

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Multiple Property Documentation Form**

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

This form is for use in documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Type all entries.

**A. Name of Multiple Property Listing**

Public Schools in the Arkansas Ozarks, 1920-1940

**B. Associated Historic Contexts**

The Evolution of the Public School System in the Arkansas Ozarks, 1920-1940

**C. Geographical Data**

The Ozark region extends across the north central and northwestern sections of the state. Located within Benton, Washington, Crawford, Carroll, Madison, Franklin, Boone, Newton, Johnson, Marion, Searcy, Pope, Van Buren, Conway, Baxter, Stone, Cleburne, Faulkner, Fulton, Izard, White, Sharp, Independence, Randolph, Lawrence and Jackson counties, the northern boundary is the state's northern boundary with Missouri; the western boundary is the state's western boundary; the southern boundary is the northern low-water mark of the Arkansas River between the western state border and the city of Conway, and the northern edge of U.S. Highway 64 between the city of Conway and the city of Beebe; and the eastern boundary is the northwestern edge of U.S. Highway 67 between the city of Beebe and the state's northern border.

☐ See continuation sheet

**D. Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Planning and Evaluation.

*Cathryn A. Byford*

Signature of certifying official

*7-11-92*  
Date

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

State or Federal agency and bureau

I, hereby, certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

*M. J. M. H. H.*

Signature of the Keeper of the National Register

*9/4/92*  
Date

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number E Page 1

---

## I. INTRODUCTION

Arkansas' public schools experienced more changes between 1920 and 1940 than they had during the entire preceding century -- developments that are reflected in the schools built during this period. A succession of innovative governors in the 1920's backed legislation and initiatives designed to bolster educational standards in the state and to provide more funding for education and the public schools. New teaching techniques and equipment ushered in an important period of modernization for the state's school systems. Legislative initiatives and the arrival of the school bus resulted in the consolidation of many of the state's school districts, the number of which fell from over 5,000 in 1920 to around 3,000 in 1940.

In the 1930's many school buildings were constructed as a means toward putting people back to work and teaching them trades, a goal of federal New Deal programs established in 1933 in response to the Great Depression. The Works Progress Administration (WPA) and other New Deal Depression relief programs were responsible for many of the school buildings that were commissioned and built during this period. These buildings frequently functioned as important community centers and as symbols of the identity and character of a particular town or area.

These developments were to encounter a unique panoply of circumstances and challenges in the Ozarks, a region of rugged mountains and valleys in northern and northwestern Arkansas. The physical conditions and rugged terrain of this part of the state had produced a predominately rural region of isolated communities, with an agricultural economy dominated by single-family yeoman farming. The population was almost entirely white. This combination of physical conditions, economic simplicity and cultural isolation had fostered an educational system dominated by small local school districts, poorly trained teachers, limited educational opportunities and inadequate educational facilities.<sup>1</sup>

Although Arkansas was experiencing an economic boom during the first decade of this period, the benefits that were realized in the Ozarks were minimal. Much of the state's prosperity was due to the demand for its agricultural products, primarily cotton grown in the Delta. In the Ozarks, good farming land was found only in Benton and Washington counties or in river valleys such as the Buffalo; elsewhere the soil was thin and not very rich. The region experienced significant rural population losses between 1900 and 1940. Some people moved to cities such as Fayetteville, Harrison or Little Rock, while others left Arkansas entirely. These population losses were exacerbated in the Depression, as those unable to pay taxes were forced to leave their land and homes.<sup>2</sup>

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number E Page 2

---

With the notable exception of Fayetteville, education in the Ozarks had traditionally lagged behind that of more prosperous sections of the country. The institution of the family farm, particularly strong in the region, fostered the common perception that very little of that taught in a schoolroom would be important in making a living. Many felt that formal education posed a threat to traditional values, drawing youths away from their families, churches and communities. Education beyond the eighth grade was not considered essential, and the decision of whether to attend high school had important ramifications for one's future. Those Ozark youths who did pursue high school educations often were exposed to new ideas and influences and a lifestyle alien to that with which they had grown up.<sup>3</sup>

The school buildings constructed during this period reflect the social dynamism of this progressive era and its adaptations to the Ozark environment. Often, structures built during this time were the first modern education buildings these areas had known, and the last prior to the mass school consolidations of 1948. Those that remain represent important reminders of Arkansas' culture and heritage.

**II. EDUCATION IN ARKANSAS, 1920-1928**

**A. The Public School System**

As the 1920's began the nation was experiencing a period of economic prosperity and a confidence in the ideals and potentials of democracy and capitalism born of the recent victory in World War I. Progressivism was a vibrant social and political philosophy of the time, a belief that governmental power could be exercised to improve social conditions. Arkansas felt the impact of these ideas, provoking concern over such issues as the construction and maintenance of an adequate road system, the extension of public services to rural areas, and the improvement of conditions for the state's farmers. The reform and improvement of the state's educational system was the prime focus of this movement.<sup>4</sup>

Arkansas' public school system was in a financial muddle in the years following World War I. The general quality of the educational programs available was poor and school terms had been cut short in the years prior to the U.S. entry into the war. The war effort had brought the construction of new schools to a virtual halt, while many of the state's more qualified teachers had left the classroom for better-paying jobs in the armed forces or in factories producing war materials. Schools were poorly financed through a system of revenues based on state and local general property taxes. Between 1916 and 1926 the state constitution limited the local district tax rate to a maximum of 12 mills.<sup>5</sup>

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number E Page 3

---

In the 1920's Arkansas public schools were under the jurisdiction of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, a popularly elected position with a two-year term. The State Superintendent served as chairman of the State Board of Education, consisting of seven members appointed by the governor for seven year terms.<sup>6</sup> At the local level, county boards of education oversaw the operations of local school districts. In 1919 the General Assembly had attempted to de-politicize the elections of county boards of education and county superintendents by authorizing elected county boards to appoint the county superintendent on a professional basis. Previously, the position of county superintendent was hotly contested in local politics. This new legislation constituted a major advancement in the state's educational system, although the county boards remained political and occasionally made bad choices in the selection of superintendents.<sup>7</sup>

The de-politicization of the county superintendent position had positive effects within just a few years, as constructive programs were initiated in most counties. The Extension Service of the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville provided most counties with the services of agricultural and home economics educators, and the state noticed a general improvement in the professional development of teachers, instructional methods and procedures, and in community support of the public schools.<sup>8</sup>

Public schools in the Ozarks often faced competition from denominational schools in the community. The popular sentiment often favored the payment of a nominal fee to educate children in a church school over the payment of property taxes to support a public school. In some areas this phenomenon threatened to put the public schools out of business, and the State Board of Education occasionally had to intervene to effect a compromise between the two systems and to iron out differences. These educational tensions between the church and public schools occasionally led to some rather creative solutions. The school board in Zinc, a mining community with socialist leanings in Boone County, secured a larger than average tract of land on which to build their school, then built a chapel alongside it. Anyone who wished to speak or preach on any subject was permitted to use the chapel as a forum, but no denomination was allowed to build a church building in town. This prohibition effectively precluded the establishment of any competing educational institution.<sup>9</sup>

The financing of education based on local taxation inevitably created great disparities in the quality of education in different parts of the state. In the late 1910's, those representing rural interests began to call for state government to redistribute resources on the basis of need, theorizing that an adequate and equitable system of education would have benefits statewide. Urban interests almost always opposed these proposals, arguing that the state could not afford

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number E Page 4

---

such a burden and that such measures would dissuade industries from locating in Arkansas. For many years the State Board of Education and the Arkansas Educational Association lobbied the General Assembly to levy new taxes for educational purposes and campaigned for an amendment to the state constitution to increase school revenues, all to no avail. Those living in cities and in wealthier areas were unwilling to pay taxes to benefit poorer communities, and often those very communities that stood to benefit from such a provision would campaign and vote against it.<sup>10</sup>

Opposition to these educational initiatives typically involved an uneasy coalition of interests on the parts of three groups: the powerful East Arkansas landowners (or "Swamp Democrats"), who felt that society and the state owed little or nothing to the lower classes beyond their mere subsistence, and certainly not an education; the leaders of urban chambers of commerce, who feared that taxes to support educational improvements would adversely affect business interests; and the west Arkansans, who held a prejudice against progress and a suspicion of things educational. A major fear, especially among the first two groups, was that if the masses were given an education, they might reject the poor working conditions and drudgery of tenant farming and other common labor, thus reducing the cheap labor supply that fed the Arkansas economy. Despite these obstacles, a state equalizing fund law was finally passed in the late 1920's.<sup>11</sup>

**B. High School and Elementary Standardization**

Education reform efforts during the 1920's concentrated on the standardization of elementary and high schools and the consolidation of small school districts. The movement to standardize and improve the state's system of high schools had demanded much attention in the early twentieth century. There were only 159 high schools in Arkansas in 1919, but this number more than doubled to 380 in 1927, and rose to 433 in 1928. By 1930, 65 Arkansas high schools had been accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. Fifty-one percent of Arkansas' accredited public high schools in 1928 were located in just 20 of the state's 75 counties. Twenty-three counties had no senior high schools (class "A" high schools), while six counties had no senior or junior (class "B") high schools.<sup>12</sup>

During this period in the Ozarks private contributions and tuition largely maintained the high schools, which were almost always found in the more progressive towns rather than in rural areas. There was no standardization among these schools, no science equipment or pre-vocational courses. The curriculum consisted largely of textbook study designed chiefly to prepare the brightest students for college entrance examinations. Normally, one teacher taught

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number E Page 5

---

all subjects. These schools provided most of the teachers for the smaller schools and for the lower grades of the larger schools.<sup>13</sup>

The re-orientation of equipment and teaching priorities to improve the state's high schools during the 1920's had resulted in the neglect of elementary schools. Elementary education was not seen as an essential element of the public school system and these schools tended to develop as satellites to high schools. Substandard teachers were often assigned to elementary grades, and crowded classrooms and poor facilities were the norm.<sup>14</sup>

The movement to improve the state's system of elementary education gained ground as it became obvious that student performances in high schools were dependent on skills acquired in the elementary grades. This imbalance was corrected in 1927 when the State Board adopted a policy of standardization and classification of the state's elementary schools. After 1925, communities increasingly came to see the public schools as a unitary system including grades one through twelve. In 1931, the General Assembly further strengthened the State Board's regulatory powers by authorizing them to exercise more control over the elementary school curriculum.<sup>15</sup>

## C. Vocational Education

The passage of the 1917 Vocational Education Act by the U.S. Congress was to have significant and long lasting effects on Arkansas education and the public school buildings of the state. Known as the Smith-Hughes Act, the new law provided federal appropriations to the state on a one-for-one matching basis and was designed to promote vocational education in agriculture, trades and industry, home economics, and teacher training in these fields. These funds were to be allocated by state departments of education to local school districts to defray as much as 50 percent of their instructional costs. Within eleven days of the passage of the federal legislation, the General Assembly in Little Rock passed legislation to qualify Arkansas for this aid, setting up a state vocational-technical education program. To provide the state's match the 1919 Arkansas General Assembly levied a 1/5 mill tax on the taxable property of the state and designated the State Board of Education as the administrative body that would carry out the provisions of Smith-Hughes.<sup>16</sup>

The Smith-Hughes Act provided for three subdivisions of vocational education. These included agricultural education, available to boys fourteen and older who lived in rural areas; home economics, offered to girls of the same ages in city or rural schools; and trades and industries, offered primarily to boys in city schools. Smith-Hughes had an almost immediate

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number E Page 6

---

impact on the state of vocational education in Arkansas. In 1918 eleven school centers in the state enrolled a total of 240 vocational-agricultural students. By 1925 there were 79 schools enrolling 3,720 students, and by 1928 the totals had risen to 116 schools and an enrollment of 5,920. At the program's peak in 1929, 158 school centers had been established.<sup>17</sup>

The implementation of the Smith-Hughes Act in Arkansas initially concentrated on agricultural education, with impressive results. In 1923 the vocational agricultural pupils at Bruno High School (Marion County) organized the Lincoln Aggie Club, believed to be the first organization of its kind in the nation. The second local chapter of the national Future Farmers of America was organized at Danville (Yell County) in 1928.<sup>18</sup>

In 1927 the General Assembly turned its attention toward the trades and industrial education provisions of the Smith-Hughes Act, enacting legislation to provide for the establishment and maintenance of public vocational schools in the state. This legislation divided the state into four districts, each authorized to establish two state vocational schools. Governor John E. Martineau appointed a three-man board of trustees and charged them with selecting the locations of the schools. However, only two vocational schools, both in the Ozarks, were established under this legislation, in Huntsville (Madison County)\* and in Clinton (Van Buren County). These schools continued to operate until the General Assembly discontinued the program in 1955.<sup>19</sup>

**D. Public School Reorganization and Consolidation**

In 1927 the State Board of Education initiated a study to determine what type of school could provide optimum service at the lowest cost, in order to realize the benefits of the state's new equalizing fund program most effectively and economically. The findings identified the need for larger schools and school districts in order to take advantage of greater local tax bases. The State Board concluded that, although the consolidation trends that Arkansas had experienced in the 1920's had been haphazard, the results for the most part had been beneficial in providing for improved high school programs.<sup>20</sup>

Reorganization on the scale recommended by the State Board would require an adequate level of funding to be successful. Without sufficient revenues to operate, the new consolidated

---

\* Orval Faubus, governor of Arkansas from 1955 to 1967, was a 1934 graduate of the Huntsville Vocational High School.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number E Page 7

---

school district would likely fail. Overzealous campaigners for the consolidation movement often exaggerated the advantages of such a program, convincing many that the reorganized school districts could be operated at considerable savings to the taxpayers. When such benefits failed to accrue, bitterness and disillusionment often resulted. In some instances, consolidated school districts secured special legislation allowing them to revert to their old organizations when the benefits of consolidation proved less extensive than had been predicted. These experiences illustrated the importance of avoiding mass consolidations and consolidating districts only after extensive planning and consideration of the long range implications.<sup>21</sup>

In 1928 the State Department of Education undertook an extensive survey of each of the 75 counties in order to outline a program of consolidation and reorganization of the state's school systems. This study, financed with a grant from the General Education Board and approved by the State Board of Education, recommended that the state's public schools be reorganized on the basis of a six-year elementary school leading either to a six-year high school or to a three-year junior high school and a three-year senior high school. These schools would be planned to accommodate a minimal number of pupils in the elementary schools, about 150 pupils in the six-year high schools, and about 100 each in the junior and senior high schools if maintained separately. The study called for the establishment of larger school districts where feasible and smaller districts where transportation conditions, community histories and neighborhood ties justified them.<sup>22</sup>

To gather information the Department of Education held open meetings to solicit community input and consulted with county boards of education on district boundaries, on the locations of new school buildings and on the disposition of old ones. The Department analyzed data relating to schools, community structures and population trends, while preparing maps detailing topographic conditions, district boundaries, school locations and the distributions of school populations. When the survey was complete, the Department prepared a map of new district boundaries statewide, complete with descriptive reports, plans for pupil transportation and budgetary requirements.<sup>23</sup>

This study established recommended student-teacher ratios, directed that school districts be planned so as to provide twelve years of schooling and called for transportation to be provided for all pupils living more than two hours from their schools. District boundaries were to be determined based on the areas from which pupils would attend the senior high school, while elementary schools were to be as numerous as neighborhood conditions demanded. Local boards of education were to be responsible for all schools within the district, with the county board of education and county superintendents intermediary between the local board and the



**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number E Page 8

---

State Department of Education. If conditions warranted, a school district could include territory in more than one county.<sup>24</sup>

The survey's proposals for the state as a whole called for 307 local districts, an average of four per county. The number of one- teacher schools was to be reduced from 2,495 to 473, while the number of schools employing five or more teachers was to increase from 412 to 577. The state equalizing fund would provide about \$2.8 million per year to finance the consolidations; however, the expected enrollment increases would necessitate over \$3.6 million in additional funding to be successful.<sup>25</sup>

The Department of Education study provided the impetus for legislative action on the consolidation issue. In 1927 the General Assembly passed Act 156, permitting counties with populations over 75,000 to organize county school districts if the majority of the population voted to do so. This legislation effectively applied only to Pulaski County which did organize such a district. In 1929 the legislature enacted an optional county-unit law directing county boards of education to call an election for consolidation upon the petition of a majority of the electors in any one district. This law was later invalidated on technical grounds by the Arkansas Supreme Court.<sup>26</sup>

The recommendations of the Department of Education's study were never fully realized, but progress was made. Between 1927 and 1932 more than 350 consolidated districts were formed, 173 in 1929 alone. Over 660 school centers received new and improved facilities as a result of these consolidations. By 1933 the number of school districts in the state totaled 3,086, a reduction of more than 1,600 from the level of the mid-1920's. Major reductions through consolidation occurred in 1929-30 (664), and in 1930-31 (591). The importance of the school bus to the success of the consolidation movement was irrefutable. Whereas in 1926, 3,136 schoolchildren were bused to school, by 1932 the total had risen to 52,654. High school enrollment in 1931 reached 47,274, an increase of over 33 percent since 1926. Average enrollment was estimated at 153 pupils per high school, with only two senior highs in the state having less than 40 pupils. Although many tiny districts were consolidated through the legislative and administrative initiatives of the 1920's, large scale school consolidation would not occur in the state until 1948.<sup>27</sup>

**III. GOVERNMENT ATTEMPTS AT REFORM, 1920-1928****A. The McRae and Terral Administrations**

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number E Page 9

---

Thomas McRae was elected governor in 1920 on the campaign slogan "good roads and good schools," and educational improvements constituted a major plank in the Democratic party platform that year. Public school terms averaged only 131 days a year, while 25 percent of the state's school children attended school less than 100 days a year. One-room schools were the norm throughout the state, and high schools were virtually nonexistent in rural areas. While the average expenditure per student from all sources amounted to \$64.34 in Oklahoma and \$59.94 in Missouri, the total in Arkansas was only \$23.63, with the state government contributing only \$2.74 per child. The per capita expenditures for black students were considerably less. In his inaugural address, Governor McRae bemoaned the "hideous illiteracy" he saw in Arkansas and called on the General Assembly to provide increased funding for the state's schools, many of which would have been closed if not for private contributions. During the 1921 legislative session the General Assembly passed a school attendance law, but rejected McRae's other proposals to increase education funding.<sup>28</sup>

Education remained an important issue in the 1922 elections, in which Governor McRae was elected to a second term. He presented an ambitious educational package to the 1923 General Assembly, advocating the abolition of the state property tax and the imposition of other taxes "such as insurance, inheritance, income, business, and franchise." The revenue increase that would result would be applied to what McRae termed the educational "crisis." The governor also advocated transfer of the state's public lands to the permanent school fund. Although most of Governor McRae's tax package failed to pass the General Assembly, the 1923 legislative session did see the passage of a severance tax to provide revenue for education, and \$150,000 was made available for vocational education. Despite opposition from the state's bauxite and lumber interests, this tax provided more than \$3.5 million for the state's schools over the next three years.<sup>29</sup>

McRae called a special session of the legislature in March 1924 to address the continuing educational problems in the state. The General Assembly rejected McRae's request to pass a tax on net incomes to provide further funding for public schools, but did pass a cigar and cigarette tax that met with the governor's approval. This legislation was declared null and void by the Arkansas Supreme Court on technical grounds, but was successfully passed again at another special session later that year. The educational package that emerged from this special session brought national attention to Arkansas' efforts at educational reform.<sup>30</sup>

Other accomplishments of the McRae administration included a law to regulate the sale of state lands and apply the proceeds to the Permanent School Fund and the authorization of a textbook commission to extend contracts for public schoolbooks. By the end of his

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number E Page 10

---

administration, McRae had almost doubled the amount of state educational funding per schoolchild to five dollars and had provided Arkansas schools with their first major infusion of state funding. Upon leaving office in 1925, one-fifth of Governor McRae's farewell address was on the progress still to be made in education. McRae is still considered one of the most effective education governors in Arkansas history.<sup>31</sup>

McRae was succeeded by Tom J. Terral, a former teacher and assistant in the state Department of Education. Governor Terral took office in 1925 calling for the extensive restructuring and reduction of state government. He proposed the abolition of the Game and Fish Commission so that the resultant \$80,000 in savings per year could be used to maintain schools for the 2,000 children in 57 districts that had no school buildings, and to lengthen the terms for the 3,834 children in 64 districts with terms of less than three months. The new governor also recommended new taxes on certain luxury items in order to increase the state's per capita education allocation to \$10 per child.<sup>32</sup> The General Assembly rejected all of these measures, but Amendment 11 to the Arkansas Constitution was passed, raising the local school district tax rate to a maximum of 18 mills.<sup>33</sup> Amidst charges of official misconduct in the negotiation of a contract to provide textbooks for the public schools, Governor Terral was denied the Democratic gubernatorial nomination in 1926, an almost unheard of occurrence for a first-term incumbent in Arkansas.<sup>34</sup>

**B. The Equalizing Fund Law of 1927**

In 1926 the State Board of Education established the Division of Statistics and Information within the Department of Education. This division initiated a systematic survey of the financial system then in place for public schools in order to devise a system to equalize educational opportunities in the state. In 1927 the General Assembly directed this division to gather facts on those school districts with low per capita funding levels and to devise a method to subsidize these districts with state funds.<sup>35</sup>

Governor John E. Martineau took office in 1927 in support of the equalization principles proposed in the Department of Education study. This study served as the basis for Act 28, the "Equalizing Fund Law of 1927" to provide additional funding through the State Board of Education for the state's poorest school districts, but the income tax bill he proposed to pay for the equalization program was narrowly defeated when opposition from special interest groups arose. Amid rumors of bribery among many legislators, Martineau refused to bring the equalization bill up for another vote. Supporters of the program challenged its opponents to produce an alternative funding plan, but all that was proposed was to allow the necessary

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number E Page 11

---

revenues to accrue through normal economic growth and the standard means of taxation. A compromise of sorts was reached when it was agreed that the equalization program would be funded with revenues from bonds sold through the State Debt Board.<sup>36</sup>

Under the new program the State Board of Education determined the approximate amount of additional funding each school district required, then forwarded this request to the Debt Board for financing. Only those school districts in compliance with the State Board of Education's rules and regulations were eligible to receive these subsidies and first consideration was given to reorganized school districts that had been set up according to a county-wide plan.<sup>37</sup>

Of the 4,374 school districts in Arkansas in 1927, most had previously issued bonds for constructing new buildings and purchasing equipment over the years. In many instances a significant portion of the current annual revenue of these districts was required to pay the principal and interest on these debts, while the buildings and equipment purchased grew antiquated and fell into disrepair. To combat this cycle, the 1927 General Assembly passed Act 119, creating a Revolving Loan Fund for these needy school districts. The new law directed the State Debt Board to make the assets of the Permanent School Fund available to the revolving fund to make loans for repairing, erecting, or equipping school buildings and to pay off outstanding indebtedness. Twenty-five percent of the equalizing fund was reserved for the construction of new school buildings. Those districts that could not afford to build a school based on blueprints approved by the Department of Education had only to borrow money equal to 7 percent of the assessed valuation of their taxable property and the balance would be supplied by the department through the equalizing fund.<sup>38</sup>

In March 1928 Martineau resigned his office and removed himself from consideration for re-election when President Calvin Coolidge appointed him U.S. district judge for the Eastern District of Arkansas. As lieutenant governor, Harvey Parnell succeeded Martineau for the remainder of his term; he was elected to the governor's office in his own right that fall.<sup>39</sup> Some delegates attempted to insert a plank in the 1928 state Democratic platform supporting the provision of free textbooks by the state to the public schools, but this measure was defeated.<sup>40</sup> The 1928 election saw the passage of a voter-initiated act forbidding the teaching of evolution in state-supported schools.<sup>41</sup>

**IV. EDUCATION IN THE DEPRESSION, 1929-1940****A. The Parnell Administration**

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number E Page 12

---

Governor Parnell's rural background and meager formal education provided him with a special sensitivity toward the needs of the state's rural school districts. Revenue growth had provided his administration with the opportunity to implement new educational programs such as the equalization fund and he vigorously supported the Department of Education's consolidation initiatives. The Parnell administration also saw the establishment of Henderson State Teachers College (now Henderson State University) in Arkadelphia in 1929, which helped to alleviate the state's shortage of well-trained teachers.<sup>42</sup>

A series of economic and environmental disasters that began with widespread flooding in the state in 1927 was to severely test Governor Parnell's leadership and ultimately signal the end of the period of progressive educational reform that Arkansas had experienced in the 1920's. In his 1929 address to the General Assembly, Parnell extolled the successes of the equalization fund program. In one year the average length of the school term in Arkansas had increased from seven and a half months to eight months and three days. High school enrollment grew from 34,311 to 40,535, and 222 new school buildings had been erected since the program's inception. The successes of the program had brought Arkansas favorable attention nationwide.<sup>43</sup>

Parnell, however, foresaw an impending crisis for Arkansas' public schools however. More than 400 schools accommodating over 110,000 school children were dependent on the equalizing fund in maintaining state educational standards. The governor predicted an equalizing fund deficit of \$551,000 in 1931 if the legislature did not provide ample revenues for the program. Without a consistent and predictable source of funding, many of the educational advancements realized since 1927 could be lost.<sup>44</sup> In response to Governor Parnell's concerns, the legislature directed that the second \$750,000 realized through the cigar and cigarette tax and one-half of all revenues beyond that should be applied to the equalization program. Another \$750,000, collected through the state income tax, was also allocated to the equalization fund. Schools that did not conform to the State Board's standards were ineligible to receive funding through this program, and first consideration was given to reorganized school districts operating under county-wide plans.<sup>45</sup>

The Great Depression, which began with the stock market crash of October 1929, hit Arkansas particularly hard. The state's feudal cotton-based economy crumbled when cotton prices fell. Mountain farmers in the Ozarks engaged in subsistence agriculture, eking out livings on marginal lands, and single-crop farming was the rule in 62 of the state's 75 counties. By 1930-31, one-third of the Arkansas population was facing starvation. Charity relief poured into Arkansas from other states and by February 1931 the Red Cross was feeding more than half a

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number E Page 13

---

million Arkansans, almost one-third of the population. In some counties almost every family was dependent on Red Cross rations. By September 1933, 15 percent of all families in Arkansas were on federal relief rolls, one of the highest percentages in the nation.<sup>46</sup>

The advent of the Depression dealt a heavy blow to the educational reforms that had been realized in the 1920's, and the reorganization and consolidation movement was one of the first casualties. As tax delinquency increased and property values fell county and local governments were hard pressed to maintain the educational improvements of the previous decade. School revenues dropped off, terms were shortened, teacher salaries fell, the state equalizing fund was quickly depleted, some state services were discontinued and the State Board of Education was reduced in both size and budget. Debts acquired by school districts in better times became almost insurmountable obstacles to development when the economy turned bad.<sup>47</sup>

In 1931 school districts in the state issued \$2 million in bonds just to pay teacher salaries. Arkansas school teachers earned an average of \$50-60 per month and many school boards were forced to pay teachers with warrants which could be cashed only at a discount. By 1933 the situation for many public schools had become so bad that many were forced to close early. By February 725 schools had closed for the year and 1,200 others planned shortened terms.<sup>48</sup>

Despite mounting economic difficulties and rising unemployment, the 1931 General Assembly showed little interest in public relief efforts, and the governor was forced to cut the wages of state employees by ten percent and call for a 20 percent reduction in state spending.<sup>49</sup> During this session the General Assembly altered the state's reorganization law, requiring a majority vote or a petition signed by a majority of electors in each district to be affected by the proposed consolidation, rather than a majority within the boundaries of the proposed district. Although the introduction of this measure was not the result of any statewide mobilization against reorganization, the debate over the seemingly innocuous bill was intense and its passage effectively signalled the end of the consolidation movement. The legislature also abolished the distinctions between the various types of school districts, allowing all districts the same powers and privileges as city special districts. This legislation provided small districts with the autonomy and power to resist efforts at consolidation.<sup>50</sup>

Although the 1930's saw the death of the school consolidation movement, educational progress was realized in other areas. However, as revenues decreased the governor's initiatives became less substantive and more cosmetic. During the 1931 legislative session Governor Parnell persuaded the General Assembly to abolish the elective office of State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and instead to allow the State Board of Education to select a commissioner

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number E Page 14

---

of education on a professional basis. The governor argued that the Department of Education could be run more efficiently by allowing the State Board to exercise more power over the Department's operations. This gradual expansion of the State Board's duties and powers was to increase the body's prestige as the decade continued.<sup>51</sup>

Governor Parnell's perceptions of the Depression and its implications for Arkansas left much to be desired. In 1932 the state experienced an unemployment rate of 37 percent, deposits in state banks fell from \$137 million to \$62 million and the state's bonded indebtedness grew to more than \$105 million. As many schools as banks closed that year, yet the governor channeled 75 percent of state revenues toward the realization of the Martineau Road Plan, the ambitious highway program envisioned by his predecessor. A March 1932 special session called by Parnell failed to pass any public relief measures, and the relief commission created by the governor to disburse Federal Reconstruction Finance Corporation funds to farmers depleted its resources and closed within eight months.<sup>52</sup>

Parnell was confident that the Arkansas economy was sound and that recovery and prosperity lay just ahead. In 1932 the governor was awarded a position on the platform committee of the Democratic party which that year nominated New York Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt as its presidential candidate. As Roosevelt campaigned pledging a "new deal" for the American people, Parnell maintained that unemployment was the only obstacle to development in Arkansas and that the financial, agricultural and industrial outlook was promising. The governor contended that the most direct path Arkansas could follow to recovery was through the Martineau Road Plan. Many blamed Parnell for much of the state's suffering during the early 1930's, and after he left office in January 1933 the lower chamber of the General Assembly adopted an ill-conceived resolution condemning the Parnell administration as "the most corrupt since the days of reconstruction and the most extravagant and wasteful in the history of the state." Cooler heads in the legislature eventually prevailed and the resolution was rescinded a few days later.<sup>53</sup>

**B. The Futrell Administration and the New Deal**

In 1933, while Arkansas ranked 46th nationwide in terms of per capita income, the state ranked first in terms of per capita indebtedness, due largely to the Martineau Road Plan. Arkansas was the only state during the Depression to default on its bonded debt, and often was forced to issue bonds just to pay for operating expenses. On June 30, 1932, the State Treasurer reported that the General Revenue Fund showed a balance of \$4.80.<sup>54</sup>

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number   E   Page   15  

---

The difficulties of the Depression were the impetus for the most direct federal influence in public building projects that the nation had ever seen. The Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) and the Federal Reconstruction Finance Corporation (FERC) channeled funds to Arkansas through the state's Emergency Relief Commission, headed by W. R. Dyess of Osceola.<sup>55</sup> As Senate majority leader and a confidant of President Roosevelt, Arkansas Senator Joseph T. Robinson was in a prime position to steer many of these relief projects to his home state. Senator Robinson's domination of federal patronage in Arkansas made him the most powerful politician in the state.<sup>56</sup>

In November 1933, the Roosevelt administration shifted federal relief efforts to the Civil Works Administration (CWA), a more streamlined work relief program than the FERC. The CWA took on 68,000 workers at standard wages statewide and was responsible for the construction of many community structures throughout the state, including public school buildings such as the facility in Damascus. However, there was dissatisfaction with the program and allegations of corruption and mismanagement. Opponents of the program asserted that many construction projects were of sub-standard quality and appeared to be thrown together, and that others just seemed to be make-work projects. The CWA served as the prototype for Roosevelt's Works Progress Administration, and by the time it was discontinued in March 1934 it had injected \$12 million into the Arkansas economy.<sup>57</sup>

The Roosevelt administration conducted a major overhaul of federal relief efforts in 1935, creating in the process the most famous of New Deal programs, the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Offering jobs instead of handouts for the unemployed, the WPA was responsible for the construction of a wide variety of community buildings, including many public schools, auditoriums and gymnasiums throughout Arkansas, including new and updated facilities for two of the state's institutions of higher learning, Arkansas Teachers' College (now known as Arkansas Tech University) and the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville.<sup>58</sup> During the course of its existence, the WPA granted more than \$11 billion to states, municipalities and other public bodies for local construction. The relief program attempted to match local needs with those of unemployed architects, engineers and construction workers.<sup>59</sup> Wages ranged from \$31 to \$95 per month.<sup>60</sup>

During the Depression, the WPA was responsible for the construction or remodeling of more than 116,000 public buildings and provided jobs for 8.5 million people.<sup>61</sup> At the height of the program in 1939, \$2.25 billion was appropriated to employ more than 3 million workers nationwide. Many Ozark schools were built or modified as a result of these relief measures, often incorporating lighting, electricity, plumbing systems and safety features that were new to



**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number E Page 16

---

the region. Between 1935 and 1941 more than 5,000 new public school buildings, ranging in size from small rural schools to large urban facilities, were built. More than 30,000 schools received improvements or modifications during this time and about 400 auditoriums and 1,100 gymnasiums were completed nationwide. Nearly two-fifths of new WPA school buildings were built with a capacity of 50-150 students, 25 percent were designed for fewer than 50 pupils, and 16 percent had facilities for 150-250 students. Just over 17 percent of the new buildings were designed to accommodate more than 250 pupils. Arkansas saw the completion of 423 new WPA school buildings or additions during these years, and the improvement of 467 educational buildings. Distinguished by their shield-shaped plaques, many of these WPA structures remain as community landmarks.<sup>62</sup> The National Youth Administration, another New Deal agency which focused on a younger class of workers than the WPA, was also responsible for the construction of public school buildings in the state.

The New Deal was to affect Arkansas education in other ways as well. The Depression provided the impetus that firmly established school lunch programs in the state's public school system. As early as 1932, surplus foods were being distributed to schools on a limited basis to be used for free lunches, and in 1935 the U.S. Congress provided for a permanent annual Department of Agriculture appropriation to purchase surplus agricultural commodities for school lunch programs. The objectives of this program were to improve the health of the nation's schoolchildren and to encourage the increased consumption of surplus agricultural commodities. This Department of Agriculture program was expanded in 1939 when surplus foods began to be distributed to school districts on the basis of the number of needy children served.<sup>63</sup>

Succeeding Harvey Parnell in the governor's office was J. Marion Futrell, a former public school teacher with a somewhat reactionary philosophy toward state government. When he took office in 1933 Governor Futrell inherited a state on the verge of bankruptcy, in danger of losing its national credit and with an outstanding bonded highway debt of \$146 million. In his inaugural address the governor called for economic retrenchment and vowed to discontinue all activities he considered inappropriate for state government. His proposals included a reduction in the numbers and salaries of state employees, the elimination of duplication of services in state government and an end to graft and mismanagement in state offices. Futrell also promised to pay off Arkansas' debts and to put state government on a cash basis.<sup>64</sup>

Revenues to fund educational improvements were difficult to find in such a political and economic environment, and the governor's personal predisposition against public education did not help matters. Futrell believed public education beyond the eighth grade was unnecessary and that a primary education was sufficient to prepare a person for a useful role in society. The

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number E Page 17

---

governor assigned little urgency to meeting the needs of the state's schools, and during the 1935 legislative session he asked the General Assembly to stop funding public education beyond the eighth grade. His proposal was rejected.<sup>65</sup>

Futrell's conservatism often put his administration at odds with the more liberal economic policies espoused by the Roosevelt administration. The Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), created by Congress in March 1933, was especially difficult to organize in Arkansas because of the governor's opposition to any relief programs. FERA provided matching funds to the states for relief purposes and was instrumental in aiding many needy individuals and school districts in Arkansas. Once the program was established in Arkansas, Governor Futrell was content to allow FERA to shoulder the burdens of public education and poverty relief in the state with as little assistance as possible from the state government.<sup>66</sup> Most of Arkansas' share of relief funds was provided through local governments, not the state. In 1934-35, 4,141 teachers were paid with FERA funds and the state's public schools were almost entirely dependent on the federal government.<sup>67</sup>

The governor's intransigence provoked tensions between Little Rock and Washington as FERA, maintaining that education and relief were the responsibilities of the states, pressured Arkansas to provide matching funds to pay its share of the costs. Near the end of 1934 Harry Hopkins, President Roosevelt's director of FERA, informed Governor Futrell that if the 1935 General Assembly did not appropriate \$1.5 million as Arkansas' share of relief and educational costs, the state would lose not only FERA funds for education and relief but all other federal funding as well. Hopkins set March 1, 1935, as the deadline for this appropriation. Futrell and the legislature were opposed to any new direct taxes, but knew the state could not afford to lose its federal funding. Three controversial measures were proposed to raise revenues to fulfill the state's FERA responsibilities: sales taxes, prohibition repeal, and legalized gambling. The sales tax bill, levying a 2 percent tax on all retail sales except specified foods and medicines, passed the Senate without Futrell's endorsement, but stalled in the house.<sup>68</sup>

When March 1 arrived without any revenues having been appropriated by the General Assembly, Hopkins made good on his threat and discontinued all federal funding to Arkansas. This development finally forced Futrell into action and he reluctantly threw his support behind the sales tax bill. By March 15 the legislature had passed the sales tax bill and approved the legalization of dog racing in West Memphis and horse racing in Hot Springs. Of the \$2.25 million expected to be realized through the sales tax, \$1.5 million was to be allocated toward education. The racing provisions would also provide revenues for state schools through gambling proceeds. The legislature also repealed the state's prohibition laws, returning the issue

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number E Page 18

---

to a local option basis and placing an excise tax on liquor sales.\*\* Harry Hopkins was satisfied that these pieces of legislation were sufficient to cover Arkansas' share of education and relief costs, and on March 17, 1935 federal funds were restored.<sup>69</sup>

The 1936 election saw the passage of a voter-initiated act obligating the state to provide free textbooks to all public schools for grades one through eight. Without adequate funding, this program proved extremely difficult to implement and the Department of Education was forced to cooperate with local school administrators in collecting and redistributing usable textbooks previously purchased by the pupils themselves.<sup>70</sup>

When Governor Futrell left office in 1937, the state was in a much better fiscal condition than that it had been four years earlier. State government had been placed on a cash basis and a surplus had been accumulated in the state treasury, but there had been little, if any, progress in terms of Arkansas' public school system or other social concerns.<sup>71</sup> While this state of affairs may have been understandable given the economic difficulties during Futrell's tenure, it was unacceptable to his successor.

### C. The Bailey Administration

Carl Bailey was a political outsider, a reformist politician who had earned the enmity of Senator Joseph T. Robinson's political machine when, as prosecuting attorney for Pulaski and Perry counties, he successfully prosecuted a Robinson ally for illegal banking practices. Although Bailey was a supporter of Roosevelt's New Deal, as governor he found himself in opposition to Robinson's clique and, by default, in alliance with those politicians opposed to the state's current power structure.<sup>72</sup>

Bailey ran for governor in 1936 as an anti-establishment candidate, harshly critical of the outgoing Futrell administration. In critiquing the policies of his predecessor, Bailey held that "[t]he people who pay taxes are buying services, not surpluses." On taking office, Bailey promised to be an activist governor with a positive program and asserted that, contrary to the Futrell philosophy, the government must assume responsibility for ensuring that its citizens realize "a decent civilized existence."<sup>73</sup> The 1937 legislative session saw the passage of a wide

---

\*\* To provide further revenue, the governor proposed converting one of the state penitentiaries into a state-owned distillery, using convict labor to manufacture and sell corn whiskey. Known as the "Convict Corn Plan," the General Assembly rejected this visionary proposal.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number E Page 19

---

range of social and economic initiatives, including a re-enactment of Futrell's 2 percent sales tax for public schools and the provision of free school textbooks through the eighth grade.<sup>74</sup>

The Bailey administration presaged an increasing polarization in Arkansas politics. The death of Senator Robinson in 1937 threw the Arkansas political scene into turmoil. Governor Bailey arranged his own nomination as the Democratic candidate for the special election called to fill the vacant seat. Despite endorsements from several members of President Roosevelt's cabinet, Bailey was opposed by the state's old guard political establishment and by most federal officials running New Deal agencies in Arkansas. Many of Bailey's opponents owed their positions to Senator Robinson's influence and feared they would lose their jobs if Bailey won. John E. Miller, the independent candidate supported by the anti-Bailey forces, won the special election. Bailey, very bitter over this defeat and holding a grudge against the political establishment that had opposed him, won reelection as governor in 1938.<sup>75</sup>

The political tensions that had developed in 1937 escalated into open warfare during Governor Bailey's second term. A feud developed between the governor and the state's WPA director, Floyd Sharp, with Bailey accusing Sharp of using WPA workers to form a political machine to oppose the governor. In 1939, Bailey's supporters in the General Assembly sought to embarrass Sharp by initiating an official investigation of the Dyess Colony, a controversial WPA project in Mississippi County. While Sharp's supporters in the legislature successfully filibustered the measure to death, this political turmoil provided the backdrop against which many of the state's WPA school buildings were constructed. Running for re-election in 1940, Bailey was defeated by the candidate supported by the federal faction, Homer Adkins.<sup>76</sup>

V. THE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF PUBLIC SCHOOL BUILDINGS, 1920-1940

A. State and Federal Assistance in School Design and Construction

In 1916 the State Department of Education initiated a program of design assistance to aid local school districts in the construction of new facilities. Through this program the department provided model school building blueprints and construction suggestions from a professional architect to those school directors who requested them. By the 1920's most new school buildings in the Ozarks were constructed based on designs acquired through this program. W. E. Lasseter, the Supervisor of Rural Schools, personally helped design and distribute detailed blueprints and plans for school buildings of one to four rooms.<sup>77</sup> Other popular sources of school designs included S. A. Challman's The Rural School Plant and Fletcher Dresslar's 1914 and 1930 design bulletins issued by the U.S. Office of Education. Few Ozark schools of this

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number E Page 20

---

period reflect the direct influence of a professional architect.<sup>78</sup>

In 1924 the Division of Buildings and Grounds was established within the Department of Education to provide expert advice on the design and construction of model school buildings. This division, headed by C. M. Hirst, furnished local school districts with plans for model school buildings, assisted with their construction and helped to supervise the layout of school grounds. It was estimated that this division saved local school districts thousands of dollars in architects' fees and other construction expenses. Forty-eight percent of the school buildings erected in the state in 1924-25 were based on plans provided by this division. This percentage had increased to 74 percent in 1925-26 and to 95 percent in 1927-28.<sup>79</sup>

The standardization of school building designs may have eliminated some of the traditional diversity and regional variety of local school architecture and design, but it also established a common legacy for schoolchildren of this period, not just in the Ozarks but nationwide. These designs were based on theories from professional educators and architects as to the ideal building specifications for the promotion of learning. Through the issuance of school blueprints and plan books, state and federal educators sought to ensure that schoolchildren had the opportunity to attend schools under hygienic conditions and in environments conducive to education.<sup>80</sup>

In 1927 the Department of Education established a revolving loan fund to provide further assistance to school districts in building new facilities. No school district was allowed to borrow more than \$10,000 from this source, which was created out of the Permanent School Fund. In its first year of operation 44 schools borrowed \$135,160 from the fund for new construction.<sup>81</sup> The influence exercised through the Revolving Fund had a beneficial impact on the built environment of the public schools. The State Board of Education consistently refused to lend money for constructing buildings that did not conform in location and type to the county-wide plan of school reorganization. In addition, 25 percent of the equalizing fund was reserved for the construction of new school buildings. If a school district that could not afford to pay for a Department approved school building could secure financing equal to 7 percent of the assessed valuation of the school district's taxable property, then the State Board would provide the balance needed to build the facility.<sup>82</sup>

**B. Characteristics of Ozark School Buildings**

School buildings in the Ozarks typically exhibit a utilitarian design and were constructed with inexpensive, locally available materials. Native fieldstone was the most common

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number E Page 21

---

construction material for schools built during this period, although many examples are frame with wood siding. Some brick school buildings may be found in the few urban centers of the region. Although these properties reflect a variety of styles and influences, they nevertheless constitute a distinctive building type, with the structure's purpose easily discerned from its form.<sup>83</sup>

By the late nineteenth century most frame schools were built using the balloon framing technique and this construction method remained prevalent through the 1920's. Frame schoolhouses of the early twentieth century were typically built with dimensional lumber, clapboard siding and a shingled, gabled roof. Wood siding patterns using horizontal boards included weatherboard, shiplap, clapboard and beveled siding. Most frame schools were similar in appearance, functional in design, with minor variations arising from each community's individual tastes and adaptations. Typical features of Ozark frame schoolhouses of this period include an entrance facing south, a brick chimney or stovepipe at the north end of the building, and a bank of windows along the east and west walls.<sup>84</sup>

Schoolhouse designs found in the plan books of the 1920's reflect a movement away from the vernacular styles that had been popular in previous decades. Because of the popular notion that nervous disorders in children were traceable to eye strain, school architects began to place windows close together along one wall of the room, so as to create the effect of one large window. Despite the fact that northern light was more even, in his work, The Public School Plant, S. A. Challman wrote that "the wholesome and disinfecting rays of the sun never enter a school with northern exposure." Therefore windows were normally placed to allow light to enter only from the east or west. Challman also directed that cloakrooms be situated along the front of the building "so as to allow for a pleasing facade," and recommended the use of window shades and door and window screens. Other suggestions included the use of furnaces or ventilated stoves instead of potbellied stoves, water dispensers or fountains rather than oaken buckets and common dippers, and the construction of better wells and outhouses. The average cost to construct one of Challman's model schools was \$1,700.<sup>85</sup>

Educators and school superintendents attempted to accentuate the advanced and progressive aspects of modern education in their building designs, eliminating features, such as bell towers, that had been standard in school buildings of the late 19th century but now seemed quaint and primitive. There were similar sentiments toward outhouses which, unfortunately, were not as expendable. State and county superintendents began circulating plans for "the sanitary privy" with most model school building designs. Virtually all were built of wood, and it was not until the WPA drew up plans for model outhouses in the 1930's that any provisions

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number E Page 22

---

were made for ventilation.<sup>86</sup>

Most of the stone schoolhouses found in the Ozarks are 1930's WPA projects constructed with native fieldstone. Typical features of these buildings include stone foundations, eighteen-inch thick walls, deep set windows and sills, stone lintels above windows and doors, and stone entrance steps. Brick school buildings found in urban areas normally utilized common vernacular construction materials, with standard size bricks and hardwood wainscoting halfway up the walls in classrooms and/or hallways. Most of these school buildings, whatever the construction material, tend to have certain features in common. They are typically symmetrical, with the main door squarely in the middle of the primary facade. If two front doors are present they are also arranged symmetrically. The front door usually faces the adjacent local road, perhaps as a symbol of the building's access to anyone in the community.<sup>87</sup>

**VI. CONCLUSION**

The period between the two world wars was a time of turbulence and upheaval in the Arkansas Ozarks and in the state's public schools. A system built on the traditions of the frontier and influenced by the agrarian culture of the Ozarks was irrevocably altered as it was faced with new demands, new developments in educational thought, and new ideas as to the role and responsibility of the public school system. The 1920's and 1930's saw the establishment of a new educational truism, that a quality education, encompassing twelve grades, should be made available to at least a significant portion of the state's citizenry. A series of major reforms during the 1920's improved the efficiency and effectiveness of the state's educational process, while the economic ravages of the Depression threatened to eradicate all that had been accomplished.

The public school buildings erected in the Ozarks during this time stand as monuments to the progressive spirit that fueled the educational initiatives of the 1920's and to the indomitability of the state's populace when faced with the Great Depression. Today, these educational institutions, community centers, and sources of local pride represent the physical reminders and the legacy of a significant period in Arkansas history.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number E Page 23

---

ENDNOTES

1. Hubert B. Stroud and Gerald T. Hanson, Arkansas Geography: The Physical Landscape and the Historical-Cultural Setting (Little Rock, Arkansas: Rose Publishing Company, 1981), p. 56.
2. Ibid.
3. Milton D. Rafferty, The Ozarks: Land and Life (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), p. 231.
4. Foy Lisenby, "Arkansas: 1900-1930," Historical Report of the Secretary of State, vol. 3, Janice Wegener, ed. (Little Rock, Arkansas: Winston Bryant, Secretary of State, 1978), pp. 141, 150.
5. Frank W. Cannaday, "Arkansas," in Education in the States: Historical Development and Outlook: A Project of the Council of Chief State School Officers, pp. 79-115, Jim B. Pearson and Edgar Fuller, eds. (Washington, DC: National Education Association of the United States, 1969), p. 83.
6. W. O. Wilson, "Public Education," Arkansas and its People: A History, Vol. 2, David Y. Thomas, ed. (New York: The American Historical Society Inc., 1930), p. 465.
7. William Erwin Halbrook, A School Man of the Ozarks, (Van Buren, Arkansas: The Press-Argus, 1959), p. 86.
8. Ibid., pp. 91-92.
9. Ibid., pp. 93-94.
10. Ibid., pp. 99-100.
11. Ibid., pp. 101-103.
12. W. O. Wilson, "The High School and Other Developments," Arkansas and Its People: A History, Vol. 2, David Y. Thomas, ed. (New York: The American Historical Society Inc., 1930), pp. 477-478.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number E Page 24

---

13. Halbrook, p. 89.
14. Cannaday, p. 89.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid., pp. 89-90.
17. Wilson, "The High School and Other Developments," p. 478.
18. Cannaday, p. 91.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid., p. 84.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid., pp. 84-85.
23. Ibid., p. 85.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid., p. 83.
27. Ibid., p. 86.
28. W. David Baird, "Thomas Chipman McRae," The Governors of Arkansas: Essays in Political Biography, Timothy P. Donovan and Willard B. Gatewood, eds. (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 1981), pp. 155-158.
29. Ibid., pp. 156-157.
30. Ibid., p. 158.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number E Page 25

---

31. David Y. Thomas, "Good Roads and Good Schools," Arkansas and Its People: A History, Vol. 1, David Y. Thomas, ed. (New York: The American Historical Society Inc., 1930), p. 300.
32. W. David Baird, "Thomas Jefferson Terrall," The Governors of Arkansas: Essays in Political Biography, Timothy P. Donovan and Willard B. Gatewood, eds. (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 1981), pp. 160-164.
33. O. E. McKnight and Boyd W. Johnson, The Arkansas Story, (Oklahoma City, Oklahoma: Harlow Publishing Corporation, 1955), p. 289.
34. Baird, "Thomas Jefferson Terrall," p. 164.
35. Wilson, "The High School and Other Developments," pp. 479-480.
36. Thomas, "Good Roads and Good Schools," p. 305.
37. Cannaday, p. 85.
38. Ibid.
39. Leon C. Miller, "John E. Martineau," The Governors of Arkansas: Essays in Political Biography, Timothy P. Donovan and Willard B. Gatewood, eds. (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 1981), p. 168.
40. Thomas, "Good Roads and Good Schools," p. 309.
41. John L. Ferguson and J. H. Atkinson, Historic Arkansas, (Little Rock, Arkansas: Arkansas History Commission, 1966), p. 278.
42. Pamela Webb, "Harvey Parnell," The Governors of Arkansas: Essays in Political Biography, Timothy P. Donovan and Willard B. Gatewood, eds. (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 1981), p. 173.
43. McKnight and Johnson, pp. 295-296.
44. Ibid., p. 296.
45. Wilson, "The High School and Other Developments," p. 481.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number E Page 26

---

46. Donald Holley, "Arkansas in the Great Depression," Historical Report of the Secretary of State, Vol. 3, Janice Wegener, ed. (Little Rock, Arkansas: Winston Bryant, Secretary of State, 1978), pp. 157-160.
47. Ibid., p. 162.
48. Ibid.
49. Webb, p. 175.
50. Cannaday, p. 86.
51. Ibid.
52. Webb, *ibid.*
53. Ibid., pp. 175-176.
54. Holley, "Arkansas in the Great Depression," pp. 162-163.
55. Ibid., p. 166.
56. Donald Holley, "Carl Edward Bailey," The Governors of Arkansas: Essays in Political Biography, Timothy P. Donovan and Willard B. Gatewood, eds. (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 1981), p. 184.
57. Holley, "Arkansas in the Great Depression," pp. 166-167.
58. Ibid., p. 167.
59. Tony P. Wrenn and Elizabeth D. Mulloy, America's Forgotten Architecture, (Washington, DC: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1976), p. 130.
60. Federal Works Agency, Report on Progress of the WPA Program: June 30, 1941, (Washington, DC: Federal Works Agency, Works Progress Administration, 1941), p. 5.
61. Wrenn and Mulloy, p. 171.
62. Federal Works Agency, *ibid.*

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number E Page 27

---

- 63. Cannaday, p. 94.
- 64. C. Calvin Smith, "Junius Marion Futrell," The Governors of Arkansas: Essays in Political Biography, Timothy P. Donovan and Willard B. Gatewood, eds. (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 1981), p. 179.
- 65. Ibid., p. 180.
- 66. Ibid.
- 67. Holley, "Arkansas in the Great Depression," p. 167.
- 68. Smith, pp. 180-181.
- 69. Ibid.
- 70. Cannaday, p. 94.
- 71. Ibid., p. 182.
- 72. Holley, "Carl Edward Bailey," pp. 184-185.
- 73. Ibid., p. 186.
- 74. Holley, "Arkansas in the Great Depression," p. 172.
- 75. Holley, "Carl Edward Bailey," p. 187.
- 76. Ibid., pp. 188-189.
- 77. Wilson, "Public Education," p. 473.
- 78. Andrew Gulliford, America's Country Schools (Washington, DC: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1984), p. 194.
- 79. Wilson, "Public Education," pp. 473-474.
- 80. Gulliford, pp. 193-194.
- 81. Wilson, "The High Schools and Other Developments," p. 480.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number E Page 28

---

- 82. Cannaday, p. 85.
- 83. Gulliford, pp. 171-172.
- 84. Gulliford, p. 182.
- 85. Gulliford, pp. 194-195.
- 86. Gulliford, pp. 174-175.
- 87. Gulliford, pp. 183-184.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number F Page 1

---

**I. Name of Property Type: Public School Buildings and Associated Structures****II. Description**

All of the public school buildings and associated structures were constructed between 1920 and 1940 under the auspices of a variety of local, state and federal entities that undertook public school facilities construction within the Ozark Mountain region of the state of Arkansas. Though the names of some of the architects have survived, the majority of the architects of these buildings (in those infrequent cases where a trained architect was actually involved) are unknown. This is probably in large part due to the fact that the Arkansas state education authorities in Little Rock had developed a stock set of designs that had been developed during the 1920's that were supposed to contain all the elements of school construction to create the "ideal" educational environment, thus eliminating in large part the need for individual building designs. Furthermore, the federal public works agencies that were involved during the Depression tended to either follow the state plans or employ a similar stock set of school designs that had been developed by federal authorities, much as the Department of Agriculture developed recommended house, barn and outbuilding plans for farmers during this same period. These designs were typically sorted according to the size of the community to be served and the number of anticipated students. These stock designs would often be slightly modified to distinguish one from others that may also be built in communities nearby to help maintain a distinct civic identity and self-image. Though the predominant stylistic tradition among school facilities constructed during this period is the broad category known as "Plain Traditional," such other styles as the Colonial Revival, the Classical Revival, and the Ozark region native stone idiom were also in evidence, at least as secondary stylistic influences, if not primary.

The public school buildings and associated structures were typically of one to two stories in height, and usually rectangular in overall plan, typically featuring both single- and double-pen floor plans within, though other floor plans are also found. Some of these buildings contained but one large, single room that could be divided by a central, movable folding partition. All of the construction types and finishes popular during this period were employed in these buildings, including wood frame, load-bearing brick and stone masonry, and brick and stone veneer, as well as stucco. Other finishes included ceramic tile roofs and concrete foundations. Chimneys were usually built of brick. Interiors were most often finished with wood, although tile floors and plaster walls were also common, especially in the more "high-style" buildings.

All the public school buildings and associated structures were constructed by public entities, or at least under the auspices thereof. They are found within or adjacent to the site of present or

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number F Page 2

---

former communities throughout the region.

### III. Significance

The significance of the public schools and associated structures derives largely from the fact that they physically reflect the growth and evolution that occurred within public education in Arkansas, and that they are directly associated with both the dramatic increase in awareness of the importance of public education that occurred on the local, state and federal levels during this period, and the renewed commitment thereto, particularly with respect to the relatively remote, rural communities within the rugged landscape of the Ozark region of the state; in fact, they are the historic resources that are most directly associated with that educational commitment. They are also occasionally significant for their design and architectural style, as they were infrequently the only -- and the most high-style -- examples of more exotic, unusual styles not to be found elsewhere in their respective communities.

As detailed in the historic context *The Evolution of the Public School System in the Arkansas Ozarks, 1920-1940*, the dramatic -- if uneven -- increase in awareness at all levels of public government of the importance of a coordinated effort to establish a responsible public education system throughout Arkansas after World War I significantly improved and enhanced the sense of community in many villages and small towns throughout the Ozark region in particular that previously had experienced little contact with the outside world. The serious and concerted effort on the part of the local, state and federal authorities either to update existing buildings or to construct new facilities -- and then to oversee actively the process of constructive education therein through the authorization of a more organized educational bureaucracy statewide -- demonstrated a far greater interest in such relatively isolated communities than ever known before. This entire region of the state, that heretofore had been largely left to organize and maintain its own school bureaucracy and facilities without outside assistance of any kind, was now enjoying at least updated, if not new facilities, and increased funding both to help pay qualified teachers and to improve the quality of local public education overall.

These public school buildings and associated structures are also infrequently architecturally significant as the best examples locally of the architectural style in which they were designed. However, this is relatively unusual, largely due to both the minimal budgets that were available for such construction and the relatively simple, functional school designs that tended to predominate for such public facilities. The Collegiate Gothic and Classical Revival buildings at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville and the Colonial Revival buildings at Arkansas Tech

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number F Page 3

---

University, as "high-style" as they are, tend by far to be the exception rather than the rule. The vast majority of the facilities to be included within this nomination, therefore, will be eligible under Criterion A only, through their direct association with this historic context, with a few buildings being also eligible under Criterion C for the significance of their architectural designs.

**IV. Registration Requirements**

The public school buildings and associated structures must meet two basic requirements to be included in this multiple property listing:

- 1) They must have been built as public school facilities within the boundaries of the Ozark region of the state of Arkansas within the period of significance (this should be documented either through public records or actual physical evidence of this use that appears on the building; however, it should be noted that due to the frequent paucity of records on many of these buildings -- and the more rural ones in particular -- oral history and professional SHPO staff judgment based on experience with common school construction types from this period may be sufficient to authenticate this original use).
- 2) They must remain recognizable as public school buildings and structures; subsequent alterations must not overwhelm their original designs.



---

**G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods**

---

Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.

☒ See continuation sheet

---

**H. Major Bibliographical References**

---

☒ See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional documentation:

- ☒ State historic preservation office  
☐ Other State agency  
☐ Federal agency

- ☐ Local government  
☐ University  
☐ Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

---

**I. Form Prepared By**

---

name/title Kenneth Story, National Register Coordinator

organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

date 7/6/92

street & number 225 E. Markham, Suite 200

telephone (501) 324-9346

city or town Little Rock

state AR zip code 72201

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number   G   Page   1  

---

In January of 1990, the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program (AHPP) initiated a survey of public school buildings erected in the Ozarks between 1920 and 1940. It was felt that these properties were in danger of insensitive rehabilitation, deterioration or demolition as a result of neglect, school consolidations or population shifts over the past half century. At the initial planning meeting in which the parameters of the project were discussed it was agreed that a number of goals would be pursued with the ultimate objective of calling attention to the importance of these properties. It was hoped that by emphasizing the importance of these properties to the understanding of the history of education in Arkansas, the AHPP could encourage their continued preservation, protection, use and adaptive re-use.

The public schools project involved significant interaction and cooperation between the AHPP program areas. The Survey staff agreed to locate school buildings on USGS topographic maps of the Ozark counties, then schedule survey trips in order to identify, photograph and document those properties that remained extant. At the same time, the agency's Preservation Planner would research and write an historic context study on the subject, to include such topics as educational reforms in Arkansas in the 1920's and 1930's, the impact of the New Deal on Arkansas' educational properties, the design and construction of school buildings during this period, and other relevant issues. This context would then accompany a multiple property nomination of eligible properties to the National Register of Historic Places. Throughout the course of the public schools project, public input would be sought through press releases to media outlets in the Ozarks.

The multiple property listing of public school buildings of the Ozarks, 1920-1940, is based upon a comprehensive survey of the region by the AHPP Survey and Inventory staff. This survey was conducted between January and May of 1990 by Joe DeRose, AHPP Survey Coordinator, and Barbara Lindsey-Allen, Survey Historian. William D. (Don) Baker, AHPP Preservation Planner, was responsible for the research and writing of the historic context, while Kenneth Story, National Register Coordinator, oversaw the development of a multiple property nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. DeRose has a B.S. in History and Political Science from Indiana State University and a M.A. in Public History from Loyola University of Chicago. Lindsey-Allen has a B.A. in History/Historic Preservation - Pre-Law from Arkansas College. Baker has a B.A. in Foreign Service and a M.A. in Political Science from Baylor University. Story has a B.A. in Art History from Amherst College and a M.A. in Art History with a concentration in the History of American Architecture from Tufts University.

The survey identified approximately 220 school buildings dating from this period, and

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number   G   Page   2  

---

those properties that were more than 50% intact were recorded. Those not recorded were passed over because of alterations that substantially damaged their integrity. Integrity requirements were based upon a knowledge of existing properties and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places. For each recorded property locations were noted on USGS topographical maps; photographs, both black and white prints and color slides, were taken of several elevations; computerized inventory forms, complete with plan view drawings, were completed; and research, utilizing primary, secondary and oral history sources was conducted.

These properties represent significant physical reminders of an important period in Arkansas history, a time in which the sweeping educational reforms of the 1920's were severely tested by the economic upheavals of the 1930's. By recognizing the importance of these resources to the understanding and appreciation of Arkansas history, the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program hopes to encourage the preservation, protection, continued use and adaptive re-use of these properties.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number H Page 1

---

Baird, W. David. "Thomas Chipman McRae." In The Governors of Arkansas: Essays in Political Biography, pp. 152-159. Edited by Timothy P. Donovan and Willard B. Gatewood. Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 1981.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Thomas Jefferson Terral." In The Governors of Arkansas: Essays in Political Biography, pp. 160-164. Edited by Timothy P. Donovan and Willard B. Gatewood. Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 1981.

Cannaday, Frank W. "Arkansas." In Education in the States: Historical Development and Outlook: A Project of the Council of Chief State School Officers, pp. 79-115. Edited by Jim B. Pearson and Edgar Fuller. Washington, DC: National Education Association of the United States, 1969.

Federal Works Agency. Report on Progress of the WPA Program, June 30, 1941. Washington, DC: Federal Works Agency, Works Progress Administration, 1941.

Ferguson, John L., and Atkinson, J. H. Historic Arkansas. Little Rock, Arkansas: Arkansas History Commission, 1966.

Gulliford, Andrew. America's Country Schools. Washington, DC: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1984.

Halbrook, William Erwin. A School Man of the Ozarks. Van Buren, Arkansas: The Press-Argus, 1959.

Holley, Donald. "Arkansas in the Great Depression." In Historical Report of the Secretary of State, 3 vols., pp. 157-174. Edited by Janice Wegener. Little Rock, Arkansas: Winston Bryant, Secretary of State, 1978.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Carl Edward Bailey." In Governors of Arkansas: Essays in Political Biography, pp. 183-189. Edited by Timothy P. Donovan and Willard B. Gatewood. Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 1981.

Leflar, Robert A., The First 100 Years, Centennial History of the University of Arkansas, (Kansas City, 1972).

Lisenby, Fay. "Arkansas: 1900-1930." In Historical Report of the Secretary of State, 3 vols.,

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number H Page 2

---

pp. 141-156. Edited by Janice Wegener. Little Rock, Arkansas: Winston Bryant, Secretary of State, 1978.

McKnight, O. E., and Johnson, Boyd W. The Arkansas Story. Oklahoma City, Oklahoma: Harlow Publishing Corporation, 1955.

Miller, Leon C. "John E. Martineau." In The Governors of Arkansas: Essays in Political Biography, pp. 165-168. Edited by Timothy P. Donovan and Willard B. Gatewood. Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 1981.

Rafferty, Milton D. The Ozarks: Land and Life. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980.

Simpson, Ethel C., Image and Reflection, A Pictorial History of The University of Arkansas, (Fayetteville, 1990).

Smith, C. Calvin. "Junius Marion Futrell." In Governors of Arkansas: Essays in Political Biography, pp. 178-182. Edited by Timothy P. Donovan and Willard B. Gatewood. Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 1981.

Stroud, Hubert B., and Hanson, Gerald T. Arkansas Geography: The Physical Landscape and the Historical-Cultural Setting. Little Rock, Arkansas: Rose Publishing Company, 1981.

Thomas, David Y. "Good Roads and Good Schools." In Arkansas and Its People: A History, 4 vols., pp. 296-314. Edited by David Y. Thomas. New York: The American Historical Society Inc., 1930.

Webb, Pamela. "Harvey Parnell." In The Governors of Arkansas: Essays in Political Biography, pp. 169-177. Edited by Timothy P. Donovan and Willard B. Gatewood. Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 1981.

Wilson, W. O. "Public Education." In Arkansas and Its People: A History, 4 vols., pp. 461-474. Edited by David Y. Thomas. New York: The American Historical Society Inc., 1930.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The High School and Other Developments." In Arkansas and Its People: A History, 4 vols., pp. 475-482. Edited by David Y. Thomas. New York: The American Historical Society Inc., 1930.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number   H   Page   3  

---

Wrenn, Tony P., and Mulloy, Elizabeth D. America's Forgotten Architecture. Washington, DC: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1976.