

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A) Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-9000a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name Sumner High School and Athletic Field  
Other name/site number Sumner Academy of Arts and Science

### 2. Location

Street & number 1610 North 8<sup>th</sup> Street  not for publication  
City or town Kansas City  vicinity  
State Kansas Code KS County Wyandotte Code 209 Zip code 66101

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

[Signature] 7/21/05  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
Kansas State Historical Society

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 commenting official /Title Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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:)

[Signature] 9/6/05  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action  
Edson H. Beall

Sumner High School  
Name of Property

Wyandotte County, Kansas  
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            | 3               | buildings  |
|              |                 | sites      |
| 1            |                 | structures |
|              |                 | objects    |
| 2            | 3               | total      |

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

Historic Public Schools of Kansas

**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)

EDUCATION/School

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Art Deco

---

---

---

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation: BRICK  
Walls: BRICK

---

---

Roof: ASPHALT

Other:

---

**Narrative Description**

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

Sumner High School

Name of Property

Wyandotte County, Kansas

County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

- Criteria A, B, C, D with checkboxes and descriptions.

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- Criteria A through G with checkboxes and descriptions.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1932-1940

Significant Dates

1939

1932

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Joseph Radontinsky, architect

S. Patti Construction Co., builder

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Documentation checkboxes: preliminary determination, previously listed, designated landmark, recorded by survey, recorded by engineering.

Primary location of additional data:

- Location checkboxes: State Historic Preservation Office, Other State agency, Federal agency, Local government, University, Other.

Name of repository:

Kansas State Historical Society

Sumner High School  
Name of Property

Wyandotte County, Kansas  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property Six

**UTM References**  
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1

|      |   |         |   |   |   |   |          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|------|---|---------|---|---|---|---|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1    | 5 | 3       | 5 | 9 | 0 | 9 | 6        | 4 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 3 |
| Zone |   | Easting |   |   |   |   | Northing |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

2

|      |  |         |  |  |  |  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|------|--|---------|--|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|      |  |         |  |  |  |  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Zone |  | Easting |  |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

3

|      |  |         |  |  |  |  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|------|--|---------|--|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|      |  |         |  |  |  |  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Zone |  | Easting |  |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

4

|      |  |         |  |  |  |  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|------|--|---------|--|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|      |  |         |  |  |  |  |          |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Zone |  | Easting |  |  |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

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 Susan Jezak Ford  
Organization Citysearch Preservation Date March 1, 2005  
Street & number 3628 Holmes St. Telephone 816-531-2489  
City or town Kansas City State Missouri Zip code 64109

**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 SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

Name Kansas City Kansas Public School District  
Street & number 625 Minnesota Avenue Telephone 913-551-3200  
City or town Kansas City State Kansas Zip code 66101

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

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

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Sumner High School  
Kansas City, Kansas

---

## Architectural Description

### Overview

Sumner High School, renamed Sumner Academy of Arts and Science in 1978, is located at 1610 North 8<sup>th</sup> Street, two blocks north of downtown Kansas City, Kansas. The brick Art Deco school was constructed in 1939 as a PWA project. It was built to replace the former Sumner High School building, constructed in 1905 for African-American students. The nominated building has continuously served students in Kansas City, Kansas since its construction. It is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of Education for its history as the only legislated African American High School in Kansas, and under Criterion C in the area of Architecture, for its form as an Art Deco style building constructed as a PWA project. The overall context for historic schools in Kansas is described in the Multiple Property Documentation Form, *Historic Public Schools of Kansas* (MPDF). The context for this building type is described in the MPDF's Associated Property Types, *City High Schools* and in Appendix B, *New Deal Era Schools*.

The Sumner High School building retains a high degree of integrity in its design, materials and placement. The school's building materials are integrated in its exterior ornament, presenting protruding and recessed walls in two shades of variegated tan brick and ornamented sections of decorative brick. The ornament is subdued and linear, consistent with the Art Deco style in school buildings. Bricks are set in header, rowlock and soldier coursing on all sides of the exterior. All parapets are capped with limestone, all sills are limestone and the concrete foundation is visible on all sides of the building. The interior retains its original hall configuration and many original details, found in woodwork, wall finishes, storage closets and chalkboards.

The original three-story building is laid out in an irregular rectangle, presenting primary façades on the south facing Oakland Avenue and east facing the school's parking lot. The original building measures approximately 450 feet by 200 feet with a north-south axis. The school has undergone several changes since 1975 to continue operations. A 1975 gymnasium and cafeteria addition, measuring approximately 125 feet wide by 150 feet deep, is connected to the northeast corner of the original building by a walkway with minimal impact to the original fabric. Sumner High School became Sumner Academy in 1978, with renovations to some of the classrooms, library and science rooms. The centrally located library was expanded into the building's courtyard in 1985. Modular buildings, added in 1994, are located on the west and north sides of the building, connected by wood walkways. Air conditioning and new heating were added to the school in 2002, resulting in lowered interior ceilings, new tile floors, the removal of the smokestack on the school's northwest corner and replacement of the windows. Windows on the primary façades fill the original openings; windows on secondary façades are a combination of downsized windows and stucco in-fill placed within the original spaces. Despite the changes, the school retains its appearance on the interior and exterior as a historic Art Deco school building.

### South Façade

As one approaches from the street, the two-and-a-half-story south façade is the first view of the school. The south elevation presents a short side of the building's rectangular shape. The school's auditorium fills the main south wall, placed centrally and forward of other walls on this elevation. The wall is spanned by four double rowlock courses of dark tan brick. Three sets of three windows stretch from the first to second stories and are

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 2 **Sumner High School**  
**Kansas City, Kansas**

---

topped with ornamental squares of brick and tiles. Dark molded brick intersects the windows with bands of ornament. The lower half of the east set of windows is also filled with dark tan brick.

The auditorium is surrounded on either side by recessed three-story towers. The west tower houses the auditorium's stage and is fronted by a one-story entrance to the stage. The tower is ornamented with horizontal bands of dark tan brick in the upper portion that surround dark brick squares. The entrance cube has small square windows irregularly placed in the upper portion. The lower portion of the cube has an entrance sheltered by a concrete overhang in the east section and three narrow vertical windows in the west portion. The school's music room, clad in dark tan variegated brick with bands of lighter brick at the parapet and water course, is located on the far west portion of the south façade, pulled forward from the auditorium wall.

The south wall of the east tower is plain brick, but is fronted by a one-story dark tan entrance to the auditorium. This entrance is pulled forward from the auditorium wall. It has a parapet that is ornamented with bands of limestone and a central limestone square carved with vertical ribbing. One approaches the double-door entrance via concrete stairs sheltered by a concrete awning.

One can see the school's entrance tower on the far eastern edge of the south façade. The south side of the four-story tower is clad in dark tan brick. The tower steps just above the third story and has a band of limestone at this level. An additional band of vertically ribbed limestone tops the tower. The south side of the tower is fronted by a two-story stairwell tower of light tan brick containing three vertical windows that run from the ground to the third story.

### **East Façade**

The east façade of Sumner High School formerly faced Eighth Street. The thoroughfare was closed when the school added the new gymnasium in 1975. This side of the school is now fronted by a parking lot.

The dark tan entrance tower located in the south portion of the elevation dominates Sumner High School's east façade. Four vertical inserts that rise from the sheltered entrance emphasize the height of the four-story tower. The lower portions of the inserts are filled with glass block. The upper portions contain vents and are covered with vertical lines of textured brick that rise to the third story, where the tower steps back. The upper portion of the tower is ornamented with four vertical indentations in the brick. The tower is capped with limestone carved with vertical notches.<sup>1</sup> At the first story, a concrete awning topped with concrete letters that read "SUMNER ACADEMY"<sup>2</sup> protects steps that lead to four entrance doors that are topped with glass block transoms. Limestone carved in geometric patterns surround this entrance.

The main entrance to the school's auditorium is located south of the tower within a recessed wall. The wall is clad in light tan brick in the upper portion and dark tan brick in the lower portion. Five decorative squares of

---

<sup>1</sup> The rear (east side) of the tower is finished to match the front.

<sup>2</sup> These letters read "SUMNER HIGH SCHOOL" until 1978.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

**Section number** 7 **Page** 3 **Sumner High School**  
**Kansas City, Kansas**

dark brick are placed in the upper portion of the wall. The auditorium's three double doors are topped with glass block transoms. The doors are surrounded by bands of limestone and separated by massive limestone columns.

The east walls behind the school's entrance tower are three stories tall. They are clad in dark tan brick on the first story and light tan brick on the second and third stories. The south wall is recessed more than the north wall. The north wall has three narrow, vertical windows in the first story and a round window in each of the second and third stories.

The north portion of the east façade contains classrooms and this wall protrudes forward of the entrance tower. Dark tan brick surrounds the windows on each story, which have limestone sills. Dark rowlock coursing is placed above and below each window opening and horizontal sections of light tan brick are located above each level of windows. The original double-hung classroom windows were replaced with modern ones in 2002, but the original window openings were not downsized. Each level has a row of six paired openings; each opening is now filled with three windows.

**1975 Gymnasium/Cafeteria Addition**

The school's cafeteria and main gymnasium are attached to the northeast portion of the east wall of classrooms. The addition is placed east of the original building and is attached by a tan brick walkway with arched exterior entrances in the south and north sides. The gymnasium building is very straightforward, clad primarily in plain brick walls with a visible concrete foundation. The west side of the building consists of plain brick walls. The wall of the south elevation features decorative brick patterns inlaid in the upper portion and a sign with the school's shield and the name, "Sumner Academy of Arts and Science" attached in the lower west portion. The ground on the south elevation slopes downward to the east. The basement level of the south side, fronted by a concrete pergola, has two central vents and pairs of metal doors on the southwest and southeast corners.

The east side of the building has plain wall of brick on the upper portion. The concrete basement wall has a central pair of metal doors surrounded on either side by a pair of windows. The east side of the building is adjacent to the bleachers for the school's athletic field.

A one-story extension projects from the north elevation of the gymnasium. A row of windows is placed in the upper portion of the gymnasium and two sets of four windows are present on the west and east edges of the first story. The raised basement level contains four windows and a pair of metal doors in west corner.

**North Elevation**

Standing on the north side of the new gymnasium addition, one can see the northernmost expanse of the east wall of the original school building. A new three-story concrete mechanical shaft is placed at the juncture of the original school and the new gymnasium addition. A three-story stairwell is located directly west of this shaft. The stairwell is clad in light tan brick and has small, horizontal windows placed on the east side. The north side of the stairwell has tall, vertical sets of windows separated by brown brick.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Section number   7   Page   4   **Sumner High School  
Kansas City, Kansas****

---

The north portion of the school houses the original gymnasium and swimming pool. The northernmost portion of the school's east wall is two stories tall with five window openings on both levels and brick patterns matching those on the three-story classroom section of the east façade. First-story windows have been filled with brick and second-story windows are downsized with stucco and modern windows. The window openings retain their original size and limestone sills. The gymnasium roof extends above the two-story height of this portion of the building. A recessed entrance is located in the northeast corner of the building, approached by concrete steps and topped with three vertical windows of glass block. A recessed plain wall extends north of this doorway.

The far north wall of the school has five window openings in the second story. The two outer openings are filled with stucco; the central windows are filled with stucco and modern downsized windows.

**Heating Plant**

The school's original heating plant and incinerator is a separate one-story cube, located on the northwest corner of the building. The flat parapet of this section of the building is capped with tile. Window openings, now bricked over, have stone sills. Brickwork matches that found on the rest of the school, with a rowlock course at the foundation. The plant, attached to the school on the west side, has two window openings on the north side and three window openings on the west side. The south side of the building is fronted by a remnant of the school's octagonal smokestack. The stack was shortened in 2002 from four stories to two stories. The smokestack is clad in tan brick and has bands of limestone mid-level and at the top. A window opening and a single metal door are located east of the smokestack on the south side.

**West Elevation**

The west side of the school contains the original gymnasium in the north section, classrooms in the center and the music room in the south section. The west wall of the gymnasium has five windows on the second story, now downsized, and three, now filled with brick, on the first story.

The west wall of classrooms projects beyond the gymnasium wall. The parapet of this wall is topped with tile. The wall has brickwork and limestone sills matching that found on the rest of the building. The north side of this projection has a loading dock in the west portion, surrounded on either side by window openings, now filled in with stucco. The north wall west of the loading dock has a central downsized entrance door and a large western window opening, now downsized with stucco and modern windows. The west classroom wall is lined with a row of window openings. These openings are now downsized with stucco and modern windows. A central section of the wall projects from the rest of the wall.

An exterior entrance is located here is located just south of the projecting bay, approached by two sets of steps that rise northward and southward. The pair of metal doors, topped with a transom window, is protected by a concrete awning. Vertical patterns of brick rise from the awning to the one-story roofline, which is capped with vertically carved limestone. The southernmost portion of the school's west wall contains the music room with four window openings, now downsized with stucco and modern windows. A single metal door accesses the



**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Section number 7 Page 5 Sumner High School  
Kansas City, Kansas**

---

interior of the music room. The west side of the block housing the school's auditorium stage rises behind the music room area. The upper portion of the wall is ornamented to match its south façade, with double bands of dark tan rowlock brick surrounding seven cubes of dark brick and tile.

**Site**

The school's site slopes downward from the southwest to the northeast. This topography places the southwest corner of the building at ground level and exposes the full basement level on the northeast corner of the new gymnasium.

The school's athletic field, built in 1932, is located east of the 1975 gymnasium. The oval field sits lower than the school building and bleachers are set into the west hill overlooking the field. The perimeter of the field is lined with a limestone wall, topped with protruding pieces of stone. A 1964 field house is located at the northwest corner of the field. The one-story rectangular brick building has a flat roof. The south side of the building contains two metal doors, the west wall has a central pair of metal doors and the north wall is plain brick. The east side of the building has two sliding metal security doors and one garage door.

Two modern modular buildings, clad in wood, are placed west and north of the school. These buildings are accessed via wood walkways that lead to the school. Parking lots are located on the west, north and east sides of the school.

**Interior**

The school's interior retains its original hallway plan and many original elements. The first story hallways follow the school's rectangular shape. The walls are wainscoted with either lockers or glazed tan concrete blocks, edged with green bullnose tiles. The blocks curve for classroom entrances and drinking fountain areas, which are lined in two shades of green tile set in a geometric pattern. The upper walls of the halls are plaster. In 2002, old tile hallway floors were replaced with new tiles and ceilings were lowered to accommodate air conditioning ductwork. Staircases retain their original terrazzo floors.

The school has many original wood classroom doors topped with glass transoms. Most of the doors have multipaned windows in the upper portion. Many classrooms still have original wood floors, chalkboards and storage. Unique storage within several of the classrooms consists of up to 30 small wood drawers located behind wood doors that slide upward into the wall.

Some of the spaces within the school have been altered to accommodate changing uses. Several of the school's classrooms were reconfigured in 1979. Among them was the former lunchroom on the southeast corner, remodeled to accommodate the instrumental and vocal music rooms. The school once had a central courtyard on the first story. The library was expanded to fill the center of this space in 1985, leaving small courtyards on the north and south sides of the library.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

**Section number**   7   **Page**   6   **Sumner High School**  
**Kansas City, Kansas**

---

The second and third stories consist of hallways above the east portion of the school lined with classrooms. Original finishes similar to those found on the first story are still present.

Two outstanding original spaces are still present within the school—the auditorium and the gymnasium. The auditorium retains its original configuration and the original seats on the main floor and in the balcony.<sup>3</sup> Original Art Deco lighting fixtures are suspended from the ceiling. The brick walls are set in patterns of light tan, dark tan and textured brick. A carved wood proscenium surrounds the stage. The school's original gymnasium, located in the north end of the building, retains its original finishes, including dark brick wainscoting and light brick walls inlaid with horizontal dark brick lines. The arched trussed roof is original, although it is now lit with fluorescent lights. The upper portion of the auditorium and the original gymnasium can be accessed via the second story.

---

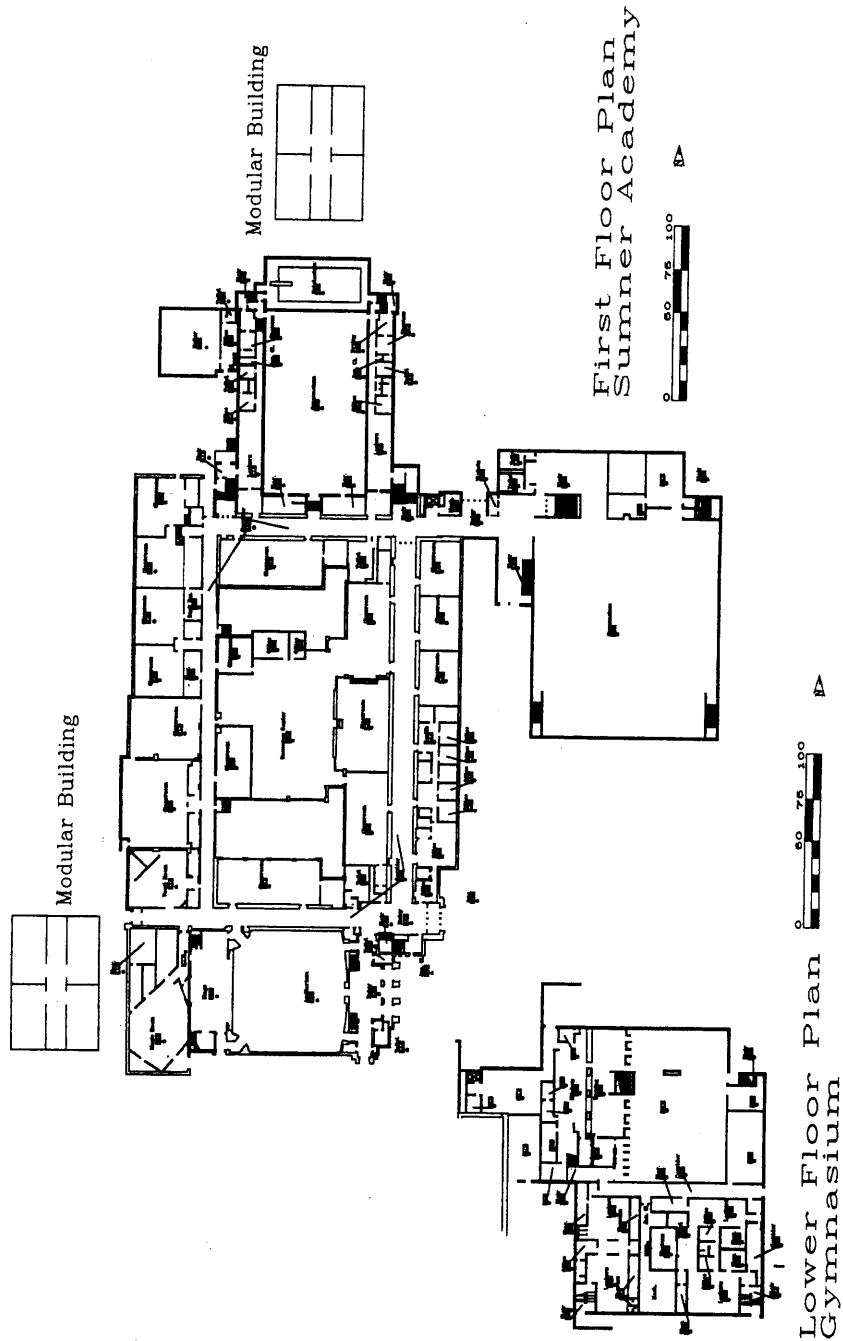
<sup>3</sup> These seats are now covered with dark blue upholstery.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 7

Sumner High School  
Kansas City, Kansas

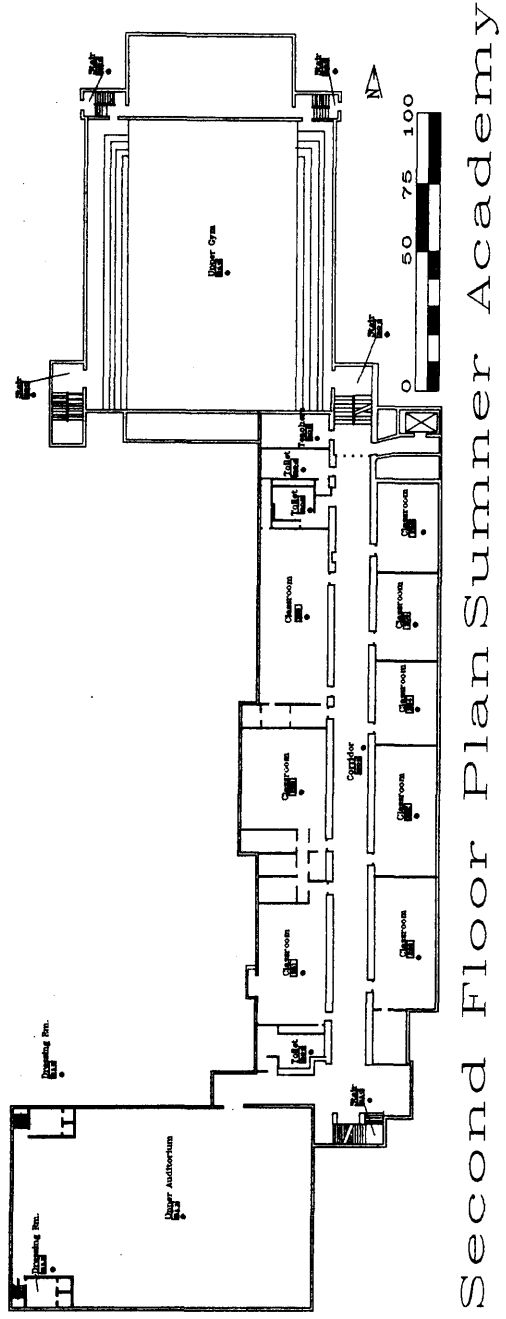


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 8

Sumner High School  
Kansas City, Kansas



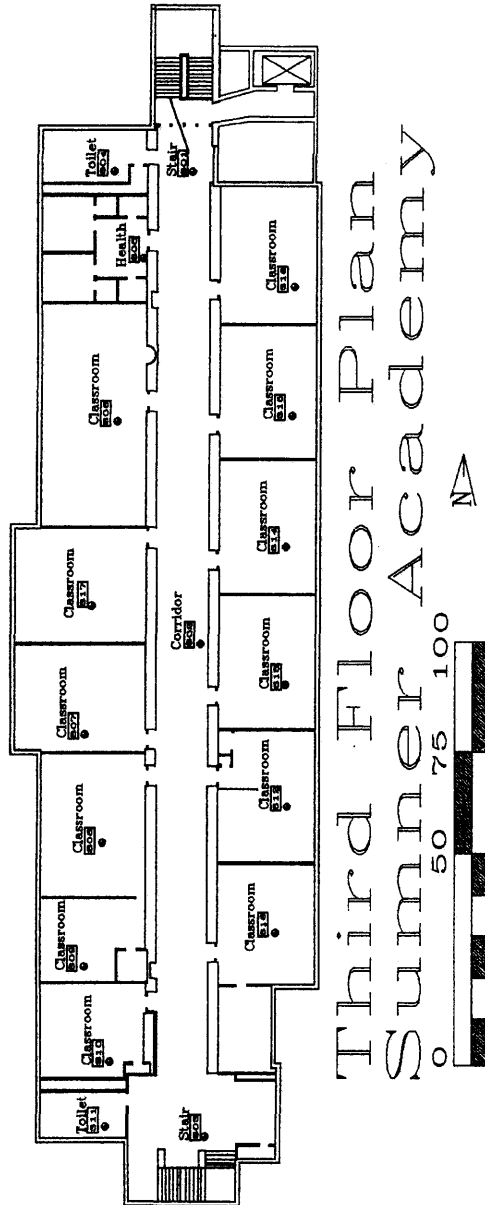
Second Floor Plan Sumner Academy

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 9 Sumner High School  
Kansas City, Kansas

---



Third Floor Plany  
Sumner Academy

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Section number** 8 **Page** 10 **Sumner High School  
Kansas City, Kansas**

---

**Statement of Significance**

**Overview**

Sumner High School, now Sumner Academy of Arts and Science, is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of Education for its history as the only legislated African-American High School in Kansas, and under Criterion C in the area of Architecture, for its form as an Art Deco style building constructed as a PWA project. The building is located at 1610 North 8<sup>th</sup> Street, two blocks north of downtown Kansas City, Kansas. The brick school was constructed in 1939 to replace the former Sumner High School building, established in 1905 for African American students in Kansas City, Kansas. The nominated building has continuously served students in Kansas City, Kansas since its construction. The overall context for historic schools in Kansas is described in the Multiple Property Documentation Form, *Historic Public Schools of Kansas* (MPDF). The context for this building type is described in the MPDF's Associated Property Types, *City High Schools* and in Appendix B, *New Deal Era Schools*.

**History of the School**

Sumner High School was born out of racial tensions brought on by conflicts in 1904. Prior to that year, all Kansas high schools were integrated and black and white high school students attended the Kansas City, Kansas (KCK) High School. In April 1904, Roy Martin, a white student, was killed by a black youth in a dispute at a baseball park. As 80 or so African-American students tried to enter the high school the following day, approximately 700 white students blocked their way, even though the accused killer, Louis Gregory, was not a student at the high school.<sup>4</sup> The school was closed for the day and the push for segregated schools in KCK was strengthened.

The Kansas Legislature passed house bill No. 890 in February 1905 authorizing separate high schools for whites and blacks in KCK. Governor Hoch was reluctant to accept the agreement, but demanded that the white KCK community provide a black high school costing at least \$40,000 and as well equipped as the present high school. Bonds were issued for a new, separate school to be known at Manual Training High School. During construction, white students attended the old high school in the morning and the black students attended in the afternoon. Although not completed, the new black high school was occupied for the 1906-1907 school year. The building was named Sumner High School for Charles S. Sumner, a prominent abolitionist and senator in the mid-1800s. The school strove to provide a superior quality of education. A high percentage of the school's faculty had graduate degrees and consistently produced countless academic and athletic achievers that became leaders within the KCK African-American community.

The old Sumner High School was overfull by the 1930s and some of the classrooms on the upper floors were declared a fire hazard. Residents began demanding a new school. The KCK Board of Education resolved in 1931 that the city needed a new Sumner High School and athletic field. The school's athletic field was built in 1932, carved into the west bank at 8<sup>th</sup> Street and Oakland Avenue. In 1937, the Kansas legislature gave the

---

<sup>4</sup> Louis Gregory pleaded self-defense, but was found guilty of first-degree murder. All accounts of the incident come from newspapers or contemporary historians, so one cannot determine accurately the actual event that led to the call for segregated schools in the city.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 11 **Sumner High School**  
**Kansas City, Kansas**

school board the authority to issue \$751,000 in bonds for the new Sumner. The board applied for a 45 percent PWA grant and received approval for a \$337,500 grant in the spring of 1938. The site was purchased across the street from the athletic field and Joseph Radotinsky was chosen as the architect.

Radotinsky's design of the new school was described by the *Kansas City Kansan* as "modern, complete and attractive." A 1938 article described the beauty of the entrance tower "inset with vertical glass brick light openings" and a buff brick "sumptuous exterior."<sup>5</sup> Ground was broken on August 22, 1938 and the S. Patti Construction Company served as the building's contractor. The design of the interior received praise that even surpassed that for the exterior. The school was to be "modern in every detail with the latest trends in vocational education incorporated into design and efficiency." The building was designed in a rectangular shape, with an auditorium seating up to 1200 people on the south end and a gymnasium on the north. It also contained a library and 32 classrooms that included four science rooms, three homemaking rooms and four vocational training rooms. The school also featured a swimming pool, one of only three in Kansas high schools at the time. The building was dedicated on Monday, January 9, 1940. Principal speakers were Governor Payne H. Ratner and Dr. Sherman D. Scruggs, a former Sumner teacher and president of Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri. An article in that day's *Kansas City Kansan* labeled the building as "the largest and most modern educational plant for Negro students in the state."<sup>6</sup>

Sumner High School maintained high educational, athletic and vocational standards for decades and was touted in the 1940s as "Kansas City's Finest Contribution to the Education of Negro Youth." The building received minor additions and alterations to accommodate changing needs. The school's field house was constructed in 1964 and the new gymnasium and cafeteria were built in 1975.<sup>7</sup>

By May 1978, the court-ordered integration of Sumner High School began. It closed at the end of the school year and received approximately \$300,000 worth of remodeling that summer. It reopened in the fall as Sumner Academy of Arts and Science, a college preparatory magnet school open to all races. Improvements included renovation of some classrooms, the library and science rooms. Improvements in 1979 affected additional classrooms, music rooms and art rooms. Mobile classrooms were added to the west and north sides of the building in 1994. Air conditioning was added to the school in 2002, along with new windows, new floor tiles and an expanded library.

Sumner Academy was removed from court-ordered desegregation in 1997 and continues to operate as a multi-cultural school for highly motivated students. Students must have and maintain a high grade point average to attend the school. The school currently houses around 975 students in eighth through twelfth grades.

<sup>5</sup> "New Sumner High To Be Attractive," *Kansas City Kansan*, 12 August 1938.

<sup>6</sup> "Challenge to Negro Youth in New School, Ratner Says," *Kansas City Kansan*, 9 January 1940.

<sup>7</sup> The original gymnasium continues to be used by the school's 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Section number** 8 **Page** 12 **Sumner High School  
Kansas City, Kansas**

---

**Significance**

Sumner High School meets requirements for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C in the area of Architecture set forth in the MPDF, *Historic Public Schools of Kansas*. The building retains a high degree of integrity in its location, setting, design, materials and workmanship. The school fits well with the MPDF's description of a city high school and as a New Deal Era school. The building is also significant for its status as the only school in Kansas legislated and built as an African-American High School.

The MPDF describes a post-1900 city high school as a building constructed to encompass many uses. The Progressive Era (1900-1930) brought a need for schools to include specialized classrooms for courses such as the manual arts, fine arts and sciences. These schools also typically included at least one gymnasium and a separate auditorium. After 1930, design emphasis shifted to the exterior of the building, resulting in many of the grand high schools built in Kansas from the mid-1920s to the onset of World War II. Sumner High School could certainly be included as one such grand design, with its streamlined Art Deco ornament. Sachs' and Erlich's *Guide to Kansas Architecture* notes that the school's massing points to a growing influence of European modernism, especially that of Willem Dudock, a Dutch architect.<sup>8</sup> The MPDF notes that Kansas schools built during the Depression were typically light brick structures with glass block details, as seen on Sumner High School. The exterior appearance and interior uses of Sumner High School have changed little since it opened in early 1940.

As noted in the MPDF, schools built in Kansas during the Depression years were primarily the result of New Deal programs, as is Sumner High School. New Deal programs had a significant impact on educational facilities across the nation and in Kansas. Sumner's Art Deco design fits well with the broad range of styles embraced by the PWA and WPA programs. Elements within this style—stepped forms, flat roofs and spare ornament—are all found with this Modern Movement style promoted by the New Deal.

Sumner High School retains its original form that is clearly distinguished from later additions to the building. The central, historic core of the building is clearly visible, identified by its design and historic materials. Additions to the building present secondary elevations, never covering or overwhelming the original portion. Integrity extends to the interior, where original wall finishes, wood trim, interior details and room configuration remains. Original windows have been replaced, but the new windows have not changed the overall fenestration openings. Worn-out tile floors have been re-laid, but terrazzo flooring on staircases remains. The changes and additions the building has received are considered reversible and therefore do not destroy significant historic details. They are well within the acceptable parameters set forth in the MPDF and do not harm or detract from the building's integrity.

The school is also eligible for listing under Criterion A in the area of Education for its history as the only legislated African American High School in Kansas. In 1879, the Kansas legislature passed a law authorizing the mixing of races in high schools. The law stated, in part, "The board of education shall have power...to

---

<sup>8</sup> David H. Sach & George Ehrlich, *Guide to Kansas Architecture*, Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1996, 57.



**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

**Section number** 8 **Page** 13 **Sumner High School**  
**Kansas City, Kansas**

---

organize and maintain separate schools for the education of white and colored children, except in high school, where no discrimination shall be made on account of color.”<sup>9</sup> The 1879 law was superseded by a 1905 law that stated, “The board of education shall have power to...organize and maintain separate schools for the education of white and colored children, including the high schools in Kansas City, Kansas; no discrimination on account of color shall be made in high schools, except as provided herein.”<sup>10</sup> *Brown v. Board of Education* nullified this measure in 1954.

Sumner High School is the only extant high school in Kansas built for only black students. The 1905 segregation law was aimed specifically at Kansas City, Kansas, enabling the circumstances surrounding the school’s construction. Until integration arrived in 1954, it was the only high black school in the state. Even after *Brown*, the school remained primarily segregated until the fall of 1978. Notable graduates include: John Coolidge, the 31<sup>st</sup> postmaster of Kansas City, Missouri; Preston Holmes, former member of Spike Lee’s production team and current independent producer; Rosalyn Story, nationally known violinist and author; Macie Houston, regional director for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska and Missouri; Delano Lewis, former CEO of National Public Radio and former U.S. ambassador to South Africa. The Sumner High School building continues to retain a powerful legacy today. within the KCK African-American community.

---

<sup>9</sup> Laws of Kansas, 1879, Chapter 81, Sec. 1.

<sup>10</sup> Laws of Kansas, 1905, Chapter 414, Sec. 1.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 14 Sumner High School  
Kansas City, Kansas

---

**Bibliography**

Conrad, Mary (School Librarian). Interview by author. 8 February 2005.

Henry, Milton (Head School Custodian). Interview by author. 27 January 2005.

*The Kansas City Kansan:*

“New Sumner High To Be Attractive.” 12 August 1938.

“Challenge to Negro Youth in New School, Ratner Says.” 9 January 1940.

*The Kansas City Star:*

“High School Boy Killed.” 12 April 1904.

“Negro Students Kept Out.” 13 April 1904.

“May Keep School Closed.” 15 April 1904.

*The Kansas City Times:*

Truitt, Rosalind. “Sumner: Black to Black and White.” 29 May 1978.

*The Kansas City Voice:*

Johnson, Minnie. “Why, How and When It All Began.” 8-14 June 1978.

“The Other Side of It.” 8-14 June 1978.

Lewis, Delano E. “Personal Perspective: A Native Kansan and African-American Relates the Impact of *Brown v. Board of Education* on His Education and Professional Journey.” *Washburn Law Journal* 43 (29 April 2004): 375-380.

Spencer, Brenda R. *Historic Public School of Kansas*. (National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form.)

“Sumner High School.” *Kansas Historic Properties Survey Form* (No. 414). Completed 26 April 2004.

Woodard, Bill. “Orange and Black Come Back.” *Kansas Alumni* (October/November 1995): 22-27.

*The Wyandotte Herald:*

“Cold Blooded Murder.” 12 April 1904.

Untitled articles. 23 June 1904; 1 September 1904; 15 February 1905; 8 June 1905; 14 September 1905.

“The Manual Training School For Colored Children.” 12 October 1905.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

## **National Register of Historic Places**

### **Continuation Sheet**

**Section number**   10   **Page**   15   **Sumner High School**  
**Kansas City, Kansas**

---

#### **Verbal Boundary Decryption**

Sumner High School occupies Block 53, Lots 13-35; Block 54, Lots 1-10 & 46-48; Block 65, Lots 1-14, the East half of Lot 15 & Lots 41-48; Block 66, Lots 14-35 in Wyandotte City subdivision. The area is roughly bounded by New Jersey Avenue on the north, 9<sup>th</sup> Street on the west, Oakland Avenue on the south and 7<sup>th</sup> Street on the east.

#### **Boundary Justification**

The boundary includes the property historically associated with the current Sumner High School building.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Section number** Photos **Page** 16 **Sumner High School  
Kansas City, Kansas**

---

**Photographic Information**

The following information is consistent for all photographs:

1. Sumner High School building
2. Wyandotte County, Kansas
3. Susan Jezak Ford, photographer
4. 27 January 2005
5. Negatives located at Kansas State Historical Society

The following information is applicable to specific photographs:

6. South and east façades; NW view  
7. #1

6. Southwest corner; NW view  
7. #2

6. Entrance tower; W view  
7. #3

6. Original building and 1975 gymnasium; N view  
7. #4

6. South façade of music room and auditorium; NE view  
7. #5

6. North side of school; S view  
7. #6

6. Northwest corner; SE view  
7. #7

6. First-story interior hall; S view  
7. #8

6. First-story interior hall; N view  
7. #9

6. Second-story classroom closets; NW view  
7. #10

6. Second-story classroom; SW view

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number Photos Page 17 **Sumner High School  
Kansas City, Kansas**

---

7. #11

6. Third-story classroom; NW view

7. #12

6. Original gymnasium; NW view

7. #13

6. Interior auditorium wall; NE view

7. #14