1. **Name of Property**
   Historic name: _Whittier School_  
   Other names/site number: _N/A_  
   Name of related multiple property listing: _N/A_  
   (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. **Location**
   Street & number: _1900 Northwest 10th Street_  
   City or town: _Oklahoma City_  
   State: _Oklahoma_  
   County: _Oklahoma_  
   Vicinity: __  

3. **State/Federal Agency Certification**
   As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
   I hereby certify that this _X_ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets
   the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic
   Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.
   In my opinion, the property _X_ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I
   recommend that this property be considered significant at the following
   level(s) of significance:
   ___national ___statewide _X_local
   Applicable National Register Criteria:
   _X_A ___B _X_C ___D

   ____________________________________________________________________________
   Signature of certifying official/Title: ___________________________ Date
   ____________________________
   State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

   ____________________________________________________________________________
   Signature of commenting official: ___________________________ Date
   ____________________________
   Title: ____________________________ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government
4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

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

Signature of the Keeper ___________________ Date of Action ____________

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private: [X]

Public – Local [ ]

Public – State [ ]

Public – Federal [ ]

Category of Property

(Check only one box.)

Building(s) [X]

District [ ]

Site [ ]

Structure [ ]

Object [ ]
### Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

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Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

### 6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions**
(Enter categories from instructions.)

- **EDUCATION/School**
  - 
  - 
  - 
  - 
  - 

**Current Functions**
(Enter categories from instructions.)

- **VACANT/NOT IN USE**
  - 
  - 
  - 
  - 
  - 

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)
  LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/Classical Revival
  ___________________________________________________________
  ___________________________________________________________
  ___________________________________________________________
  ___________________________________________________________
  ___________________________________________________________

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)
Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK

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

Summary Paragraph

Built in 1910, with additions completed in 1919 and 1923, Whittier School is associated with the construction of the first public school buildings in Oklahoma City. It is an excellent example of a Classical Revival-style school designed by Solomon Andrew Layton, whose firm is attributed with the design of numerous public buildings in Oklahoma City and throughout the state. Whittier School is three stories in height. It has a red brick exterior with several ornamental features, including cast stone pediments, cornices, and subsills. A series of painted metal mullions and panels are visible on the north-facing façade and south (back) elevation. The building’s interior retains much of its original layout. A wide, central corridor is located on both the second and third stories, providing access to numerous classrooms. A modest auditorium is on the first story, at the east end of the building.
Whittier School

Name of Property

Oklahoma County, Oklahoma

County and State

Narrative Description

Site and Setting

Whittier School is set on the southwest corner at the intersection of Northwest 10th Street, which has an east-to-west orientation, and North Kentucky Avenue, which runs north-to-south, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma. Concrete sidewalks extend parallel and adjacent to both streets. The building is set back approximately 100 feet from the curb of Northwest 10th and approximately 30 feet from the curb of North Kentucky Avenue. A concrete sidewalk extends diagonally southwest from the intersection of Northwest 10th and North Kentucky to the westernmost entrance on the building’s north-facing façade. The site is level and set at a higher elevation than the neighboring streets.

The area is primarily residential, with some commercial buildings and industrial operations mixed in. Northwest 10th Street is a four-lane road. The south side of Northwest 10th in the vicinity of Whittier School is mixed use (residential and commercial), while the north side is largely undeveloped. North Pennsylvania Avenue, a major north-to-south traffic corridor in Oklahoma City, is one block to the west. The southern branch of the Union Pacific Railroad (historically, the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad), is less than a ½ mile to the south. Much of the railroad corridor is lined with industrial operations and warehouses. Oklahoma City’s central business district is approximately two miles to the east.

The setting encompasses approximately 2.3 acres of Block 15 in the Bell Vern Addition to Oklahoma City. The school building is set on the northeast corner of Block 15 (250’ x 300’), which is not subdivided and appears to have been set aside for a public school after the addition was platted in 1909. A parcel (50’ x 140’) is directly to the west and Lots 41-45 are to the southwest, all of which the Oklahoma City Board of Education acquired by the early 1920s.¹

There are no other structures or objects historically associated with Whittier School on site. City directories and Sanborn maps indicate a single-family dwelling on the 50’ x 140’ parcel west of Whittier School (1912 Northwest 10th Street) until 1924-25 (see Section 11, Pages 4-9). Aerial photographs and Sanborn maps indicate that Lots 41-45 to the southwest of Whittier School were undeveloped throughout the period of significance (see Section 11, Pages 4-13). Historic photographs indicate that this area was utilized for parking by the late 1960s (see Section 11, Page 18). Currently, a paved parking lot bounded by a chain link fence is to the west and south of Whittier School. Aerial photographs available through Google Earth indicate that this parking lot was in place by 1990. By 2013, a basketball court was installed on part of the parking lot. Currently, the existing pavement is in poor condition and much of the parking lot is overgrown with grass, weeds, and shrubs.

¹ See Warranty Deed, Oklahoma County Clerk, Book 222, Page 552, November 29, 1919 (concerning Lots 41-42); and Warranty Deed, Oklahoma County Clerk, Book 231, Page 88, May 10, 1920 (concerning Lots 43-45).
General Building Description

Whittier School is a three-story, Classical Revival-style building. The first story is set partially below grade, leaving approximately 6½ feet exposed. The entire building is clad in common red brick laid up in a running bond pattern. It has a flat roof with parapets capped in cast stone. Directly below the parapet cap, and centered on the north-facing façade, is a cast stone plaque sign that reads “19-WHITTIER SCHOOL-10”. A cast stone key is to each side of the sign. Approximately three feet below the parapet cap, there is a cast stone belt course that wraps around the entire building except for the north elevation of the east wing. Directly below the windows on the second story, there is a projecting soldier brick belt course that wraps around the entire building. A cast stone key is set within the course at each corner of the building.

The central block, built in 1910, is rectangular in shape and has an east-to-west orientation. A three-story addition, completed in 1919, is to the east of the central block (herein, the east wing). Another three-story addition is to the west of the central block (herein, the west wing). It was completed in 1923. Each addition has a north-to-south orientation, is rectangular in shape, and projects forward (north) from the building face of the central block.

The original windows on the second and third stories have been partially infilled with a fixed, painted wood panel at the upper sash and an aluminum-framed, 1/1 hung unit at the lower sash. The window openings on the first story are currently boarded. The cast stone belt course below the roofline serves as the lintel for most third-story windows. The projecting soldier brick belt course serves as a subsill for most second-story windows.

North-facing Façade (Photos #0001-0002, 0006)

Whittier School has a symmetrical, north-facing façade. A series of brick piers subdivide the central block into five distinct bays of unequal width. Each outermost bay contains a primary entrance, while the bays in between contain windows. The centermost bay contains a pair of window openings on each story, while each flanking bay is wider and contains a set of five window openings on each story. On the second and third stories, each opening contains a 1/1 window. The windows are separated by painted metal mullions. A square, painted metal panel is situated below each third story window and above the corresponding window on the second story. Each window opening on the first story is aligned vertically with a window above and has a projecting, arched double rowlock course lintel. All window openings on the first story are currently boarded.

Each outermost bay of the central block is approximately equal in width to the centermost bay and is demarcated by brick piers that project forward (north) of the building face for approximately 1½ feet. The roofline of each outermost bay is approximately four brick courses taller than the roofline of the rest of the building and is demarcated by a cast stone pediment and cornices. A 1/1 window is centered on the third story of each bay. This window is framed by a projecting soldier course with a square, cast stone key at each corner. An entrance is centered...
directly below each window, on the second story. Each entrance is recessed and contains a pair
of painted, slab metal doors with sidelights and transoms. A painted cast stone panel framed by a
soldier course is located above each entrance. Three square cast stone keys of equal width and
spacing are set within the course above each panel and a wrought iron gate is set within each
entryway. A set of thirteen steps flanked on each side by a common red brick knee wall with cast
stone caps provide access to each entrance. Each set of steps is wider at grade level and narrows
gradually to a width equal to that of each entrance bay. An infilled opening, which historically
provided access to the first story, is located underneath each set of steps. Each infilled opening is
set four steps below grade.

A connector to the east wing is set to the left (east) of the east entrance. A pair of 1/1 windows is
centered on both the second and third stories of the connector. The windows are separated by a
painted wood mullion. The third-story windows share a contiguous cast stone subsill and the cast
stone belt course below the roofline serves as the lintel. The subsill is four brick courses
(approximately nine inches) higher than the sills of all other third-story windows on this
elevation. There are no openings on the first story of the connector.

The east wing projects forward (north) from the building face by approximately five feet. The
roofline at the center of the wing peaks slightly and is one brick course taller than the roofline of
the rest of the wing, which is equal in height to the roofline of the central block. Two window
openings are centered on the wing: one on the third story and one on the second story. The
opening on the second story contains an aluminum-framed, 1/1 hung window. The opening on
the second story is currently boarded. Each opening has a cast stone subsill. A cast stone motif is
set three brick courses below the third story window and three courses above the second story
window. The motif is comprised of a diamond-shaped, cast stone key within a square-shaped
soldier/stretcher course surround. A cast stone key is set within each corner of the course. The
motif is the same width as each window opening.

Roughly equal in width as the east wing, the west wing is less pronounced on this elevation.
Located adjacent to the west entrance, the west wing projects forward (north) from the building
face by approximately 1½ feet. The roofline at the center of the wing peaks slightly and is one
brick course taller than the roofline of the rest of the wing, which is equal in height to the
roofline of the central block. A cast stone key is set just below the parapet cap near each end of
the wing. Three boarded window openings are centered on this wing; one on each story. The
window openings on the third and second stories have similar dimensions as those on the east
wing. Each of these openings has a cast stone subsill. The lintel for the opening on the third story
resembles the shape of a pediment. A cast stone key identical to those below the roofline is
situated directly below the pediment, to each side of the window. A cast stone motif identical to
that on the east wing is situated between the second- and third-story openings. On the first story,
the boarded opening is large enough to have contained a pair of hung windows.
East Side Elevation (Photo #0003)

The east side elevation is comprised solely of the east wing. The roofline is flat for the full length of the elevation. There are three cast stone keys directly below the parapet cap: one at the center of the elevation and one approximately three feet from each end.

Two openings, each large enough for a set of five windows, are on each story. The openings are aligned vertically and arranged symmetrically on the elevation, with one near the north end of the building and the other near the south end. The openings on the first story are set at grade level and are currently boarded. Openings on the second and third stories contain sets of five 1/1 windows with painted, vertical wood panels above. The windows are separated by painted wood mullions. Several windows are boarded or have been replaced with single panes of glass. Each set of windows on the second and third stories has a continuous cast stone subsill. The cast stone belt course located below the roofline serves as the lintel for the third story windows.

Just to the right (north) of center on the second story, there is a boarded window opening set into the otherwise all-brick middle section of the elevation. The opening is approximately 2/3ds the height and width of a 1/1 window and has a cast stone subsill.

South (Back) Elevation (Photos #0004-0005)

The fenestration pattern of the central block is similar to that of the façade. Each of the three center bays contain the same number of window openings as the corresponding bay on the façade (two openings in the centermost bay and five openings in each flanking bay). On the second and third stories, the windows are identical to those on the façade. The continuous belt course lintels and subsills are also identical to those on the façade. On the first story, the two window openings in the centermost bay are boarded and have projecting, arched double rowlock course lintels. A boarded entrance is set underneath these windows, approximately four feet below grade level. A set of twelve concrete steps descend parallel and adjacent to the building to provide access to the entrance. The bay to the left (west) of the center bay contains five boarded window openings on the first story. Each of these openings has a projecting, arched double rowlock course lintel and is equal in size to the first story windows on the façade. The bay to the right (east) of the center bay contains four boarded window openings. Each opening is approximately half the size of the first-story windows to the west, has a projecting, arched double rowlock course lintel, and a rowlock course subsill. Each subsill is set approximately two feet above grade.

Each outer bay of the central block has a roofline, brick piers, and cast stone details identical to the corresponding bays on the façade. A pair of 1/1 windows with painted, vertical wood paneling above is centered on the second and third stories of each outer bay. The windows are separated by a painted wood mullion. Third-story windows have a soldier course subsill. A cast stone key is set to each end of the subsill, and the cast stone belt course below the roofline serves as the lintel. There is a boarded window opening centered on the first story of each outer bay.
Each opening is set at grade level and is approximately half the height and equal in width to the window openings above.

The second and third stories of the connector to the east wing are identical to those on the façade. A boarded entrance is located on the first story. Interior investigations reveal the entrance to contain a pair of painted, slab metal doors flanked by sidelights. The entrance is recessed. A brick pier to each side of the entrance projects forward (south) less than one foot from the building face. The east pier is set adjacent to the east wing. These piers support a brick entablature capped with cast stone.

The east wing projects forward (south) from the building face by approximately 12 feet. The roofline is flat. A cast stone key is set directly below the parapet cap near each end of the wing. A boarded opening large enough to have contained a pair of windows is centered on the third story. The opening has a cast stone subsill and the cast stone belt course below the roofline serves as the lintel. Below this opening, on the first and second stories, the centermost section of the wing (approximately 19 feet) projects forward (south) less than one foot from the building face. An opening large enough for a set of four 1/1 windows with wood panels above is centered on the second story. The windows are separated by painted wood mullions and share a continuous cast stone subsill. A large boarded opening with a continuous rowlock brick course subsill is centered beneath these windows on the first story. The opening appears large enough to have contained a set of three windows and is vertically aligned with the windows above.

The west wing projects forward (south) from the building face by approximately three feet. The roofline is flat. A cast stone key is set directly below the parapet cap near each end of the wing. There are two boarded window openings on the third story; one near each end of the wing. Each opening appears large enough to have contained an individual hung window. Each opening has a cast stone subsill and the cast stone belt course below the roofline serves as the lintel. Two boarded window openings of identical size are on the second story. Each is aligned vertically with an opening above and has a cast stone subsill. There are four openings on the first story. The easternmost opening contains a painted, wood slab door and is aligned vertically with a window above. The three openings to the left (west) are evenly spaced, with the westernmost opening aligned vertically with an opening above. Each of these openings is boarded and has a rowlock brick course subsill that is set less than one-foot above grade.

**West Side Elevation (Photos #0005-0006)**

The west side elevation is comprised solely of the west wing. The roofline and cast stone details are identical to those of the east side elevation.

Two large openings with equal sections of brick at each end and at the center of the elevation are located on each story. On the second and third stories, each opening contains a set of five 1/1 windows with painted wood panels above. The windows are separated by painted wood mullions. Some of the windows are boarded. Each set of windows on the second and third stories...
Whittier School

has a continuous cast stone subsill. The cast stone belt course located below the roofline serves as the lintel for the third story windows. On the first story, the northernmost opening is set at grade level and is currently boarded. The opening is aligned vertically and matches the width of the openings above. The south end of the southernmost opening contains a metal overhead garage door, while the remainder of the opening to the left (north) of the door is currently boarded. The entire opening is aligned vertically and matches the width of the openings above. The garage door is set approximately 1½ feet below grade and a concrete loading dock with painted metal railings extends west from the garage door for approximately twenty feet. The remainder of this opening is set at grade level.

**Interior (Photos #0007-0012)**

The interior integrity remains intact, reflecting the building’s original history as a public school. On the second and third stories, a wide corridor with tall ceilings extends east-to-west for the full width of the central block. Classrooms flank the corridors to the north and south. A staircase is at each end of the corridor, providing access to each story. Remnants of the building’s mechanical systems are located on the first story of the central block. Additional classroom space is located in both the east and west wings, with the second and third stories of the west wing containing among the largest classrooms in the building. An auditorium is on the first story of the east wing (see Photo #0012). Concrete beam ceilings, plaster walls with wood base trim, and concrete floors are typical throughout. Many of the classrooms have remnants of a wood plank floor. Staircases on the second and third stories feature a curved, half-height wall with wood handrails (see Photo #0007).

**Modifications/Alterations**

Whittier School operated from 1910 to 1957. Historic photographs indicate the original windows to have been a combination of 3/3 and 6/6 wood-framed, hung units (see Section 11, Pages 15 and 17). A photograph from circa 1910 indicates the metal mullions and panels on the façade were unpainted (Section 11, Page 15). Interior investigations reveal that most historic windows remain on the first floor (see Photo #0012). The existing aluminum-framed, 1/1 hung windows with painted wood panels above were likely installed after 1968 and before 2011. Interior modifications date to the mid-to-late twentieth century, when the building was occupied by Oklahoma State University Technical Institute (1962-1982) and the Oklahoma City-County Community Action Program (1983-2005). Such alterations include the installation of a suspended acoustic tile ceiling system and partition walls in several of the classrooms. Partition walls have a painted or wood panel finish, and most do not extend the full height of the ceiling.

City directories indicate that Whittier School has been vacant since 2006. The building is in fair condition. Sections of the parapet have sloughed off the back elevation (see Photos #0004-0005) and the roof is deteriorated along this area, which has led to water damage of existing ceiling, wall, and floor finishes.
8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

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

Criteria Considerations
(Mark “x” in all the boxes that apply.)

- [ ] A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- [ ] B. Removed from its original location
- [ ] C. A birthplace or grave
- [ ] D. A cemetery
- [ ] E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- [ ] F. A commemoratory property
- [ ] G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years
Whittier School  Oklahoma County, Oklahoma
Name of Property

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)
  ARCHITECTURE
  EDUCATION

Period of Significance
  1910-1957

Significant Dates
  1910
  1919
  1923

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

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder
  LAYTON & SMITH/ARCHITECT
  OKLAHOMA CONSTRUCTION CO., INC/BUILDER
  GROSS CONSTRUCTION CO./BUILDER
Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Whittier School is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A at the local level of significance for Education and under Criterion C at the local level of significance for Architecture. The period of significance is from 1910 to 1957. Built in 1910 (with additions completed in 1919 and 1923), Whittier School was designed in the Classical Revival architectural style by Solomon Andrew Layton, who was Oklahoma’s most prominent architect during the early twentieth century. Whittier School was also the site of a Works Progress Administration (WPA)-sponsored “nursery school,” which provided Oklahoma City’s only public preschool program during the late 1930s and early 1940s. The Oklahoma City Board of Education closed Whittier School in 1957, citing increased maintenance costs and declining student enrollment.

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

Historic Context

Originally a tent village that appeared almost overnight following the Land Run of April 22, 1889, Oklahoma City grew quickly to become a vibrant commercial center on the southern Great Plains. The City of Oklahoma City was formally incorporated on July 15, 1890. At that time, the city had approximately 4,000 residents. By the end of the decade, an agricultural boom and the completion of five railroad lines to and from town limits transformed Oklahoma City into a commercial hub. Gaining the state capital in June 1910, along with its associated governmental functions, enabled the city to become the political center of Oklahoma. The discovery of oil in and around the city limits during the late 1920s and early 1930s further cemented Oklahoma City’s economic and political importance to the state.²

Oklahoma City’s public schools often struggled to keep up with its expanding population. In fact, the first schools within city limits were private institutions. Mrs. Lyman Hoyt North established the first school in Oklahoma City during the summer of 1889. She held classes in her house (or under a cottonwood tree, depending on the source) and students paid a monthly tuition to attend. Other private schools, commonly known as “subscription schools” during this period, were in operation by the fall of 1890. A citywide public-school system was formally created after December 1890, when the territorial legislature enacted legislation for the funding and operation of public schools throughout Oklahoma. Public school classes in Oklahoma City commenced on March 1, 1891. Although the Board of Education allotted money for a school in each ward, this money did not provide for the immediate construction of new buildings. Thus, as Larry Johnson notes, the first public school classes were “held in various storefronts and rooms” throughout

Oklahoma City.\(^3\) The first public school buildings in Oklahoma City were not constructed until 1894.\(^4\)

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were a period of remarkable growth for Oklahoma City’s public schools. For example, between 1898 and 1909, estimated public school enrollment expanded from 1,300 students to over 13,000.\(^5\) In order to keep up with the city’s growing student population, the Board of Education introduced and city voters approved a series of bonds to finance the construction of new school buildings. By the fall of 1910, at least 23 public school buildings were in operation.\(^6\) Chief among them was Central High School (NRIS #76001570), completed in 1910. In April 1911, city voters were once again considering a bond to finance the construction of three more school buildings as well as several “overflow” structures to help accommodate the city’s ever-growing student population.\(^7\) In all, this rapid expansion in the number of students, combined with the architectural designs implemented to house them, became a point of pride for Oklahoma City residents, leaders, and boosters alike.\(^8\)

**Architectural Significance**

Solomon Andrew Layton (1864-1943), widely known as “[t]he state’s premier architect,” received the contract to design Whittier School.\(^9\) According to *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, Layton and his partners, most notably S. Wemyss Smith, designed at least 46 public school buildings in Oklahoma City.\(^10\) Additional research has confirmed that Layton designed 38 public school buildings in the city between 1909 and 1931.\(^11\) A full-page spread in *The Daily Oklahoman* in September 1911 included photographs of eight of Layton’s earliest school buildings, including Whittier (see Section 11, Page 14).\(^12\) Oklahoma City Construction Co., Inc., is credited with building Whittier School. This company built several schools as well

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5 Ibid., 10, and Johnson, “Early Public Schools.”

6 *Historic School Buildings*, 12.

7 “Bond Issue of $165,000 Asked,” *The Daily Oklahoman*, April 18, 1911, 8.

8 For example, see “Oklahoma City Schools,” in “Oklahoma in Tabloid, 1911,” supplement to *The Daily Oklahoman*, September 22, 1911.


10 Ibid.

11 Confirmation derived from *Polk's Oklahoma City Directory* and construction bid notices published in *The American Contractor* and *The Daily Oklahoman*.

12 “Oklahoma City Schools.”
as “many other prominent buildings [in Oklahoma City],” including the Skirvin Hotel (NRIS #79002010), which was also designed by Layton’s firm.\(^{13}\)

The architectural design of Whittier School was inspired by the Classical Revival style. Layton’s firm applied this style to a number of school buildings during this period (1909-1912), including Central High School and (Old) Douglass High School (NRIS #7000259), formerly Lowell Elementary School. The style remained popular into the 1920s, which witnessed another wave of school construction in Oklahoma City that included Dunbar Elementary School (NRIS #SG100002217), Harmony School (NRIS #SG100004742), and Harding Junior High School (NRIS #2000172), each of which were also designed by Layton. A reading of the National Register nominations for these properties, combined with a 2001 *Architectural/Historical Survey of Oklahoma City’s Historic School Buildings*, reveals shared traits for early Oklahoma City school buildings. They include:

- A masonry exterior (typically brick), with decorative details at the parapets and main entrances (typically cast stone).
- A height of 1 to 3 stories, with a flat, non-combustible roof.
- A rectangular-shaped footprint, with an interior layout that originally contained upwards of 12 to 15 classrooms.\(^{14}\)

Layton’s firm applied similar standard design and decorative elements to each building. For example, Whittier School and its contemporaries such as Lowell, Wheeler Elementary (now Middle) School, and Adelaide Lee Elementary School (all built by 1910) each stood 3 stories in height, with the first story set partially below grade and the main entrances located on the second story. Most buildings also had similar ornamental features. As the *Historic School Buildings* survey notes, such details included arches, battlements, and oriel windows. These characteristics inspired many surveyors to classify early Oklahoma City public school buildings under the Gothic Revival or Collegiate Gothic architectural styles.\(^{15}\)

Although Whittier School has a similar original footprint as its contemporaries, it is unique for its small size. Due to its closure in 1957, the building did not evolve in a manner similar to other historic school buildings that remained in use throughout the late 20\(^{th}\) and early 21\(^{st}\) centuries.

\(^{13}\) Advertisement, in “Oklahoma in Tabloid, 1911,” Supplement to *The Daily Oklahoman*, September 22, 1911. Other schools built by Oklahoma City Construction Co., Inc. include Wheeler Elementary (now Middle) School (501 Southeast 25\(^{th}\) Street) and Eugene Field Elementary School (1515 North Klein Avenue).

\(^{14}\) For traits common to early ward schools in Oklahoma City, see “Oklahoma City Schools” and *Historic School Buildings*, 24-25. See also National Register of Historic Places, “Dunbar Elementary School, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma,” NRIS #SG100002217, available at [http://nr2_shpo.okstate.edu/pdfs/SG100002217.pdf](http://nr2_shpo.okstate.edu/pdfs/SG100002217.pdf), and National Register of Historic Places, “Harmony School, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma,” NRIS #SG100004742, available at [http://nr2_shpo.okstate.edu/pdfs/SG100004742.pdf](http://nr2_shpo.okstate.edu/pdfs/SG100004742.pdf).

\(^{15}\) *Historic School Buildings*, 25. Bizzell Memorial Library (NRIS #1000071) at the University of Oklahoma is perhaps the best-known example of an education building designed in the Collegiate Gothic architectural style in Oklahoma.
For example, Wheeler and Adelaide Lee elementary schools, which were built at the same as Whittier and remain in use, feature additions that postdate Whittier’s period of significance. (Old) Douglass High School, formerly Lowell Elementary, underwent additions in 1919 and 1934 that increased the building’s footprint to 88,000 square feet; approximately nine times its original size.16 Similarly, additions to Dunbar Elementary between 1923 and 1980 expanded its footprint to over 53,000 square feet, or approximately six times its original size.17 In contrast, Whittier School’s footprint experienced limited growth. In 1919, construction was completed on a 3-story east wing, which included an auditorium on the first story. Four years later, the west wing was built in time for the fall term.18 Both wings, when combined with the central block, amount to only 31,000 square feet. This relatively small footprint helps convey Whittier School as it would have originally appeared during the early twentieth century, when school buildings throughout Oklahoma City were smaller and serviced only neighborhoods in their immediate vicinity.

Whittier is also significant for its Classical-inspired details, most notably the incorporation of wide metal mullions and panels that frame the 2nd- and 3rd-story windows on the north-facing façade and south (back) elevation. While most of Layton’s school buildings feature façades that are subdivided by brick or cast stone piers, no other existing school building from this period combined the application of brick piers and metal mullions to frame the window openings (see Historic Image #2, Section 11, Page 15).

Upon its opening in 1910, Whittier School and similar buildings were notable for the attention to detail involved with their design, construction, and maintenance. For example, the Board of Education’s claim that a school was “absolutely fireproof” underscored the building’s sound construction and the safety of the learning environment. Mentions of a “steam blast” ventilation system, meanwhile, reinforced the Board’s requirement that “all school buildings…must be models as to hygiene and sanitary engineering” in order “to protect the health and well-being” of each student.19 The 1919 Sanborn map indicates that Whittier School’s heat and air was supplied by a “Steam Sturtevant System,” in which a large fan forced air through steel pipe radiators and distributed it throughout the building via ductwork.20 School officials bragged that such systems enabled the school’s air temperature to be “controlled automatically and…not vary one

16 National Register of Historic Places, “(Old) Douglass High School, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma,” NRIS #7000259, Section 8, Page 8.
17 “Dunbar Elementary School,” Section 7, Page 5 and Section 8, Pages 18.
18 Solomon Layton’s firm, which by 1919 was known as Layton, Smith, and Forsythe, designed the east wing. See “Notice to Contractors,” The Daily Oklahoman, June 14, 1919, 10. The architect of the west wing is unknown, but an article in the Daily Oklahoman indicates that Gross Construction Company won the bid for its construction. See “School Board Votes To Buy Building Site,” The Daily Oklahoman, June 26, 1923, 8.
19 “Oklahoma City Schools.”
degree.” The Board also indicated that it installed air humidifiers in many of its buildings, noting that they were “essential in this dry and dusty climate.” Overall, this emphasis on a safe and sanitary built environment was appropriate because school buildings such as Whittier accommodated city youth, parents, administrators, and teachers for at least 36 weeks each year.

Education Significance

City documents and newspaper articles commonly referred to Whittier as a “ward school,” which meant that its student population comprised of individuals who lived within a specific ward of Oklahoma City. Whittier’s district boundaries were bound roughly by North Barnes Avenue to the west, Northwest 16th Street to the north, North Ellison Avenue to the east, and Linwood Boulevard to the south. Known today as Metro Park, this section of Oklahoma City developed in association with the expansion of railroads, streetcars, and industry. The J. B. Klein Iron and Foundry, later known as the Robberson Steel and Bridge Company, was the most notable manufacturing facility in the vicinity of Whittier. Located at 1401 Northwest 3rd Street, Robberson’s operations ultimately spanned 19 acres adjacent to the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad. Other industrial operations, including another iron and steel plant as well as an aluminum and brass foundry, were also in this area. Surrounding residential neighborhoods comprised mainly of individuals and families who recently immigrated to Oklahoma City for work in the burgeoning industrial sector. For example, approximately 25% of Klein Iron and Foundry workers were European immigrants. Additional workers were emigrants from rural areas in Oklahoma and elsewhere in the United States.

The Oklahoma City Board of Education subdivided school grades between Primary, Intermediate, and High School levels. Students of high school age (grades 9-12) attended Central High School. Whittier and other ward schools accommodated students in grades 1-8 as well as kindergarten. For this reason, Whittier was originally known as a “grade school.” This designation gradually disappeared during the 1920s, when the City of Oklahoma City constructed several junior high schools for students in grades 7-9. References to Whittier as an “elementary school” began to appear in the Daily Oklahoman by the mid-1930s.

21 “Oklahoma City Schools.”
22 Ibid.
23 When Whittier School opened in 1910, the school year was divided into two, 18-week terms. See Oklahoma City Board of Education, Course of Study and Superintendent’s Report of the Oklahoma City Public Schools (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Eng. & Ptg. Co., 1909), 7.
24 For example, see “Bond Issue of $165,000 Asked.”
25 The Daily Oklahoman, April 29, 1923, 14B.
27 Primary: Grades 1-4; Intermediate: Grades 5-8; and High School: 9-12. See Board of Education, Course of Study, 271.
Oklahoma City public schools were segregated from the system’s inception in 1891. Children who attended Whittier resided in nearby white, working-class neighborhoods associated with the steel mills and warehouses situated along the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad, near present-day Interstate 40. This location meant that Whittier’s students did not experience the racial inequalities and economic disparities experienced by black students and teachers on the northeast side of the city. In addition, with the closure of Whittier in 1957, there is no evidence that the school participated directly in the contests associated with the integration of Oklahoma City public schools during the mid-twentieth century.29

Whittier School’s student population reflected the overall increase in the number of students in Oklahoma City public schools during the early twentieth century. By the fall of 1916, over 12,500 children were enrolled in public schools citywide. Of these children, 334 attended Whittier. This enrollment placed Whittier slightly below the average and median student enrollment in city public schools, which were 369 and 380 students, respectively.30 Nevertheless, one year later, the Daily Oklahoman noted “congested conditions” at Whittier, which prompted school officials to send overflow students to nearby Hawthorne School (2300 Northwest 15th Street).31 Such conditions likely influenced the decision to construct the 1919 and 1923 additions to Whittier School. Enrollment at Whittier peaked in 1924, with 710 students and 19 teachers. These numbers placed Whittier among the largest public schools in Oklahoma City for a time. Likewise, Whittier’s 21 classrooms placed it on par with other school buildings constructed during the same period, including Culbertson Heights (no longer extant), Eugene Field, Shields Heights (now Santa Fe South Hills Elementary), and Wheeler.32 This increase in student enrollment and the expansion of Whittier’s footprint was caused by a boom in housing construction throughout much of Oklahoma City during the mid-to-late 1920s. Reports of “congested conditions” or of schools “filled beyond capacity” were common and, occasionally, front-page news in the Daily Oklahoman during the late 1910s and throughout the 1920s.33

29 Johnson, “Early Public Schools” and Historic School Buildings, 11. See also “Harmony School,” Section 8, Pages 17-18. According to the 1992 survey of Oklahoma City, African Americans were excluded from owning property in neighborhoods near Whittier School, including Metro Park and Willard-Colcord. See Reconnaissance Level Survey, 21.

30 “City Schools Have 13,819 On Rolls,” The Daily Oklahoman, October 27, 1916, 5. This statistic omits the estimated enrollment for Central High School (1,555) as well as African American students, whose enrollment was lumped into single figure under the category “Negro schools” (1,017).

31 “School Districts Revised To Avoid Double Sessions,” The Daily Oklahoman, September 14, 1917, 1.

32 “Yah, Now Then, Whose School Was Biggest?” The Daily Oklahoman, August 3, 1924, 7A. The number of students and classrooms for schools mentioned above is as follows: Culbertson Heights (22 rooms for 855 students), Eugene Field (20 rooms for 673 students), Shields Heights (15 rooms for 457 students), and Wheeler (23 rooms for 798 students).

33 For example, see “City Schools Have Gain of 2,000 Pupils,” The Daily Oklahoman, September 7, 1927, 20. For an example of reporting on housing construction in Oklahoma City during the late 1920s, see “Capitol Hill Building Activities Increase 50 Percent: Survey Shows Million Spent on New Homes,” Daily Oklahoman, August 26, 1928, B-5. See also Bob L. Blackburn, Heart of the Promised Land: Oklahoma City, An Illustrated History (Woodland Hills, CA: Windsor Publications, Inc., 1982), 127.
Regardless of the number of students, the Oklahoma City Board of Education established a detailed, comprehensive curriculum for Whittier’s students. This program was scaled, and it increased in rigor and complexity as students advanced from one grade to the next. Lessons for first, second, and third graders were rudimentary and involved courses such as language, spelling, writing, and basic arithmetic. Lessons were short in duration, often 15–20 minutes each. By the time a student reached fourth, fifth, and sixth grade, lessons increased in duration (approximately 25 minutes), new subjects such as geography were integrated, and continuing subjects such as reading or arithmetic increased in complexity. By the time of seventh or eighth grade, students engaged in science and history, while subject matter in courses such as mathematics became more applied. For example, in the 1909 Superintendent’s Report, the instruction of seventh and eighth graders placed special emphasis on “mental arithmetic” and encouraged teachers to create problems and concepts based on daily applications that would “interest the children.”

Students’ experiences at Whittier also reflected certain societal expectations, especially those related to morality, citizenship, and physical fitness. Participation in such activities frequently divided according to gender. According to a 1905 territorial statute, public school teachers throughout Oklahoma (many of whom were women) were expected “to teach morality in the broadest sense of the word, for the purpose of elevating and refining the character of school children to the highest plane of life.” This statement reflected an aim to prepare children and adolescents for participation in a modern, industrial world. Thus, students who attended Whittier School participated in a number of programs sponsored by civic groups or corporations, including public speaking lessons, spelling tests, and essay contests. In April 1924, for example, a Whittier fifth grader named Violet Livingston won $25 for submitting an essay on “The Health and Food Value of Carbonated Bottled Beverages” in a competition sponsored by the local Coca Cola bottling plant. During World War I, Whittier students supported the Allied war effort by gathering spare cloth to make pillowcases, towels, and scarfs. Male students engaged in interschool sporting events, including a popular “Ward School [baseball league]” that included over 200 “boys of honor and good character” from Whittier and other schools in the city. Board of Education officials and teachers also emphasized the importance of “manual training” for students. For boys, such “training” involved education in the “industrial arts” to prepare them for

34 Course of Study, 260.
35 Quoted in Board of Education, Course of Study, 104.
37 Livingston’s essay appeared alongside essays by other students in a full-page advertisement sponsored by the Coca Cola Company. See “Everybody Wins,” The Daily Oklahoman, April 17, 1924, 11. See also “Public Speaking Taught at Whittier School,” The Daily Oklahoman, February 21, 1915, 8C and “Best Spellers Are Announced,” The Daily Oklahoman, April 1, 1917, 13A.
38 “Graded Schools Hold Graduation,” The Daily Oklahoman, January 18, 1918, 14.
factory work. Meanwhile, school courses in “domestic science,” as well as participation in public events such as flower parades and flower shows, were reserved for girls.\(^{40}\)

Further establishing the education significance of Whittier School is the fact that, for a time, it provided the only public preschool program in Oklahoma City. Starting in April 1938, Whittier dedicated two of its classrooms for approximately 40 children aged 2-5. Commonly referred to as a “nursery school,” the program was sponsored by the Works Progress Administration (WPA), a New Deal work relief project, and provided childcare services for mothers employed in WPA-sponsored projects. Although administrators expanded the cap to 50 children in April 1940, the *Daily Oklahoman* reported that 100 children remained on the waiting list.\(^{41}\)

Newspaper articles indicate that the nursery school’s services were desperately needed and reveal that working mothers and young children were among the most vulnerable Americans during the Great Depression. According to the *Daily Oklahoman*, the children who attended Whittier’s nursery school came “from all sections of the city,” with many “undernourished and suffering from malnutrition when they enter.” Administrators even told of one young girl so malnourished that they postponed her tonsillectomy for three weeks until her blood was capable of congealing to the extent required for the operation.\(^{42}\) Given such reports, it is not a surprise that many mothers commented positively on their children gaining weight upon entering the program, with one saying that her son “gained two pounds in three weeks.”\(^{43}\) Typically, the nursery operated from 9:00am to 3:00pm each day. Children received lunch, an afternoon snack, and vitamin D supplements. In addition, they learned basic motor skills, participated in art and music programs, played outside, and took a nap.\(^{44}\)

According to Elizabeth Wilkins of the *Daily Oklahoman*, Whittier’s nursery school represented “Oklahoma City’s only public pre-school,” which was made possible only because it operated “as a federal [New Deal] project.”\(^{45}\) In addition to providing such valuable services to young

\(^{40}\) See Board of Education, *Course of Study*, 112-115. See also “Graded Schools Hold Graduation,” *The Daily Oklahoman*, January 18, 1918, 14 and “Society,” *The Daily Oklahoman*, July 16, 1916, 1C. Other programs, such as gardening classes sponsored by the city Chamber of Commerce and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, were reserved for students in specific grades. See “Expert to Teach Home Gardening,” *The Daily Oklahoman*, February 24, 1913, 8.

\(^{41}\) “Cleanliness And Care Taught,” in “National Baby Week,” supplement to *The Daily Oklahoman*, April 28, 1940, 2. See also “Federal Nursery School To Reopen at Whittier,” *The Daily Oklahoman*, April 27, 1938, 4. Prior to its operating at Whittier, the nursery was located at Willard School (1400 Northwest 3rd Street). However, the fire marshal ordered the nursery to be moved from Willard due to overcrowding.

\(^{42}\) “Cleanliness And Care Taught,” in “National Baby Week,” supplement to *The Daily Oklahoman*, April 28, 1940, 2.


\(^{45}\) Elizabeth Wilkins, “Prepositions and Other Problems,” feature editorial, *The Daily Oklahoman*, November 10, 1940, 1D.
children heretofore overlooked in the public school system, the nursery program provided employment for teachers, nurses, and service workers such as cooks and janitors. As stated in a WPA report, this combination of early childhood services and adult employment opportunities provided “an efficient and beneficial mode of child care and caused widespread hopes that nursery schools could be incorporated generally into the public school system for the benefit of all children.” Due to the necessity of the program (as well as its popularity), the federal government extended funding for nursery schools to support parents who worked in essential industries during World War II. At least nine of these schools operated in Oklahoma City by the fall of 1943. The federal government did not sponsor a comprehensive early childhood education program until 1964, when President Lyndon Johnson introduced Head Start as a part of his Great Society program.

The Oklahoma City Board of Education closed Whittier School after the 1956-57 academic year. Three issues influenced this decision: 1) deteriorating building conditions; 2) vandalism; and 3) declining student enrollment. Reports of mechanical problems and structural deterioration at Whittier began to emerge in the early 1950s. In September 1952, just as the fall term had commenced, a city inspector condemned the building’s boiler system. The school board moved quickly to replace the system, but not before several parents transferred their children from the school. Circumstances had not improved by 1957, when the Daily Oklahoman noted that Whittier was “in generally bad condition” and required “nothing short of a complete rebuilding…. Most alarming was a report that the walls of the original building had begun to separate from the walls of the 1919 and 1923 additions.

At least three instances of vandalism at Whittier compounded the accounts of its structural deterioration. For example, in October 1954, two teenagers broke into the building. School officials estimated that repairs after the break-in cost $1,000. Declining enrollment after World War II compounded the challenges associated with break-ins and the building’s deteriorating condition. In the fall of 1946, the school recorded 376 students. One decade later, however, the official enrollment at Whittier was 280 students. This number fell far short of the building’s stated capacity of 530 students. As a result, school officials were utilizing parts of Whittier for storage by 1957.

The decrease in the number of students was caused by the success of the local steel industry and

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47 Edyth Thomas Wallace, “Safe While Mothers Work,” The Daily Oklahoman, September 12, 1943, 16C.
49 “Reserves Seek To Rent School Building in City,” The Daily Oklahoman, May 8, 1957, 5.
51 “Grade Schools Enrolment Off,” The Daily Oklahoman, September 10, 1946, 2.
52 “Reserves Seek To Rent School Building in City,” The Daily Oklahoman, May 8, 1957, 5.
suburbanization, which ultimately triggered a reorganization in district boundaries that prompted Whittier’s closure. As Robberson Steel and other foundries expanded production and paid high wages during and after World War II, these wages placed many employees within a growing middle class and enticed new workers to Oklahoma City. Better pay and a combination of other factors enabled many white, middle class families to move to new suburban developments and schools on the periphery of Oklahoma City.53 This outmigration was accompanied by an influx of African Americans, American Indians, and Latinos in search of housing and employment near central Oklahoma City. Moreover, three schools within a ½-mile of each other—Hawthorne Elementary (2300 Northwest 15th Street), Eugene Field Elementary (1515 North Klein Avenue), and Willard Elementary (1400 Northwest 3rd Street)—were capable of absorbing new arrivals as well as Whittier’s dwindling number of students. Shifting demographics, combined with the opinion that the building required considerable repairs, made Whittier School expendable from the perspective of the Board of Education.54

After closing Whittier School in 1957, the Oklahoma City Board of Education continued to own the building for over fifty years and leased it to various entities. The most notable tenant was Oklahoma State University Technical Institute (presently, Oklahoma State University-Oklahoma City), which occupied the building from 1962 to 1983. Approximately 420 students attended the institute in the fall of 1962. At the time, it offered a two-year, engineering technician degree and provided day and night classes on various technical subjects, including electronics, construction, and drafting.55 Enrollment steadily expanded in the following decades. In November 1980, approximately 800 students attended classes at the former Whittier School building.56 By this time, classes at Whittier were held in conjunction with those at the institute’s campus at Northwest 10th Street and North Portland Avenue. In 1983, when the Oklahoma City school board indicated that it planned to sell Whittier School, the institute ceased holding classes at the historic school building and announced that it was breaking ground on a new building for the engineering technology program on its campus.57

Surveyors first documented Whittier School in 1992, when a Reconnaissance Level Survey of a Portion of Central Oklahoma City concluded that the building was individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places for its architecture. This survey also suggested that the

54 Upon closing Whittier, the Board of Education reorganized district boundaries so that students who lived north and west of the school attended Hawthorne, those who lived north and east attended Eugene Field, and those who lived south of the school attended Willard. See Georgia Nelson, “Four City Schools To Be Closed Down,” The Daily Oklahoman, June 28 1957, 1-2. Hawthorne Elementary School remains in operation. Eugene Field Elementary School, originally built in 1910, was demolished and rebuilt in the same location in 1984. It remains in operation. Willard Elementary School closed in 1986 and is currently vacant.
Whittier School could contribute to a potential Metro Park Historic District, but there have been no subsequent surveys to assess the historic integrity or possible eligibility of Metro Park as a residential historic district.\(^{58}\) At the time of the *Reconnaissance Level Survey*, Whittier School was occupied by the Oklahoma City-County Community Action Program. In 2001, the Criterion Group, Inc. and the Kirkpatrick Foundation sponsored an architectural and historical survey of early Oklahoma City school buildings. However, this survey did not provide specific historical information on Whittier School. Nor did it provide any determination on the building’s eligibility for the National Register.\(^{59}\) The Community Action Program continued to occupy Whittier School until 2005.\(^{60}\)

Whittier School has been vacant since 2006.\(^{61}\) The Cross and Crown Mission acquired the building in 2011.\(^{62}\) Headquartered at a nearby church (formerly Second Presbyterian Church, 1008 North McKinley Avenue, constructed circa 1911), the mission’s staff and volunteers serve as “an inner-city ministry” providing spiritual uplift, clothing, food, after-school programs, and other services to Oklahoma City residents.\(^{63}\) According to its website, the organization had “grand plans” for Whittier and solicited funds for its rehabilitation.\(^{64}\) Unfortunately, fundraising efforts fell well short of the mission’s needs and the building was put up for sale. R7 Capital Funding LLC acquired Whittier School in September 2019.\(^{65}\)

**Conclusion**

The school board’s closure of Whittier School in 1957 and the building’s gradual decline into disrepair by the early twenty-first century reflected an overall decrease in public school enrollment citywide. Public school attendance in Oklahoma City peaked in 1967, with 77,000 students. Since that time, student enrollment has dropped, the number of vacant school buildings in central Oklahoma City has increased, and overall confidence in public school administrators has eroded. For example, in 2017, enrollment in Oklahoma City public schools hovered at around 45,000 students. Meanwhile, officials struggled to maintain, utilize, and re-purpose

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\(^{58}\) The proposed district was bounded roughly be Northwest 10\(^{th}\) Street to the north, North Western Avenue to the east, Linwood Boulevard to the south, and North Virginia Avenue to the west. *Reconnaissance Level Survey*, 14, 17. See also Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office, *Oklahoma Landmarks Inventory*, [http://oli_shpo.okstate.edu/query_result.aspx?id=6025&pb=P](http://oli_shpo.okstate.edu/query_result.aspx?id=6025&pb=P).


\(^{60}\) *Polk’s Oklahoma City Directory* (Kansas City: R. L. Polk & Co., 1983-2005). City directories indicate that the Community Action Agency specialized in providing “individual family services”.


\(^{62}\) Quit Claim Deed, Oklahoma County Clerk, Book 11572, Page 96, February 16, 2011.

\(^{63}\) “History,” [https://crossandcrownmission.com/history/](https://crossandcrownmission.com/history/), accessed December 17, 2019. Estimated date of construction for Second Presbyterian Church derived from Oklahoma County Clerk and *Polk’s Oklahoma City Directory*.


\(^{65}\) Warranty Deed, Oklahoma County Clerk, Book 14130, Page 1448, September 13, 2019.
historic school buildings. As acting superintendent Rebecca Kaye told The Oklahoman in 2018, “A third of our active instructional space is empty,” which meant that the school board was “spending a lot of money on heating and air conditioning empty space instead of investing that money in our instructional needs.”

After Whittier School opened in 1910, city promoters proclaimed, “The pride of Oklahoma City is her school system.” This pride in historic neighborhood schools remains high, as shown in the public outcry that accompanied a contemporary district reorganization effort that resulted in the closure of fifteen school buildings prior to the fall 2019 semester. Meanwhile, the successful rehabilitation of historic school buildings such as Dunbar Elementary and (Old) Douglass High School offers an effective blueprint for how Whittier School can be repurposed and provide another century of service to Oklahoma City.

66 Steve Lackmeyer, “Closing the Deal: OKC school district works with city on sales of abandoned schools,” The Oklahoman, May 6, 2018, 6C.
67 “Oklahoma City Schools,” in “Oklahoma in Tabloid, 1911,” supplement to The Daily Oklahoman, September 22, 1911.
69 For example, the successful rehabilitation of Douglass High School (also known as Page Woodson School) garnered a National Preservation Award from the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 2018. The repurposing of Dunbar Elementary (now Dunbar Commons) into senior housing was completed in the fall of 2019. See also Phillips, “Century ago.”
9. Major Bibliographical References

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

**Books**


**Government Records and Publications**


Oklahoma County Assessor. Oklahoma City.

Oklahoma County Clerk. Oklahoma City.

**Newspapers**


**Reference Collections and Databases**


State Historic Preservation Office. *Oklahoma Landmarks Inventory.*


Reports


Websites


Previous documentation on file (NPS):

____ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
____ previously listed in the National Register
____ previously determined eligible by the National Register
____ designated a National Historic Landmark
____ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #__________
____ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #__________
____ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey #__________
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service / National Register of Historic Places Registration Form
NPS Form 10-900

Whittier School
Oklahoma County, Oklahoma

Name of Property                   County and State

Primary location of additional data:

_X__ State Historic Preservation Office
____ Other State agency
____ Federal agency
____ Local government
____ University
_X__ Other

Name of repository: Metropolitan Library System, Oklahoma City, OK

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): ________________

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property  less than 1 acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates
Datum if other than WGS84: ___________
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 35.478337   Longitude: -97.543759

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

The present legal description places Whittier School within the northeast corner of Block 15 in the Bell Vern Addition. The property boundaries are as follows: Commencing from the southwest corner of the intersection of Northwest 10th Street and North Kentucky Avenue (POINT OF BEGINNING), thence south for a distance of 300 feet, thence west and parallel with the north line of Block 15 for a distance of 250 feet, thence north and parallel with the east line of Block 15 for 300 feet, thence east for a distance of 250 feet to the POINT OF BEGINNING.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The current boundary is the extent of the property historically associated with the existing building. Although the Oklahoma City Board of Education historically owned the northeast corner of Block 15 as well as Lots 41-45 to the southwest, there is no other existing building, structure, or developed landscape associated historically with Whittier School to the south and west of the site.
11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Catherine Montgomery AIA, President; Matthew A. Pearce, Ph.D., Principal Historian
organization: Preservation and Design Studio, PLLC
street & number: 616 Northwest 21st Street
city or town: Oklahoma City state: Oklahoma zip code: 73103-1861
e-mail: cm@PandDStudio.com
telephone: 405-601-6814
date: May 18, 2020

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- Maps: A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

- Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- Additional items: (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)
Photographs
Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn’t need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Whittier School
City or Vicinity: Oklahoma City
County: Oklahoma  State: Oklahoma
Photographer: Matthew Pearce, Ph.D., Preservation and Design Studio, PLLC
Date Photographed: November 2019

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Direction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0001</td>
<td>North-facing façade. Northwest 10th Street in foreground.</td>
<td>South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0002</td>
<td>Closeup of north-facing façade.</td>
<td>South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0003</td>
<td>East side elevation (left). North-facing façade (right).</td>
<td>Southwest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0004</td>
<td>South (back) elevation.</td>
<td>Northwest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0005</td>
<td>West side elevation (left). South (back) elevation (right).</td>
<td>Northeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0006</td>
<td>North-facing façade (left). West side elevation (right).</td>
<td>Southeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0007</td>
<td>Main (2nd) floor. Entrance. Staircase to 3rd floor with curved knee wall and wood handrail.</td>
<td>Northeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0008</td>
<td>Main (2nd) floor. Corridor.</td>
<td>West</td>
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<tr>
<td>0009</td>
<td>Main (2nd) floor. Classroom.</td>
<td>Southwest</td>
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<tr>
<td>0010</td>
<td>Third floor. Corridor.</td>
<td>West</td>
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<td>0011</td>
<td>Third floor. Classroom</td>
<td>South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0012</td>
<td>Ground floor. Auditorium.</td>
<td>Northeast</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.
Whittier School is near the northeast corner of Block 15 in the Bell Vern Addition to Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma. The area within the historic boundary (outlined in red) is not subdivided and appears to have been set aside for a public school after the addition was platted in 1909. Ownership boundaries of R7 Capital Funding, the current property owner, are outlined in yellow. They include a parcel (50’x140’) directly west of Whittier School and Lots 41-45 to the southwest, all of which the Oklahoma City Board of Education acquired by the early 1920s. There is no other existing building, structure, or developed landscape associated historically with Whittier School within the current ownership boundary.

Boundaries for this nomination are limited to the Whittier School boundaries indicated above as the historic boundary and described as follows: Commencing from the southwest corner of the intersection of Northwest 10th Street and North Kentucky Avenue (POINT OF BEGINNING), thence south for a distance of 300 feet, thence west and parallel with the north line of Block 15 for a distance of 250 feet, thence north and parallel with the east line of Block 15 for 300 feet, thence east for a distance of 250 feet to the POINT OF BEGINNING.
Whittier School
Name of Property
Oklahoma County, Oklahoma
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)
Whittier School (outlined in red) is located at 1900 Northwest 10th Street in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The setting is primarily residential, with numerous single-family houses and multi-unit dwellings in the vicinity. The southern branch of the Union Pacific Railroad (lower left) is less than 0.75 miles to the south. Oklahoma City’s central business district is approximately 2 miles to the east.
Whittier School was built in 1910, with an addition in 1919 (herein, the east wing) and 1923 (herein, the west wing). The building is situated near the southwest corner at the intersection of Northwest 10th Street, which has an east-to-west orientation, and North Kentucky Avenue, which runs north-to-south. A grass lawn with some mature trees is to the north of the building. A large, paved parking lot is to the south and west. There is a concrete loading dock near the southwest corner of the building.
Whittier School first appears in the 1919 edition of the Sanborn maps. Map #98 also documents other public school buildings built during the same time as Whittier, including Shields Heights (301 Southeast 38th Street, built in 1911), Putnam Heights School (1601 Northwest 36th Street, built in 1909), and Culbertson Heights School (intersection of North Everest Avenue and East 13th Street, built in 1910, no longer extant).
Close Up: 1919, Volume 1, Map #98
(Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps)

A closer view of the 1919 Sanborn map indicates that Whittier School is 2 stories in height plus a basement. It is of fireproof construction and has a composition roof with a 24-inch parapet indicated on the west side and south (back) elevations. “Pier Construction” is indicated on the north and south elevations. A cornice extends along the north and east side elevations. The building is indicated as having electric lights and a “Steam Sturtevant System” for heat. Whittier School is located at the intersection of West 10th Street and Kentucky Avenue, 2 miles west of Broadway Avenue. A 1-story frame dwelling with a shingle roof is on a parcel to the west of Whittier School. A 2-story stable is to the south of the dwelling. The notation “No Exposure” west of the dwelling indicates that there is no risk of a building fire spreading from that direction, which suggests that the land to the west is undeveloped.
The 1922 Sanborn map is the first edition in the public domain that documents development in the vicinity of Whittier School. Located in the Bell Vern Addition to Oklahoma City, which was platted in 1909, many of the blocks in proximity to Whittier School contain undeveloped lots. Most existing buildings are 1 story in height and of frame construction. Many buildings are single-family dwellings, with some duplexes and apartments mixed in. Lots 41-45 in Block 15, located to the southwest of Whittier School and owned by the Oklahoma City Board of Education, are undeveloped.
Close Up: 1922, Volume 1, Map #91
(Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps)

A closer view of the 1922 Sanborn map provides more details about the structure and layout of Whittier School. It documents the east wing (built in 1919), which is 2 stories in height (plus a basement) and of fireproof construction with a composition roof and a 12-inch parapet on the south (back) elevation. The entire building is 40 feet in height, and the map documents window openings on the first and second stories. A cornice extends along the north and east side elevations. The entire building has brick exterior walls, clay tile block interior walls, concrete floors, and concrete roofs. A central corridor extends east-to-west for much of the width of the central block. The heat system differs from the description of the 1919 map and is described in this edition as a “steam, fan system.” Whittier’s street address is 1023 North Kentucky Avenue. This address differs from the Polk’s city directories, which list Whittier at 1900 Northwest 10th Street. The street address of the dwelling to the west of Whittier is 1912 Northwest 10th Street. The stable is no longer extant. A 1-story autohouse with a composition roof is in the southeast corner of the parcel where the stable had been previously. Lots 44-45 are undeveloped.
The Big Picture: 1949, Volume 1, Map #91
(Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps)

The updated edition of the 1922 Sanborn map published in 1949 shows the continued development of the Bell Vern Addition. Blocks between Northwest 10th Street and Linwood Boulevard are primarily residential, with some single-family dwellings having been converted to or replaced by duplexes. Commercial and manufacturing operations are to the south along the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad (presently, the southern branch of the Union Pacific Railroad). Many lots to the east of North Virginia Avenue are undeveloped. Lots 41-45 to the southwest of Whittier School remain undeveloped.
A closer view of the 1949 Sanborn map documents the west wing (built in 1923), which is of identical construction and equal in height to the rest of the building (40 feet, or the equivalent of 2 stories plus a basement). A 12-inch parapet is indicated on the west side elevation of the west wing and the south (back) elevation of the east wing. Perimeter walls of both the east and west wings are 12-inches thick. The heat system description has changed again and is described as “hot air ducts.” City directories indicate that the dwelling and the autohouse to the west of Whittier School was no longer extant by 1925. This edition of the Sanborn maps is consistent with the city directories as in that the subject residence and autohouse are no longer indicated. Lots 44-45 remain undeveloped.
The Big Picture: 1950, Volume 1, Map #91
(Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps)

The 1950 edition of the Sanborn map does not indicate any major changes in the vicinity of Whittier School. The parcel to the west of Whittier School and Lots 41-45 to the southwest are undeveloped.
A closer view of the 1950 Sanborn map indicates no changes to Whittier School and the immediate area.
The Big Picture: 1955, Volume 1, Map #81
(Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps)

The 1955 edition of the Sanborn map does not indicate any major changes in the immediate vicinity of Whittier School. The parcel to the west of Whittier School and Lots 41-45 to the southwest remain undeveloped.
Close Up: 1955, Volume 1, Map #81
(Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps)

A closer view of the 1955 Sanborn map indicates no changes to Whittier School and the immediate area.
Shields Heights School, 1911. Currently Santa Fe South Hills Elementary School.

Eugene Field School, 1910. No longer extant.


Whittier School, 1910

Columbus School, 1909. Vacant.

Culbertson Heights School, 1910. No longer extant.

Lowell School, 1910. Listed as (Old) Douglass High School, NRIS #7000259.


Historic Image #1: 1911

In 1911, The Daily Oklahoman published photographs of “ward schools” designed by architects Layton & Smith. Whittier School is in the lower left (indicated in red). Eugene Field and Culbertson Heights schools are no longer extant. School buildings currently in use have larger footprints than Whittier. Wheeler and Lee schools, for example, each have additions that postdate Whittier's period of significance. (“Oklahoma in Tabloid, 1911,” supplement to The Daily Oklahoman, September 22, 1911)
Whittier School

Name of Property
Oklahoma County, Oklahoma

County and State
N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Whittier School

Name of Property
Oklahoma County, Oklahoma

County and State
N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Whittier School opened in the fall of 1910. Photograph by That Man Stone. (Oklahoma Historical Society Photograph Collection)

Whittier School accommodated students in kindergarten and grades 1-8. The above photograph is possibly from a Fourth of July celebration in 1919, which commemorated the first peacetime July 4th holiday since the end of World War I. (Chester R Cowen Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society)
Whittier School
Name of Property
Oklahoma County, Oklahoma
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

During the early 1930s and early 1940s, Whittier School provided Oklahoma City’s only public preschool program, which was sponsored by the Works Progress Administration. ("Nursery Children Learn to Dress Themselves," *The Daily Oklahoman*, October 10, 1940, 7).

Whittier School experienced several break-ins during the mid-1950s. Above, a teacher and student clean up after vandals caused approximately $1,000 in damage. Photograph by George Tapscott. (Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society)
Whittier School

Name of Property
Oklahoma County, Oklahoma

County and State
N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Historic Image #6: 1957
The Oklahoma City Board of Education closed Whittier School following the 1956-57 school year. Photograph by Jim Lucas. (Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society)

Historic Image #7: 1962
Oklahoma State University Technical Institute (presently, Oklahoma State University-Oklahoma City) began holding classes at Whittier School in 1962. Photograph by Dick Cobb. (Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society)
Whittier School
Name of Property
Oklahoma County, Oklahoma
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

A class at Oklahoma State University Technical Institute, formerly Whittier School. Photograph by Russ Crowder. (Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society)

Documented by this late 1960s image, the area to the west and south of Whittier School was utilized as a parking lot. Photograph by George Tapscott. (Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society)

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**Historic Image #12: ca. 2011**
(Cross and Crown Mission)

**Historic Image #13: ca. 2011**
(Cross and Crown Mission)
Whittier School
Name of Property
Oklahoma County, Oklahoma
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Historic Image #14: 2012
(Okahoma County Assessor)

Historic Image #15: 2019
R7 Capital Funding LLC acquired Whittier School in 2019. (Oklahoma County Assessor)
Whittier School
Name of Property
Oklahoma County, Oklahoma
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Photos Page 1 of 12

OK_Oklahoma County_Whittier School_0001
Whittier School
Name of Property
Oklahoma County, Oklahoma
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

OK_Oklahoma County_Whittier School_0002
Whittier School
Name of Property
Oklahoma County, Oklahoma
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

OK_Oklahoma County_Whittier School_0003
Whittier School

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County and State
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Section number Photos Page 5 of 12

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Section number Photos Page 7 of 12

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Whittier School

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County and State
N/A

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OK_Oklahoma County_Whittier School_0009
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Section number  Photos  Page  10 of 12

OK_Oklahoma County_Whittier School_0010
Whittier School
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