

# 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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name Bown-Corby School

Other names/site number KHRI # 115-891

Name of related Multiple Property Listing Historic Public Schools of Kansas

## 2. Location

Street & number 412 N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street  not for publication

City or town Marion  vicinity

State Kansas Code KS County Marion Code 115 Zip code 66861

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this  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  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national  statewide  local Applicable National Register Criteria:  A  B  C  D

### SEE FILE

Signature of certifying official/Title Patrick Zollner, Deputy SHPO Date \_\_\_\_\_

Kansas State Historical Society  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register  determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register  removed from the National Register

other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

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Name of Property

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**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only **one** box.)

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

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

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

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

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

EDUCATION: school  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

WORK IN PROGRESS  
DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS: Late Gothic Revival  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete  
walls: Brick  
Stone detailing  
roof: Asphalt  
other: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## Narrative Description

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

### Summary

Built in 1929, the Bown-Corby School is a two-story Late Gothic Revival-style building located north of downtown Marion in a residential neighborhood. The school site is comprised of two city blocks bordered by North Street on the south and formerly including a spacious playground at the rear, now a paved parking area. The site was home to the old Valley School that was condemned and demolished for construction of this building.

The symmetrical front facade faces south and is defined by gabled wall dormers at the center and end bays. A series of intersecting gabled roofs with composition shingles form the roof-line, pierced by a large square brick chimney on the west. The school has red brick walls with a concrete foundation and ashlar limestone detailing. The school is an excellent representative of Late Gothic Revival architecture which emerged as the predominant style of school construction in the period following World War I. Built as the town's grade school to serve an expanding population, the modest building is nicely articulated with detailed features including projecting bays, buttresses, stone detailing, and quoined stone surrounds. The school retains the original 6/1 double-hung wood windows on primary facades and multi-light steel windows at the rear. Designed by Wichita architect S. S. Voigt, the Bown-Corby School is an excellent example of a Town Graded-School that served educational needs of a small community in central Kansas for 62 years.

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## Elaboration

### Site

Located three blocks north of downtown Marion, the school site occupies two city blocks bordered by 1<sup>st</sup> Street on the west, 2<sup>nd</sup> Street on the east, and North Street on the south. The site includes the vacated Willard Street that formerly bisected the site E/W. Located in a residential neighborhood, the school site is surrounded by early 20<sup>th</sup> century single-family homes to the south and west; adjoining land is undeveloped on the east and north.

Constructed in 1929 on the site of the old Valley School, the Bown-Corby School is situated in the center of the site south of the former Valley School that was demolished in 1928. The school faces North Street on the south,<sup>1</sup> set back from its center-block location with a grass lawn, mature trees and perimeter sidewalks on the south, east and west. A concrete sidewalk extends to the primary entrance in the center of the front/south facade. A paved parking area is located at the rear, north of the building and extends around the building on the west and east providing access to secondary entrances on each side of the school. The parking lot is accessed from the west or east, off 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. The rear of the site is bordered by an undeveloped wooded area.

### The Late Gothic Revival Building

The school is an excellent example of the Late Gothic Revival architectural style. Varied classifications of this style include English Gothic, Perpendicular Gothic, Tudor, and Collegiate Gothic. Gothic architecture was the style of the High Middle Ages in Western Europe, emerging from the Romanesque and Byzantine forms in France in the later 12<sup>th</sup> century. Cathedrals are the classic representatives of the style, characterized by the pointed arch, rib vault, exterior flying buttress and richly decorated fenestration.<sup>2</sup> The Gothic period lasted until the 16<sup>th</sup> century; in English architecture, the style is typically divided into three periods - Early English, Decorated, and Perpendicular.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The school is addressed at 412 N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street although the building faces south, fronting North Street.

<sup>2</sup> Cyril M. Harris, Illustrated Dictionary of Historic Architecture (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1983) 254.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

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The Late Gothic Revival style is a revival of the earlier variations. Schools in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century often employed the Collegiate Gothic style, a secular version of Gothic architecture, prevalent around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the United States and England, particularly on college campuses. Introduced to educational buildings at Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania, Collegiate Gothic emerged as a dominant style on the campuses of Princeton, Yale, Duke and the University of Chicago.<sup>4</sup> The Bown-Corby School, however, is not a true representative of the Collegiate Gothic style, but rather incorporates subtle influences of the Tudor Revival, which also was popular during that period.

Architect S.S. Voigt did not appear to favor a particular style in his school designs, but rather embraced the popular styles of the times. His early school commissions were Progressive Era/Commercial Style buildings of the 1920s. Other Collegiate Gothic schools designed by Voigt included The Rural High School District No. 2 (Lost Springs) in 1921, Southern Coffey County High School in LeRoy in 1928, and Belleville High School in 1931. By the mid-1930s, his school designs reflected Modern and Art Deco stylistic influences.

The Bown-Corby School is a modest example of the Late Gothic Revival style, lacking more elaborate characteristics of the style such as towers and crenulations. The building embodies prominent features that are characteristic of the style including gabled roofs, pointed arch openings at building entrances, stucco at the gable ends, stone quoining, and a symmetrical facade with central entrance. Even without a tower, the projecting gabled-bays provide vertical emphasis in the overall horizontal massing.

### Exterior

The Bown-Corby School is a two-story red brick structure with the primary entrance at grade, between the first and second floors. The plan form is rectangular with the roof form comprised of intersecting gables with gabled wall dormers on the front/south facade. The roofline is further distinguished by a large square brick chimney near the center of the west side of the building. The existing roof is red composition shingles (blue prints note that the original roof was also composition shingles).

The exterior facade is red brick, laid in a running bond with every sixth course laid in Flemish bond. The foundation is concrete, painted white. The front facade is comprised of five distinct bays. Bays two and four comprise the body of the facade where window openings are a set of four double-hung windows.

The end bays (bays 1 & 5) on the front facade are defined by a slightly-projecting gabled wall dormer with a simple decorated wood fascia and Tudor detailing with vertical wood strips over stucco in the gable end. A wood ventilation louver is centrally located in the gable end. The end bays feature window openings with sets of three double-hung windows. All window openings have flat arched brick soldier course lintels and simple stone sills and a single diamond-shaped stone panel is located between the first and second floor windows in each bay. A cornerstone at the southeast corner of the building is inscribed with the architect and builder, and Board of Education members.

The center bay is narrow, comprised of the main building entrance. Similar to the end bays, the center bay is a gabled wall dormer that projects slightly from the main facade. The center bay features stone detailing in the gable-end and a datestone inscribed "1929." Half-height brick buttresses with beveled stone caps frame the center and end bays. The entrance is distinguished by a quoined stone surround framing a Gothic (pointed) arched door opening with an entablature inscribed "Bown Corby School." The paired doors are contemporary aluminum-framed glass doors with an arched glass transom. The entry is slightly above grade with concrete steps and steel pipe handrails. A single window over the entrance also features a quoined stone surround. A rare feature of this historic school is that it retains its original wood windows. The windows are six-over-one double-hung units. Aluminum-framed storm windows have formerly been installed at most windows.

<sup>4</sup> Marcus Whiffen, American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992).

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The east and west sides of the building have minimal openings. A one-story gabled projecting bay frames a central entrance and a single window is located on the upper floor above the entry. The gabled entry surround features a stone cap and original lantern-style light fixtures are extant. Like the front entry, the paired doors are aluminum-framed glass doors with a single-light transom. The doors are slightly above grade with concrete steps and steel pipe handrails. The brick walls on each side of the entrance feature a square panel with a brick soldier-course surround and stone corners. The west facade features additional openings including a lower-level door and window into the mechanical space north of the central entry. The cast-iron school bell was salvaged from the old Valley School building and placed on the west side of the new school. A wood gabled canopy was constructed to cover the bell and remains in place north of the center entrance, over the mechanical room entry. The entry is slightly below grade, accessed by a concrete area-well with steel pipe railing. The single door is a six-light over three-panel wood door.

The rear/north facade is not symmetrical; the bays on the rear facade, as defined by window openings, do not align with the gabled roof dormers creating an asymmetrical configuration on the rear of the building. Generally five bays in width, Bays 2 and 4 are comprised of sets of five double-hung windows on the upper floor and four multi-light steel windows on the lower floor. The center bay is a solid brick wall between the sets of windows in Bays 2 & 4. The end bays differ in configuration. A single steel window is in place on the lower level at the east end bay where the west end bay has one upper and one lower window. A former coal chute is also in place at the west end of the north facade, corresponding to the mechanical/fuel rooms inside. The steel windows on the lower level generally correspond to the original gym/playroom in the center of the north side of the building flanked by restrooms on each end of the gym. The mechanical and fuel rooms at the west end of the lower level account for the asymmetry in the facade configuration.

The exterior of the school retains a remarkable degree of historic and architectural integrity. There have only been three noticeable exterior alterations namely the installation of aluminum storm windows and the replacement of the original wood doors with the existing aluminum-framed glass doors and the front and side entrances. The final alteration was the addition of an accessible at-grade entrance on the front/south facade. The new entry did not involve modification of the main entrance; it is located east of the center entrance where a former window was converted to a door. These alterations do not significantly affect the building's historic character.

### Interior

The school was designed with a small enclosed vestibule at the main central entrance on the south facade. The original wood doors have been removed but the wood-framed multi-light sidelights and transom are extant at the vestibule. Stairs located inside the front entrance, provide access to the upper floor. The lower level is accessed from the side stairways at each end of the corridor.

A double loaded corridor bisects the simple rectangular plan form extending between side entrances on the east and west to provide access to classrooms on the north and south sides of each floor. Open stairways are located at each end of the central corridor on the east and west, providing access between floors. The stairs are terrazzo with plastered half-wall railings.

Marion's new grade school was designed in 1929, near the end of the Progressive Era in Kansas. While this period was significant in terms of its effect on the design of public schools which resulted in the emergence of spaces being designed for specialized uses within a school, specialty-designed spaces were less common in "town schools" than in neighboring "city schools" and less prevalent in graded schools than in high schools.

The new school in Marion included four classrooms on the upper floor with a small office and library in the northwest corner. Although one of the classrooms was labeled "Kindergarten," there were no visible distinctions among the rooms aside from the Kindergarten Room's adjacency to the office and library. Responding to a booming local economy following numerous oil strikes in Marion County in the 1920s, the school was designed for a growing community. The lower level provided two additional classrooms that were left unfinished at the time of construction, labeled "Future Grade Room" on the original plans. The north half

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of the lower level included a large open room labeled gym/playroom on the original drawings. There is no indication of a cafeteria or kitchen space in the building. It is unclear if the gym served a multi-use function including a cafeteria or if the district provided off-site facilities for lunch. The gym/playroom was originally open to the corridor with a steel I-columns and pipe railings defining the open room north of the corridor. The primary former interior modification was enclosure of this space and dividing the former gym into two classrooms. These alterations are clearly discernible as the new walls are concrete block, compared to the plaster finish on the original walls. The two lower level classrooms are also distinguished today by their finishes. The brick walls never received a plaster finish like the upper-floor classrooms. When these rooms were later occupied as classrooms, the masonry walls were painted and they retain their painted brick finish today. Girls and Boys restrooms flank the gym and mechanical and fuel rooms were located at the west end, on the north side of the lower level. The lower-level rooms and corridor originally had exposed concrete floors. Carpeting has been installed in most lower-level rooms; other rooms such as the restrooms retain a painted concrete floor.

The classrooms generally retain original features and finishes including built-in wardrobes across one wall in each classroom and chalkboards with wood chalk trays and tack boards above, generally located on two walls of each classroom. The upper-level classrooms retain their original plaster wall finish. Constructed with maple wood floors and yellow pine trim, some classrooms rooms retain exposed wood floors while others have carpet formerly installed over the wood floors. Wood trim included baseboards, wainscot rail (chair rail), picture molding, and ceiling molding. The original ceiling finish was "Celotex" tiles applied directly to the bottom of the ceiling joists. Suspended acoustical tile ceiling have been installed in some classrooms, approximately 12-16" below the original ceiling, at the level of the original picture molding. The Celotex ceilings and wood ceiling molding are in place above the suspended ceilings.

The corridors retain their original terrazzo floors, plaster walls with wood trim, and Celotex tile ceilings as well as original features including bulletin boards. The original paneled wood doors are in place, comprised of single-light over three-panel wood doors with operable single-light transoms at classrooms and five-panel wood doors at secondary openings.

Constructed in 1929, the Bown-Corby School served Marion for over 60 years, closing in 1992. A new elementary school was constructed in 1961 and Bown-Corby School then served K-3. Following an addition to the 1961 elementary school in 1992, all elementary grades moved to the elementary school and USD 408 vacated the Bown-Corby School. The old school became home to Butler County Community College and served that function for twenty years. This change in use resulted in only minor alterations to the original building, namely the accessible entrance at the front of the building (with interior ramp) and new wiring for a computer lab in the southeast classroom. The college recently vacated the building and the school was purchased by the current owner who plans to convert it to apartments.

### Integrity

The Bown-Corby School retains a high level of architectural and historic integrity. The school maintains integrity of location, setting, design, feeling and association. Integrity of materials and workmanship have been somewhat compromised in select areas by former modifications. The school embodies distinctive characteristics of the Late Gothic Revival architectural style, including gabled dormers, pointed arches, buttresses and quoining.

The primary exterior modifications include replacement doors at primary entrances, the addition of aluminum storm windows, and the conversion of one original window to a door on the south/front facade to accommodate an accessible entrance to the lower level. The latter modification included construction of an enclosed interior ramp/corridor reducing the size of the former classroom in the southeast corner of the lower level. Other interior alterations include enclosure and sub-diving of the original gym/playroom on the north side of the lower level, converting the space to two classrooms.

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Historic features and finishes are generally intact on the building's interior, although covered in some areas. The primary modification to interior finishes has been installation of suspended acoustical-tile ceilings in some classrooms and installation of carpeting over concrete floors on the lower level and over original wood floors on the upper level. As noted above, finishes vary in lower-level rooms reflecting the later finishing of the two classrooms on the south side (painted masonry walls versus plaster) and conversion of the gym to classrooms (painted concrete block walls). Florescent lighting was formerly installed throughout the interior; historic lantern-style light fixtures remain in place at the building entrances. New HVAC systems were installed in recent years, located in the lower-level corridor with exposed ductwork in the corridor.

Extant original interior features include the basic plan configuration with entry foyer, central corridor, and stairways, as well as built-in features including wardrobes and chalk boards in the original classrooms and original interior doors throughout. Original finishes include plaster walls, "Celotex" ceilings in the upper corridor and some classrooms, terrazzo flooring in corridors and stairways, wood floors in some classrooms, and original wood trim throughout. The Bown-Corby School clearly communicates its historic function as a public grade school and embodies the characteristics of the "Town Graded Schools" property type as defined in the *Historic Public Schools of Kansas* MPS.

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**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.)  
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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

Education

Architecture

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1929-1965

**Significant Dates**

1929

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

Samuel Siegfried Voigt, Architect

Thos. S. Howard, Contractor

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The period of significance for the Bown-Corby School is 1929 to 1965. This period begins with the school's date of construction and ends with the fifty-year cutoff for periods of significance where historic functions and characteristics continue to have importance and no specific date exists for ending the building's historic or architectural significance. The school continued to function as a public school until 1992 with few physical alterations.

**Criteria Considerations (justification)**

NA

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### **Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

#### **Summary**

Constructed in 1929, the Bown-Corby School in Marion is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under the multiple property documentation submission, *Historic Public Schools of Kansas*, as a representative of the *Town Graded School* property type. The school is significant under National Register Criteria A and C in the areas of Education and Architecture. Built in 1929 to replace the condemned Valley School on the same site, the Bown-Corby school served the town of Marion as an elementary school for more than 60 years. The school was named to honor two long-time teachers in the Marion school district – Anna Bown and Jenny Corby. Jenny Corby served as principal of the former Valley School and the Bown-Corby School when it opened.

The school is significant architecturally (Criterion C) as an excellent representative of a Late Gothic Revival public school building, a high-style design built in a rural Kansas community in 1929. The school embodies traditional characteristics of the style with its red brick exterior and stone detailing, multiple gable roofs, pointed arches, buttresses, and quoining. The school is also significant as the work of Wichita architect S. S. Voigt, a talented designer who specialized in church and school design.

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#### **Elaboration**

##### The Town of Marion (Center)

Marion County was originally created by an act of the Territorial Legislature in 1860 attaching it to Chase County. Its first settlement occurred in the spring of 1858 near the town of Florence. Settlers first arrived near Marion Center in 1860 and a post office was established there in 1862. The county was officially organized in 1865, when it was separated from Chase County by Governor Samuel J. Crawford. Local elections were held later that year. Marion Center was surveyed and platted in 1866, the first town in the county. Later the same year Marion Center was named the county seat. The City and County were named in memory of General Francis Marion, a South Carolina patriot of the Revolutionary period.<sup>5</sup>

In its early years, a shared courthouse and school was constructed. Although the town developed slowly during the Civil War, Marion Center became a city of the third class August 17, 1875. The county's population exploded in the 1870s, growing from 663 in 1870 to 12,453 in 1880.<sup>6</sup> The town of Marion had a population of 857 in 1880 and reached an all-time high in 1887 with a population of 2,715.<sup>7</sup> By 1883, "Marion Center had three banks, three hotels, three real estate agents, three druggists, three physicians, three milliners, three boot and shoe dealers, three lumber dealers, three livery stables, three butchers, three harness and saddle makers and dealers, nine general merchants, two insurance agents, two billiard halls, two bakers and confectioners, two hardware dealers, two barbers, two painters, two blacksmiths, three carpenters and contractors, three stone cutters and contractors, two dentists, one book seller, one jeweler, one gunsmith, one furniture dealer, one brick-maker, one photographer, one tailor, one plasterer, one mantua-maker."<sup>8</sup> The town developed E/W along Main Street and N/S along First Street. The depot and mill were at the south end of the business section; the stone courthouse was built on the east side of First Street and permanent business buildings were built along Main Street. In 1882, a new stone school house was built on the hill

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<sup>5</sup> William G. Cutler, *History of the State of Kansas* (Chicago: A.T. Andreas, 1883) Marion County Part 1.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, Marion Part 2.

<sup>7</sup> Marion County Historical Society, *Van Meters Marion County, Kansas Past and Present* (Hillsboro: M.B. Publishing House, 1972) 243.

<sup>8</sup>Cutler, Marion County, Part 2.

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overlooking E. Main Street. Still in use by USD #408 today, locals maintain the Hill School to be the oldest, continuously operating school building in Kansas.<sup>9</sup>

Marion experienced the booms and busts typical of new cities and towns across the state. One of the most significant booms came in the 1910s-1920s when oil was discovered in the county. Drought and dust storms of the Great Depression brought hard times to the area but Marion survived the economic crises as well as physical challenges including floods and fires in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. National trends in the period following World War II were experienced locally in Marion including the decline of railroad transportation, the development of the interstate highway system, and the movement of populations from rural areas to cities. Marion continues to serve as the county seat. Local residents celebrate the town's distinction of being the oldest settlement in the county with its annual "Old Settlers Day." The population of Marion County now stands at approximately 11,000 with the city of Marion having approximately 1,800 population. Agriculture remains the primary economic base of the county. Local residents continue to take pride in their community and their schools.

### Education in Marion<sup>10</sup>

There were no schools in Marion County when the first settlers arrived in 1860. Maggie Norris, who received her teaching certificate from Chase County, taught a short school session in 1864. Shortly thereafter the first schoolhouse, a log cabin, was built. Following official organization of Marion County in 1865, the boundaries of Marion County School District #1 were formed, coinciding with the county boundary. Marion Center had the only school house. In 1871, there were 74 organized school districts in the county but only three schoolhouses. By the turn of the century, Marion County had 130 school districts, most of which continued to operate until state-mandated consolidation that occurred in the period spanning from 1945 to 1961. By 1972, there were five unified school districts in the county including USD #408 in Marion.<sup>11</sup>

Marion's first school building, the log cabin built in 1864, served the needs of the growing settlement for a brief period. In 1868, a new stone building was constructed on the site of the current courthouse in Marion, to serve the joint function of a school on the first floor and a courthouse on the second floor. School population grew with the booming town in the 1870s. Local citizens voted to erect a new school on the hill east of the business district on Main Street. The Hill School, as it is still known, was completed in 1874, built of limestone at a cost of \$15,000. This first purpose-built school still stands, serving USD 408 administrative functions. As enrollment increased, citizens supported new bonds to build another school one mile west of town and another in the valley in town (Valley School).<sup>12</sup>

A high school was organized in 1901 although high school subjects were taught in Marion schools as early as 1873. In 1912, Marion became an accredited four-year high school and in 1922, a new high school building was constructed adjacent to the Hill School. Until that time, high school and grade school students attended school together in the same building. The Valley School building was condemned in 1928 and a new school – Bown-Corby - was built on the same site. Bown-Corby served as the city's grade school until a new elementary school was built in 1961. The new school served grades 4-8 and Bown-Corby then served K-3. The schools have been expanded on numerous occasions but these four schools- Hill School, Marion High School, Bown-Corby School, and Marion Elementary School - served Marion residents into modern times. A gymnasium was added at the high school in 1950 and a new vocational building constructed in 1975. A new

<sup>9</sup> Cutler, Marion Part 2 and Marion County Historical Society school files.

<sup>10</sup>The history of Marion's schools is summarized from the chapter on schools in *Van Meters Marion County, Kansas Past and Present*, Cutler's *History of the State of Kansas*, and Norma Stallwitz's article *The Early Schools in Marion County, Kansas (1961)* and Marion Historical Society files.

<sup>11</sup> *Past and Present*, 261 and Cutler, Marion Part 2.

<sup>12</sup> *Past and Present*, 261.

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wing was added to the Elementary School in 1992 allowing the school to accommodate all elementary grades. Bown-Corby was vacated at that time.<sup>13</sup>

#### The Bown-Corby School

The Bown-Corby School was built out of necessity when the old Valley School building was declared unsafe by the State Fire Marshall. The school had developed "alarming" cracks in the foundation. After inspection by local engineers and builders, the local Board of Education called in the State Fire Marshall for an inspection of the school. The school was deemed unsafe and ordered abandoned. Arrangements were quickly made to accommodate grade school classes in the Hill School and High School, and one class was held in the Methodist Church.<sup>14</sup>

While the Board of Education studied the matter, local residents circulated a petition to ask the Board to build a new school. Accommodating the grade school classes in the Hill School and High School has caused overcrowded conditions in both buildings. Additionally, first graders were required to walk a great distance and to cross roads with heavy traffic to attend classes at the Hill School.<sup>15</sup> By June the school board had developed preliminary plans for a new grade school to be constructed on the site of the Valley School building. Local citizens approved a new bond issue by a vote of 4 to 1 in favor. The Board of Education hired Wichita architect S.S. Voigt to design the school, said to favor an "English style building." The main portion of the new building would have four classrooms to house the valley school children and be constructed with a full basement to accommodate future expansion.<sup>16</sup>

The architect's rendering of the new building was published in September.<sup>17</sup> Howard Thomas of Hutchinson was awarded the contract to build the school.<sup>18</sup> Included in the construction contract was demolition of the old Valley School building. The school bell was to be salvaged and used at the new building. The cornerstone of the new school was laid October 21, 1929 (one week prior to Black Monday, the stock market crash preceding the Great Depression). A box containing a variety of documents pertaining to the history of Valley School, students attending the school, and workmen building the new school, was placed in the cornerstone. Miss Jenny Corby, Principal of the Valley School, gave a presentation on the history of the school. It was announced that the new school would be named Bown-Corby to honor two of the town's long-time educators.<sup>19</sup>

Anna Bown taught in the Marion Schools for 35 years, retiring in 1916. Jenny Corby served as principal of Valley School when it closed, and continued as principal of the new Bown-Corby School. Corby came to Marion in 1898 after teaching five years at Peabody and two years at Durham. She served the Marion district for 41 years, retiring in 1941.<sup>20</sup>

With little fanfare, classes moved into the new school at the end of March 1930. The school originally housed the elementary grades Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade and served this function for just over thirty years. Following the opening of the new "modern" elementary school in 1961, Bown-Corby housed Kindergarten through 3rd Grade until 1992. The Bown-Corby School then served as home to Butler County Community College for twenty years. In 2014, the school was sold to the current owner, a private developer who plans to convert the school to apartments. The Bown-Corby School served the City of Marion as a public school from its construction in 1929 until 1992 and continued to serve an educational function as home of the Community College, until recently.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> "Valley School Building Ordered Abandoned," *The Marion Review*, December 4, 1928.

<sup>15</sup> "Want A New Building," *The Marion Review*, March 12, 1929 and "School Petition is Circulating," *The Marion Record*, March 7, 1929.

<sup>16</sup> *The Marion Review*, June 4, July 9 & 16, August 6, 1929 and *The Marion Record*, June 6, 1929.

<sup>17</sup> *The Marion Record*, September 12, 1929.

<sup>18</sup> "Building Contract Let," *The Marion Review*, August 6, 1929.

<sup>19</sup> "Cornerstone of New School Laid on Monday," *The Marion Review*, October 22, 1929.

<sup>20</sup> *Past and Present*, 261.

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### Architect S.S. Voigt of Wichita<sup>21</sup>

Samuel Siegfried Voigt (1885 – 1937) was born in Leipzig, Germany and came to Wichita as a child. After working for Wichita architect F.G. McCune, Voigt established his own practice in Wichita and was widely known for his design of schools and churches over the state. His obituary said that he had drawn plans for more than 400 school buildings and approximately 200 churches. Notable Wichita projects included St. Paul's African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1914, Westside Presbyterian Church in 1915, the Barnes Building and Fourth National Bank Building in 1919, Salem Evangelical Church in 1920, the Orpheum Theater Building in 1922, Southwestern Osteopathic Sanitarium in 1924, University Friends Church in 1925, Midian Shrine Temple in 1927, St. Mary's American Syrian Orthodox Church in 1935, and Stanley African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1937. Kansas schools known to have been designed by Voigt are located in: Beeler, Belleville, Caldwell, Chase, Coffey County, Derby, Elmdale, Harper, Lakin, Lorraine, Lost Springs, Leroy, Medicine Lodge, Moran, Piedmont, and Utica, in addition to the 1929 Marion school. Voigt died unexpectedly at age 52, following a brief illness in 1937.

### Historic Public Schools of Kansas<sup>22</sup>

As defined in *The Historic Public Schools of Kansas* MPS, *Town Schools* are generally schools located in cities of the third class (population between 250 and 2,000); however, population is not the sole criterion for the property type. The town schools are characterized by the fact that typically, one school (or one grade school and one high school) served the entire town. The town graded school did not necessarily evolve into the modern elementary school as it did in the cities. There are three sub-types of the town school property type: town graded schools, town high schools, and education-related structures. *The Town Graded School* is inclusive of the vast majority of town schools. The only schools excluded are those schools built as high schools. The town graded school is also one of the most flexible in terms of student population. Schools were built to serve only the elementary grades, others served K-8 and some served the entire school-age population, grades K-12.

The town school is an evolution of the common school, traditionally built as the first school in a town that was designed for graded instruction. The graded school emerged in towns across Kansas after 1900. The majority of these schools are Progressive Era Schools - Commercial Style, one- and two-story brick structures with a variety of stylistic influences. The plan forms included rectangular and T, I, and U shaped plans typically, with a central gymnasium. The graded schools typically had standard classrooms with few specialized spaces.

The Bown-Corby School is classified as a Town Graded School, as defined in *The Historic Public Schools of Kansas* MPS and meets the property requirements set forth in the MPS. The Marion school embodies distinguishing characteristics of the property type designed specifically to serve the elementary grades in the city of Marion. Built to replace the condemned Valley School, the former grade school on the same site, the Bown-Corby School was a modest 2-story rectangular building housing four classrooms, a gym/playroom, small office and library, and two future classrooms with no specialized space provided except for the gym. The exterior of the school embodies the Late Gothic Revival style, the most popular architectural style of public schools built during the post-WWI period.

The decades following WWII saw the emergence of the "modern" elementary school. Modern construction materials and techniques led to a new style of building - the sprawling one-story school plant. The trend impacted cities and smaller towns alike. Marion built a new "modern" elementary school in 1961 to serve grades 4-8 and the Bown-Corby School continued to serve K-3 for another 30 years closing in 1992.

<sup>21</sup> Architectural commissions and biographical information on Voigt was summarized from the *Historic Public Schools of Kansas* MPS and references found in Tiehen Notes online (Index to Wichita Eagle and Beacon newspapers) online at [http://specialcollections.wichita.edu/collections/local\\_history/tiehen/index.asp](http://specialcollections.wichita.edu/collections/local_history/tiehen/index.asp)

<sup>22</sup> Brenda Spencer, *Historic Public Schools of Kansas* Multiple Property Nomination to the National Register, September 2004.

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### Summary

The Bown-Corby School is eligible for listing on the National Register under Criteria A and C in the areas of Education and Architecture. The school is significant on a local level as a representation of local residents' commitment to public education. Constructed in 1929, the building served the public education needs of the city for more than sixty years.

The property retains integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, and association. The building has experienced only two major exterior alterations – the replacement of doors at primary and secondary entrances and the addition of an accessible entrance on the front/south facade. Minor exterior changes include the installation of aluminum storm windows but the original wood and steel windows are in place – a rarity on public school buildings in Kansas. The primary interior modifications were the conversion of the original gym to two classrooms and installation of an interior ramp corresponding to the accessible entrance (reducing the size of one original classroom). The interior of the building has undergone minor remodeling including system and finish upgrades. New HVAC systems, suspended ceilings and contemporary lighting have been installed throughout. The original corridor configuration has been maintained and significant interior features and finishes are in place including plaster walls, terrazzo and wood floors, open stairways, built-in wardrobes and chalkboards.

The building retains a high degree of integrity on the interior and exterior clearly portraying its origins as a public school. The school is an excellent example of a modest Late Gothic Revival style grade school significant as a representative of the work of Wichita architect S. S. Voigt. The Bown-Corby School is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under the multiple property documentation form, *Historic Public Schools of Kansas*, as a representative of the *Town Graded School* property type.

Bown-Corby School  
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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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

Baxter, Mrs. Edson (Rebecca Shreve). "Story of First Settlers as Told at 1912 Old Settlers Picnic," reprinted in *Souvenir Program of "From Hope to Heritage."* Marion, KS, August 1961.

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*Cornerstone of New School Laid Monday*, The Marion Review. October 22, 1929.

Cutler, William G. *History of the State of Kansas* (Marion County). Chicago: A. T. Andreas, 1883.

*Into New School Monday*, Marion County Record. April 3, 1930.

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Marion County Historical Society. Van Meters Marion County Kansas Past and Present. Hillsboro, KS: M.B. Publishing House, 1972.

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*Occupy New School Building*, The Marion Review. April 1, 1930.

*Plan New School Building*, The Marion Review. July 16, 1929.

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Spencer, Brenda. *Historic Public Schools of Kansas* Multiple Property Nomination to the National Register, 2004.

Stallwitz, Norma. "The Early Schools of Marion County, Kansas." Marion, KS, 1961.

*Statement of Board of Education in Regard to New School Building*, Marion County Record. June 6, 1929.

Tihen, Dr. Edward N. *Notes from Wichita Newspapers, Special Collections and University Archives, Wichita State University Libraries* accessed on-line at [http://specialcollections.wichita.edu/collections/local\\_history/tihen/index.asp](http://specialcollections.wichita.edu/collections/local_history/tihen/index.asp)

*Valley School Building Ordered Abandoned*, The Marion Review. December 4, 1928.

Voigt, S.S, *Grade School Building for Marion, Kansas – architectural plans*. July 1929.

*Want A New Building*, The Marion Review. March 12, 1929.

Who's Who in Wichita – 1929. Wichita, KS: Robert M. Baldwin Publishing Company, 1929.

The Wichita Beacon, November 17, 1937.

*Will Vote on New Valley School Building*, The Marion Review. June 4, 1929.

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

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

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: Kansas Historical Society

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): NA

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**10. Geographical Data**

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**Acreeage of Property** .55 acres

**Provide latitude/longitide coordinates OR UTM coordinates.**  
(Place additional coordinates on a continuation page.)

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1	<u>38.351002</u>	<u>-97.021448</u>	3	_____	_____
	Latitude:	Longitude:		Latitude:	Longitude:
2	_____	_____	4	_____	_____
	Latitude:	Longitude:		Latitude:	Longitude:

**Verbal Boundary Description** (describe the boundaries of the property)

All Block 1 less 20' alley & including 1/2 vacated portion of Willard Street, Willard Addition, Marion otherwise known as Bown-Corby School and land

**Boundary Justification** (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The parcel described above reflects the full block on which the school is located.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title Brenda R. Spencer  
organization Spencer Preservation date 20 October, 2014  
street & number 10150 Onaga Road telephone 785-456-9857  
city or town Wamego state KS zip code 66547  
e-mail Brenda@spencerpreservation.com

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**Property Owner:** (complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

---

name Tom George Investments, LLC  
street & number 1900 Red Brush Ct. telephone 316-207-1866  
city or town Wichita state KS zip 67206

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

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each digital image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to a sketch map or aerial map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

**Photograph Log**

Name of Property: Bown-Corby School

City or Vicinity: Marion

County: Marion State: Kansas

Photographer: Brenda Spencer

Date Photographed: 13 August, 2014

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

<u>Number</u>	<u>Camera Direction</u>	<u>Description</u>
1 of 15	N	Front/south facade
2 of 15	NW	View of site from 2 <sup>nd</sup> Street, SE of property
3 of 15	SW	East and north facades
4 of 15	W	Secondary entrance on east facade
5 of 15	E	West facade
6 of 15	NE	View of site from 2 <sup>nd</sup> Street, SW of property
7 of 15	NW	Primary entrance in center of south/front facade
8 of 15	NW	Detailing at center entry bay on south facade
9 of 15	S	Interior view of primary building entrance, looking down from 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor
10 of 15	E	Looking E in 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor corridor
11 of 15	E	Stairway at E end of corridor, from 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor
12 of 15	W	Looking W toward west stair in 1 <sup>st</sup> floor corridor
13 of 15	N	Classroom in west half of original gym/playroom with steel windows, 1 <sup>st</sup> floor
14 of 15	W	Typical grade school classroom in NW corner of 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor with wood windows, Chalkboards with original wood frames, and original built-in wood wardrobes
15 of 15	NW	Detail of built-in wardrobe (typical) in 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor classroom, NE corner of floor

**Figures**

Historic Views of school building provided by Marion County Historical Society.  
Original drawings/blueprints by architect S.S. Voigt provided as separate attachment.  
Site plans from Google Maps, accessed online 3 October, 2014.

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**Historic Views** - Undated photos of Bown-Corby School from Marion County Historical Museum files.



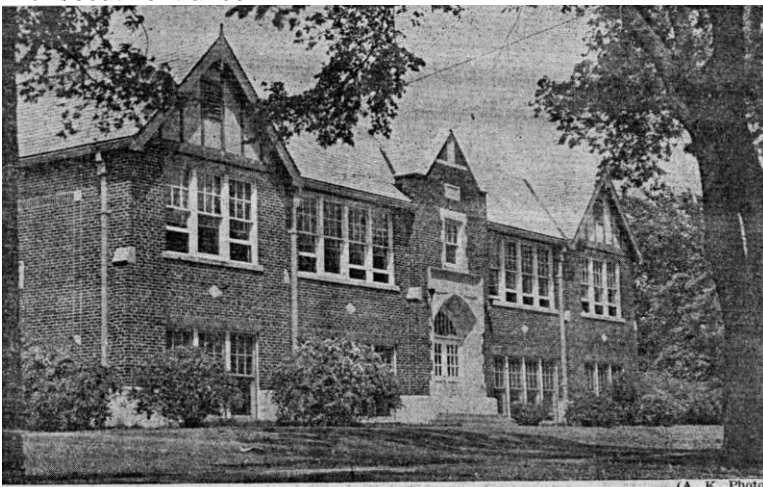
*View of school from southwest.*



*Front/south entrance.*



*Anna Bown*



*View of Bown-Corby School from SW - undated newspaper article "Marion Schools-Then and Now"*

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Aerial View of Context from Google.com 2014  
Bown-Corby School  
Marion, Marion County, Kansas  
Latitude/Longitude: 38.351002 / -97.021448  
Datum WGS84

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Aerial View of Site Boundary from Google.com 2014  
Enlarged image of site below  
Bown-Corby School  
Marion, Marion County, Kansas  
Latitude/Longitude: 38.351002 / -97.021448, Datum WGS84

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**SITE**

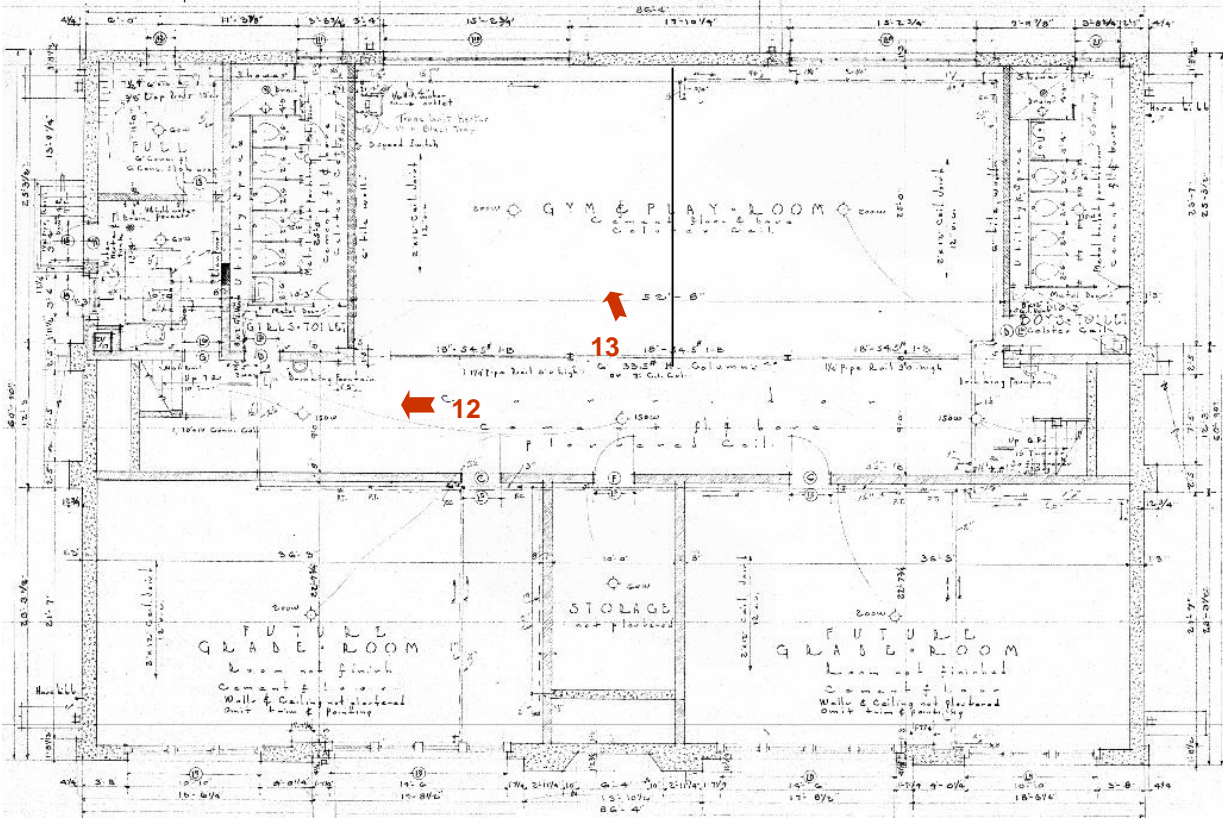


**PHOTO KEY**

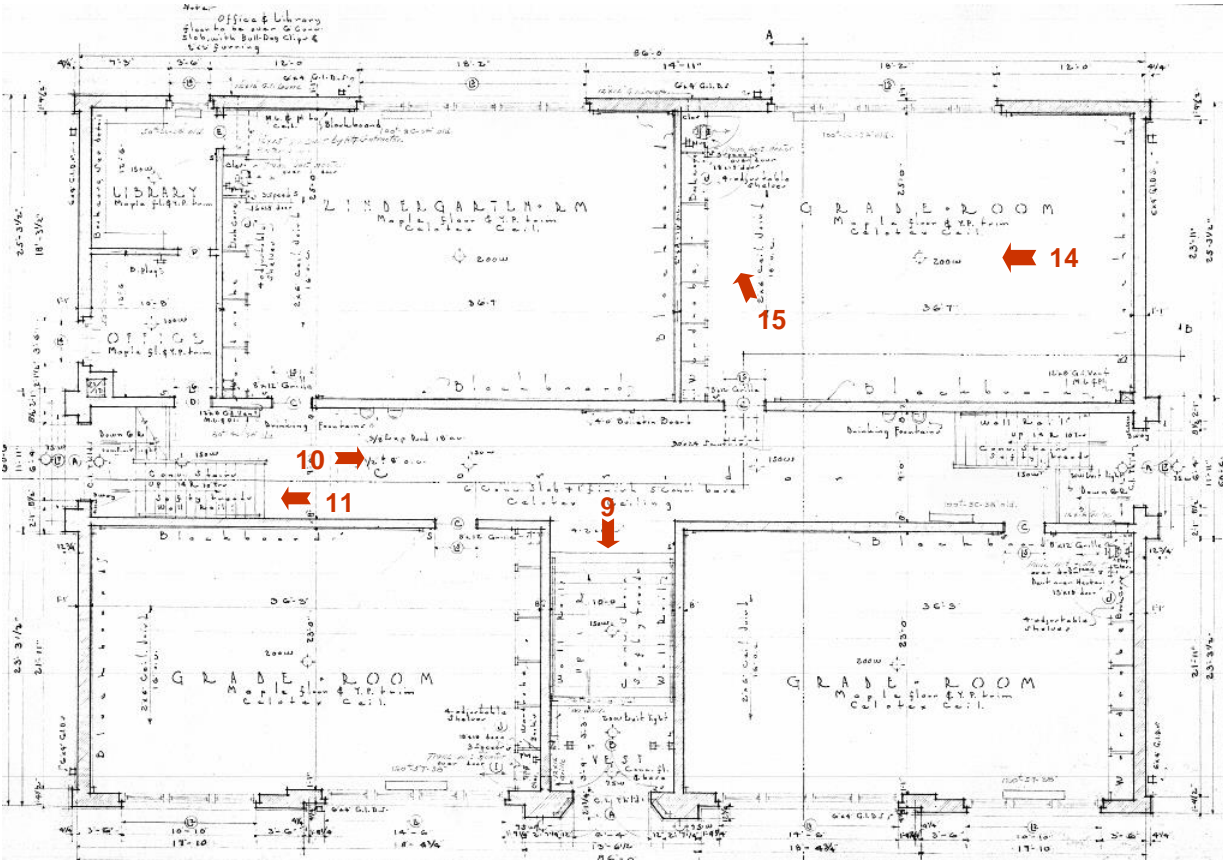
Aerial image from Google.com, 2014 used as Site Plan

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**LOWER FLOOR**



**UPPER FLOOR**

**PHOTO KEY**



Note—Historic drawings are used as base plan and do not accurately reflect existing conditions in some areas