

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

Old Kenner High School, Jefferson Parish, LA

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Old Kenner High School

Other Name/Site Number:



2. LOCATION

Street & Number 1601 Reverend Richard Wilson (Third Street) Not for publication: NA

City/Town Kenner Vicinity: NA

State: Louisiana Code: LA County: Jefferson Code: 051 Zip Code: 70062

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

Nationally: Statewide: Locally: x

Phil Boggan (handwritten signature)

Signature of Certifying Official/Title Phil Boggan Deputy SHPO, Dept. of Culture, Recreation and Tourism

December 21, 2007

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official/Title

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

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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):

Signature of Keeper: Patrick Andrews

Date of Action: 2/7/2008

5. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property
Private:
Public-Local: x
Public-State:
Public-Federal:

Category of Property
Building(s): x
District:
Site:
Structure:
Object:

Number of Resources within Property
Contributing
1
1

Non contributing
buildings
sites
structures
objects
0 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 0

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: NA

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6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: Education Sub: School
Current: Vacant Sub: Not in Use

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: Classical Revival

Materials:

Foundation: Brick
Walls: Brick
Roof: Other: Tar & Gravel
Other: Cast Concrete

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

Located near the Mississippi River's levee, the Classical Revival style Old Kenner High School stands on the river's north bank in the Jefferson Parish town of Kenner. Although New Orleans' Lewis Armstrong International Airport is located a short distance away, a handful of simple early twentieth century residences and a mid-twentieth century elementary school are the high school's nearest neighbors. Initial construction of the two-story, masonry building was completed in 1924; five years later the School Board added a two-story addition at the building's northeast corner. Alterations to the school have been minimal since the historic expansion. Thus, the school easily retains its National Register eligibility.

Kenner High's façade displays a five-part composition of projecting and receding planes. These consist of a slightly projecting central pavilion and two projecting end pavilions connected to the central section by receding hyphens. The rear elevation features a two-story section (the auditorium, see below) projecting from the middle of the main building block. The rear elevation of the western end pavilion also projects slightly, as did that of the eastern pavilion until the addition lengthened that side of the building even further. Each portion of the façade is pierced by bands of windows, as are the side elevations and part of the rear.

Much of the building's Classical Revival ornament, made of cast concrete, is found on the school's façade and side elevations. (Decoration was omitted from the outer walls of the addition and the rear elevation.) The central pavilion features fluted pilasters that divide the surface into three bays. The building's main entrance is found in the central bay beneath a brick arch with a cast concrete voussoir and a cast concrete tympanum with decorative carving. Small cartouches fill the spaces between the curve of the arch and the sill of the window above. The pilasters have molded bases and simplified acanthus leaf capitals above single strips of necking. They support a heavy entablature divided into architrave, frieze and cornice. The frieze contains three raised plaques, each centered above the bay below it. Taken together, the plaques read "Kenner High School," with one word in each plaque. The frieze also displays decorative patera

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centered above the pavilion's four pilasters. A shaped parapet with concrete coping surmounts the entablature. The ends of the parapet, located above the central pavilion's end pilasters, project slightly, framing the receding central plane of the parapet and emphasizing the verticality of the pavilion. Vertical rectangular panels featuring floral motifs decorate the projections. However, the parapet's most significant decorative feature is an oval cartouche flanked by horizontal rectangles containing carvings suggestive of open books. The central pavilion's entablature and parapet extend in both directions to encircle the building. Beyond the central pavilion, the entablature's frieze is ornamented by cast concrete squares containing bas-relief flowers. Although much of the remaining parapet is straight, it is shaped above the end pavilions. There, the façade parapets feature central geometric motifs combined with the same flower-within-a-square decoration found on the frieze.

Although the exterior's Classical Revival features stand forth, the building is made even more impressive by its use of patterned brick motifs in various places. For example, the portions of the entablature's architrave and cornice that run beyond the central pavilion are composed of bands of slightly projecting brick. The pillars framing the windows of the end pavilions feature five columns of horizontal brickwork divided by four columns of vertical brickwork. Brick lozenges are found between the first and second story windows. Brick windowsills and lintels, a brick watertable and a brick belt course also provide the building with ornament and texture. Although not decorative features, three metal fire escapes survive on the exterior.

Access to the interior was not possible on the day of the site visit because it could not be unlocked. However, a floor plan and recent photographs provided by the applicant make it possible to gain some sense of its character. The plan is fairly conventional. A large entrance opens into a minimal lobby which leads in turn to a continuous hallway running from end to end of the building. Offices and classrooms with cloakrooms are located on the south side of this long hall. On the other side, the corridor opens into the central auditorium, which is flanked by staircases that rise to the second floor and also descend a few steps to boys' and girls' restrooms. At each end of the building the hallway makes 90-degree turns to extend into the end pavilions and the addition, where more classrooms and cloakrooms are located. On the second floor the corridor opens into classrooms, a storeroom, a teacher's lounge, and the auditorium's balcony. A large library fills much of the western end pavilion on this floor.

The recent photographs show that the two-story auditorium has fine plaster decoration. A heavily molded and denticulated cornice encircles the space and also outlines ceiling beams that divide the area into three parts. Paneled pilasters with elaborate acanthus leaf capitals above necking separate the side walls of the balcony from the rest of the auditorium. The stage features a segmental arch proscenium supported by pilasters whose capitals are less elaborate than those associated with the balcony. Outside the auditorium the interior is treated more simply. Multi-light transoms located high in the walls between classrooms and hallways allow air to circulate. Most interior spaces have chair rails and baseboards. The original wooden floors survive.

The most serious alteration the building has experienced is the deterioration that has occurred on the exterior and the interior since the school closed in the 1990s. For example, the exterior walls need a careful and thorough cleaning. Although current photos showing the school's windows boarded over by plywood panels are distressing, most of the original, multi-pane windows survive behind the panels, which were installed to protect them. A crosswalk now parallels the building, and the exterior space at the rear between the auditorium and the 1929 addition has been covered. However, these changes are reversible. Inside, the wooden floors are in poor condition, some spaces have been subdivided, and modern paneling covers some

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walls. None of these changes impacts the architectural styling that makes the building eligible for the National Register. Furthermore, many are easily reversed. As one of the town's rare architectural landmarks, the Old Kenner High School is a strong candidate for Register listing.

Note Concerning the U.S.G.S. Topo Map

The site indicated on the topo map by the National Register staff as the location of the Old Kenner High School is correct. Because a mid-twentieth century elementary school is located to the east, just across the side street (Duncan Street) from the high school, it appears that the cartographer became confused and left the historic school off the map.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Applicable National
Register Criteria:

A___ B__ C X D

Criteria Considerations
(Exceptions):

A__ B__ C__ D__ E__ F__ G___ NA

Areas of Significance: Architecture

Period(s) of Significance: 1924

Significant Dates: 1924

Significant Person(s): NA

Cultural Affiliation: NA

Architect/Builder: William T. Nolan, Architect

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State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

The Old Kenner High School is locally significant in the area of architecture within the Jefferson Parish community of Kenner because it ranks as one of the town's very few architectural landmarks.

Located along the north bank of the Mississippi River, the City of Kenner stands on ground under cultivation as early as 1720. By the mid-1840s these lands (consisting of three plantations) were owned by four brothers--Minor, William Butler, George R., and Duncan Farrar Kenner. (The latter achieved fame as a Confederate States diplomat and, later, for his innovations as a sugar planter.) By 1852 Duncan and George had sold their Jefferson Parish lands to their brothers, so it was Minor and William Butler who decided to subdivide the area into a town site when the newly formed New Orleans, Jackson, and Great Northern Railroad announced a proposed route across the Kenner plantations. The subdivision was apparently delayed by the 1853 death of William Butler Kenner; Minor was not able to hire a surveyor to complete the work until 1855. Kennerville, as the village was first known, developed very slowly. Although a foundry opened around 1858, it apparently brought few settlers to the town; and it appears that the majority of lots sold before Minor Kenner's 1864 death were used as truck gardens. German, Irish, and Italian immigrants, and a number of freed African-Americans, settled there after the Civil War. Kenner was incorporated in 1873 but lost its charter thirteen years later. Lumber and vegetable packing businesses opened there in the 1880s, a new city charter was granted in 1913, and the community was connected to New Orleans via the Orleans-Kenner Traction Company (a streetcar line) in 1915. Nevertheless, Kenner remained a small agricultural village far into the twentieth century. Today Kenner is a largely modern suburb of New Orleans.

Because Jefferson Parish has not been officially surveyed, the National Register staff conducted a windshield survey to gather information on extant structures. This survey found four general types of buildings:

- 1) modern strip developments,
- 2) a few low-key historic commercial structures, most of which have been altered,
- 3) humble bungalows and cottages dating from the 1920s to the 1940s, and
- 4) slab-on-grade ranch houses dating from the 1950s and later.

Only five buildings are exceptions to these findings. These include the large, Colonial Revival style Raziano House (National Register), a shotgun featuring Eastlake trim and Queen Anne fish scale shingles, a bungalow with a small porte-cochere, a small house with a Colonial Revival porch and door, and the candidate. The latter obviously ranks as the largest and most ornate commercial/institutional building in the city.

Historical Note

Kenner High School was the first school to be built in the City of Kenner. It originally offered all grades, becoming a junior high in the late 1950s. Because the building is beneath the flight path of the nearby Lewis Armstrong International Airport, in 1993 the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) bought the property as part of the 1990 FAA Noise Abatement Program. In February 1995, a land swap between

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the City of Kenner and the FAA saved the school from demolition. The municipal government now owns the building and plans to restore it for use as city offices. All believe that listing the building on the National Register will assist the city government in obtaining grants for the restoration.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

History of Kenner High School, typescript; copy in National Register file.

Floor plan of Kenner High School; copy in National Register file.

Swanson, Betsy, *Historic Jefferson Parish: From Shore to Shore*. Gretna: Pelican Publishing Company, 1975, pp. 107-109.

Site visit by National Register staff.

Windshield survey by National Register staff.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): NA

- Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- Previously Listed in the National Register. (partially)
- 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 (Specify Repository):

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: Approximately 1 acre

| | | | |
|-----------------|-------------|----------------|-----------------|
| UTM References: | Zone | Easting | Northing |
| | 15 | 765100 | 3319180 |

Verbal Boundary Description: Please see attached sketch map.

Boundary Justification:

On the south and east sides, the boundaries follow the property lines of the parcel on which the school stands. On the north side the boundary is cut 15 feet from the rear elevation of the building, and on the west side it is cut approximately 27 feet beyond that elevation. These boundaries were chosen to preserve the school's historic setting while excluding large non-contributing elements added to the campus in later years.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: National Register Staff, Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation

Address: P. O. Box 44247, Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Telephone: 225 342-8160

Date: Fall 2007

PROPERTY OWNERS

City of Kenner
1801 Williams Boulevard, Building B
Kenner, Louisiana 70062

The Honorable Edmond J. Muniz, Mayor

Contact: Department of Planning
Misty Owens, Associate Planner
504 468-7280

Old Kenner High School

Kenner, Jefferson Parish, LA

