

**Baltimore City
Commission for Historical and
Architectural Preservation**



**Landmark Designation Report
March 9, 2021**

Clifton School
2670 Kennedy Avenue
Baltimore, Maryland



Commission for Historical & Architectural Preservation

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Significance Summary

The Clifton School is the sole surviving building that tangibly represents the educational experience of students living in the growing suburbs of Baltimore City in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Originally constructed in 1882 as a Baltimore County school, it served City students following annexation in 1888. In a relatively unusual decision in 1915, the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners opted to retain the schoolhouse and build an addition on it to increase capacity instead of demolishing the schoolhouse. Today, it is the only Baltimore County school still extant in the City and is one of only 6 public school buildings remaining that was constructed prior to 1890. Architecturally, it is representative of two periods of construction, and two different architectural styles that are compatible in materials, scale, and details. This structure was designed by Baltimore architects Frank E. Davis (1882 building), and the firm Smith & May (1915 addition), both well-established and celebrated architects.

Architectural Description

The building is located in the Coldstream Homestead Montebello neighborhood, on a 0.26 acre parcel bound by Kennedy Avenue to the southwest, Gorsuch Avenue to the northwest, Tyler Street to the northeast, and an unnamed private alley street to the southeast.

This brick schoolhouse was constructed in two phases in 1882 and 1915. What is now the primary elevation of the building – the 1915 addition to the building – faces Kennedy Avenue. This southwest elevation is a two story, three-bay, brick Colonial Revival style building with an elevated basement and flat roof with a parapet wall capped with terracotta coping and a simple intermediate cornice below that appears to be cast stone. According to the National Register nomination form for the Clifton School, “[t]he central bay is an advanced pavilion with truncated corners. The main door within is a frontispiece door with paneled pilasters on plinths with a full entablature and broken pediment above.”¹ It appears that there was once a bas relief sculpture – possibly an eagle – located within the broken pediment over the door, based on paint ghosting. The entrance is filled with a single contemporary solid metal door with infill paneling, and a four-lite wooden transom window above. Located on the truncated corners above the door are a pair of rectangular stones that have been altered with mortar; it is likely that they had been date or name stones for the building. Above the main entrance on the second floor, two oversized paired windows are covered with plywood, but the six-light transom windows with flat arches above are extant.

There are two end bays on this elevation, with balanced fenestration of three windows on each floor per side. The basement level is partially below grade, with a concrete window well. A beveled water table topped with a soldier course is present on this elevation, and the soldier course wraps around the other two elevations of this addition as well, serving as the lintels for the basement windows. The first floor windows also feature a soldier course lintel, and the second floor windows feature segmental arch soldier course lintels.² The windows all have cast stone sills. The windows themselves were historically 9/9 double hung windows. These appear to have been at least partially removed and replaced with undersized vinyl 1/1 windows in the bottom portion of the window openings, with the majority of the openings covered with painted plywood. This condition is found on all elevations.

The northeast elevation of the 1915 addition facing Gorsuch Avenue is seven bays wide, with six window openings. The soldier belt course, cornice, and parapet wrap around to this elevation. There are fire escapes mounted to this elevation that wrap around to the northwest elevation. Adjacent is the side elevation of the original 1882 school building. This building features a steeply-pitched cross-gable roof with stepped parapet walls on the end gables, capped with terra cotta coping. This elevation has four bays and a full two stories plus partially-above grade basement, and has the same lintel patterns as the addition. The belt course on this building is a raised brick string course.

The northwest elevation, facing Tyler Street, was the original façade of the 1882 school building. This elevation is at grade and features a stone water table. The intersecting walls of the “T” are each one bay. This building had two entrances to the school, one on each side elevation of the projecting front gable, covered by an awning. The doors are replacement single panel metal doors. Above each entrance is a large window in the second story. The façade of the projecting bay is two bays wide, and centered on the building, between the first and second floors, is the datestone, marking this as “Public School No. 4, District 9, 1882.” All of the windows on the elevation are covered with plywood. The 1953 photos from the Baltimore City School Plant shows that these windows originally had functional shutters.

The southwest elevation of the building facing the alley is almost identical to the northwest elevation, except that this elevation is clearly the more functional elevation. A chimney is tucked into the corner where the 1882 schoolhouse and the 1915 addition meet, the electrical lines enter the building on the same corner, and this elevation of the 1915 addition has an at-grade basement door instead of partially below-grade windows.

Contextual History

The school building is in the neighborhood that is today known as Coldstream Homestead Montebello, named after three of the historic summer estates that once stood there. The middle portion of the neighborhood – where the school is located – was the Homestead estate, established by Thomas Gorsuch, a wealthy plantation owner, in the 1700s. The estate stayed in the family until descendent Robert Gorsuch Jr. subdivided the property in 1850 to create a suburban enclave.³ According to the National Register Nomination Form for the Coldstream Homestead Montebello Historic District:

Similar to wealthy merchants, Baltimore City middle-class residents desired open pastoral landscapes away from the urban environment. Capitalizing on the economic and social climate, Robert Gorsuch Jr. formed a syndicate to subdivide the Homestead estate in 1850 to create Homestead Village. He recognized the middle-class's aspiration to associate themselves with the grand county estates of Baltimore's prominent class. Advertisements promoted the location's rural characteristics, open spaces, ambiance, and prestige.⁴

This syndicate, the Homestead Village Building Association, began selling shares in the company in 1850.⁵ An advertisement published in 1853 in the *Sun* stated that Homestead Village "stands in every respect unequalled. It is a beautiful, high and healthy situation, about one-third

of a mile north of Baltimore city limits. It fronts on the Harford turnpike, and runs through and connects with Huntington village at the first toll bar on the York turnpike. The whole estate, upwards of 100 acres, is laid off in building lots, the majority of which are sold to industrious tradesmen and mechanics. Some 20 streets run at right angles, across and through it--one of which, Gorsuch avenue, 60 feet wide, is now being paved..."⁶ The first church in the community, the Protestant Episcopal Church was completed in Homestead village in 1853, "near the suburbs of this city."⁷ According to Barbara Hoff, author of the National Register Nomination form for Clifton School, Homestead was one of Baltimore's earliest planned subdivisions, and the eastern-most community north of Baltimore City when it was first developed.⁸

John Thomas Scharf, in his *History of Baltimore City and County*, published in 1881, noted that the development of the "suburban village" at Homestead failed in the 1850s because there was no railway nearby.⁹ Indeed, the National Register nomination form for Coldstream Homestead Montebello iterates this, and suggests that poor financial planning was also to blame. The establishment of the horse-powered Halls Spring Passenger Railway in 1870 along Harford Road helped spur greater development to the northeast of the city, although Homestead remained the only suburban development in this area through the nineteenth century.¹⁰

The *1877 Hopkins Atlas* described the ninth district of Baltimore County, in which Homestead was located, as the "richest and most populous District in the County", noting that the "southern part is a thickly built suburb of Baltimore."¹¹ However, as the eastern-most community in the northern suburbs, Homestead didn't fit with this larger trend.¹² In fact, the Homestead community was lightly populated in 1877 according to the Atlas; while many streets were laid out, very few of the blocks were more than 10-20% developed.¹³ The nineteenth century homes still extant in the community are very distinguishable, as most are detached dwellings or duplexes, and are largely wood frame buildings.

The community grew significantly in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, due to several factors outlined in the Coldstream Homestead Montebello Historic District National Register nomination form:

Baltimore City's 1888 annexation of the surrounding western and northern sections of Baltimore County increased the properties' value as the city became responsible for improvements to the local infrastructure. Additionally, the tax structure for annexed land spurred investment and development. Coupled with City Passenger Railway's purchase of the Halls Spring Passenger Railway in 1885 and its electrification in 1894, housing developed at a rapid pace in the first quarter of the twentieth century. All the subdivisions in Baltimore were directly tied to the streetcar lines, which expanded the radius an individual could live from his/her workplace. The neighborhood's desirability was further increased...when the city purchased Clifton Park, located directly east of the Coldstream Homestead Montebello Historic District.¹⁴

Indeed, in 1894, the Homestead Improvement Association and the Northeast Baltimore Improvement Association urged the City to acquire the Clifton estate for a public park, recognizing that such a large public park would be beneficial to citizens in Northeast

Baltimore.¹⁵ Homestead was particularly well served by this recommendation, given that it was “charmingly located within a few moments’ walk of Lake Clifton,” according to Scharf.¹⁶ Baltimore City purchased Clifton Park from the Board of Trustees for Johns Hopkins University later that year.

The early decades of the twentieth century brought significant development to Homestead and the neighboring communities of Coldstream and Montebello. Real estate developers constructed a variety of styles of rowhouses, many in the “daylight” style, with generous front porches. According to the Coldstream Homestead Montebello National Register nomination form, this area was largely a white middle-class community into the mid-twentieth century, but this began changing in the 1960s. The form states that “In the 1950s and 1960s, African-American Baltimoreans faced a scarce supply of housing due to the results of urban renewal, highway construction projects, and racism. Urban renewal efforts displaced more than seventy-five thousand people. Coupled with new developments reserved only for Caucasians, dishonest real estate brokers engaged in blockbusting.”¹⁷

The Coldstream Homestead Montebello neighborhood began changing very quickly at the hands of block-busting realtors who bought properties from white people for cheap, intentionally fanning fears about an influx of Black people, and then selling to Black people for significantly higher prices and often with financially predatory lending terms. The opening lines of a 1969 *Sun* article about block-busting in Baltimore stated “Between April, 1965, and July, 1966, a well-known Baltimore real estate speculator bought 25 row houses from white people along two blocks of the Alameda south of 33d street and sold or rented them to Negroes. Typical among the houses was one that was bought for \$6,500 and sold two months later for \$11,950.”¹⁸ Between 1964 and 1970, this neighborhood rapidly shifted from a white community to majority Black community.¹⁹

Eight churches in Coldstream Homestead Montebello and Ednor Gardens-Lakeside banded together to fight block-busting in their communities in the 1960s and 1970s.²⁰ The group, Homestead-Montebello Churches, Inc., working with community partners, were “resolute in their determination to expose instances of unlawful real property schemes, and to assist those residents so victimized by seeking redress of their losses to the fullest extent of all available remedies at law.”²¹ This group of churches pooled their money together and hired Vincent Quayle, then a Jesuit seminarian, to investigate the predatory real estate practices in the area.²² Quayle later went on to found and be the long-running Executive Director of St. Ambrose Housing Aid Center. Rev. Quayle and a fellow Jesuit, Rev. John Martin, conducted a study of the house sales in the neighborhood, finding that at least a third of the houses in the neighborhood were “bought cheaply from panicky whites and sold dearly to Negroes by speculators, who often arranged terms at exorbitant rates for persons unable to call on banks.”²³ The group’s efforts ultimately were unsuccessful in preventing block-busting in these neighborhoods.

In the mid-to-late twentieth century, this neighborhood experienced vacancy and demolition. There has been some infill construction on vacant lots, which is subject to the Urban Renewal Plan for the neighborhood. During this time, in 1976, the Coldstream Homestead Montebello Community Corporation was founded to promote the wellbeing and improve the overall health

and quality of life in the community.²⁴ This organization has been instrumental in the stabilization, growth, and community revitalization of the community over the past 40+ years.

School History

Baltimore County School 4, District 9 (1882 – 1888)

A school has been present on this site serving the Homestead community since at least 1876 and likely earlier, given that the village was created in 1850. The earliest evidence of the presence of a school is in the 1876 *City Atlas of Baltimore City, Maryland and Environs, Volume I*, published by G. M. Hopkins (see Map 3), which identifies a public school at the corner of Gorsuch Avenue and Tyler Street.²⁵ It was likely originally a frame structure.

In August 1881, the Baltimore County School Board was petitioned for “more school facilities at Homestead”, and the next month, the School Board approved the construction of a new schoolhouse there.²⁶ The Gothic Revival style, T-shaped portion of the school building that faces Tyler Street was constructed in 1882 as Baltimore County Public School District 9, School 4.²⁷ This modest but handsome building held four classrooms for five teachers, and served 190 white students in grades 1-7.²⁸ The building is attributed to architect Frank E Davis; he designed several other schools for the county around the same time, is the only architect mentioned in the Board of School Commissioner’s minutes regarding school design during this time period, and the county had a policy of hiring one architect at a time.²⁹

Francis Earlougher Davis – who went by Frank E. Davis professionally – was born in Ellicott City in 1839. Following an apprenticeship with Edmund G. Lind and an education at the then-new Maryland Institute of Art and Design, Frank was elected to be a member of the Baltimore Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) in 1870. In the late 1870s or early 1880s, he formed a partnership with his brother Henry, in which Frank designed the buildings, and Henry constructed them.³⁰ Given that timeframe, it is possible that Henry Davis was the builder of the original 1881 portion of the Clifton School. Frank E. Davis designed over 200 structures, the majority of them in Baltimore, but others were located in Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Delaware. His work spanned residential, commercial, institutional, and religious structures, with his list of work including nearly two dozen schools, five courthouses, and over fifty churches.³¹ Other significant works designed by Davis in Baltimore include the Pine Street Police Station (1878), Male Grammar and Primary School No. 1 (1880), and Orchard Street Church (1882), a Baltimore City Landmark.

According to Barbara Hoff, in the National Register nomination form for the Clifton School, this building represents a marked shift in school construction in Baltimore County:

In its historical context, the structure was built at a time of steady growth of the county school buildings. In the ten year span 1877-1887 an average of five new structures were built each year, netting 16 additional buildings. The trend was to build brick or stone buildings, rather than log and frame schools. Log schools were the least preferred, and very few existed by 1887.

At the same time, the county school commissioners were placing much greater emphasis than earlier on the durability, function, and appearance of the schools. The 1878 Annual Report of the Baltimore County School Commissioners stated that schools "no longer (are) built of (the) roughest materials without symmetry or design... in some remote corner or district; but the most desirable and convenient sites are selected, upon which substantial houses, neat in design, ornamental in appearance, with all modern improvements [sic], are erected." In 1886 the report said, "In this age of progress the schools should be in the vein...; in fact, a good school house, to be attractive, should have all the comforts and conveniences of a good home." These new requirements caused a paradoxical rise in the cost of the schools at the same time the commissioners were exercising a conservative, tight fiscal policy. Nonetheless, schools of this period are designed individually and built of brick - not wood - and exhibit a fair amount of embellishment.³²

In 1884, an application was made to the Baltimore County School Board to make this school an English-German bilingual school.³³ It is not clear if the application was successful, but it does speak to who was settling in this village. This area, like Baltimore as a whole, likely had a large German population that settled in this community for decades. Other evidence that supports this is the 1889 frame church that originally housed the German Evangelical Lutheran St. Matthew's Mission church located just a block south of the school on Gorsuch Ave.³⁴ This congregation, which offered sermons in German and in English, was active into at least the 1920s.³⁵

Homestead School, Baltimore City Public School No. 50 (1888-1915)

In 1888, Baltimore City annexed 23 square miles of land located north and west of the city, including Homestead village. The schoolhouse in Homestead and twelve other county schools became City schools; for over a decade, they were referred to as "Annex schools."³⁶ Of these Annex schools, this structure appears to be the only school that has survived to the present day; the rest have been demolished or replaced with new schools on the same site. This school is a rare survivor.

This school is also a tangible reminder of the difficulties that Baltimore City and its school system faced during a period of rapid physical and population growth.³⁷ Many of the annexed county school buildings were in poor condition, didn't meet the space requirements of Baltimore City – which segregated school buildings by race and classrooms by sex – and with a rapidly growing population in the new Annex section of the city, the existing school buildings were quickly at overcapacity.³⁸ Additionally, with the City's population growing at a rapid pace across the City, there was a pressing need for more schools, period. According to Hoff, "As early as 1888 Clifton had been noted as overcrowded with five teachers dispersed among 195 students."³⁹

The efforts to expand or replace the school building were drawn out over two decades, beginning in the 1890s.⁴⁰ The deficiencies in the building were well documented. In 1901, School No. 50 was identified as one of only twenty-two schools that was heated by stoves and would be eligible for furnaces as soon as funding was made available.⁴¹ A 1902 *Sun* article about the overall poor conditions of Baltimore City schools noted that "[t]he visitors to School No. 50, at Homestead, called attention to the pressing need for increased accommodations there, as the building used as

an annex is entirely unsuitable. They said a church building in the vicinity would soon be vacant and might be rented."⁴²

In 1905, the School Board approved over \$3 million for school improvements, with a special note of the "extension of the residential districts in Northeast Baltimore and the increased demands upon the school accommodations in that section," which included the Homestead community.⁴³ A recommendation was made for an addition with eight classrooms at School No. 50.⁴⁴ A permanent addition was not constructed, although it is possible that temporary classrooms were built on the school grounds.

By 1909, the school had an annex in a nearby building, which is illustrated in the 1915 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (see Map 5).⁴⁵ Both the annex and the main building were deemed unsafe by the Baltimore City Building Inspector, who had undertaken a comprehensive survey of the serious fire hazards present in Baltimore City Schools. This assessment was completed in response to a deadly school fire in March 1908 in Collinwood, OH, just outside of Cleveland, which trapped nearly 350 people and killed 172 children, two teachers, and a rescuer.⁴⁶ This tragedy caused a "spasm of horror [that] swept across the country," but is forgotten today.⁴⁷ However, much like the more recent Ghost Ship fire in an artist collective in Oakland, CA, the Collinwood Fire spurred a renewed concern over fire safety across the nation. In Baltimore City, Building Inspector Preston documented "improper arrangements of schools, insufficient exits and stairways, the necessity of additional doorways and similar necessities to meet the requirements of safety in schools" in almost all of the school buildings.⁴⁸ A dearth of capital funds for City Schools led Preston to fear that "nothing could be done more than change some doors to open outward," and he urged the Board of School Commissioners to listen to the demands of parents and citizens.⁴⁹ The Homestead School required another stairway, and the rented branch of School No. 50, located in a rowhouse two blocks away, was determined to be "dangerous for a school on account of inadequate ways of getting out."⁵⁰

Unsurprisingly, a resolution was adopted by the Homestead League and Improvement Association in 1910, requesting that the School Board provide better facilities at School No. 50.⁵¹ The request was to no avail, because in 1912, a delegation from the Homestead Improvement Association made yet another plea to the School Board Commissioners for improvement to School No. 50.⁵²

Clifton School, Baltimore City Public School No. 50 (1915-1932)

On December 24, 1914, it was reported in the *Sun* that "A contract for building an addition to School No. 50, Gorsuch avenue and Tyler street, Northeast Baltimore, and also for alterations to the present building, was given yesterday to Charles Herbold & Sons yesterday at a meeting of the Board of Awards. The work will cost \$28,300..."⁵³ After over twenty years of advocacy to address the overcrowded conditions and insufficient facilities, the addition completed in 1915 doubled the size of the school.⁵⁴

The addition is attributed to Baltimore architecture firm Smith & May. Hoff provides an excellent biographical summary:

Smith and May had begun in the Baltimore firm of Parker, Thomas and Rice who designed the Savings Bank of Baltimore, Belvedere Hotel, Alex Brown and Sons Building, and the B&O Building. All of these structures still exist as superb examples of the Neo Classical and Beaux Arts schools of design. Smith left the firm in about 1912 to begin his own firm, which specialized in the design of educational buildings. They were the official architects for Baltimore County and the University of Maryland, as well as the consulting architects for the Maryland State Board of Education. They did city design also, including the Forest Park Junior High in 1924, and the Gwynn's Falls Park School in 1925. One of their most important designs was not a school, though, but the Baltimore Trust Building (now Maryland National Bank Building) with Taylor and Fisher in 1929. Their Clifton School design harmonizes well with the older section by using the same brick, fenestration, and belt courses on all the facades. The addition is typical of early twentieth century school design which almost exclusively employed either the Gothic or Colonial Revival styles.⁵⁵

This brick Colonial Revival addition was constructed onto the rear of the 1882 building, completely reorienting the parcel and making the southeastern elevation of the school building facing Kennedy Avenue the primary entrance. The decision to construct an addition to the existing building, rather than demolishing the existing building and constructing an entirely new facility was very unusual, because as Hoff states, “the commission preferred to replace rather than expand the poorly built and maintained annex schools. Hence, few of them still survive, and Clifton stands as evidence of the school system's adjustment to the expansion of Baltimore and its population.”⁵⁶

One person who was a stalwart in the school – and by extension, the community – through the tumult of post-annexation, overcrowding, temporary classrooms, and an ever-increasing student body, was Miss Gertrude M. Bennett. Bennett was the principal of School No. 50 for 24 years, from approximately 1890 until her retirement due to poor health in 1914. She had served as an educator in Baltimore City Public Schools for over 40 years.⁵⁷ Her long successful career occurred at a time when there were few occupations open to women, and for whom marriage would make them ineligible to teach in Baltimore City.⁵⁸ Thus, women had to choose between a career in education and having a spouse and children. According to her obituary, “one of the things she was proud of concerning her record was that she had taught the grandchildren of some of her early pupils.”⁵⁹ In this community, she helped educate two generations.

It is unclear when the school name shifted from “Homestead” to “Clifton”. According to Hoff, the entire community was referred to as “Clifton” by the 1890s because of the community’s proximity to Johns Hopkins’ former summer estate of “Clifton” just across Harford Road, but all references to this school building in the *Sun* during the late nineteenth and first decade of the twentieth century use the term “Homestead”. The first reference to the school as the “Clifton School” in the *Sun* was in a 1917 article.⁶⁰ Therefore, it is possible that name of the school didn’t change until the 1910s. If that is the case, the impetus for the change could have been the expansion and updates to the school. But this is conjecture, and it is unlikely to be clarified either way without additional primary sources.

During World War I, the students at “Clifton School No. 50” subscribed for two \$50 bonds for the *Sun*’s war bond bills drive, for which the students raised the money by making and selling candies.⁶¹ According to the *Sun*, “schoolchildren [were] joyfully getting into the game of putting up the money to send the Kaiser where he belongs (everyone knows where that is), and playing the game hard. These youngsters set a fine example for their elders and also for their companions.”⁶² The students at School No. 50 certainly were unflagging in their fundraising – in 1919, they subscribed for \$1,850 in contributions to Baltimore’s Women’s Victory Liberty Loan Committee.⁶³

School No. 50-A (1931 – 1944)

In December 1929, it was announced that funds were available to build the "First unit of new building for School No. 50, on grounds of the new City College" as part of a \$10 million school construction loan for elementary and junior high schools.⁶⁴ Just a mere 14 years after its addition and rehabilitation, the *Sun* article noted that the current school facilities for the Clifton School were inadequate.⁶⁵ A delegation headed by the president of the Parent-Teacher Association at School No. 50 opposed the construction of the new elementary school on the property of the newly-constructed City College, but the reasons for their opposition was not reported.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, the construction went forward as planned, and Abbottston Elementary School, named for a former estate in the neighborhood, was completed in 1931 as the new Public School No. 50 at the intersection of Gorsuch Ave. and Montebello Avenue (now Loch Raven Boulevard).⁶⁷

Although the new Public School was located just several blocks away, the former School No. 50 at Gorsuch and Kennedy Avenues remained opened as an annex building for the new elementary school.⁶⁸ The school that was previous an “annex” from Baltimore County had become an “annex” yet again, apparently serving the first grade students of the new elementary school. According to Hoff, “[i]n 1936 there were six teachers and 180 pupils in the grades 1-A; in 1941-1942 there were only 3 teachers and 89 pupils. As a result, the school was closed in 1944, and the students were transferred to School No. 50.”⁶⁹

Administration Annex No. 521, and vacancy (1944-1982)

In 1944, the school building became Administration Annex No. 521, serving as offices, meeting space, and presentation space for the Department of Education.⁷⁰ During this time, the building housed the Division of Health and Physical Education, and in the late 1950s, served as the Art division headquarters.⁷¹ The building was closed in 1965, and was vacant for almost twenty years.⁷²

Montpelier Kennedy Apartments (1982-present)

On November 18, 1982, the property was sold in a package with 1424-1468 Montpelier Ave. by the Mayor and City Council to the current owner, Montpelier/Kennedy Associates Limited Partnership for \$1.⁷³ Carl W. Streuver, of Streuver Brothers and Eccles, Inc. was a general partner of this limited partnership, which is notable given the firm’s long track record of rehabilitating historic buildings in Baltimore.⁷⁴ The sale was subject to a disposition agreement and the requirements of the Urban Renewal Plan for Coldstream Homestead Montebello.⁷⁵ The property was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in January 1982, prior to the sale of the property.⁷⁶ The National Register designation was likely pursued to make the

rehabilitation project eligible for historic tax credits. The building was converted into eleven units of affordable housing, at a time when the adaptive use of schools into housing was still something of a novelty in Baltimore.⁷⁷ Today, the building still serves as multi-family housing.

Context within Baltimore City Schools

Baltimore City has been home to hundreds of school buildings over its long history. However, relatively few of them survive to the present day. As noted in this report, many schools became less suitable or safe for continued use, and the needs of the school system and the communities changed. A survey of the extant nineteenth century public schools in Baltimore helps provide a better contextual understanding of the Clifton School. A survey of the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties and National Register of Historic Places (both available on the Maryland Historical Trust's MEDUSA Maryland Cultural Resource Information System), as well as records in CHAP files, documents that there are only fourteen nineteenth century Baltimore City public school buildings that survive to present day (see Table 1). Of those, only six were built prior to the 1890s, including the Clifton School.

In considering these fourteen buildings, the Clifton School is markedly different from the rest. It is the only school that was originally part of the Baltimore County school system; the other "Annex Schools" have been demolished. It is also the most modest school that survives to present day. This difference in size can be attributed to the fact that it was originally designed for the County school system, which had different educational and design standards than the City. This building was intended to serve a small village, with apparently no forethought regarding population growth. While a couple other surviving nineteenth-century schools have additions, in those cases, they retained the original orientation of the oldest portion of the building, unlike at the Clifton School, which flipped the primary orientation of the building when the addition was constructed. It frankly is a wonder that it survived to present day; and its survival is likely thanks to the School Board seeing value in retaining it in the early twentieth century, reusing it for offices in the mid-twentieth century, and for the requirements in the Coldstream Homestead Montebello Urban Renewal Plan to retain and rehabilitate the school in the late 1970s. This landmark designation will help ensure that the Clifton School and its legacy will be retained and continue to serve future generations of Baltimoreans.

Application of Landmark Designation Criteria

The property meets CHAP Landmark Designation criteria, as follows:

The quality of significance in Baltimore history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, public interiors, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

B. A Baltimore City Landmark may be a site, structure, landscape, building (or portion thereof), place, work of art, or other object:

1. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of Baltimore history; or

3. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction

The Clifton School is the sole surviving building that tangibly represents the educational experience of students living in the growing suburbs of Baltimore City in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Originally constructed in 1882 as a Baltimore County school, it served City students following annexation in 1888. In a relatively unusual decision in 1915, the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners opted to retain the schoolhouse and build an addition on it to increase capacity instead of demolishing the schoolhouse. Today, it is the only Baltimore County school still extant in the City and is one of only 6 public school buildings remaining that was constructed prior to 1890. Architecturally, it is representative of two periods of construction, and two different architectural styles that are compatible in materials, scale, and details. This structure was designed by Baltimore architects Frank E. Davis (1882 building), and the firm Smith & May (1915 addition), both well-established and celebrated architects.

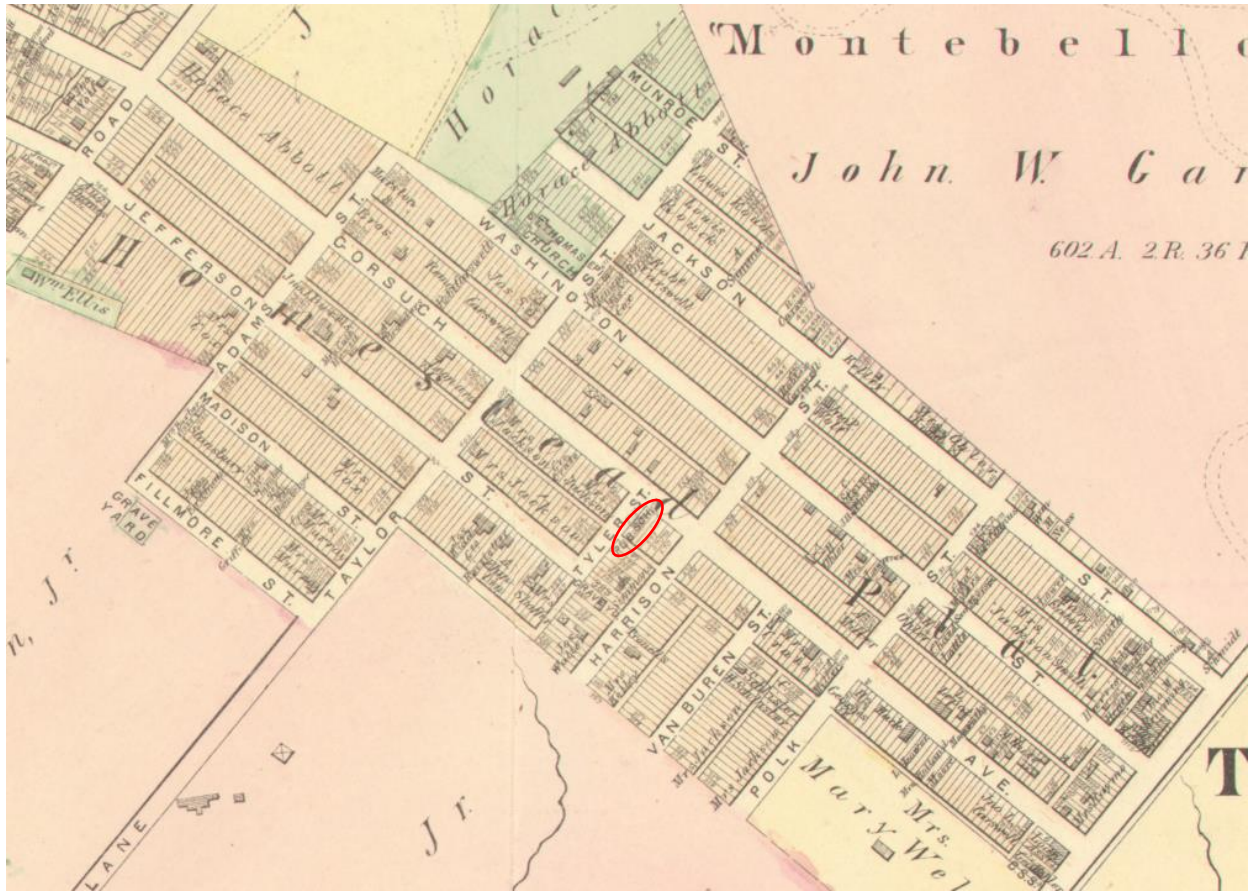
Maps



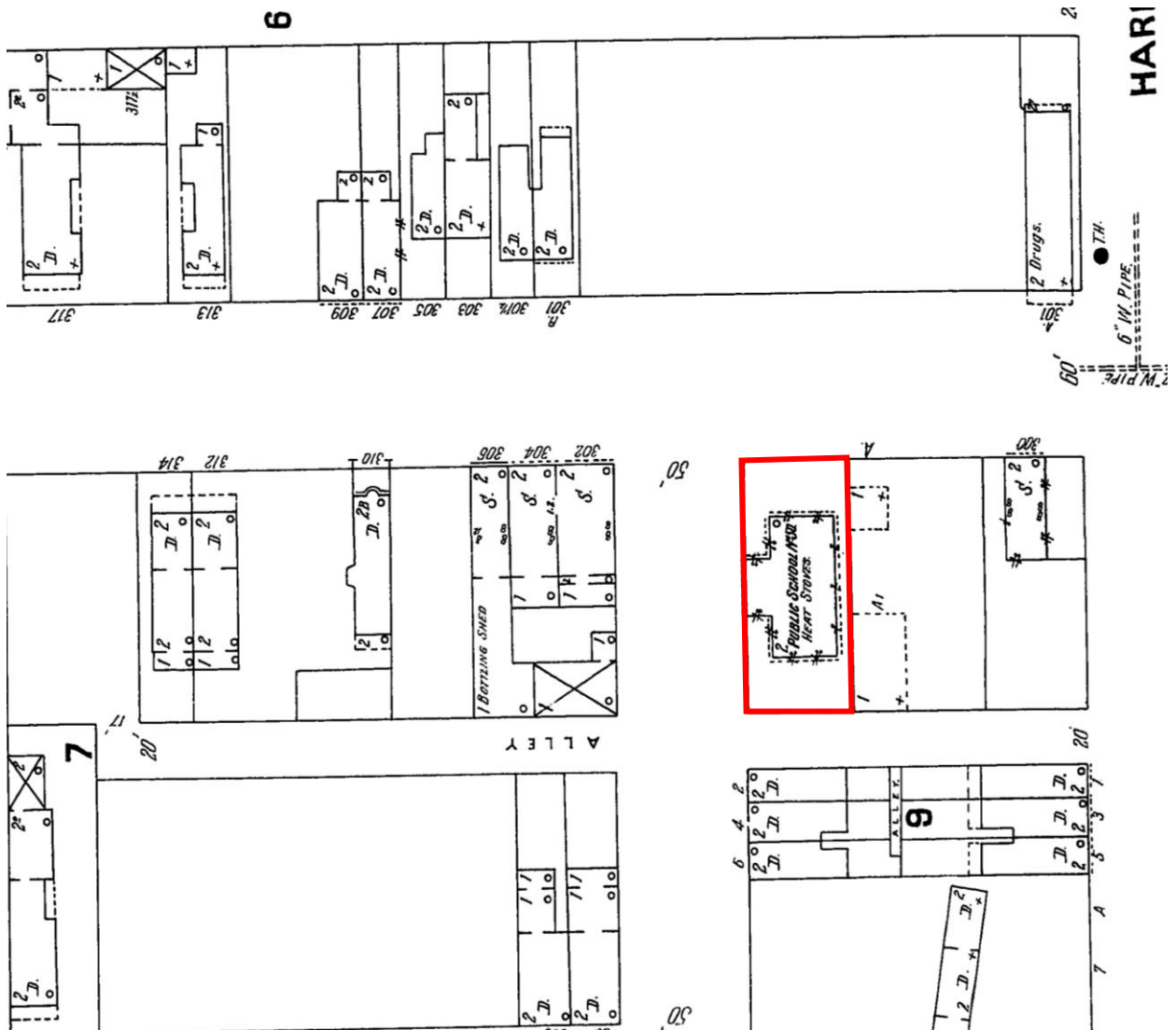
Map 1: Locator Map, 2670 Kennedy Avenue marked with a red star.



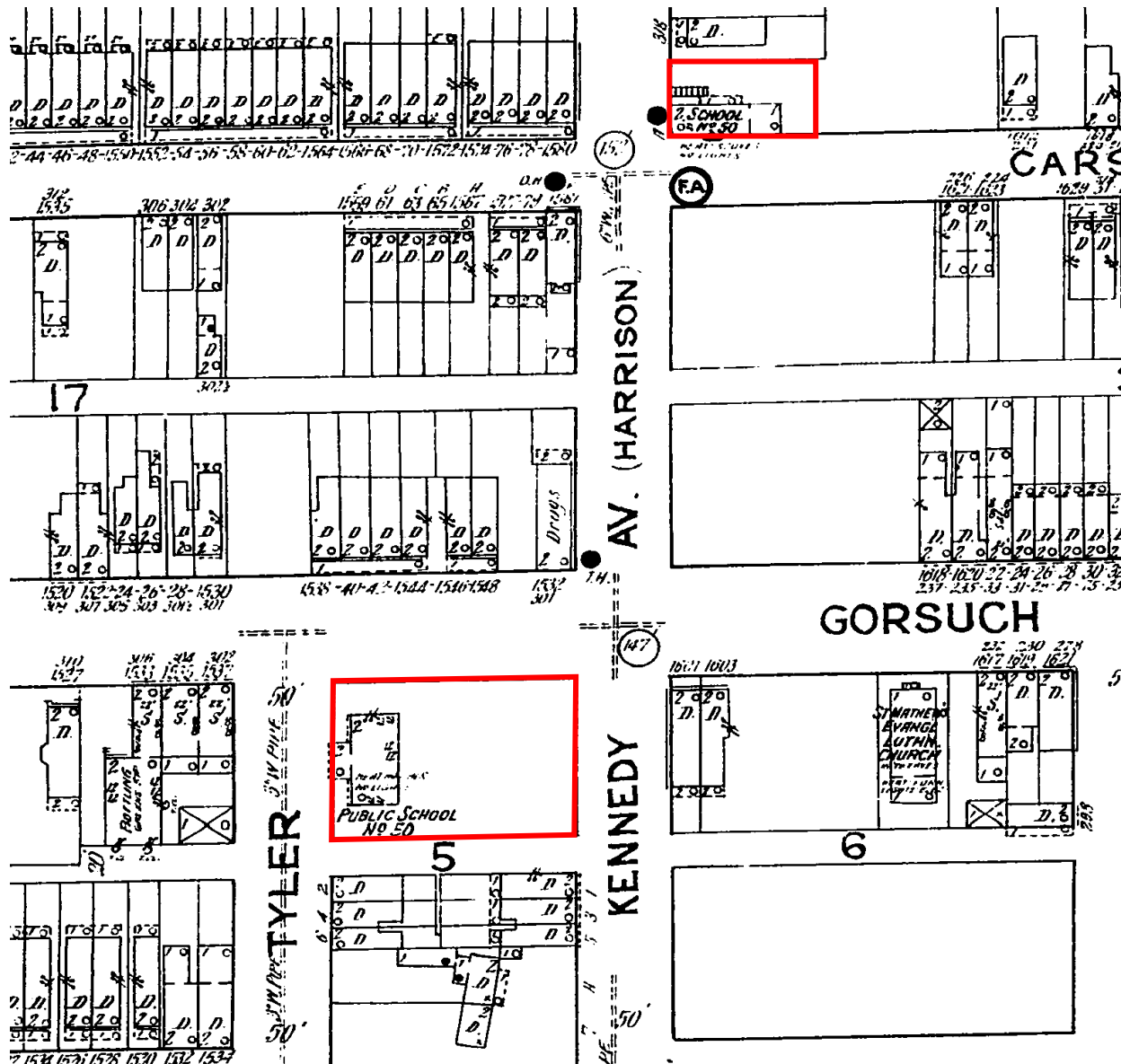
Map 2: Detailed map of 2670 Kennedy Avenue, marked in red.



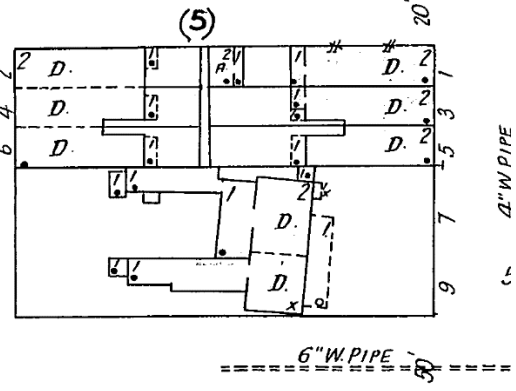
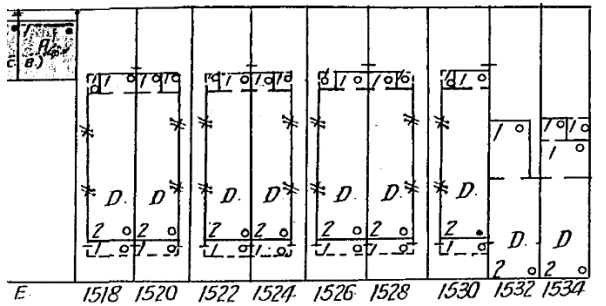
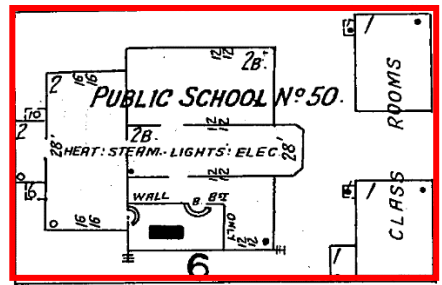
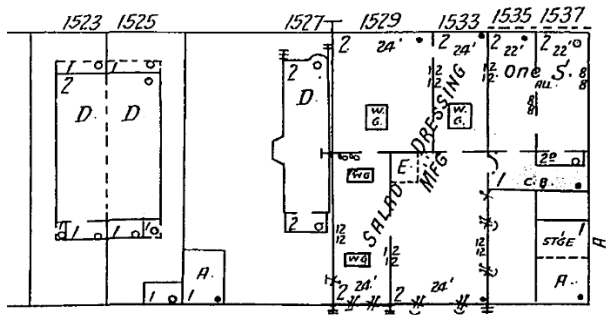
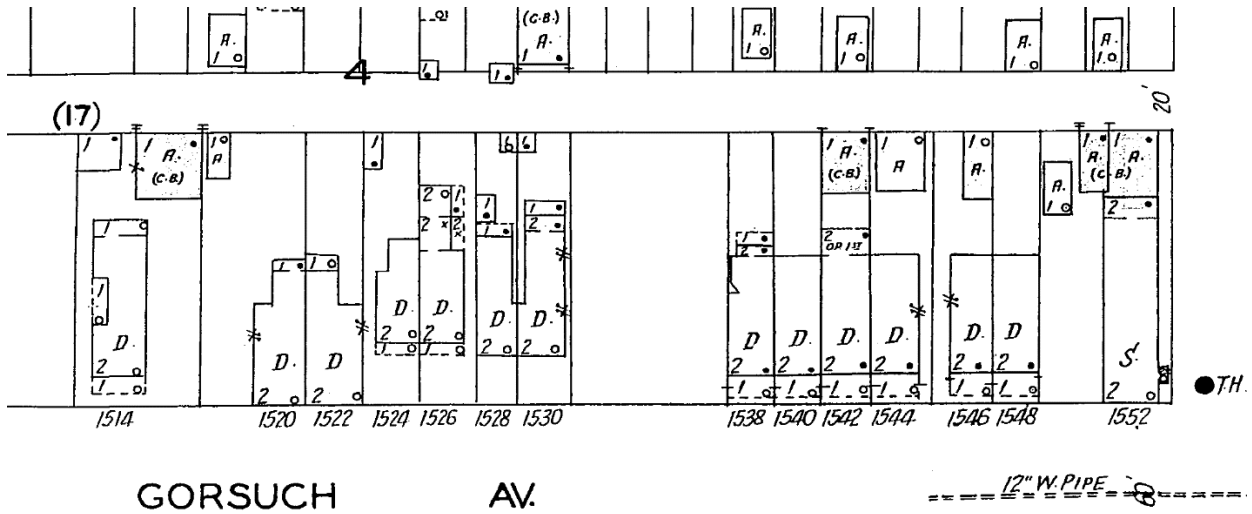
Map 3: The “Homestead Plat” depicted in G. M. Hopkins’ 1876 *City Atlas of Baltimore, Maryland, and Environs, Volume 1, Plate Q* (pages 63-64). This was the original boundaries of Homestead village. A school building was located at Tyler and Gorsuch Street, circled in red.



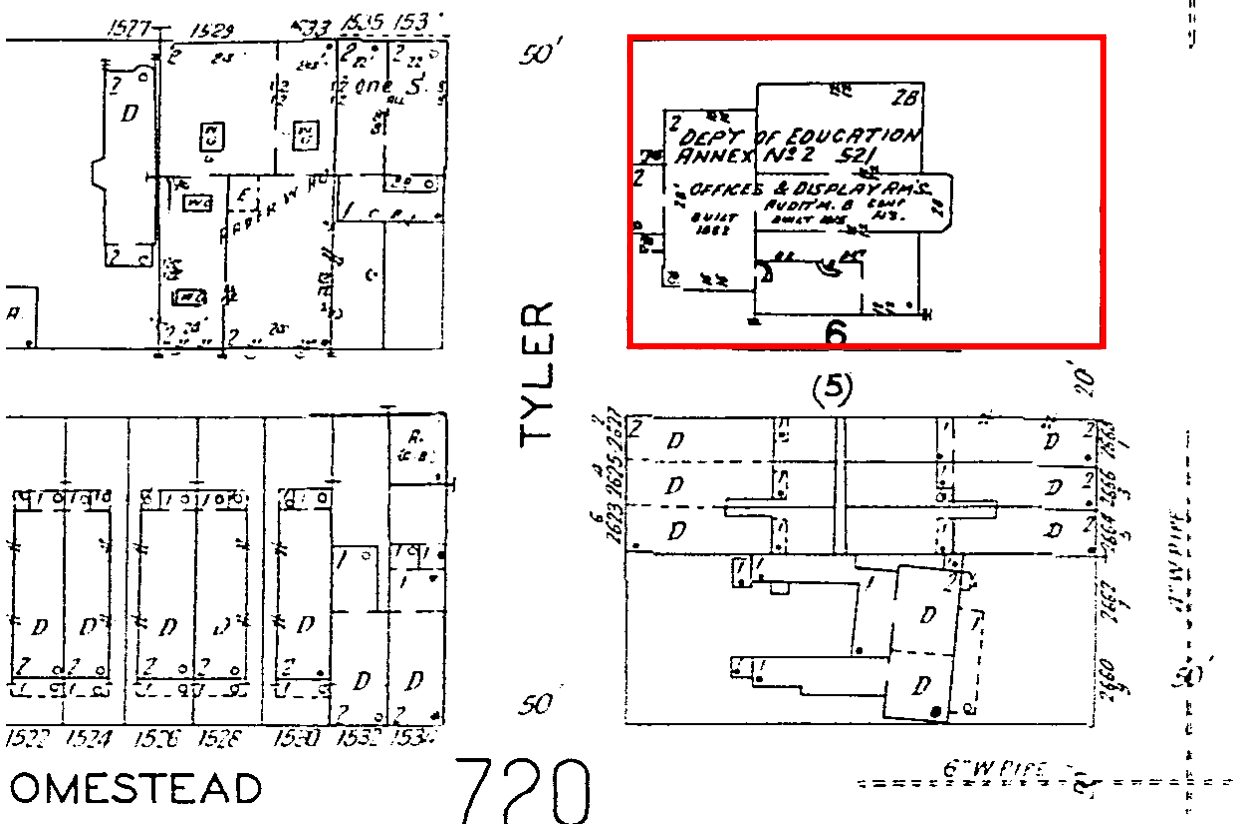
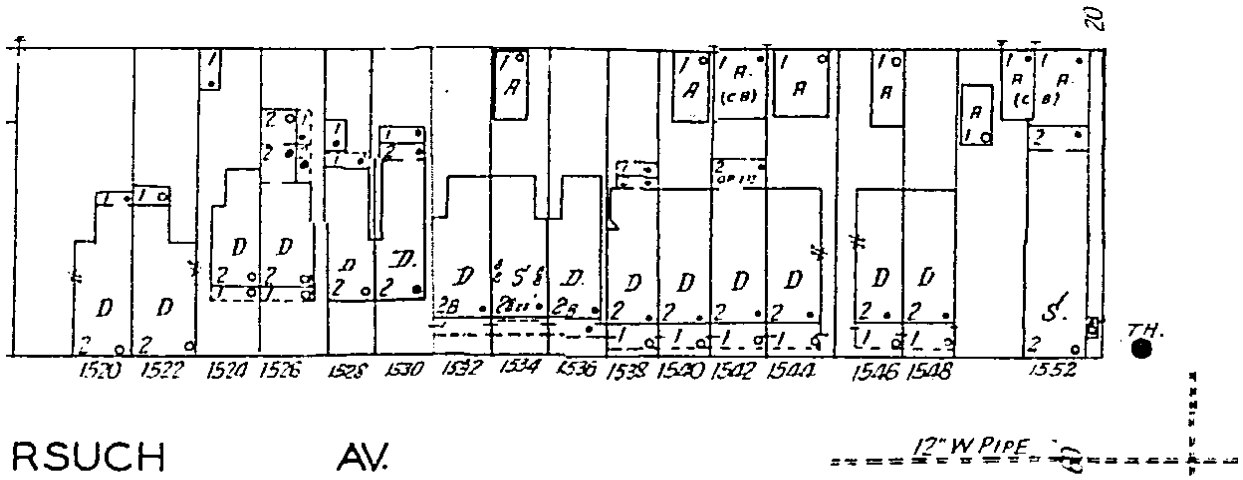
Map 4: 1902 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (Volume 3, Page 353), depicting the 1882 building. There are two structures on the adjacent lot that were possibly temporary classrooms.



Map 5: 1915 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (Volume 7, Page 714), depicting the 1882 building, now shown on one large parcel that spans from Tyler Street to Kennedy Avenue. Nearby, at the corner of Kennedy and Carswell Streets, a building is being used as a school annex.



HOMESTEAD 720
 Map 6: 1928 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (Volume 7, Page 719), depicting the 1882 building and the 1915 addition, along with two temporary classroom buildings in the schoolyard.



Map 7: 1953 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (Volume 7, Page 719), with the building identified as "Department of Education Annex No. 2, Building 521"

Photos



Image 1: 2020 Aerial Photo of property, view from North. (Eagleview)



Image 2: 2020 Aerial Photo of property, view from South. (Eagleview)

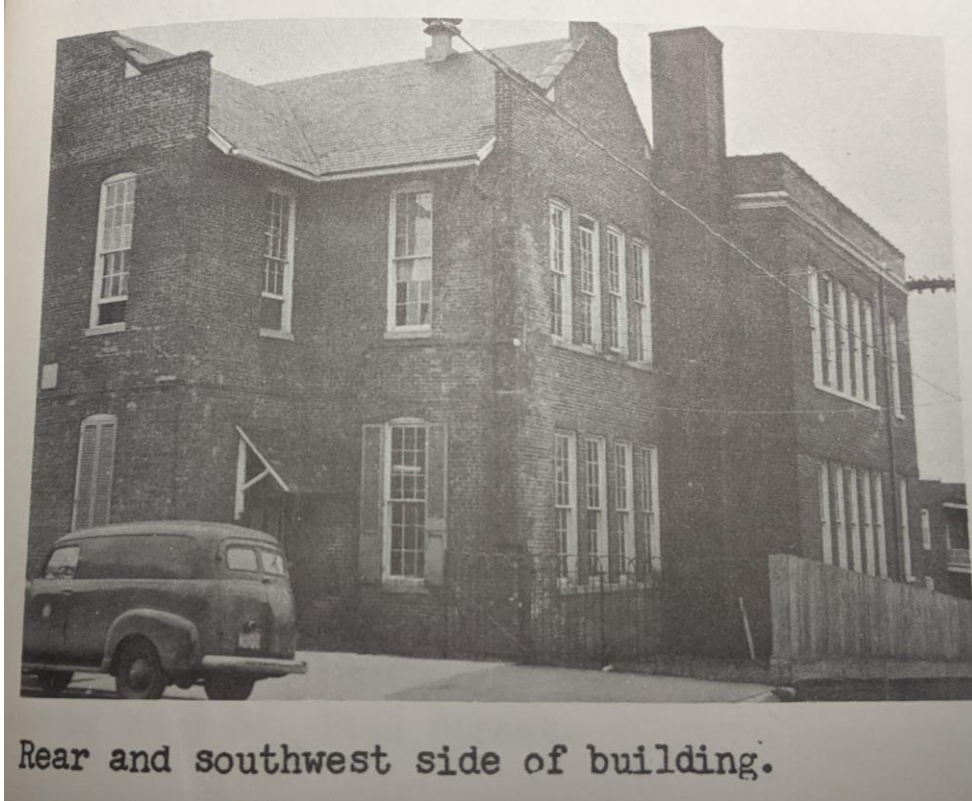


Image 3: Photo of the Tyler Street elevation (1882) and alley elevations in the 1953 School Plant Directory published by Baltimore City Public Schools.

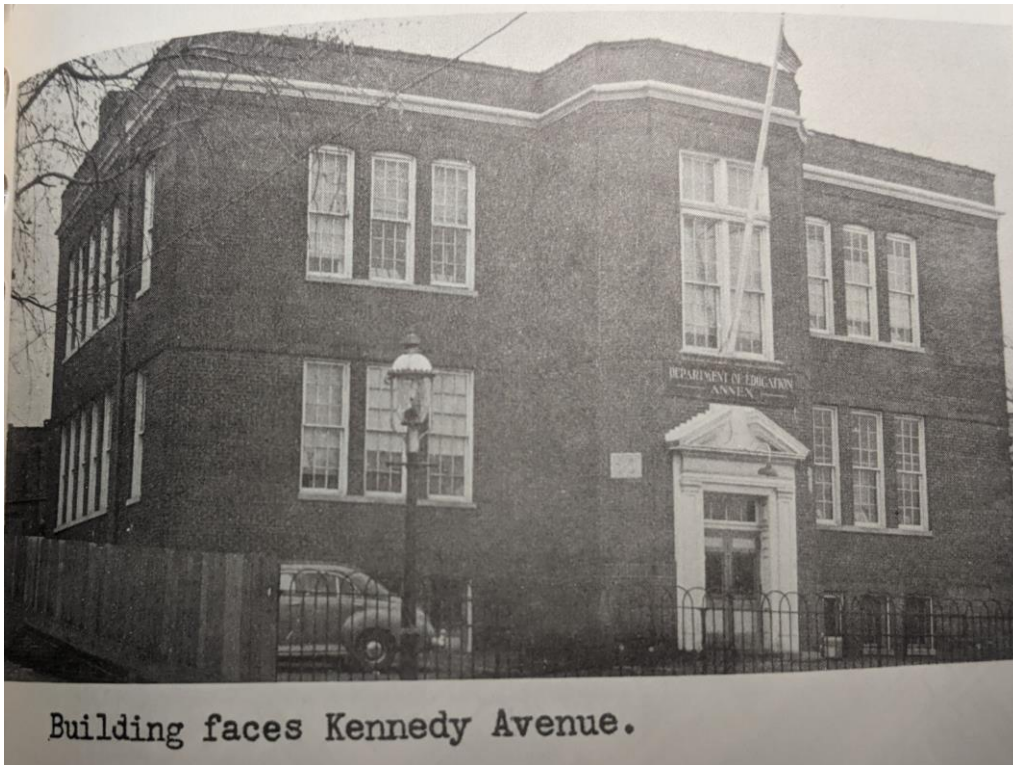


Image 4: Photo of the Kennedy Avenue elevation (1915) in the 1953 School Plant Directory published by Baltimore City Public Schools.

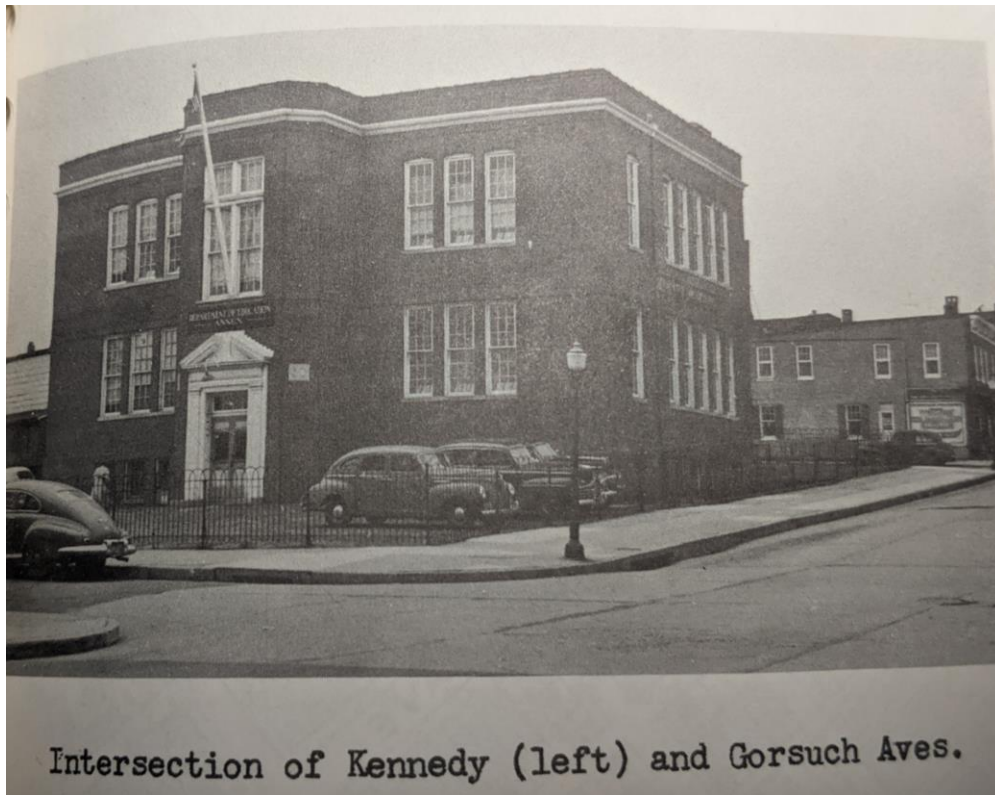


Image 5: Photo of the Kennedy and Gorsuch Avenue elevations in the 1953 School Plant Directory published by Baltimore City Public Schools.



Image 6: The Gorsuch Avenue and Tyler Street elevations in January 2021.



Image 7: The datestone on the Tyler Street elevation.



Image 8: The Kennedy Avenue elevation in January 2021.



Image 9: The Gorsuch Avenue elevation in January 2021.



Image 10: The alley elevation in January 2021.

Tables

Date	Name	Address	Architect	Historic Designation
1854	Primary School No. 15	1024 Light Street	Unknown	Contributes to the Federal Hill local and National Register historic districts
1867	Grammar School No. 4	826 S. Sharp Street	J. J. Husband	Maryland Inventory of Historic Places
1869-1870	Eastern Female High School	249 Aisquith Street	R. Snowden Andrews	Baltimore City Landmark, National Register of Historic Places
1877	P.S. 103, Henry Highland Garnet School	1315 Division Street	George Frederick	Baltimore City Landmark, National Register of Historic Places
1880	Male Grammar and Primary School No. 1	520 W. Fayette Street	Frank E. Davis	National Register of Historic Places
1882	Clifton School	2670 Kennedy Avenue	Frank E. Davis	National Register of Historic Places
1890	School 33, The Armistead School	1417 Light Street	Unknown	Contributes to the Federal Hill South National Register Historic District
1890/1930	Grammar School #20, Sir Robert Eden School	1400 E. Federal Street	Frederic A. Fletcher (1931 addition)	Contributes to the Old East Baltimore National Register Historic District
1891/1905/1912	Public School #99, Columbus School	2000 E. North Avenue	Unknown	National Register of Historic Places
1892	Public School No. 25	511 S. Bond Street	Charles Kratz	Contributes to the Fells Point local and National Register Historic Districts
1892	Public School #111, Frances Ellen Harper School	1024 Carrollton Avenue	Unknown	National Register of Historic Places
1895	Booker T. Washington Middle School	1310 McCulloh Street	Alfred Mason	Baltimore City Landmark, contributes to the Old West Baltimore National Register Historic District
1896	Public School No. 37	1125 N. Patterson Park Avenue	Unknown	National Register of Historic Places
1897	African-American School No. 9	1431 N. Carey Street	Alfred Mason	Contributes to the Old West Baltimore National Register Historic District

Table 1: Extant Nineteenth Century Schools in Baltimore City

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- ¹ Barbara Hoff, “‘Clifton School,’ National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form” (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1982), Section 7, Page 1, https://mht.maryland.gov/secure/Medusa/PDF/NR_PDFs/NR-704.pdf.
- ² Hoff, Section 7, Page 1.
- ³ Robyn Chrabascz, “‘Coldstream Homestead Montebello Historic District,’ National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form” (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2012), Section 8, pages 71-72, https://mht.maryland.gov/secure/medusa/PDF/NR_PDFs/NR-1541.pdf.
- ⁴ Chrabascz, Section 8, Page 73.
- ⁵ “Other 5 -- No Title,” *The Sun (1837-1995)*, August 24, 1850.
- ⁶ “Other 5 -- No Title,” *The Sun (1837-1995)*, November 1, 1853.
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- ⁹ John Thomas Scharf, *History of Baltimore City and County, from the Earliest Period to the Present Day: Including Biographical Sketches of Their Representative Men* (L.H. Everts, 1881), 890.
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- ¹⁵ “CLIFTON AS A PARK: Homestead Improvement Association Wants the City to Acquire It,” *The Sun (1837-1995)*, April 7, 1894.
- ¹⁶ Scharf, *History of Baltimore City and County, from the Earliest Period to the Present Day*, 890.
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- ¹⁹ Weldon Wallace, “Montebello Church's Demise Parable Of An Urban Parish” *The Sun (1837-1991)*; Dec 6, 1970; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Baltimore Sun pg. 30
- ²⁰ Mike Dausch, personal communication, 3/15/2017
- ²¹ Richard Schuerholz, Jr. “Letters to the Editor: Blockbusting Opposition” *The Sun (1837-1991)*; Jun 5, 1969; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Baltimore Sun pg. 14)
- ²² Dausch; Douglas Connah Jr. “Blockbusting in Baltimore: less blatant and rapacious: The old ...” *The Sun (1837-1991)*; Jan 26, 1969; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Baltimore Sun pg. K2)
- ²³ *Ibid.*
- ²⁴ “About Us”, Coldstream Homestead Montebello Community Corporation, <https://www.liveinchm.org/-about-us>
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- ²⁶ Correspondence of the Baltimore Sun, “Baltimore County Affair: Habeas Corpus--Public School Matters TEACHERS OF COLORED SCHOOLS,” *The Sun (1837-1995)*, August 2, 1881; “LOCAL MATTER: Brief Locals,” *The Sun (1837-1995)*, September 12, 1881.
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- ⁴⁹ Preston.
- ⁵⁰ Preston.
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- ⁵² “GROUP HEADS PLACED: Fourteen Made Principals Of Elementary Schools THREE YET TO BE CARED FOR Leave Of Absence For Remainder Of Term Granted To Mr. Soper-Annals Are Allowed,” *The Sun (1837-1995)*, February 15, 1912.
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- ⁵⁵ Hoff, Section 8, Page 4.
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