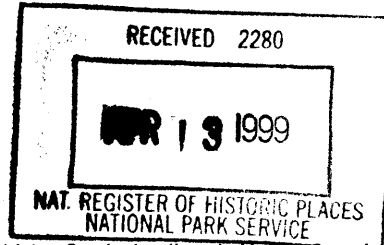


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



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 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 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 Sunset High School

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 223 Marie Street NA not for publication

city or town Sunset NA vicinity

state Louisiana code LA county St. Landry code 097 zip code 70584

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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 \_\_\_ nationally \_\_\_ statewide X locally. (\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Gerri Hobdy April 7, 1999  
Signature of certifying official/Title Gerri Hobdy, Date  
LA SHPO, Dept. of Culture, Recreation and Tourism

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 this property is:

- 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): \_\_\_\_\_

Edson K Beall Signature of Keeper Date of Action 5/12/99

Sunset High School  
Name of property

St. Landry Parish, LA  
County and State

**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	
1	—	buildings
—	—	sites
—	—	structures
—	—	objects
1	0	Total

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

NA

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

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat. Education

Sub. School

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat. Vacant

Sub. Not in Use

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

No Style

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Brick

roof Other: Tar & Gravel

other

**Narrative Description**

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

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" next to 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**

NA

(Mark "X" next to all that apply.)

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a 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.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Education

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**Period of Significance**

1926

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**Significant Dates**

1926

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**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

NA

**Cultural Affiliation**

NA

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**Architect/Builder**

Architect: Herman J. Duncan, Alexandria, LA

Builder: Burke & Haley, Baton Rouge, LA

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

NA

- 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 # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Sunset High School  
Name of property

St. Landry Parish, LA  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreege of Property** approx. one acre

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

1 15 589810 3364750

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

4 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title National Register Staff

organization Division of Historic Preservation date February 1999

street & number P.O. Box 44247 telephone (225) 342-8160

city or town Baton Rouge state LA zip code 70804

## 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

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Town of Sunset, The Honorable John L. Olivier, Mayor

street & number P. O. Box 6 telephone (318) 662-5296

city or town Sunset state LA zip code 70584

**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 the 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 Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Sunset High School (1926) is a two-story masonry structure with a basement. It is positioned at the center of a small educational complex located in the northeast corner of the St. Landry Parish town of Sunset. (The other buildings comprising the campus are not eligible for National Register listing.) Although the building's exterior does exhibit a few low-key decorative features, the school should be classified as having "no style" for the purposes of this nomination. Some alterations have occurred on the interior, but the exterior is unchanged. Thus, the school retains its National Register eligibility.

The institution's floorplan is typical of the period. It consists of rows of large classrooms (with accompanying cloakrooms) flanking a long hallway which extends the width of the building on the first and second floors. Staircases are placed at each end of this hall. Interesting features found in all interior spaces include vertical beaded board wainscot, picture rails, pressed metal ceilings, and nine-light transoms above doors. A low, above-ground basement story is subdivided at the rear but inaccessible in the front. The subdivisions include boys' and girls' restrooms (the latter entered from outside the building) located in the basement's rear corners, and a boiler room filling part of the rear basement's central area.

The building's facade is articulated in three parts – a long central section flanked by projecting wings or pavilions. In addition, the central entrance is articulated to resemble a pavilion but does not project. It features pilasters flanking an arched entrance with a brick-filled tympanum above a glazed double door. Each side pavilion is distinguished by corner brick pilasters which wrap around two sides of the building; similar pilasters anchor the school's rear corners. However, at the place where the entrance to the girls' restroom is located, the basement level's corner is open, with rusticated piers supporting the floors above. Rustication (hidden behind vegetation on the facade but visible on the sides and rear) also distinguishes the basement story. A brick parapet featuring curved sections above the entrance "pavilion" and side pavilions outlines the roof, while a corbeled brick cornice outlines the structure on all elevations except the rear. A notable feature is the series of large nine-over-nine windows (usually arranged in groups of four or five) which provide light to the classrooms. Paired windows pierce the central "pavilion" on the second level. All of the windows are outlined by decorative brick bands.

Alterations have occurred only on the interior. The most important is the conversion of three former second floor classrooms into two large science laboratories

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with paneled walls, tiled ceilings, and built-in cabinets. Another notable change is the loss of all original doors. Less significant modifications include the subdivision of one downstairs classroom into four offices, the removal of a wall between two spaces in the administrative office, the subdivision of one cloakroom, the removal of shelves from some of the other cloakrooms, the placement of carpet over the floors, and the installation of flourescent lights in the classrooms.

Since the exterior remains unaltered, there is no doubt that any former student, teacher or administrator of Sunset High School would recognize the building should he or she return to the campus today. As the symbol of the "coming of age" of education in southwestern St. Landry Parish, Sunset High School is a viable candidate for National Register listing.

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Sunset High School is locally significant in the area of education because its 1926 construction represents the “coming of age” of public education in southwestern St. Landry Parish. As will be explained below, the erection of a large modern brick school made possible improved education, not to mention its considerable symbolic value as a milestone.

Like the citizens of many rural Louisiana communities, the residents of Sunset and the surrounding area were slow in making free public education available to children. In the years following the Civil War the prevailing attitude was that education should be the responsibility of the family or church rather than of state or local government. As a result, there was very little money for public education and no real governmental support. Although a Catholic school of high quality, Sacred Heart Academy, existed in nearby Grand Coteau, the average citizen could not afford to send his or her daughters there, and the institution provided no facilities for boys. Thus, poor quality one-room schools, often built by local citizens, furnished the only schooling available for the majority of the area’s children.

Sunset opened its first one-room school in 1904. A historic photograph shows the facility to have been a crude, windowless, board and batten structure with a brick chimney at one end. Before long the school moved to a private home, then floated to three different sites before finding a permanent location in 1906. In that year, Sunset residents built a two-story wooden school costing \$10,000. Children from nearby rural hamlets and farms joined Sunset residents in attending. Because it offered only grades one through seven, the school was considered a junior high. Education for most children in the Sunset area ended at this point, with many joining the work force. Continuing their education at the Opelousas High School—located approximately eleven miles to the north—was not an option for the majority of the area’s pupils. The cost of boarding children in the latter community was more than most families could bear, and the town was considered far away at a time when roads were poor and transportation often unavailable.

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The first evidence of interest in building a new facility for Sunset is found in the St. Landry Parish School Board minutes for January 7, 1924. At that meeting the board created and defined the territory of the Sunset School District and ordered a special election to determine taxpayer support for a \$30,000 bond issue to fund a new school. The outcome of this election is unclear. What is known is that a new election, seeking approval for a \$60,000 bond issue, was held on August 25, 1925. This proposition passed with 96 yeas and 29 nays.

The Sunset taxpayers' vote to fund the new brick school reflected an important trend. The transition from frame school buildings to "modern" brick facilities is a recognizable chapter in the history of public education in Louisiana, with the latter universally by their very nature considered to be better. The *Annual Report of the State Department of Education in Louisiana for 1924-25* bragged that the number of brick school buildings in the state had grown from 40 in 1900 to 388 in 1925. By way of explanation, the report noted: "In the earlier years the custom was to erect cheap frame buildings. The custom now is to use permanent materials . . . ."

It is clear that Sunset's new brick building represented an improvement in the physical plant, which translated into a considerable improvement in the quality of public education provided. The facility contained an administrative office and fifteen large, well-lighted classrooms with accompanying cloakrooms. In addition, the opening of the new building allowed education officials to convert the old wooden school into a gym, providing space for physical education and athletic competition for the first time. More importantly, there was finally physical space available to offer high school courses. Because educators felt the school should offer traditional classes as well as provide students with practical life experiences, the high school curriculum focused upon academic and college preparatory courses but also emphasized home economics and vocational agriculture. (The latter classes were taught in house-like "cottages" erected nearby soon after the brick school was completed; these no longer survive.) So many students took advantage of the opportunity to attend high school that three teachers were needed; the first class graduated in 1927. The elementary grades were also well attended, requiring the hiring of nine teachers. Many of the younger children spoke French at home, and administrators' insistence that they speak English at school helped them to master that language. The school's total enrollment for its first year was 449, and many of these pupils came from outside Sunset. A historic photograph shows horse-drawn as well as motorized school buses which were employed to transport students from Grand Coteau, Cankton, Bristol, Lewisburg, Shuteston, Frozard, Maree Brule, and Bosco to the school.



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The Sunset building served all grades until 1938, when a one-story classroom building was constructed nearby. At that time the high school moved to the new quarters, leaving the elementary students to occupy the 1926 structure. As time passed more buildings were added to the campus. Elementary courses were taught in the 1926 building until 1991, when consolidation of parish schools forced closure of all the classrooms in Sunset. The institution now belongs to the Town of Sunset, which hopes to restore the building for use as municipal offices. As the symbol of the "coming of age" of education in southwestern St. Landry Parish, Sunset High School is a legitimate candidate for National Register listing.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Historic photographs of 1904, 1906 and 1926 Sunset schools; copies in National Register file.

"History of Education in Sunset, La.;" copy in National Register file.

Interview with The Honorable John L. Olivier, Mayor, Town of Sunset (graduate of Sunset High School), February 4, 1999.

Minutes, St. Landry Parish School Board; copy in National Register file.

"Remembering the Beginning of Sunset," *Opelousas Daily World*, October 28, 1990; copy in National Register file.

Site visit by National Register staff.

*Sunset High School, 1906-1991*, video documentary; copy at Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation.

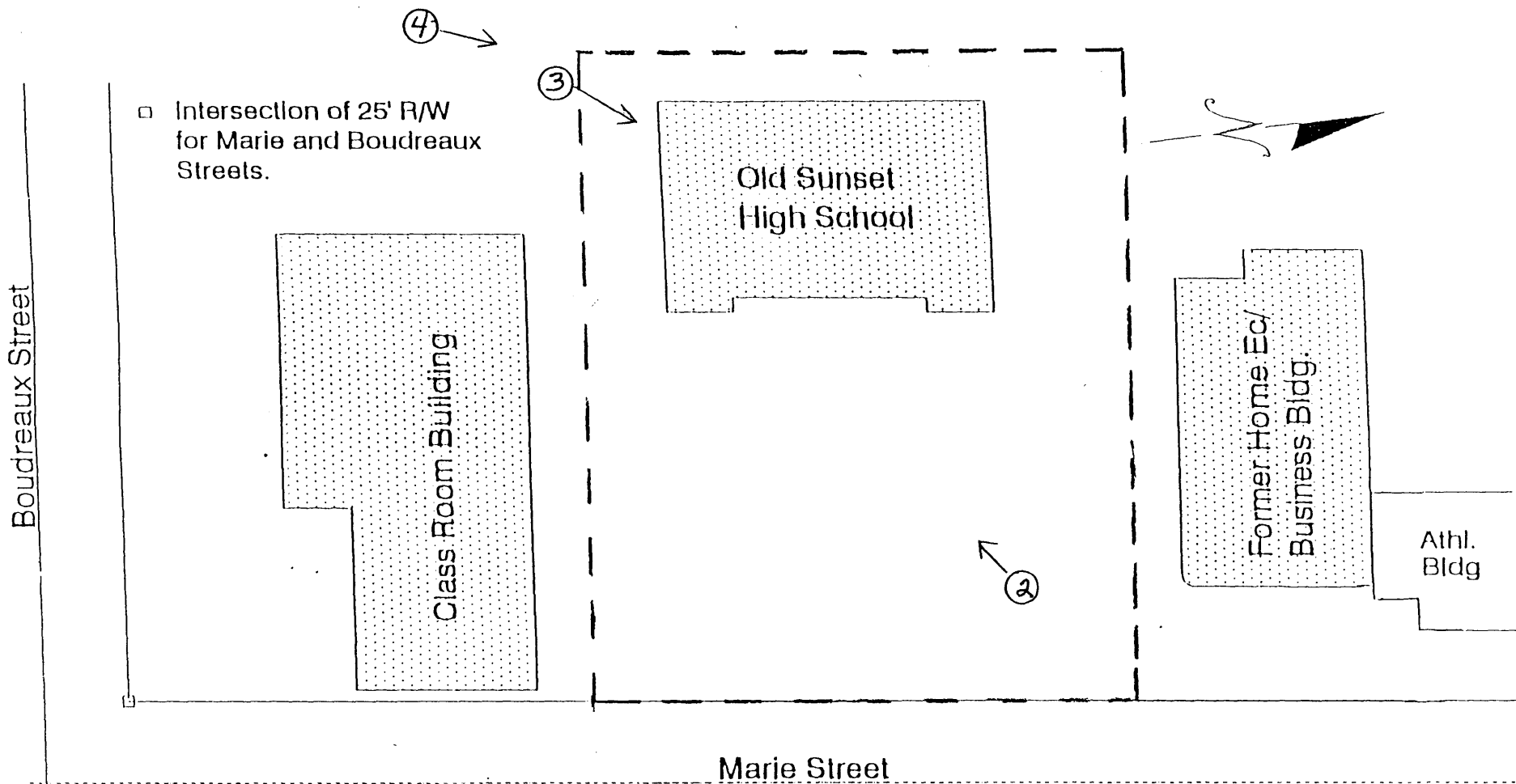
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BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

Please see attached sketch map.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:

The boundary follows the historic property line on the east (Marie Street) side of the school. Other boundaries are cut approximately 25 feet from the south side, 14 feet from the west side, and 40 feet from the north side of the building. These boundaries were chosen to include as much of the historic school grounds and view shed of the building as possible while excluding several non-contributing elements which stand nearby.



# SUNSET HIGH SCHOOL

St. Landry Parish, LA

Surveyed By:

*Irvin L. Deranger*

Irvin L. Deranger, C.E., R.L.S.  
 La. Reg. No. 01220  
 Scale: 1" = 50'  
 August 28, 1992  
 BOUNDARY: - - - -