United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Webster School
and/or common Webster School

2. Location

street & number 1644 Wyandotte

KN. not for publication
city, town Kansas City vicinity of congressional district #5-Hon. Richard Bolt
state Missouri code 29 county Jackson code 095

3. Classification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
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<td>in process</td>
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<td>yes: restricted</td>
<td>entertainment</td>
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4. Owner of Property

name The Ramos Group
street & number 101 West 11th St.
city, town Kansas City vicinity of state Missouri 64105

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of Recorder of Deeds
Jackson County Courthouse
415 East 12th St.
city, town Kansas City state Missouri 64106

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Historic Kansas City Foundation

Inventory of K.C. Architecture has this property been determined eligible? yes no
date 1977 federal state county local
depository for survey records Historic Kansas City Foundation
city, town Kansas City state Missouri 64105
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<td>thence north along the west line of Wyandotte Street 140 feet; thence west and parallel to the north line of 17th Street, 164.25 feet to the east line of an alley; thence south along the east line of said alley 140 feet to the north line of 17th Street; thence east along the north line of 17th Street 164.25 feet to the point of beginning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>James M. Denny, Section Chief, Survey-Nominations and State Contact Person Department of Natural Resources Historic Preservation Program P.O. Box 176 Jefferson City</td>
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</table>
### 7. Description

**Condition**

- [ ] excellent
- [ ] good
- [x] fair
- [ ] deteriorated
- [ ] unaltered
- [x] altered

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Webster School, 1644 Wyandotte Street, Kansas City, Missouri is a two-story brick structure designed in a Victorian style derived from Italianate. Design elements which denote that style are enumerated below.

**EXTERIOR**

**Over-all dimensions**

The building consists of two rectangular pavilions connected by a narrow passageway (Plate 5). The pavilion which fronts on Wyandotte measures 76 feet (on Wyandotte) by 80 feet (on 17th St.). The other pavilion is located to the west and measures 76 feet by 36 feet.

The original floor plan provided a basement, four rooms on each floor and an attic in the larger pavilion and four rooms, an attic and a basement in the smaller. Some of the rooms have been divided into offices.

Rooms in both pavilions are arranged symmetrically about a longitudinal axis, a characteristic often found in Richardsonian Romanesque buildings. Also characteristic are the bulky massing and rooftop broken by gabled wall dormers on the east and west and by conical roofs of flanking stair towers on the north and south.

**Construction Materials and Colors**

The building is constructed of pressed brick laid in common bond throughout most of the structure and patterned brick in some areas. Walls are 16 inches thick. The brick has been painted a buff color. Paint is peeling in many areas to reveal red brick. The building was probably not painted originally. Red brick is characteristic of Richardsonian Romanesque structures. Stone is used for some decorative detailing.

The roof on the larger pavilion is composition shingle, replacing original slate. Roofing on the smaller pavilion is slate.

**Openings**

**East facade:**

1. The main entrance is located in the center of the east facade. The large portico (Plate 2) supported by four rectangular columns is of a different material (sandstone) and of a different style than the rest of the building. Carved into the lintel above the columns is the name Midland Radio Schools. This portico is a later addition probably dating from 1945 when the building was purchased by Midland Radio Institute. Included in this alteration are entrance doors with semi-circular arch above, terra cotta wall covering surrounding doors, and windows flanking doors which have been filled in with glass bricks.

2. Windows are symmetrically arranged on the first story, two pairs
on either side of the entrance portico. The second story has an irregular arrangement of windows, three on the left side of the facade, four in the center, recessed portion above the entrance, and four on the right side (Plate 1).

All windows are double-hung sash type and originally all had transoms which have been covered. Windows on second story are surmounted by relieving arches, characteristic of Richardsonian Romanesque

North and South facades:
1. Side entrances to the building are located in connecting passageways. Semicircular arches cover doors; elliptical relieving arches cover windows of second story of passageway.

2. Windows are symmetrically placed and evenly spaced on these facades except for stair tower windows which are slightly lower than windows on flat wall sections. Windows have transoms which consist of 15 square panes of glass, many of which have been covered. Windows throughout the structure are of tall, narrow proportions. As on the east facade, windows on the first story have square heads and are surmounted by relieving arches on the second story.

West Facade:
1. No entrance on the west facade.

2. Central window is wider than other windows on both stories (Plate 6). Central window is flanked by two narrow windows and three wider windows on both sides. Arched window in gabled dormer.

Decorative Details

East Facade:
1. Basement and first story are separated by a projecting string course molding.

2. Window transoms on first story have been covered with recessed rectangles of brick.

3. A band of stone approximately 1 feet wide runs above the first story windows.

4. A string course divides first and second stories.

5. Facade is divided into three sections laterally; middle section is recessed.

6. Corbeled brick surrounds windows on second story (Plates 3 and 4).

7. A band of stone approximately 1 foot wide runs across facade at tops of second story windows.
2. Cross pattern set into brick on left side of facade flanking and in between windows.

9. Corbeled brick at cornice.

10. Gabled wall dormers on left and right sides of facade; left dormer wider than right dormer. Patterned brick on both dormers, but patterns are different (Plates 3 and 4). Characteristic of Richardsonian Romanesque: string courses, stone bands, patterned brick, gabled wall dormers.

North and South facades:
1. String course below windows of first story.

2. Band of stone approximately 1 foot wide runs above windows of first story.

3. String course below second story.

4. Band of stone approximately 1 foot wide runs across facade at tops of windows of second story.

West facade:
1. String course below windows of first story.

2. Band of stone above windows of first story, as above.

3. String course below second story.


5. Corbeled brick at cornice.

6. Gabled wall dormer in center with stepped corbeled brick (Plate 7).

7. Wood fascia of dormer ends in carved scroll.

INTERIOR

The interior has been remodeled and rooms have been divided. It is in poor repair. Walls are paneled to approximately 5 feet high with oak (original) which has been painted, but could be restored.

ALTERATIONS

Exterior
1. Walls, now painted a buff color, were probably red brick.

2. Window transoms have been bricked in or covered in some other way.

3. Material and style indicate the addition of the large entrance portico.
Interior

Rooms have been divided and woodwork painted. The interior has been redecorated many times.

CONDITION

The building is in fair condition. It is vacant, but in no immediate danger of demolition.

SITE

The Webster School is located on the northwest corner of 17th and Wyandotte Streets on a raised site ranging from approximately two to ten feet above street level. A rough-cut limestone retaining wall surrounds the property; the wall is surmounted by a metal railing. The yard is paved with brick across the east front and along the south. Grass is growing between the bricks. The north is paved with asphalt as is the west. These areas are used for parking. The front and side yards are landscaped with hedges.

This location is a commercial area southwest of Kansas City's Central Business District.
8. Significance

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Specific dates 1885, 1887
Builder/Architect Mumma & Wood/ Manuel A Diaz, 1885
William F. Mackney 1887

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Webster School is significant because of its architectural style. It is one of a few surviving of the many that were built in the 1880's in Kansas City that were executed in the Richardsonian Romanesque style. Examples of this style which have been demolished were the Old City Hall, the Old Jackson County Courthouse, and the original Board of Trade. Thus, the Webster School survives as an important example of a period in Kansas City's architectural history which has been virtually destroyed.

It is also significant as one of the oldest school buildings in Kansas City. (There is none earlier that has a documented date and is part of the Kansas City school system, but I hesitate to say oldest.) It is an example of the earliest scientifically designed school buildings in Kansas City. Previous buildings were "plain brick of four, six and eight rooms, with narrow stairways and no enclosed cloakrooms...heated with coal stoves and ventilated by raising and lowering windows." Eleven schools were built during the 1880's including this one. Marked improvements were made in the interior arrangements and convenience of the rooms. Better methods of heating, ventilating, seating and lighting were adopted.

HISTORICAL DATA

The Kansas City School Board authorized purchase of land at the northeast corner of 17th and Wyandotte Streets on April 24, 1885, just 3½ weeks after the public had approved $60,000 in school bonds. It bought a 114½ x 164½ foot lot from A.A. Whipple, cashier of the Citizen's National Bank, 6th and Delaware, for $6,000. Bids for the building were opened on July 2. They ranged from a high of $29,966 to $14,975. The contract was awarded to Charles R. Mumma. Mumma was the partner of W.H. Wood in the firm of Mumma & Wood, who listed themselves in the City Directory as carpenters or general contractors specializing in "modern theatrical stagework." Mumma & Wood began work immediately and had the building ready for occupancy in November. In January 1886 classes were being held there.

The building was designed by Manuel A. Diaz, the school board architect. Diaz (who listed himself as a civil engineer in the City Directory) was the first person to hold that position. Previously the board hired local architects for specific projects. Diaz was appointed on April 17, 1884 and remained until April 7, 1887. He drew plans for the "new Central School," Jefferson School at 17th and Garfield Avenue, Wendell Phillips School on Cherry Street, and the Garfield, Bryant and Adams Schools. During his tenure several buildings were also enlarged.
It has never been determined whether the school was named for Noah Webster the lexicographer or Daniel Webster the statesman but evidence points to the latter. Seven schools were opened in 1886 and five of them Garfield, Garrison, Douglas, Madison and Adams Schools were named for persons active in government. Only one, Bryant, was named for a literary figure. 

Webster School was enlarged by a four-room addition on the west during the summer of 1887. It is a separate 63 x 75½ foot building connected with the original block by a narrow hallway and contains two rooms on each floor and a basement. Even the attics of the two buildings are connected by the hallway.

The addition was designed by Diaz's successor, William F. Hackney, who was appointed school board architect May 19, 1887. He was placed in charge of "all plans and specifications for all new buildings and additions, and "superintended the building of buildings." A native of Springfield, Missouri, Hackney came to Kansas City shortly before his appointment from Des Moines. While there, according to one source, "he planned the Iowa State Capitol Building." He was school architect for ten years until the position was abolished. During that time he designed twenty schools. Hackney, who accepted a former assistant, Charles A. Smith as his partner, committed suicide in 1899. Among the more outstanding buildings left from the partnership is the old Kansas City Public Library Building. The Webster addition was his first Kansas City project.

Webster School was a part of the Kansas City school system for 45 years, serving a neighborhood characterized by workingmen's houses, small apartments and commercial buildings. Gradually the character of the neighborhood changed as larger business houses replaced homes and stores and the population dwindled. It was closed in 1932. The building lay vacant for six years, when it was leased to the State of Missouri for Social Security offices. In 1938 it was sold to the Helping Hand Institute for $8,875 to be traded with the Kansas City Association for the Blind for property at 20th Street and Madison Avenue. The State continued to use the school building until 1945 when the Midland Radio School acquired it.

While Midland was housed in the Kansas City Power & Light Building the first television signal in Kansas City was transmitted. Midland modernized the Webster School on the interior and used it for twenty years. The Institution's name went through several changes: Midland Radio & Television School, Central Institute of Technology and Missouri Institute of Technology.

In 1969 Bell & Howell purchased the building. The Institute moved to a new location in January 1977 and the Webster School has been vacant since that time. In 1978 Historic Kansas City Foundation acquired the building in order that it be preserved. They sold it to the Ramos Group, the current owners, with restrictive facade covenants.
CONCLUSION

The Webster School is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places with a local area of significance in the categories of architecture and education. It is one of the oldest surviving schools in Kansas City, "scientifically designed", and it is an example of a style, the Italianate Style, popular in Kansas City in the 1880's for commercial and civic buildings but which has not survived in most cases.

FOOTNOTES


2. Minutes of the Kansas City School Board, April 12, 1885.

3. Ibid., April, 1885.

4. Ibid., July 2, 1885.


7. Ibid.


9. Minutes of the Kansas City School Board, May 19, 1887.

10. Minutes of the Kansas City School Board, May 19, 1887; Kansas City Star, May 25 and May 26, 1899.

9. Major Bibliographical References
Annual Reports of the Kansas City Schools, 1883-84, 1885-86, and 1886-87.
Kansas City Journal, Jan. 6, 1938.
Kansas City Journal, Feb. 7, 1938. (continued)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property: less than 1 acre
Quadrangle name: "Kansas City Mo.-Kansas"
Quadrangle scale: 1:24,000

UMT References

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Verbal boundary description and justification: All that part of the Southwest 1/4 of the Southwest 1/4 of Section 5, Township 49, range 33, described as follows:
Beginning at the northwest corner of 17th and Wyandotte Streets in Kansas City, Missouri, as said streets are now located and established; (cont'd)

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Joan L. Michalak, Architectural Historian
organization: date: 1 March 1981
street & number: 905 E. 5th St. telephone: (816) 474-5073
city or town: Kansas City state: Missouri 64106

city or town: Kansas City state: Missouri 64106

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

____ national  ____ state  __X__ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature: Director, Department of Natural Resources
title and State Historic Preservation Officer: date

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Keeper of the National Register: date
Attest: date
Chief of Registration: date
**Photo Log:**

<table>
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<th>Webster School</th>
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<tr>
<td>City or Vicinity:</td>
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<td>County:</td>
<td>Jackson County</td>
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<tr>
<td>Photographer:</td>
<td>Joan Michalak</td>
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<td>Date Photographed:</td>
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Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 7. View from the W. Detail of W façade.
2 of 7. View from the W of the W façade.
3 of 7. View from the S of the S façade.
4 of 7. View from the E. Detail of entrance on primary (E) façade.
5 of 7. View from the E. Detail from E façade.
6 of 7. View from the E. Detail of E façade.
7 of 7. View from W. Detail of W façade.