

PH 364 762

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED JUN 28 1976
DATE ENTERED SEP 13 1976

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC
* * Central Colored School
AND/OR COMMON
Mary D. Hill School

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
542 West Kentucky Street
CITY, TOWN
Louisville
STATE
Kentucky
VICINITY OF
3 & 4
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
COUNTY
Jefferson
CODE
021
CODE
111

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
			<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Jefferson County Board of Education
STREET & NUMBER
Newburg Road
CITY, TOWN
Louisville
STATE
Kentucky

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Jefferson County Courthouse
STREET & NUMBER
513 W. Jefferson
CITY, TOWN
Louisville
STATE
Kentucky

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

(continued)

TITLE
Historic Landmarks & Preservation Districts Commission
DATE
1975
DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS
Historic Landmarks & Preservation Districts Commission
CITY, TOWN
Louisville
STATE
Kentucky

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED	(removal of cornice)	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Central Colored School Building, now the Hill Adult Learning Laboratory, is located at the northern edge of an area known as Limerick, which lies between downtown Louisville to the north and Old Louisville Residential District to the south and east (see the nomination form for the latter, placed on the National Register February 7, 1975). Limerick, as its name indicates, was traditionally the home of Irish immigrants, many of whom worked for the L & N Railroad, one of whose lines runs along the west side of the area. The focal point of Limerick proper is still the imposing St. Louis Bertrand Roman Catholic Church and School (see the National Register nomination approved at the State level on October 21, 1975; and Maps 1 and 2). When the Central Colored School was erected in 1873, however, many of the turn-of-the-century houses around the church complex had not yet been built, and there was rather spotty residential development around the school, extending south from Broadway.

Two blocks north and one east was the Fifth Ward (Montserrat) School, erected in the mid-1850s to supply the then-fashionable Broadway residential area (see the National Register nomination, approved at the State level October 21, 1975). By 1876 several major Protestant churches had been built on 4th Street two blocks east of the Central Colored School: the (later Central) Presbyterian Church shown on the detail of the 1876 map; Calvary Episcopal Church (approved at the State level on December 4, 1973) and the Church of the Messiah (First Unitarian Church) (listed on the National Register April 21, 1976) slightly farther north; and others on Broadway.

Probably because of the location of the high school for black students at 6th and Kentucky Streets, the neighborhood around it attracted black residents and another important black educational institution, the Municipal College, later Simmons University and known later by several other names (see the National Register nomination form, approved at the State level on March 9, 1976). The first municipal public housing complex in Louisville was also placed nearby on 7th Street.

Thus, the Central Colored School was originally, and remains to the present, in spite of the decimation of the area through neglect, located in a strategic area not far from significant commercial, religious, educational, and residential sections and institutions. Although there are still a number of later 19th-century houses near the school, particularly on the west side of the block of 6th Street north of it, there are many vacant lots, deteriorated residences, and incompatible commercial and industrial structures around it. Directly to the north is a public playground and within several blocks to the east are several newly-built, high-rise apartment complexes for the elderly.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Black History
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES **1873**

BUILDER/ARCHITECT **J. B. McElfatrick**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Central Colored School as it was originally known (now the Mary D. Hill School), may rightly be recognized as an architectural and historical landmark. In its past 102 years, this edifice has been closely identified with prominent local, state, and national figures, black and white alike. First conceived of as a permanent, tax-supported facility for the education of Louisville's black children, it presents a unique and noble reminder of the course of that race's progress during an otherwise discouraging era of Reconstruction. Architecturally, the school stands as an important survivor of the post-bellum design scene in Louisville and, in particular, of the work of a little-known yet talented architect, hitherto known primarily for the design of theaters, J. B. McElfatrick. The style originally assigned to it by contemporary observers--"American Renaissance"--is symbolically appropriate, if difficult to reconcile with present architectural nomenclature.

The Sixth and Kentucky school, although significant as the site of the first public high school for blacks built in the Commonwealth, actually may trace its roots to a time well before Emancipation. Writing in 1897, one keen black commentator, Henry Clay Weeden, informs us that "schools for colored children were in operation in this city in the early forties." Usually connected with churches or independent instructors who migrated to Louisville after training elsewhere, various efforts were organized in different parts of town during this period and "were operated by the permission of the local authorities." Up to this time, blacks had been denied the right to schooling except with a private tutor or the indulgence of a slave master, even though the city had established public schools as early as 1829, the first of the Western river towns to do so. Although seemingly a small concession, public endorsement of black education was a bold step in the right direction and did rub against the statutory policy of other states and localities where blacks were forbidden instruction in reading and writing until after the war. Nonetheless, the need for publicly supported education for blacks was clear. As Weeden recalled, there were "a good many free [black] children" in ante-bellum Louisville and "many of the slaveholders permitted, and, in fact, a large number sent the slave children to the schools." However, after Appomatox all blacks, of course, were free, enfranchised, and--perhaps most important--tax paying. That they were denied a fair share of the revenue only underscored the wrongdoing.

(continued)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"A Notable Event." The (Louisville) Courier-Journal, 8 October 1873, sec. 1, p. 3.

"The Central Colored School." Louisville Commercial, 8 October 1873, sec. 1, p. 5.

(continued)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA ^{EDJ}

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY ~~1 acre~~ less than one

UTM REFERENCES

A	1, 6	6, 0, 8	2, 8, 0	4, 2	3, 2	9, 4, 0	B						
	ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING				ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING			
C							D						

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Walter intended that the frame house and mobile classroom buildings be excluded. See phone report of 9-13-76. EDJ

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

Elizabeth F. Jones and Douglas L. Stern, Staff Members

WEL

ORGANIZATION

Louisville Historic Landmarks & Preservation Districts Commission (502) 587-3501

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

617 W. Jefferson

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Louisville

STATE

Kentucky

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

Edred W. Meeter

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE 6/23/76

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 9/13/76

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE 9/13/76

ATTEST

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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Cherokee Triangle

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ITEM NUMBER 6

PAGE 2

Survey of Historic Sites in Kentucky
State 1971
Kentucky Heritage Commission
Frankfort, Kentucky

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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Central Colored School

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PAGE 2

The exterior of the school building--which is set back several feet from the sidewalk at the southeast corner of the intersection--remains essentially as it was shown in an engraving from the 1876 Manual of Kentucky School Architecture, published by the Superintendent of Public Instruction, H. A. M. Henderson (compare photos 1 and 2). The only noticeable change is the loss of the elaborate bracketted cornice and narrow but highly ornamented pediments over the central entrance bays on each side.

The rectangular three-story block has five bays on the north and south facades, seven wider bays on the east and west. The central bays have double windows on the two upper stories over the entrances; those on the east and west are elongated, reflecting the placement of the stairways inside.

Except for the rough stone foundation with ashlar water table and incised stone trim, the entire exterior as it stands is of brick laid in a variety of ornamental patterns articulating the wall surface and framing the openings. (It is likely that the cornice and pediment were of galvanized iron and therefore easily removed.)

The north and south facades have the more elaborate treatment, as the main entrance faces north. The second and fourth bays project about one brick forward of the end bays, and the central unit farther forward. Each vertical unit is defined by pilaster strips, treated on the first story as blocks with raised panels alternately; divided in two with recessed panels on the second story; and in one-and-a-half units with chamfered corners on the main section of the top story. Curved spandrels take the place of capitals and link the pilaster strips to the dentillated brick lower courses of the cornice, which still remain. Similar but longer dentils lie under the belt course that separates the first and second floors. There are shallow segmental arches with panels that descend to the keystones of the windows on the second floor. The first-story windows and entrances have square heads, the second segmental, and the third round-arched, in a regular progression. There are brick hoodmolds over all the openings, with incised stone keystones. The east and west facades are somewhat plainer, lacking pilaster strips except at the corners and flanking the central bay.

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Central Colored School

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Inside, cross halls allowed twelve large, well-lit corner classrooms. Some alterations have been made to the interior, but it remains basically intact.

A number of temporary classrooms share the site, which is surrounded by a chicken-wire fence, with the main building and another small one-story frame structure (probably a residence contemporaneous with the school) which now houses a cafeteria.

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In 1865 work began in earnest by both black and white citizens to secure fair treatment. A committee was formed, Weeden relates, "composed of Messrs. Peter Lewis, Horace Morris, Jackson Burks and others." Morris's involvement doubtless contributed to the scheme's eventual success. According to Weeden, he was a member of the underground railroad of Ohio, a prominent Mason, in the Treasury Department under General Bristow, and an appointed steward of the Marine Hospital, the first black man elected to such a position in the entire country. They aligned themselves with General Ely and petitioned the Federal Government for assistance. The urge for restitution must have been considerable. Within months a two-story, brick edifice was erected at Fourteenth and Broadway and staffed with "white teachers from the North." Though encouraging, this federally-sponsored effort "did not satisfy the leading citizens, and appeals were made to the local School Board for the establishment of city free schools for colored children."

Progress made after the creation of the "Ely Normal School" was much slower. "Petition after petition was sent the Board," Weeden tells us, "but no cognizance was taken of them." Finally, in April 1870 a petition arrived which did have an impact. Signed by a number of prominent local figures, it convinced the Board to take some positive action. Beginning by organizing a subcommittee on black schools, it heard various proposals designed to effect a change, eventually settling on one which would create three primary schools in rented quarters, preferably within church confines. The effort was supported, however, by revenues gained only from the black community's city school tax, not the general school tax. The result was a system burdened with inordinately large classes, undependable physical facilities, and a program restricted to the lower grades. Weeden writes of a painful conclusion: ". . . the progress of the children was as good as could be expected considering the unfavorable circumstances in which they were placed." Attempts were made to introduce new legislation that would have allowed all property taxes from the black community to be invested in the school program. Yet without a firm legal basis for such action within the Commonwealth's statutes, these hopeful remedies were overturned. Nonetheless, backers of the movement possessed a solid commitment to this new cause and early in 1873 could begin to sense victory.

After repeated efforts aimed at softening the lawmaker's attitudes, the local lobby finally hit an equitable compromise in January of that year. Unlike most other Kentucky counties or municipalities, Louisville regarded the education of blacks as a just and humane enterprise. Its efforts to that date, and those of local industrialists and citizens such as L. L. Warren, Benjamin F. Camp, and J. J. T. Murray, were instrumental in convincing the Assembly of that. Most of the Commonwealth's legislators were not prepared, however, to equip all cities with the necessary taxing power simply to satisfy Louisville's isolated request. Everywhere, it seems, a slaveholding tradition or sympathy with the Southern cause was intense, and reconciliation was neither quick nor thorough. The solution to this knotty question

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presented itself in a rather serendipitous way to the puzzled assembly. The Louisville School Board had owed a total of \$64,000 to the city's Commissioners of the Sinking Fund because of bond repayment. The legislators, seeing a way out of their quandary passed an act releasing the Board from its obligation. In return, however, the school officials were required to direct the money to the program for black children for "the purchase of three lots and the erection of three houses."

"This was a happy victory," Weeden reports, and would provide a critically important precedent for other efforts. A year later, in February 1874, the legislature passed another act which allowed the entire tax gained from black-owned property to be spent for black schools, a provision asked by the Louisville lobby and refused only months before. The most effective means of maintaining such a system, the use of the general school tax, was not approved until 1885 after considerable debate and court involvement. The city's vigorous pursuit of black schooling and its ultimate result, the opening of the Sixth Street School in October 1873, are remarkable attainments in light of so many obstacles.

The formal dedication of the Central Colored School, as it was originally called, occurred on October 7 just shortly after its completion and was regarded as the signal of a new era. Among the various civic luminaries present at the ceremony was Horace Morris. After working diligently on the project since its inception and bearing much of the responsibility for the work himself, Morris was pleased to address both the audience which crowded the school's third floor chapel and Camp, the head of the School Board. As he put it: "I confess, Mr. President, that I do feel elated; I feel 'That swelling of the heart I ne'er shall feel again,' for I do not expect to see another day so important as this -- a day so pregnant with meaning, so full of food for thought, so marked in its import, so plain in the lesson it teaches." And for those who might have questioned the quality of his hope he added that the "beautiful building is a tacit acknowledgment that the citizens of this great city mean to put the past behind them and look ahead to the future." Also present and asked to speak was the school's first principal, a Mr. Maxwell, who left the school a short time later for a more lucrative position with the Pension Bureau. His remarks, though, were doubtless heartfelt: "Personally, I can but admire the spirit that originated and the means that consummated so great and good a work for our people here. It will not only have a wholesome effect upon the cities and towns of this state," Maxwell continued, "but it will be the means of teaching other States a lesson of justice to its colored citizens." Along with the principal at that afternoon's ceremony were Charles D. Jacob, then mayor of Louisville; Lincoln's Attorney General, James Speed; Benjamin Helm Bristow, U. S. Attorney who, as Yater reminds us, "had moved so vigorously against the Ku Klux Klan that it never became a political force in the State," and Warren, vigorous lobbyist for the school movement and the figure for whom the now-gone Warren Memorial Presbyterian Church was named.

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✓ Aside from this enormous historic value, the school, renamed in memory of kindergarten pioneer Mary D. Hill, presents an admirable architectural asset. As principal Maxwell declared; "Ohio, my own native State, would profit by coming here and making observations in regard to the architectural genius and liberality displayed in the erection of this building." The day after the dedication the Louisville Commercial added that "it strikes the observer at a glance, as a building where durability, beauty and utility have been combined." And as the Courier-Journal put it the edifice "is as neat and handsome a school structure as there is in the city." The cause of this praise was a now-obscure local designer who had begun his practice in Louisville only a few years before in 1868. "It is my pleasure," remarked building committee head, C. O. Smith, "to bear testimony to the efficiency of Mr. J. B. McElpatrick, our architect." The Commercial seconded the chairman's estimate: "McElpatrick was the architect, to whom the present handsome appearance and convenience of the building is due." Other comments issued after the opening exercises point to the complete effort made by all contracted. Costing a total of \$23,000, the edifice was well-ventilated, supported by a foundation "made of the most durable stone," and though plain, as the Courier-Journal saw it, still "set off by a great many stone cappings, and by a handsome coat of red paint." The solid foundation was the work of Peter Pfeiffer; the cut-stone was produced by Belknap, Glasser and Company; H. T. Kninlin did the brick work; W. H. Muscroft and Company did the carpenter and joiner work; the plastering was by B. E. Jordan; George L. Smith completed the tin roof; Brocar and McKelvey, the painting and glazing; the fencing was originally erected by Eben Sheets and Company; Daniel Fivian had the paving and grading work; and the iron work, now largely gone, was the product of the preeminent ornamental iron foundry of F. W. Merz. Little else is known about McElpatrick, though, except that he was the designer of the much-lamented Macauley's Theatre, which opened October 13, on Walnut, almost one week after the school's dedication.

A native of Fort Wayne, Indiana, McElpatrick and son William H. left Louisville in 1882. Eventually arriving in New York City in 1886, the firm, known as J. B. McElpatrick and Son, practiced together until the elder's death in 1906. Considered specialists, not surprisingly, in theatre design, the pair were credited with the Empire and Abbey Theatres and a remodeling of the old Metropolitan Opera House. The Central Colored School must have certainly been the watermark of the firm's early work.

✓ Since its opening the edifice has been the scene of many noteworthy events. As Yater discovered, it was visited by George W. Cable, who was in Louisville in 1885 on a speaking tour with Mark Twain. A steadfast abolitionist and champion of racial equality, the Southern author cautioned the students at the school "not to be parallel to the lines of demarcation between the races, but to cross them." Joined by an

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eastern school in 1874 and western one in 1875, the Central Colored School served as an educational and cultural cynosure for black Louisvillians until 1894. It was then that ✓ the school, jammed to overflowing by the addition of a higher division (now Central High School) in 1885 and in the midst of an overwhelmingly white neighborhood, was moved to quarters at Ninth and Magazine. The building then was turned over for the use of white students only. Reporting in 1895, Professor Meyzeek, the principal, seems concerned more with the disruption that the move caused rather than his building's supposed confiscation: "On the second Monday of September last the Central School opened, not under the most favorable circumstances, by reason of the removal of the school from the old location. . . and the consequent displacement of books and apparatus."

For many years the building was used as a predominantly white elementary school serving the neighborhood. After several years of disuse, it has recently reopened as the Hill Adult Learning Laboratory, and thus continues to serve the community.

ITEM NO. 9

Weeden, Henry Clay, ed. Weeden's History of the Colored People of Louisville.
Louisville: H. C. Weeden, 1897.

Withey, Henry F., and Withey, E. R. Biographical Dictionary of American Architects. Los Angeles: New Age Publishing Company, 1956.

Yater, George H. "Mary D. Hill School," paper presented at the Public Hearing of the Historic Landmarks and Preservation Districts Commission, Louisville, 5 February 1975.

ITEM NO. 6

Survey of Historic Sites in Kentucky (Supplement)
1975 State
Kentucky Heritage Commission
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601

Central Colored School
Louisville
Jefferson County, Kentucky

Map 2

Atlas of the City of Louisville,
Louisville: Louisville Abstract and
Loan Association, 1876.

School is at top left, as property
of "Trustees of Male & Female
High Schools & Public Schools!"
Note St. Louis Bertrand Church
and School two blocks south of
the school.

