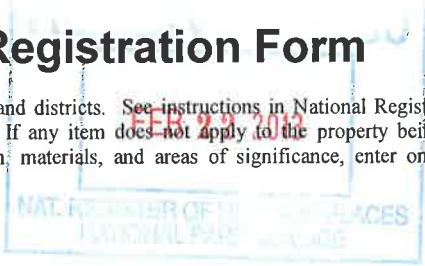


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

143

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.



1. Name of Property

Historic name: John Mercer Langston School

Other names/site number: Slater-Langston School

Name of related multiple property listing:

Public School Buildings of Washington, D.C., 1862-1960

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

2. Location

Street & number: 43 P Street, NW

City or town: Washington, D.C. State: DC County: _____

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A ___ B X C ___ D

<u>David Maroney</u>	<u>DAVID MARONEY DC SHPO</u>	<u>2/13/2013</u>
Signature of certifying official/Title:		Date
<u>DC HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE</u>		
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government		

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
_____	_____
Signature of commenting official:	Date
_____	_____
Title :	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

John Mercer Langston School
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.
County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)

Lon Edson H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

4.9.13
Date of Action

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

John Mercer Langston School
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.
County and State

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u> </u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u> </u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION/School

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/Not in Use

John Mercer Langston School
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.
County and State

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH CENTURY REVIVAL/Italian Renaissance

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick Walls; Slate Roof

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The John Mercer Langston Elementary School is a purpose-built public school building located in a center-city neighborhood of Washington, D.C. known as Shaw East. It was built in 1902 to handle the overflow of students from the adjoining 1891 Slater School. Both schools were built for African-American pupils at a time when public education was segregated by race. In its location at 43 P Street, NW, Langston School forms part of a complex of schools built for African Americans along First Street, between L and P Streets, N.W.

The Langston School is a red brick, two-story, Italianate-style, eight-classroom school of the subtype "Architects in Private Practice" described in the Multiple Property Documentation Form *Public School Buildings of Washington, D.C., 1862-1960*. Designed by Appleton P. Clark, Jr., the building has two towers on the south front elevation marking the boys' and girls' entrances. The asymmetrical arrangement of towers and bays can be ascribed to the "unfinished" nature of the building as the architect had planned, from the outset, a wing addition to the west that was never built. As constructed, the front elevation features arched entrance doors with molded-brick surrounds located in the two towers, segmentally arched window openings, limestone sills, blind

John Mercer Langston School

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

arches above the second-floor windows, and five-pointed stars placed in each of the blind arches. The overhanging eaves have exposed rafter ends are supported by carved wooden brackets.

A playground is located at the east side of the school and separated from the public right-of-way by a non-historic chainlink fence.

The Langston School is in good but neglected condition. It retains integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, association, and feeling. The building is in its original location and is part of a complex of schools built for African Americans. The building retains its original massing and its highly detailed craftsmanship. The building lacks its original windows, which have either been replaced, or removed, or are boarded up. Although the windows were distinctive, the building's integrity has not been compromised by their loss.

Narrative Description

Exterior

The Langston School at 43 P Street NW, designed by architect Appleton P. Clark, Jr. and built in 1902, reflects a highly detailed Italianate style of architecture. It is a red-brick, two-story, eight-classroom building, with four rooms and cloak rooms on each floor above a full-height basement level. The building has a rectangular footprint, with its long sides facing P Street, NW on the south and an alley on the north. The building is set upon a fully exposed and raised brick foundation, has brick walls laid in an all-stretcher bond, and is covered by a broad half-hipped/half-gabled roof characterized by wide and overhanging eaves with exposed rafters and supported by large wooden brackets. The roof is clad with slate. The exterior trim, generally limited to window sills and inset panels, is limestone.

As conceived, the front (south) elevation facing P Street was designed as a five-part façade consisting of two towers connected by a central, two-story pavilion and buttressed at the ends by similar two-story end wings. However, the west end wing—intended at the outset to be built as an addition—was never constructed. As a result, the building, as built, is divided into four parts on this elevation, including the two towers connected by a central, two-story wing, and another two-story wing at the east end of the building. The west wing (planned as an addition), was never constructed, giving the façade its “unbalanced” effect.

The four-part façade extends eight bays long, with each tower constituting a single bay and being identically detailed. Both towers project slightly from the central connecting wing and include a round-arched entry door in the first story with paired and arched windows in the second story. These superimposed openings are set within a slightly recessed area that extends the full height and culminates at the top with blind arch corbelling. Both entrance doors are reached by dual-flight stairways leading from the ground level to the doors which open to stairs at a landing level between the basement and the first floor. The double wood doors are set within an engaged brick architrave surround with an arched transom above the frieze. The engaged brick architrave consists of brick pilasters framing the doors and supporting a brick frieze above. A jack-arched

John Mercer Langston School

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

brick lintel surmounts the double doors, while a molded brick cornice projects slightly between the lintel and the frieze panel above. The round-arched transom above the frieze has a multi-layered molded brickwork surround, and historically had multi-paned glass, no longer intact.

Between the first and second stories is a broad spandrel area of brick with two roundels formed by decorative brickwork located within the brick wall. The second story features paired 1/1 replacement wood windows, each one with its own blind arched transom above and both set within a larger blind arch above. The windows are separated from each other by a brick pilaster or stile and their blind arches above the windows are both filled with decorative brick roundels flush with the brick wall, also laid in decorative patterning. A limestone bas relief of a five-pointed star dominates the center of the blind arch, similarly of decoratively laid brick, that covers the pair of windows and completes the second-story window framing. The use of the five-pointed star (Star of David) in this particular instance is not known to have any significant meaning.

Above the second story window, the recessed panel of the tower culminates with blind and corbelled arcading. The tower is capped by its own hipped roof, clad in slate, and featuring wide eaves with exposed rafter ends. Large wooden brackets, in turn, support the overhanging roof. The more centrally located tower includes, above the entry doors and between the roundels, raised metal letters carrying the name of the school: LANGSTON SCHOOL.

The wing between the towers and to the east of inner tower are identically detailed with three large, segmentally arched window openings on the first story and six, single windows above them in the second story. Historically, these second-story windows featured 20/1 double-hung wood sash with 20-light transoms above. Currently the windows are either boarded up or are filled with 1/1 replacement windows with single light transoms. The segmentally-arched first story openings originally held pairs of two 20/1 wood windows with a segmentally arched multi-paned transoms above. Presently, these windows have either 1/1 replacement sash, or are currently boarded up with plywood and not visibly intact. All of the openings retain their brick lintels, or molded surrounds, and limestone sills.

The second story windows are separated from each other by a brick pilaster that in turn supports the blind round-arch transom over each window. This blind arch is ornamented with decorative brickwork. The overhanging roof rises above, with the large wooden brackets interspersing each of the six windows of the wings.

The rear (north) elevation is similar to the south façade, with one notable exception being that the entrance doors in each tower are at grade level. The west elevation of the building has an undecorated brick wall, with the exception of pairs of first- and second-story windows. The east elevation has pairs of first- and second-story windows near its southeastern corner and matching blind apertures near its northeastern corner. There is a central pavilion which does not contain an entrance.

The east elevation is three bays wide with a tower forming the central bay. The tower projects slightly from the wall plane and features pairs of windows on the first and second stories. The

John Mercer Langston School

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

second-story windows, like those of the façade towers, are together set beneath a round-arch brick surround with round-arched transoms above the individual openings. A stone five-pointed arch is located in the spandrel of the arch. The tower projects through and above the overhanging roof line. The bay to the south of this central tower has wide, segmentally arched windows on the first story and paired windows on the second story. Again, this second-story windows are surmounted by blind round arches which spring from stone imposts. Now missing or boarded up, these windows historically had 20/1 light double-hung sash and multi-light transoms. The openings to the north of the central tower—wide segmental-arched openings on the first story and paired rectangular openings above—are blind openings filled with brick. It is not clear why these openings were designed as blind openings as the interior corresponds with a classroom. However, only one of the four classrooms (the classroom at the southeast corner of the building) had windows on two sides.

The west end elevation is a planar brick wall surface with pairs of windows located on-center of the wall at the first and second stories. The second-story windows have round-arch surrounds with blind brick transoms filled with diagonally laid ornamental brickwork. One of the first-story windows retains its original multi-light wood transom—the only surviving original window on the building.

A playground is located to the west of Langston School and separates the building from the adjacent Slater School.

Interior

The interior of Langston School is vacant, but fully intact. Four classrooms are located on both the first and second floors with stairwells located in the towers on the north and south sides of the building and corridors running through the center of the building, lengthwise. The tower at the east end houses a pair of cloak rooms, while other cloak rooms are located between the classrooms and stair halls. The corridors have wood floors and plaster walls and tall ceilings with dropped acoustical tiling. The door openings into the classrooms have wood trim with bulls' eye corner blocks and operable, single-light transoms. The classrooms are well lit spaces with the long walls filled with windows and the shorter walls with chalk boards. The wood floors have been covered with vinyl tile and fluorescent lights have been dropped from the ceiling.

John Mercer Langston School
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.
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 listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

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

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

John Mercer Langston School
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.
County and State

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE
EDUCATION
ETHNIC HERITAGE/Black

Period of Significance
1902-1954

Significant Dates
1902; 1954

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder
Appleton P. Clark, Jr.

John Mercer Langston School
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.
County and State

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The John Mercer Langston Elementary School, a school for African Americans for grades 1-8, was designed by architect Appleton P. Clark, Jr. and built in 1902 to handle the overflow of students from the adjoining 1891 Slater School. In its location at 43 P Street, Langston School forms part of a complex of schools built for African Americans along First Street, NW between L and P Streets in the Shaw East neighborhood of Washington, D.C. The new school was named for John Mercer Langston (1829-1897), the first African-American congressman from Virginia, who also had a distinguished diplomatic, academic and legal career in the District of Columbia. Langston School was one of 31 schools opened between 1895 and 1902 during a period of steady population growth in the District, including along the North Capitol Street corridor.

Interestingly, in an effort to ease the overcrowding at Slater Elementary School, school officials chose to build a new and separate school building next to Slater, rather than building an addition to it. For almost two decades, Slater and Langston Schools operated independently, serving separate student bodies for grades 1-8. In the late 1910s, when Slater's third principal, Anna E. Thompson, became principal of both schools, the schools merged progressively and began to be referred to as Slater-Langston. By 1919, within a few blocks of Langston and Slater Schools were three elementary schools, a junior high school, a vocational school and Washington's only two black high schools. By 1925, this African-American academic campus was educating a quarter of the District's black public school students. In 1951, Slater became an annex for the nearby vocational school, Margaret Murray Washington, while Langston continued to serve the elementary school student population.

In the months before the 1954 Supreme Court decision outlawing school segregation, Langston was cited as one of a number of African-American schools "operating above capacity." But by 1982, the overcrowded situation at Langston reversed when enrollment steadily declined. In 1993, the school was closed. The overwhelmingly African American community, which had fought previous attempts to shutter the school, accepted the closure. In 1997, the building became a homeless shelter.

Langston Elementary School is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under the Multiple Property Document *Public School Buildings of Washington, D.C., 1864-1960* with Education and Cultural Heritage/Black, and Architecture as its Areas of Significance. Langston School is a purpose-built public school building; it is more than 50 years old; it is in its original location; it retains integrity; and it retains original fabric and its character-defining features. Further, the building, designed by architect Appleton P. Clark, Jr. is representative of the school building sub-type, "The Architects in Private Practice, 1897-1910." As described in the Multiple Property document, the schools from this period were no longer designed by the Office of the Building Inspector, but were designed by private architects commissioned to do so. The hiring of private architects reflected the public's dissatisfaction

John Mercer Langston School

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

with the standardized eight-room, red brick school buildings that were the product of the Office of the Building Inspector. The schools designed by private architects are generally high-style buildings and highly articulated with quality materials and detailing.

Langston School is eligible under Criterion A according to the registration criteria since it conveys important information regarding the evolution of public education for African Americans in the District of Columbia, namely that of segregation and overcrowding in the public school system.

Langston School is also eligible under Criterion C as an outstanding example of a public school building subtype referenced in the Multiple Property Documentation Form *Public School Buildings of Washington, D.C., 1862-1960* under the associated property type "The Architects in Private Practice, 1897-1910." Schools of this period were designed by private architects, largely in an effort to appease the public's criticism at the end of the 19th century of the older Victorian-era school buildings.

The Period of Significance for the Langston School extends from 1902, the date the school building was completed until 1954 when the Supreme Court outlawed school segregation.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Langston School is significant in the Areas of Education and Ethnic Heritage-Black since it conveys important information regarding the development of the District of Columbia public school system, including a) the evolution of public education for African Americans, especially the neglect and the relief of school overcrowding, and b) segregation.

Langston School is significant in the Area of Architecture since it is an excellent example of a public school building built for African American students, and in particular, of an "Italianate-style rectangular block extensible school building," devised to accommodate an increased need for new school buildings in the city. Designed by master architect, Appleton P. Clark, Jr., Langston School provides a distinguished example of the associated property sub-type, "Architects in Private Practice, 1897-1910" as established in the Multiple Property Document for Public School buildings in the District of Columbia.¹

The development of the District of Columbia public school system and African-American education

The history of the Langston School follows main themes in the development of the city. The schools were built in an era marked by rapid growth, with attendant economic, social and political strains. In addition, like so much of Washington life, the District of Columbia public

¹ Beauchamp, Tanya E., *Multiple Property Documentation Form: Public School Buildings of Washington, D.C., 1862-1960*, Section F, p. 31.

John Mercer Langston School

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

schools were rigidly segregated by race throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth. While racial separation was not mandated by a specific law, it was a school system policy that courts held legally enforceable and which shaped the most basic elements of the system. A third theme is the influence of Congress in making funding decisions and appointing boards to make what in other cities would be local-government decisions.

Public education in the city of Washington dates to 1804, when the first board of school trustees met under the titular leadership of President Thomas Jefferson to establish schools for white students. Early public schools were considered an essentially charitable endeavor for students whose parents could not afford private instruction. The schools were to be provided with an annual endowment of \$1,500 from the proceeds of taxes on "slaves, dogs, licenses from carriages and hacks, for ordinaries and taverns, for retailing wines and spirituous liquors, for billiard tables, for theatrical and other amusements, and for hawkers and peddlers." By the late 1840s, public schools were open to white children regardless of their family income.

The movement for public education of African Americans in the District of Columbia finally took root in 1862, some 58 years after the initiation of the public school system for white children. But black residents of the District took matters into their own hands, establishing a first private school for African Americans in 1807, near 3rd and D Streets, SE and taught by three formerly enslaved black men who installed a white teacher. Thereafter, several schools for African Americans opened as private ventures subsidized by individuals and churches. Pupils were "free blacks", as it was long a crime to instruct slaves.

In May 1862, a month after passage of the law enacting the emancipation of the enslaved of the District, Congress authorized a Board of Trustees of Colored Schools for Washington and Georgetown, members of which were to be appointed by the Secretary of the Interior. Initially, the public primary schools for African Americans were funded by 10 percent of the taxes "collected from persons of color in Washington and Georgetown." This funding was too insignificant to open a single school, but in 1864 Congress mandated that funds be allocated to "colored schools" in the same proportion as African-American children were to white children in the city population. Several private schools for blacks were incorporated into the new system at the invitation of the Trustees, so that by 1864 there were eleven schools including a high school, 21 teachers and 1,000 pupils. The first new, black public school opened in Ebenezer Church at 4th and D, SE in 1864 and moved the following year to its own frame schoolhouse at Second and C Streets, SE. Although there was continued opposition to providing education and educational facilities for the District's African-American children, more substantial buildings were built within the next few years. The brick John O. Cook School at 4th and O Streets, NW opened in 1867, followed by the original Thaddeus Stevens (1868) and Charles Sumner Schools (1872), designs prepared by the eminent architect Adolph Cluss.

In 1873 the black school system was formally transferred to the District of Columbia government under a reorganized Board of Trustees and an integrated board, but under which African-American schools remained separate from white ones. George F.T. Cook was appointed superintendent and served until 1900. In 1875, black schools had a total enrollment of more than 5,400 and a total of ten buildings, one of which was a high school. (The first white public high

John Mercer Langston School

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

school did not open until seven years later.) School construction lagged population growth because of scant funds and successive congressionally controlled governmental reorganizations. In 1878, a more stable system of construction planning was put in place under the immediate oversight of the District of Columbia's Engineer Commissioner and its Inspector of Buildings, with design contributions from the Architect of the Capitol.

In 1882 the District Commissioners put all the schools under the supervision of a nine-member Board of Public School Trustees that included three African-American members. In 1900 black and white schools were administratively merged under a single superintendent and integrated board of education. The ultimate result of these reorganizations was increased, yet still insufficient, funding for the construction of the earliest public schools for African-American students.

All these factors, including congressionally determined low levels of funding, residential and academic racial segregation, and the structure of the municipal government and school administration, directly influenced the development of the Langston School.

The building of Langston School

Between 1892 and 1902, the population of the District continued to grow steadily. Denser development continued to occur in many established neighborhoods, including both African-American and white neighborhoods along the North Capitol Street corridor. Between 1895 and 1902, the District government opened 31 schools, down slightly from the 38 opened in the period 1887-1894.

The turn of the twentieth century was rife with conflict over the public schools. In 1900 longtime African-American Superintendent George F.T. Cook was attacked for "inefficiency" by subordinates, and white school Superintendent W.B Powell was assailed on similar grounds by numerous community groups and the Architect of the Capitol. Although some criticisms involved instructional methods, many involved the pace of school construction and consequently the number of students in half-day classes throughout the city. After an investigation, the Senate replaced the existing board of trustees with a new board of seven members selected by the District Commissioners. Despite protests, the Office of Superintendent of Colored Schools was abolished, and the position was reclassified as one of two "Assistant Superintendents" reporting to a white Superintendent who oversaw all public schools.

It was hoped that 1901 would bring a new period of calm, but plans for the building of Langston and another school for African-American pupils in Brookland triggered bitter controversies that echoed a similar dispute of the early 1890s. With respect to the proposed Langston School's location on N Street, near the severely overcrowded Slater and Cook Schools, the Eckington Citizens Association wrote to the commissioners in September 1900, stating "Why place such a school on a street where the residents are all white when there are so many streets given up to the colored population?" On November 27, 1900, the Washington Post reported that the white North Capitol and Eckington Citizens Association had entered a "decided protest" against a "colored school" being situated at that location and that the commissioners "might look further."

John Mercer Langston School

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

On February 21, 1901 the school board was advised to defer any decision on whether to locate the new school beside Slater School on the unit block of P Street. The Post intimated that the school board was opposed to the clustering of schools, so perhaps the decision was expected to be negative. A few days later, other residents protested plans to build the school near the original M Street site, claiming that there were already four African-American schools in their area. In June, the District Commissioners ended the controversy by purchasing from Charles H. Ficking lots in Square 615, adjoining Slater School.

It is significant that the school officials chose to deal with the overcrowding of a school, especially one for blacks, by building a separate building as opposed to erecting temporary structures or adding to Slater. By 1919, within a few blocks were three elementary schools, a junior high school, a vocational school and Washington's only two black high schools. John F. Cook Elementary built in 1877 on P between First and North Capitol was located across P Street from Slater and Langston. Armstrong Technical High School opened on P between First and Third also in 1902. The building at M between First and New Jersey now called the Perry School was the M Street High School from 1891 to 1916 until the high school moved into its new site on First between N and O Streets and became the Paul Lawrence Dunbar High School. The building on M (Perry School) then became M Street (and later Shaw) Junior High in 1919 when the District instituted junior high schools. What was first the O Street Vocational School and later the Margaret Murray Washington School was built in 1912 on O Street between North Capitol and First Streets. By 1925, this African-American academic cluster was educating a quarter of the District's black public school students.

On April 3, 1901, the school board voted to name the new school for John Mercer Langston (1829-1897), the first African-American congressman from Virginia, who also had a distinguished diplomatic, academic and legal career in the District of Columbia. Born a slave in Virginia, Langston graduated from Oberlin College, moved to Washington, D.C. to become inspector general of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands in 1868. He later served as dean of the law department of Howard University as well as the university's vice-president and acting president from 1869 to 1876. He was appointed in 1877 Minister Resident and Consul General to Haiti and Chargé d'Affaires to Santo Domingo. Langston served in Congress from September 23, 1890 to March 3, 1891. After an unsuccessful re-election campaign, he returned to the District, where he practiced law until his death on November 15, 1897 at his home at 2225 Fourth Street NW.

Unlike the unheralded opening of the Slater School some ten years earlier, Langston's November 1902 dedication was reported in the *Washington Post* and the *Washington Bee*, a leading African-American community newspaper. In addition to an address by Commissioner Henry B.F. MacFarland, president of the District's Board of Commissioners, the ceremony included contributions from Board of Education members and African-American school officials, as well as musical performances by students. A highlight of the ceremony, held one day before the fifth anniversary of Langston's death, was the presentation of his portrait to the school on behalf of the Langston family.

John Mercer Langston School

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

Like Slater School, Langston's eight rooms held classes representing grades one through eight. As was the case with Slater School, Langston was chronically overcrowded from its earliest years. A school building safety survey in 1908 found that Langston's seven classrooms (the eighth was apparently devoted to sewing classes) each served an average of 40 pupils, while Slater's eight classrooms served an average of 48.

In an era of discrimination against women of all races, Slater's principals Eva Chase and L.S. Chase were among the most highly-ranked women in the African-American school system administration. Langston School had its own strong, founding principal in Ella D. Barrier, colleague of educator Anna Julia Cooper, and active in such organizations as the National Colored Women's League, segregated local chapter of the Women's Christian Temperance Union and a founder of the Phyllis Wheatley YWCA.

For almost two decades, Slater and Langston Schools operated as independent entities with separate programs despite their proximity. In the late 1910s, Slater's third principal, Anna E. Thompson, became principal of both schools. By early 1922 the parent-teacher associations (PTAs) of both schools had combined, and the schools began being referred to as Slater-Langston. By the early 1920s, the school buildings were showing their age and exhibiting inadequacies when compared to modern buildings. The PTAs pushed for improvements such as adequate ventilation and drainage, concreting the basement at Slater, enhanced recreational facilities, and finally, remarkably a classroom seat for every child. The school board in 1922 attained additional lots for an addition but eventually allowed use of this land as a playground. When Slater became an annex to M.M. Washington Vocational School in 1951, Langston continued as an elementary school. Months before the 1954 Supreme Court decision outlawing school segregation, Langston was cited as one of a number of African-American schools "operating above capacity" while a neighboring white school had only 286 pupils in a building with a capacity of 648.

By 1982, the overcrowded situation at Langston reversed. Because of urban renewal and other factors, enrollment steadily declined. In 1993 it was recommended for closure, and accepted by the community which had fought previous attempts to shutter the school. In 1997, the building became a homeless shelter. Since 1998, Langston has been leased by a social service agency, Associates for Renewal in Education.

The architecture of Langston School

Langston School is identified as a characteristic example of the property type "The Architects in Private Practice" so classified in the National Register Multiple Property document *Public School Buildings of Washington, D.C., 1862-1960*.

The process for the design and construction of the Langston School was markedly different from that for the neighboring Slater School a decade earlier. The more or less uniform Romanesque Revival style promulgated by the Office of the Building Inspector had lent a sense of dignity and consistency to public schools of the 1890s, but with the approach of the new century it was derided as old-fashioned. Rather than being designed in-house, new schools were now designed

John Mercer Langston School

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

on commission by private architects in more innovative, eclectic revival styles. Buildings of this sub-type tended to be classical in style and symmetrical in massing. Styles ranged from Renaissance to Gothic. They were built of brick in a variety of hues from red to yellow and trimmed in terra cotta and limestone. Although they tended to be located farther back from the street, elementary-school floor plans initially followed that of the earlier period, i.e., four rooms over four rooms. Although later floor plans were expanded to include additional classrooms and auditorium/gymnasium space in basements, Langston was not a beneficiary of this Progressive-era concept.

Langston School is in the Italianate style, with towers and a façade enlivened by a complex pattern of arches. One feature that attracts attention is the “unbalanced” façade which features a central tower and a second tower on the west end. This asymmetry occurred because a section to the west of the western tower was never built. A second noteworthy feature is the Star of David medallion above the second story tower window apertures. Although it suggests to some observers that Langston School was once associated with Judaism, the Star of David is an ancient nondenominational symbol of protection. Despite these stylistic flourishes, Langston is a conventional eight-room school with four classrooms on two stories linked by center hallways.

Appleton P. Clark, Jr.

Langston School was designed by Appleton Clark (1865-1955), one of the city’s most prolific and influential architects. Clark, a native Washingtonian, designed numerous office and commercial buildings during a more than 60-year career. Among his most prominent works are the old Washington Post Building at 1337 E Street, NW and the Foundry Methodist Church and Roosevelt Hotel on 16th Street NW. In addition to his commercial architectural practice, Clark had a career as a hotel executive. He was very active in civic affairs and viewed architecture as a vehicle for civic betterment.

Clark was also affiliated with the Washington Sanitary Housing Company which, among other projects, built the pioneering, low-cost, low-income dwellings which housed some Slater and Langston pupils. From its inception in 1904, Clark served as the company’s president and as a director in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Clark designed three children’s homes in the Washington area and wrote a book on the principles of constructing them. On his death in 1955, the Washington Post eulogized him as the “dean of Washington architects.”

John Mercer Langston School
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Tanya E. Beauchamp and Associates. *Public School Buildings of Washington, D.C., 1864-1945*.
National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Document. 2003.

The Colored American.

Lillian G. Dabney. "The History of Schools for Negroes in the District of Columbia, 1807-1947."
Dissertation for the Catholic University of America. Washington, D.C. 1949.

The Evening Times.

Campbell Gibson and Kay Jung. *Historical Census Statistics on Population Totals By Race, 1790 to 1990, and By Hispanic Origin, 1970 to 1990*. Washington, D.C. United States Census Bureau. 2002.

Antoinette Lee. District of Columbia School Building Survey. 1987.

Public Schools of the District of Columbia. *Biographical Directory of the Public Schools of the District of Columbia*. Washington, D.C. Office of the Statistician. 1953.

Public Schools of the District of Columbia. "School Buildings Past and Present." Washington, D.C. Office of the Statistician. Unpublished survey. 1965.

Report of the Board of Trustees of the Public Schools of the District of Columbia. Washington, D.C. Government Printing Office. 1885-1886, 1890-1891, 1891-1892 and 1902-1903.

The Washington Bee.

The Washington Post.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

John Mercer Langston School
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.
County and State

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property .41 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

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

- | | |
|--------------|------------|
| 1. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|-------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Zone: 18 | Easting: 3 25 396 | Northing: 43 08 472 |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |

John Mercer Langston School
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.
County and State

4. Zone: Easting : Northing:

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

The Langston School is located at 45 P Street, NW, on the north side of the unit block of P Street, NW, and occupies the western part of Lot 827 in Square 615.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries correspond with those of the lot upon which the school was constructed in 1902

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Patsy Fletcher and D.P. Sefton, historians
organization: DC Historic Preservation Office and D.C. Preservation League
street & number: 1000 4th Street, SW
city or town: Washington, D.C. state: 20024 zip
code: DC
e-mail _____
telephone: 202 442-8800
date: July 2012

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

John Mercer Langston School
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.
County and State

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: **Langston School**

City or Vicinity: **Washington, D.C.**

County:

State:

Photographer: **Angeliki Kourelis**

Date Photographed: **February 2013**

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

View looking northwest at south (front) and east (end) elevations

1 of 8

View looking northeast at south (front) and west (end) elevations

2 of 8

View looking northeast at south (front) and west (end) elevations

3 of 8

View looking east at west elevation

4 of 8

View looking north at south elevation of west end tower

5 of 8

View looking north at west end tower entry door

6 of 8

View of west end tower, second story, south elevation

7 of 8

View of round-arched pediment over central entry in central tower

8 of 8

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

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Langston Elementary School
Name of Property Washington, D.C.
County and State Public School Buildings of Washington, D.C. (1862-1960)
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Maps and Images

Page 1



Historic Photo of Langston School, ca. 1902
(From Charles Sumner School Museum and Archives, Washington, D.C.)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

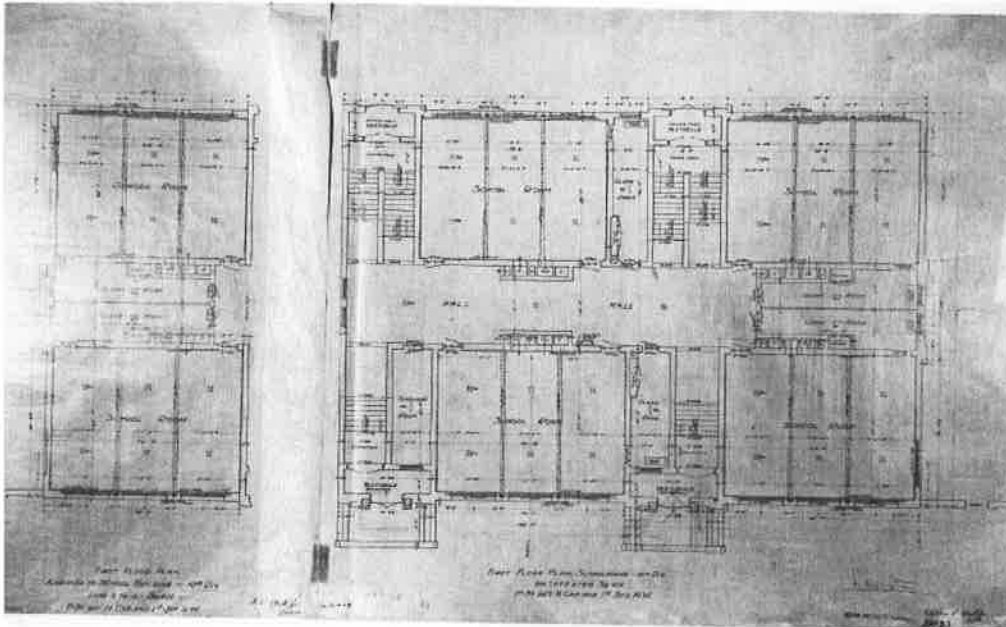
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Langston Elementary School
Name of Property Washington, D.C.
County and State Public School Buildings of Washington, D.C. (1862-1960)
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

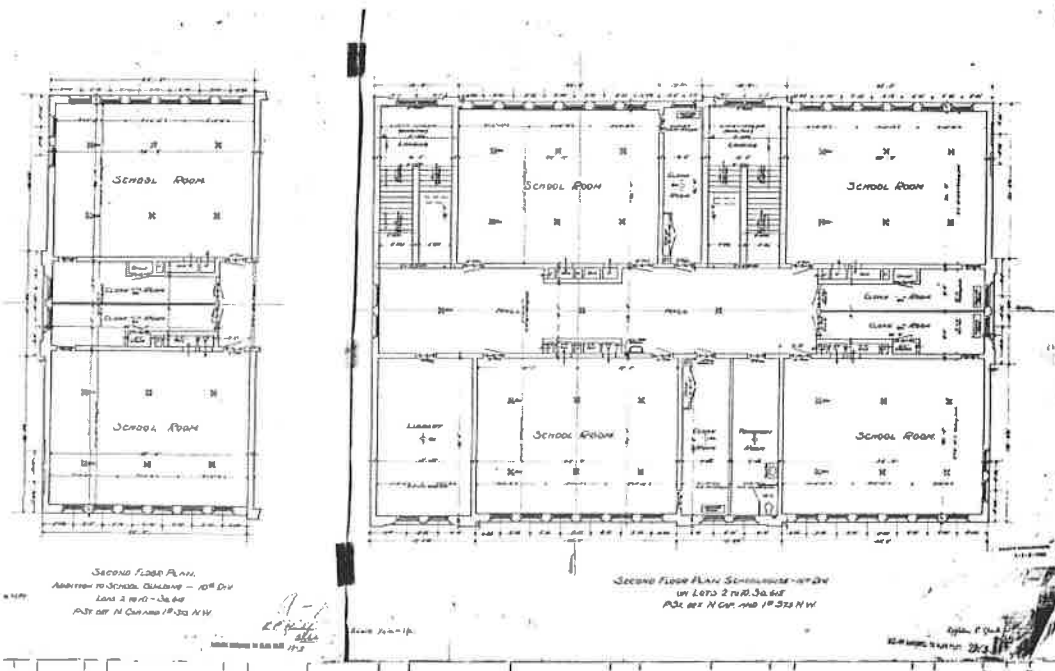
Section number Maps and Images

Page 2

All Plans and Elevations from *Charles Sumner School Museum and Archives*



First Floor Plan of Langston School with unbuilt addition (left side)
Appleton P. Clark, Jr., architect, 1901



Second Floor Plan of Langston School with unbuilt addition (left side)

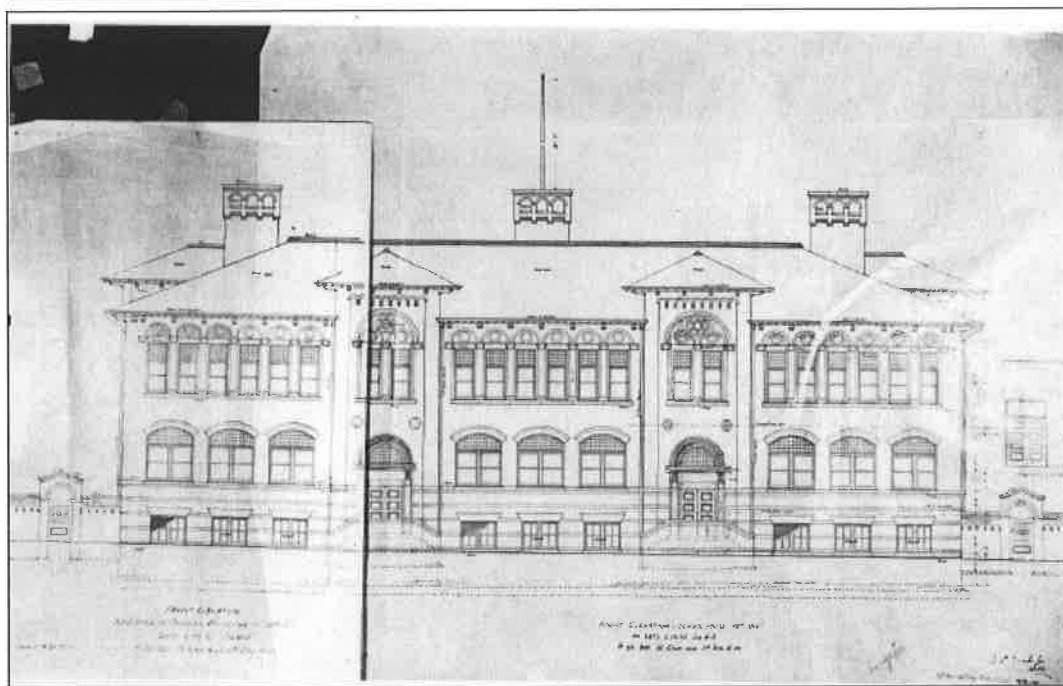
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

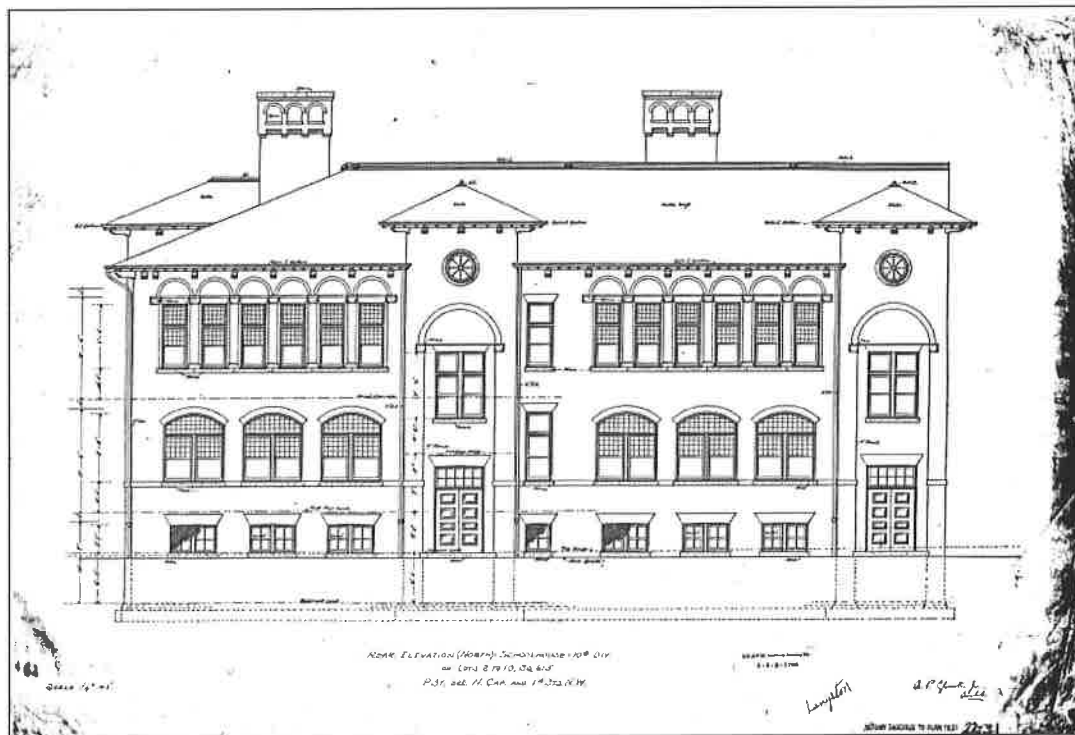
Langston Elementary School
Name of Property Washington, D.C.
County and State Public School Buildings of Washington, D.C. (1862-1960)
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Maps and Images

Page 3



South (Front) Elevation of Langston School with unbuilt addition (left side)



North (Rear) Elevation of Langston School, 1901

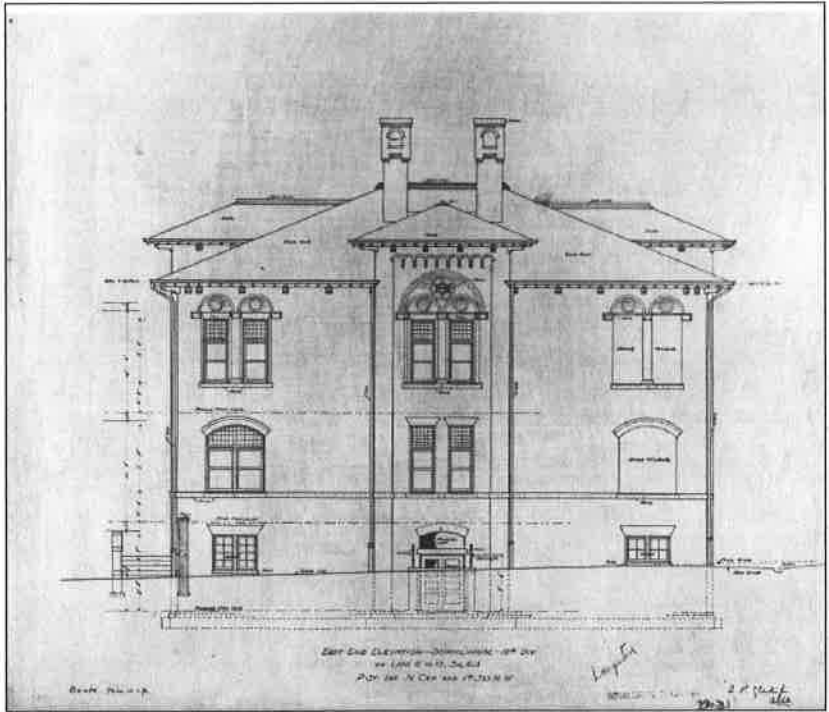
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

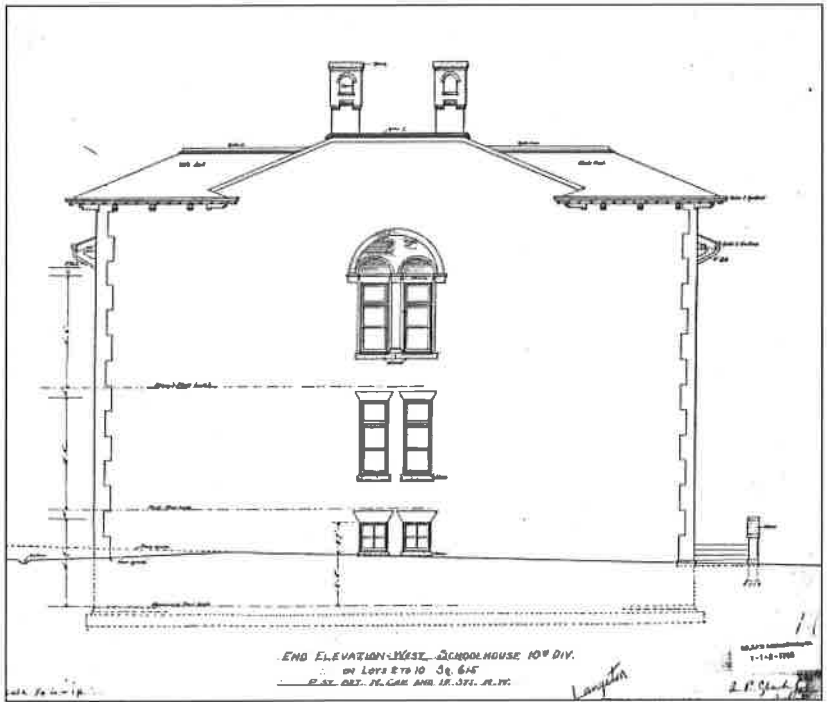
Langston Elementary School
Name of Property Washington, D.C.
County and State Public School Buildings of Washington, D.C. (1862-1960)
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Maps and Images

Page 4



East Elevation of Langston School, 1901



West Elevation of Langston School, 1901

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Langston Elementary School
Name of Property
Washington, D.C.
County and State
Public School Buildings of Washington, D.C. (1862-1960)
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Maps and Images

Page 5



Classroom, SE Corner, 1st Floor
Patricia Fisher, Photographer, July 1986



Corridor, Second Floor
Patricia Fisher, Photographer, July 1986

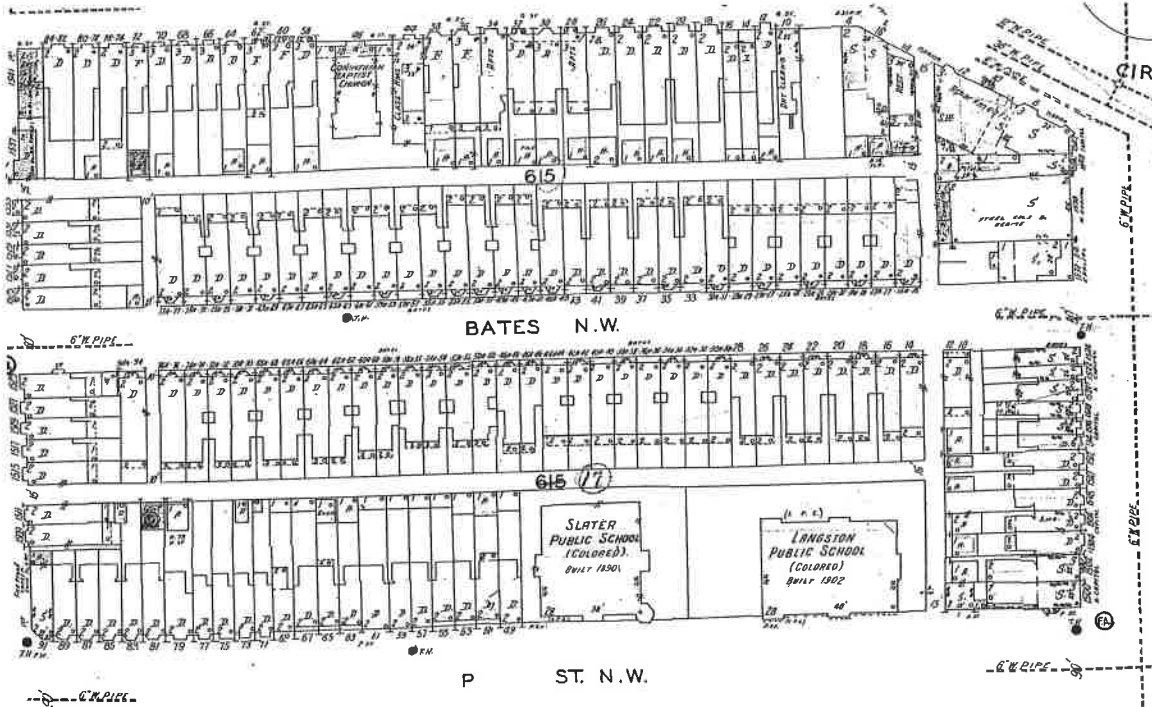
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

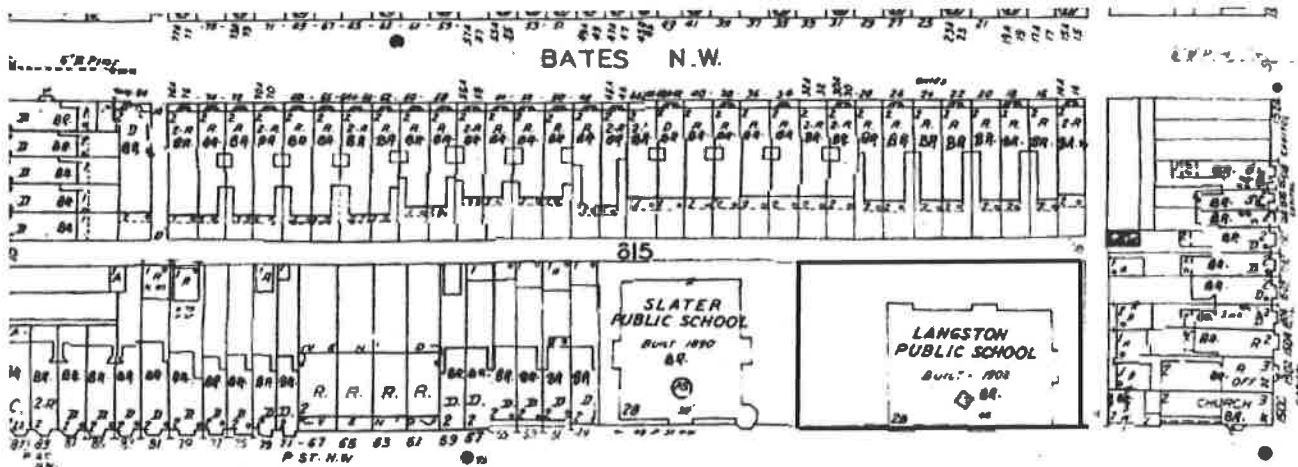
Langston Elementary School	
Name of Property	Washington, D.C.
County and State	Public School Buildings of Washington, D.C. (1862-1960)
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)	

Section number Maps and Images

Page 6



Site Map showing Langston School
(From Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1959)

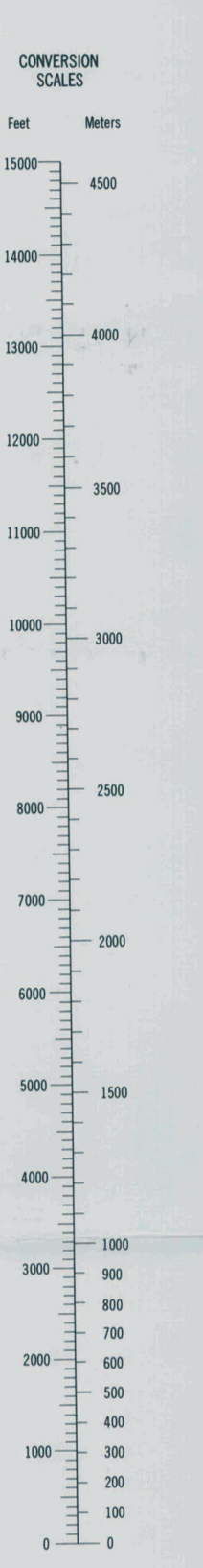


Site Plan Showing National Register Boundary

Slater and Langston Elementary Schools
Washington, DC

WASHINGTON WEST QUADRANGLE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA-MARYLAND-VIRGINIA
7.5 MINUTE SERIES
(TOPOGRAPHIC-BATHYMETRIC)

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

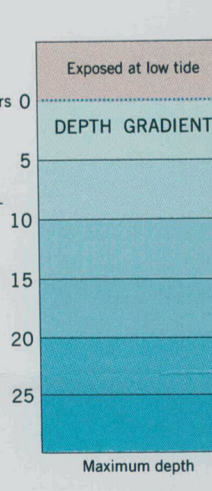


Langston School
18,325,396.01
43,084,721

Slater School
18,325,461.01
43,084,721.00

To convert feet to meters
multiply by 3.048

To convert meters to feet
multiply by 3.2808



Maped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey and the National Ocean Service
Control by USGS, NOS/NOAA, NPS, and WSSC
Compiled by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1951 and other sources. This information not field checked
Bathymetry compiled by the National Ocean Service from tide-coordinated hydrographic surveys. This information is not intended for navigational purposes
Mean low water (dotted line) and mean high water (heavy solid line) compiled by NOS from tide-coordinated aerial photographs. Apparent shoreline (outer edge of vegetation) shown by light solid line
Polyconic projection, 10,000-foot grid ticks based on Maryland coordinate system, and Virginia coordinate system, north zone 1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid, zone 18
1927 North American Datum
To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983 move the projection lines 8 meters south and 26 meters west as shown by dashed corner ticks
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map
Revisions shown in purple and woodland compiled in cooperation with Commonwealth of Virginia agencies from aerial photographs taken 1983 and other sources. This information not field checked
Map dated 1983
Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas

NATIONAL OCEAN SERVICE
HYDROGRAPHIC SURVEY INDEX

Survey Number	Survey Date	Survey Scale	Survey Line spacing (Nautical Miles)
H-9478	1977	1:5,000	0.1-0.8
H-9488	1976	1:5,000	0.1-0.5

SCALE 1:24,000

CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1999
BATHYMETRIC CONTOUR INTERVAL 1 METER WITH SUPPLEMENTARY 0.5 METER CONTOURS-DATUM IS MEAN LOW WATER
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO DATUMS IS VARIABLE
THE MEAN RANGE OF TIDE IS APPROXIMATELY 0.4 METER

BASE MAP COMPLES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
BATHYMETRIC SURVEY DATA COMPLES WITH INTERNATIONAL HYDROGRAPHIC ORGANIZATION (IHO) SPECIAL PUBLICATION 44 ACCURACY STANDARDS AND/OR STANDARDS USED AT THE DATE OF THE SURVEY
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
DENVER, COLORADO 80225 OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
NATIONAL OCEAN SERVICE, ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20852
AND VIRGINIA DIVISION OF MINERAL RESOURCES, CHARLOTTEVILLE, VIRGINIA 22903
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

- Heavy-duty
- Medium-duty
- Light-duty
- Unimproved dirt
- Interstate Route
- U.S. Route
- State Route

WASHINGTON WEST, D.C.-MD.-VA.
38077-H1-TB-024

1965
PHOTOREVISED 1983
BATHYMETRY ADDED 1982
DMA 5561 I NE-SERIES V833

UTM GRID AND 1983 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET



15
M.P.H.

DC Historical Society

NO PARKING
EXCEPT BY PERMIT
ANYTIME

NOW ENTERING
A WEED AND SEED
COMMUNITY



DC LAW
NO PEDESTRIANS
IN CROSSWALKS
\$250 FINE
←





Welcome
to Your
Playspace!

capitals



The 1st Annual Capitals Art Project



DC LAW

STOP FOR [pedestrian icon]

IN CROSSWALK

\$250 FINE







LANGSTON SCHOOL



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Langston, John Mercer, School
NAME:

MULTIPLE Public School Buildings of Washington, DC MPS
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, District of Columbia

DATE RECEIVED: 2/22/13 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 3/21/13
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 4/05/13 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 4/10/13
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 13000143

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 4.9.13 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.