

**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 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 Lincoln School

Other names/site number N/A

Name of related Multiple Property Listing N/A

## 2. Location

Street & number 1400 E. Pony Thomas Street

N/A

not for publication

City or town West Plains

N/A

vicinity

State Missouri Code MO County Howell Zip Code 65775

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

I hereby certify that this X 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 X 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    C    D

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources  
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

Lincoln School  
Name of Property

Howell, Missouri  
County and State

## 5. Classification

### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

### Number of Resources within Property

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	3	structures
0	1	objects
1	4	<b>Total</b>

### Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

## 6. Function or Use

### Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION/School

### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL/Meeting Hall

RECREATION AND CULTURE/Museum

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19<sup>th</sup> AND EARLY 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY  
AMERICAN MOVEMENTS/Craftsman

### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: CONCRETE

walls: WOOD/Weatherboard

roof: ASPHALT

other:

☒

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION ON CONTINUATION PAGES

Lincoln School  
Name of Property

Howell, Missouri  
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## 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.)

- ☒ 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

☒ STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE ON CONTINUATION PAGES

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_

☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

☒ State Historic Preservation Office

☐ Other State agency

☐ Federal agency

☐ Local government

☒ University

☐ Other. Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

### Areas of Significance

Ethnic Heritage: Black

Education

### Period of Significance

1926 – 1954

### Significant Dates

1926: construction

1954: last graduation

### Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

Unknown

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## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreeage of Property** Less than an acre

### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1	<u>36.741935</u> Latitude:	<u>-91.852265</u> Longitude:	3	<u>36.741928</u> Latitude:	<u>-91.851559</u> Longitude:
2	<u>36.74152</u> Latitude:	<u>-91.852271</u> Longitude:	4	<u>36.741505</u> Latitude:	<u>-91.851577</u> Longitude:

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

       NAD 1927 or X NAD 1983

1	<u>15</u> Zone	<u>602467</u> Easting	<u>4066859</u> Northing	3	<u>15</u> Zone	<u>602530</u> Easting	<u>4066859</u> Northing
2	<u>15</u> Zone	<u>602467</u> Easting	<u>4066813</u> Northing	4	<u>15</u> Zone	<u>602529</u> Easting	<u>4066812</u> Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (On continuation sheet)

**Boundary Justification** (On continuation sheet)

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kevin Cupka Head, Director, Warren Center for Archaeological Research  
organization Missouri State University date 11/7/2024  
street & number 901 S. National Ave. telephone (417) 836-5363  
city or town Springfield state MO zip code 65897  
e-mail kcupkahead@missouristate.edu

## Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Photographs**
- **Owner Name and Contact Information**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for nominations 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.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.



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**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

Tier 1 – 60-100 hours  
Tier 2 – 120 hours  
Tier 3 – 230 hours  
Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

## Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch 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.

## Photo Log:

Name of Property: Lincoln School

City or Vicinity: West Plains

County: Howell State: Missouri

Photographer: Emily Gray

Date  
Photographed: June 10, 2024

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

### Exterior

- 1 of 17. South elevation, photograph facing north.
- 2 of 17. South and east elevations, photograph facing northwest.
- 3 of 17. East elevation, photograph facing west.
- 4 of 17. East and north elevations, photograph facing southwest.
- 5 of 17. West and north elevations, photograph facing southeast.
- 6 of 17. West and south elevations, photograph facing northeast.

### Interior – Main Level

- 7 of 17. Main room interior, photographed from north wall facing south.
- 8 of 17. Main room interior, photographed from west wall facing east.
- 9 of 17. Main room interior, photographed from south wall facing north.
- 10 of 17. Descending stairway to basement, photographed from entry facing east.

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Interior – Basement

- 11 of 17. Basement interior, photographed from west wall facing east.
- 12 of 17. Basement interior, photographed from center facing north.
- 13 of 17. Bathroom, photographed from doorway facing north.
- 14 of 17. Kitchen, photographed from east wall facing northwest.
- 15 of 17. Utility closet with exposed joist, photographed from doorway facing northeast.
- 16 of 17. Basement interior, photographed from kitchen entry facing southwest.
- 17 of 17. Open exterior door, photographed from outside facing east.

**Figure Log:**

Include figures on continuation pages at the end of the nomination.

- Figure 1. Context Map. Source: USGS, 1984.
- Figure 2. Site Map. Source: ESRI, 2024.
- Figure 3. Current Floor Plan (Main Level). Source: Oaks III, 2024.
- Figure 4. Current Floor Plan (Basement Level). Source: Oaks III, 2024.
- Figure 5. South Elevation, Prior to 2024 Renovation. Source: McConnell, 2024.
- Figure 6. Exposed Interior Framing of North Wall, Prior to 2024 Renovation. Source: McConnell, 2024.
- Figure 7. Exposed Framing of Roof, Prior to 2024 Renovation. Source: McConnell, 2024.
- Figure 8. Scene From Washington Avenue Neighborhood, ca. 1915. Source: McConnell, 2024.
- Figure 9. Basement Interior, Prior to 2024 Renovation. Source: McConnell, 2024.
- Figure 10. Class Photograph, 1944 or 1945, Mary Margaret Givehand, Teacher. Source: Oaks III, 2024.
- Figure 11. Class Photograph, 1952, Dorothy Tiddle, Teacher. Source: Oaks III, 2024.
- Figure 12. Lincoln School in the Background of Oaks Family Photographs. Source: Oaks III, 2024.
- Figure 13. Property Setting, View WNW. Source: Gray, 2024.
- Figure 14. Property Wetting, View SW. Source: Gray, 2024.
- Figure 15. Benches and Fence Along North Boundary, View ENE. Source: Gray, 2024.

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N/A
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**Summary**

The Lincoln School, located at 1400 East Pony Thomas Street in West Plains, Howell County, Missouri (Figure 1), was constructed in 1926<sup>1</sup>. The school is a one-story, front-gabled frame building on a concrete basement foundation. The one-room schoolhouse is rectangular in plan, measuring approximately 30 by 22 feet. The building is clad in wood weatherboard siding beneath an asphalt shingle, clipped gable roof with intact historic wooden knee brackets. A concrete stoop and stair lead to the covered main entrance on the south elevation of the building. A poured concrete, below-grade stairway connects the sidewalk along Washington Avenue to a basement entrance on the west elevation. Concrete steps also access a rear entry on the east end of the north elevation.

The property remains on its original 0.75-acre lot in West Plains, within the city's historically Black neighborhood (Figure 2). There are no outbuildings, though a basketball court and swing set were constructed on the eastern half of the lot, which is also known as Lincoln Park. Only the blacktop of the basketball court remains. Additional improvements to the lot in 2024 include the installation of a steel perimeter fence, paved parking area along Pony Thomas Street, a new flagpole, and two picnic benches in greenspace along the northern edge of the lot (Figures 13–15). As enumerated in Section 5, the permanent structures (e.g., basketball court, parking lot, perimeter fence) and object (flagpole) postdate the period of significance and are assessed as non-contributing resources.

The property clearly retains its integrity of *location, design, setting, feeling* and *association*. In 2024, the building underwent renovation and rehabilitation work, including systems modernization, weatherboard restoration, installing new windows and doors, and updating some interior fixtures and finishes to accommodate modern use. These alterations have significantly infringed on the property's integrity of *materials* and, to a lesser extent, *workmanship*. Despite these alterations, the building retains its original layout and form and conveys its historic function as a school. On the main level, the interior retains an open plan suited to its function as a classroom. Non-historic window replacements match the dimensions of the originals, and the original fenestration pattern has been retained. As none of the alterations manifest in the present building detract from the property's historic character, the property retains its integrity of *materials* and *workmanship*.

**Setting**

Lincoln School is situated within the historically Black neighborhood in the northeastern part of West Plains, bounded by Abe Taylor Street to the north, Pony Thomas Street to the south, Washington Avenue to the west, and to the east by Lincoln Park and Jackson Street. The only

<sup>1</sup> Crockett Oaks III, Lincoln School, Preliminary NRHP Eligibility Assessment, Spring 2024.

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other building on this block is a steel frame storage building at the northwest corner of Pony Thomas and Jackson Streets. Many of the houses and other buildings that once comprised the immediate neighborhood have been razed and, in some cases, replaced with newer construction (e.g., mid-to-late-twentieth-century ranch houses on the west side of Washington Avenue). Contemporaneous housing is still intact further east along Pony Thomas Street. A lumber yard is located opposite the property on the north side of Pony Thomas Street.

There are few notable features within the property boundary beyond the schoolhouse. The building sits on a relatively level prominence in the southwest corner of the lot. The lot itself is a mown grassy lot with sparse mature shade trees and a rolling decline to the east. Considering their size in 2024, some of the extant shade trees were likely alive during the period of significance. In 2024, a steel perimeter fence was installed around the majority of the open space. A concrete parking lot was also installed along the front of the property on Pony Thomas Street in 2024. The remnant blacktop of a basketball court and two picnic tables convey the use of the space as a park after the closure of the school. The present lot presents much the same character as it would have as a schoolyard during the period of significance. Certainly, the topography and vegetation have changed very little. The absence of a swing set or playground area is the most obvious departure from the historic school landscape.

**Exterior**

Lincoln School is a one-story front-gabled frame building on a concrete basement foundation. The clipped gable roof is covered in non-historic asphalt composition shingles, has historic triangular knee braces at the gable ends, and is drained by non-historic metal gutters and downspouts. Non-historic soffits with recessed exterior light fixtures have been added to the eaves on each gable end. A historic square brick chimney with non-historic vent and cap extends from the southeast slope of the roof. The original simple drop joint, wood weatherboard cladding was recently restored and repainted. The original double-hung six-over-six windows have been replaced with non-historic windows of identical shape and size. This reversed the use of smaller non-historic windows during a previous renovation and restored the windows to their original dimensions. The original fenestration pattern has been retained, consisting of two gangs of three windows on the east elevation, two windows to either side of the covered single entry on the south elevation, and three awning basement windows along the eastern and western elevations. Exterior doors are identical non-historic, six-panel, hinged types. The exterior retains its historic form and clearly conveys its designed function as a historic one-room schoolhouse. Unless mentioned otherwise, all non-historic materials have been installed during the 2024 renovations.

*Primary (South) Elevation*

The south elevation of the building serves as the primary façade and entrance (Photo 1–2, 6). This elevation contains three bays, inclusive of a central entry straddled by identical double-

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hung, and six-over-six non-historic windows. The entry door is a non-historic, single six-panel, hinged fiberglass variety, covered by a non-historic clipped gable awning and non-historic exterior lamp. The current awning was installed in 2024, replacing an earlier non-historic shed awning, and mimics the gable end of the roof above. The gable end itself is embellished with four plain, triangular wooden knee brackets, a common element of Craftsman-style buildings from this period. A non-historic sign reading “LINCOLN SCHOOL”, made of individual raised lettering in a simple sans serif font, is installed above the entry, between the awning and knee brackets. A non-historic concrete stoop and stair with central railing were added in 2024, replacing an earlier, wood frame ramp and porch (Figure 5).

*East Elevation*

The east elevation of the building contains two bays of ganged windows spanning the northern three-quarters of the façade on the main level (Photo 2–4). Each grouping includes three identical double-hung, six-over-six non-historic windows. Three awning, six-pane, non-historic windows are evenly spaced along the above-ground basement wall.

*West Elevation*

The west elevation of the building is similar to the east elevation, although the main level lacks bays (Photo 5–6). A smaller, fixed basement window has been set in the southernmost basement bay, though the central and northern windows are identical to those on the east façade. A fourth bay on the basement level, between the central and southern windows contains a single, six-panel, hinged metal entry door that provides direct entrance to the basement level via a poured concrete stairway with retaining walls to either side. A non-historic wall-mounted security light lights the basement entry.

*North Elevation*

The north elevation is similar to the south elevation but lacks the central entrance features of the primary façade (Photo 5). As with the south elevation, the north gable end retains its historic triangular knee brackets. No windows are present for either the main or basement level. A single bay on the east end of the main level façade contains a non-historic single, six-panel, hinged fiberglass entry door identical to the main entry door. This entry is illuminated by a non-historic wall-mounted lamp identical to that on the south façade. A concrete stair with central railing installed in 2024 replaces an earlier stairway of similar construction. An external frame pen of 4 x 4 posts and horizontal plank panels was also installed west of the stairway in 2024, concealing the non-historic air conditioning condenser.

**Interior – Main Floor**

The main floor interior retains the open space of the one-room schoolhouse, although much of the fixtures and finishes have been updated in 2024 (Figure 3; Photo 7–9). The use of transparent plate glass barriers to frame the basement stairway (Photo 10) is a notable departure from the

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original stair entry, which was enclosed by interior lathe and plaster walls and a door. The historic brick chimney has been left exposed, and the original hardwood floor is intact. The interior walls are covered in non-historic horizontal panels mimicking the buildings exterior weatherboard siding. Non-historic recessed lighting, track lighting, and a ceiling fan have been installed in a non-historic sheetrock ceiling, which has been painted black to match the exterior doors. A non-historic pull-down attic access is located above the main entrance. The upper sashes of the two southern windows, as well as the northeastern window have been decorated with stained glass panels depicting historical and biographical scenes. A bespoke framed mural, “By God’s Grace,” painted by Dr. Bolaji Ogunwo in 2024 prominently occupies the space along the north wall where a chalkboard once similarly drew the focus of the room’s occupants (Photo 9)<sup>2</sup>.

### **Interior – Basement**

The basement interior was substantially modified in 2024 to make the space useable and suitable to a modern function, with select original details left exposed to convey the historic character of the building (Figure 4; Photo 11–12). A closet has been installed beneath the descending stairway in the southeast corner of the building. A non-historic bathroom has been installed in the northwest corner of the basement, with a non-historic kitchen installation in the northeast corner (Photo 13–14). A utility closet, housing the furnace and water heater has been installed between the bathroom and the kitchen (Photo 15). The exterior walls of the basement have been left exposed to the interior and are plastered in a manner consistent with the period of significance. A second mural by Dr. Ogunwo was added to the wall at the stairway's base in 2024 (Photo 11). Interior walls are covered with drywall and the main floor joists, ducting, and electrical are concealed by a sheetrock ceiling (Photo 16). The basement floor has been leveled and covered with non-historic faux wood laminate flooring. Though inactive, the brick chimney has been left exposed in the southeast corner of the main room (Photo 17).

### **Secondary Resources**

In addition to the primary resource (the schoolhouse), the property contains three non-contributing structures: a basketball court, parking lot, and steel perimeter fence; as well as one non-contributing object: a flagpole (Figure 2). All of these features post-date the period of significance. The basketball court is no longer in use, and there is no standing hoop. The parking lot, fence, and flagpole were all installed during the 2024 renovations. The flagpole is located near the location of the historic flagpole associated with the school.

### **Integrity**

Integrity is defined as the ability of a property to convey its significance, and is evaluated separately for a property’s *location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, and/or feeling*<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Crockett Oaks III, #WeAreLincolnSchool, Microsoft PowerPoint Presentation, February 16, 2024: Slide 12.

<sup>3</sup> National Park Service, How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation, National Register Bulletin 15, 4.

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N/A

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The building is at its original location, has not undergone any additions or substantial alterations in form or design, and the surrounding neighborhood — though changed — retains many contemporaneous dwellings and the general character of the residential neighborhood served by Lincoln School. While certain landscape features have been lost (e.g., the swing set and basketball goal), these features overlapped with the use of the space as a park after the period of significance, and their absence does not detract from the ability of the property to convey its function as a school and schoolyard. As such, the property retains integrity of *location*, *setting*, and *design*.

The Lincoln School has undergone many historic and non-historic alterations that have resulted in the replacement of original *materials*. Several modification episodes occurred during the period of significance, such as the installation of toilets in the basement in 1949 (Figure 9), and others occurred during the decades after classes ceased in 1954. Significant renovation efforts occurred in 2024. Non-historic materials are extensive, including windows, doors, ducting and vents, lighting and electrical fixtures, and wall coverings. Historically, the stairwell in the southeast corner was enclosed in lathe and plaster walls and accessed by a hinged door. This enclosure is replaced by a plate glass barrier installed around the stairwell in 2024, resulting in the only notable departure from the historic plan of the main floor. The interior of the basement has been drastically altered in 2024 to create a useable space. Historically, the basement was not a finished space, and was principally used for maintenance, storage, and (after 1949) indoor restrooms. Key original elements, such as the hardwood floor of the classroom, brick chimney, concrete foundation walls have been left intact and exposed. On the exterior, non-historic materials include doors and windows, light fixtures, asphalt composition shingles, and paint.

As the core structure and design elements of the building have been retained — even if concealed at times beneath non-historic finishes — the original *workmanship* of the design and construction of the property remains evident (Figures 6 and 7). The decision to leave select features exposed further provides visitors the opportunity to engage with and appreciate the original material as handled and installed by the builders in 1926. That said, the 2024 renovations have covered over or replaced a significant amount of the original construction elements of the building, many of which would have been exposed historically. While there are concerns pertaining to *materials* and *workmanship*, the alterations to the property have not resulted in a loss of historic character. The building is immediately recognizable as a one-room schoolhouse and retains the diagnostic stylistic elements of its 1926 construction date. As a result, the property retains integrity of *materials*, *workmanship*, and *feeling*.

<sup>4</sup> National Park Service, Evaluating Non-Historic Exteriors, Best Practices Review, Issue 1, 1.

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### Summary

The extant Lincoln School building, located at 1400 East Pony Thomas Street in West Plains, Howell County, Missouri, was constructed in 1926 to replace a smaller and reportedly poorly constructed school erected nearby ca. 1890<sup>5,6,7</sup>. Lincoln School operated as the only school for Black students in West Plains and the surrounding Howell County from 1926 until its closure in 1954, after which West Plains schools were integrated<sup>8</sup>. During this *period of significance*, the school was overseen by 11 different teachers and was one of few social and geographical anchors for the local African American community<sup>9</sup>. Although no longer used as a school after 1954, the property continued to serve as a meeting place, and as a lasting material reminder of segregation for the residents of West Plains predominately Black neighborhood. Newly restored and rehabilitated to serve as a community meeting place and educational facility, Lincoln School today is a historical rarity and cultural landmark worthy of recognition by inclusion on the NRHP<sup>10</sup>.

The property is considered significant under *Criterion A* in the areas of *Education and Ethnic Heritage: Black*, as the only known extant historic African American school house in West Plains – if not Howell County. The historic significance of this property is evident at the *local* level, and the period of significance is 1926–1954, as defined above.

### Historic Context

At the start of the Civil War, there were approximately 36 enslaved persons enumerated among the population of Howell County.<sup>11</sup> While some of these folks remained in Howell County after emancipation, many of the Black families residing in Howell County by the early twentieth century had arrived in the county after the Civil War. Among the county's early Black pioneers were Liza and Pony Thomas, William Bobo, and the Campbell family. Other Black families with ties to the community include the surnames of Davidson, Oaks, Givehand, Kannard, and Ball.<sup>12</sup> Jobs were available with the railroad and at B.F. Olden's Fruit Orchards.<sup>13</sup> It was the families of these formerly enslaved pioneers and their descendants who would build, support, and attend Lincoln School in West Plains.

By the late nineteenth century, a predominately Black neighborhood was well-established in northeastern West Plains. Along with a rural Black neighborhood in Dry Creek Township just

<sup>5</sup> Gary R. Kremer and Brett Rogers, Lincoln School, Missouri Historic Property Inventory Form, June 30, 2001, 2.

<sup>6</sup> *The West Plains Journal*, April 1, 1926.

<sup>7</sup> "Special School Levies Carry by Big Majorities", *West Plains Quill*, April 8, 1926.

<sup>8</sup> Kremer and Rogers, Lincoln School, 2.

<sup>9</sup> Oaks III, #WeAreLincolnSchool, Slide 7.

<sup>10</sup> Kaitlyn McConnell, "Lincoln School, West Plains former Black school, to become cultural center," *Ozarks Alive*, August 23, 2023, accessed June, 2024, <https://www.ozarksalive.com/stories/lincolnschoolwestplains>

<sup>11</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, Federal Population Slave Schedules, Howell County, Missouri, 1860.

<sup>12</sup> Kremer and Rogers, Lincoln School, 2.

<sup>13</sup> Oaks III, #WeAreLincolnSchool, Slide 3.



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north of West Plains, the Black neighborhood around Washington Avenue encompassed the sole African American community in Howell County.<sup>14</sup> The neighborhood is often referred to as “Illinois Town,” “C\_\_town” or “N\_\_ Hill” in historical accounts.<sup>15,16,17</sup> Unlike many other towns throughout Southern Missouri during Jim Crow, West Plains did not institute “sundown” laws, which likely contributed to the growth of the local Black community.<sup>18,19</sup> The threat of racial violence was nevertheless a palpable source of anxiety for the residents, especially during the 1890s and early 1900s. Many folks left both West Plains and Southern Missouri as a result, especially during a major emigration in 1903.<sup>20</sup>

In 1847, Missouri passed legislation that prohibited the education of African Americans, regardless of whether they were enslaved or free. Under the sympathetic Radical Republican administration of the early Reconstruction period, access to free public schools was mandated for all Missourians, ages 5 to 21, regardless of race. At the same time, segregation was codified into state law, with townships required to establish separate schools for African Americans. Enforcement proved difficult, as racism and a shortage of Black teachers greatly slowed the establishment of schools for African Americans, especially in small towns and rural areas. In West Plains and many other such places, dedicated education facilities wouldn’t be established until the first decades of the twentieth century, despite their legal requirement since 1866. Prior to this, African American schools in Missouri often made use of private residences, converted homes and outbuildings, or churches.<sup>21</sup> Until federally mandated integration was enforced after 1954, these “marginalized institutions” were typically the only source of formal education for generations of Black Missourians.<sup>22</sup>

A relative boom in the construction of new schools for Black students occurred throughout Missouri between World War I through the 1930s, even as the inequality and inadequacies of these institutions when compared to white schools was increasingly apparent to the general public. “...often similar to their white counterparts in economy of design, the rural schools especially, were always inferior in terms of construction and materials.”<sup>23</sup> While white-led school boards in some parts of Missouri resisted integration for nearly a decade after the 1954 ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the West Plains school district integrated for the following school year, in 1955.<sup>24</sup> Some of the rural and small-town Black schools were abandoned or razed, while others – such as the Lincoln School – were repurposed to serve the needs of the local community.

<sup>14</sup> Oaks III, #WeAreLincolnSchool, Slide 3.

<sup>15</sup> Kremer and Rogers, Lincoln School, 2.

<sup>16</sup> Oaks III, Lincoln School Prelim. EA., 2.

<sup>17</sup> Oaks III, #WeAreLincolnSchool, Slide 4.

<sup>18</sup> Kremer and Rogers, Lincoln School, 2.

<sup>19</sup> Oaks III, #WeAreLincolnSchool, Slide 3.

<sup>20</sup> Oaks III, #WeAreLincolnSchool, Slide 3.

<sup>21</sup> Kremer and Rogers, Af. Amer. Schools, 3–5.

<sup>22</sup> Kremer and Rogers, Af. Amer. Schools, 7.

<sup>23</sup> Kremer and Rogers, Af. Amer. Schools, 14.

<sup>24</sup> Kremer and Rogers, Lincoln School, 2.

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These simple, one-room frame buildings were easily converted to a variety of uses, and often relatively easy to relocate away from their original setting. Of these survivors, many would undergo significant alterations and additions over the years, resulting in buildings that no longer conveyed their intended and historical function as schools.

### **History of Lincoln School**

Little archival information was located pertaining to the details of the construction and operation of Lincoln School. There are no known student censuses and most information presented here is derived from limited oral history via Crockett Oaks III and the prior research of Kremer and Rogers. An earlier school was established in the North Washington Avenue neighborhood around 1890 (Figure 8). Also called Lincoln School, this building was reportedly a small and somewhat improvised frame building, likely cobbled together without any support or resources from the white neighbors.<sup>25</sup> The exact location of this building is unknown, but it was likely abandoned and demolished shortly after the present school was constructed in 1926. The two Lincoln Schools in West Plains are the only known historically Black schools to have existed in Howell County. Though larger than the previous building, and with a coal furnace in the basement, the 1926 schoolhouse lacked indoor plumbing. A privy was erected behind the school and used until toilets were installed in the basement in 1949 (Figure 9).<sup>26</sup>

At its height of operation during the 1930s, the school reportedly hired two teachers simultaneously.<sup>27</sup> Like all public schools in the state at the time, Lincoln School taught eight grades (First through Eighth). Between 1926 and 1954, the school was under the supervision of 11 different teachers (Figures 10–11; Table 1).<sup>28</sup> According to Crockett Oaks III, no formal student census exists. A typical school day at Lincoln School would start with a recital of the Pledge of Allegiance around the flagpole by the playground, as well as the singing of “Lift Every Voice and Sing” (the Black National Anthem). In addition to a swing set east of the building, the northwest corner of the lot was used as an informal baseball diamond.<sup>29</sup> With no local high school allowing Black students, graduates of Lincoln School only option for secondary education was to relocate to urban centers such as Springfield or Kansas City during the school year. As this was an untenable option for most families, most Black residents did not attend school past eighth grade.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Kremer and Rogers, Lincoln School, 2.

<sup>26</sup> Kremer and Rogers, Lincoln School, 2.

<sup>27</sup> Kremer and Rogers, Lincoln School, 2.

<sup>28</sup> Oaks III, #WeAreLincolnSchool, Slide 7.

<sup>29</sup> Kremer and Rogers, Lincoln School, 3.

<sup>30</sup> McConnell, “Lincoln School...to become cultural center,” accessed June, 2024.

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Table 1. Teachers at Lincoln School, West Plains, 1926–1954

Year(s)	Teacher
1926–1930	Lulu McKee
1931–1941	Louriece Penn
Exact dates unknown	Mary Adams
1942	Lois E. Young
1943–1944	Edyth Cooper
1944–1945	Mary Margaret Givehand
1946–1947	Mary Reynolds
1948–1950	Bettye Wilson
1951	Theodore McCroskey
1949–1952	Dorothy Tiddle
1953–1954	Houston Ellis

Along with the church and cemetery, schools traditionally served as a geographical and social anchor for rural and small-town Black communities.<sup>31</sup> Lincoln School was more than a place for the education of children. The school served as a community gathering place, hosting picnics, sporting events, and holiday programs. As is typical for rural and small-town Black neighborhoods, the school and the church were closely tied to all social happenings. Larger school events were often held at Mt. Olive Baptist Church, located a block south on Washington Avenue. The church building is still standing but has been converted into a private dwelling. Commencements were held at the local white school.<sup>32</sup>

West Plains school district integrated in 1955, and Lincoln School held its last commencement for the Class of 1954. Among the graduates that year was Crockett Oaks Jr., whose son and daughter-in-law are the current owners and principal caretakers of the property (Figure 12). After 1955, the building was owned and operated by the City of West Plains, serving as a V.F.W. post and Alcoholics Anonymous meeting place. The property was purchased from the City of West Plains by Crockett and Tonya Oaks III in 2023 for the price of \$1,200.<sup>33</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Absent local preservation efforts, determined individuals, and community support, many communities have lost or are in danger of losing not only their historic Black schools, but many

<sup>31</sup> Christopher C. Fennell, “Pulpits and Stones: African American Terrains of Action and Memory.” *Historical Archaeology* 55 (2021):550.

<sup>32</sup> Kremer and Rogers, Lincoln School, 3.

<sup>33</sup> McConnell, “Lincoln School...to become cultural center,” accessed June, 2024.

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other African American heritage sites, that have been ignored or actively obscured through over a century of systemic, institutionalized racism. Much of the published research has focused on urban centers or within the borders of the Little Dixie and the Bootheel.<sup>34</sup> This is not surprising. At the time of *Brown v. Board of Education*, approximately 90% of Missouri's Black student population resided in the St. Louis, Kansas City, or a handful of rural counties; Howell County was not one of them.<sup>35</sup>

Along with an earlier building no longer standing, Lincoln School was reportedly the only school for at least three generations of African Americans not only in West Plains, but in Howell County<sup>36</sup>. The building was constructed in 1926 and operated continuously as a school until 1954. Although the architect of the school is unknown, it was constructed by the hands of Black residents whose children would go on to learn within its walls. The property exists today as an essential model for the preservation of a small-town Missouri African American schoolhouse. It represents what would have been the most common form (rectilinear plan, gable end, one room, utilitarian) and the most common name (Lincoln) among such buildings throughout the state. As such, it effectively conveys and continues its function as a gathering and teaching place for future generations of West Plains. But can also be an effective surrogate for the many Lincoln — or Douglass, or Washington, or Carver, or unnamed 'Colored', 'African,' etc.— schoolhouses throughout the state, that can serve their communities no longer. As such, the property not only conveys its educational and socio-historical importance to a local community, but to a larger regional community as well.

For these reasons, the property is considered significant at the local level under Criterion A in the areas of Education and Ethnic Heritage – Black for the period of significance of 1926–1954, during which Lincoln School was the only available source of formal education for generations of West Plains' Black residents, and served as a cornerstone of a discrete community descended from the formerly enslaved pioneers of Howell County. As of 2024, the building retains its historic character and continues to both convey its function and serve its role of a place of education and community gathering.

<sup>34</sup> Kremer and Rogers, Af. Amer. Schools, 3–6.

<sup>35</sup> Monroe Billington, "Public School Integration in Missouri, 1954–64." *The Journal of Negro Education* 30, no. 3 (1966):252–262.

<sup>36</sup> Kremer and Rogers, Lincoln School, 3.

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**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Lot 3 and the W  $\frac{1}{2}$  of Lot 2 of Padon's Subdivision of E  $\frac{1}{2}$  of NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Section 21, Township 24, Range 8, west of the 5<sup>th</sup> P.M. in Missouri.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary includes the schoolhouse and platted lot historically and legally affiliated with the building.

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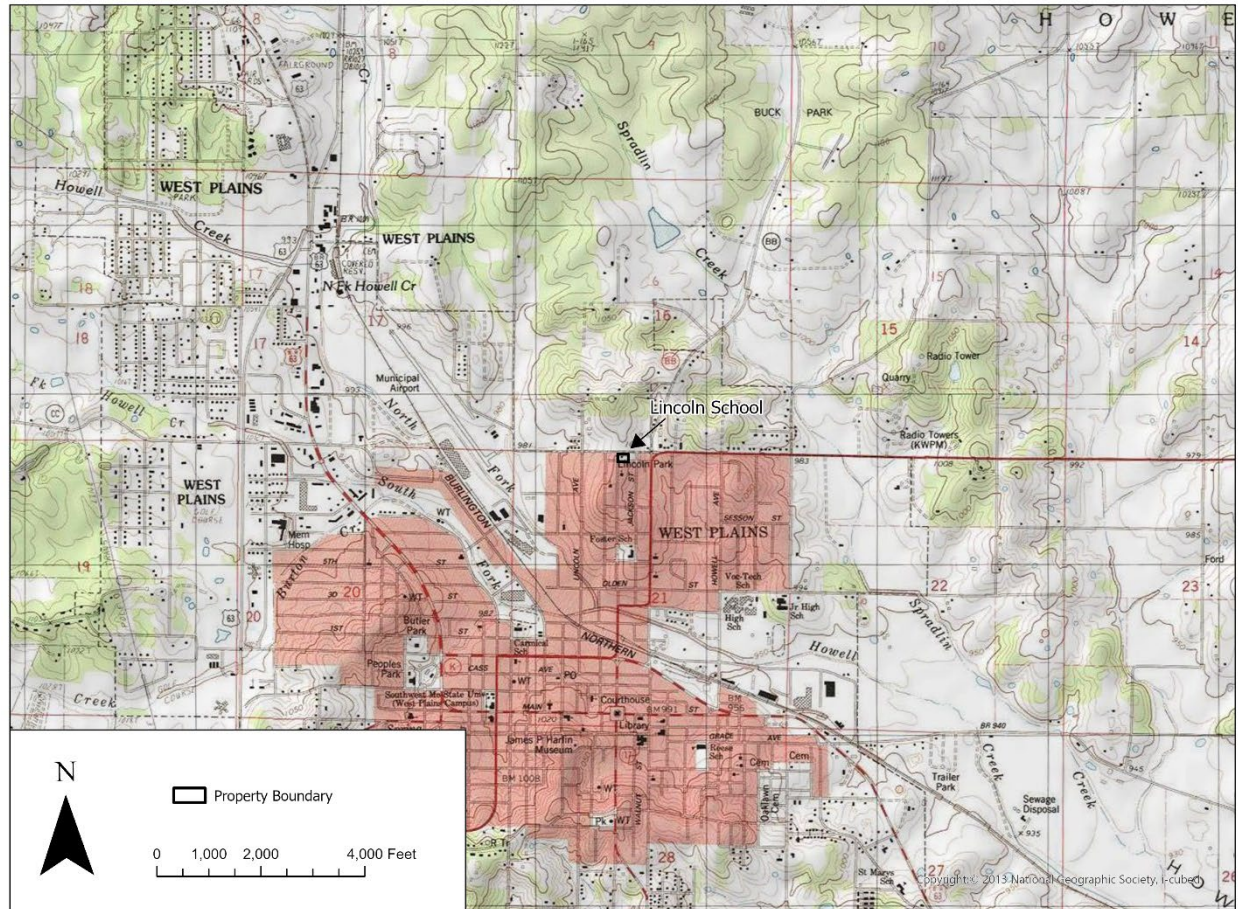


Figure 1. Context Map. USGS. 1984 West Plains, MO 7.5-minute Quad.



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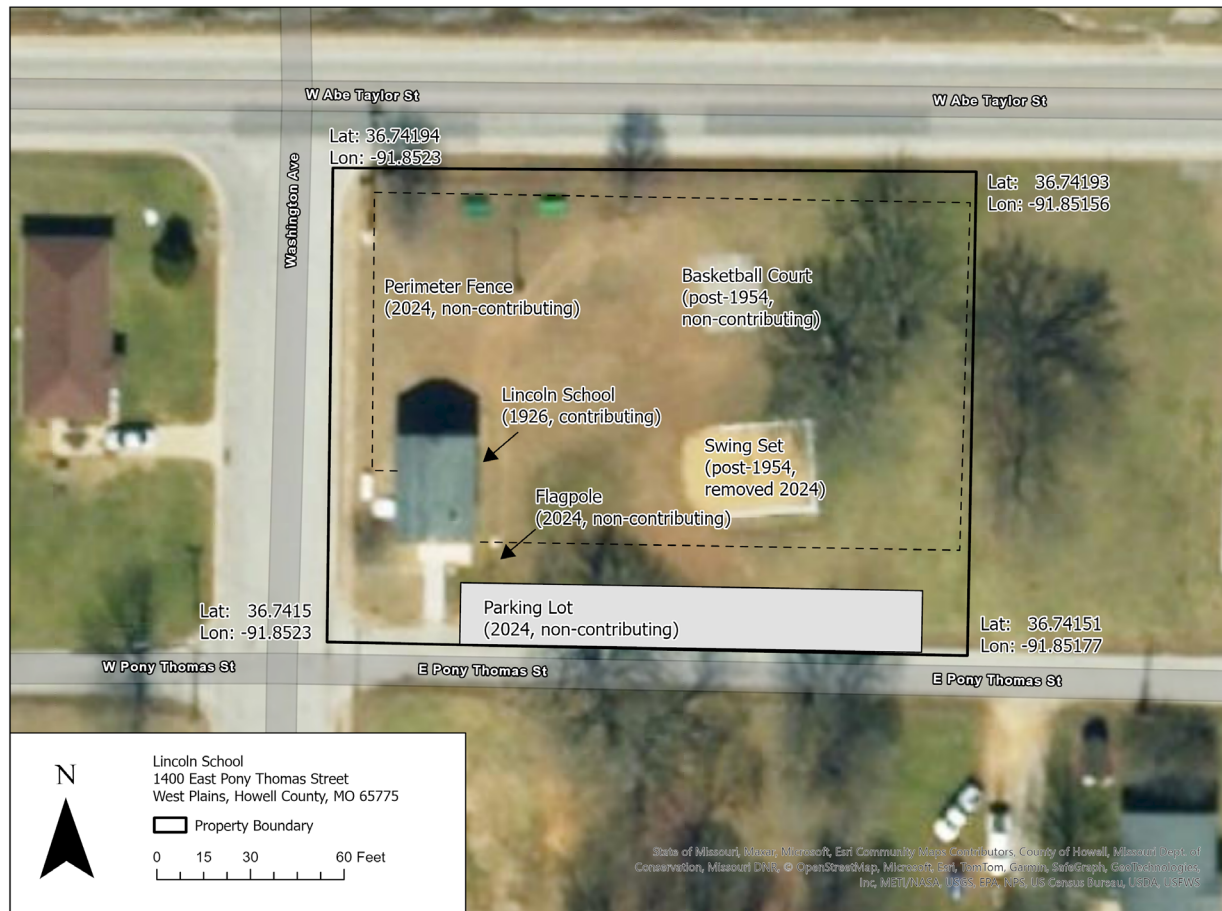


Figure 2. Site Map. ESRI Hybrid Reference Layer, 2024.



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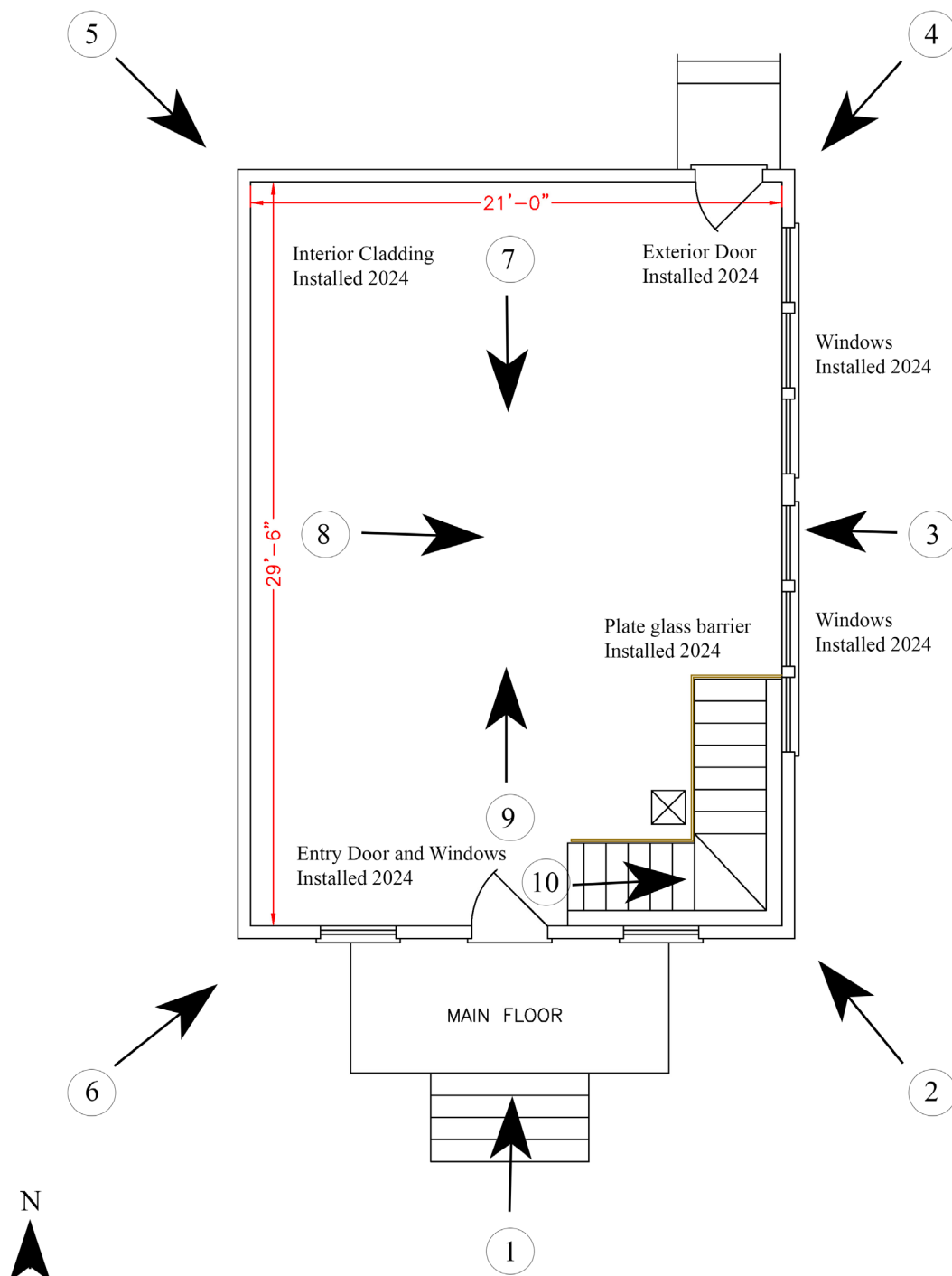


Figure 3. Current Floor Plan (Main Level). C.W. Oaks III.

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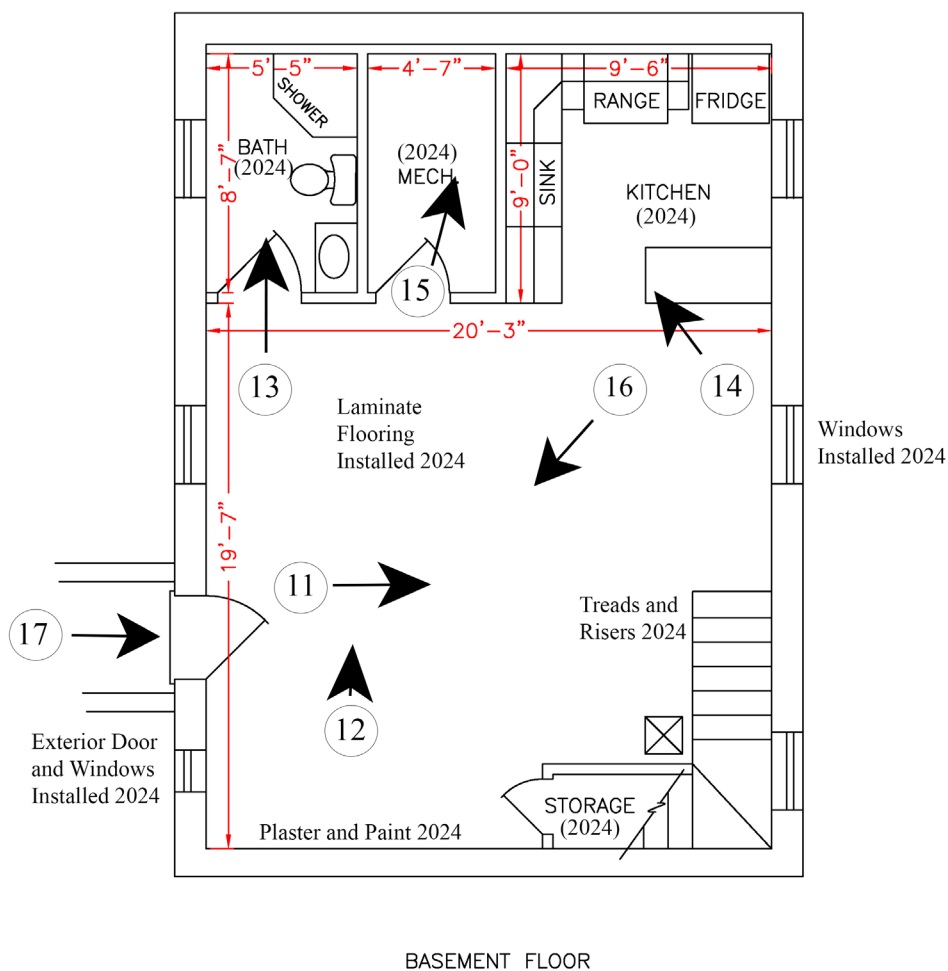


Figure 4. Current Floor Plan (Basement Level). C.W. Oaks III.

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**Figure 5. South Elevation, Prior to 2024 Renovation. McConnell, “Lincoln School...to become cultural center,” accessed June, 2024.**

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Figure 6. Exposed framing of the north wall before renovation. McConnell, "Lincoln School...to become cultural center," accessed June, 2024.



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**Figure 7. Exposed framing of the roof before renovation. McConnell, “Lincoln School...to become cultural center,” accessed June, 2024.**

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**Figure 8. Scene from Washington Avenue Neighborhood, ca. 1915. McConnell, “Lincoln School...to become cultural center,” accessed June, 2024.**

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**Figure 9. Basement interior prior to renovation. McConnell, “Lincoln School...to become cultural center,” accessed June, 2024.**

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**Figure 10. Class Photograph, 1944 or 1945, Mary Margaret Givehand, Teacher. C. W. Oaks III.**



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Figure 11. Class Photograph, 1952, Dorothy Tiddle, Teacher. C. W. Oaks III.

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Figure 12. Lincoln School in the Background of Oaks Family Photographs. C. W. Oaks III.

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**Figure 13. Property Setting, View WNW. Emily Gray, June 10, 2024.**



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Figure 14. Property Setting, View SW. Emily Gray, June 10, 2024.

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**Figure 15. Benches and Fence along North Boundary, View ENE. Emily Gray, June 10, 2024.**































































