

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Mark Twain School

other names/site number Poplar Bluff Museum

2. Location

street & number 1012 N. Main Street not for publication N/A

city or town Poplar Bluff vicinity N/A

state Missouri code MO county Butler code 023 zip code 63901

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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 nationally statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Claire F. Blackwell 24 Dec. 97
Signature of certifying official Claire F. Blackwell Date
Deputy SIFPO

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register _____
 See continuation sheet.
 determined eligible for the _____
National Register
 See continuation sheet.
 determined not eligible for the _____
National Register
 removed from the National Register _____
 other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

Mark Twain School
Name of Property

Butler County, MO
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply) Category of Property (Check only one box)

private
 public-local
 public-State
 public-Federal

building(s)
 district
 site
 structure
 object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count).

| Contributing | Noncontributing | |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| <u>1</u> | <u>0</u> | buildings |
| <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> | sites |
| <u>0</u> | <u>1</u> | structures |
| <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> | objects |
| <u>1</u> | <u>1</u> | Total |

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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

Historic Resources of Poplar Bluff, Missouri

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

| | |
|------------------|---------------|
| <u>EDUCATION</u> | <u>School</u> |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

| | |
|-------------------------------|---------------|
| <u>RECREATION AND CULTURE</u> | <u>Museum</u> |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS
Classical Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

| | |
|------------|-----------------|
| foundation | <u>concrete</u> |
| roof | <u>asphalt</u> |
| walls | <u>brick</u> |
| other | <u>wood</u> |

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Mark Twain School
Name of Property

Butler County, MO
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions).

EDUCATION

Period of Significance

1910 - 1947

Significant Dates

1910

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Architect/L.B. Walker
Builder/J.W. Litton

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Department of Natural Resources

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 1

Mark Twain School
name of property
Butler County, Missouri
county and State
Historic Resources of Poplar Bluff, MO

Summary

The Mark Twain School is a two-story, H-plan, Neo-Classical style, public school building. The Mark Twain School, also known as the Poplar Bluff Museum, is located at 1010 North Main Street in Poplar Bluff, Missouri. The building was constructed in 1910 as a public school and was acquired in 1988 by the City of Poplar Bluff for use as a museum. The building is located on a large urban lot in a residential area northwest of downtown Poplar Bluff. Constructed of brick laid in stretcher bond, the building is composed of two, parallel, rectangular-plan, hipped roof blocks joined by an enclosed two-story flat roof corridor. The building rests upon a scored, cast concrete, raised basement and a cast concrete watertable extends along all four sides of the building. The building has a hipped roof of asphalt shingles. Some interior floor, wall, and ceiling surfaces have been added but the overall floor plan remains intact. Despite the loss of its original windows, the school retains overall integrity of its design, character, and setting. A columned monument added in 1995 is also located on the property, and is included as a non-contributing structure. The building is included within the Public Buildings (Schools) property type of the Historic Resources of Poplar Bluff, Missouri, multiple property nomination.

Narrative Description

The Mark Twain School is a two-story brick building completed in the Neo-Classical style. On the main (west) facade of the building is the primary entrance which has double doors of ca. 1970 aluminum and glass. Above the doors is a ca. 1970 aluminum and glass transom. The entrance is framed by cast concrete Doric motif pilasters and directly above the entrance is the inscription "Mark Twain School, 1910" etched in cast concrete panels. The cast concrete pilasters are continued at the second floor level and at the roofline above the primary entrance is a projecting gable with an exterior of pressed metal shingles. In the gable field is a circular glass attic window.

Windows throughout the building were replaced ca. 1975 with one-over-one aluminum sash windows. On the south, east, and north facades the original window openings have been enclosed with wood panels. Basement windows have also been enclosed with wood panels. The window openings retain their original brick sills and cast concrete lintels on the first floor and brick corbelling over the second floor windows. Below the roofline between each window bay is corbelled brick. The building has a wide eave with paired wood modillion blocks. Corbelled, engaged, corner pilasters are located on all elevations. A system of gutters and downspouts leads from the cornice to the ground level.

The Mark Twain School retains only one original exterior door. A three-panel, three-light wood door entry is located in the south bay of the east (rear) elevation. The building's remaining exterior doors on the north, east, and south facades were removed ca. 1970 and consist of paired and single glass and aluminum doors. These entrances are covered by frame shed roofs and are accessed by flights of cast concrete steps. Basement entrances are located on the building's north and south elevations and are located within one-story, scored, cast concrete, gable roof wings. Steel fire escapes with steel supporting posts and hand railings were attached to the north and south facades ca. 1970.

The interior of the building maintains its original floor plan and consists of four classrooms per floor with central connecting corridors. A flight of double-run, wood stairs are located on either end of the central hallway and connect the basement, first floor, and second floor levels. Both stairways feature closed stringers with smooth plaster finishes wood treads and risers. The stairs retain original square newel posts.

Many spaces retain original plaster walls and most entrances retain original single-light, three-panel glass and wood doors. Transom spaces over the doors were enclosed ca. 1970 with plywood panels. In recent remodeling for museum purposes, paneled, acoustical tile drop ceilings with recessed florescent lighting were installed on the first floor. Second floor ceilings were concealed with scored

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 2

Mark Twain School
name of property
Butler County, Missouri
county and State
Historic Resources of Poplar Bluff, MO

acoustical tile, and exposed florescent tube lighting was attached directly to the ceiling's surface. Original ceiling height has been retained in the hallways and on the second floor. The recent remodeling has also resulted in the covering of the original wood floors in the hallway with carpeting while classroom flooring was covered in linoleum.

An original classroom has been retained on the second floor and features original chalkboards, wood flooring, radiators, window surrounds, and sills. As elsewhere in the building, original windows and framing were removed and are now enclosed by plywood panels.

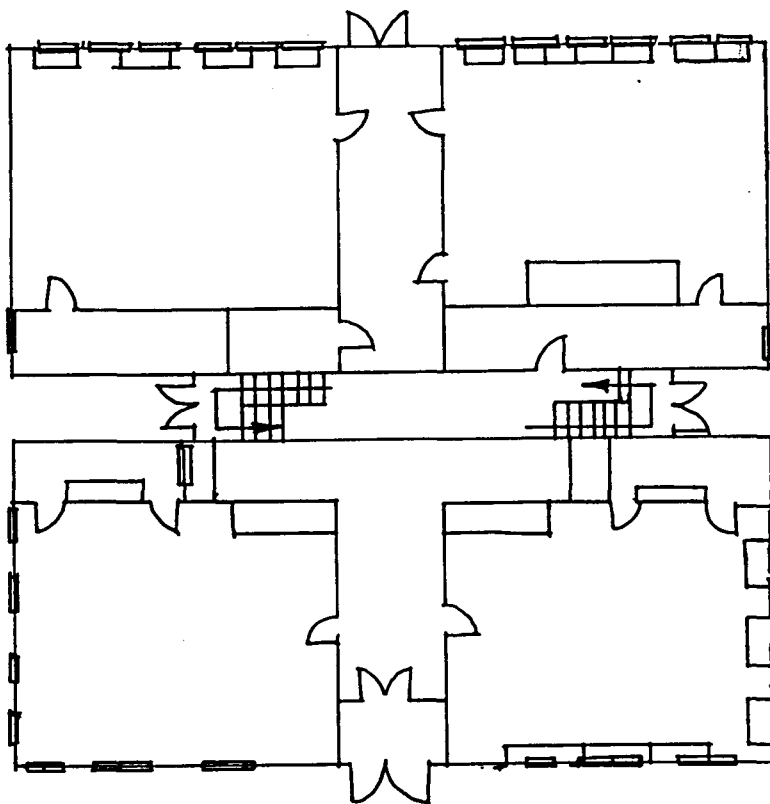
The Mark Twain School rests on a gently rolling grassed lot and is located facing west towards North Main Street. An asphalt paved parking lot adjoins the building on the south elevation. An interconnected system of cast concrete and brick paved sidewalks lead to the building. In front of the main entrance on the west facade are two original concrete and metal light standards which are included as contributing structures. A colonnade which consists of four monumental Doric columns resting on a cast concrete base stands to the northwest of the Mark Twain School. Originally these columns formed the portico of Poplar Bluff's first federally owned post office. Erected in 1914, the post office was demolished in 1975. The columns were salvaged and erected on the grounds of the Mark Twain School in 1995 and are included as a non-contributing structure to the property. With these exceptions, there are no other buildings or structures on the Mark Twain School property.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 3

Mark Twain School
name of property
Butler County, Missouri
county and State
Historic Resources of Poplar Bluff, MO



Mark Twain School
1010 N. Main Street
Poplar Bluff, Missouri
Floor Plan, First Floor
Not To Scale

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 4

Mark Twain School
name of property
Butler County, Missouri
county and State

Historic Resources of Poplar Bluff, MO

SUMMARY

The Mark Twain School is significant under National Register Criterion A for its role in the 20th century educational history of Poplar Bluff. The school was completed in 1910 to serve as the community's primary high school on the north side of Poplar Bluff. It served as the city's primary high school from 1910 to 1951 and remained in use as an elementary school until 1988. The building is the oldest remaining public school building in the city and it retains much of its overall form and plan. In recent decades the original doors and windows of the building were replaced or enclosed and it no longer retains sufficient character to be nominated for its architectural significance. The building is presently undergoing remodeling for use as the Poplar Bluff Museum. The building's period of significance extends from its construction date to its fifty year benchmark of 1947. The building is associated with the historic context of Public Buildings (Schools) of Poplar Bluff, Missouri, ca. 1883 - 1945. The building is included within the Public Buildings (Schools) property type of the Historic Resources of Poplar Bluff, Missouri, multiple property nomination.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Built in 1910, the Mark Twain School cost \$11,300 to build, and is located in the residential area north of downtown Poplar Bluff. The construction of the school was an important step in the development of the Poplar Bluff school system. The first school in Poplar Bluff was established in 1869 by the "Butler County Education Society."¹ This two-story frame building was succeeded by a new brick public school in 1875. By 1884, three hundred children of school age attended the public school in the city. This school, known as the Benton School, was demolished and in 1923 the Williamson-Kennedy School was built on its site.

By 1891, the growth of Poplar Bluff necessitated the construction of a new high school building. Known as Central High School, this brick building served as the city's only high school facility for the next two decades. During these years, Poplar Bluff's population continued to rapidly increase and by 1910 a new high school building was required. A lot was purchased on North Main Street and a large, two-story brick building was erected in 1910. The school was named for Mark Twain, the pseudonym for Samuel Langhorne Clemens (1835-1910), a renowned American writer and humorist from the late nineteenth century who died the year the school was built. Clemens' parents moved to Missouri from Fentress County, Tennessee, in 1835 (just months prior to Twain's birth). Mark Twain wrote several novels in the late nineteenth century, which are considered benchmarks in American literature, including *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *Life on the Mississippi*. Although Mark Twain never resided in Butler County, he was a folk hero of Missouri and the school was named in his honor.

The construction of the Mark Twain School was in accordance with modern school plans of the period. The building's incorporation of an H-shaped floor plan and raised basement suggest the influence of architect William B. Ittner, St. Louis, Missouri's Commissioner of School Buildings. In 1898, Ittner introduced the use of an H-shaped plan with a raised basement to St. Louis public school design. Ittner's plan, which advocated fireproof construction and the increased use of natural light, represented the first departure from traditional school planning.² Ittner's concept appeared in a variety of publications and was quickly adopted by architects in other communities.

¹ Deem, *History of Butler County*, p. 79.

² National Register Nomination, "St. Louis Missouri, Public Schools of William B. Ittner."

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 5

Mark Twain School
name of property
Butler County, Missouri
county and State
Historic Resources of Poplar Bluff, MO

The design for the Mark Twain School reflected the Neo-Classical style of the period. The style was popularized during the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago and its employment of monumental porticos and classical detailing was widely used in the early 20th century for schools and public buildings. Common features included porticos with columns or pilasters on the main facade, symmetrical designs, and eaves with dentils and/or modillion blocks. The Mark Twain School is a modest example of this style with Neo-Classical influences reflected in its symmetrical plan, Doric motif concrete pilasters which frame the central entrance bay, and its eave modillion blocks. Local architect L.B. Walker designed the building, however, little is known about his career. It appears Walker was a practicing architect in Poplar Bluff during the early 1900s and the Mark Twain School was one of his larger commissions. Walker died in 1915 only five years after he completed his design for the school. John W. Litton was employed to construct the school and it was dedicated in 1910 with actual occupation occurring in 1911.

Upon its completion, the Mark Twain School was the primary high school facility for the city. It contained four large classrooms on each floor along with administrative offices. The 1891 Central High School building became a junior high facility following the construction of the Mark Twain School. Over the next several decades the Mark Twain School continued to serve as Poplar Bluff's only high school. In 1939, Poplar Bluff contained five public grade schools (including the Wheatley and Williamson-Kennedy Schools), a senior high school (the Mark Twain School), and a junior high school (the Central High School). In this year the school system employed 81 teachers and were attended by 2,704 students.³

Following World War II, it became apparent that the Mark Twain School no longer retained sufficient space to accommodate the city's high school students. In 1951, a new school building also called the Mark Twain School, was constructed several blocks north on Main Street. The "old" Mark Twain School was then converted into an elementary school and it remained in this use until 1988. During the 1960s a new high school building was constructed on Highland Drive and the Central High School building constructed in 1891 was demolished. Along with the other elementary schools, the "old" Mark Twain School was remodeled in the 1970s.

The Mark Twain School served as a school for Poplar Bluff for seventy-eight years - from 1910 until 1988 - when it was sold by the Poplar Bluff School Board to the City of Poplar Bluff for a symbolic one dollar. The City of Poplar Bluff converted the school into the Poplar Bluff Museum, which was dedicated on July 3, 1994. The Poplar Bluff Museum presently features four separate rooms with displays for the Butler County Historical Society, the Veteran's Exhibit Room, the Abington-Howorth Room, and the Poplar Bluff Sport Hall of Fame. Through contributions, the museum hopes to develop several departments including the following: Museum, Library, Archives, Iconographic, Oral History, Education, and Publications.

In 1995, a set of four limestone columns were erected in the front lawn of the museum, at the northwest corner of the building. These limestone Doric-style columns, were originally on the portico of the Poplar Bluff Post Office. Built in 1914 at 122 South Broadway, this post office building was closed in 1967 and demolished in 1975. The portico columns were salvaged and erected in front of the school as a memorial to the post office building.

The Mark Twain School served as the city's main high school from 1910 to 1951 and continued in use as an elementary school until 1988. The building is the oldest remaining public school building in the city and retains its original floor plan and overall form. The building's appearance was altered in the 1970s through the use of modern aluminum and glass doors and windows and in recent years other window openings have been enclosed with plywood panels. Due to the extent of these alterations, the building is not nominated for its architectural design but instead for its historical significance. It is hoped that in future rehabilitation of the building that windows and doors in keeping with their original design will be added.

³ Deem, History of Butler County, p. 81.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 6

Mark Twain School
name of property
Butler County, Missouri
county and State
Historic Resources of Poplar Bluff, MO

Additional information on the historic contexts and significance of the Mark Twain School is located in the accompanying Multiple Property Cover Document, "Historic Resources of Poplar Bluff, Missouri."

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 9 Page 7

Mark Twain School
name of property
Butler County, Missouri
county and State
Historic Resources of Poplar Bluff, MO

Bibliography

Deem, David Bruce. History of Butler County, Missouri: A Narrative Account of its Historical Progress, its People and its Principal Interests. Poplar Bluff, MO: Poplar Bluff Printing Company, 1925.

National Register Nomination, "St. Louis Missouri, Public Schools of William B. Ittner." Nomination on file at the Missouri Department of Natural Resources.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 10 Page 8

Mark Twain School
name of property
Butler County, Missouri
county and State
Historic Resources of Poplar Bluff, MO

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary for the Mark Twain School includes all of lot 2 on block 3 of Butler County tax map 13-2-3-2. The lot is bounded on the west by N. Main Street and on the east, south, and west by adjoining property lines.

Verbal Boundary Justification

The boundary for the Mark Twain School includes all property historically associated with the building.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section Photographs Page 9

Mark Twain School
name of property
Butler County, Missouri
county and State
Historic Resources of Poplar Bluff, MO

Mark Twain School
1012 N. Main Street
Poplar Bluff, Butler County, Missouri
Photo by: Thomason and Associates
Date: January 25, 1997
Location of Negatives: Department of Natural Resources

- Photograph No. 1: West and south facades, view towards the northeast.
- Photograph No. 2: West facade, detail of main entrance, view to east.
- Photograph No. 3: South and east facades, view towards the northwest.
- Photograph No. 4: East and north facades, view towards the southwest.
- Photograph No. 5: Interior view of first floor staircase.
- Photograph No. 6: Interior view of museum space on the first floor.
- Photograph No. 7: Post Office monument on the west facade, view to the northeast.













