

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Robidoux School

and/or common Junior College

2. Location

street & number 201 South 10th

not for publication

city, town St. Joseph

vicinity of

#6 - Hon. Thomas Coleman

state Missouri

code 29

county Buchanan

code 021

3. Classification

Category

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

Ownership

- public
  - private
  - both
- Public Acquisition
- in process
  - being considered

Status

- occupied
  - unoccupied
  - work in progress
- Accessible
- yes: restricted
  - yes: unrestricted
  - no

Present Use

- agriculture
  - commercial
  - educational
  - entertainment
  - government
  - industrial
  - military
- museum
  - park
  - private residence
  - religious
  - scientific
  - transportation
  - other:

4. Owner of Property

name Bill R. McKinney

street & number 201 South 10th

city, town St. Joseph

vicinity of

state Missouri 64501

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of Recorder of Deeds, Buchanan County Courthouse

street & number 5th and Jule

city, town St. Joseph

state Missouri 64501

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Johnson, Johnson and Roy, Inc. Richard Franks, A.I.A. Project Director  
title Historic Preservation Inventory, St. Joseph, Missouri. has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1972  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Department of Planning and Zoning, St. Joseph, City Hall

city, town St. Joseph

state Missouri 64501

## 7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved    date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Robidoux School is a two-story brick building with an English basement. The building is cruciform in shape and Classic Revival in style. The entire site is surrounded by a stone wall which is capped by a concrete ledge. A portion of the wall on the north and west, is rubble stone, and identifies the position of the original school building on this site. The remainder of the wall is cut stone and dates from the 1908 construction.

The walls of the building are laid in common bond, with bands of brick raised in ornamental design. Corner pilasters ornament the north and south wings.

Window bays on the north and south ends of the central corridor are cast metal, extending from a concrete lug sill at the first floor level to the stringcourse above the second floor level. The window units are ornamented with pilasters between the central sash and sidelights. Below the window bays are double leaf entrance doors which have concrete surrounds and shaped lintel with a bracket keystone.

With the exception of the auditorium wing, the building has a concrete foundation, watercourse, stringcourse and entablature. (The concrete is pre-cast to appear as if it were stone.) The parapet has pattern bond insets and a concrete cap.

Windows on the north, east and south facades are a variety of sizes and shapes, but are of the same detail at each floor level. At the basement level, windows extend from the foundation to the watercourse; on the first floor windows have concrete lug sills and flat arch radiating voussoirs; on the second floor windows have concrete lug sills and tie into the stringcourse. At some points on these facades there are accents by the addition of a concrete plate between the stringcourse and the entablature.

The front or west facade is much more highly ornamented than are the others, and is dominated by the central extension. The first level of the extension is the main entrance to the building. This entrance is reached by a nine step flight of cement stairs from the sidewalk level. The three door entrance has a concrete surround. The central door of the entrance has an ornate bracketed segmental pediment. Doors on either side have flat arch radiating voussoirs with a keystone. The extension is surmounted by a pediment with dentil trim and pattern bond face. Four concrete columns extend from the top of the door surround to the bottom of the nameplate below the pediment. The columns have composite capitals. The name of the school is incised in the nameplate which is also decorated at either end by Beaux-Art ribbon rosettes. Windows on the first floor level are casement with transom and have bracketed lug sills and bracketed hoods. Windows at the second floor level have concrete window surrounds and decorated lug sills, and are double hung. On either side of the central extension are single sash, double hung windows at each level. Other windows on the west facade are four sash, six over one, double hung with mullions. At the basement level the windows extend from the foundation to the watercourse and have a brick central mullion.

At the first floor level the windows have concrete continuous sills and flat arch radiating voussoirs. At the second floor level windows have continuous sills and are headed by a brick extension of the plate below the entablature. Windows on the north and south wings have decorated continuous sills on the second floor level as well as brackets on the outside mullions. Between the two window levels there is a Beau-Arts wreath and bracket.

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The auditorium wing of the building on the east is much more severe in its decoration, having only a corbelled brick entablature. Windows are three sash double hung on the first and second floor levels and single sash double hung on the basement level. Cast iron steps lead from double leaf doors with transom, on the first floor level. There is access to the boiler room and a boiler stack.

The interior of the building is utilitarian with very little ornamentation. The feature which merits comment is the system of interior stairs which provide immediate access and egress from all of the rooms. This is probably the architects reaction to the acknowledged need for fire exits which was accentuated by the Iroquois Theatre fire of December 30, 1903.

Alterations include the windows on the east facade of the first floor of the north and south wings which have been filled in with cement blocks by the previous owner.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1908 **Builder/Architect** Eckel and Boschen

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Robidoux School is eligible under Criteria C and A to wit: that it embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Neo-Classical Revival style of the late 19th - early 20th century; and that it is associated with the development of public education in St. Joseph, Missouri, northwest Missouri's most important city.

One of the earliest signs that a frontier settlement was growing into an established and viable community was the move to provide public education for its citizens.

This move came in St. Joseph with the election of the first Board of Public Schools in 1860. Three grammar schools, one in each of the three wards of the city, were built. A limited high school curriculum was offered by Edward S. Neely in the small building between Francis and Felix which had previously been his private academy.

The events of the Civil War forced cancellation of the city schools in the Spring of 1861. In August of 1864, the Board of Public Schools voted to reopen the schools and named Mr. Neely as Superintendent.<sup>2</sup> Neely remained Superintendent until 1904, meanwhile serving several terms as County Superintendent.

In 1866, the first public high school was constructed on the north half of the site now occupied by the building being nominated. That first high school was a two story, four room building and cost \$36,000 to build.<sup>3</sup> John Crosby was the first principal. Initially only one room was used for high school instruction. By the mid-1880's, not only were all four rooms being used for the high school, but the building had to be enlarged. In 1895-1896 a new high school was constructed at 13th and Patee, and the old high school was remodeled into a Grammar School which was named for the city founder, Joseph Robidoux.

By 1907, the Robidoux School was 41 years old and had long outlived its usefulness. The School Board decided to raze the old building and erect a new one on the site. Early in 1908, the south half of the west half of Block Fourty-one (41), Smiths Addition was purchased for \$12,500 and the firm of E.J. Eckel was employed to design the building. Eckel, a native of Alsace, Germany and a graduate of Ecole des Beaux Arts, Paris was identified by John Albury Bryan as the "the outstanding man in the history of the profession in the western section of the state."<sup>5</sup> Eckel was a fellow of the American Institute of Architects. During the time this building was being designed Walter Boschen, a native of Pennsylvania and also a Beaux Arts graduate, joined the firm. Boschen was to be the architect for a number of the important commercial buildings of the downtown city scape.<sup>6</sup> The report of the School Superintendent, J.B. Whiteford shows the cost of the building and its contents as \$130,000. The building was opened for instruction in the winter of 1909-1910. Pride in this new grammar school building is reflected in this quote from the School Board's Annual Report:

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"The old building recently razed was the original High School erected in 1866 to which as emergency demanded, had been added room after room until it became a rambling dark, dangerous, unsanitary, poorly ventilated structure. In 1908 an additional quarter block of ground was added to the site upon which the present school building is just being completed. The new building has not a superior in this country so far as architectural beauty, fireproofing, sanitation and modern equipment are concerned, and except in size, will compare favorably with any school. It contains twelve class rooms, a teachers' room, library and office, also an auditorium with seating capacity for 1,100 persons, serving long needed facilities for school entertainments, lectures, and central meeting place for teachers and educational gatherings. This school, since the abandonment of the German English School, will serve as a center for instruction in German. The basement affords ample space for complete equipment for manual training and domestic sciences, there being two large rooms for boys and two for girls for these purposes. There is also a large playroom for boys and a like room for girls. The high pressure steam heating plant with automatic regulation, is the first in this city to be equipped for burning fuel oil. The playgrounds, though necessarily restricted in area, will have all the playground appliances. Cost of building including furniture and equipment \$130,000. Cost of grounds added to site \$12,500."

By the fall of 1914, high school enrollment had grown so much that Central High School (which had been built twenty years earlier) was seriously overcrowded. The Robidoux School took on a second educational role as a Freshman annex to the High School, and the grammar students were moved a block north to the old German School building.

The passage of the Smith Hughes Act by Congress in 1917, led to a third educational role for the Robidoux School. The Act established a Federal Board for Vocational Education and provided federal matching monies to State and local Boards of Education who provided vocational education for those over the age of fourteen. In May, 1919, it was announced by Superintendent Vernon Mays that vocational courses would be separated from "college prep" courses and that the Robidoux School would become Robidoux Polytechnic High School. For eight years Robidoux Polytechnic combined, successfully, the teaching of the humanities and the involvement of students in a full range of extracurricular activities with outstanding vocational education. This quotation from the 1924 yearbook reflects the feeling its students had for the school:

"Robidoux is a high school that is different. Here you find a school spirit(sic) that is unlike that in any other high school. A strong band of understanding exists between student and teacher; a friendly sort of camaraderie is found amongst the students themselves. The student is made to feel that education is not the mere gathering of information but the development of a mind trained to accuracy, open to new ideas, and eager for the advancement of all that is good.

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Our school is classed among the foremost Polytechnic schools in this part of the country. Although the newest high school in the city, Robidoux has become well known because of the success of work done in all its departments, and the sprit (sic) of loyalty aroused in the hearts of its students."<sup>8</sup>

The last graduating class of Robidoux Polytechnic was in the spring of 1927. In the fall of 1928, Robidoux reverted to use as a Freshman annex for Central High School.

A fourth educational role for this venerable building was as the home of the St. Joseph Junior College from January 1933 to May 1965 and as a temporary home for Missouri Western State College until 1969.

In 1915, the St. Joseph School had elected to establish a two-year post high school curriculum. Classes were first held at Central High School, being taught by the High School staff. In 1925, the Junior College was moved to the adjacent Everett School building and a separate staff was formed. In January of 1933, the Junior College was moved to the Robidoux School Building. This move coincided with the opening of a new Central High School which is located sixteen blocks to the east of Robidoux and the conversion of the old high school into Roosevelt Junior High School. It is as the location of the Junior College that most residents of the city identify this building.

During its lifetime, a vast majority of college bound graduates of the St. Joseph High Schools attended Junior College. These students either terminated their education with the Associate of Arts degree or left the community to seek baccalaureate and higher degrees.

In 1964, a citizens committee, with Judge Frank Connett as Chairman, circulated petitions which were then submitted to the State Board of Education. These petitions sought the right to hold an election to create a Junior College District in the St. Joseph and nine adjoining school districts. The election was held on January 19, 1965, and in the fall of that year the first classes for this extended district were held. With the move to secure state funding for the Junior and Senior years of education, it was apparent that the Robidoux building would no longer remain viable and a bond issue was passed for construction of a new campus on the eastern edge of the city. With completion of the first phase of the new campus, the use of this building as an educational institution came to an end in the spring of 1969.

The building was purchased from the St. Joseph Board of Education by the Buchanan County Historical Society for use as an archival center. The society's subsequent semi-abandonment of the building resulted in deterioration and vandalism to this central city landmark.

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The building has been purchased in the Spring of 1981 by Bill R. McKinney, local businessman who plans to use the building for his sporting goods business. This action by Mr. McKinney reflects current historic preservation attitudes of seeking alternative uses for historic buildings and their preservation with private funds.

FOOTNOTES

1. Birdsall, William & Co., ed. History of Buchanan County, Missouri (St. Joseph, MO: St. Joseph Steam Printing Co., 1881), pp. 538-539.
2. Ibid., p. 540.
3. Ibid., p. 542.
4. Rutt, Chris L. History of Buchanan County and the City of St. Joseph and Representative Citizens. (Chicago, IL: Biographical Publishing Co., 1904), pp. 111, 112.
5. Bryan, John Albury, Missouri's Contribution to American Architecture. (St. Louis, MO: St. Louis Architectural Club, 1928), p. 50.
6. St. Joseph News-Press. (News Press Publishing Co., St. Joseph, MO), June 16, 1958, p. 1.
7. Annual Report of the Board of Education. Year Ending June 30, 1909. (St. Joseph, MO: Nelson Hanna Printing Co., 1909), pp. 121-122.
8. The Tech-Nineteen Twenty Four. (St. Joseph, MO: Students of the Department of Printing, Robidoux Polytechnic School), no page.

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3. Bryan, John Albury. Missouri's Contribution to American Architecture. St. Louis, MO: St. Louis Architectural Club, 1928.
4. Robidoux Polytechnic News. Special Senior Issue. 1923.
5. Robidoux Polytechnic Yearbooks. Tech Senior, 1922.
6. Rutt, Chris L. History of Buchanan County and the City of St. Joseph and Representative Citizens. Chicago, IL: Biographical Publishing Co., 1904.
7. St. Joseph News-Press. St. Joseph, MO: News Press Publishing, Co., June 16, 1958.
8. Telephone Conversations between Nancy Sandehn and the following residents of St. Joseph, MO. during the week of May 4-8, 1981:
  - Mr. Max Coleman
  - Miss Louise Lacy
  - Mr. Frank Popplewell
  - Miss Ruth Spangberg
  - Mr. Charles Thomas
  - Mr. Don Trout
  - Mrs. Frances Young
9. The Tech-Nineteen Twenty Four. St. Joseph, MO: Students of the Department of Printing, Robidoux Polytechnic School.

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2. Thomas W. Carneal, Associate Professor of History  
Northwest Missouri State University  
306 Colden Hall  
Maryville  
May 11, 1981  
816/582-7141 ext. 1289  
Missouri 64468
3. James M. Denny, Chief, Survey & Registration  
Department of Natural Resources  
Division of Parks & Historic Preservation  
P.O. Box 176  
Jefferson City  
March 30, 1983  
314/751-4096  
Missouri 65102



## 9. Major Bibliographical References

1. Annual Reports of St. Joseph Boards of Education. St. Joseph, MO: Nelson Hanna Printing Co., 1865-1912.
2. Birdsall, William & Co., ed. History of Buchanan County, Missouri. St. Joseph, MO: St. Joseph Steam Printing Co., 1881.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Less than one acre

Quadrangle name St. Joseph North

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A 

1	5	3	4	1	7	4	0	4	4	0	2	1	6	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C 

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D 

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E 

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F 

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G 

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H 

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

All of lots one (1) two (2) three (3) and four (4) Block Forty-one (41) Smith's Addition to the City of Saint Joseph, Missouri.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code

state	code	county	code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title 1. Nancy Sandehn, Research Assistant

organization Northwest Missouri State University

date May 13, 1981

street & number 306 Colden Hall

telephone 816/582-7141 ext. 1289

city or town Maryville

state Missouri 64468

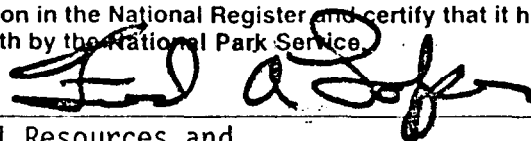
## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



Director, Department of Natural Resources and  
title State Historic Preservation Officer

date

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

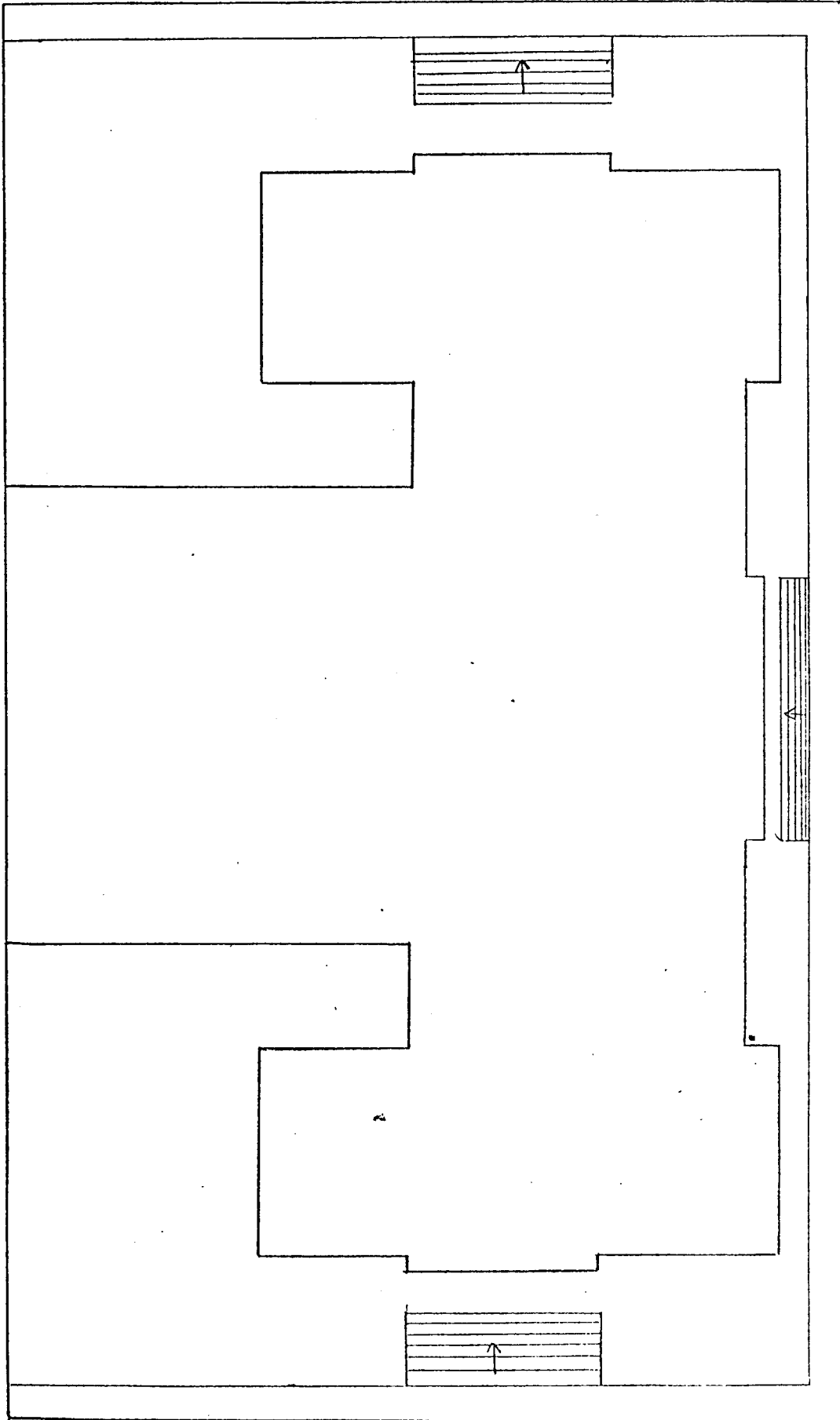
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

Charles Street

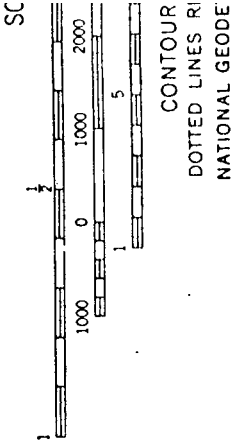
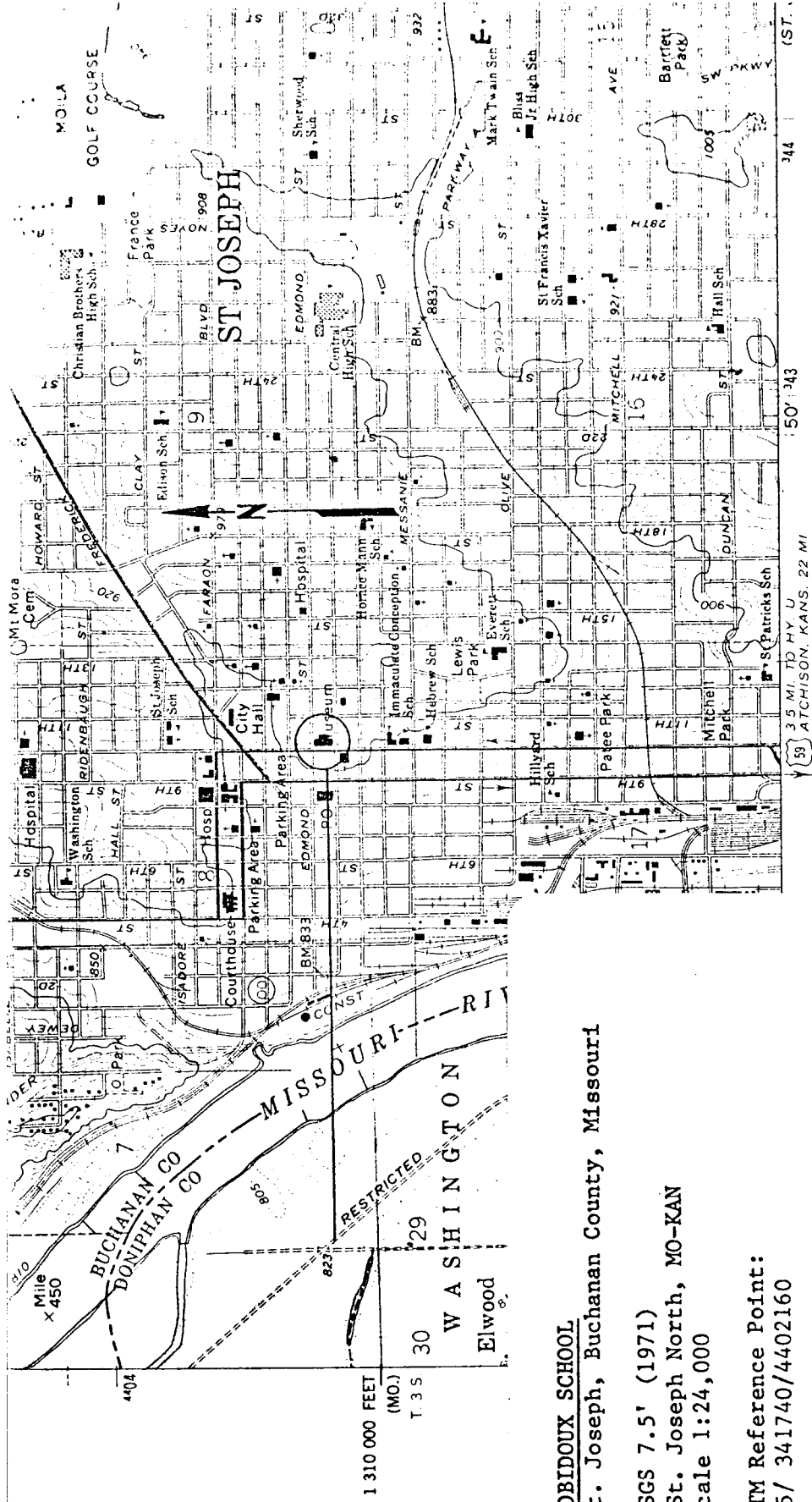


So. 10<sup>th</sup> Street

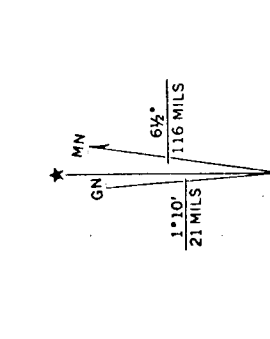
# The Robidoux School

Edmond Street





THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH  
 FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DI  
 AND THE DIVISION OF RES  
 MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF NAT  
 AND STATE GEOLOGICAL  
 A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC



UTM GRID AND 1978 MAGNETIC NORTH  
 DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

**ROBIDOUX SCHOOL**  
 St. Joseph, Buchanan County, Missouri

USGS 7.5' (1971)  
 "St. Joseph North, MO-KAN  
 Scale 1:24,000

UTM Reference Point:  
 15/ 341740/4402160

al Survey

t zone

1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,  
 zone 15, shown in blue

Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown  
 Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where  
 generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked  
 Revisions shown in purple compiled from aerial photographs taken  
 1977. Map edited 1978. This information not field checked  
 Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas

**Photo Log:**

Name of Property: **Robidoux School**

City or Vicinity: **St. Joseph**

County: **Buchanan County** State: **MO**

Photographer: **Tom Carneal**

Date Photographed: **May 1981**

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

- 1 of 14. NW
- 2 of 14. SW
- 3 of 14. W
- 4 of 14. S
- 5 of 14.
- 6 of 14. N
- 7 of 14. W
- 8 of 14. W
- 9 of 14. W
- 10 of 14. Interior, central corridor.
- 11 of 14. Interior, stairwell
- 12 of 14. 1<sup>st</sup> floor plan
- 13 of 14. Aerial view of school
- 14 of 14. Progress of school







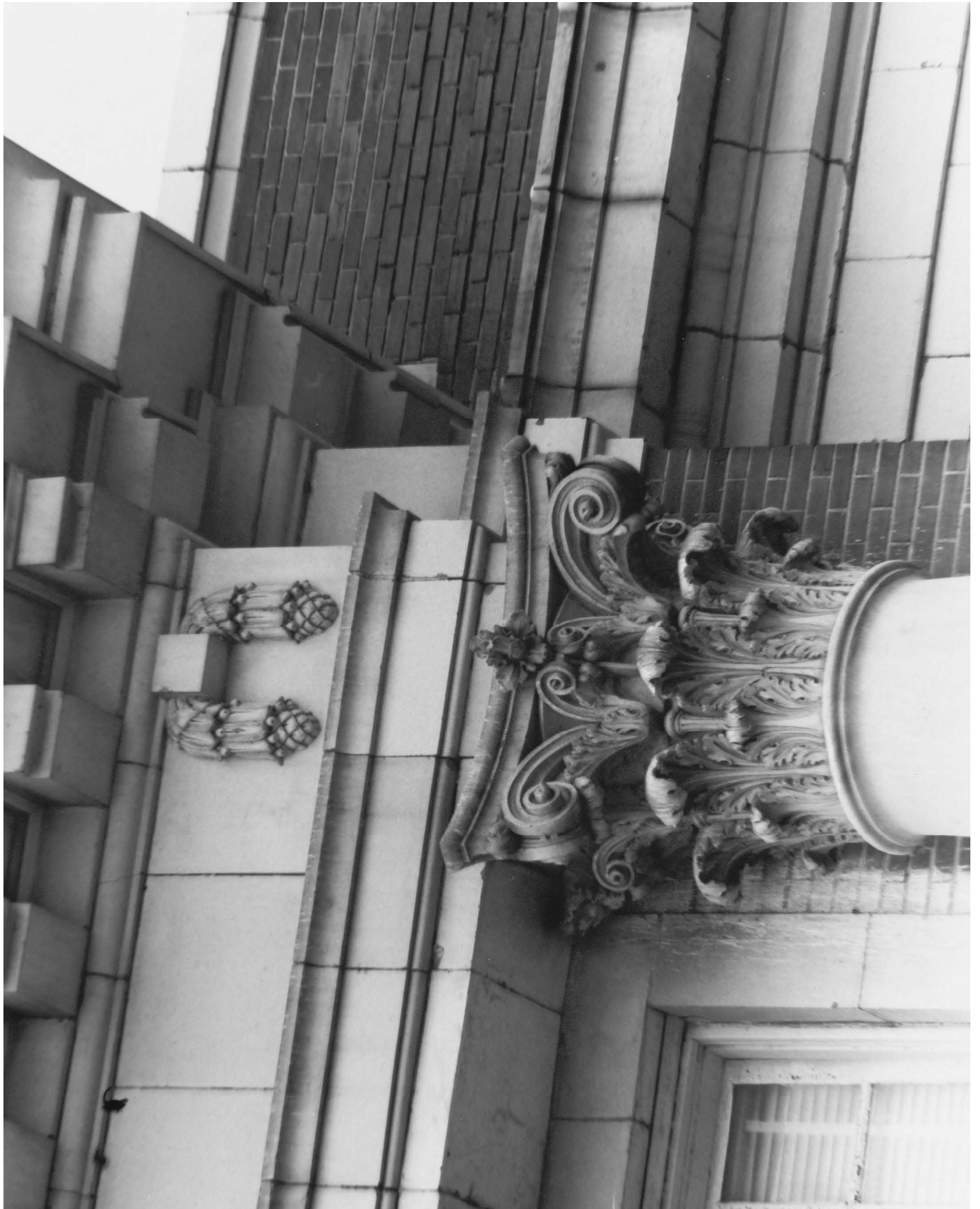












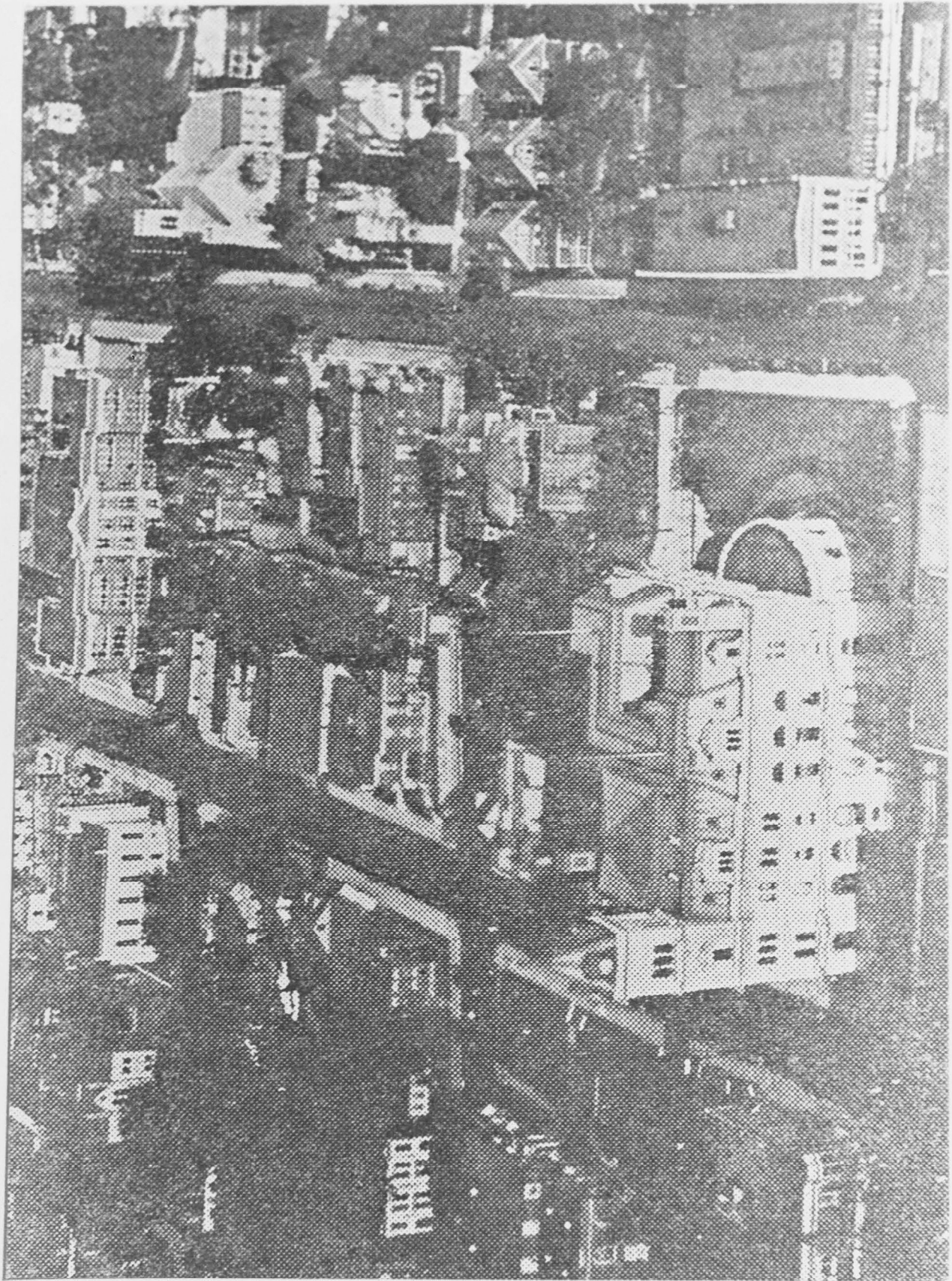




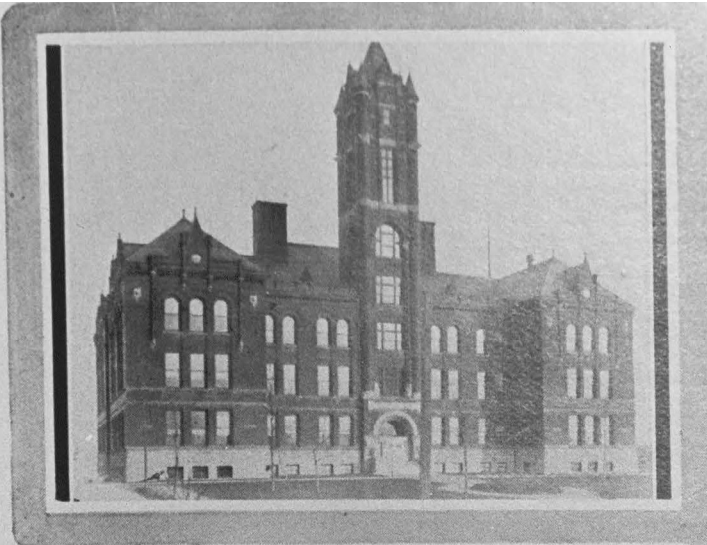




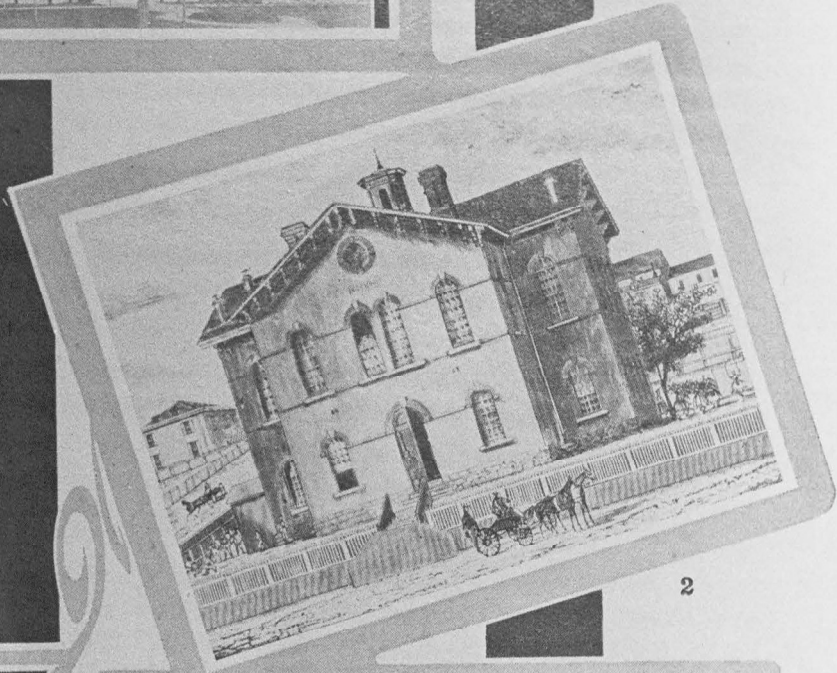




ROBIDOUX BY AIRPLANE



3



2



1

**PROGRESS OF ST. JOSEPH HIGH SCHOOL.**  
1—Building Rented 1864-1866. 2—Building Erected 1866. 3—Present Building Erected 1896.