### National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

historic name Osage Hills School

other names/site number \_\_\_\_N/A\_\_

2. Location

street & numbe	er 1110 Glenwood South	[N/A] not for publication
city or town	Kirkwood	[N/A] vicinity

\_\_\_\_

state	Missouri	code	MO	countv	St. L	ouis (	Countv	code	189	zip code	63122

#### 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 [ ] nationally [ ] statewide [X] locally.

(See continuation sheet for additional comments [ ].)

Mark & Milie

Date

Signature of certifying official/Title

Mark A. Miles/Deputy SHPO

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 certifying official/Title

State or Federal agency and bureau

#### 4. National Park Service Certification

 I hereby certify that the property is:
 Signature of the Keeper
 Date

 [] entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet [].
 Date

 [] determined eligible for the
 National Register
 Date

 [] determined not eligible for the
 National Register.
 Date

 [] determined not eligible for the
 National Register.
 Date

 [] removed from the
 National Register.
 Date

 [] removed from the
 See continuation sheet [].
 Date

 [] other, explain
 Date
 Date

#### **Osage Hills School** Kirkwood, Saint Louis County, Missouri

### 5. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property Contributing Noncontributing
[X] private [ ] public-local	[X] building(s) [ ] district	0buildings
[ ] public-State [ ] public-Federal	{ ] site [ ] structure [ ] object	sites
	[ ] 02]000	structures
		objects
		<u>10</u> Total
Name of related multiple	property listing.	Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.
N/A		0
6. Function or Use		
Historic Function EDUCATION/school		Current Functions VACANT
7. Description		
Architectural Classification		Materials foundation_STONE/Limestone
REVIVALS/Colonial Reviva	<u> </u>	walls BRICK STONE/Limestone
		roof <u>SYNTHETICS</u> other WOOD/Weatherboard

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

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#### Osage Hills School Kirkwood, Saint Louis County, Missouri

#### 8. Statement of Significance

#### Applicable National Register Criteria

[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.

[] 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**

Property is:

[ ] 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 commemorative property.

 $[\ ]$  G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

#### Areas of Significance EDUCATION ARCHITECTURE

Periods of Significance 1938-1957

**Significant Dates** N/A

Significant Person(s) N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Bonsack and Pearce, Architects, Inc.

#### Narrative Statement of Significance

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

#### 9. Major Bibliographic References

#### **Bibliography**

(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:
- [X] State Historic Preservation Office
- [ ] Other State Agency
- [ ] Federal Agency
- [ ] Local Government
- [] University
- [] Other:

#### Name of repository:\_\_\_

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#### Osage Hills School Kirkwood, Saint Louis County, Missouri

### 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of I	Property <u>7.8</u>	5 Acres						
UTM Refere	nces							
A. Zone 15	Easting 722910	Northing 4271435	E	3. Zone	Easting	Northing		
C. Zone	Easting	Northing	۵	D. Zone	Easting	Northing		
				[] See con	tinuation she	et		
	ndary Descrip undaries of the pro	<b>ption</b> operty on a continuation she	et.)					
Boundary J (Explain why the		selected on a continuation sl	neet.)					
11. Form Pre	epared By							
name/title	Karen Bode I	Baxter and Timothy P	. Malon	ey				
organization	Karen Bode	Baxter, Preservation	Specia	list	_date <u>Marc</u>	ch 29, 2007		
street & num	ber <u>5811 Del</u>	or			telephone	(314) 353-0593		
city or town_	city or town <u>Saint Louis</u> state <u>MO</u> zip code <u>63109</u>							
Additional Documentation Submit the following items with the completed form:								
Continuation Sheets								
Maps								
A USGS m	ap (7.5 or 15 minu	ite series) indicating the prop	perty's loca	ation.				
A Sketch n	A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.							
Photograph	Photographs							
Representative black and white photographs of the property.								
Additional Items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)								
Property Owner (Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)								
name Gregory B. and Sharon E. Dosmann								
street & num	street & number <u>1245 JJ Kelley Memorial Dr.</u> telephone <u>(314) 515-4050</u>							
city or town_	St. Louis		_state_	Missouri	_ zip code6	63131		

### National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Osage Hills School Kirkwood, St. Louis County, MO

#### **Narrative Description**

#### **SUMMARY**

The Osage Hills School, at 1110 Glenwood South in Kirkwood (St. Louis County), Missouri, is a one story (plus partial basement), gabled roof, multicolored brick, Colonial Revival, school building. The original building, completed in 1938 based upon plans by Bonsack and Pearce, Inc., forms an H-shaped plan facing north onto what is now a semi-circular driveway accessed where Glenwood curves west to parallel in front of the north side of the school property. Between 1938 and 1951 a hallway and two additional classrooms infilled the back side of the middle section and in 1951 the west hallway was extended and another classroom was added in a projecting wing on the rear of the building. Each of these additions was carefully integrated into the original design, utilizing the same masonry detailing as the original building. The building sits at the crest of a hill that slopes to the south in a heavily wooded area of St. Louis County with a large paved parking lot along the east side of the building. The design draws heavily on the Colonial Revival style popular in residential designs in the mid-twentieth century, with its unusual basketweave textured brick and stone detailing, the original asbestos shingle roof, its distinctive cupola and flanking dormers on the center wing, the round arched recessed tile friezes on the façade of the flanking wings, as well as all of the original baskethandle arched openings on the façade. The school building retains a high degree of historic integrity with the only visible exterior alteration being the replacement windows and doors, a loss of the distinctive multipaned units, although the original mullion patterns still remain. On the interior it retains its original classroom configuration and walls, including the distinctive large, glazed block high wainscot walls, the stained doors and trim, and the false fireplace mantel in the Kindergarten room. In recent years, dropped acoustical tile ceilings and lighting as well as some carpeting has been added to the interior, usually without severe damage to the historic finishes underneath.

#### Exterior

The façade of the school faces Glenwood and the railroad tracks paralleling the north side of the property. The center section appears to be one and one-half stories tall, but in reality the upper level is only a portion of the large attic and it allows for the vaulted ceiling in the large Assembly Room that comprises this section of the building. This center section is side gabled, with the asbestos shingle roof extending down to the tops of the first floor windows. Centered on the ridge is a small, octagonal, vented cupola and on the façade side of the roof, near each end, are small gabled dormers clad with weatherboards that retain their original wooden, eight-light, paired casement windows. To each side of this taller center section are shorter, one story side gabled wings that connect to the end gabled, projecting classroom wings that create a shallow courtyard for the façade entries.

The center section is divided into a series of five baskethandle arched openings with stone keystones, cornerblocks and sills. The central opening contains the doorway with sidelights to the Assembly Room, with a separate slightly ramped sidewalk leading from the circular drive to this entry. The other four openings have tripartite sashed windows with transoms, although the multipaned window units have been replaced with single light glass windows utilizing the same divisions as the historic windows. Below the windows is ashlar limestone that extends to the ground. Buttress-like brick piers with sloped concrete caps frame each of these openings.

Osaga Hills Sahaal

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

### National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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#### Narrative Description (continued)

The one story connector wings on either side of this center section contain a shorter baskethandle arched opening for the entry doors to each hallway vestibule. These too are divided vertically into three divisions and have transoms above the paired doors and sidelights, but the doors and windows in these entries have been replaced, eliminating the multipaned configuration. However, the interior doorways of these vestibules retain the original multipaned, paired doors and sidelights.

Each of the end gables of these wings has a large round arched recessed frieze of a simple tile with a shallow brick and ashlar stone walled, semicircular planter in front of the frieze. The sides of these arched friezes, as well as the corners of the wing have irregularly placed stone quoining (a feature more commonly seen on Tudor Revival designs). The arched openings have stone sills and keystones as well. There is a soldier brick course connecting the bottom edges of the eaves across the façade and it has a slit vent surrounded by basketweave textured brick in the gable end and a stone sill.

The west elevation continues the ashlar stone foundation and irregularly placed stone quoining, with five bays of paired sashed windows with brick sills and wooden lintels. The windows have been replaced but retain the center mullion in each opening.

The east elevation is more complex, although it too has the same ashlar stone foundation and irregularly placed stone quoining. On the front half it has three rectangular window bays with the same window treatments, but mid-building, there is a pipe rail and exterior concrete stairs paralleling the building that lead down to the basement (mechanical room) entry. The back half of this elevation has single sashed window openings flanking a wide bay window that has a hipped roof extension from the main roof and extends the brick walls and ashlar limestone foundation. Although the window sashes have been replaced, it retains the paired sashed window openings on the face of the bay as well as the canted sashed window openings on each side. The soffit of the bay has scalloped board detailing.

The back (south) side of the building retains its 1951 appearance where the additions span this elevation between the east and west wing's gable ends. The ashlar limestone foundation extends across the entire rear elevation and the east wing's gable end is split by a tapered, end wall, brick chimney which is flanked by single sashed window openings. Because of the side gabled rear addition that now extends across the rear, the east wing no longer projects out from the center section. This center section has a series of five rectangular openings, four of which have paired sashed windows, but the west opening is the paired doors leading to the west hallway adjacent to the west wing. Although these doors have been modified, the interior vestibule retains the original nine light over two panel, paired wooden doors. Outside there is a broad set of concrete steps leading from this entry to the ground level because of the grade change as the property starts to slope downhill. The gable end rear wall of the west wing has a simple rectangular slit vent in the gable end and a decorative soldier course rectangular panel with stone cornerblocks, but is otherwise void of detail. The extended hallway and west wing added in 1951 now extend further into the rear than the main rear wall and nestled to the east side is a shedroofed, wood framed, patio cover. At the east end of the center section is an interior brick chimney with a slender tall brick flue that is positioned behind what is technically a window and between this window bay

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#### Narrative Description

and the one to the east is a narrow doorway that matches one between the west window bay and stair hall wall. Both have simple concrete steps leading down to ground level.

#### **Interior Features**

The interior layout originally consisted of a large Assembly Room with stage in the center section flanked by the hallways which ran parallel to the east and west wings, which each contained two classrooms separated by restrooms. Between 1938 and 1951, the two halls were connected with an addition across the back side of the assembly room and two classrooms were added along the south side of the center section. In 1951, the west hall and wing were extended, adding a small office with a restroom, as well as another classroom.

The Kindergarten Room included a small section at the back of the east hall and utilized the southeast classroom; it had the distinctive bay window with a window seat as well as a brick fireplace with a simple wooden mantel and small decorative tiles in the face of the fireplace. The walls in both the classrooms and halls have a high wainscot of large beige glazed blocks with a black glazed block along the base and simple plaster walls and ceilings above, but most areas now have dropped acoustical tile ceilings. The floors are poured concrete with various layers of tile or carpeting now overlaid on the finish floors. The trim throughout the interior was historically stained wood (although some is now painted), usually set within a plaster opening but some doorways have crown capped trim. Classroom doors are nine light, two vertical panel, stained wood doors. Many of the halls retain the simple wooden shelf ledge with the coat hooks near the top of the wainscoting. Most classrooms have two small coat closets on one end wall with wide storage closet between that has since lost its doors. The small closets have simple slab doors now, but both the storage closet and closet doors are framed with the crown capped trim. The large Assembly Room has a shallow stage along the east end with a framed wall opening to the stage area and the entire Assembly Room has a vaulted, wood beamed ceiling.

#### **Alterations and Integrity Issues**

The school building retains a high degree of architectural integrity. On the exterior, the only alterations have been replacement of the original multipaned window sashes and doors, but these even retained the original multion divisions. On the interior, there is some deterioration to the decorative features (such as holes in the glazed tile walls and damaged plaster), but most features are the historic elements, except for the dropped acoustical tile ceilings and floor coverings. The two additions added between 1938 and 1951 are both historically significant since they fall within the period of significance for the property. The semi-circular drive was not part of the original design, as evidenced by the historic photograph, but it is not known when it was added to the property. The inclusion of both the Kindergarten and Assembly Rooms (with the stage) are distinctive features that became common features in mid-twentieth century grammar schools.

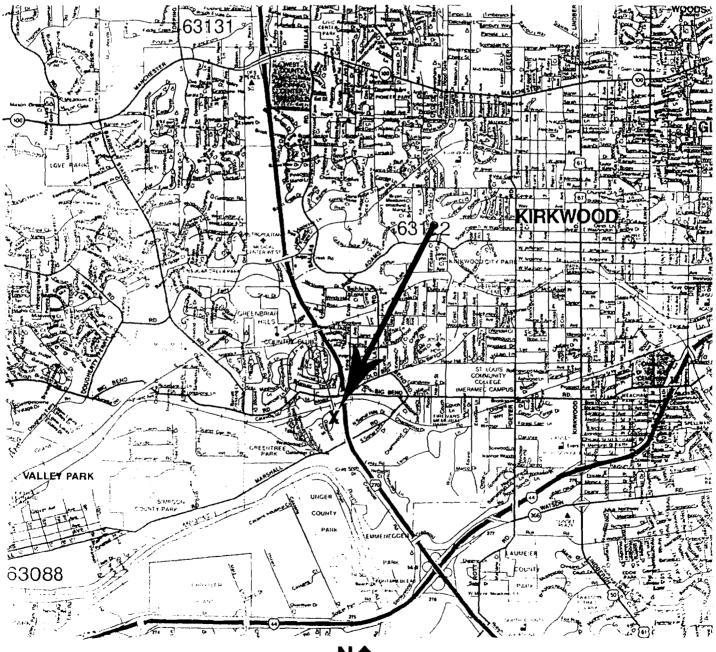
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Osage Hills School Kirkwood (St. Louis County), MO

Map of St. Louis County, MO

#### Locating Property



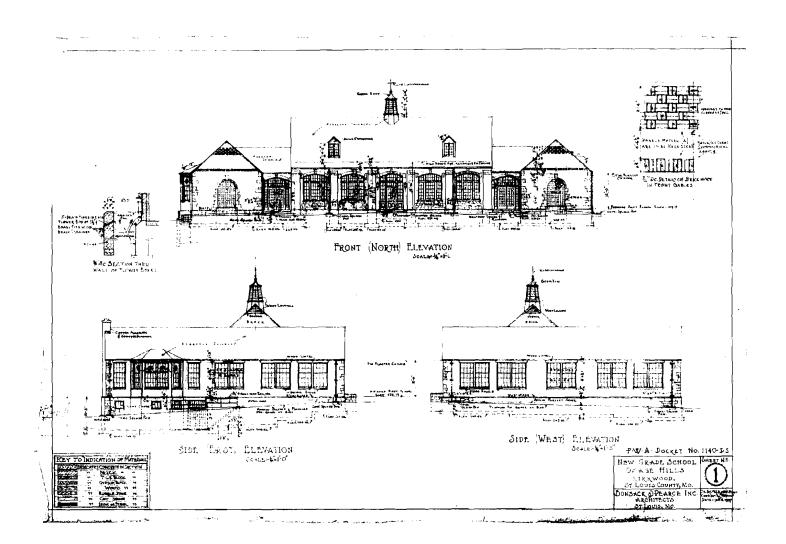
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Courtesy of Greg Dosmann, property owner

#### 1937 North, East, and West Elevations Bonsack and Pearce, Inc., Architects

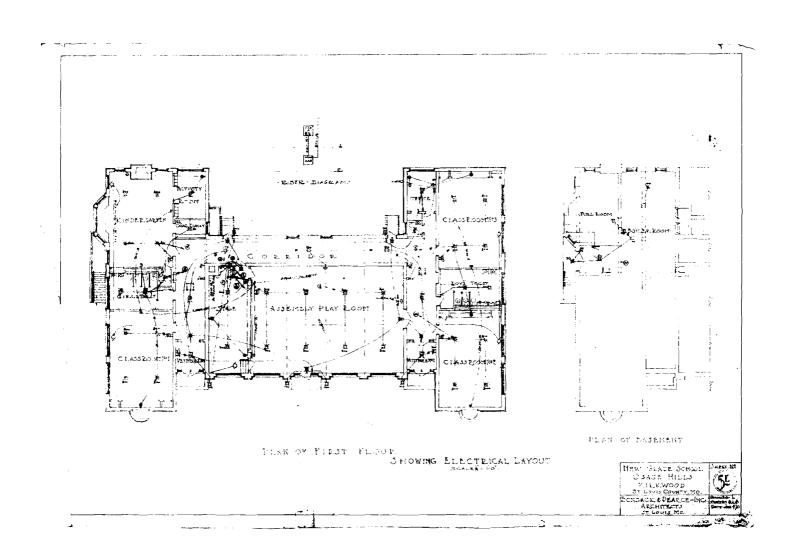


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Courtesy of Greg Dosmann, property owner

1937 First Floor Plan Bonsack and Pearce, Inc., Architects



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Osage Hills School Kirkwood (St. Louis County), MO

Bonsack and Pearce, Inc., Architects

**1951 Addition Floor Plan** 

Courtesy of Greg Dosmann, property owner

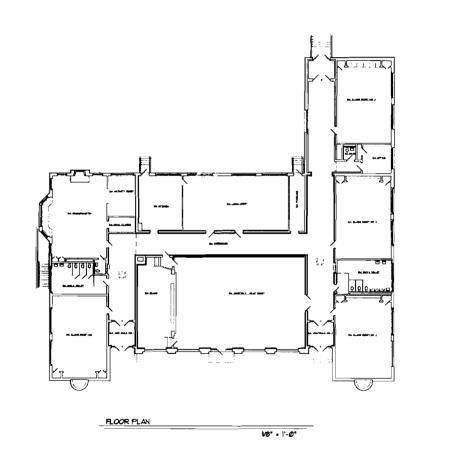
. . . 511:12 Railings SILL Steps 20.41. 613 67 47 CLASS ROOM 4 o 62) 6 d 10.0 **(**2) Č. Section In PLAN OF FIRST FLOOR Scale - K= 10 16 continuous Rods

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Osage Hills School
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Courtesy of Donna F. Boxx, Architect, P.C.

**Existing Floor Plan** 





Photo, 1937 ca.

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

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Osage Hills School Kirkwood (St. Louis County), MO

From "Kirkwood, A Pictorial History, p. 157



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Osage Hills School Kirkwood, St. Louis County, MO

Narrative Statement of Significance

#### Summary

The Osage Hills School, located at 1110 Glenwood South, Kirkwood, Missouri, is locally significant under Criterion C: Architecture as the most distinctive architectural design in southwest Kirkwood; this Colonial Revival institutional building is so significant to the Kirkwood architectural heritage that it has been included on the Kirkwood Landmarks Commission's list of the city's most endangered resources for the past two years. Its design is more reminiscent of a residence than typical school architecture of the era and was carefully crafted to blend with the upscale revival designs (Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival, and French Eclectic) of the homes being built in the new Osage Hills subdivision. The Osage Hills School, built in the Meramec Highlands district for the Kirkwood School Board, was constructed in 1938 with additions in 1944 and 1951, all according to designs by the St. Louis architectural firm of Bonsack and Pearce,<sup>1</sup> a firm known both for its upscale residential designs in the Central West End in St. Louis as well as their distinctive commercial and governmental buildings throughout the region, and it is the only known example of their work in Kirkwood.<sup>2</sup> Osage Hills School is also significant under Criterion A: Education for its role in the expansion of the Kirkwood School district during the 1930s. The school district had initiated an effort to modernize its school system by providing neighborhood grade schools in locations closer to where many of the students lived while taking advantage of the federal matching grant funds available during the Great Depression. This money allowed Kirkwood to modernize its system and to build three new grade schools, including Osage Hills.<sup>3</sup> By utilizing modern building design standards for grade schools to meet the needs of a modern curriculum and educational methods, the new Osage Hills School included a small auditorium/stage area as well as kindergarten classroom complete with a decorative fireplace, and limited the school to a single story level (for the safety of the young children). The residents of the Osage Hills subdivision had requested annexation to Kirkwood and the construction of a new, modern grade school helped the Kirkwood School District "demonstrate its commitment to this newly annexed area."<sup>4</sup> The Osage Hills School was initially constructed for kindergarten, first and second grades, incorporating the kindergarten into the neighborhood school (where previously there had been a separate public kindergarten building in Kirkwood that was phased out by 1939.<sup>5</sup> Between 1938 and 1951 additional classrooms were added, obviously part of the original design since it had included the back hallway in anticipation of this growth, and the school now served kindergarten through sixth grades,<sup>6</sup> a role it continued until the late 1960s although Kirkwood schools continued to use the building until the mid-1980s.<sup>7</sup>

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Osage Hills School Kirkwood, St. Louis County, MO

Narrative Statement of Significance

#### Architectural Legacy of Osage Hills School

The Osage Hills School was designed in 1937-1938 by the St. Louis architectural firm of Bonsack and Pearce, a firm that designed a number of other schools, as well as residences, offices, and industrial buildings. Harvey Pearce and Frederick Bonsack formed their offices in 1921, shortly after Bonsack finished his Navy service during World War I.<sup>8</sup> Pearce was an experienced architect who studied at the Washington University night school and the St. Louis Architectural Club besides working as a draftsman at Edmund Manny, Albert Groves, Eames & Young and Harry Hohenschild, and later becoming partners with Hohenschild in 1919.<sup>9</sup>

Frederick C. Bonsack was the son of a contractor and lumber salesman who eventually became an architect himself. After working with his father, Bonsack joined the Navy during World War I and upon his return started an architectural firm with Pearce. The men worked together until 1953 when Bonsack died and Pearce formed a new firm with his brother, becoming Pearce and Pearce.<sup>10</sup> Bonsack and Pearce's commissions included the Dade County Courthouse, as a WPA project, the Audrain County Courthouse, most of the buildings for the St. Louis Stamp Company complex, Kingshighway Methodist Church, the First Baptist Church in Fulton, Missouri, the Chillicothe City Hall, Washington School, (the African American school) in Monroe City, Missouri, and numerous residences on Washington, Portland Place, and other West End Streets, both private and public in St. Louis, as well as a number of government and institutional buildings constructed during the Great Depression.<sup>11</sup>

The Osage Hills School was one of the few known school buildings constructed by Bonsack and Pierce, and the only surviving school building the firm is known to have designed in the St. Louis area (they had designed Hancock Place High School in Lemay, but it was torn down c.1988).<sup>12</sup> The basic elements of their façade design for the Osage Hills School, including the basic symmetry of the façade, the dormers and cupola on the rooftop, the bay window and transomed and sidelighted entries are all common to mid-twentieth century residential Colonial Revival designs. By then, Colonial Revival residences also tended to be one story in height, unlike earlier variations of this popular revival style, and the architects utilized this trait to provide a single level for Osage Hills 'new grade school. The Colonial Revival style selected by Bonsack and Pearce for the design of Osage Hills School blended well with surrounding residences in the Osage Hills subdivision which were restricted to Colonial Revival, French Eclectic, and Tudor Revival designs, since the school also incorporated exterior features often found on all three revival styles (such as multi-hued brick, rusticated stone detailing ((mostly at the raised foundation)), a wood shingled roof, and multi-paned windows).

The school was one of the first modernly designed (for the time) schools in Kirkwood, providing a healthy and sanitary environment for the school children, with large windows for good ventilation, clean radiator heat, glazed block walls for easy cleaning in both the classrooms and

### National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Osage Hills School Kirkwood, St. Louis County, MO

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

halls, large and spacious classrooms, as well as large restrooms for the children to use, features that were seen as critical to modern education in the mid-twentieth century. Because of evolving curriculums and educational methods, the building was essentially one story tall (except for the boiler room in a basement) since egress requirements for the young children had become a growing concern in case of fire. They also incorporated a low stage and multi-purpose auditorium (with a level floor) in the original design as well as a cozy kindergarten that featured a bay window with a bench seat and a fireplace that incorporated nursery rhyme themes in its decorative tiles on the mantel. Their original design planned for future expansion of the school by including a hallway along the back side of the building, making it easy for them to add rear classrooms in 1944 and 1951.<sup>13</sup>

#### **Kirkwood History**

Kirkwood is a commuter suburb located thirteen miles from downtown St. Louis, six miles from the city limits. The community was founded in 1853 by Hiram W. Leffingwell and Richard Smith Elliott.<sup>14</sup> Leffingwell and Elliott organized a committee headed by themselves and with J. W. Twichell, J. J. Mudd, and William R. Pye to form the Kirkwood Association "to purchase tracts of land on the Pacific Railroad for location and improvement of a villa within a suitable distance of St. Louis."<sup>15</sup> The association found forty local businessmen to invest in the endeavor as a business venture with stock subscribed and paid for by the members. Leffingwell and Elliott were chosen to find a site for the village and they were able to buy three plots of land totaling 240 acres for \$24,400 thirteen miles from downtown St. Louis along the Pacific Railroad where it approaches the Meramec River.<sup>16</sup> The location in St. Louis County (which at the time still included St. Louis City) was divided among the Bonhomme Township, Carondelet Township and Central Township and on a higher point of land than much of the ground in the Meramec River Valley, offering a healthy location for a commuter suburb. After finding the location in an area originally known as Gravois, the Kirkwood Association decided to name the town Kirkwood, in honor of James Pugh Kirkwood, the chief engineer for the Pacific Railroad Company.<sup>17</sup> The first plat was recorded on May 31, 1853 with forty blocks with four lots each. except for the four blocks in the business area where the land was sold by street footage.<sup>18</sup> The plat was recorded after the first Pacific Railroad train had arrived in Kirkwood from St. Louis on May 11, 1853. The first official land sale was also before the plat was recorded, taking place on May 26, 1853 and generating \$47, 017.30 for the sale of only 132 acres.<sup>19</sup> The sale allowed the Kirkwood Association to pay out dividends to the forty investors in the Kirkwood Association of \$30 per share on May 19, 1860 and then issue more dividends on November 19, 1860, May 17, 1861, December 15, 1862, and December 30, 1863, the final dividend payment which took place after all of the land had been sold and which completed all outstanding commitments to shareholders.<sup>20</sup> As a result of the overwhelming success of the development of Kirkwood, the Kirkwood Association was disbanded on December 30, 1863 having completed its purpose of founding a new suburban community, the first designed suburban community in the United

### National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Osage Hills School Kirkwood, St. Louis County, MO

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

States west of the Mississippi.<sup>21</sup>

Kirkwood grew quickly after its founding, aided not only by the access created with the Pacific Railroad, but also because of conditions in St. Louis at the time. In 1848, St. Louis had a cholera outbreak that killed thousands as well as additional cholera outbreaks in 1851, 1852, and 1853. This highlighted the crowded, polluted, diseased conditions prevalent in the city. Kirkwood's growth was also aided by the cheap access from St. Louis. The Pacific Railroad not only ran numerous trains through the area daily, the first tickets were only forty cents for a one way ticket (a one way ticket from St. Louis to Cheltenham (the modern day Dogtown Neighborhood in the city of St. Louis) was fifteen cents and a round trip ticket was twenty-five cents.) <sup>22</sup> Although Kirkwood's growth slowed in the first years of the 1860s because of the Civil War, after the war, Kirkwood's tremendous growth resumed. On February 20, 1865, the state legislature approved the first charter for Kirkwood, three days after the charter for the Kirkwood School District was passed on February 17, 1865.<sup>23</sup> One of the first acts of the new government was to name a town marshal, making the Kirkwood Police Department the oldest department in St. Louis County.<sup>24</sup> One of the other early acts of the government was to make plans to build a public school in Kirkwood, which was opened for classes on September 24, 1866.

#### History of Meramec Highlands/Osage Hills

Marcus Bernheimer was an entrepreneur and businessman in St. Louis who had moved from Louisiana to St. Louis to open a wholesale grocery business in 1875.<sup>25</sup> After successfully starting his wholesale business, Bernheimer was looking for a new business opportunity in the early 1890s. In 1892, Bernheimer left his grocery business and formed the Sunset Hills Electric Light, Water, and Power Company in conjunction with a new health spa he was opening called the Meramec Highlands, located southwest of the Kirkwood city limits where Osage Hills School is now located.<sup>26</sup> During the end of the nineteenth century, country resorts and health spas were popular destinations for wealthy families looking to escape the crowds, pollution and disease of the cities. St. Louis, landlocked hundreds of miles from the coast or resorts along the Great Lakes, did not have many options for such an escape except for those who could afford to be absent all summer long, or at least businessmen who could send their families and then join them for a week or two when work allowed.<sup>27</sup>

Bernheimer found a thirty-eight acre location along the Manchester Division of the United Railway, fifteen miles from downtown St. Louis overlooking the Meramec River (the area now includes Greentree Park, Greenbriar Hills Country Club, and Marshall Field).<sup>28</sup> The location not only offered the river and beaches, but the land also included a sulfur spring that produced 60,000 gallons a day of water, offering the added attraction of a healthy mineral spring.<sup>29</sup> Bernheimer raised \$1,000,000 in capital for the resort and in 1894 opened a hotel with 125 rooms and fifteen guest cottages.<sup>30</sup> The resort also included its own train station, where the Frisco Railroad ran as many as nine trains each way for 10 cents a trip in 1895.<sup>31</sup> In addition,

### National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Osage Hills School Kirkwood, St. Louis County, MO

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

the Meramec Highlands also had a general store, a dance pavilion, a billiard hall, a bowling alley, a swimming beach on the Meramec River, and a boathouse. The mineral water bathhouse offered sulfolithiated water for hot and cold baths, allowing Bernheimer to push the health spa aspect of his resort as well as the accessibility.<sup>32</sup> Bernheimer even had plans for a subdivision, but no lots were ever sold.<sup>33</sup>

After initial success, the resort began to lose its luster in 1905. The streetcars started running to the Highlands for 5 cents, providing east access and thereby eliminating the sense of exclusivity of the Highlands resort. At the time Kirkwood was a dry community, while the Highlands had licenses for a dram shop, allowing liquor to be sold, as well as allowing the saloons that later opened.<sup>34</sup> The combination of easy access to the area via the streetcars and prevalence of alcohol brought in crowds that were increasingly boisterous, creating an atmosphere in which Kirkwood parents made the Highlands off limits to many of their children by the 1910s.<sup>35</sup> As the 1920s started with the passage of Prohibition, the area had been reduced to little more than a boisterous honky-tonk that saw the saloons in the area turn into "restaurants" while the dram shops became "cafes," both of which were thinly veiled cover for speakeasies.<sup>36</sup> A newspaper report in 1923 even reported that " after buying and consuming 14 drinks of moonshine, two prohibition agents... were reasonably certain that prohibition laws were being violated at Leder Hall, a saloon at the Meramec Highlands."<sup>37</sup> The area had become so notorious that one of the workers at the store, Joseph Havaty, was arrested as an accomplice of Pretty Boy Floyd after he stole the Kroger Grocery Company payroll in 1925 with a man known as "Sheik" Hildebrand, offering them a place to hideout and split the money.

The shift in demographics effectively destroyed the area as a resort and in 1925 Bernheimer's heirs sold five hundred acres, including the Meramec Highlands, for \$100,000 to keep from losing the land to a tax sale.<sup>38</sup> The new owners, Ralph Bixby and J. C. Smith, planned a new country club and an exclusive residential development, which could take advantage of the streets that Bernheimer had already laid out.<sup>39</sup> The new owners held a contest with a \$500 prize to name the new development and S. S. Lewis, a teacher at Roosevelt High School and Kirkwood resident, suggested the name Osage Hills. The developers constructed a completely new country club and golf course while continuing to use the residential plans that Bernhimer was never able to bring to fruition.

The Osage Hills subdivision was planned with restrictions and strict covenants and was divided into three areas, each with distinct architecture, one area with Colonial Revival architecture, one with Normandy(aka French Eclectic), and the last with English Tudor.<sup>40</sup> The famed Swiss landscaping engineer and architect, Frans Herdig, was hired to design the development.<sup>41</sup> The developers had a sale day on April 4, 1926, by which time \$400,000 worth of homes had already been sold.<sup>42</sup> After the successful sale day, the new Osage Hills community was growing quickly, and in 1927 the area was annexed by Kirkwood at the request of the residents, but the annexation did not initially include the Meramec Highlands School District.<sup>43</sup>

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Osage Hills School Kirkwood, St. Louis County, MO

#### Narrative Statement of Significance (continued) Kirkwood Educational History

#### **Public Schools**

The Kirkwood School Board was created by the legislature on February 17, 1865, three days before the charter for the town itself was passed by the legislature.<sup>44</sup> The school board needed a site for the new school building and A. G. Edwards and A. S. Mermod found the land and arranged a purchase for a school.<sup>45</sup> The Kirkwood school district grew quickly and in 1869 the white school moved to a new building on a lot that had been purchased originally to build the African American school, while the African American school was moved into the former elementary school. In addition to this expansion, as early as 1876 Kirkwood High School was initially a two-year high school education.<sup>46</sup> Kirkwood finally built a permanent four-year high school in 1896, a building that burned down in 1905.<sup>47</sup>

While the school district was dealing with the problems caused by the destruction of the High School, the district still needed to expand. In 1905, the school district had three schools, Kirkwood High School, Jefferson Elementary School, and Booker T. Washington School.<sup>48</sup> Just a few years later, in 1908, Kirkwood opened the first kindergarten in the area, the Katherine Tracy Kindergarten, named for the Kirkwood resident and St. Louis Public School teacher who was instrumental in establishing the Kirkwood kindergarten.<sup>49</sup> As Kirkwood expanded, people started clamoring for a school south of the Frisco Railroad tracks to serve the children in Meacham Park. These children had to walk over a mile to school and cross the railroad tracks on the way, a situation that parents wanted to remedy.<sup>50</sup> In response, the school district established the Meacham Park Branch School District and opened the Meacham Park School for the sixty-six white children in the area in 1911; the African American children still had to make the long walk to Booker T. Washington School.<sup>51</sup> The district continued to expand and in 1914 the Ittner-designed John Pitman School was opened, followed by the Henry Hough School in 1915, which taught first through fourth grades.<sup>52</sup>

By 1917 there were 1,586 school age children, 1,299 of whom were in public schools in Kirkwood. The League of Women Voters pushed for replacement of Jefferson School, which was too small for its student population. The League started a petition and was able to get a bond issue on the ballot in 1920 for \$20,000 for a new elementary school as well as a new African American school and \$205,000 for a new high school.<sup>53</sup> The measure passed 1328 to 177.<sup>54</sup> William Ittner won the bid for the high school design and the cornerstone was laid October 29, 1921 and class first opened September 5, 1922.<sup>55</sup>The bond also paid for the construction of a new Meacham Park school, to serve African American students so that some children would no longer have to walk miles and cross railroad tracks to reach school. The school was not opened until 1935 and when it did the board reorganized the schools so that all

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#### Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

African American children in Kirkwood would still attend Booker T. Washington School through sixth grade and all white children in Meacham Park would attend the Meacham Park School through eighth grade.<sup>56</sup>

In 1929, the school board saw another bond issue pass, this time for \$250,000 to construct a new junior high school, enlarge and improve the Meacham Park school, build two new elementary schools, and enlarge Henry Hough School.<sup>57</sup> The new schools all opened for the 1930 school year and utilized new designs, modernizing the school system by replacing dilapidated and inadequate school buildings with new designs, a trend that culminated in the late 1930s when Osage Hills School was constructed.<sup>58</sup> By 1930, the Kirkwood School District included the following schools: Katherine Tracy Kindergarten, Adams Avenue School, John Pitman School, Henry Hough School, Booker T. Washington School, George R. Robinson School, W.W. Keysor School, Meacham Park School, Nipher Jr. High School, and Kirkwood High School.<sup>59</sup> In 1931. the Kirkwood School District expanded even more, annexing nearby Meramec Highlands School District. The newly annexed district included the original Osage Hills School.<sup>60</sup> The District expanded further in 1949 when the Meramec Highlands School District #51 was annexed by Kirkwood. The newly annexed area was located south of the Meramec Highlands School District, which was separate from Meramec Highlands School District #51. The district continued to expand through the 1950s and had to reorganize after desegregation in 1954.<sup>61</sup> The reorganization included the addition of the Westchester School in 1950, a new junior high in 1985 and the Rose Hill School, also in 1958.<sup>62</sup>

#### Mermamec Highlands/Osage Hills Education

In conjunction with the residential development Bernhiemner envisioned when he built the Highlands, the Meramec Highlands School was also founded in 1894, the same year the formation of the Meramec Highlands School District was approved by voters on April 3, 1894.<sup>63</sup> The school was a one-room school that quickly became inadequate for the students, although the schoolhouse still stands as a private residence located at 39 Barberry Lane.<sup>64</sup> The school continued in operation through the Meramec Highlands era and into the Osage Hills development. In 1929 the developers rented and enclosed the screened-in restaurant at the Meramec Highlands General Store to use as a primary school in order to accommodate the growing student population.<sup>65</sup> In 1932, the Meramec Highlands School District was annexed by the Kirkwood School District and the Osage Hills School fell under the control of the Kirkwood School District.<sup>66</sup>

The Osage Hills School demonstrates the growth of the suburbs west/southwest of St. Louis. When Osage Hills was created out of the Meramec Highlands, the Highlands was gaining a reputation as a rough and tumble area ready-made for carousing but not suitable for children. This perception was reinforced by the inadequate and dilapidated building used as a schoolhouse for the children of the Meramec Highlands. After the annexation, the people of Osage Hills were now part of the Kirkwood municipality and expected the same services other neighborhoods in

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Osage Hills School Kirkwood, St. Louis County, MO

#### Narrative Statement of Significance

the community received. These services included an adequate school for the children in the area. Despite the need for a new school building, Kirkwood lacked the funds to immediately construct a new school. The population had also just approved a bond issue for schools in 1929 to build two new schools and expand others, so another bond issue was not a practical solution, despite the fact that the original Osage Hills schoolhouse was becoming dilapidated and worn down by the time the Kirkwood School District annexed Osage Hills. The construction of a new Osage Hills school building would help take care of public services needed for the newly annexed Osage Hills, benefit the people moving to the new subdivision and already living in the area and help solidify a connection to their new local government, an important consideration for the newly annexed residents in what was still a slightly more rural area of Kirkwood.<sup>67</sup>

In 1933 property was purchased, with the help of federal funds, at the location of the former Meramec Highlands dance pavilion for a new school building.<sup>68</sup> Despite the purchase of the land, the school district was not able to afford a new school immediately, even with the availability of federal funds, so it was not until 1937 that St. Louis architects Bonsack and Pearce were hired to draw the plans for Osage Hills School. An agreement concluded with the federal government paid 45 percent of the construction costs of Osage Hills School as well as portions of other projects in the district, including the two schools approved by the bond issue (in all, additions for Nipher Junior High, Kaiser Elementary, Tillman Elementary, and Robinson Elementary schools), all changes made to modernize the school system.<sup>69</sup>

This federal money made it possible for Kirkwood to award the Robert Paulis Construction Company the contract for \$49,494 for Osage Hills School. The construction was completed and the building put into service in September of 1938 with four classrooms for kindergarten, first and second grade classes.<sup>70</sup> Overall the new school was a success but there was some initial concern by parents because the nearby Meramec Highlands Quarry had become a refuge for "undesirable persons."<sup>71</sup> The Kirkwood School Board talked to H. W. Bixby, the Osage Hills developer, about leasing the property; Bixby fenced in the enclosure and the entire top of the hill to also block off the Frisco Railroad bridge, satisfying parents concerns.<sup>72</sup> The school was so successful and the Kirkwood student population in that area continued to grow so much that by 1944 the Kirkwood School District had to add an addition to the Osage Hills School with two more classrooms.<sup>73</sup> After the addition, Osage Hills expanded to include kindergarten through sixth grades.<sup>74</sup> The new Osage Hills School prospered and another classroom was added in 1951. By the late sixties when the Kirkwood student enrollment was declining system wide, and Osage Hills was closed, along with several other schools.<sup>75</sup> The students at Osage Hills were assigned to George Robinson School.<sup>76</sup> The Osage Hills School building was used by the Kirkwood School Board as their central offices, for their school board and other public meetings, for special school programs (such as a storytelling program), and as the central repository for books from 1975-76 until the property was sold to St. Joseph's Hospital in the mid-1980s, which used it as a day care center until the late 1990s.<sup>77</sup>

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Narrative Statement of Significance

#### Conclusion

The Osage Hills School stands today as a "unique piece of architecture in southwest Kirkwood and the only historic institutional building in the area."<sup>78</sup> Its unusual residential character and Colonial Revival features blend well with the revival residences in the Osage Hills subdivision and as the only known Bonsack and Pearce design in Kirkwood, it is still considered to be extremely important to the architectural heritage of the community.<sup>79</sup> It was also an important part of Kirkwood's expansion, as a tangible example of the benefits of annexation for the Osage Hills development. The school was a part of the incorporation of the new area into the broader community and into the city services, including the city water system and police and fire protection, as well as the education system. At the same time, the Osage Hills School was part of a continuing effort on the part of Kirkwood to expand and improve its school system. The Osage Hills construction allowed Kirkwood to not only serve its new citizens with a new school building, one that was more accessible and in much better condition than the existing schoolhouse had been, it also demonstrated Kirkwood's continued growth, both as a city and a school system as the schools expanded to match the growing population. The strength of Kirkwood's school system allowed the community to continue to grow and expand by marketing itself as an ideal location to raise a family, with quiet neighborhoods and an excellent school district with first class and up-to-date facilities. The building is also the only institutional building in an area of Kirkwood that had historically been first summer cottages and resort and then a failed subdivision. The somewhat more rural nature of the area when the school was constructed made the school an important component in encouraging the residential development of this part of Kirkwood and a tangible reminder of one of the benefits of annexation by the City of Kirkwood, a good school district.

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Narrative Statement of Significance

#### **FOOTNOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Bonsack and Pearce, Architects, Inc, "Osage School, Kirkwood" [Architectural Plans], January 1937. From the Private Collection of Gregory B. Dosmann

<sup>2</sup> Jones, Patricia L, Baxter Residence, St. Louis, Missouri. Interview, Conducted by Karen Bode Baxter and Timothy P. Maloney, 3 January 2004

<sup>3</sup> June Wilkinson Dahl, *A History of Kirkwood*, (Kirkwood: Kirkwood Historical Society, 1965), 311-132,397-398.

<sup>4</sup>Jones

<sup>5</sup>Dahl, 398

<sup>6</sup> Bonsack and Pearce, Architects, Inc.

<sup>7</sup> Jones

<sup>8</sup>Mound City of the Mississippi: A St. Louis History, "People: Bonsack, Frederick C. located at <u>http://stlcin.missouri.org/history/peopledetail.cfm?Master\_ID=1925</u>. accessed 12/13/2005; John Devonty, A History of the City of St. Louis and Vicinities From Earliest Times to Present, (St. Louis: John Devonty, 1898) 400.

<sup>9</sup>Mound City of the Mississippi: A St. Louis History, 400

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.; Hamilton, Esley. E-mail communication with Karen Bode Baxter. 3 January 2007.

<sup>12</sup> Hamilton

<sup>13</sup>Bonsack and Pearce; Jones

<sup>14</sup> Dahl, 11; William L. Thomas, *History of St. Louis County, Missouri: A Story that Attracts*, (St. Louis: S. J. Clark Publishing Company, 1911) 367; Barbara J. Beverly and J. B. Lester, *Kirkwood, Missouri: The Greentree City, A Pictorial History*, (St. Louis: Webster-Kirkwood Times, 1994) 3,5.

<sup>15</sup> Dahl, 11.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas, 367.

<sup>17</sup> Beverly and Lester, 5; Frederick Essen and John J. Hartnett, A History of the City of St. Louis and Vicinities From Earliest Times to the Present, (Clayton, Missouri: Clayton Watchman-Advocate, 1898) 30.

<sup>18</sup> Dahl, 17. <sup>19</sup> Ibid.

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Osage Hills School Kirkwood, St. Louis County, MO

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**FOOTNOTES(Continued)** 

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 23.

<sup>21</sup> Beverly and Lester, 5.

<sup>22</sup> Dahl, 20.

<sup>23</sup> Beverly and Lester, 4.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>James F. Baker, *Glimpses of Meramec Highlands*, (Kirkwood: Meramec Highlands Books, 1995) 12.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 3.; William L. Thomas, *History of St. Louis County, Missouri: A Story that Attracts*, (St. Louis: S. J. Clark Publishing Company, 1911) 378.

<sup>28</sup> Baker, 10.

<sup>29</sup> The City of Kirkwood, *The Wonderful City of Kirkwood, 100 Years Yound, 1865-1965,* (Kirkwood: The City of Kirkwood, 1965) 4.<sup>30</sup> The City of Kirkwood Landmarks Commission, *Historic Kirkwood Landmarks,* (Kirkwood: The City of Kirkwood Landmarks Commission, 32.

<sup>31</sup> The City of Kirkwood, 4.

<sup>32</sup> The City of Kirkwood Landmarks Commission, 32.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>34</sup> Baker, 5.

<sup>35</sup> Dahl, 194.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 194.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 184.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 199.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 107, 199.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 199.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 201.

<sup>43</sup>Missouri Historical Society, "Osage Hills Clippings File," Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, MO.

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**Osage Hills School** Kirkwood, St. Louis County, MO

Narrative Statement of Significance Footnotes (Continued) <sup>44</sup> Dahl, 127. <sup>45</sup> Ibid. 128. <sup>46</sup> Ibid, 134. <sup>47</sup> Ibid, 135, 137. <sup>48</sup> Ibid, 277. <sup>49</sup> Ibid. 272. <sup>50</sup> Ibid. 275. <sup>51</sup> Ibid, 276. <sup>52</sup> Ibid. 289. <sup>53</sup> Ibid, 300. <sup>54</sup> Ibid. <sup>55</sup> Ibid, 302. <sup>56</sup> Ibid, 310. <sup>57</sup> Ibid, 311. <sup>58</sup> Ibid. <sup>59</sup> Ibid, 396. <sup>60</sup> Ibid, 397. <sup>61</sup> Ibid. 402. <sup>62</sup> Ibid. 402. <sup>63</sup>Baker, 125; The City of Kirkwood Landmarks Commission, 28. <sup>64</sup>The City of Kirkwood Landmarks Commission, 28. <sup>65</sup> Baker, 107. <sup>66</sup>Ibid, 134; Beverly and Lester, 157; The City of Kirkwood Landmarks Commission, 10. <sup>67</sup>Jones <sup>68</sup> Baker, 136. <sup>69</sup> Ibid. 137, Jones. <sup>70</sup> Ibid: Beverly and Lester, 157.

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Footnotes (Continued)

Narrative Statement of Significance

<sup>71</sup> Baker, 137. <sup>72</sup> Ibid. <sup>73</sup> Ibid, 399. <sup>74</sup>Jones <sup>75</sup> Ibid, 138. <sup>76</sup> Ibid, 138. <sup>77</sup> Ibid, 139, Jones <sup>78</sup>Jones <sup>79</sup>Ibid

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Osage Hills School Kirkwood, St. Louis County, MO

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Osage Hills School Kirkwood, St. Louis County, MO

#### **Verbal Boundary Description**

A tract of land in the West ½ of the Southeast ¼ of Section 10, Township 44 North, Range 5 East, more particularly described as follows: Beginning at an iron pipe in the Southern boundary line of the Right of Way of St. Louis and San Francisco Railway Company, according to deed thereof recorded in Book 525 page 356 of the St. Louis County Record, at the intersection of said right of way line with the Southwardly prolongation of the center line of Osage Trail as shown on the plat of Osage Gills, Subdivision, recorded in Plat Book 23 page 48 and 49 of the St. Louis County Records, thence North 64 degrees 53 minutes East along said right of way, 225 feet to a point, thence South 14 degrees 26 minutes East, 500 feet to a point, thence South 64 degrees 53 minutes West, 725 feet to a point; thence North 14 degrees 04 minutes east, 265.6 feet to a point; thence North 64 degrees 53 minutes East, 324.5 feet to the Southwardly prolongation of said center line of said Osage Trail, thence North 14 degrees 26 minutes West 30.52 to the point of beginning.

#### **Boundary Justification**

These boundaries incorporate all of the property that has been historically associated with this building and the property's legal description. Except for public sidewalks and a small area behind the building at the back alley, the building encompasses the entire lot.

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Osage Hills School Kirkwood (St. Louis County), MO

Photo Log

Photographer: Sheila Findall November 21, 2006 Negatives with photographer: Karen Bode Baxter, 5811 Delor Street, St. Louis, MO 63109

- Photo #1: Exterior, looking southwest at north and east facades
- Photo #2: Exterior, looking west at east and south facades
- Photo #3: Exterior, looking northeast at west and south facades
- Photo #4: Interior, looking north in main hall at main entrance
- Photo #5: Interior, looking south in main hall
- Photo #6: Interior, looking east in auditorium at stage
- Photo #7: Interior, typical classroom

