

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Virginia Avenue Colored School  
other names/site number Virginia Avenue School; JF-SW-450; Jessie R. Carter Elementary

**2. Location**

street & number 3628 Virginia Avenue not for publication N.A.  
city or town Louisville vicinity N.A.  
state Kentucky code KY county Jefferson code 111 zip code 40211

**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.)

David L. Morgan 02-13-04  
Signature of certifying official David L. Morgan, SHPO Date  
Kentucky Heritage Council/State Historic Preservation Office  
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

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 or Tribal government

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

| Signature of the Keeper | Date of Action |
|-------------------------|----------------|
| <u>Edson R. Beall</u>   | _____          |
| _____                   | _____          |
| _____                   | _____          |
| _____                   | _____          |

### 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 |            |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| <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 N. A.

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

### 6. Function or Use

#### Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: EDUCATION Sub: School

#### Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: SOCIAL Sub: Civic  
SOCIAL Meeting Hall  
COMMERCE / TRADE Specialty Store  
OTHER After-School Activities  
RELIGIOUS Religious Facility

### 7. Description

#### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> Century Revivals  
Italian Renaissance  
Palladian (Renaissance)

#### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Reinforced Concrete  
walls Brick  
Stucco  
Reinforced Concrete  
Glass  
roof Asphalt  
other Stone  
Galvanized Iron  
Glass

#### Narrative Description

(Please see continuation sheets)

**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 a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved

significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Ethnic Heritage - Black
- Education
- Architecture
- 
- 
- 
- 

**Period of Significance**

1923-1954

**Significant Dates** 1923 1926  
1954    
   

**Significant Person** (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Plato, Samuel M.

**Cultural Affiliation**

N. A.

**Architect/Builder**

Colley, J. Merrick, Architect  
Plato, Samuel M., Architect and Builder

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Please see continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

(For citation of books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form see continuation sheets.)

**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  
#

**Primary location of Additional Data**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository:  
Jefferson County School Board Archives



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## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 1

Virginia Avenue Colored School  
Jefferson County, Kentucky

### Narrative Description

#### Location

The former Virginia Avenue Colored School (JF-SW-450) is located at 3628 Virginia Avenue, Louisville, KY. The school is situated upon a gentle hill facing North, and about 45'-0" from the South edge of Virginia Avenue. The property, just over 4 acres, is bounded also by Dumesnil on the South, 36<sup>th</sup> Street on the East, and effectively by the I-264 expressway to the West. It lies within the modern boundaries of what is now identified as the Chickasaw neighborhood. Historically, it was part of the Parkland neighborhood, both literally in its location and in serving the residents of Parkland. The school site lies approximately five blocks East of the Parkland National Register Historic District, and is contemporary with the period of significance of that District.

The East side of the site was an open field through much of the school's history, documents indicate. The North side (toward Virginia Ave.) became a playground area with slide, swings, sandbox and merry-go-round by 1950. A major addition in 1954 divided the North and East halves of this field, leaving the larger South side as a completely open area, for activities such as softball. When another major addition was made in 1968 in the Northeast corner along Virginia Ave, the playground was displaced. The Southwest side has served mostly as an access road, and then parking. Portable buildings were located here in the 1960s prior to the addition. Prior to the construction of Interstate 264, 38<sup>th</sup> Street was located about 800 feet West of the school, and 37<sup>th</sup> Street did not extend through the site. After construction of Interstate 264, which wraps the city, the portion of 38<sup>th</sup> that remains has become an access road from the expressway, on the site's West side. At some point a playground area was added to the site's West side, beyond a retaining wall, and on the lots abutting the Expressway (I-264) access ramp.

#### Building

The original portion of the building, built in 1923, is a raised one-story building, with a lower level partially above grade, and a hip roof. The upper level contains 4 classrooms and a central corridor. The lower level contains restrooms and playrooms, as well as a Coal Bunker and Boiler Room. Two flanking wing additions were built in 1926 (East and West) with the rapid growth of the school. These match the original building in style, form and construction. These wings originally contained a Cafeteria with Kitchen and a Gymnasium / Assembly Room on their lower levels, with a total of 6 new classrooms above these. The vast majority of the building's original character remains. The building is structurally solid today, and is remarkably well-preserved, especially nearly every aspect of the interior.

This composite building is brick faced, and of terra cotta tile block masonry bearing structure. Lower level walls, pilasters, first floor slab and supporting beams are composed of reinforced concrete. The hip-style roof is of wood frame structure, and tapers up in two segments with different slopes, which are now asphalt shingled. Upper portions were previously standing seam tin decking. There is one large gable at the main front Virginia

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Virginia Avenue Colored School  
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Avenue entrance (to the oldest portion of the building) with detailed metal cornice, concrete and brickwork. A smaller gable of galvanized metal, with pediment was built above the two front entrances added with the 1926 additions at each stair. All three entrances include arched-glass transoms. The brick of the large chimney at the center of the earliest building's South elevation tapers from square to octagonal, although the chimney stack has been substantially shortened from its original height. There is much detailed brick pattern work both on facades without openings and below the characteristic tall classroom windows.

Nearly all interior partitions (except a handful added later) are also constructed of terra cotta block. Interiors consist primarily of plaster over metal lath at walls and ceilings, Maple floors (upper level), wood doors and frames, base, wainscot, chalkboard trim, in addition to detailed built-in casework, including cabinets, and drawers. These interior finishes to detail remain in quite fine condition.

A two-story addition of 16 new classrooms, more restrooms and incidental service spaces was added in 1954, extending from the Southeast corner of the U-shaped 1920's structures. This replaced 10 portable buildings that were in use on the Northeast side, and accommodated the greatly increased number of pupils they housed. However *no* allowance for any growth was made (Trowel, p. 53). This wing is of masonry-bearing, concrete block construction, also with a brick exterior. It has a parapet wall, and low-slope 'flat' roof consisting of 2" concrete, roof insulation, built-up roofing and gravel ballast. It stands nearly exactly as it was built.

Subsequently, due to more modern school needs and still greater student enrollment, an addition was built in 1968 on Virginia Avenue, including a new main entry, extending from the Northeast corner of the existing building. Note that from the front, the North end of the East 1926 building addition, including a front entry, is virtually entirely obscured by this new 'boxy' late 1960's entrance with two pairs of double-doors. This addition, built in the former playground, houses 10 new classrooms, and includes a larger cafeteria, updated full commercial kitchen, front offices, and storage. The former cafeteria was converted to library use at this time. This building is also a concrete block, bearing structure, with steel joists and ballasted built-up roof, with large areas of terrazzo floor, and has been maintained in close to its original state.

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Virginia Avenue Colored School  
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#### **Statement of Significance**

The historic Virginia Avenue Colored School (JF-SW-450) in what was historically the Parkland neighborhood of West Louisville, Kentucky, meets National Register eligibility Criteria A and B. It is significant in two contexts. The first, "African American Education in Louisville, Kentucky, 1865-1970" covers the period of emancipation following the Civil War, through the 1954 decision that led to the desegregation of America's public schools, until the beginning of the local desegregation of Louisville's schools. The second historic context, "Samuel Plato, African American Architect and Builder, 1900-1957," supports the view of Mr. Plato's role as an important employer and builder within the greater Louisville community. The construction of the Virginia Avenue Colored School 1923 signals the growing importance of the African American community within Louisville's educational system. It also indicates one important local accomplishment of a very early prolific African American builder, Samuel Plato.

#### African American Education in Louisville, Kentucky, 1865-1970.

According to Trowel, schools for African Americans in Kentucky existed as early as 1827. The fact that the local authorities publicly granted permission for such schools to operate in Louisville was unusual among surrounding localities and states. While such schooling was permitted in a few places, such as Louisville, Lexington, and Covington, actual instruction was conducted only a few months per year. Most areas had statutes forbidding any instruction in reading or writing for African Americans. Schools for black children were in operation in Louisville by the early 1840s (Henry Clay Weeden). Generally these schools were connected with churches, or independent teachers.

Despite the fact that African Americans did pay taxes in Kentucky before 1837, they did not benefit much from the revenue. No uniform means of schooling was provided to African Americans. Meanwhile, a City Public School system in Louisville, for Whites, was established by 1829 (Jones & Stern, p. 1)

The Common School Law was amended to exempt African Americans from School taxes on the 8<sup>th</sup> February 1839. Prior to the Civil War, pay schools for African American Children were conducted, with teachers of either race (Trowel, p.13).

Acts of the General Assembly in February 1866 created a school system for African Americans in Kentucky, on paper. African Americans would pay a school tax and a \$2 poll tax. These alone would go to fund their schools. The fund provisions were vague, supervised by white trustees, and were divided equally between schools and aid for the poor. As a result, very few schools were established (Comm. of Kentucky, p. 39).

In Louisville, in 1865, Mr. Horace Morris led a committee in endeavor to acquire Federal Govt. assistance for equal treatment. He was a member of the underground railroad of Ohio, a prominent Mason, in the Treasury Department under General Bristow, and appointed steward of the Marine Hospital, the first black man elected to

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such a position in the entire country (Weeden). The group also gained support from General Ely. A federally sponsored two-story building was built at 14<sup>th</sup> and Broadway, but not primarily with public city funds. It was staffed by white teachers from the North (James & Stern, p. 2).

In 1866 Records of the Freedmen's Bureau show 15 schools operating in Kentucky, and by 1869, there were 354 day and night schools, 377 teachers, and 15,022 pupils. The Freedmen's Bureau operated schools, but many of them had to charge fees. As shown by these numbers, these were primarily single room, single teacher schools, and they were conducted three months per year. There were 170 Sunday schools with 993 teachers, 11,244 pupils, and 4 high schools with 912 pupils total (Comm. of Kentucky, p. 39).

In 1873, after steadfast and intensified efforts to improve the allocation of taxes, progress was seen locally. The Assembly of Kentucky felt they could not make a statewide change for Louisville's isolated request to build schools for African Americans. However, the legislator's forgave a \$64,000 debt owed by the school board to the City's Sinking Fund, with the understanding that these same \$64,000 funds be appropriated for the education of African American children (Jones & Stern, p.3).

In 1874, a separate school fund and school system was set-up, with African-American Trustees appointed. Still, African American Schools could only receive funds collected from African Americans, mostly from taxes on property (Trowel, p. 15). Needless to say, African Americans at the time scarcely owned or made enough to generate tax income to build schools from the ground up. These Schools were required to be at least 600 feet from white schools in-town, and 1 mile apart in the country (Comm. of Kentucky, p. 39).

Despite these limitations, African American schools grew in Kentucky. By 1877 there were 532 schools for African Americans, including a High School in at least 12 cities and towns. From 1885-1905 all African American rural schools of Kentucky were conducted for only five months per year (Trowel, p.16).

The Central Colored School was built at 6<sup>th</sup> and Kentucky streets, opening in October 1873. Records indicate this school was operated through 1882 as a primary school only. The Louisville Colored High School, Louisville's first High School, opened in this building in 1882, with 27 pupils, a principal, and one additional teacher. However it was no later than 1894, having become surrounded by a predominantly white neighborhood, and also overcrowding, this fine building at 6<sup>th</sup> and Kentucky was turned over for the use of White Students only, renamed the Mary D. Hill School. Central School was moved to quarters in larger existing buildings at 9<sup>th</sup> and Magazine. Later renamed Central High School, it was moved to new locations two additional times.

The growing importance of education among Kentucky's African American population is evidenced by literacy rates around the turn of the century. US Census statistics show that 56% of Kentucky's African American Population in 1890 could not read and write. However, that rate had been cut in half by 1910, with only 28% illiterate (Comm. of



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Kentucky, p. 39).

After the building of the "Central Colored School" in Louisville, African American Schools were opened but most school construction ceased. It was in this period that the U.S. Supreme Court had established the principle "separate but equal," providing states *some legal justification* for segregation, until as late as 1954. In the 1880s there were increasing amounts of segregation laws in Louisville – which excluded blacks from the use of facilities and services (Louisville History league).

In 1904 the Kentucky General Assembly passed the Day Law - segregating public and private schools. This forced Berea College to end desegregated schooling, and stop accepting blacks. Berea had not discriminated among students on the basis of race, creed, or social status since its founding in 1855.

In 1912 the fifteen Southern states and the District of Columbia spent \$10.32 for the education of each white child and \$2.89 for the education of each Negro child" Trowel indicates (p. 10). World War I, 1914-1918 economically hit all schools, White and African American.

In West Louisville, by 1890 the town of Parkland West of Louisville had an African American community, sometimes called "Little Africa" (see p. 8-7, below) which consisted of over 700 families, 1400 children, 6 churches, 6 groceries, 1 pool hall and 1 private park. Greenwood Ave. had become the strict segregational boundary, with Blacks living to the South, and Whites to the North (Smiley, p. 3). Conwill characterizes the area as "an old ante-bellum black community that bordered the Ohio River and sheltered runaways from slavery" (p. 1).

In a private home, the Gibbs House on Orleans Avenue (now Dumesnil Street), after the start of a Church there, became Parkland's first school. A three-month pay-school was run from 1892 through 1906 by Jacob Ross, presumably African American. It began with 6 students, and ended with an attendance of 75 pupils (Cotter, p. 13). Clearly, the "separate but equal" public school system was not yet providing even a substandard school for the over 400 children in this community.

It was in September 1915 that the Virginia Avenue Colored School opened at 36<sup>th</sup> and Virginia Avenue in a two-room, portable frame building with 58 students, and outside toilets. The 75' x 200' lot cost \$252.00, and the building cost \$523.42 to construct. Furnishings included 80 desks and a coal stove were provided at \$405.10, totaling about \$1,180.10. Shortly, due to the very rapid growth of this community, there was a marked need for both a larger and better facility (Trowel, p. 49).

The overcrowding at black schools throughout the city was probably felt immediately at the Virginia Avenue School upon its completion. In 1920 a bond issue was proposed for the improvement of the all-white University of Louisville and the city public schools. This Bond issue became historic, as the black committee refused to support it, and subsequently gained support of a social activist, Democrat Patrick Henry Callahan. Together they created a coalition of black and white voters, showed opposition publicly,

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and generated a four-thousand vote margin to defeat the bond issue in the November 1920 general election. It had become clear that the bond issue's benefits would largely exclude blacks. This truly indicated a turning point, as "Louisville blacks recognized the need to exert themselves to extract concessions from indifferent whites." (Hardin, p. 40).

An increasingly better educated African American community which had long recognized the importance of education in the betterment of their community, in the 1920s started to realize a power to affect such changes in that direction in Louisville.

The 1921-1922 School year marked the passage of a million-dollar bond issue by the Louisville Board of Education to purchase sites, build new buildings, and expand playgrounds. After much petitioning by the Virginia Avenue School P.T.A. and overcrowding, in 1922 plans for a new building were drawn-up, funded by this bond issue. The relocated Central Colored School also had additions built by this bond issue.

Louisville Board of Education meeting minutes show that Samuel M. Plato was awarded the General Contract for the Virginia Avenue Colored School. The total of all contracts was \$57,488. The original 1923 and 1926 Construction Documents bear the name J. Meyrick Colley Architect, Board of Education. Colley is noted in attendance at the bid opening in the minutes also. The lot was enlarged to 252' x 200,' at a cost of \$144.20.

Trowel notes that the "Virginia Avenue School was the first Negro School in the city to be built from the ground up. Other Negro children were housed in buildings that were previously used by white pupils or still in dilapidated buildings" (p. 50).

Within two years, due to swiftly increasing enrollment, the building required expansion, and with the issue of a five million dollar Board of Education bond for School improvements in November 1925, the Assembly room, Cafeteria and 6 classrooms were added in two flanking wing additions built in 1926, completed by 1927. Each classroom was provided with a cloak room and three blackboards, as well as steam heat and inside bathrooms for the entire facility. The Original 1923 building drawings do show basement restrooms. However they also indicate a Slate roof, which evidence indicates was not installed, with asbestos shingles being used. The 1926 additions were completed for \$73,807.35 (Trowel, p. 15).

Due to the rapidly growing community and continued segregation in Louisville, 10 Portable Classroom buildings had been added by 1954, in addition to classes held in the gymnasium. The African American population in Parkland, which began in 1891 with nine families, had doubled between 1940 and 1950, to 6,000 (Trowel, p. 48).

In November 1954 the long Southeast wing addition was added, with 16 substantially more modern classroom facilities. However, this only accommodated the current student need, with no allowance for growth. By 1955, the Virginia Avenue School had 1,023 pupils, 27 teachers, and classes were again being held in the gymnasium.

The word "Colored" was dropped from the name of the school during Dr. Clyde A. Liggin's tenure as principal from 1934 to 1958. He also organized the first Violin Class

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in 1935, first school band, glee clubs, dramatic clubs, operettas, and a school newspaper and brought an African American history curriculum at every grade level. This seems to be an indication of the end results of long-standing statewide discourse, even among African American educators, about Liberal Arts verses Vocational / Industrial Education. Liggin and other proponents also lead the first successful attempt to get a branch library established for the Parkland African American children.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1954 that racial segregation was unconstitutional, but in Kentucky it was nearly two decades later before fully implementing the order. When it did occur, in the form of bussing, it met violent resistance in Louisville. As late as 1969, the City schools enacted one last effort to resist the desegregation order, by completing a two-story addition along Virginia Avenue, as well as many upgrades for the whole building.

The testimony to the role Virginia Ave. School played in the betterment of the lives of the African American Community can be seen by a few of the prominent individuals that it touched. Ms. Jessie R. Carter, 1892 graduate of the Central Colored School and 1938 A.B. graduate of Kentucky State College, was the first principal of the Virginia Avenue School, serving from 1918-1926. She was very active in community and church organizations outside of the school. In her honor, the School was renamed the Jessie R. Carter Elementary School in 1970.

Josephine B. Trowel, teacher at Virginia Ave. School in the 1950s, was also the author of "A History of the Virginia Avenue School," her 1956 dissertation on the rapid increase in African American Population in Parkland, the neighborhood, school, economic conditions, and the pattern of Whites moving out and African Americans moving in to Parkland around 1950. Josephine B. Trowel was later Principal of the school from 1972-1975, documented as the last years of racially segregated education at the school.

Muhammad Ali (Cassius Clay at the time) attended the Virginia Ave. school from 1948-1954, as he lived on the 3300 block of Grand Avenue in Parkland in the 1940s & 1950s.

The Virginia Avenue Colored School came into being due to the labors of the Little Africa Community, and was literally at the center of community activity, education, religion, growth and change. It helped stabilize the growing community, playing an integral role in local African American education after World War I.

#### Samuel Plato, African American Architect and Builder, 1900-1957

Samuel Plato (Born Waugh, AL in 1882, died in Louisville, KY 1957) was one of the earliest black Architects in the country. Samuel Plato was not only an Architect, but also a very early African American general contractor/builder as well. He was the first black Architect ever to be awarded a Federal Post Office Contract, in Decatur Alabama. During his career, he designed and/or built at least 39 Post Offices, 12 churches and 88 housing units (Weeter, p. 708).

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Plato learned carpentry from his father who had apprenticed under black artisan Samuel Carter. While attending Simmons University in Louisville, starting in 1898, Plato studied Architecture and Carpentry through correspondence courses from the International Correspondence School. Prior to this, he had attended early school near Waugh, Alabama and studied one year in Winston-Salem, North Carolina (Weeter, p. 708).

Jefferson County School Board Archive records show Samuel Plato was the General Contractor on both the 1923 building, and the 1926 additions. Plato was exalted for his fine craftsmanship, and especially high quality woodwork in what he designed and built. Blunk explains,

The buildings designed and contracted by Plato are of great historical value due to their high quality of craftsmanship, authentic use of a multitude of styles, and their ability to defy age. The high craftsmanship of Plato's buildings is a product of the now famous Arts & Crafts movement, in which Plato played a large part. Plato learned the art of carpentry from his father, and his talent was evident in the construction of the cabinets, doors, and windows in his buildings.

The door casings, chair rail, chalk board trim, recessed supply cabinets with glass doors, and coat closet in each class room appear to be admirable examples of this attention to quality and detail. Not to mention the durability they must possess to have retained such good condition through nearly eight decades of elementary school students.

Other than his Post Offices, which are literally all over the country and not all have been accounted for, the majority of his works are concentrated in Kentucky and Indiana. The most being in Marion, Indiana where he lived from 1902-1921, and in Louisville, Kentucky, where he lived from 1921 until his death. At least 10 structures in Marion are verified as Plato's works, but there are certainly more (Blunk, p. 1).

Plato faced resistance from many white contractors, designers, and sometimes clients. It is ironic that many of the contractors that had refused to work with him, only a few years later, were forced to seek work from him when he earned several large contracts with major clients. Mr. Plato was wise enough to use his leverage to demand African Americans be accepted to the local unions of workers in each trade. Otherwise, none of the workers in the Union would be allowed to work on his projects.

As far as is documented, one subdivision, two churches, and several homes in Louisville comprise his works here. Only a handful of individual buildings, (6 or less) he is credited with building and / or designing still stand in Jefferson County. He is credited with the Lampton Street Baptist Church and his home on W. Muhammad Ali Blvd (then Walnut St.). Two are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Broadway Temple A.M.E. Zion Church at 13<sup>th</sup> and Broadway, built 1915 and Municipal College Campus, Simmons University. Also, the Russell Historic District is listed.

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Virginia Avenue Colored School  
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### Supplemental History - "Little Africa"

In understanding this school's in the context of West Louisville, a brief history of the community may be helpful. In 1876 A young African-American male William McGowan lived in a farmhouse at what is now 36<sup>th</sup> and Virginia, with his family and a boy named Joseph S. Cotter. McGowan was one of the keepers at the Davidson Plantation on Cane Run Road, one of two houses in Parkland (Cotter, 1934).

Parkland was first laid out in 1871 and became an incorporated town in 1874. The first lots in Parkland sold to Blacks were in 1880 to John Gibbs, John & Mary Thomas, Joe Grider, and three other families, on what was then called Orleans Avenue (now Dumesnil St.) between 36<sup>th</sup> and 38<sup>th</sup> streets. The settlement began in 1891 with their houses, a grocery at 38<sup>th</sup> and Orleans, and a church in the Gibbs house (which became the First Virginia Avenue Baptist Church located today across Virginia at 3601 Virginia Ave.) The resultant community was often called "Colored Parkland" or "Black Parkland" by whites, "Needmore" by its early settlers, and then by some African Americans in the city, "Little Africa" (Smiley, p. 2).

Cotter described the growth in 1916: "From this nucleus on Orleans and Virginia Avenue there has sprung up a little black city eighteen squares long and nine squares wide; and, it seems, that "Little Africa" is destined to be its permanent name" (p. 12).

The shotgun homes, 'shanties,' 'wood shacks,' of Little Africa contrasted to the buildings of white-owned Parkland, a thriving, prestigious active community, with abundant churches, strict ordinances, full of stunning Victorian, Queen Anne, and Romanesque homes along tree-lined streets. Little Africa, built largely on swampland, was dubbed "Tin Town," for the structures having their walls and roofs clad with the shell of large cans of "Polk's Best Tomatoes" flattened-out, nailed, and lapped (Trowel, p. 49).

Joseph S. Cotter, inspirational leader, community advocate, educator, writer and poet, wrote "Founding of Colored Parkland or Little Africa," a 25 year history. This was in 1916, at the time of a weeklong "Homecoming Week" affair held in a large tent set-up on Virginia Avenue, between 36<sup>th</sup> and 37<sup>th</sup> streets – Celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of "Little Africa" and to initiate the leveling of streets, laying of cinder walks, and other improvements. This is the field where the 1968 and 1954 Virginia Avenue School additions stand today. Even in 1915 almost no streets South of Greenwood Avenue were paved, and many were difficult to pass in fair weather (Trowel, p. 24).

Little Africa served a purpose in its time. It provided a home to the population of Freedmen and enabled them to transition into a co-existence within a segregated Society. The African American community is not even mentioned in many histories of Parkland, and most of "Little Africa" was bulldozed in the 1950's by Urban Renewal. In 1958 a large section South of Dumesnil was replaced by updated housing projects Cotter and Lang Homes, housing over 3000 unemployed and underemployed.

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Virginia Avenue Colored School  
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### Boundary Description

The property is a 4.09 acre rectangular parcel bounded by 1.) Virginia Avenue on the North (375') 2.) 36<sup>th</sup> Street on the East (420'), 3) Dumesnil Street on the South (375') and 4) two narrow parcels that abut the Interstate I-264 right-of-way to the West (420').

Specifically, those lots of tax block 45G numbered 23-34, 51-55, and the former alley right-of-way (which runs East-West in between these two groups) which is 20'-0" in width, all as recorded in Jefferson County PVA records.

### Boundary Justification

The boundary as defined is that historically used for this school and it's educational purposes prior to the end of the period of significance and since.

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### Photographs

The attached 25 B & W print photographs share the following properties:

Photographer: Mark D. Frazar  
Date taken: 7 November 2003  
Negative location: Office of Veritas Design  
536 Eastern Parkway  
Louisville, KY 40217

### Description of Views:

#### Exterior

| <u>Photograph No.</u> | <u>Description</u>  |
|-----------------------|---|
| 1                     | Virginia Avenue original main entry, looking South                            |
| 2                     | 1920's & 1968 portion, looking Southeast, from elevated pedestrian walkway    |
| 3                     | Closer view of 1920's portion wall/roof, looking Southeast                    |
| 4                     | Secondary entry onto Virginia Ave, 1926 wing, looking West                    |
| 5                     | Closer view of Gable detail at secondary entry                                |
| 6                     | 1920's portion, looking Southeast, from elevated ped-way                      |
| 7                     | West 1926 wing, side façade windows, looking East                             |
| 8                     | Rear of 1920's portion, looking Northeast                                     |
| 9                     | West 1926 wing, side façade, looking North                                    |
| 10                    | Rear of 1920's portion, looking North, 1954 addition at right                 |
| 11                    | Rear of 1920's portion, looking North, 1954 addition at right                 |
| 12                    | 1923 portion, rear façade windows, looking North                              |
| 13                    | 1954 addition, looking Northeast  |
| 14                    | 1968 addition, looking Southwest  |
| 15                    | Current 1968 main entry on Virginia Ave. & 1920's portions, looking Southwest |
| 16                    | 1923 portion original main entry - Virginia Ave, looking South                |



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(continued)

### Interior

| <u>Photograph No.</u> | <u>Description</u>   |
|-----------------------|--|
| 17                    | Typical Window, 1926 wing hall, taken in West wing                               |
| 18                    | Main hall 1923 portion, looking East   |
| 19                    | Typical Classroom wall, 1923 portion   |
| 20                    | Typical Supplies Cabinet Unit, 1923 portion                                      |
| 21                    | Typical Classroom, 1926 portions, taken in East wing                             |
| 22                    | 1926 wing interior stair, taken in West wing, looking North                      |
| 23                    | Basement hall 1923 portion, looking East   |
| 24                    | Sunken Gymnasium in East 1926 wing Lower Level, looking South                    |
| 25                    | Urinals, 1923 portion Lower Level, looking North by Northwest, and slightly down |