, six-over-six units at the second and third stories feature cut stone lug sills, while the fourth story units feature a continuous sill course. Units at the sixth bay (moving east to west), second and fourth floor, are articulated with a wide stone lintel and cut stone surround, respectively. A two-story brick bridge connects the south façade to the 1956 Industrial Arts Building (see below).

Divided into three bays, the west façade of the main block is rusticated at the ground floor. At this level, there are original paired, multipaned industrial sash windows with wide cut stone lintels and stone sills. Upper story windows per Smith's design, repeat the six-over-six design found throughout the building. The windows at the second story have been covered with plywood. A wide, cut stone stringcourse separates the third and fourth stories. At the center bay, a pair of cut-stone swags is set beneath the fourth story window unit, which is set apart from the other windows by a cut-stone surround.

Mostly obscured by the hillside and surrounding bank of trees, the north façade of the main unit is designed similarly to that of the south façade. The original six-over-six, double-hung, sash windows with cut stone sills are largely intact. At the fifth bay (moving west to east) paired industrial sash units marked the stairwell at the upper stories, per Smith's original design. Double-leaf wood and glass doors with multipaned sidelights and transom originally led to the first Switzer School building, constructed in 1882.

Other key characteristics of the 1926 building include a wide, molded brick water table at the roofline at the east, south (main unit), west (main unit) and north facades. The roofline of the entire complex features a parapet with cut-stone coping. A stone retaining wall is located at the north end of the surface parking at the east side of the complex. A two-story brick connector is located between the 1926 addition and the 1899 Switzer School.

As originally designed, the interior of West Side Jr. High featured a girl's and boy's gymnasium, the coal bin and a portion of the boiler room at the basement level; the upper portions of the gymnasiums, boiler room and cafeteria at the ground floor; an auditorium with stage, branch library, and industrial arts classrooms off the double-loaded corridor at the first floor; multiple classrooms, art room, study hall, and upper level of the auditorium at the second floor; music and "expression" (with acoustical ceiling), additional classrooms at the third floor level. The swimming pool was placed at the sub-basement level. The majority of the original interior spaces of West Side Jr. High school remain intact and in good condition. See Figures 6-9.

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Addition to Switzer School, 1829 Madison Avenue (PWA Project No. MO 1584 F)

Built to update Switzer School as the original 1882 building (no longer extant) had become obsolete, the new addition was constructed in 1939 using Public Works Administration (PWA) funding. According to *Western Contractor*, Nate W. Downes was listed as the architect and engineer for the project, yet the plans indicate Downes only as engineer.

Built to the north of Smith's 1899 Italian Renaissance Revival school building, Switzer Addition replaced the original Switzer School (Switzer North or Building No. 11) designed by Vantile Coddington. Opened in 1882 and razed in 1939. Measuring 61 feet x 103 feet, Switzer Addition is constructed of reinforced concrete with a brick and cut stone exterior. The majority of windows have been boarded up for reasons of security.

The main entrance bay, asymmetrically placed, features three single-leaf doors at the deeply recessed first floor; doors have been covered with plywood. A wide cut-stone panel crowns the entrance and features "SWITZER SCHOOL" in raised letters. Original fenestration was multipaned fixed wood at the entry bay, and separated by thin brick piers. Corbeled brick spandrels are placed between the first and second floor and at the roofline. The fixed window configuration is repeated to the south between large banks of windows separated by brick piers. The remainder of the windows at the west façade are ribboned, non-original awning metal units with cut stone sills and separated by slender brick piers. Large brick spandrels separate each floor. Air intakes are located under each bank of windows. The far north bay of the west façade features contrasting bands of brick in an otherwise unadorned façade. A double-leaf wooden apron door is located at the basement level of the entry bay and originally led to the playground on the west side of Madison Avenue, directly across from the Switzer Addition.

Fenestration of the east façade repeats the design and configuration of the windows of the main or west façade. The far north bay of the east façade features fixed windows matching those of the main entry bay. This window type is repeated between two banks of ribboned tripartite units, again, repeating the replacement units of the main façade. Air intakes, as well as wide brick spandrels further articulate the east façade. The banks of ribboned fenestration are repeated at the far west bay of the north façade. The south façade is without any articulation.

A two-story brick connection is placed between the north face of the 1899 building and this addition. Window configuration at both stories matches that of the entrance bay of the west façade. A one-story brick vestibule, also placed between the 1899 and 1939 buildings, leads to the ground level of both buildings.

Twelve new classrooms were designed as part of the new school; six to a floor reached by double-loaded corridors. A large recreation room was designed for the ground level. Generally, the interior remains in its original condition and integrity of design has remained. See Figures 10-12.

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West Jr. High School: An Industrial Arts Addition. 20th and Madison

Designed by Curtis & Cowling, Kansas City architects, the Industrial Arts Addition reflects the Constructivist era of architecture. Originally designed and built as a two-story building in 1958, a third story was added in 1962. The building is located on a sloping site south of Smith's 1926 addition. A rubble stone retaining wall is placed at the west and south property lines.

The west or main and south facades are similar in design and detail, where a curtain wall consists of concrete columns, steel sash windows and insulated metal spandrel panels. At the west or main façade, the south bay of face brick projects beyond the curtain wall plane. A recessed entrance bay, placed at the far north end, features a pair of double-leaf steel and glass doors set below a large transom consisting of 1/4 inch welded wire glass and insulated metal panels. With the 1962 addition, a third story added a recessed, glazed face brick panel above the entry bay. The existing masonry parapet was removed and the curtain wall was extended with the addition of heat absorbing glass and insulated panels. The south end bay was also extended with the same type of face brick. Other features of the west façade include a single-leaf hollow metal door placed to the north of an overhead door constructed of insulated metal panels.

Materials and detailing of the west façade are repeated at the south façade, where the entire wall consists of insulated metal panels set between projecting steel sash windows; face brick frames the whole. An overhead door and single leaf door, placed at the east bay, are similar in design and materials to those of the west façade.

The east façade, generally consisting of face brick, also features an entrance bay. Its design is the same as the entrance bay of the main façade, except that the recessed panel at the third floor is made of face brick instead of glazed. The overpass, which connects the Industrial Arts addition to the 1926 building, features face brick, metal awning fenestration and an aperture (drive through) at the north end supported by ribbed, concrete columns. A series of concrete stairs with metal pipe railing leads to the entrance.

Sloping two feet to the west, the north façade is characterized by a column of steel sash awning windows at the west end of the center bay and by the overpass (as described above).

With this new addition, several large classrooms became available, including a woodworking shop and metal shop at the first floor. The second floor featured a printing area, a printing and drafting room, two additional classrooms and an office. With the construction of the third floor, the Industrial Arts building gained an expansive cafeteria. A unique feature of the cafeteria is a mosaic wall manufactured by the Cambridge Tile Company, Cincinnati. The polychromatic Constructivist design echoes the geometric vocabulary of the building's curtain wall. See Figures 13-16.

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Switzer School Primary Unit, 900 W. 18th Street

The last of the additions to the Switzer School Buildings complex is this two story, reinforced concrete building designed by Peterson and Mantel architects, Kansas City. Measuring 165 feet by 119 feet, this modified "L"-shaped building was completed in 1958. The building, which is sited on a slope from east to west, is of fireproof construction except for the brick faced concrete block and curtain wall at the west façade. Switzer School Primary Unit is linked to the 1939 building by a tunnel underneath Madison Avenue.

It appears that the main entry was intended to be at the east façade, where a concrete walkway, supported by concrete columns, leads to double-leaf metal doors at the far south bay. Banks of aluminum sash, awning type windows with brick sills are placed at the east façade of the unit on a north-south axis to the entry bay.

The north façade of the entry unit also displays a large bank of aluminum sash, awning type windows with brick sills at the first and second story, which overhangs and is supported by a series of concrete columns. Two single-leaf hollow metal doors are placed at the center bay. The windows of the east façade (the unit on a north/south axis) wrap to the first bay of the second story of the far north façade. Metal double-leaf doors in metal frames are placed toward the eastern bay.

Facing a large asphalt surface parking lot, the west façade is characterized by banks of aluminum sash, awning type windows with brick sills, divided by concrete piers and set above face brick spandrels and concrete overhangs. Windows have been boarded. A wide concrete foundation is exposed. Set back from the main block is a one-bay unit featuring aluminum sash awning type windows, which also have been boarded.

The south façade, reached by a long asphalt drive placed to the west of a play area, is suspended at the second story and supported by six concrete columns. The upper wall of face brick is punctuated with glass blocks, while the first story features aluminum sash awning type windows at the clerestory level. A double-leaf metal door is located at the far west bay and a single-leaf metal door is placed at the easternmost bay.

Five separate classrooms are placed at each of the first and second floors of the north/south wing, with two kindergarten rooms at the first floor and a large playroom at the second floor of the boot of the "L". See Figures 17-19.

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Statement of Significance

The Switzer School Buildings complex, generally located on Madison Avenue between 18th and 20th Streets in Kansas City, Missouri, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C and is locally significant in the areas of Education and Architecture.¹ The Switzer School complex consists of five original buildings constructed from 1899 through 1958 which as a group reflect the history of improved design styles of educational buildings constructed for the Kansas City School District over six decades. Switzer (South), the oldest building in the complex and the first schoolhouse in the district to have electricity, achieved many firsts in experimental social and educational activities, including night school. It was the first to serve as a community center, leading to increased educational awareness and the development of the district's first Parent-Teacher Association. In 1912, the district's first stationary water basins were introduced when Switzer hosted a community evening attended by 700 in its new kindergarten rooms. Additionally, Switzer (South) was the site of the first girls' club to be organized in any elementary school in the U.S. in connection with the YWCA. As a group, the five buildings reflect changing requirements and design progressions over more than half a century of school construction in Kansas City. The buildings consist of an 1899 Italian Renaissance Revival style eight room schoolhouse, a 1926 classically inspired structure that accommodated the need for large community spaces, gymnasiums, a branch library and classrooms designed for specific areas of study, a 1939 PWA Art Deco building which replaced an outdated elementary school, and two modern (1956 and 1958) buildings designed to accommodate the changing curriculum and student population while embracing new materials and architectural trends. The two oldest buildings were designed by Charles A. Smith, longtime school board architect and senior partner in the prestigious Kansas City architectural firm of Smith, Rea and Lovitt. Ranging from the Italian Renaissance Revival style housing an eight room school, to a classically-inspired brick facility that could accommodate the need for large community spaces, gymnasiums, branch library and classrooms custom designed for specific areas of concentration and afford expanses of natural light; to a modern, Art Deco styled building designed to replace an outdated elementary school and finally to two modern buildings that were built to provide for the changing curriculum and student population, while embracing new materials and architectural trends. Although the buildings were constructed individually to serve their West Side neighborhood, they are all connected physically in one way or another. The period of significance is from 1899 (the construction date of the earliest extant school building) through 1958 (the construction date of the final building in the complex).

Elaboration

The Development of Switzer School and West Junior High School (1882-1958)

In 1867 the Kansas City School Board was formed, yet the construction of school buildings did not commence until the late 1870s. By the early 1880s, only eight elementary schools and one high school had been constructed in Kansas City. Switzer School was first established in a square two-story brick building that opened in January 1882 at the southeast corner of Madison and 18th Street. It was the eleventh new school to be constructed in the Kansas City, Missouri school district. As originally

¹ Switzer School was named after Henry Switzer, a former secretary for the Kansas City Board of Education.

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designed, the building featured large windows allowing for adequate light and ventilation, with steam heat from a boiler that provided warmth in the winter months. The roof was of slate and metal. Pupils in grades 5, 6 and 7 who lived in the West Side neighborhood were admitted. The architect on record for the school board at this time was V. W. Coddington, a graduate of the Industrial University at Champaign, Illinois in 1875.² Between 1899 and 1939, when the school building was razed to make way for a modern addition, it was known as Switzer North. See Figure 21.

The school board continued its mission of building a school system that would serve an ever-increasing population. Just one year after the new school opened, the board purchased the adjacent lots to the south of the new Switzer School. In c.1885 a one-story four-room wood-frame building was constructed as an annex for Switzer. It was located directly south of the school and was designed by William J. Hackney, school architect. Two wood burning stoves in the building were the only source of heat. Grades 5, 6, and 7 were the only grades admitted until the board decided to increase the size of Switzer in 1898.³

By the mid-1890s both the school and the annex building had become overcrowded. A total of 678 pupils attended Switzer as noted from a "student desk inventory" from the *Annual Report* in June 1899.⁴ As a result of the need for additional space, the school board pursued another building campaign. Between 1892 and 1906, Kansas City voters unanimously supported each and every tax levy that was put to public vote. In early 1899 W. F. Hackney was the district architect, having served in that capacity for about ten years. Hackney died on May 25, 1899. Charles A Smith, who had worked with Hackney, was chosen by the school board as the district's new architect. Smith had been planning for a two-story, eight-room building that would double the size of Switzer. This building was referred to as the "New Building at Switzer School." In the 1905 *Annual Report*, the two buildings were referred to as "Switzer North and South." Switzer (South) was only one of many Kansas City schools that Smith would design as district architect.⁵ See Figure 21.

In August 1899, Smith released a bid request for Switzer (South). By November 1899 the contracts had been let: stone excavation, Anderson and Swanson; cut stone work, Duggan Cut Stone Co.; mill work and glass, Roach and Musser; brick work, Shinnick and Massman; lumber, K. C. Lumber Co.; sheet metal and slate, J. A. Ritzler Cornice and Ornament Co.; and painting, J. T. Johnson. The firm of Hollinger and Mitchell was chosen as the general contractor. In addition to the new school, a wood frame house designed by Smith house was constructed on the school premises for use by the janitor who provided year-round maintenance.⁶

² School Board Minutes, "Mr. Coddington, Architect," Book C Jul 7, 1881 – Jun 26, 1890, 18. James M. Greenwood Papers, Kansas City School Board Minutes, Microfilm, SC86-1 Special Collections Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City Missouri.

³ School Board Minutes. Aug. 17, 1899, Entry # 26653, p. 588.

⁴ Twenty-Eighth Annual Report of the Board of Education of the Kansas City Public Schools. June 30, 1899.

⁵ Donald Hoffman, "A Switzer History: Kansas City's oldest school is younger than some think," *The Kansas City Star* 17 Feb 1982. Smith served as the district architect for more than three decades. According to the City Directory for 1898, Florian Klee was the janitor in charge of Switzer. The house supplied to him by the district was located at 1831 Madison.

⁶ "Flying Bricks," *Kansas City Architect and Builder*, November 1899, 333. Microfilm, Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.

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The new building contained eight classrooms including two kindergarten rooms. It was the first school in the district that provided stationary washbasins in kindergarten classrooms. In addition, Switzer (South) was the first school in the Kansas City district that featured electrical service. Experimental night school, initiated in the late 1880s but unsuccessful due to lack of light and ventilation, was once again implemented at Switzer (South) because of the ability to provide light. The success of night classes at Switzer led to additional night school programs as the addition of electricity was implemented at other school buildings in the district.⁷

In 1913, the requirement for kindergarten changed to five years of age from six, which necessitated an additional class. As early as 1916, the school day was split into half sessions for older pupils to alleviate overcrowding. Student names were drawn to divide them between morning and afternoon classes and by 1920 the Kansas City School District began placing 7th grade pupils into the high schools. This experiment led to adding junior high schools to future construction plans. Until this time, elementary schools were referred to as ward schools, which served kindergarten through the 7th grade, while high school was a four-year term. The first junior high schools were built in the 1920s for grades 7, 8 and 9.⁸

In 1914, the Switzer School staff and its PTA requested that the board of directors add a junior high school to the West Side neighborhood. Kansas City's growing population at the time included many immigrants who were settling in the area. Between 1906 and 1917, enrollment at the elementary level had more than doubled from 20,406 to 41,851.⁹ It was not until the 1920s, however, that it became evident that another major building campaign was necessary.

Plans for a new West Jr. High School were announced on August 12, 1925.¹⁰ The estimated cost was \$413,000 for a three to five-story brick and concrete building with a composite roof. Charles A. Smith was the architect. Nate W. Downes was the mechanical engineer and C. W. Van Vacter was awarded the general contract in the amount of \$320,000. The building consisted of brick, terra cotta, reinforced concrete, three-stories and a basement. Additional contracts awarded included heating and plumbing, MacMahon Co., \$73,000; electrical wiring, W. L. Hutchinson Electric Co., \$13,423; lighting and fixtures, R. W. Hodge Electric Co., \$1,795; and temperature regulator, Powers Regulator Co., \$3,945.¹¹

West Side Jr. High School was the fourth junior high school building to be constructed in the Kansas City school district. The new building was constructed adjacent to and south of the Switzer (South)

⁷ Ester E. Thorsell, "Switzer," *The Kansas City Post*, 6 Jan 1929, n.p. Microfilm, Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City Missouri.

⁸ Office of Board Services, "Some interesting facts in the history of the public schools of Kansas City, Missouri, prior to 1948." (School District of Kansas City MO.: Kansas City, MO., 1989), 2. Washington School (Apr. 1868) and Humboldt School (Nov. 1868), 21. Central Jr. High constructed in 1920, Westport Jr. High in 1921, Northeast Jr. High opened in 1922.

⁹ Ella Wiberg, "The History of the development of public education in Kansas City, Missouri." 1940, 69,128. Thesis, University of Wisconsin. Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri. Ms. Wiberg was a teacher at Central High School in Kansas City, Missouri.

¹⁰ Landmarks Commission, City of Kansas City, Missouri "1838 Summit, Building Permit # 14459," 10 Sept 1925.

¹¹ "West Side Jr. High School," *The Western Contractor* 9 Sept 1925, 34.

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building and contained 22 classrooms and special rooms to serve 800 students.¹² The elongated L-shaped building extended west from Summit to Madison.¹³ See Figures 20-21. The new building was attached to Switzer South by a reinforced concrete bridge that gave the elementary pupils access to a new gymnasium and pool in the sub-basement, a 700-seat auditorium and a new library on the first floor to the right of the main entrance. Previously, the first lending library ever introduced into a Kansas City school had been located in the original 1882 Switzer Building. In addition, the boys' club used the library for weekly meetings. The new school and library opened in September 1926.¹⁴ See Figure 22.

District-wide enrollment for the year ending June 1924, in the ward schools alone, for grades kindergarten to 6th grade was 50,560, while high school enrollment reached 13,200. High school enrollment had doubled in just seven years.¹⁵ The citywide population continued to increase and the need for more schoolrooms, as well as necessary adjustments and improvements to curriculum work, increased over the next two decades.¹⁶

In 1939 the school board released plans for an addition to the Switzer School Buildings complex. Funding was to be provided by a school improvements grant from the federal Public Works Administration (PWA). In February 1939 the board received confirmation of a grant subject to PWA approval of the building plans. With approval granted in March 1939, it was announced that contracts would be let for a two-story addition with a basement.¹⁷

Funding for school improvements had been issued by the PWA beginning in 1937. Although Switzer was not among the initial round of grant-funded projects, PWA Project No. MO 1584 F approved plans for a new building for Switzer, dated January 14, 1939 and revised January 30, 1939. Nate W. Downes was listed as engineer on the plans, but as architect and engineer in *Western Contractor*. The 12-room building would be constructed north of Switzer (South) once Switzer (North) was razed. The demolition contract for the 1882 building was let to Bonded Lumber and Wrecking Company for \$200.¹⁸ The contract for the new three-story building with a basement was awarded to J. E. Dunn Construction Co. on a base bid of \$104,942. Dunn provided brickwork, reinforced concrete and cut stone for the 12-room addition.¹⁹ The design of the 61 ft. x 103 ft. building included fireproof stairwells. Also awarded were contracts for plumbing and heating, W. T. Conroy, \$12,000, and electrical work, W. L. Hutchinson, \$4,571.²⁰ The new, fireproof 12" brick curtain wall building provided additional classrooms for elementary pupils and included a spacious new library. In addition, the new building included a tunnel

¹² "Switzer," *The Kansas City Star* 18 July 1926. Microfilm, Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.

¹³ Sanborn Insurance Company, *Sanborn Map of Kansas City, Missouri*, 1917, w/1958 overlay, sheet 132.

¹⁴ Kansas City Public Library Digital Photo Collection, "Kansas City Public Library, Switzer Branch interior group portrait of members of Boys' Club," 1920. Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City Missouri.

¹⁵ Wiberg, 128.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ *The Western Contractor* 25 Jan 1939, 17; 1 Feb 1939, 18; 8 Feb 1939, 13 and 8 Mar 1939, 18.

¹⁸ Landmarks Commission, City of Kansas City, Missouri "1829 Madison, Building Permit # 6884-A," 25 March 1939.

¹⁹ *The Western Contractor* 8 Mar 1939, 18. Whether Downes or J. E. Dunn served as architect remains undetermined.

²⁰ Ibid.

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under Madison Avenue so children could access the school playground without having to cross a busy street.²¹

For nearly two decades after that, no new construction occurred on the Switzer School Building Complex. However, by the 1950s many buildings had become outdated and the need for trade schools, in addition to updating existing schools, became a priority for the district. Technical training and trade schools had existed for some time in other parts of the district, but not in the West Side neighborhood served by Switzer. In 1955 a building permit was issued for the addition of an Industrial Arts Building to West Jr. High. The new two-story building included a basement and a passageway that led from the north end of the new building to the gymnasium in the 1926 junior high. The building was designed by Curtis and Cowling, architects, while the general contractor was Bennett Construction Co. See Figure 24.²²

In May 1956 the school board approved a \$21 million building program. Part of the program was to be a new primary school in the neighborhood. A lot was purchased directly west of the 1939 building and located on the southwest corner at 900 West 18th Street. This two-story, 165 ft. x 119 ft. primary school building was constructed of brick and concrete block with a flat tar and gravel roof. The building contains ten classrooms, two kindergarten rooms and a small gymnasium on the second floor. Twelve houses located along Bellevue were razed for its construction.²³ The architectural plans illustrate an extension to the existing tunnel and reinforcement of the old portion leading into the 1939 PWA building. The tunnel continued to offer easy access to the school offices and library in addition to the gymnasium and auditorium for both staff and pupils. The architectural firm of E. L. Peterson and James E. Mantle designed the new school building. Lane Construction Co. was the general contractor. The estimated cost was \$410,000.²⁴ See Figures 25-26.

The last major building project on the Switzer School Buildings complex was the addition of a third floor to the Industrial Arts Building in September 1962. The addition was for a new, state-of-the-art cafeteria. The estimated cost was \$107,207. The general contractor was the Weeks Maxwell Construction Company. The project was completed by September 1962.²⁵

Several minor construction projects on the complex were carried out over the years. In March 1912, the 1899 building was remodeled to include a gymnasium. The cost of that project was estimated at \$1,400 and T. E. Smith and Son was the listed builder.²⁶ In November 1920 an addition was constructed at 20th and Madison at an estimated cost of \$5,000. The builder on record was Bert Elmers. No other

²¹ Architectural Plans, PWA MO 1584 F. Sheet S2.

²² Landmarks Commission, City of Kansas City, Missouri "1826 Summit: Building Permit # 40818 A," 14 Jan 1955.

²³ "Final Switzer School Plans Now Being Prepared," *The Kansas City Star* 28 Oct 1956, n. p. Microfilm, Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.

²⁴ Landmarks Commission, City of Kansas City, Missouri "900 W. 18th Street: Building Permit # 18621," 28 Jan 1957.

²⁵ Landmarks Commission, City of Kansas City, Missouri "1826 Summit: Building Permit # 69518," 1 May 1962.

²⁶ Landmarks Commission, City of Kansas City, Missouri "18th and Madison: Building Permit # 51923," 27 Mar 1912.

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details were given.²⁷ Another minor project was completed in 1931 when Edward F. Reyburn remodeled the office section of West Side Jr. High for \$600.²⁸

The complex pattern of buildings on the Switzer site represents a cross-section of 19th and 20th century school architecture as it evolved in the Kansas City School District. These historic buildings reflect the growth of an educational system that, in many ways, surpassed school systems in other cities of equal and greater size, both architecturally and with a progressive educational system. The Kansas City School Board decided to close all five buildings in the complex in the mid-1980s after a century of a rich and diverse history in Kansas City's education.

Switzer School Buildings Complex: History of Education in Kansas City

School No. 11, as it was called in 1881, was renamed Switzer School by the time it opened on January 1, 1882. The school was named in honor of Henry Switzer, a former school board secretary who had passed away in 1880. Prior to 1867 when the first board of directors was established, there were no public school buildings. Initially, the district had little or no money to fund a building campaign and schooling was offered in rented rooms in buildings with insufficient lighting and ventilation. Heat was supplied by wood burning stoves, while some schoolrooms were without heat. Only two school buildings were erected prior to 1870. The Kansas City School District began to grow rapidly in the 1880s, however, and the Switzer School complex exemplifies the growth and innovative educational system that was implemented in the district's early years.

Dr. J. M Greenwood: Kansas City School Superintendent (1874-1913)

Perhaps the most influential man in public education at this time was Dr. J. M. Greenwood. He served as Kansas City's Superintendent of Schools for 39 years. Dr. Greenwood was the primary caretaker of a school district in its infancy. Being an innovative educator himself, Dr. Greenwood encouraged Kansas City teachers and board members to think innovatively about the process of education. He often worked in unison with President George L. Osborn, of the State Normal School in Warrensburg, Missouri. Osborn aided Dr. Greenwood in developing continuing education or "teachers' courses" for teachers in the Kansas City district.²⁹

Dr. Greenwood and his team of educators made a major impact on education through their contributions to the development of the Kansas City School District. Dr. Greenwood's touch could be found in all facets of education from health and hygiene to the implementation of a classic curriculum. Dr. Greenwood started a lending library from his office in 1874 and his love of books led to the implementation of a lending library in every school. Dr. Greenwood was instrumental in persuading the State of Missouri to pass a law appropriating funds to every school in the state for the establishment

²⁷ Landmarks Commission, City of Kansas City, Missouri "20th and Madison: Building Permit # 70718," 9 Nov 1920.

²⁸ Landmarks Commission, City of Kansas City, Missouri "1831-35 Madison: Building Permit # 93900," 15 July 1931.

²⁹ Personal and Professional Papers of James Mickleborough Dr. Greenwood (1874-1914) Ms Collection G1 Truman University Online: <http://library.truman.edu/manuscripts/G1-Greenwood.htm>

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and maintenance of school libraries.³⁰ The tradition not only carried over to other schools in the district but eventually grew into the current Kansas City Public Library system.³¹

A supporter of experimentation in education, Dr. Greenwood opened two night schools in the 1870s.³² At this time, schoolhouse lighting was either natural daylight or gas lamps at night. No one under thirteen or already attending a day school was admitted to the experimental classes, but some of the boys attending night school were newsboys. Overall however, the night schools attracted an undesirable and unruly group. After two years and dwindling attendance, the night schools were closed and the experiment was deemed a failure—although newsboys who wished to attend school were now allowed to attend a two hour slot each day from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m.³³

Although the night school idea initially failed, the concept was solid and it was implemented again in 1900 at Switzer School after Switzer became the first school in the district to be wired for electricity. As more district buildings gained electricity, other schools were able to offer a night school curriculum as well.³⁴

An example of Dr. Greenwood's encouragement of creativity and innovation on the part of the school staff was his hiring of Dr. Carl Betz, a native of Germany, in 1885. Dr. Betz was given permission to teach physical education or what was then called "physical culture."

Kansas City was the first city having a systematic physical exercise in its schools: Chicago followed soon. In 1887, Dr. Betz, in his report to the Board, stated that Kansas City was still leading in physical education, and that her system had been introduced into schools of Chicago, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Davenport, and Yankton, and in a number of cities in Missouri it was being tried. He had been asked repeatedly by school authorities from all parts of the country to furnish Kansas City's "Plan of Physical Culture." No one had ever attempted to write such a plan by Dr. Betz, and he asked the Board to publish it in a special pamphlet.³⁵

This was followed with the addition of kindergarten classes. In April 1892, Mrs. F. W. Griffin had petitioned the board to add kindergarten classes to the public school system. She offered her services as a teacher free of charge for the balance of the year, in an experiment carried out at the district's Emerson School. Although initially some skeptics did not approve of having six-year old pupils placed among the older students, the program was a success. When the 1899 addition to Switzer was built, the new building was the first in the district to incorporate kindergarten classrooms into the design

³⁰ Ibid, 38.

³¹ Carrie Westlake Whitney, *Kansas City Missouri: its History and its People 1808-1908*, Vol. 1 1908, (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1908), 326-27.

³² Wiberg, 27x. The resources cited in this study often refer to Junior High School and High School simultaneously and in the same context. To understand the difference it is necessary to look at the period of time and to understand how the district divided the students by grade.

³³ Wiberg, 35.

³⁴ Wiberg,

³⁵ Ibid, 28-29.

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scheme and the first in the district to install stationary washbasins for the express use of two kindergarten classes.³⁶

Meanwhile, as experiments continued in nearly every classroom, it often seemed that just as one building campaign was completed the city had grown again and more classrooms were needed. At one point as the board worried over repairs, bonds, levies, bids, the purchase of lots and the awarding contracts, Dr. Greenwood voiced his frustration, saying that "...if Kansas City would ever stop growing just long enough for us to catch up once, it would be a great help to schools in relieving them from pressure."³⁷

In 1900, when Switzer (South) opened, there were 24,677 pupils enrolled district-wide, an increase of 2,200 students from just four years prior. At that time students were being accepted into the fifth, sixth and seventh grades. Switzer School was a ward school and typically for grades one through seven.³⁸

Another experiment, led by Switzer principal A. E. Douglass, was to open school doors after hours for community activities. Douglass' hope was that by offering an after-school gathering place, he would be able to establish closer cooperation between home and school. With the encouragement of Dr. Greenwood, Douglass implemented the establishment of the first Mother's Club in Kansas City. It was organized under the guidance of Switzer teacher Mary Harmon Weeks. By May 1912, this group had evolved into the first Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) established in the Kansas City School District.³⁹ In 1914, the PTA and the school's staff united in an effort to petition the school board to expand Switzer to include a high school, as there was no convenient high school that West Side students could attend.⁴⁰

Switzer continued to make headway as an innovative center of education. In addition to the organization of the first PTA, Switzer was home to the first YWCA established in any American school. The YWCA met weekly under the tutelage of two Switzer teachers, Miss Glenna Sturtevant and Miss Laura Murray, before the YWCA took over their work.⁴¹

During his years in Kansas City Dr. Greenwood, a prolific writer and lecturer, became one of the leading figures in state and national public school education. He served one term as president of the Missouri State Teachers Association and was honored with a Doctor of Law degree from the University of Missouri-Columbia in 1896. He was an extremely active member of the National Education Association, serving as its treasurer from 1890-95, and president in 1898. Upon his retirement in May

³⁶ Thorsell, *The Kansas City Post* 6 Jan 1929.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 43.

³⁸ There is some confusion as to how the schools were set-up grade wise. Often the ward schools were 1-7 grades, later kindergarten was added yet the annual reports state that Switzer was accepting 5th 6th and 7th grade students and never mentioned the lower grades.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

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1913, he was appointed advisor to the Kansas City Board of Education in Kansas City and continued as such until his sudden death on August 1, 1914.⁴²

In the years following Dr. Greenwood's retirement, Switzer/West Jr. High continued to offer quality education. In 1958 the Switzer Elementary Unit was constructed. Shortly thereafter, however, the school began experiencing a difficult period of transition. The political and economic climate, as well as issues of segregation became problems that challenged the school's ability to teach and maintain enrollment. But although the neighborhood declined into an economically depressed area of the city, with a heavy Hispanic and black population, education remained highly prized by the community.⁴³

In 1979 an article appeared in *The Kansas City Star* about migrant railroad workers from Mexico as the first settlers of Switzer. While the West Side of Kansas City has a strong and predominately Hispanic-American community, this was not the only ethnic group in the area nor was it the first. The article misstated some important facts, as a large group of Scandinavian and Irish settlers had immigrated to the area prior to 1880. They had established several churches in the neighborhood and constructed brick row houses and apartments. These ethnic groups attended the original Switzer School.⁴⁴ Eventually, over several decades in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a large Mexican-American population settled in the area as they found work with the railroads and packing companies.⁴⁵

It was not until Congress passed the Elementary and Secondary School Act of 1965 that funds were provided to schools that taught children from low-income families. Switzer was listed as a Title I School and qualified for this special funding. In 1968 Switzer's student enrollment was one-third Mexican-American, one-third African-American and one-third Anglo-American. Title I also aided schools such as Switzer in obtaining teaching material that children of low-income areas could relate to. The "Dick and Jane" readers in which everyone had new clothing and lived in white suburbia did not resonate with the children who attended the Switzer complex. Teachers often wrote their own material and devised special ways in which to keep the children engaged in their schoolwork. They made maps of the surrounding community and wrote stories using names of the children in their class. One teacher, Mrs. John T. Duncan, put together a cookbook of recipes from each child's home, which helped keep the parents engaged, as well.⁴⁶

An understanding of the general atmosphere of education during the first half of the Kansas City School District's history makes it easier to understand both the development and ultimate decline of the Switzer School Buildings complex. During the early years of its development, the district faced challenges from an ever-increasing population. Included in the growth were increasing numbers of

⁴² Personal and Professional Papers of James Mickleborough Dr. Greenwood (1874–1914) Ms Collection G1 Truman University Online: <http://library.truman.edu/manuscripts/G1-Greenwood.htm>

⁴³ Between 1912 and the mid-1960s, little to no information exists regarding cultural issues at Switzer/West Jr. High complex.

⁴⁴ James J. Fisher, "Things Have Changed at Switzer," *The Kansas City Times* 15 Jan 1970. Microfilm, Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.

⁴⁵ Dr. Elaine Brand, "Migrant Railroad Workers First Settlers of Switzer."

⁴⁶ Sara Barker, "Learning Linked to Familiar World," *The Kansas City Star* 11 Aug 1968. Microfilm, Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.

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immigrants who were settling in areas around the railroad yards, packing and warehouse industries and other blue-collar employment. The greatest challenge presented by this group came from language barriers. The need for innovative teaching methods, a curriculum that could satisfy the needs of all students and the need for classroom space were among the earliest hurdles to be faced by the school board. Although the challenges were many, Kansas City was often used as a model and studied by other school districts around the country. Today, the Switzer complex is a patchwork of architecture that serves as a reminder of the educational system that previously exemplified one of the most successful school districts in the nation.

Architects and Developers of the Switzer/West Jr. High School Complex: 1882-1958

Building	Year	Architect	Classrooms
Switzer (North)	1882 (Demolished)	V. W. Coddington	8
Switzer (North) Annex	1883/84 (Demolished)	Wm. F. Hackney	4
Switzer (South)	1899 (1914 addition)	Charles A. Smith	8 (2 rooms)
West Jr. High School	1926	Charles A. Smith	22
Switzer Annex	1939	PWA, No. MO 1584	12
Industrial Arts Building	1956 (1962 addition)	Curtis and Cowling	Unknown
Switzer Primary Unit	1958	Peterson and Mantel	12

The history of the Switzer School complex would be incomplete without information about the first school building on the site, which was also the first school established in Kansas City's West Side neighborhood. Constructed in 1882, the original Switzer School was at first simply called School No. 11. Later the name was changed to South West Elementary before the board ultimately dedicated the building to Henry Switzer. The construction of Switzer and several other schools had been overwhelmingly approved during the first major tax vote in a building campaign that began in the late 1870s. Although Switzer (North) was the first schoolhouse constructed on the West Side, it was actually the eleventh elementary building district-wide. The architect on record was V. W. Coddington, while the contractor was M. B. Behney.⁴⁷ This building served the district from 1882 until it was demolished in 1939.

Relatively little is known about Vantile Wm. Coddington. He was born in Linton, Indiana, in 1852, and began his career as a carpenter. He attended the State Industrial University at Champaign, Illinois, where he was graduated in his profession in 1875. Coddington completed two years of graduate studies in architecture before arriving in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1878 where he immediately began practicing his profession.⁴⁸

For the next decade and a half, architects serving the Kansas City School Board included Manuel Diaz, who served from 1884 to 1887 (the year he resigned), and William F. Hackney who served from 1887

⁴⁷ School Board Minutes, Book C, 18. Microfilm, Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Mo.

⁴⁸ *The History of Jackson County, Missouri; Containing a History of the County, Its Cities, Towns*, (Kansas City: Union Historical Press, 1881; reprint, Cape Girardeau, Ramfre Press, 1966), 755.

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until his death in 1899. Diaz's most important design for the school board was Webster School located at 1644 Wyandotte (NR listed 9/2/82). In association with Diaz, Hackney designed a four-room alteration to Webster School. In relation to Switzer North, Hackney had been preparing a design for the janitors' house and would have most likely completed the plans for the south school building. But Hackney committed suicide in May 1899, leaving the job to Charles Ashley Smith, his partner at the time. Upon Hackney's death, Smith was hired as school district architect by the Kansas City School Board.⁴⁹

Smith was born in Steubenville, Ohio, on March 22, 1866. His family moved to Des Moines, Iowa in 1874. Charles's father, Augustine Smith, worked as a contractor and builder while serving on the Des Moines City Council and Board of Education. Upon completing a public school education at the age of 16, Smith joined the firm of Bell and Hackney in Des Moines. In 1887, Hackney moved his firm to Kansas City where a building boom was under way. Smith, then 21, moved with Hackney as his draftsman. In 1892 Smith was made a partner in the firm and with the support of the Kansas City School Board, Hackney and Smith designed their most important surviving building, the old Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, constructed 1895-1897 (NR 5/23/77). Smith designed an addition to this building in 1917-1918.⁵⁰

Smith retained his position as school district architect for 38 years. This was the longest and most enduring relationship with the school board of any previous or succeeding architect. In 1910 Smith joined Charles Rea and Walter Lovitt. Smith, Rea and Lovitt was in business for ten years until Lovitt died in 1921. The firm designed the Bryant Elementary School in 1915.⁵¹ Smith retired from his school board position in 1937. He died in 1948 at the age of 82.⁵²

When the Industrial Arts Building was added to West Jr. High in 1956, the architectural firm was Curtis and Cowling. Conrad J. Curtis (1924-1993) was in partnership with Robert A. Cowling (1931-1994) for only a short time. The extent of their work apparently spanned from 1954 to 1957. They are listed as architects for the following projects: Hodes Plumbing Supply (1954) at 2751 Gillham Rd.; Morton Salt Company (1955) at 6175 Paseo; and Whittier School (1957) at 1015 Indiana. Robert A. Cowling worked on his own in 1952 when he designed Hodes Plumbing Supply at 1200 E. 8th Street. In 1950

⁴⁹ Cydney Millstein, "Kansas City School Survey, Final Report pre-1940," Landmarks Commission City Development Kansas City, Missouri, October 1989, 44.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid, 45.

⁵² Ibid, 45-47.

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Conrad J. Curtis was partnered with Everett L. Peterson on two projects, Reed Hand Craft Building at 2830 Warwick and Hertz Rent-A-Car at 1217 Wyandotte.⁵³

Everett L. Peterson was in solo practice during the 1940s. In 1947 he designed the Jewel Tea Company Building at 535 Westport Road and an addition in 1953. He designed the ABC Market Building in 1947 (demolished in 1994). In 1948-1955, Peterson apparently was part of Peterson and Scharhag who designed the Ruhl School on 81st Street in 1948 and George Longan School at 3411 Cherry in 1954-55. Sometime after this Peterson joined with James E. Mantel as Peterson and Mantel to design a dormitory building for Missouri State College c.1955.⁵⁴

⁵³ Landmarks Commission, Architect Database, City of Kansas City, Missouri.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

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Verbal Boundary Description:

All of Lot 170 and all of Lots 185 through 192, inclusive, Block 7, except those parts in streets, Jarboe's Addition, a subdivision in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri, together with the vacated alley adjoining said Lots, plus Lots 165 through 169, inclusive, Block 7, Jarboe's Addition, a subdivision in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri, plus Lots 171 through 174, inclusive, Block 7, Jarboe's Addition, a subdivision in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri.

AND

The South 13 feet of Lot 201, and Lots 202 through 212, Block 8, Jarboe's Addition, a subdivision in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri, together with the vacated alley adjoining said Lots, and also together with Lots 213 through 217 and the South 10 feet of Lot 218, Block 8, Jarboe's Addition, a subdivision in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri, together with the vacated alley East of an adjoining said Lots.

Boundary Justification:

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with Switzer School, Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri.

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Key to Photographs:

Richard Welnowski, Photographer. April 2009. Negatives are located at the office of AHR, LLC, Kansas City, MO

Photo No.	Description	View
	Switzer School South: 1899	
1	Main (west) façade	East
2	Detail of main entrance	East
3	Detail of second floor	East
4	East or rear façade	West
5	Second floor hallway	South
6	Second floor classroom, southwest corner	Southwest
7	Switzer South with connection to West Jr. High	East
	Switzer / West Jr. High: 1926	
8	Main (east) and south facades	Northwest
9	Main (east) façade	West
10	Detail of main entrance	West
11	South facade and a portion of the west facade	East/northeast
12	Detail of retaining wall	East
13	West façade	East
	Switzer/West Jr. High: 1926 (con't)	
14	North façade	East
15	North façade	South
16	Auditorium, first floor	South
17	Branch Library room	East
18	Science classroom, second floor	Southeast
19	Hallway, second floor	East
20	Boy's gymnasium, basement floor	West
21	Swimming pool, sub-basement	South
	Switzer School: 1939	
22	Main (west) façade	East
23	Main facade and a portion of the north facade	East/southeast
24	Streetscape with Switzer, main façade	Southeast
25	Detail of entry bay, west façade	East
26	Classroom, second floor	Northeast
27	Detail of main façade with passageway	East
28	Right to left: Rear of 1939 building and 1899 building	Northwest

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29	Tunnel at basement level	West
Photo No.	Description	View
	West Jr. High Industrial Arts Building: 1956	
30	Main (west) and south facades	Northeast
31	Main façade (with a portion of the 1926 building)	Northeast
32	Main façade	East
33	Detail of entry bay, main façade	East
34	South façade	North
35	East and south facades	Northeast
36	East (rear) façade	West
37	Detail of entry bay, east façade	West
38	Cafeteria room, third floor	Southwest
39	Passageway from West Jr. High to the 1926 building	East
	Switzer Primary Unit: 1958	
40	Main (east) facade	Northwest
41	South facade	North
42	Detail of south facade	Northeast
43	Overview of south and west facades	Northeast
44	West facade	East/southeast
45	Courtyard (north and east facades)	Southwest

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Figure No.	Key to Figures in Section 7
	Switzer (South) School: 1899
1	West or main elevation
2	North elevation
3	East elevation
4	South elevation
5	First floor plan
	West Junior High School: 1926
6	East and West elevations
7	North elevations
8	South elevation
9	First floor plan
	Switzer School PWA No. MO 1584 F: 1939
10	East and West elevations
11	North and South elevations
12	First floor plan
	West Side Jr. High Industrial Arts Building Addition
13	All elevations
14	First floor plan
15	Second floor plan
16	Cafeteria addition
	Switzer School Primary Unit
17	All elevations
18	First floor plan
19	Second floor plan
20	Site Plan
	Key to Figures in Section 8
21	Switzer (North) 1882 (razed 1939) and Switzer (South) 1899; Main facades
22	Boys Club c. 1920; Meetings held in the Switzer School Library
23	West Side Jr. High School
24	West Side Jr. High School Detail
25	West Side Jr. High Industrial Arts Addition
26	Switzer School Primary Unit Model
27	Switzer School Primary Unit

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Figures in Section 7



Figure 1
Switzer (South) School
c. 1899 North Elevation
Charles A. Smith, architect

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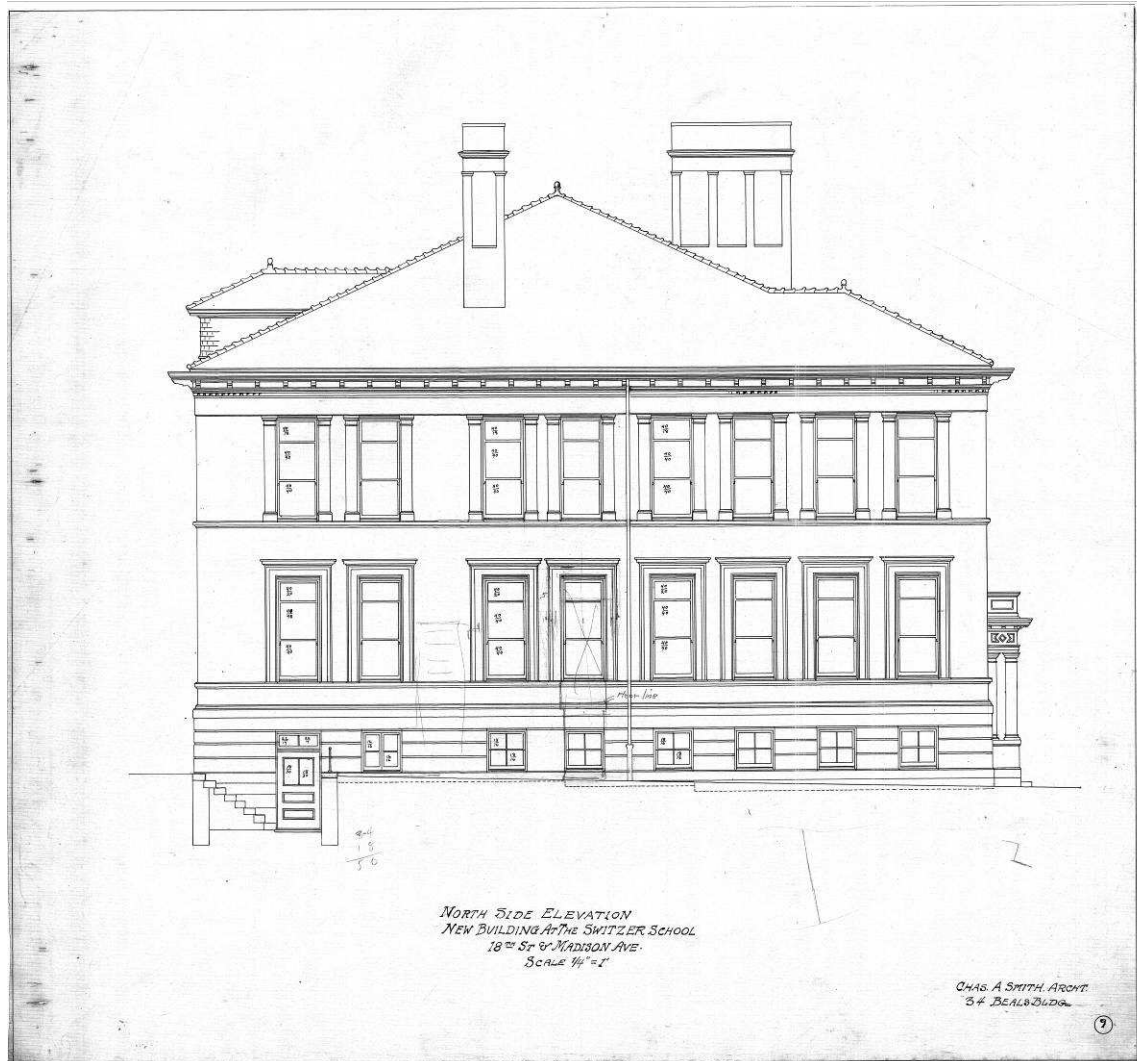


Figure 2
Switzer (South) School
c. 1899 North Elevation
Charles A. Smith, architect

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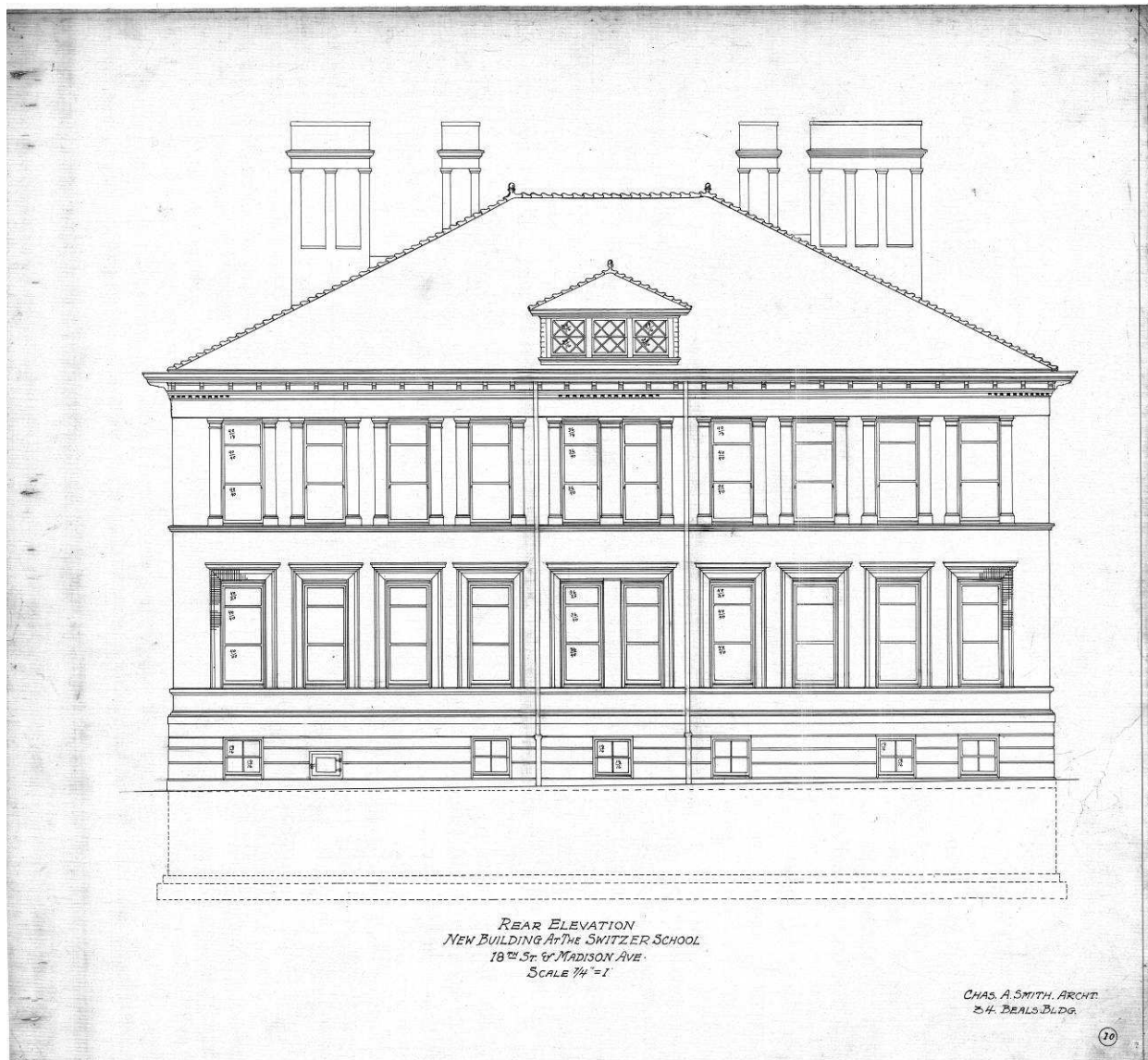


Figure 3
Switzer (South) School
c. 1899 East Elevation
Charles A. Smith, architect

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Figure 4
Switzer (South) School
c. 1899 South Elevation
Charles A. Smith, architect

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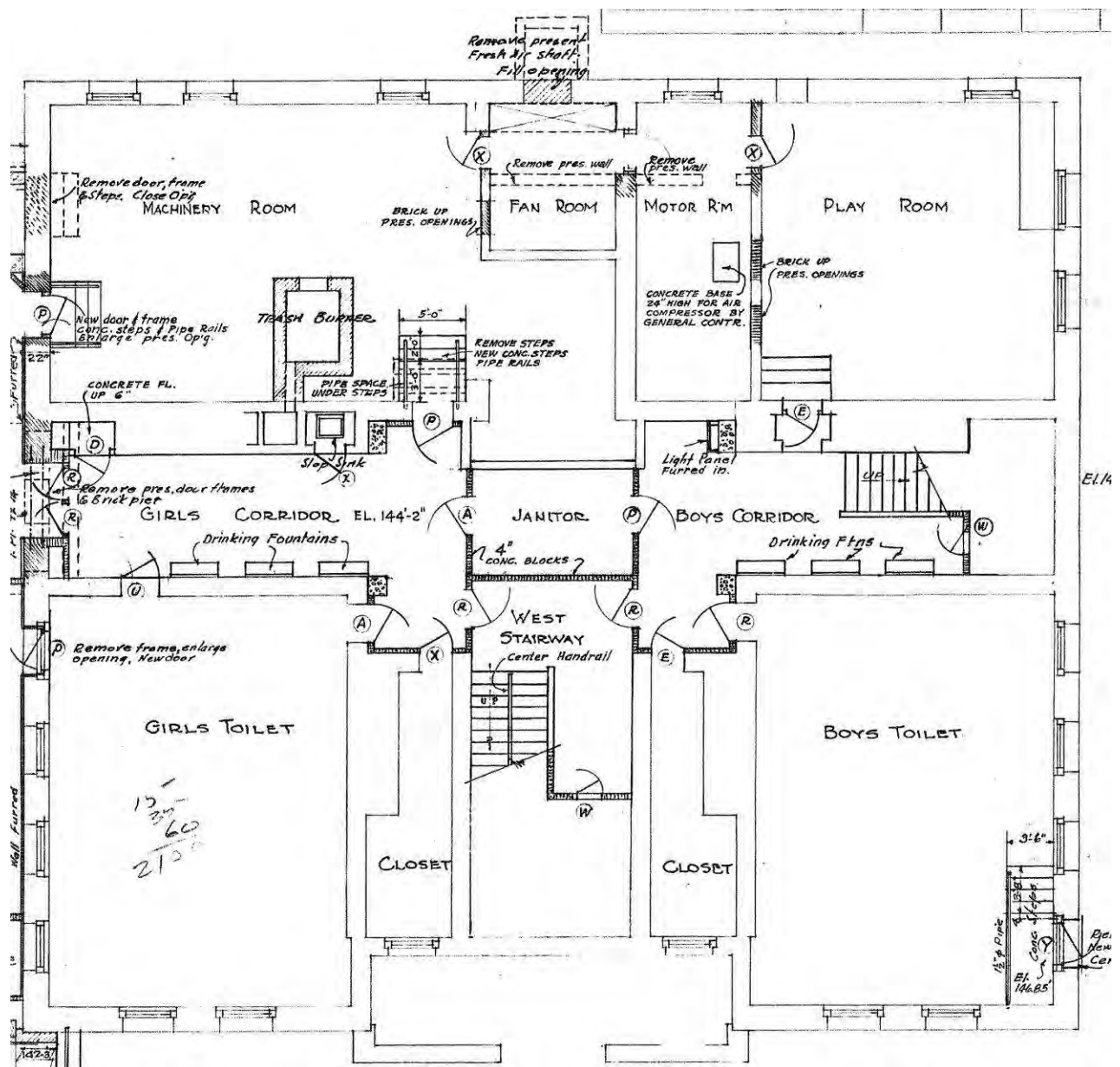


Figure 5
Switzer (South) School
c. 1899 first floor plan
Charles A. Smith, architect

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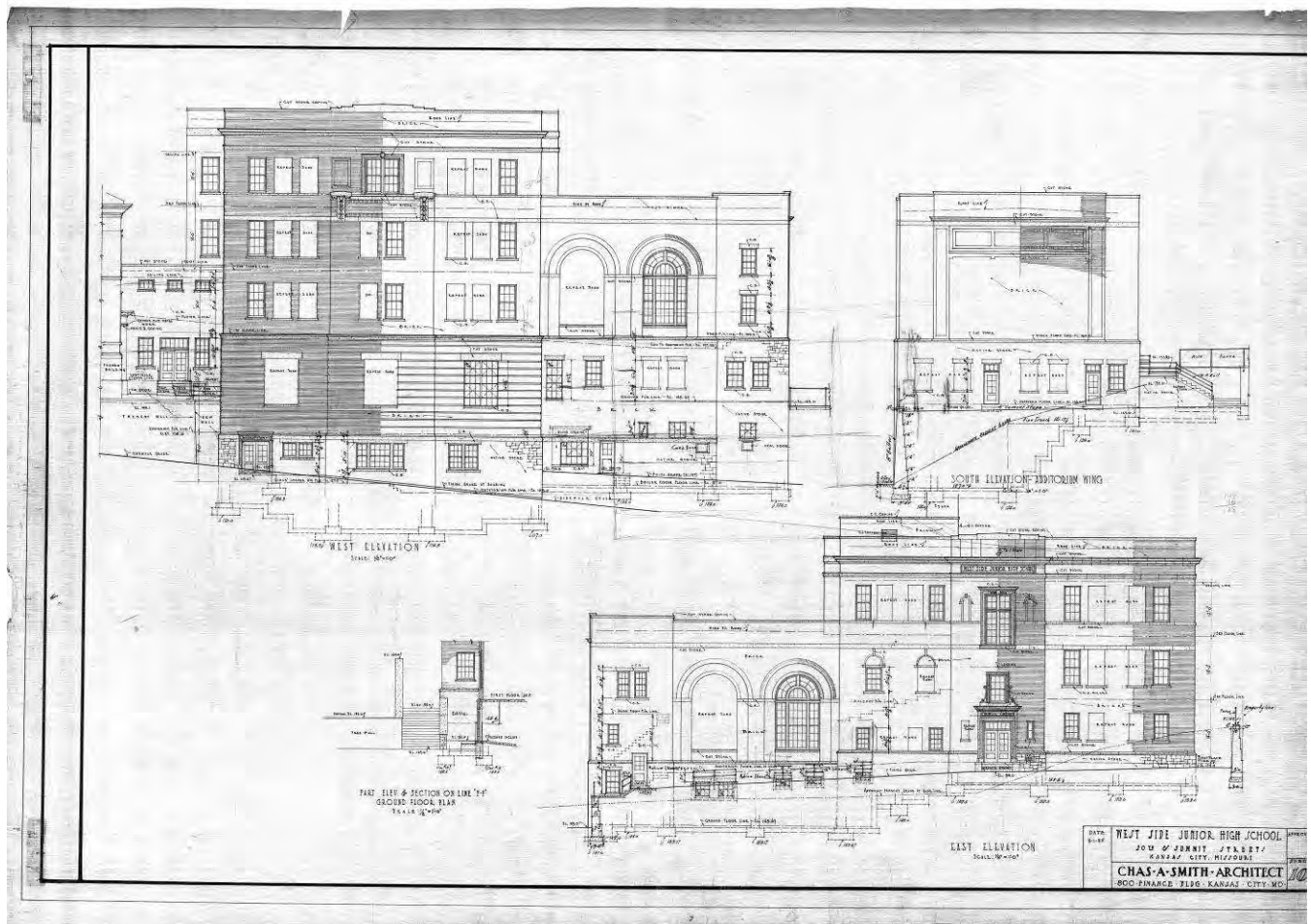


Figure 6
West Side Jr. High School
1925: Main or East and West Elevations
Charles A. Smith, architect

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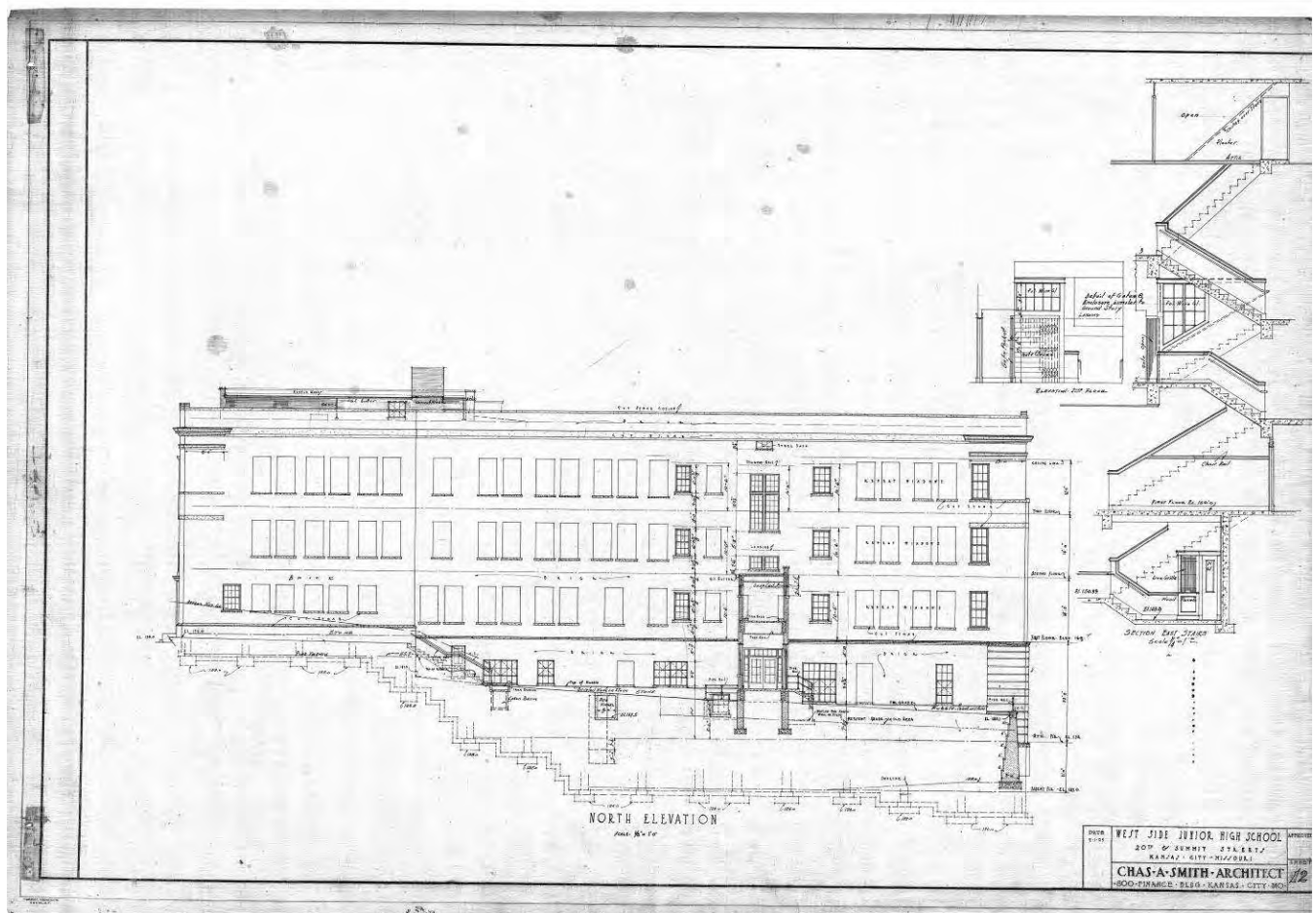


Figure 7
West Side Jr. High School
1925: North Elevation
Charles A. Smith, architect

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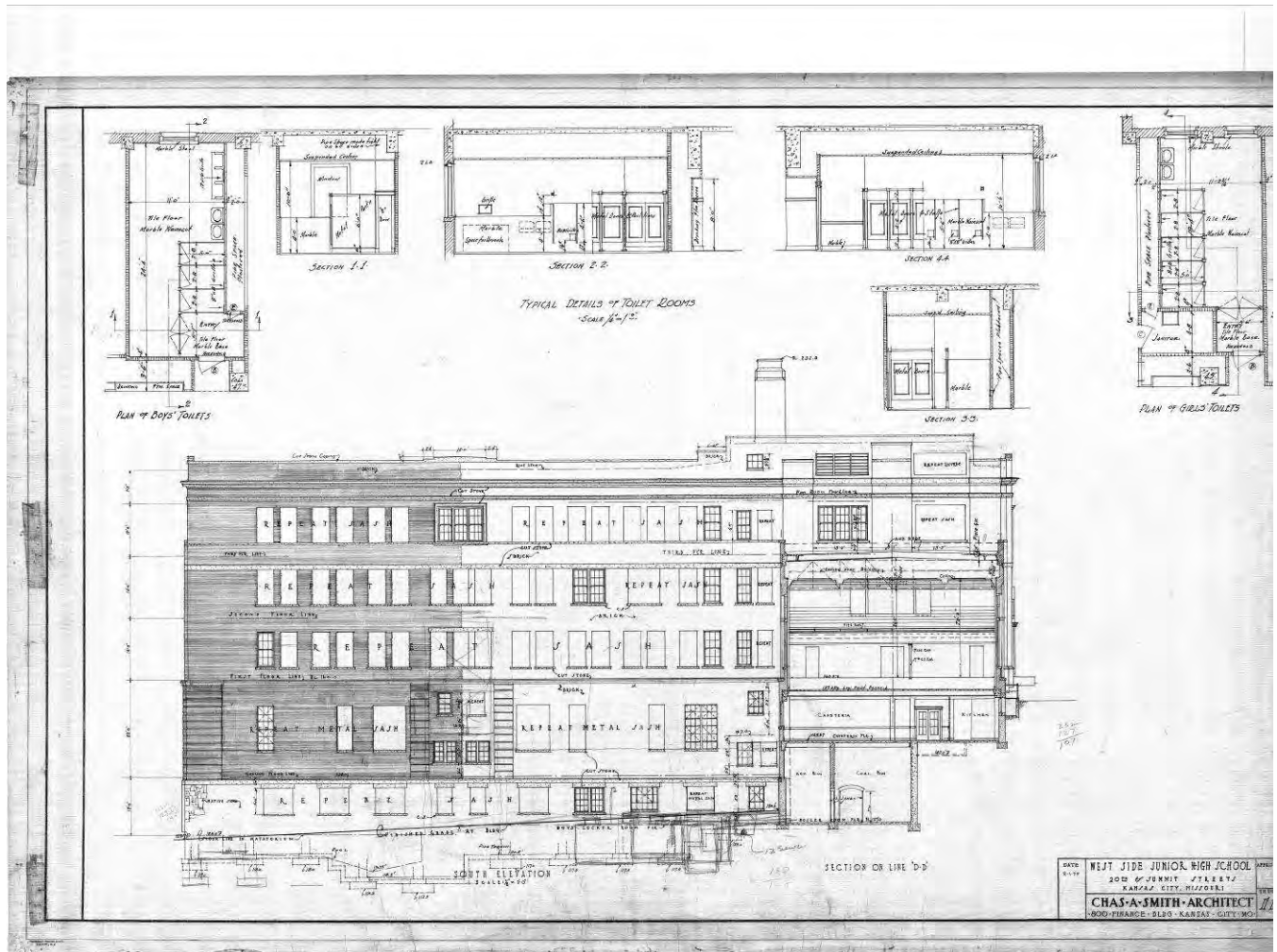


Figure 8
West Side Jr. High School
1925: South Elevation
Charles A. Smith, architect

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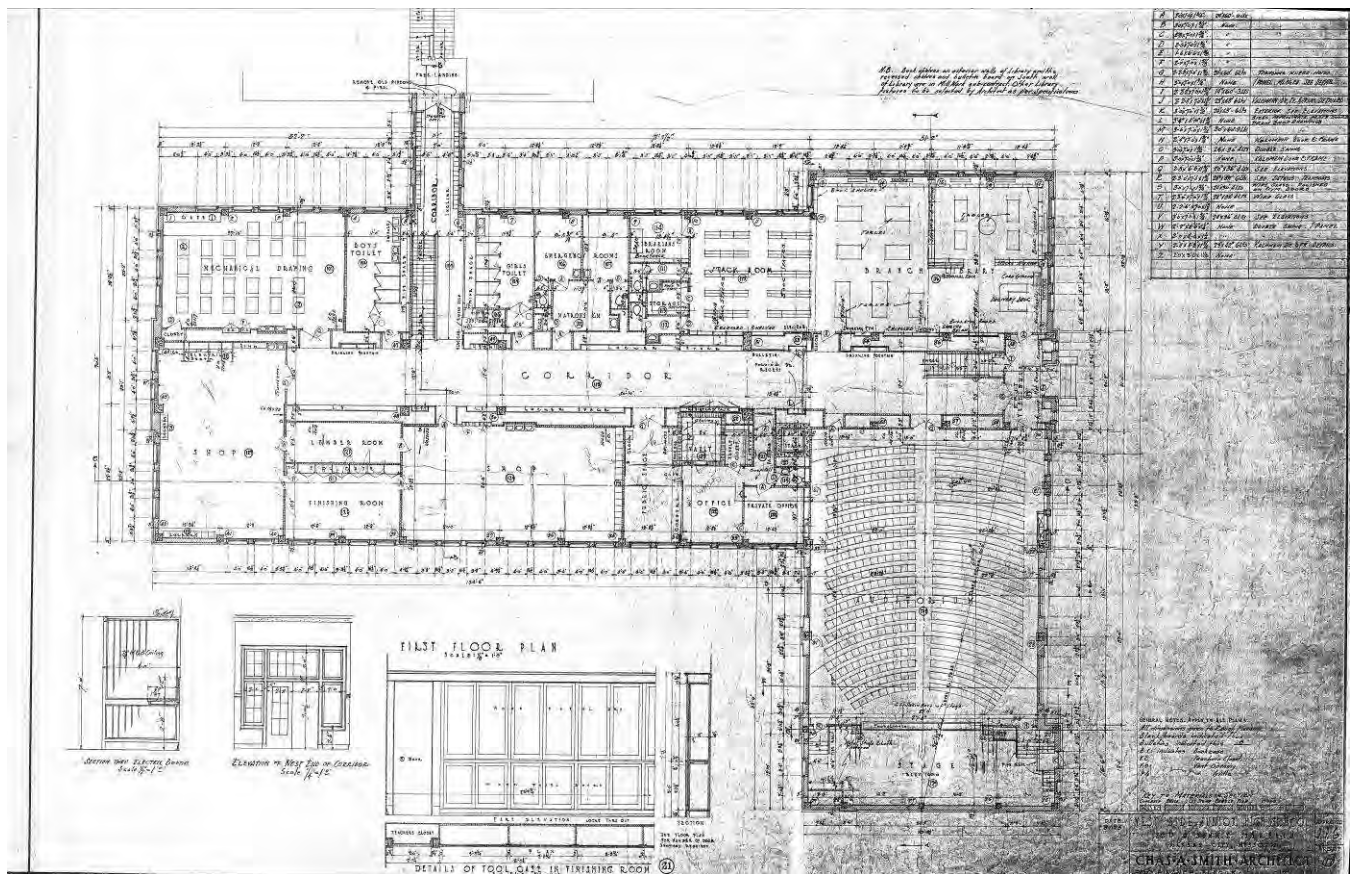


Figure 9
West Side Jr. High School
1925: First floor plan
Charles A. Smith, architect

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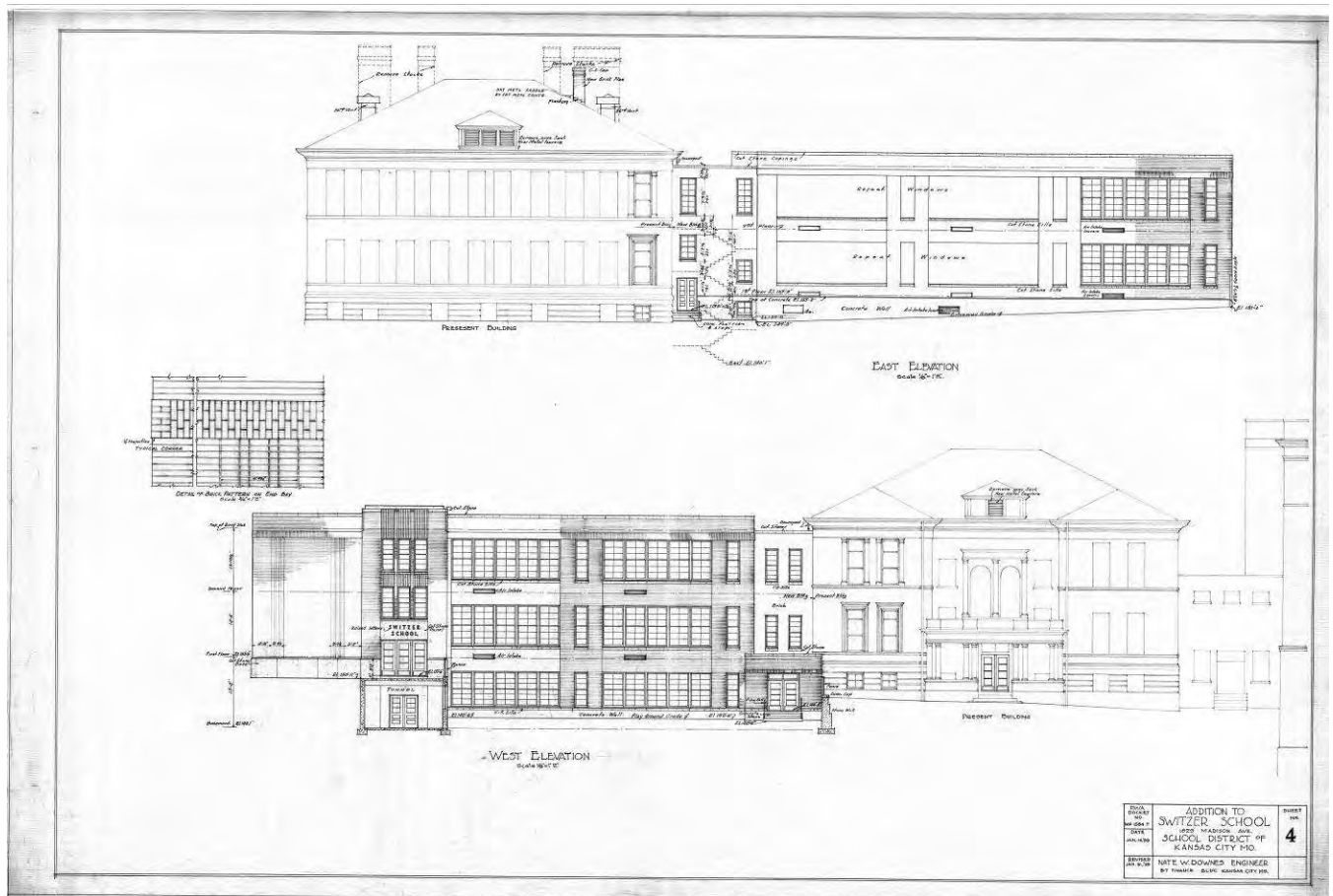


Figure 10
Addition to Switzer (South)
1939: East and West Elevations
PWA No. MO 1584 F

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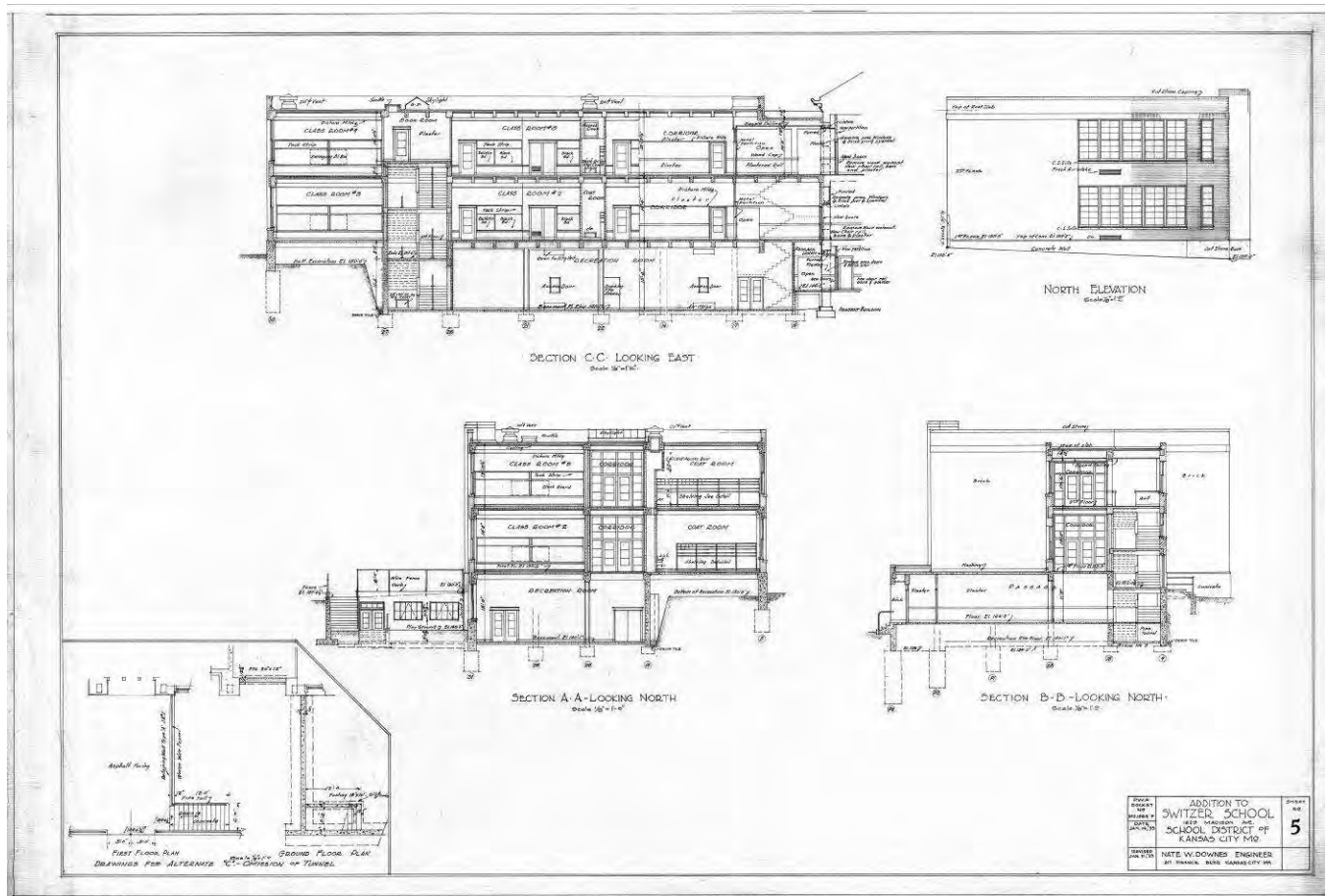


Figure 11
Addition to Switzer (South)
1939 North and South Elevations
PWA No. MO 1584 F

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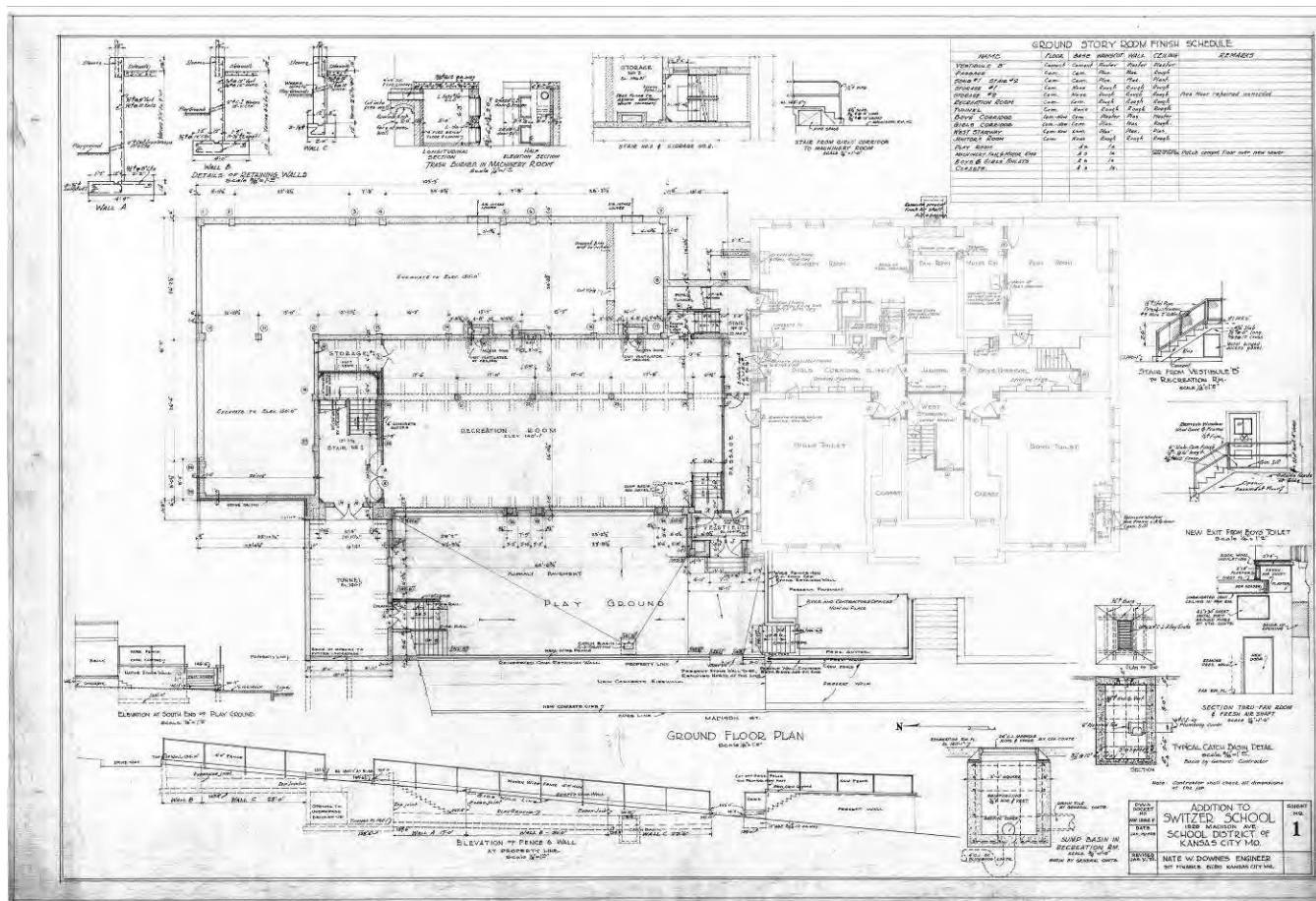


Figure 12
Addition to Switzer (South)
1939: First Floor Plan
PWA No. MO 1584 F

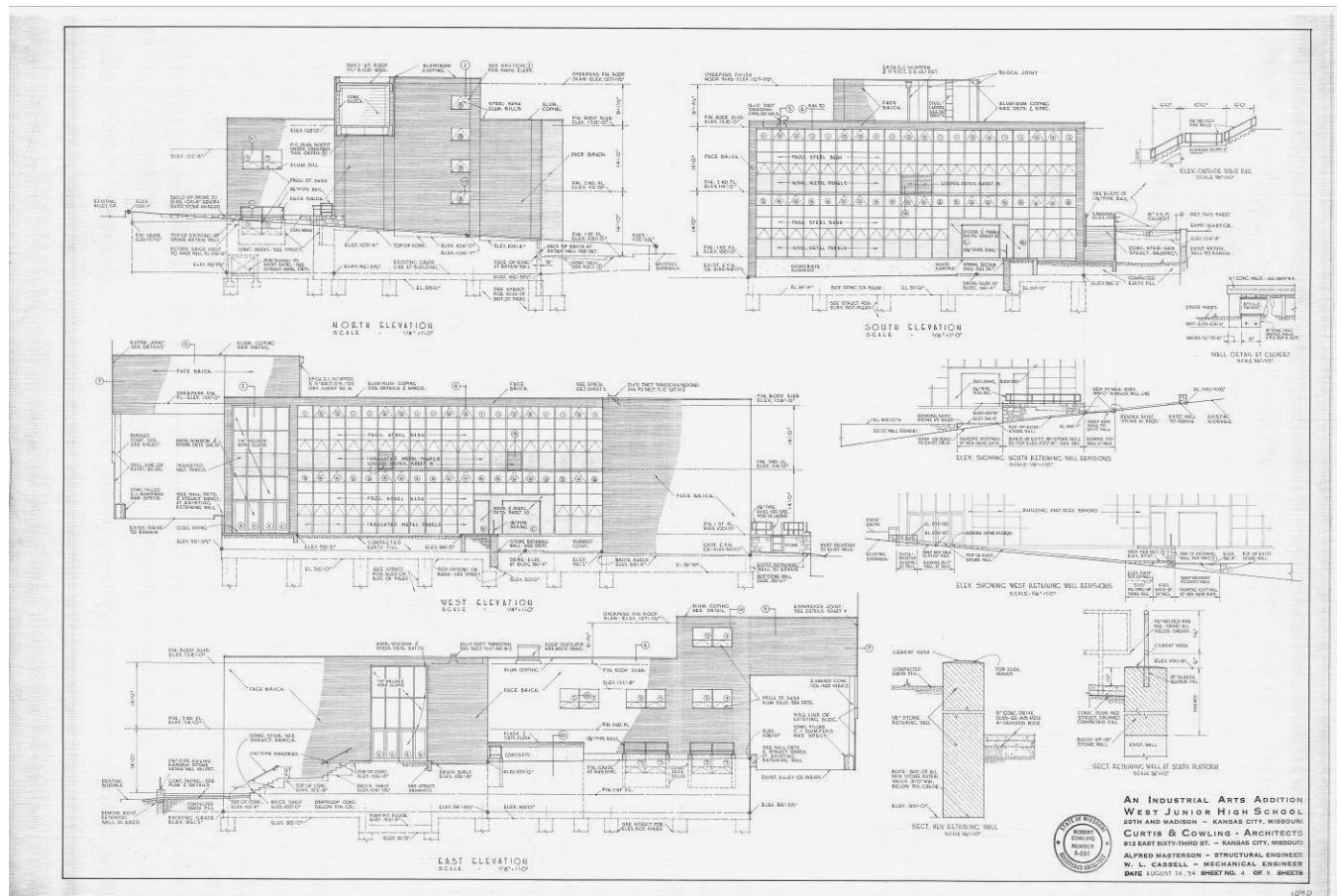


Figure 13
West Side Jr. High: Industrial Arts Addition
1954: All elevations
Curtis and Cowling, architects

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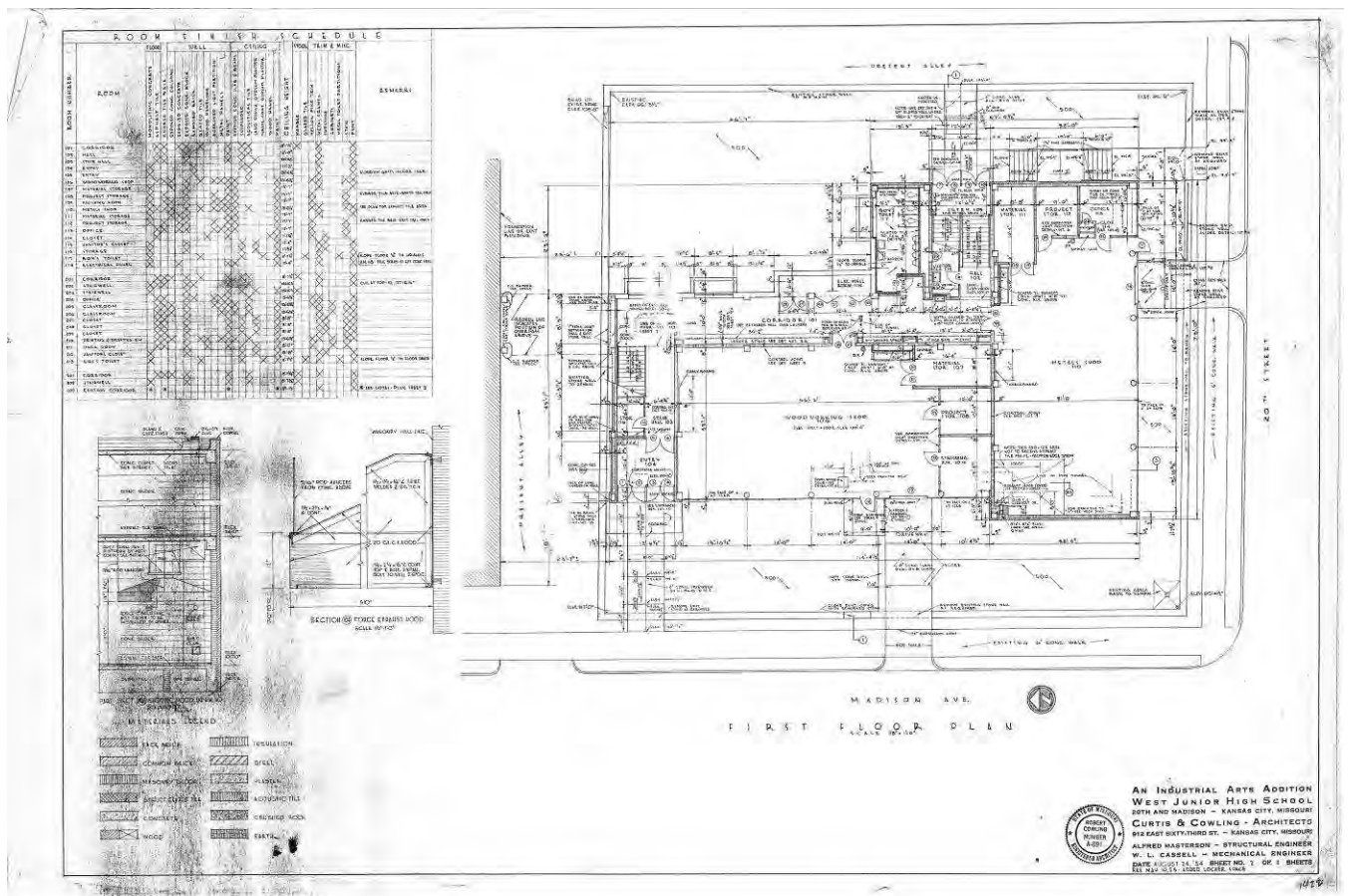


Figure 14
West Side Jr. High: Industrial Arts Addition
1954: First Floor Plan
Curtis and Cowling, architects

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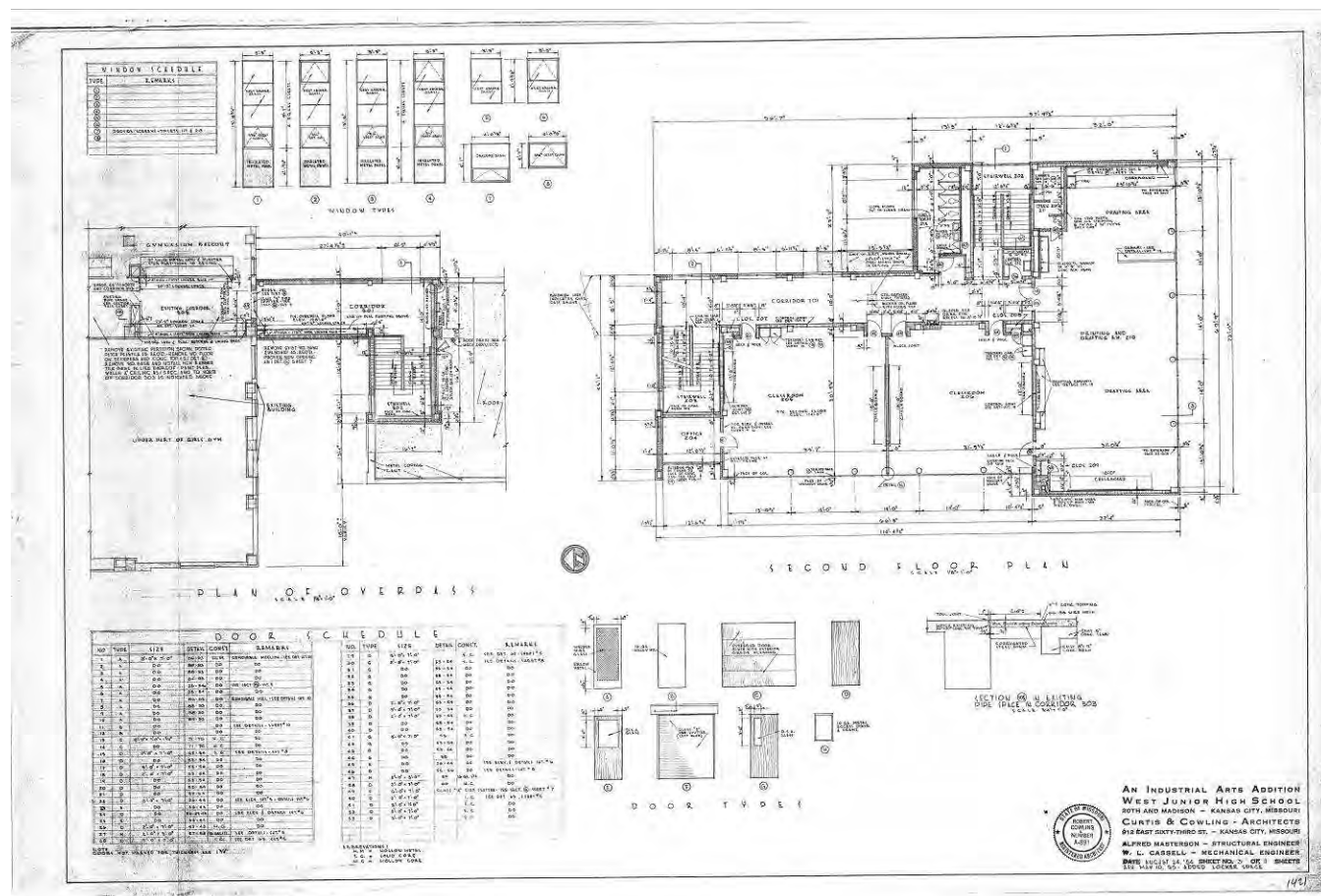


Figure 15
West Side Jr. High: Industrial Arts Addition
1954: Second Floor Plan
Curtis and Cowling, architects

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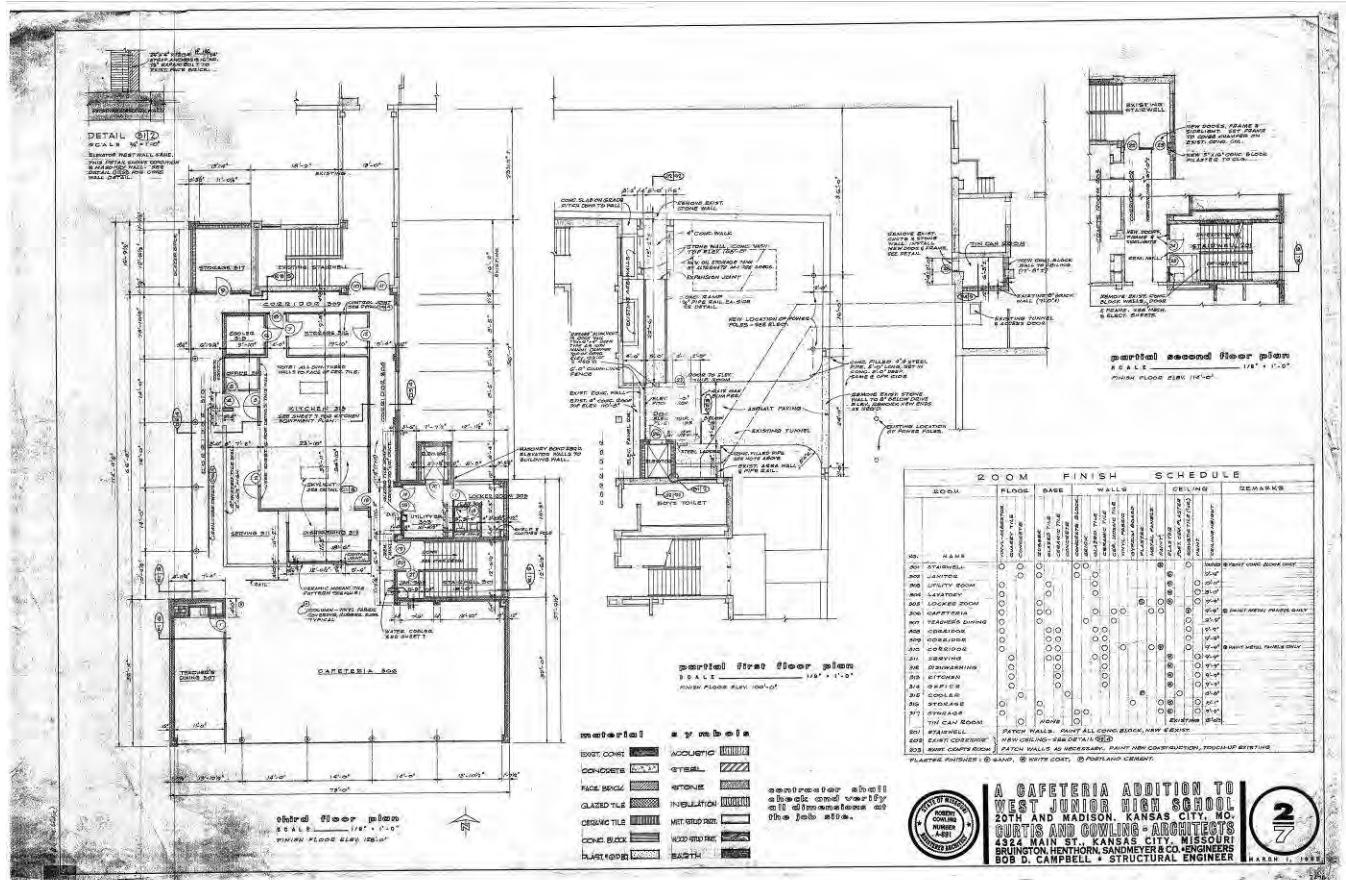


Figure 16
West Side Jr. High: Industrial Arts Cafeteria Addition
1962: Third floor plan
Curtis and Cowling, architects

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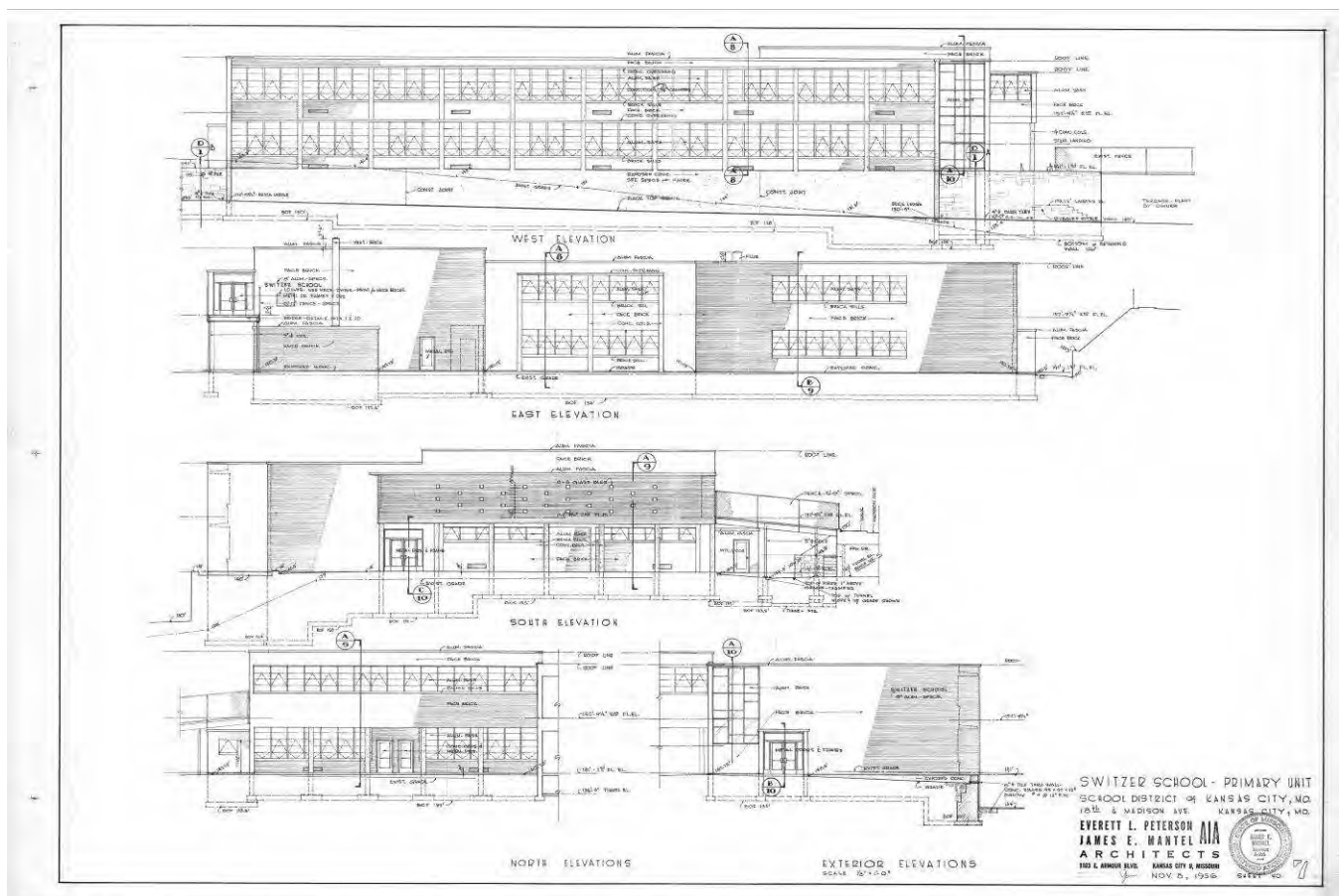


Figure 17
Switzer School: Primary Unit
1956: All elevations
Peterson and Mantel, architects

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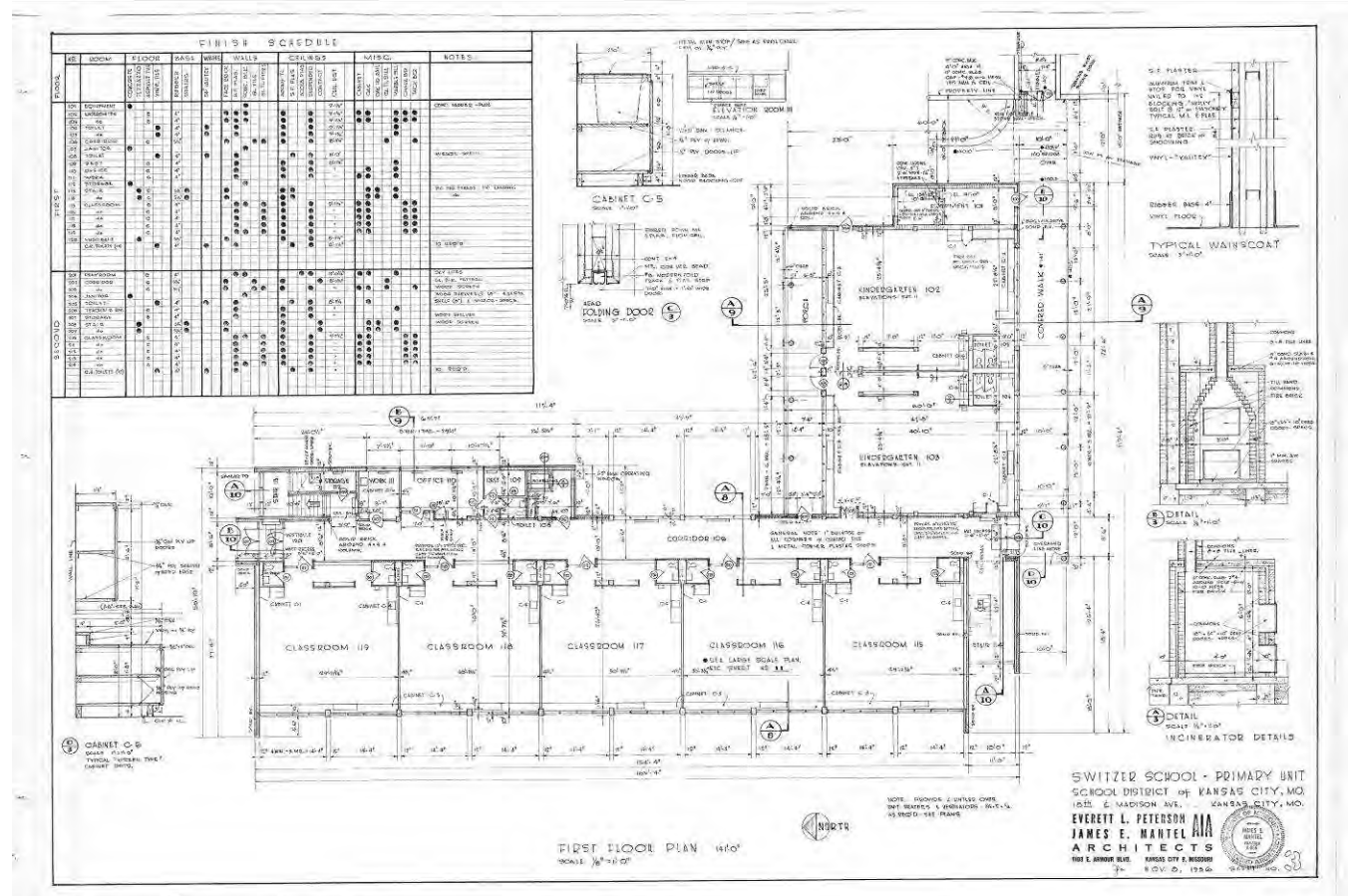


Figure 18
Switzer School: Primary Unit
1956: First Floor Plan
Peterson and Mantel, architects

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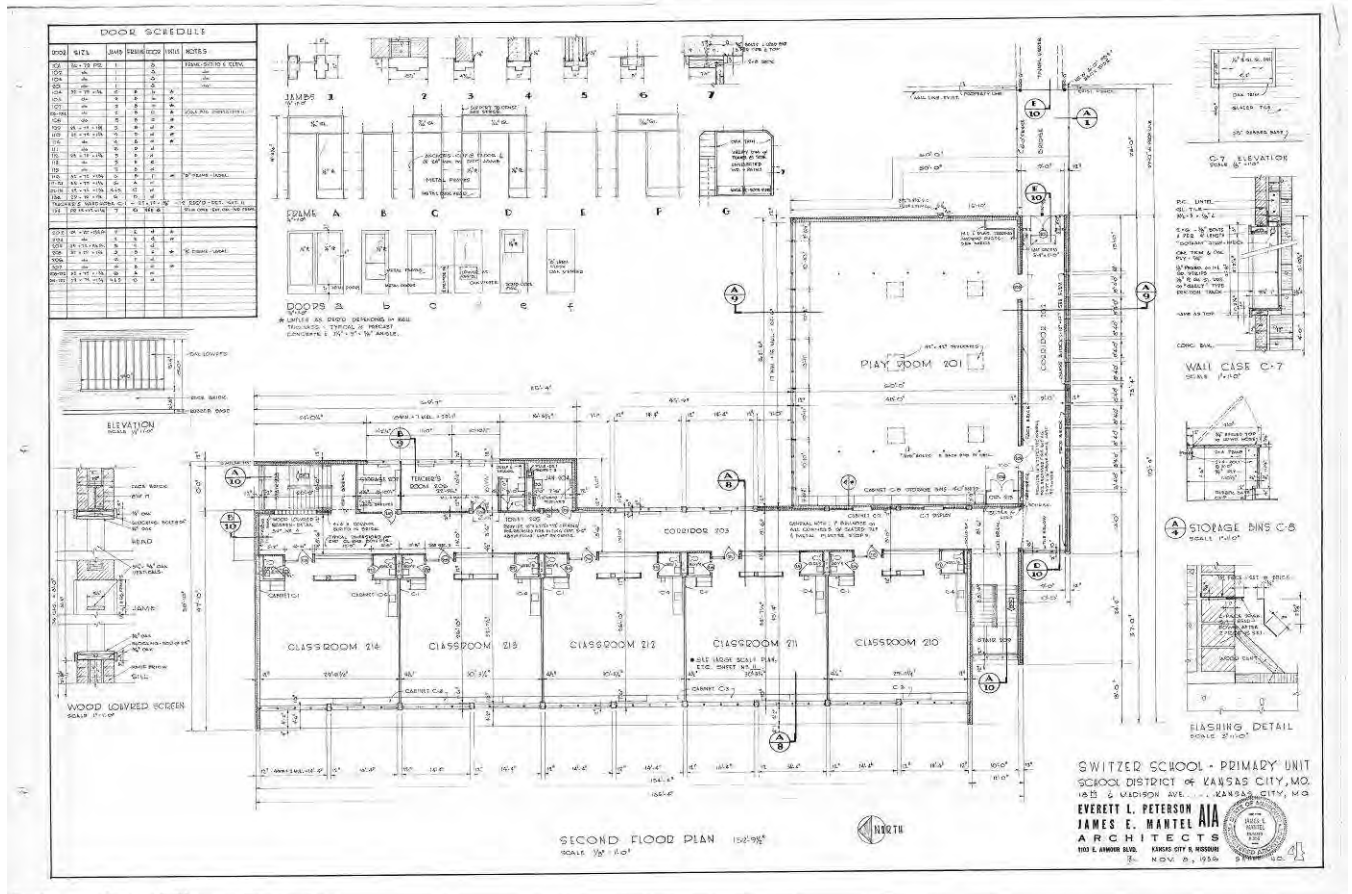


Figure 19
Switzer School: Primary Unit
1956: Second Floor Plan
Peterson and Mantel, architects

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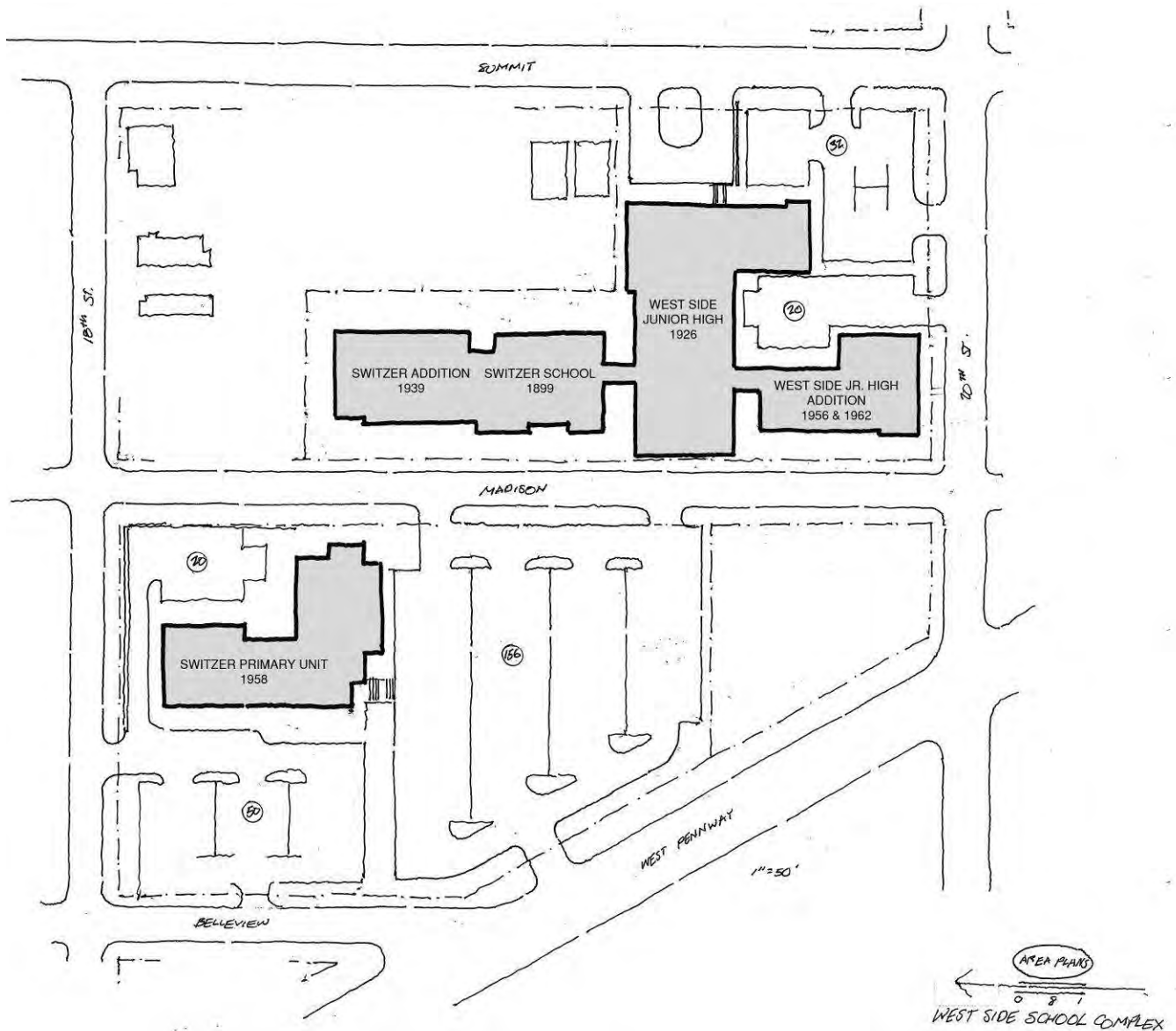


Figure 20
Site Plan, Switzer School Buildings Complex

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Figure 21
Switzer School North (left) and South (right)
Photo c. 1905
Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri

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Figure 22
Switzer (North): Main entry
Boys' Club Photo c. 1920
Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri

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Figure 23

West Side Jr. High School, 1926: main facade

Photo c. 1930

Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri

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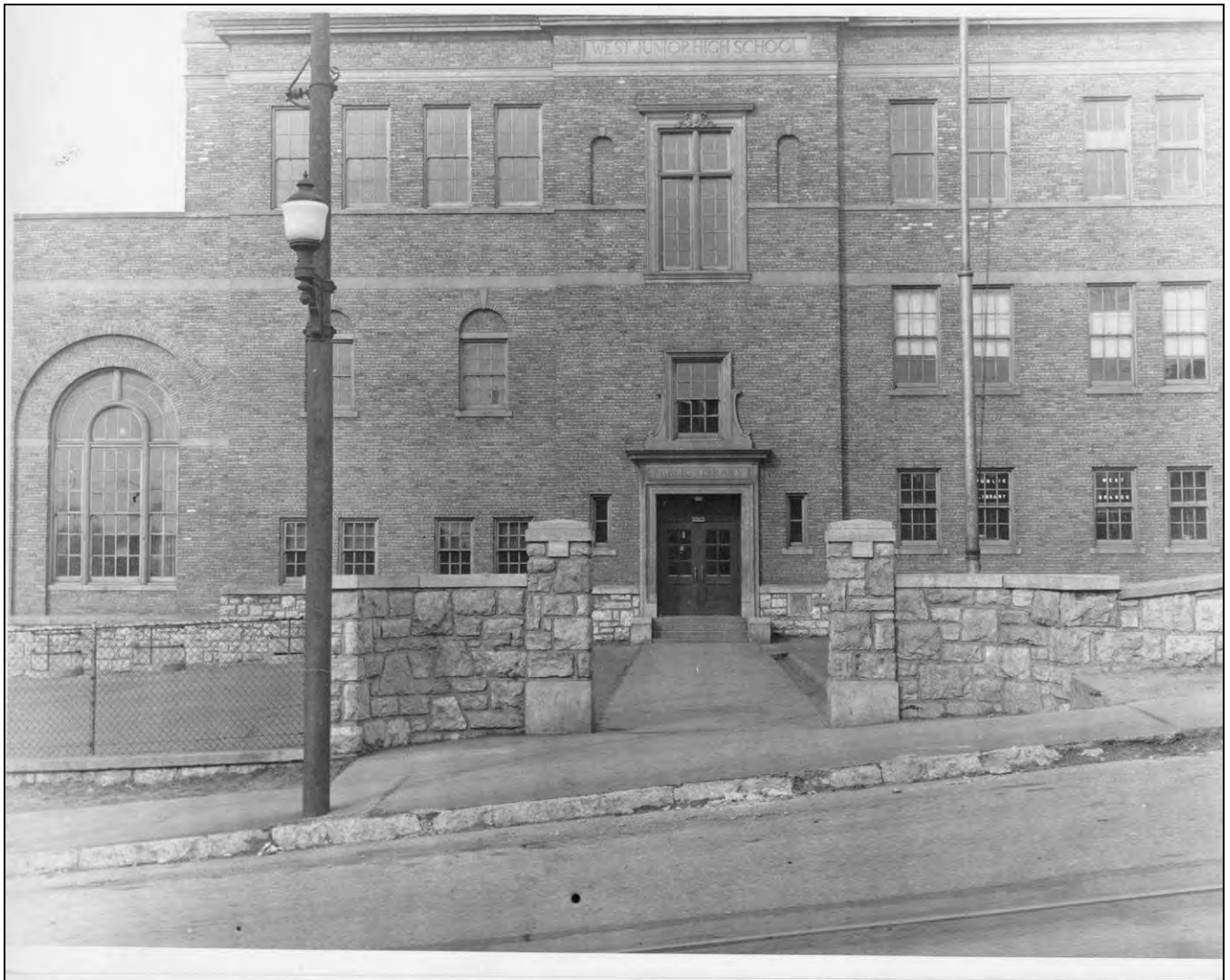


Figure 24
West Side Jr. High School
Photo c. 1926
Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri

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Figure 25
West Side Jr. High School: Industrial Arts Building
Photo c. 1956
Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri

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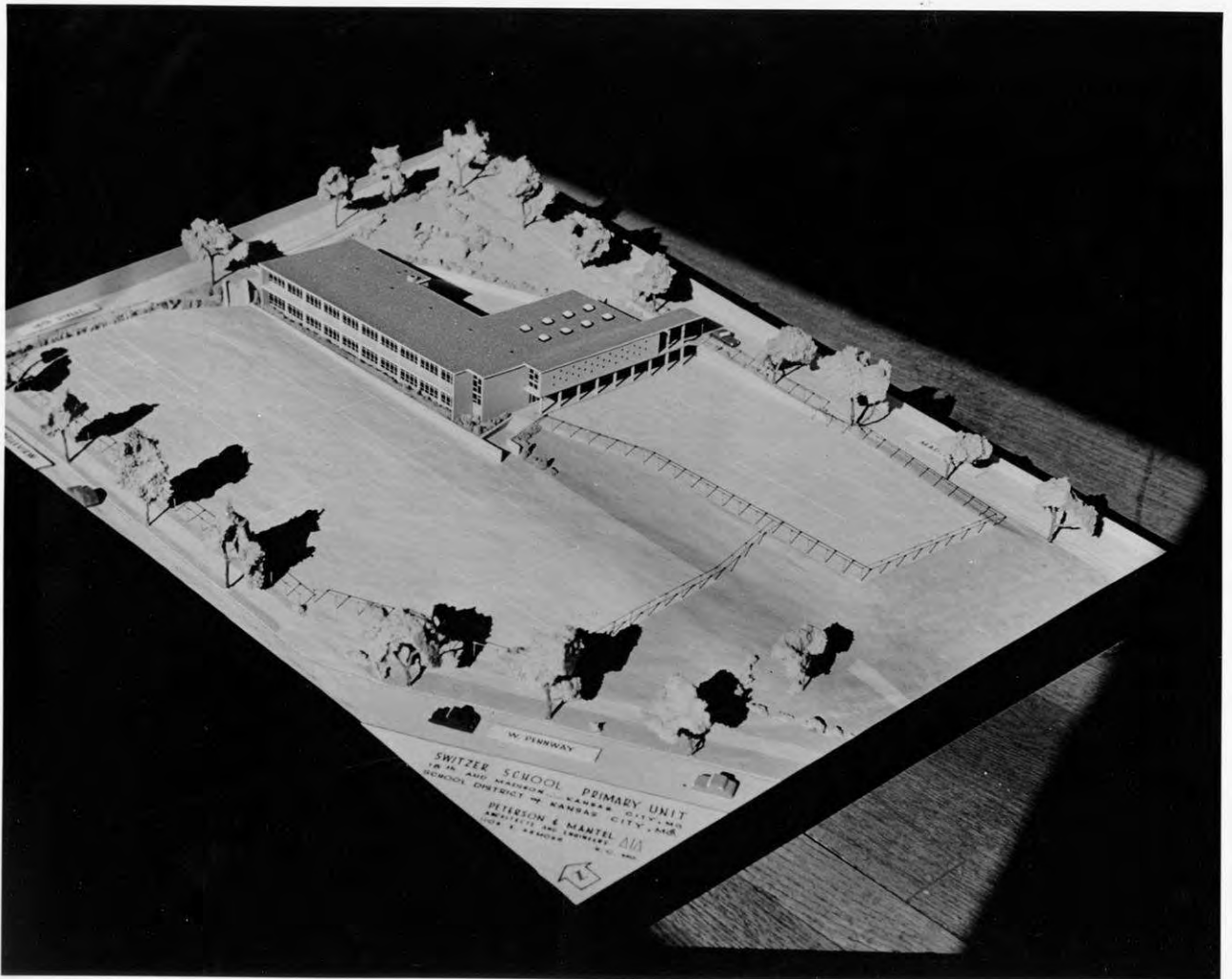


Figure 26
Switzer School Primary Unit
Architects Model: Photo c. 1956
Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri

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Figure 27
Switzer School Primary Unit
Photo c. 1958
Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri



Switzer School⁰²⁷
 1829 Madison
 AVE, 18th and
 Summit, and
 20th and Madison
 Kansas City,⁰²⁶
 Jackson County,
 Missouri
 UTM REFS:
 15/362040 E
 15/4328080 N











PURCHASE ORDER NUMBER: 0458144
MATERIAL OR STOCK#: 639EPR3707
DESCRIPTION: EASTER BASKET
QUANTITY OF RETAILS: 24 EA
MFG'S IDENT NO: 1095 PROD DATE 8305
NET WT: 3.2 KGS GROSS WT: 5.9 KGS
MEASUREMENTS: 0.129 CBM











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