

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site
Kansas



Monroe Elementary School

Cultural Landscapes Inventory

July 2014

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The Cultural Landscapes Inventory Overview:

CLI General Information

The Cultural Landscapes Inventory (CLI) is a database containing information on the historically significant landscapes within the National Park System. This evaluated inventory identifies and documents each landscape's location, size, physical development, condition, landscape characteristics as character-defining features, as well as other valuable information useful to park management. Cultural landscapes become approved inventory records when all required data fields are entered, the park superintendent concurs with the information, and the landscape is determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places through a consultation process or is otherwise managed as a cultural resource through a public planning process.

The CLI, like the List of Classified Structures (LCS), assists the National Park Service (NPS) in its efforts to fulfill the identification and management requirements associated with Section 110(a) of the National Historic Preservation Act, National Park Service Management Policies (2001), and Director's Order #28: Cultural Resource Management. Since launching the CLI nationwide, the NPS, in response to the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), is required to report information that responds to NPS strategic plan accomplishments. Two goals are associated with the CLI: 1) increasing the number of certified cultural landscapes (1b2B) servicewide; and 2) bringing certified cultural landscapes into good condition (1a7). The CLI is maintained by the Park Historic Structures and Cultural Landscapes Program, WASO, and is the official source of cultural landscape information servicewide.

Implementation of the CLI is coordinated and approved at the regional level. Each region annually updates a strategic plan that prioritizes work based on a variety of park and regional needs that include planning and construction projects or associated compliance requirements that lack cultural landscape documentation. When the inventory unit record is complete and concurrence with the findings is obtained from the superintendent and the State Historic Preservation Office, the regional CLI coordinator certifies the record and transmits it to the national CLI Coordinator for approval. Only records approved by the national CLI coordinator are included in the CLI for official reporting purposes.

Relationship between the CLI and a Cultural Landscape Report (CLR)

The CLI and the CLR are related efforts in the sense that both document the history, significance, and integrity of park cultural landscapes. However, the scope of the CLI is limited by the need to achieve concurrence with the park superintendent, and resolve eligibility questions when a National Register nomination does not exist, or when an existing nomination inadequately addresses the eligibility of landscape characteristics. Ideally, a park's CLI work (which many include multiple inventory units) precedes a CLR because the baseline information in the CLI not only assists with priority setting when more than one CLR is needed it also assists with determining more accurate scopes of work for the CLR effort.

The CLR is the primary treatment document for significant park landscapes. It therefore requires a more in depth level of research and documentation, both to evaluate the historic and the existing condition of the landscape and to recommend a preservation treatment strategy that meets the Secretary of Interior's Standards for the treatment of historic properties.

The scope of work for a CLR, when the CLI has not been done, should include production of the CLI record. Depending on its age and scope, existing CLR's are considered the primary source for the history, statement of significance, and descriptions of contributing resources that are necessary to complete a CLI record.

Chapter 1: Inventory Unit Summary

Inventory Unit Description

The historic vernacular landscape and structures of Monroe Elementary School in Topeka, Kansas are primary physical resources associated with the landmark Oliver Brown et al. v. Board of Education of Topeka case and the U.S. Supreme Court decision handed down May 17, 1954. Since being declared a National Historic Site in December 1992, the school building and surrounding property has been under the management of the National Park Service. The Park Service intends to open Monroe School to the public in 2003 and present an interpretive program that informs and educates visitors on local and national issues that relate to the Brown v. Board decision. To prepare for the 2003 opening, the Park Service has initiated research efforts whose goal, in part, is to achieve an understanding of segregation, and the civil rights movement in the context of Topeka. This includes a Historic Resource Study (1999), written by NPS Historian Rachel Franklin Weekley. A Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) team completed documentation of the architectural features of the building in 1993. The current landscape consists of a fenced lot, with the Monroe School building at the center, with concrete paving on the front (east) side, an asphalt-paved lot on the north side and grass and gravel on the south and west. The west side is bounded by a narrow alley and rear walls of residential properties that front on South Quincy Street. A few trees line Monroe Street along the front of the school. There is no extant playground equipment. The adjacent grassy lot, on the east side of Monroe Street, contains only a chain-link fence baseball backstop at the northwest corner. This lot is bounded by a railroad track on the east side. It was historically associated with and used by the school, and is part of this landscape. The site was fully opened to the public in 2004, collaborating with the Brown Foundation on hosting monthly special events.

Property Level and CLI Numbers

Inventory Unit Name:	Monroe Elementary School
Property Level:	Landscape
CLI Identification Number:	500006
Parent Landscape:	Monroe Elementary School

Park Information

Park Name and Alpha Code:	Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site- BRVB
Park Organization Code:	6145
Park Administrative Unit:	Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site

CLI Hierarchy Description

The Monroe Elementary School is a cultural landscape, which covers 1.85 acres in a mixed residential and light industrial urban neighborhood in Topeka. Monroe School, an important site in the landmark case Brown vs. Board of Education, is related historically to other cultural sites in Topeka. The significant landscape includes intact playgrounds located north and south of the school, a parking area and alley in the rear, a concrete courtyard and sidewalks in front of the school, and a play lot east of the school. Fencing does not appear to be original fabric, but is in the same general locations, and post holes exist which may be contributing. Features such as a flag pole and baseball backstop are still intact from the period of significance. This landscape is indicative of the vernacular character of the Topeka elementary schools of the period and the features reflect the historic land use and supports the associative significance of the site.

Chapter 2: Concurrence Status

Inventory Status: Complete

Completion Status Explanatory Narrative

Inventory Unit status is based on the cultural landscape inventory data recorded in 1995 by S. Williams. 1998 Seasonal Megan Weaver was given the responsibility checking and adding to data originally entered as part of CLAIMS Beta testing by M. McEnaney. Assistance was provided by R. Young and M. McEnaney. Due to time constraints, information on this landscape has not yet been review by the park or forwarded to the National Center. Acceptance from the park will take place after the 1998 fiscal year upload of CLAIMS data to the National Center.

Revision Explanatory Narrative

Data on the Monroe Elementary School was amended in FY99 by K. Fitzgerald. These changes were at the request of the park after a close review. CLI Coordinator R. Young concurred with these changes. A final draft of the report was sent to the park for the library.

Concurrence Status:

Park Superintendent Concurrence:	4/6/1999
National Register Concurrence:	Not Listed

National Register Concurrence Narrative:

The Monroe Elementary School landscape and features were determined to contribute to the national significance of the school.

Site Visit Conducted:	9/9/2011
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Chapter 3: Geographic Information & Location Map

State & County:

State: Kansas
County: Shawnee County

Size (Acres): 1.85

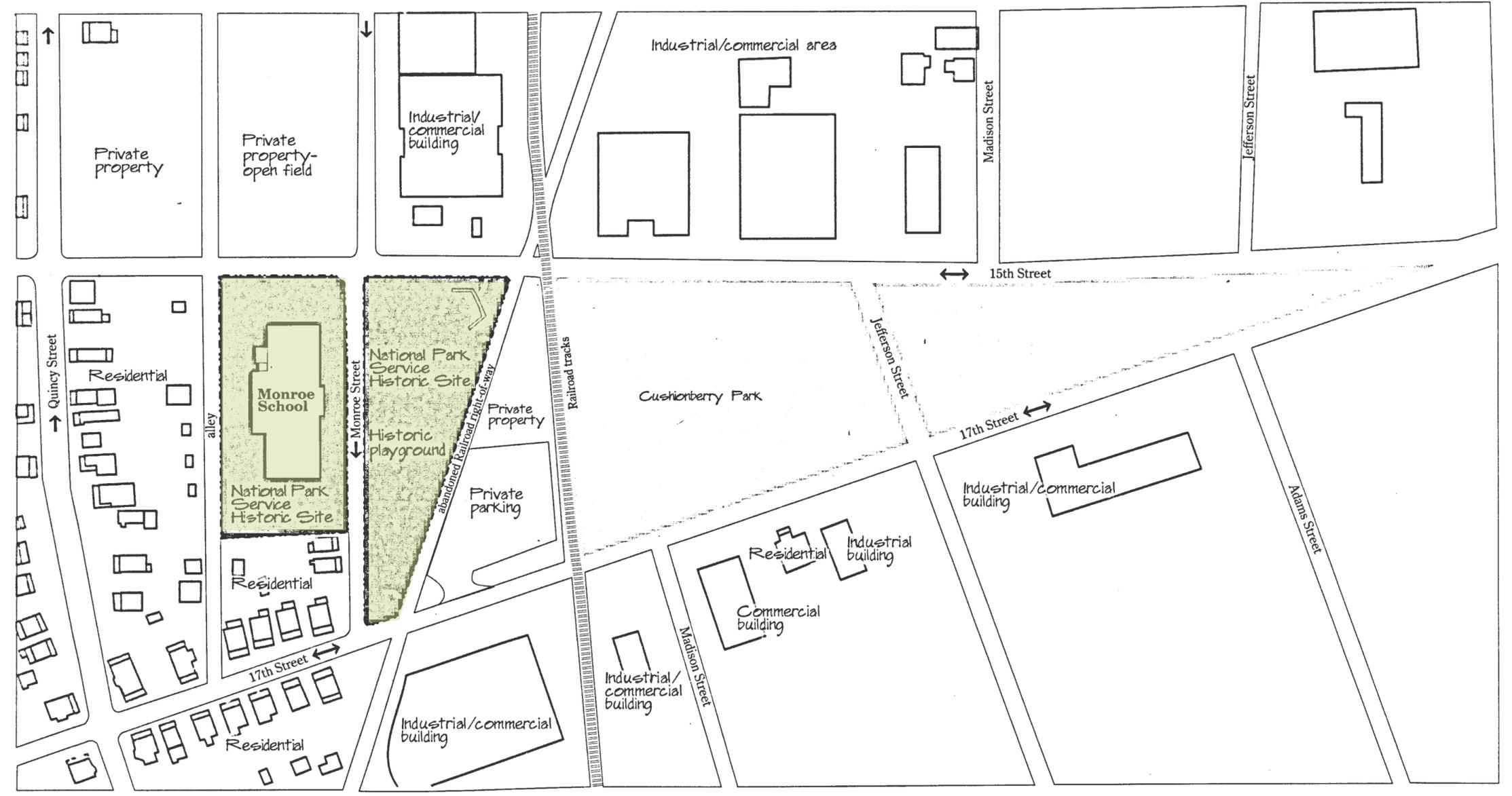
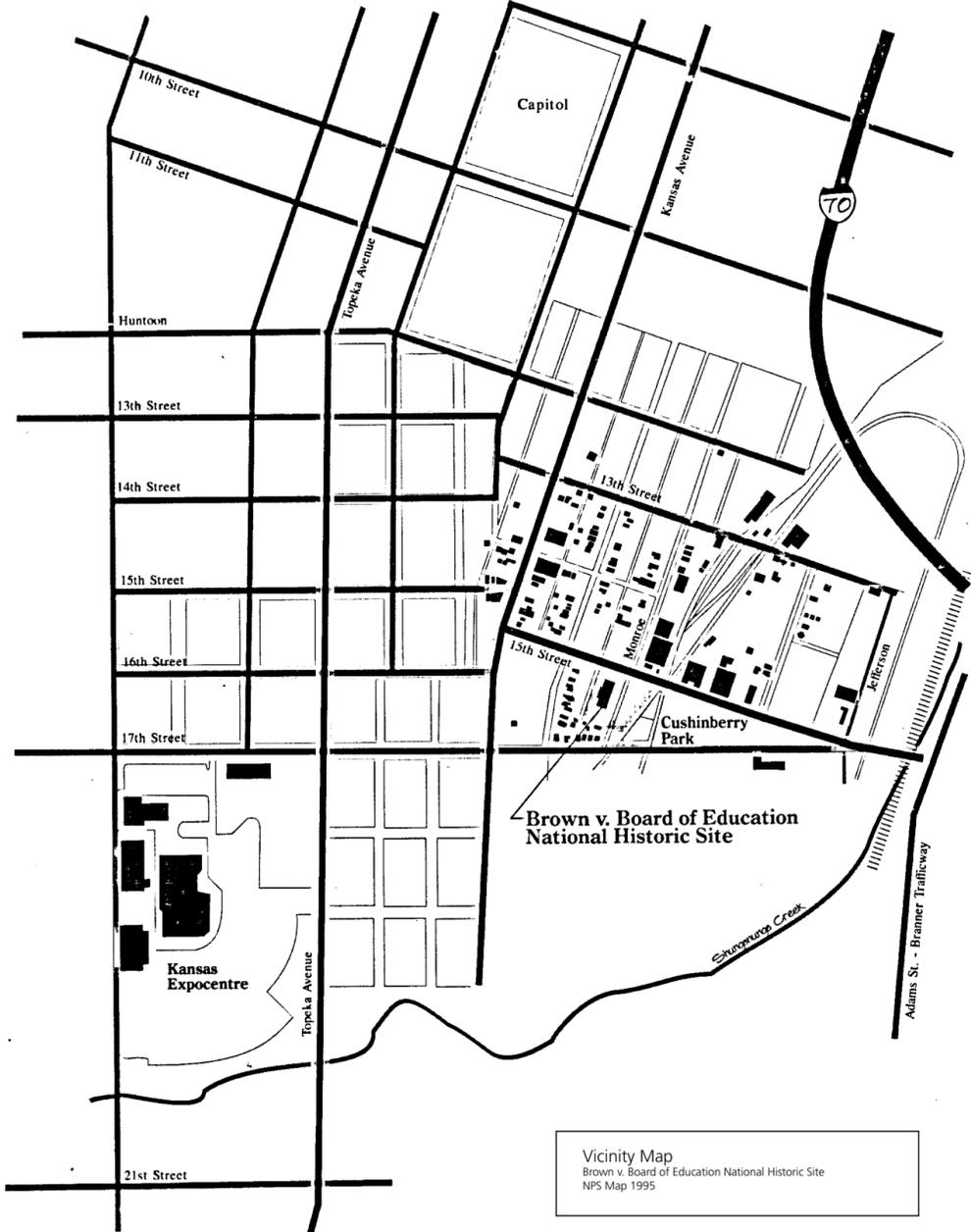
Boundary Description:

The boundary for the Monroe Elementary School includes lots, 505, 507, 509, 511, 513, 515, 517, 519, 521, 523, 525, 527, 529, and 531 on Monroe Street and lots 506, 508, 510, 512, 514, 516, 520, and 522 on the east side of Monroe Street, all in Ritchie's addition to the City of Topeka, Shawnee County, Kansas. This was the boundary of the Monroe Elementary School at the time of the 1954 Supreme Court decision.

Boundary UTM's

Source: GPS- Uncorrected
Point Type: Polygon
Datum: WSG84

Map Point	UTM	Easting	Northing	Long/Lat
1	15	268341	4324456	-95.676542, 39.038480
2	15	268451	4324413	-95.675263, 39.038127
3	15	268356	4324293	-95.676317, 39.037019
4	15	268336	4324294	-95.676550, 39.037023
5	15	268349	4324331	-95.676404, 39.037364
6	15	268302	4324350	-95.676954, 39.037516



Existing Conditions
Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site
NPS Map 1995

Cultural Context: Regional Context

The Monroe Elementary School lies within a economically depressed urban neighborhood featuring residential, light industrial, and small business development, as well as vacant lots. The historic context of the area needs further documentation; it is not adequately addressed in this inventory. In recent years, the neighborhood has been in decline, with decreasing residential uses and increasing vacant lots. The neighborhood has always been associated with African-American history. John Ritchie made a 160-acre claim in 1856 and sold off small lots of his claim to African American farmers in the 1860s. As early as 1868, lots were purchased for a school site for black children, and a school was built in 1874 (Cultural Landscape Guidelines 2000).

The integrity for the period of significance appears moderate to low. A proposed Downtown Redevelopment Plan could seriously impact the site's historic context.



View looking West at Monroe Elementary School from the southeast corner of the playfield, 1994 (NPS)

Physiographic Context: Regional Context

The Monroe School lies in an urban neighborhood, with little evidence of its natural physiography. The site is fairly level and well drained, but may lie in the floodplain of Butcher Creek or the South Branch of the Shunganunga Creek, which flow several blocks to the east of the site.

Political Context: Regional Context

The site lies about seven blocks south of downtown Topeka, within the Second Congressional District, City of Topeka, Shawnee County, Kansas. Former United States Senators Robert Dole and Nancy Kassebaum and Representative Dan Glickman sponsored the NHL study that led to BRVB's designation. The site was designated Brown vs. Board of Education National Historic Site on October 26, 1992 by Public Law 102-525. The legislated purpose of BRVB, as stated in the enabling legislation are 1) to preserve, protect, and interpret for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations, the places that contributed materially to the landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision that brought an end to segregation in public education; 2) to interpret the integral role of the Brown v. Board of Education case in the civil rights movement; and 3) to assist in the preservation and interpretation of related resources within the city of Topeka that further understanding of the civil rights movement.

Chapter 4: Management Information

General Management Information

Management Category: Must be Preserved or Maintained
The management category was selected because preservation of the inventory unit was specifically legislated and relates to the park's legislated significance.

Agreements and Legal Interest

Management Agreement:

Type of Agreement: Unknown

NPS Legal Interest:

Type of Interest: Fee Simple

Adjacent Lands Information

Do Adjacent Lands Contribute? Yes

Adjacent Lands Description:

The Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site consists of several landscapes and structures through out Topeka of which Monroe Elementary School is one. All of these landscapes and structures are considered contributing to the significance of the Historic Site. Adjacent lands contribute to the landscape of Monroe Elementary School, by providing a moderate to low integrity yet neutral setting for the school, which was just one of four black elementary schools during the period of significance. Monroe School is best known as the segregated black school that Linda Brown attended because policies of the Topeka School Board restricted enrollment in Sumner Elementary School to white students. However, children of the other plaintiffs in the landmark Brown vs. Board case attended the other three black schools, Washington, Buchanan, and McKinley. With the establishment of this historic site, Monroe Elementary School exemplifies the larger fight for the equalization of rights, opportunities, and privileges among all citizens in the United States. Associated cultural resources not presently part of the national historic site also contribute to the story of race relations and community in Topeka, such as the NAACP offices, the courthouse, and the Kansas State Capitol.

Inconsistencies in Topeka's segregation policies, separated children by race in the lower grades, but integrated them in junior and senior high schools. However, athletics and social events were segregated and black junior and high school students, especially boys, used Monroe School playing fields and the gymnasium/auditorium for athletic events and dances. Also, during the period of 1933-1950, it was documented that intramural track and softball games among the four black elementary schools were held in the east lot playing field. These contests were competitive and often drew large crowds from the neighborhood and elsewhere in the city. Understanding the broader "landscape" of Brown vs. Board and the many that participated, will be the interpretive goal of the historic site.

Public Access

Type of Access: With Permission

While the grounds are open to the public, the exhibits at Monroe Elementary School are open only when park staff are working.

FMSS Location Numbers

40804	Baseball Back Stop
1024553	Baseball Field
40806	Flagpole
66961	Monroe Elementary School
80446	Parking Area Monroe Elementary
1008036	Playground- Paved
1024548	Playground- Unpaved

Chapter 5: National Register Information

Existing National Register Status

National Register Landscape Documentation:

Entered Inadequately Documented

National Register Explanatory Narrative:

Landscape is not listed on the National Register and is determined Significant based on the findings of the CLI data and consensus determination of eligibility by the Kansas State Historic Preservation Office. The Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site is listed on the National Register of Historic Places

National Register Eligibility

National Register Concurrence:	10/26/1992
Contributing/Individual:	Contibuting
National Register Classification:	Site
Significance Level:	National
Significance Criteria:	A- Associated with events significant to broad patterns of our history
Criteria Considerations:	G- A property achieving significane within the past 50 years if it is of exceptional importance
Period of Significance:	1951-1954
Historic Context Theme:	Creating Social Institutions and Movements
Subtheme:	Social and Humanitarian Movements
Facet:	Civil Rights Movement
Area of Significance:	Social History Politics/Government Ethnic Heritage- Black Law

National Register Information (cont.)

Existing NRIS Information:

Name in National Register:	Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site
NRIS Number	01000156
Primary Certification:	SHPO Concensus Determination
Primary Certification Date:	10/26/1992
Other Certifications and Date:	Listed as a NHL- 12/1/1991

Statement of Significance:

The Monroe Elementary School is a significant landscape because of its association with the case of Oliver Brown, et al. v. Board of Education of Topeka (1954), in which the United State Supreme Court concluded that “separate educational facilities are inherently unequal” thus effectively denying the legal basis for segregation in 21 states with segregated schoolrooms and starting a revolution in the legal status of black Americans that continues to this day. The Sumner Elementary School is the neighborhood school that refused to enroll Linda Brown because she was black, thus precipitating the case that gave its name to the Supreme Court’s 1954 decision. The Monroe Elementary School is the segregated school that Linda Brown attended before the Supreme Court’s 1954 decision. The location of both schools in Topeka and the quality of education they provided to Linda Brown and the other plaintiffs in the case were material to the finding of the Supreme Court in the Brown decision.

Adapted from National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 1991.

National Historic Landmark Theme:

- XXVIII: The Law,
 - A. The Development of Principles in the Legal Specialties
- XXXI: Social and Humanitarian Movements
 - M. Civil Rights Movements
- XXVII: Education
 - B. Elementary, Intermediate, and Secondary Education
 - 5. Development of Equal Educational Opp

Chapter 6: Chronology and Physical History

Cultural Landscape Type and Use

Cultural Landscape type:	Vernacular
Current and Historic Use/Function:	
Primary Historic Function:	School
Primary Current Use:	Exhibit

Current and Historic Names:

Name:	Type of Name:
Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site	Current
Monroe School	Historic

Chronology

Year	Event	Annotation
CE 1868	Purchased/Sold	Lots 50, 52, and 54 on Monroe Street purchased for school building for black children, building on Lot 51 rented for immediate use.
CE 1874	Abandoned	Rented building (Lot 51) deemed unsuitable and replaced by a building at 15th and Monroe Streets.
CE 1925	Purchased/Sold	Board purchased lots 517-519 and 521-523; Board resolves to issue bonds in order to pay for the construction of new buildings and the purchasing of additional land.
CE 1926	Built	Monroe School constructed. Thomas Williamson was the architect.
CE 1940	Purchased/Sold	Board approved land exchange with City; Board acquires playground on east side of Monroe Street in exchange for Board owned land elsewhere.
CE 1975	Abandoned	Monroe School closes due to lack of enrollment.

Chronology

Year	Event	Annotation
CE 1978	Purchased/Sold	Monroe School put up for sale due to impending transfer of School District's offices to new centralized service facility.
CE 1981	Purchased/Sold	Monroe School sold to Fairlawn Church of the Nazarene.
CE 1988	Purchased/Sold	Property conveyed to S/S Builders, Inc. by Advisory Board, Kansas City District, Church of the Nazarene.
CE 1991	Memorialized	Monroe School designated a National Historic Landmark.
	Purchased/Sold	Property donated to US Government by S/S Builders, Inc.
CE 1992	Memorialized	Monroe School designated as Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site, October 26, 1992 by Public Law 102-525.
CE 2005	Rehabilitation	Completed rehabilitation of Monroe Elementary School, fully reopened as a museum.

Cultural Landscape Physical History Narrative

1856-1925: Settlement and the Establishment of the Original Monroe School

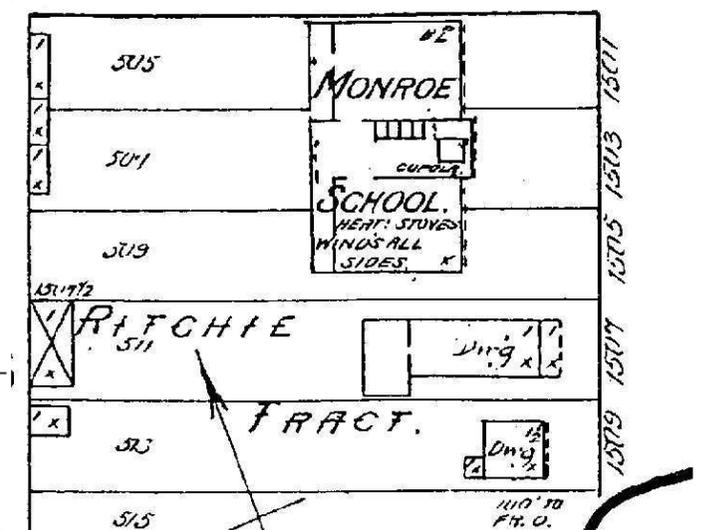
The land on which Monroe Elementary School now stands was originally registered in 1856, soon after government surveys of the area had been completed. It was registered in the name of John Ritchie, one of Topeka's earliest settlers and most prominent citizens (Fitzgerald, 11). Ritchie's property was part of a 160 acre claim that he bought from Jacob Chase, one of the nine initial founders of Topeka. This land was officially designated as NE 1/4, Section 6, Township 12 South, Range 16 East, 160 acres (Fitzgerald, 11). Ritchie established a homestead here and used at least part of the land for farming. He also owned land in other parts of the city, and was a land speculator who became actively involved in many early Topeka development ventures.

By the mid 1860's Ritchie began subdividing and selling 75 to 100 foot lots on his farm. Ritchie was also known to have given away land to "those who would improve the property" as part of his "free soil principle." Among the people who did business with Ritchie were migrating African-Americans. Unlike other landowners in the area, Ritchie did not discriminate against blacks and, indeed, had been a staunch abolitionist who participated in running the underground railroad on its route through Topeka. This apparently led to what Fry Giles described as "a circumstance that militated against the sale of lots to white people, and the locality. . . remained comparatively unoccupied from that cause" (Bird and Wallace, 233). Thus, white settlers may have not have been viewed the area as a desirable location but it may be possible that this part of Topeka became a popular early settlement area for the city's small but growing African-American population. A census of the area taken in June, 1886, confirms that a large number of South Topeka's residents were African-American (Bird and Wallace, 234-5).

In 1867, the city of Topeka attempted to annex the Ritchie area. Ritchie fought the annexation twice and won both times (Bird and Wallace, 5). In 1885, Ritchie's land, along with two other areas, was incorporated as a third class city called South Topeka. Although the boundaries of South Topeka were described as vague by contemporaries, the city is thought to have been bounded on the north by 12th Street, on the west by Kansas and Topeka Avenues, and to the south by the Shunganunga Creek. John Ritchie died in 1887 and shortly thereafter, in January, 1888, the City of Topeka finally succeeded in acquiring what became known as Ritchie's Addition through a dedication by John Ritchie's heirs. Streets were laid out on a grid pattern creating rectangular blocks, with each block split by a 20 foot alley running north-south. Lots in the addition were typically 25 feet wide and 150 feet long. Also, by this time, the land had been dissected by the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe, and the Kansas, Nebraska Dakota railroads, both of which likely began attracting businesses that depended on rail transit. Curiously, the southeast part of the quarter section, or addition, appears on the plan to have remained undivided.

In 1911, a portion of Ritchie's Addition located at the corner of Monroe Street and Euclid (now 17th) Street was replatted. However, this did not affect the lots at the north end of the block where the Monroe School was eventually located.

The development of the first Monroe School is somewhat obscure. The Shawnee County Historical Bulletin No. 67, which gives an



Sanborn-Perris Map showing the Monroe School and Ritchie Tract, 1896 (CLI 1992)

Cultural Landscape Physical History Narrative, continued

historical account of many of Topeka’s early schools, states that “the report [of the Board of Education] of 1889-90 told that most buildings are overcrowded, the Adams building on Quincy was to be exchanged for a site on lots 50, 52, and 54 on the corner of 15th and Monroe Streets, and a new four room building was to be built on that site” (Fitzgerald, 21). However, the Bulletin also states that “On the 13th of July in 1868 lots 50, 52, and 54 on Monroe Street were purchased for the erection of a school building for black children.” In the meantime, it was necessary to rent a building on lot 51 on Monroe Street. By 1874 this building was unsuitable for use and was replaced by a building at 15th and Monroe Streets (Fitzgerald, 74). The source of confusion, or incongruity, in lot numbers may stem from the use of a different lot numbering system prior to the annexation, or the authors could have confused street addresses with lot numbers. In any event, the Sanborn maps of 1889 and 1896 show Monroe School occupying lots 505, 507, and 509 at the corner of Monroe and 15th. The Sanborn map of 1913 shows the school still situated on the same three lots, adjacent to what appears to be a house. During June, 1913, the Board purchased lots 513 and 515; however, it is not known what this newly acquired property was used for, or if they had purchased the adjacent lot 511 (Land Records, Shawnee County Courthouse). The building had been remodeled in 1911, so it is possible that the Board was simply buying land to use for additional play space. Both the 1896 and 1913 plans show that spaces at both the front and rear of the building were probably inadequate for a school which may have had as many as 150 to 200 students.

By 1916 the Board of Education had apparently succeeded in buying lot 511. A proposed paving plan for 15th Street between Monroe and Quincy—dated February 17, 1916—shows the Board as owner of lots 505 through 515, giving the school twice as much property as they had in 1913. This plan also shows that the new paving was brick, and that the paved portion of the right of way, excluding curbs, was 26 feet wide, and the verge 17 feet wide, including curbs.

In 1919, the city approved a plan to pave Monroe between 15th and Euclid Street. According to the paving plan and schedule, the road was to be paved with a five inch base and two inches of asphaltic concrete. The paved portion of the right of way was to be 26 feet wide. This plan shows that the Board still owned lots 505 through 515, and that land just to the east of Monroe was then owned by the City of Topeka and was used as a park (This land was acquired from Hale and Anna Ritchie in 1917). Its use at the time has been suggested by Kenneth Redden, a resident of the neighborhood, and a student who graduated from Monroe in 1922. Mr. Redden said the area bounded by 15th Street, Monroe, 17th, and the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad has been a ball diamond for as long as he can remember. The plan also shows the existence of a fifteen foot wide sewer right of way located just northwest of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe right of way.

1925-1933: Construction of the School and Early Landscape Features

By April 1925, Monroe “school patrons” had requested that the Board provide the school with additional playground space. The Board reacted by considering the purchase of two vacant, tax title lots located to the immediate south (517 and 519), and the two lots just south of these (521 and 523) which were occupied by a house that the Board believed could be moved from the site (Board Minutes, 1924-1971). On May 26, 1925 the Board bought lots 517 and 519, and then on June 25, 1925 bought lots 521 and 523, gaining an additional 100 by 150 feet of space (Land Records).

This extra breathing room outside of the building did nothing to relieve the crowded conditions inside the classrooms. Monroe and other schools in the system seemed to have an overabundance of students, a situation brought to light in a report from the Superintendent to the Board dated October 5, 1925. The report claimed that, except for a few schools and grades, there were few classes with less than 25 students. The report concludes:

Cultural Landscape Physical History Narrative, continued

We have very crowded conditions in certain classes in Washington, Monroe, and McKinley [Schools]. There is no way to relieve the situation, however, unless we could have more classrooms or larger classrooms. In Monroe and Buchanan we might take care of the problem if the class rooms were larger. We are not justified, however, in basing the matter wholly on numbers, as in the white schools we have no more than two half grades in a room while in many rooms in the colored schools we have three half grades. (Board Minutes)

In response to the conditions outlined in the report, the Board resolved to issue bonds to pay for the purchase of new sites, the construction of new buildings, and to make repairs and additions to existing buildings. One of the buildings slated for construction was a completely new structure that would take the place of the original Monroe School building. The Board’s Building Committee determined that in order to build, additional land would need to be acquired. They began purchasing property south of the existing Board-owned property, adding lots 525 and 527 in May, 1926, and lots 529 and 531 in October, 1926. They apparently encountered some resistance from abutting property owners in obtaining the necessary space, because they had to condemn the last two properties. Lots 529 and 531 were specifically taken for play purposes, with a portion of the condemnation order reading:

. . . the Board of Education having actually examined and inspected the grounds proposed to be condemned and appropriated, finds that said land above described, owned by Ed Hall, is necessary for additional playgrounds for the use of Children [sic] while attending said Monroe School. (Land Records)

The Board enlisted the services of Thomas Williamson as architect for the new school building. Williamson was already well known to the Board—his firm designed many of the district’s school buildings from 1912 into 1960’s, including Topeka High School and Sumner Elementary School (HABS report, 12). The Board requested that Williamson’s firm develop plans for the new school in January 1926, and, by February had approved a set of preliminary plans (Board Minutes) (an incomplete set of these drawings are located at park headquarters). By May 1926, the Board was taking bids on construction, heating, plumbing, and wiring of the school, and subsequently awarded the general contract to F.M. Spencer & Son (Board Minutes). In October, the Board was ready to consider bids on hardware, and discussed the issue of placing “SLOW” signs on the streets in the vicinity of the school, perhaps indicating that much of the work on the structure was already completed (Board Minutes).

In their first gesture toward the landscape immediately surrounding the building, the Board awarded the contract for concrete and sidewalk work to Lundgren & Carlson in November 1926 (Board Minutes). In the following month, they allocated \$100 toward the purchase of shrubbery for Monroe, and during the same meeting “authorized the purchase of 130 elm trees at a price not exceeding \$1.40 each for the purpose of landscaping and beautifying school grounds” (Board Minutes). Whether Monroe was planted with any trees from this allocation is not known; however, later photographs and oral interviews indicate that elms were located in front of and to the south of the building. Finally, during the same meeting the Board was informed of a proposal by Stanley Forestry Company to “trim and subject to surgery where necessary all trees” at many schools, including Monroe, indicating that during this time the school grounds may have already been occupied by relatively mature trees.

On February 8, 1927, the Building Committee reported to the Board that the final inspection of the school was nearing, and three days later the Board authorized the clerk to advertise for bids for the wrecking of the old Monroe School. The next month, the Board accepted a bid from C.L. Shaner to “pay the Board \$107.50 for the materials and wreck the building 1 foot below ground level” (Board Minutes). By April the school had apparently received its final inspection—a letter from Williamson was read to the Board in which he stated that the school was entirely completed, and had come in under budget (Board Minutes).

Cultural Landscape Physical History Narrative, continued

All that remained in preparation of the facilities for use in the coming school year was for the old building to be razed.

When the school opened for classes in 1927 it was located in the approximate center of the 150 by 350 foot parcel of land the Board had managed to acquire in the previous two years. The footprint of the building measured roughly 61 feet east to west and 174 feet north to south, leaving a space approximately 77 feet by 150 feet to the north of the school and one of approximately 99 feet by 150 feet to the south as main play areas. In addition there was a strip about 33 feet wide in front of the school (not including sidewalks), and a strip 56 feet wide in the back, although the auditorium projected about 15 feet into this space. An undated Plot Plan for Monroe School indicates that the northeasterly corner of the building was to be located 100 feet from the face of the curb on 15th Street and 50 feet from the face of the curb of Monroe Street. Field measurements, however, show that the building was sited about 94 feet from 15th and 50 feet from Monroe, perhaps as a way of gaining additional play space at the south end of the site where it would be located adjacent to only one street. This meant that the new school was built only 12 feet from the old school. It is not known if the revised plot plan showing the new location was ever drawn.

Information on the appearance of the landscape, or grounds around the building when the school opened in 1927, is sketchy. A 1927 photograph taken by Wolfe shows a paved expanse in front of the school with a walk leading from the street to the south entrance of the building, and another walk, with mud scrapers on either side, leading from the street to the main entrance. The walk extends south of the school parallel to and separated from the street by an earth strip. There is also a strip in front of the school that appears to be void of any vegetation, as does the planter/retaining wall located along either side of the entrance in front of the school. Perhaps the most prominent features of the landscape in this photo are what appear to



Monroe School after completion, 1927 (Wolfe Photo, Kansas State Historical Society).

Cultural Landscape Physical History Narrative, continued

be a mature elm tree and a conifer (possibly a cedar). These trees are not standing in the right-of-way, but are located on the school grounds and are surrounded by pavement, save for small cut-outs around their trunks; stumps of these two trees and the cut-outs in the concrete are still visible on the site. Finally, at least a portion of the south playground appears to be grass, with no trace of fencing along the sidewalk bordering this part of the property.

Another photograph taken at about the same time by Wolfe, shows the two trees previously mentioned as well as two additional mature elm trees planted in the strip between the sidewalk and street. Three saplings planted in the verge, one north of the main entrance walk, and two south of the walk are visible, as are a set of uneven or chinning bars in the verge between the two trees. At the right side of the photograph there appears to be some scrap lumber, perhaps left over from the razing of the old school, beside the walk running from the street to the north side of the building, and in the background, to the left, a picket fence appears to be running along the southern boundary line. The paved surface in front resembles concrete, while the street appears to be paved with asphalt. Finally, the foreground of the photo reveals the east play lot as a barren stretch of ground punctuated only by the presence of a rock and a small pile of sand (but 1927 was only the first year of operation for the school).

It is not known if Williamson employed or utilized the services of a landscape architect. There is no evidence to indicate that he did for this project, although it is interesting that Board minutes do mention that as early as June 1926, Williamson had written a letter to the board suggesting the use of a landscape architect's services in the designing of Clay School. Williamson later stated, in April 1927, that he wanted the appropriately named Mr. Donald Bushey, Landscape Architect of the League of Kansas Municipalities, to address the board on the layout of the grounds at Clay School. The Board ended up authorizing Bushey to prepare plans for the layout of circular walks at Clay (Board Minutes). Records also show that Williamson later sat before the Board and urged Bushey's employment in the designs for Randolph (another Black school) and Curtis Junior High Schools, indicating that he and Bushey may have been collaborating on many more of Williamson's projects.

In the plan that Bushey developed for Randolph School, American elms are used exclusively for street trees and the general grounds contain only American elms and pin oaks. Shrubs include *Spiraea vanhouttei*, *Berberis thunbergi*, and *Forsythia intermedia*. *Spiraea* is a shrub that some former teachers mentioned as being planted at Monroe. Both *Spiraea* and elms were extremely popular at this time, so it would not have been unusual for even a lay person to select these species for planting.

A personal account of the features and uses of the new school grounds has been given by Mrs. Leola Brown Montgomery. Mrs. Montgomery began attending Monroe when it first opened in the Fall of 1927 as a first grader, and graduated from the eighth grade in 1935. She remembers the playground being essentially comprised of all of the land around the school, with the north half being the "boys playground," and the south half the "girls playground." The boys' and girls' ends were divided by an imaginary line running east-west through the center of the school. The separation of play areas by gender reflects nationwide playground design practices during the early 1900's, and was also a feature of the 1927 Randolph School "Planting Plan." Access from the rear of the first floor girls and boys bathrooms to the south and north playgrounds respectively further illustrates this practice.

According to Mrs. Montgomery, the south yard (girls playground) contained a slide in the southwest corner, a giant slide to the east, and an overhead ladder further east. Mud scrapers were located just outside the south entrance. Mrs. Montgomery cannot recall any trees in this part of the playground, but does remember that the entire schoolyard, with the exception of the concrete play area in front, was covered in grass. She recalls a tall fence at that south end, and a fence at the north end, but didn't pay much attention to the kind of material used for its construction. In the front of the school, the girls played a variety of

Cultural Landscape Physical History Narrative, continued

games, include jump rope, hopscotch, and jacks. The back of the school had no equipment and was used for more free-form games.

On the boys end of the playground, Mrs. Montgomery remembers only another overhead ladder, or “walker.” The boys played marbles in front of the school, and games throughout the rest of their side. A mud scraper was also located outside of the door at the north end.

Mrs. Montgomery recalled that students used the field just east of Monroe for various games including crack-the-whip and softball, as well as track events. She said the whole field was used extensively at least once a month for games when Mr. Dittmore, the physical education director, came to visit the school. The most prominent features of the field at the time were the backstop and a fence running along the north end of the field.

Other features of the neighborhood that Mrs. Montgomery remembers are a grocery store at the corner of 15th and Quincy where she would sometimes buy lunch, a restaurant at the corner of 15th and Monroe, and houses extending north up Monroe Street and east down 15th Street, which provided a residential character to the area. During this period, she said, nobody drove a car. Everyone, students as well as teachers, walked or rode the bus, making parking areas on the school grounds and bicycle racks unnecessary.

About the only documented change that occurred with regard to the school during the early years of its existence is contained in the minutes for the board meeting that took place on April 1, 1929 in which they decided to place “two large signs similar to those at Randolph. . . at the intersections of the block,” rather than build a fence (Board Minutes). It is unclear from this source if the Board had also considered extending a fence already present; all former students interviewed who attended Monroe after it opened remember a fence enclosing at least a portion of the playground.

1933-1950: Changes in Space, Uses, and Landscape Features

The most significant change that took place within the next few years was initiated in June 1933, when the Board resolved to exchange land they owned on East Eighth Avenue and East Tenth Avenue for the triangular parcel of land across from the school bounded by Monroe Street, 15th Street, 17th Street, and the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad (actually a sewer easement) (Board Minutes). Though Monroe students had been using this field at least since the new school opened in 1927, the Board did not own it. It is possible that by purchasing it they thought they could take liberty in using the space more intensively or control the scheduling of users. They may also have been taking steps to ensure that this space would remain available for recreation. In any case, the land swap was carried out and finalized in June 1934, and Monroe acquired its last parcel of land (Land Records).

Former male students who attended the school over the next ten years all remember the newly added property as being used for track and field events and softball. And, as in Mrs. Montgomery’s day, 1927-35, games such as croquet were still played there during recess or gym. According to these former students and a former teacher, the softball diamond on the east side of Monroe was used only by the upper grades, and especially by the older, bigger boys who had “graduated” from other, smaller spaces where ball was played on the north and south sides of the school. Joe Douglas, who attended Monroe from 1933-40, remembers playing a variant ball game called “work-up” in the southeast corner of the school grounds. Then intermediate softball on the east side of Monroe toward the center, and then, finally, a more advanced game using the actual diamond on the east lot (Oral interview, 1994). Around this time, too, the east lot was also used for intramural track and softball games held among all four black elementary schools. These contests were quite competitive and often drew large crowds from the neighborhood and elsewhere in the city.

An aerial photo taken in 1942 seems to confirm that the field must have been used quite intensively at the

Cultural Landscape Physical History Narrative, continued



Monroe School, c. 1948 (Topeka Public School District 501)

time, judging from its worn, barren appearance which contrasts with the grass-covered park further to the east. Also, just to the east of the softball field, between two sets of railroad tracks, the photograph shows worn, rectangular patches of ground. Former students Charles Douglas and William Bradshaw said this space was occupied by tennis courts (Oral interviews, 1994). Records show that this land was probably owned by the city at the time, and possibly part of the park that once included the Monroe softball field (Land Records). Unfortunately, this photograph does not reveal any detail of the grounds immediately around the school but the memories of former students are helpful in constructing an image of several spaces and features. For example, there were drinking fountains located just outside of the north and south doors, a slide in the southwest corner of the grounds, a basketball hoop or hoops behind the school near the auditorium, and gravel or dirt covering much of the grounds.

Other features mentioned include mud scrapers outside all the doors, a walker near the northwest corner of the building, a flagpole at the northeast corner of the grounds, movable box hockey in front of the school, a fairly large tree in the south yard, and tall chain link fencing that ran along the north and south boundaries then turned the corners and enclosed both yards along Monroe Street. A fence also ran along 15th street on the playing field to the east. These former students remember that games like jump rope and hopscotch were played on the cement surface out in front of the school, and that ball and soccer were played in the north and south yards.

One photo possibly taken during this period (based on the size of the trees in front of the school), shows mud scrapers on either side of the front entrance walk and, possibly, the north entrance. It also shows that the uneven bars had been removed from the front of the school. Distinguishing features in the photograph are the lack of grass on the field in the foreground, perhaps a testimony to intensive use, and the relative lushness of the trees and shrubs located just in front of the school.

Cultural Landscape Physical History Narrative, continued



Third Grade Classroom on the second floor, Monroe Elementary School, 1949 (Administrative Headquarters, Topeka Public School District 501)

Another significant difference between this period and earlier years is that playgrounds were no longer divided by gender but, instead, by age. It is not known when this change occurred at Monroe; however, at Buchanan School, another African-American elementary school, it was initiated sometime around 1931 or 1932. After separation by age was implemented, it became customary for the children in the primary grades to play in the south yard, the children in the intermediate grades to play in the north yard, and the older children to play in the field across the street. This organization of playground space reflected the organization of classrooms within the building: primary grades were in the south wing, intermediate grades

were in the north wing, and upper grades were upstairs. A closer analysis might determine how the playground equipment in each yard reflected this evolution from segregation by gender to segregation by age.

None of the former students remember the grounds being used for parking, with the exception of Mr. Green, the Janitor, who parked in back. The few teachers who drove parked on the street in front of the school. Also, no one recalled students riding bicycles to school, eliminating the need for bike racks.

Two prominent features of the neighborhood recalled by many people are the restaurant at the northwest corner of Monroe and 15th, and the grocery store at the northeast corner of 15th and Quincy. They remember the neighborhood as being mostly residential.

A final clue as to the appearance of the school grounds looked like during this period is provided by a photograph taken circa 1948, in the spring. This photo shows all the trees present in previous images in a more mature state. The only tree missing is the cedar that was located to the left of the entrance door shown in the c.1930's photograph. Low-growing or clipped shrubs are quite visible in the planters on either side of the entrance, but did not seem to occupy much of that space. Grass appears to be growing just to the right of the entrance door. In the foreground, the playing field seems to have a very sparse covering of grass or some other vegetation. One student from the school's later years remembers getting frequently stuck with burrs in the field. This memory is corroborated by a former school nurse who said children often came to see here after being stuck by burrs while playing in the field.

An obvious difference between the school grounds as they appear in this photograph and the one thought to date from the 1930's, is that a mud scraper has been removed from the south side of the front entrance walk. The remaining mud scraper looks like the same type, and occupies the same location, as the one appearing in the 1930's photograph. A box hockey game is visible in the verge south of the front entrance walk between the two trees, appearing to rest on the curb. It is just possible to make out a hole in the end of the box facing viewer. One last distinguishable feature, not visible in the 1930's photograph, is the surface of Monroe Street, which is smooth and paved with asphalt. This indicates that no changes in paving material had taken place on that specific street.

Cultural Landscape Physical History Narrative, continued

1950-1954: Changes in Space, Uses, and Features during the Period of Significance

At present there is not a great deal of written, graphic, or photographic documentation of the Monroe School landscape during the 1950-1954 period. Some photographs and plans do exist, however, and in conjunction with oral testimony, they permit a fairly coherent landscape image to emerge.

The earliest photograph taken from this period do not show Monroe School; they portray only peripheral areas, such as 15th street near the intersection of Monroe, Laura's Coffee Shop, another restaurant located at that corner, and houses looking north on Monroe. The road is a very interesting feature of this photograph, because it is still paved with brick. The photograph also seems to show the shadows of trees, and, possibly, the flagpole in the northeast corner of the grounds, stretching across Monroe.

15th Street was still paved with brick in 1952 when the city approved a plan for paving the alley behind the school with concrete. The plan shows 17th Street also paved with brick. Since the plan was issued, the streets have been paved with asphalt, but it is not known when this was completed. The alley may not have actually been paved until some time after the paving plan was issued. In fact, one of the students who attended Monroe from 1950-1957 remembers watching the work being done and thinks it was completed in approximately 1953. The alley, prior to the paving project, had probably been gravel, according to Bill McCarter, an engineer with the city of Topeka since the early 1950's. The plan also shows that the sidewalk along 15th Street leading towards Monroe was concrete, in contrast to the brick sidewalk on the opposite side of the street.

The most useful information pertaining to the site that can be gleaned from this plan is the fencing was apparently running along the north and south boundaries but not the west boundary of the grounds immediately surrounding the school. Poles or some other kind of objects were stuck in the ground behind the school, beside the paved part of the alley, perhaps to prevent vehicles from pulling into, or to keep children from suddenly running out from, these areas.

In July 1953, about one year after the alley paving plan was issued, the Board approved the purchase of new fencing for Monroe and a number of other schools. They approved the purchase of exactly 477 feet of six foot high Cyclone brand chainlink fence for Monroe, and an additional 200 feet of ten foot high Cyclone chainlink fence for backstops, without designating where this was to be used (Board Minutes). Based on this information, it would seem that the fence was purchased and installed; however, a year later, in May 1954, the board accepted bids on more fencing. The list of schools to be furnished with fence that summer included three schools—Lincoln, Roosevelt, and Randolph—that were on the previous year's list (Board Minutes). While this piece of information casts some uncertainty on whether the fence approved in 1953 was purchased and installed by May of 1954, it seems likely that the fence was installed at all but the three schools that made the list again in 1954.

A photograph, tentatively dated 1953, is the most reliable piece of evidence found showing how the school appeared during this period. This photo, labeled "Monroe," shows five cars, whose model years range from 1948 through about 1953, parked in front of the school. Although the date of this photo cannot be confirmed, it could have been taken as early as 1952 but no later than September of 1957, when a no parking ban went into effect in front of the school.

The photograph shows that many of the features apparent in the c.1948 photo had not changed, and provides a broader perspective of the grounds. It reveals that there were at least three trees, probably elms, planted somewhat symmetrically on either side of the front entrance wall in the verge. The photo also shows there was at least one shrub planted just east of the fence enclosing the north yard, possibly in the verge.

Cultural Landscape Physical History Narrative, continued

The photograph also provides the first glimpse of features north of the school, showing that the fence enclosing the north yard appeared to start at the walk leading to the north entrance, running along the east boundary next to the sidewalk, along the north boundary, and then along the west boundary and alley, disappearing behind the school. No fence appears along the east side of Monroe. A number of unidentifiable poles that do not correspond with the fence posts can be seen inside, and possibly outside, of the fence. They do not appear to be playground apparatus but rather single poles sticking up from the ground, resembling tether ball poles. At the right of the photograph a small section of fence can be seen running along the southern part of the east boundary, next to the sidewalk, and ending at the walk leading to the south entrance. On the other side of the fence, in the south yard, there was a fairly large tree, possibly an elm. Southwest of the tree is a large metal slide. This is the first time this piece of playground apparatus appears in any photograph of the school. In the foreground, no fence appears to separate the railroad tracks from the playing field.

An additional feature first seen in this photo is a pair of bicycles parked in front of the school, partially obscured by a dark car. The presence of these bikes may lead to the speculation that a bicycle rack was present on the grounds; former maintenance people who worked at various schools said that most bicycle racks were portable and could have been placed in one location one year and another location the next, making it difficult to pin down their location (Oral Interviews, 1994).

Notable features which appear in both the c.1948 and c.1953 photos include: the continued presence of the two trees in the south, a front concrete play area, one mud scraper standing just north of the front entrance walk (partly hidden in these photos by a dark car), the movable box hockey game positioned between the two elms planted in the verge just south of the front entrance walk, and the patchy appearance of the playing field on the east side of Monroe Street.

An aerial photograph taken in June 1954 provides additional information on some of the larger scale features of the site. This photo shows trees in the verge at the southwest corner of 15th and Monroe, trees planted in the verge and the play area in front of the school, and the large tree in the approximate center of



Monroe School, c. 1953 (Topeka Public School District)

Cultural Landscape Physical History Narrative, continued

the south yard. In this photo, there appears to be vegetation planted near the front along the south wall of the building; however, this speculation has never been confirmed by oral testimony. The aerial photograph and several others referenced in successive pages were reviewed by David Barnes; unfortunately, they are either not available for inclusion or were Xerox copies which provide a poor quality scanned image.

The south yard seems to have patches of grass surrounded by gravel or dirt, while the back of the school and the north yard appear to have an almost entirely gravel or dirt surface. It is most likely that it was primarily gravel, with some dirt. Maintenance people who worked at the various schools in the system, including Monroe, during this period said that it was common practice for the kids at the schools to just wear the grass out to the point where it would not grow, leaving only dirt. Their job was to cover any exposed dirt surfaces with gravel, commonly called “chat,” to keep the play areas from becoming muddy, and keep down the dust (Oral interviews, 1994). Virtually all the maintenance people interviewed stated that covering the dirt play areas with chat was an established practice starting in the early to mid 1950’s. Though the north yard may appear to be asphalt or some other hard surface, it does not appear reflective in the same way that other asphalt surfaces in the photo. It more closely resembles concrete but no evidence exists showing that the grounds ever had a concrete surface in any location other than the front entrance and the walks.

Judging by the aerial photo, the playing field on the east side of Monroe was also quite worn. Most informants recall that gravel was not placed on this field. This corresponds with both early and contemporary photographs showing a fairly worn but smooth surface, with patches of grass or weeds. It is also evident that the north end of the field is more worn than the south end, especially where the backstop now stands, indicating fairly intensive use.

At the south tip of the field, cars appear to have pulled over the curb and are parked; this was not known to be a permanent arrangement. No cars parked behind the school; since the photo was taken during summer vacation, no conclusions can necessarily be reached about parking arrangements. Oral testimony indicates that perhaps four or five people parked behind the school near the northwest corner of the auditorium, the rest of the teachers or staff walked or rode buses during the school year (Ross Oral Interview, 1994).

Unfortunately, the photo resolution is insufficient to distinguish fencing or any play equipment that might have been on the school grounds. Oral testimony offers the only means of reconstructing a picture of what may have been in the school grounds from 1950 through 1954. Sources agree on the type and location of several site features, though not on the details of these features. Photographs taken at Washington Elementary School from c.1955 and c.1959 portray comparable playground features.

Almost all people interviewed—students, teachers, or local residents—remember a set of swings on the grounds. Most remember its location in the western part of the south yard, near an asphalt strip of paving that is currently present at the site (Comer, Hurd, Johnson, Napue, Norman, Ross, Thompson, and Fuqua Oral Interviews, 1994). Many former students remember “teeter-totters” just to the south of the swings near the southern boundary of the school grounds; some state that the teeter totters and swings were attached. A merry-go-round may also have been present in the south yard, although its location is uncertain. Most of the people who remember a merry-go-round placed it east of the large tree that stood in approximately the center of south yard; one person said it was west of the tree. A more likely location is at the far eastern end, given that the merry-go-round doesn’t appear either east or west of the slide in the c. 1953 photo of the school.

Not everybody remembered a slide in the south yard. However, those who did seemed to recall it quite clearly—either because it was the site of many injuries or because its installation was a fairly exciting event (Comer and Johnson Oral Interviews, 1994). The people with memories of the slide’s arrival at the school

Cultural Landscape Physical History Narrative, continued

believe it occurred around 1953. It is reasonable to assume the location did not change between its installation and the time when the c. 1953 photo was taken.

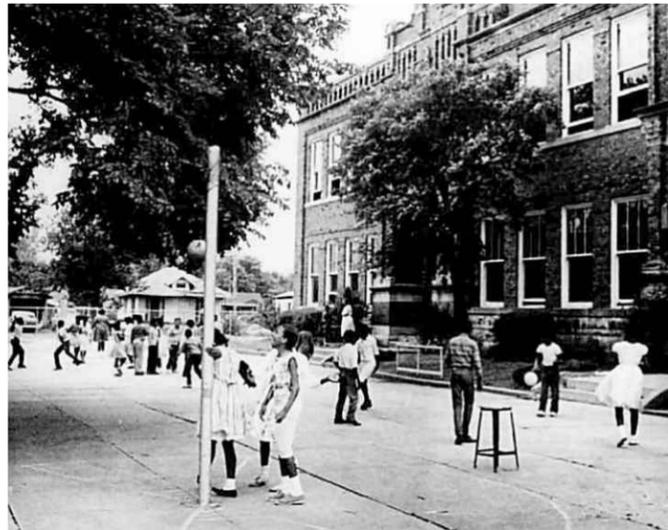
The last apparatus that quite a few informants remember in the south yard was a jungle gym; however, whether a jungle gym was present by 1954 is questionable. A newspaper article appearing on August 8, 1954 reported that the Board of Education authorized the trade school to build jungle gyms for various schools, including Monroe. The Board noted that, as a result of the authorization, all of the schools would finally have jungle gyms, implying that those listed did not yet have them (Whitson Clippings Scrapbook).

Almost all the informants remembered a water fountain in the grass just south of the concrete entrance walk, across from the south door. This fountain apparently had a counterpart on the north end of the school. The pipes of both water fountains may still be buried underground at the site.

Mud scrapers were also located just outside both side entrances. Although their exact location and orientation to the walks and entry way was not well remembered, a clue may be provided by a later photo, taken c. 1974 when Monroe was first being considered for historic landmark status. The photo shows a mud scraper on the north side of the building, located east of the entrance, on the north edge of the entrance walk. Strangely enough, many people don't remember a mud scraper being out front, but the c. 1953 photograph shows what seems to be the same mud scraper that had been at the north side of the entrance walk when the school opened in 1927.

The box hockey box, a feature appearing in several earlier photos of the school, was another item remembered by most people, and everybody recalled its location in front of the school. Some remember two boxes but this can not be verified. All that is known is that the box was portable, and the game seems to have been played on the cement in front of the school. Its location in the verge in earlier photos may have been a storage place rather than the in-use position.

A final feature remaining from the 1950 through 1954 period is the flagpole located in the northeast corner of the grounds. Not everybody remembered the flagpole; those who do say the one presently there seems



Children on the playground at Washington Elementary School, one of the other Topeka elementary schools involved in the Brown v. Board of Education case, c. 1955 (Joe Douglas Collection, University of Kansas)

to be in the same place, and is probably the same flagpole as the one they remember. As with other features of the site, this contention cannot be verified by photographs. However, the physical condition of the flagpole and the fact that it is clearly present in later aerial photographs suggests that it was probably there from 1950 through 1954.

The existence or location of other features which have been mentioned as being on the school grounds during this period is less certain. Many people, including ones who attended the school in the 1930's and early 1940's said that there was a walker west of the northwest corner of the building, at the back of the school. One informant, who was school principal, said there was a walker in the north yard when he arrived in the early 1960's (Ritchie Oral Interview, 1994). This indicates a walker was present in this area for

Cultural Landscape Physical History Narrative, continued

a long period of time.

Two former male students have said there was at least one basketball hoop in the northwest part of the school grounds, near the northwest corner of the building. (Comer and Ross Oral Interviews, 1994). This, too is quite possible, and perhaps not remembered by the female students or teachers, who may not have paid much attention to the presence of a basketball hoop. The evidence to support this is found in an aerial photo taken in 1965 that shows fairly clearly two basketball hoops occupying the west part of the north yard. (18) Photos taken in 1974 for the building's nomination as a national landmark also show a basketball hoop. Still, one wonders why so many other people would have missed this feature.



Children on the playground at Washington Elementary School, one of the other Topeka elementary schools involved in the Brown v. Board of Education case, c. 1959 (Joe Douglas Collection, University of Kansas)

Finally, although many people have mentioned tetherball poles in the concrete in front of the building, they are not visible in the c. 1953 photo. Norma Norman, an informant who lived next door to Monroe from the 1940's through the 1960's, remembered a tetherball pole sunk in the ground in the northeast part of the north yard (Norman Oral Interview, 1994). Hers is the only memory supported by the c. 1953 photograph, which shows a tall, thick post among the fenceposts enclosing the north yard. In addition, Diane Johnson, a neighborhood resident, questioned whether tetherball was played on the playground as early as 1954; she said it may have come a little later (Johnson Oral Interview, 1994). The c. 1953 photograph seems to support the argument that poles were not installed in the concrete area in front of the building until after 1954.

Other apparatus mentioned as being present at the playground from 1950 through 1954 were chin-up bars and a giant slide. Only one person recalled the giant slide, however, and two the chin-up bars, casting some doubt on whether these were part of the Monroe landscape. Again, it is possible there were chinning bars at the school, but no evidence corroborates this recollection. On the other hand, an object as large as a giant slide would likely be remembered by more people.

A feature recalled by each informant is the fencing marking the boundary of various parts of the school property on both the east and west sides of Monroe. On the west side, most informants recalled a fence running along the entire length of the southern boundary that turned at the southeast corner and headed north, stopping at the edge of the walk leading to the south entrance. The exact height of this fence was not agreed upon by the students, teachers, and residents who were among the informants but most said it was tall, and many said it was woven wire rather than chain link. Kenneth T. Fuqua, a grounds maintenance person for U.S.D. 501 from 1962 through 1981, remembers having to mow the grass and remove weeds near the fence (Fuqua Oral Interview 1994). He said that it was probably from ten to twelve feet high and made of woven wire. He recalls that even shortly after his arrival, it looked as though it had been there for years. Mr. Fuqua also said there was a chainlink fence running along the east side of the south yard. Further support for the height and material of the south boundary fence is lent by Mark Stueve of S/S Builders who owned the property from 1988 through 1993 (Stueve Oral Interview, 1994). Mr. Stueve said that one of the only changes his company made to the landscape was to remove an old woven wire fence that was at least ten to twelve feet high from the south boundary.

Cultural Landscape Physical History Narrative, continued

The fence running along the east boundary of the south yard, which appears at the extreme left of the c. 1953 photo, appears to be no more than about four feet tall. The material is impossible to determine. Mr. Fuqua remembers this fence and those on the east side of the north yard as all chain link, and the minutes of the Board of Education meeting in 1953 would provide verification. The Board, however, had approved the purchase of six-foot high chain link fence, contrasting with the fence in the photo which appears to be much shorter. The only explanation for the disparity is that the fence approved for Monroe in 1953 had been delivered to the school prior to the time the photo was taken, or that the southern portion of the school did not need replacement fence.

At the north end of the western side of the school grounds, several informants recalled a fence that ran from the walk that led to the north entrance door north, along the east boundary to the northeast corner of the property, then proceeded west along the north boundary to the alley and then south along the alley west of the school and terminating west of the school's northwest corner. This is supported by the c. 1953 photo, which shows a fence on both the east and west sides of the north playground. Some interviewees have remembered the fence as chain link, while others think it was woven wire. The exact height of the fence is also in question—the c. 1953 photo shows a fence along the alley that is taller than the fence on the east side of the grounds but it is impossible to estimate the height.

The only other part of the grounds which are may have been fenced during the 1950-54 period is the north boundary of the east-side playing field. The details are unclear on the height and material of the fence but it most likely was woven wire and at least six feet tall.

The backstop in the playing field now covered with woven wire was probably also woven wire from 1950 through 1954; the supporting posts also resemble posts seen at other, still active, schools. Bob Gerht, another maintenance worker, said that after about 1954, the school system purchased chain link rather than woven wire fence for backstops, so it is very likely the backstop materials date back to at least 1954. Thus, it may be correct to state that the backstop is one of the few remaining features left from the period of significance.

The aforementioned features were situated in distinct use areas defined and impacted by the children, teachers, and staff. The practice of separating children by age continued into the 1950's, and prevailed until the school's closing in 1975. For the most part, younger children in primary grades (K-2 or 3) played in the south yard on the apparatus, intermediate aged children in the north yard, and older children, especially boys, played in the field on the east side of Monroe. Apparently, the east portion of the south yard was an area reserved for active games: a former resident remembers that baseball was played in the southeast corner (Johnson Oral Interview, 1994). A former student recalls that during the school system's Summer recreation program, they would occasionally take horse rides around the south yard (Comer Oral Interview, 1994).

The north yard had comparatively little equipment. Most people with any memory of this space state that games such as softball and volleyball were played here, as well as games that were part of physical education classes. And, as mentioned before, tetherball poles and basketball hoops may have been present in this area.

The concrete area in front of the school seems to have been used for playing court type games, specifically hopscotch and four square, jump rope, and jacks. Many of the former female students who played hopscotch said the court was drawn in with chalk that they would take from the school. These homemade courts could have been drawn just for the sake of drawing or as a supplement to standard courts that were provided by the school administration. Alan Scrimsher, a painter with the Maintenance Department

Cultural Landscape Physical History Narrative, continued

who started in 1955 said it was customary when he arrived to paint courts on the cement or asphalt areas around the schools using specific dimensional standards and according to the school principal's directions. He could not remember painting any particular court pattern at Monroe during his time there but guessed they would have had room to put two types of each court north and south of the entrance door; at least eight feet was allowed at both the north and south sides of the main entrance. Mr. Scrimsher added they would typically paint a large circle at the schools, with the diameter of the circle determined by the space available.

At least part of the area behind the school was also occasionally used for recreation; one former student remembers playing baseball there (Comer Oral Interview, 1994). This space had a primarily utilitarian function; trucks would use the alley to make deliveries through the rear doors of the building. Linda Brown Thompson says that coal was unloaded into the grate in the rear near the northwest corner of the building. Some former employees also remember an incinerator in back where combustible trash was burned. Finally, a maximum of three or four cars would park just behind the northwest side of the building (Ross Oral Interview).

Photo withheld due to copyright restriction and use-permission constraints. Memories of the surface behind the building vary: most informants thought the surface was gravel, while others mentioned sand or grass. Only one person said there was asphalt in the back, and that this would have been for trucks to use in making deliveries. The 1954 aerial photograph suggests that the predominant surface was probably either gravel or sand rather grass or asphalt.

During this period, the playing field on Monroe's east side was used for softball and baseball games, intramural track meets, and Gray Y football (Comer and Ross Oral Interviews, 1994). Primarily, the field is identified as the place where the older school boys would play softball or baseball, which may have precluded its use by other students. In fact, one female student said she doesn't remember the field being used much, and can recall only occasionally going over there. Perhaps one of the more persistent memories of the playing field is that of a former student who frequently played baseball there, and said sand burs were a constant menace (Comer Oral Interview).

The 1954 aerial photograph shows trees along the east and the north verges; today the only trees to the east of the school. The c. 1953 photograph shows planters in the front of the school with low growing or well trimmed shrubs on the south side of the entrance, with no shrubbery on the north side of the entrance. One former student has commented that he remembers grass growing better in this area than any other part of the school (Comer Oral Interview, 1994). Kenneth Fuqua, the former grounds person, remem-

Cultural Landscape Physical History Narrative, continued

bers removing euonymous and spiraea from the planters soon after his arrival in 1962. He said the shrubs looked like they had been there for awhile, perhaps since 1954, and were torn up from the children playing on the wall around them.

Mr. Fuqua vaguely recalls pink *Spiraea thunbergi*, and the white, bridal wreath variety planted on either side of the steps, and euonymous, variety “Manhattan” on the outer edge. He did not remember the district planting flowers around the school. He stated that during his years with the school district most of their plants were purchased from Skinner’s Nursery. Don Roepke, a landscape architect with Skinner’s beginning in the early 1950’s, consulted for the school district during this period, but could not remember seeing or recommending plants for Monroe. He said in the 1950’s, commonly used plants included pfitzer junipers, flowering crabs, *Spiraea vanhouttei*, and honeysuckle. He estimated that during this period “the city was better than 50 percent elms”, and the grounds around Monroe school were more than likely planted with American elms.

The former students who attended school from 1950 through 1954 seem to share memories of the neighborhood around the school with those attending in earlier years. Generally, they recall an area with a much more residential character. There were more houses along Monroe and 15th streets, and fewer large commercial buildings inhabited the immediate vicinity than at present. The 1954 aerial photo reveals a number of large trees around and near the school. Since these trees are no longer extant the area possesses a more open and exposed appearance.

The businesses that were recalled most readily by earlier students were still in the neighborhood from 1950 through 1954. Most remember that the restaurant across the street, Laura’s Coffee Shop, served great chili, and sold the school children candy. Some said one of the most memorable sights was Laura, the proprietor, sitting outside of the restaurant on warm days fanning herself. Records show that part of Laura’s building was also used as a rooming house in the late sixties, and oral testimony suggests her premises may have occasionally been used for gambling and prostitution from the 1940’s when she bought the building until she died in the early 1970’s.

Just up the street, at the northeast corner of Quincy and 15th, was the Party Shack, described by one person as a neighborhood “Seven-Eleven” (Napue Oral Interview, 1994). This store sold beer and later became a tavern where it was gambling was rumored to take place.

Another long-standing neighborhood feature was the Fleming Company food warehouse at 311 17th Street. Informants living near Monroe recall a steady stream of truck traffic arriving and leaving the warehouse. Frequently, truck drivers loaded their trucks and pulled part way down Monroe to park and close their rear doors. One informant said the activity around Fleming’s seemed to keep children from using the southern part of the playing field on the east side of Monroe.

1955-1959: Changes During the Early Years of Integration

Alterations to the landscape during the period immediately after school integration seem to have been relatively minor. No informants interviewed recalled any major changes in the school grounds in terms of apparatus, use, surfacing, or vegetation. Most informants attending the school from 1950 through 1954 were gone by 1957 so they can not provide oral testimony about this period. Sources documenting subsequent changes are written and do not indicate any changes for the years immediately following the desegregation ruling.

Some equipment mentioned by informants as having been on the school grounds may have actually been installed after the discrimination ruling. For example, tetherball poles which some remember in the front of the school between 1950 and 1954 may have been put in after 1954. Likewise, the jungle gym described

Cultural Landscape Physical History Narrative, continued

in the south yard, may have actually been authorized by the Board, built by the trade school, and installed shortly after 1954.

The first major change documented after 1954 is noted in the September 15, 1957, Board Minutes, which tell that Superintendent Godwin “explained to the board that Monroe playground is separated from the school by a street, and proposed that the Board request the City Commission to establish a no parking zone on either side of the street between 15th and 17th. He also proposed fencing the playground, graveling one end of the playground to be used as a parking area for students and teachers of that building...and require all persons driving cars to park in the parking lot.” The minutes also describe that “Mr. Godwin recommended that the board ... authorize the maintenance department to fence the playground area, graveling part of the area to be used as a parking lot for teachers and students of the school.”

Evidence that this order was carried out fairly quickly is found in the city’s traffic engineering records for Monroe Street. They show that an order was signed on October 1, 1957, that prohibited parking in front of the school. Presumably, the parking ban would not have taken effect unless the parking issue had already been resolved.

Further proof that Godwin’s order was carried out is offered by an aerial photo, taken by the Shawnee County Metropolitan Planning Agency in 1960, which shows evidence of use of the southern third of the east side playing field.

Although not mentioned in the minutes, the maintenance department may have erected two light standards to illuminate the parking area and railroad tracks to the east. This speculation is founded on the two concrete light bases, which appear in a 1965 aerial photo, that can still be found on site, adjacent to the former parking lot location.

A report prepared in 1957 or 1958 describing Monroe School’s physical condition provides very general information about the school grounds and neighborhood, and may have actually led to the measures taken by Godwin that are described above (School File). It stated:

The Monroe Elementary School is located on a site of approximately two acres, one block east [sic] of an industrial and warehouse area. Railroad tracks run adjacent to the athletic field on the east side. The noise, smoke, and odors are unpleasant and distracting. The school serves the surrounding low- income residential area. There are a few nearby business establishments with undesirable atmosphere. Many pupils must cross high-traffic streets in order to reach the school. A street separates the play field from the school site proper. The site is of adequate size in terms of present and anticipated enrollment. Fencing is needed in order to afford a higher degree of safety with reference to the railroad tracks. Only a very limited amount of playground area is hard-surfaced and adequate parking facilities are not available to personnel.

The report recommended vacating the street separating the school and playing field, if possible, and fencing the playing field to increase safety. Cars were only prevented from parking, rather than driving on the street; a 1962 aerial photo shows the faint shadow of a fence along the east side of Monroe, leading to the conclusion that the recommendations were carried out.

The second and final change to the landscape surrounding the school occurred in 1959, when Principal Eva Montgomery had most of the playground equipment removed from the grounds, apparently for safety reasons. According to Mrs. Mildred Hall, the school Secretary in 1959, Ms. Montgomery had all the equipment removed (Hall Oral Interview, 1994). Claude Ritchie, Eva Montgomery’s successor, corrected this by saying that not everything was removed—when he arrived in 1962, a merry-go-round was still in the south

Cultural Landscape Physical History Narrative, continued

yard and an overhead ladder stood in the north yard (Ritchie Oral Interview, 1994). Another feature he recalled but could not locate was a basketball goal. Reports of these features lends some credibility to the informants who remembered their presence from 1950 through 1954.

1960-1975: Changes in Site Features and the School's Decline

General information about the school's appearance from 1960 through 1975 was deduced from aerial photographs from 1962 and 1965, which are not available. The most obvious difference between the 1962 photo and previous aerial taken in 1954 is that the southern portion of the playing field was used for parking, and the east side of the field had been fenced. The fence is visible at the corner at 15th and Monroe and runs east along 15th Street and the northern boundary of the playing field, ending somewhere north-east of the backstop.

On the west side of Monroe, trees are evident in the verge in front of the school, and in the south, front concrete play area. At least one tree appears in the verge north of the school, and the large tree in the middle of the south yard is present.

Except for the front area, the surface surrounding the school still appears unpaved. Grass seems to cover most of the north yard, while the south yard and back of the school are mainly gravel or dirt-covered. A marked change from previous years can be seen in the east side playground, which features substantially more grass. Parked cars are visible next to the northwest side of the school and in the playing field parking lot.

The 1965 aerial photo reveals more detailed information about the school grounds. It shows a slide in the southwest part of the south yard, and an unidentified object perhaps 15 feet east of the slide. The western part of the north yard contains two basketball hoops, and, the flagpole base is visible in the northeast corner of the north yard. In this photo, the flagpole appears to be inside of the fence.



Monroe School, 1974 (Kansas State Historic Society)

Cultural Landscape Physical History Narrative, continued

Most of the fencing can be traced by looking at its shadow. These shadows suggest that the fence ran north along the boundary between the school property and the alley, began at a spot opposite the northwest corner of the auditorium. It then turned and ran along the north and east boundary, and ended near the north entrance walk. The fence resumed at the south side of the south entrance walk, ran south along the east boundary and appeared to continue to 17th Street. The fence along the south boundary is not visible but its presence since the earliest days of the school is verified by all informants. This fence configuration is probably the identical to that present in 1954, based on the c. 1953 photo and oral testimony.

The fence enclosing the east side playing field appears as in the 1962 aerial photo. At least one person familiar with the school grounds during this period has mentioned the fence opening across from the school's front entrance (Bell Oral Interview, 1994). Depressions and concrete pieces in the field provide evidence of this feature and the rest of the fence along the east side of Monroe.

The backstop is also plainly visible for the first time in the 1965 photo. It was located in the northeast corner of the playing field; the location described by informants and its contemporary location.

Between 1965 and 1974, when the site was photographed as part of the school's historic landmark nomination, a chain link fence was installed along the front of the school. This addition effectively joined the fences running along the east boundaries of the north and south yards. Kim Bell, a student from 1963 through 1969, remembers a fence with a gate opposite the front doors running along the entire front of the school, just as it appears in the photo. This recollection places the installation sometime between 1965 and 1969.

In the 1974 photo, cars are being parked along the back of the building and in the southwest part of the south yard. It is difficult to tell whether this rear portion had been paved.

One unusual feature in the photo is the rectilinear shape in the south part of the north yard adjacent to the school. It appears paved, yet there is no record of its installation nor can anyone remember it being paved. Claude Ritchie says that during his time at Monroe, from 1962 though 1966, he had the back paved with an asphalt strip, and the north yard paved with asphalt. However, Richard Allen, Principal from 1966 through 1969, stated that during his tenure, there was no pavement in back, and the north yard was gravel. The only evidence indicating when the school may have been paved is found in the Board minutes from December 16, 1968, in which the purchase of asphalt surfacing was approved (School File). This work was probably not carried out until school ended in June 1969.

Although the 1965 photo shows all vegetative features noted in earlier photos still intact, this soon changed. Kenneth Fuqua, the grounds person who began working for the school system in 1962, says that he removed many elms from the grounds of various schools during the 1960's, and remembers removing the elm in Monroe's south yard. He called this particular tree a "water elm". Eventually all the elms were removed, as well as the evergreen tree planted in the concrete play area in front of the school. This left the school grounds and surrounding area virtually free of any shade trees. This condition is apparent in a 1976 aerial photo of the site.

A former Monroe teacher, Marjorie Hromada, says that she took initiative sometime between 1969 and 1973 and planted Silver Maples in the verge in front of the school. They do not appear in the 1976 aerial but can be seen in the survey photos taken for the 1974 historic landmark nomination.

By January 1975, substandard facilities and orders by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare to comply with the unitary plan of education led the Board to vote to close Monroe and several other schools (School Files). In June of that year the school ceased to function.

Cultural Landscape Physical History Narrative, continued

1975-1980: Use as a Maintenance Facility

In June 1975, the Board of Education voted to use Monroe as a temporary warehouse (School Files). Maintenance workers prepared the site for its new use by removing playground equipment and other site features, such as water fountains and mud scrapers. Bob Gehrt, maintenance supervisor during this period, and Charlie Jones, a maintenance worker, remember a decision made to park buses on the site; in 1976, fencing around the school was modified to provide greater security (Gerht and Jones Oral Interviews, 1994). The chain link fence remaining on the site, bearing the stenciled words “Crane Junior High School” and “Lowman Hill School” was probably salvaged when those schools closed.

A 1976 aerial photo showed dramatic changes to the school’s landscape. Both the north and south yards were used as parking areas, and no trees were present on the school grounds. The only features visible that remained unchanged from previous periods are the flagpole, backstop, and fencing around the east side playing field, and the parking area south of the field.

The school was used as a warehouse for about three years. In December 1978, the Board voted to put the school on the market. James Seltsam, the School District’s Realty Advisor assessed the building’s value and was authorized to search for a buyer (School Files). Mr. Seltsam eventually struck a deal with Richard C. Appelhans, a local banker and real estate developer. On June 27, 1980 the property was conveyed to Appelhans (Land Records). The last act before the property transferred was the removal of the fence on the east side of Monroe by maintenance workers (Jones Oral Interview).

1980-1982: Changes to the Property Under Richard C. Appelhans

No changes to the property’s use or features by Mr. Appelhans have been recorded. An old file on Monroe School, kept by the Board Clerk, indicates the new owner attempted to convert the facility into a private school, but this plan did not come to fruition. Efforts to contact Mr. Appelhans regarding his involvement with the school have been unsuccessful.

In November 1982, Appelhans apparently transferred control of the property to a Topeka congregation connected with the Church of the Nazarene, Kansas City District (Land Records).

1982-1988: Changes to the Property Under the Church of the Nazarene

Fred Willard, a former member of the Wanamaker Woods Church of the Nazarene in Topeka, explained that although the church members made minor alterations to the building’s interior, they did not alter the landscape (Willard Oral Interview, 1994). The church’s outreach program at Monroe was apparently unsuccessful; in August 1988, the property was sold to Mark Stueve, owner of S/S Builders.



Aerial Image of Monroe School and neighborhood, 1986 (Shawnee County Appraiser, Topeka-Shawnee County Metropolitan Planning Agency)

Cultural Landscape Physical History Narrative, continued

1988-1993: Changes to the Property Under S/S Builders

The former Monroe School was one of many Monroe Street properties owned by S/S Builders. The company intended to use the building as a warehouse for construction materials and equipment (Stueve Oral Interview). The company made minor alterations to the interior and exterior of the building to prepare it for this purpose. Mark Stueve, owner of S/S Builders, said that little was done to the grounds, and he had little direct involvement with the site. Most of the work was done by his brothers, who were his employees.

Mr. Stueve did remember one significant change: removing a tall, old, woven wire fence located along the southern boundary. A post from this fence can be found in the extreme southwest corner of the site. The only other change Mr. Stueve recalled was the addition of a four foot high field fence that currently encloses much of the property.

In 1990 Mr. Stueve considered putting the building up for auction, but was persuaded by the Brown Foundation for Educational Equity, Excellence and Research to take it off the market and endorse its designation as a National Historic Site. In December 1990, the building was declared a National Historic Landmark, and on October 26, 1992, was created a National Historic Site. The National Park Service became actively involved in managing the property, and eventually purchased it in December 1993 (Land Records).

1993-present: Changes Under the National Park Service

At present, the National Park Service (NPS) has made no significant changes to the school’s landscape. Most NPS efforts have focused on building stabilization, and maintaining the grounds by periodic mowing. The fence installed under S/S Builder’s ownership has deteriorated; its location about seven feet north of the south boundary is an inaccurate indication of the extent of the property. The only significant features remaining from the 1950-1954 period are the flagpole in the northeast corner of the school site proper, and the backstop on the east side playing field. Depressions in the elm trees remain in the north and east verges of the school site, and a stump and the concrete cut-outs in the south, front part of the school site show where an elm and cedar stood. What may be bases of tether ball poles can be seen at the north and south ends of the playground. Although several former students claim that tetherball poles once stood in this location during the period of significance, this has not been adequately verified. Other evidence of playground apparatus and equipment may be buried at the site; further research is needed to determine its existence.

The panoramic views of the school and surrounding neighborhood and many of the site’s individual features were photographically documented during the CLI field visit in March 1994. These black and white photographs, and a field map are included in the CLI files (MWSO, CRM).

Monroe School reopened to the public in 2004. A replica of the historic 1950s fencing was erected on the south side of the site. The heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system is a geothermal system, with seventy 250 foot deep wells distributed into 13 zones within the historic site. (Superintendent 2005)



Spirea in bloom along the east entrance of Monroe School (NPS 2014).

Chapter 7: Analysis and Evaluation of Integrity

Summary:

The cultural landscape at Monroe Elementary School consists of playgrounds, and a playing field, an entry courtyard, parking areas, and the roads and sidewalks along the north and east sides of the school. As a preliminary assessment, the CLI data concludes that the landscape is significant and has a moderate level of integrity. The overall level of available documentation on the landscape is fair, but because the general historic (1950-1954) character of the landscape was apparently fairly simple, some level of preservation treatment should be feasible. There is a surprising scarcity of photographic documentation for the physical landscape, and we had to rely primarily on oral histories for analysis.

The open spaces at each end (north and south) of the Monroe Elementary School building were used as play yards during the period of significance. Their general open character is still intact, although several details are missing. The grass ground cover appears to be similar to the grass, dirt and gravel condition present in 1951-54. Fencing does not appear to be original fabric, but is in the same general locations. One or two large deciduous trees are missing from the south yard. It is unknown when the asphalt court was added to the north play yard. The most obvious non-intact elements of these play yards are the various pieces of playground equipment. This equipment included chin-up bars, a giant stride, probably tetherball, and an overhead ladder (monkey bars). Mud scrapers shown close to the north and south entrances in period photographs are no longer intact.

The open, grassy lot across Monroe Street from the school building appears to be very intact, as it was never very formally developed. A baseball backstop [HS-3] at the northeast corner appears to be original to the 1951-54 period. It is unclear to what extent this lot was fenced (currently none), and it is most probable that a fence is missing from along 15th Street, along the north side. The eastern boundary was, and continues to be, a railroad right-of-way.

The concrete paved area in front of the school's main entrance (east side of the building) appears fairly intact. The size and configuration are consistent with that of the historic period. Two trees (a deciduous tree and a cedar) present during the Period of Significance are missing and their stumps remain in cutouts in the concrete. Games played in this area, such as hopscotch, 4 square and jump rope, required no physical expression in the landscape. Small mud scrapers may be missing from this area, but it is unclear from available photographs.

Concrete sidewalks of various widths on the school building lot correspond to the configuration and location of those noted in historic photographs. It is unclear whether original material may have been replaced over time. The parking area, in the rear of the building, during the 1951-54 period consisted only of space for between 5-7 cars and was paved only with gravel. Today, this space continues this historic use, albeit on a greatly extended scale, and continues to visually "read" as an open space.

Monroe and 15th Streets are two lane city streets, now paved with asphalt, and having concrete curbs. The streets were paved with brick during the period of significance, and the brick may still exist under the asphalt. Monroe Street separates the school building lot and the play field lot. It is and historically was lined with trees along the east side of the school building lot. The current spacing of these trees and species is somewhat different, but the same general character for the street is still intact. From some of the historic photographs, there also appear to have been some deciduous trees along the south side of 15th Street, along the school building lot, during the Period of Significance. These are not intact.

The flagpole is a common element traditionally associated with schools and other public buildings. It should be included as a contributing element. The existing steel flagpole is located at the northeast corner of the school lot, and is set in a grassy area between the concrete play area fence and the concrete side-

Summary, continued:

walks that run the perimeter of the block. It is anchored in a concrete pad. Rust has formed on the areas that have lost their protective paint layer.

More ephemeral character-defining features include the level topography of both lots, the open views from the northeastern corner of the play field to the Monroe Elementary School building (filtered by the line of deciduous trees); and a general sense of enclosure by residential-type buildings and uses on both the west and the south sides of the school building lot.

Adapted from the CLI Determination of Eligibility, 1995.

Landscape Characteristics:

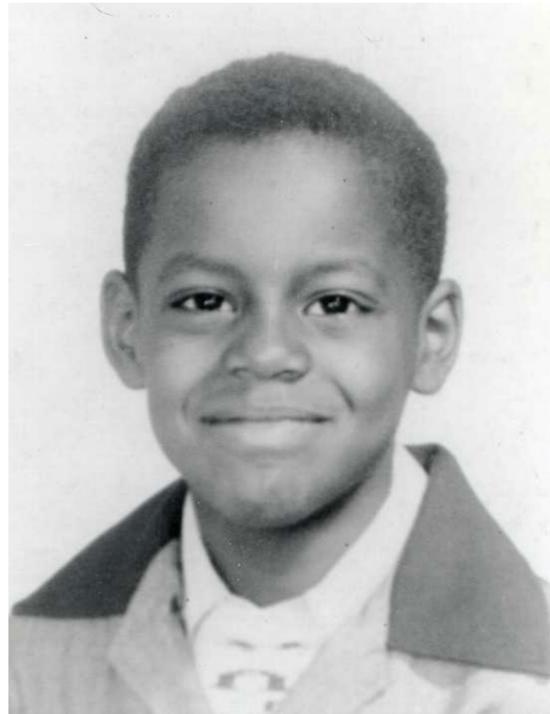
- Cultural Traditions
- Buildings and Structures
- Small Scale Features
- Spatial Organization
- Circulation
- Views and Vistas
- Land Use
- Natural Systems and Figures
- Topography
- Vegetation

Cultural Traditions: Landscape Characteristics

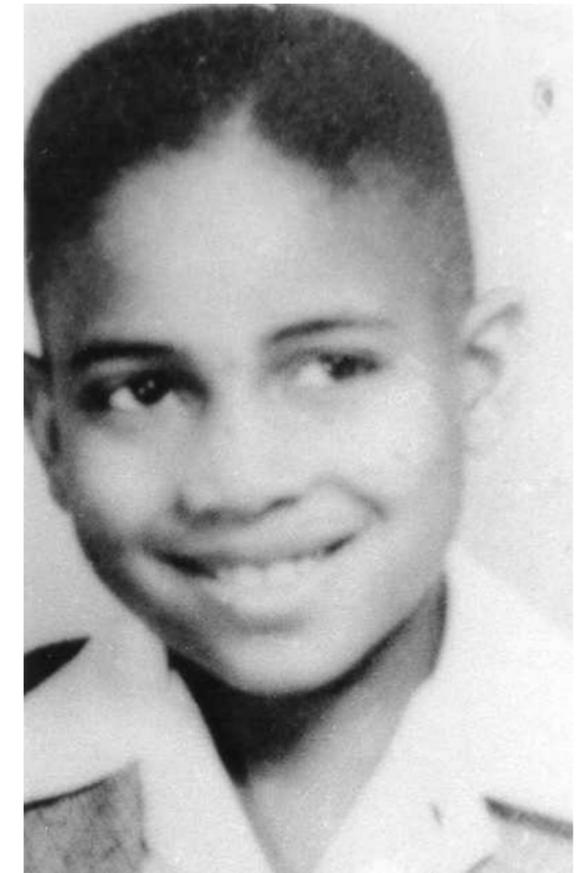
No ethnographic values have been assessed or documented, but members of the Brown family, original plaintiffs in the case, have been very active in promoting the designation of a National Historic Landmark and inclusion in the National Park System. Although strong ties between the school and surrounding neighborhood may exist, little has been documented except for numerous interviews with former students, teachers and staff. Topeka's African-American community may feel strong ties to the site; again, this subject requires further study. Other plaintiffs involved with the Supreme Court case were Mrs. Lucinda Todd, Mrs. Richard Lawson, Mrs. Sadie Emmanuel, Mrs. Iona Richardson, Mrs. Lena Carper, Mrs. Marguerite Emerson, Mrs. Shirley Hodison, Mrs. Alma Lewis, Mrs. Darlene Brown, Mrs. Shirla Fleming, Mrs. Andrew Henderson, and Mrs. Vivian Scales.

Photo withheld due to copyright restriction and use-permission constraints.

Cultural Traditions: Landscape Characteristics, continued



Cultural Traditions: Landscape Characteristics, continued



Images of the Plaintiffs involed with the Supreme Court Case.
On the left, in the top row, Katherine Louise Carper and Donald Henderson. In the bottom row, Vickie Henderson and Ruth Ann Sales.
On the right, Carl and Vickie Laqton and Charles Hodison.
(Courtesy of the Kansas Collection, University of Kansas)

Buildings and Structures: Landscape Characteristics

The Monroe School is listed on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the civil rights movement and the landmark U. S. Supreme Court case of Brown v. Board of Education. The school is the primary feature of the site - organizing all other landscape characteristics and features.

Feature:	Monroe Elementary School
Contributing?	Yes
LCS Structure Name:	Monroe Elementary School
LCS ID Number	70141
LCS Historic Structure Number:	HS-01

Locational Data:

Source: GPS- Uncorrected

Point Type: Point

Datum: WSG84

Zone: 15 Easting: 268357 Northing: 4324390

Longitude: -95.676338 Latitude: 39.037898

Associated Image Page Numbers in CLI: Page 52



Monroe Elementary School. (NPS 2014)

Small Scale Features: Landscape Characteristics

The playground areas at Monroe School are contributing features and remain largely intact today. The few existing small scale features possess functional value and are vernacular in nature. The open spaces at each end (north and south) of the Monroe Elementary School building were used as play yards during the period of significance. While their general open character is still intact, several features are missing. Fencing is not original fabric, but is in the same general locations. The concrete paved courtyard area in front of the school's main entrance (east side of the building) is contributing as well. The size and configuration are consistent with that of the historic period. The open, grassy lot across Monroe Street from the school building appears to be very intact, as it was never very formally developed.

Currently, very few playground features remain on the site. Historically, playground equipment was scattered, and water fountains and mud scrapers were placed at several locations on the site. Existing contributing features include the flagpole and the chain-link baseball backstop, located in the northeast corner of the play lot east of the school. The backstop appears to be original to the 1951-54 period. The flagpole, a common element traditionally associated with schools and other public buildings, is located at the northeast corner of the school lot. Various post holes that exist along the sidewalk and play court should be protected in the chance that they indicate the original location of historic fencing or mud scrapers. The presence or absence of overhead utility poles from 1950-1954 has not been documented.

Small Scale Features: Landscape Characteristics, continued

Feature: Backstop
Contributing? Yes
LCS Structure Name: BASEBALL BACK STOP
LCS ID Number 70143
LCS Historic Structure Number: HS-03

Locational Data:

Source: GPS- Uncorrected

Point Type: Line

Datum: WSG84

Zone: 15 Easting: 268440 Northing: 4324403

Longitude: -95.675383 Latitude: 39.038029

Associated Image Page Numbers in CLI: Page 67



Backstop in the ball field east of the school, facing southwest. (Mannikko/NPS 2005)

Small Scale Features: Landscape Characteristics, continued

Feature: Concrete Courtyard area at School Entrance
Contributing? Yes
LCS Structure Name: PLAYGROUND/PARKING AREAS
LCS ID Number 70142
LCS Historic Structure Number: HS-02

Locational Data:

Source: GPS- Uncorrected

Point Type: Polygon

Datum: WSG84

Zone: 15 Easting: 268362 Northing: 4324388

Longitude: -95.676279 Latitude: 39.037880

Associated Image Page Numbers in CLI: Page 67



Courtyard in front of the school, facing northeast. (Mannikko/NPS 2005)

Small Scale Features: Landscape Characteristics, continued

Feature: Open play lot at east lot, adjacent to entrance
Contributing? Yes
LCS Structure Name: PLAYGROUND/PARKING AREAS
LCS ID Number 70142
LCS Historic Structure Number: HS-02
Locational Data:
Source: GPS- Uncorrected
Point Type: Polygon
Datum: WSG84
Zone: 15 Easting: 268396 Northing: 4324375
Longitude: -95.675880 Latitude: 39.037766

Associated Image Page Numbers in CLI: Page 68



Play lot and ball field east of the school, facing south. (Mannikko/NPS 2005)

Small Scale Features: Landscape Characteristics, continued

Feature: Playground north of school
Contributing? Yes
LCS Structure Name: PLAYGROUND/PARKING AREAS
LCS ID Number 70142
LCS Historic Structure Number: HS-02
Locational Data:
Source: GPS- Uncorrected
Point Type: Polygon
Datum: WSG84
Zone: 15 Easting: 268357 Northing: 4324433
Longitude: -95.676349 Latitude: 39.038285

Associated Image Page Numbers in CLI: Page 68



North elevation of the school, showing the grassy play area, facing south. (Mannikko/NPS 2005)

Small Scale Features: Landscape Characteristics, continued

Feature: Flagpole
Contributing? Yes
LCS Structure Name: FLAGPOLE
LCS ID Number 70140
LCS Historic Structure Number: HS-04

Locational Data:

Source: GPS- Uncorrected
 Point Type: Point
 Datum: WSG84
 Zone: 15 Easting: 268381 Northing: 4324434
 Longitude: -95.676079 Latitude: 39.038298

Associated Image Page Numbers in CLI: Page 69



Flagpole in front of the school, facing south. (Mannikko/NPS 2005)

Small Scale Features: Landscape Characteristics, continued

Feature: Playground south of school
Contributing? Yes
LCS Structure Name: PLAYGROUND/PARKING AREAS
LCS ID Number 70142
LCS Historic Structure Number: HS-02

Locational Data:

Source: GPS- Uncorrected
 Point Type: Polygon
 Datum: WSG84
 Zone: 15 Easting: 268328 Northing: 4324354
 Longitude: -95.676654 Latitude: 39.037563

Associated Image Page Numbers in CLI: No Image

Feature: Lightpoles
Contributing? No
LCS Structure Name:
LCS ID Number
LCS Historic Structure Number:

Locational Data:

Source: GPS- Uncorrected
 Point Type: Point
 Datum: WSG84

Point	UTM	Easting	Northing	Longitude	Latitude
1	15	268374	4324420	-95.676155	39.038169
2	15	268351	4324357	-95.676394	39.037594
3	15	268343	4324430	-95.676510	39.038252
4	15	268320	4324367	-95.676759	39.037672
5	15	268344	4324340	-95.676469	39.037441

Associated Image Page Numbers in CLI: No Image

Small Scale Features: Landscape Characteristics, continued

Feature: Brick and Limestone Sign at northeast end of school

Contributing? No

LCS Structure Name:

LCS ID Number:

LCS Historic Structure Number:

Locational Data:

Source: GPS- Uncorrected

Point Type: Point

Datum: WSG84

Zone: 15 Easting: 268377 Northing: 4324430

Longitude: -95.676121 Latitude: 39.038256

Associated Image Page Numbers in CLI: Page 69



Brick and Limestone park sign, built in 2003, facing south (Mannikko/NPS 2005).

Spatial Organization: Landscape Characteristics

The Monroe School building is centered on the west lot, with play spaces or parking areas on all sides. The spatial organization of the surrounding neighborhood is apparently much more open today than during 1950-1954. Adjacent residences enclose the alley at the west and south sides of the school lot. Light industrial/commercial and residential land uses once located at the north side of the school have disappeared. Overall, the grounds are divided into the north and south play grounds on the school lot, the concrete courtyard area at the front of the school, the open play lot, and a parking area at the rear of the school.



Adjacent residences west and south of Monroe School, c. 1974 (Kansas State Historical Society).



Areas south and east of Monroe School. showing residences and light industry (Mannikko/NPS 2005).

Circulation: Landscape Characteristics

Sidewalks at the north and east edges of the school lot are the primary route for pedestrian traffic. Historically, children entered the school through the front entrance, and the north and south ends of the lot were fenced thereby limiting movement. Vehicular traffic was limited during the period of significance as most students and teachers either walked or rode the bus. A small parking lot for 4 to 6 cars was located at the rear of the school. Deliveries, especially coal, were made at the rear of the school.

Feature: Parking area at rear of school

Contributing? Yes

LCS Structure Name: Playground /Parking Areas

LCS ID Number 70142

LCS Historic Structure Number: HS-02

Locational Data:

Source: GPS- Uncorrected

Point Type: Polygon

Datum: WSG84

Zone: 15 Easting: 268326 Northing: 4324402

Longitude: -95.676701 Latitude: 39.037995

Associated Image Page Numbers in CLI: Page 54

Feature: Alley on west side of school lot

Contributing? Yes

LCS Structure Name: Not Currently Listed

LCS ID Number

LCS Historic Structure Number:

Locational Data:

Source: GPS- Uncorrected

Point Type: Polygon

Datum: WSG84

Zone: 15 Easting: 268309 Northing: 4324375

Longitude: -95.676886 Latitude: 39.037749

Associated Image Page Numbers in CLI: Page 54

Circulation: Landscape Characteristics, continued



Rear of Monroe Elementary School used for deliveries and light parking during the period of significance (Kansas State Historical Society c.1974)



West side (rear) of Monroe Elementary School. (Mannikko/NPS 2005)

Circulation: Landscape Characteristics, continued

Feature: Monroe and 15th Streets
Contributing? Yes
LCS Structure Name: Not Currently Listed
LCS ID Number
LCS Historic Structure Number:
Locational Data:
Source: GPS- Uncorrected
Point Type: Polygon
Datum: WSG84
Zone: 15 Easting: 268373 Northing: 4324410
Longitude: -95.676162 Latitude: 39.038077
Associated Image Page Numbers in CLI: Pages 55 and 56

Circulation: Landscape Characteristics, continued



Corner of Monroe and 15th streets and north and east sidewalks. (Kansas State Historical Society c.1974)



Corner of Monroe and 15th streets and north and east sidewalks. (Mannikko/NPS 2005)

Circulation: Landscape Characteristics, continued

Feature: Sidewalks and Steps
Contributing? Yes
LCS Structure Name: Playground/Parking Area
LCS ID Number 70142
LCS Historic Structure Number: HS-02

Locational Data:

Source: GPS- Uncorrected
 Point Type: Polygon
 Datum: WSG84

Point	UTM	Easting	Northing	Longitude	Latitude
1	15	268368	4324438	-95.676226	39.038331
2	15	268378	4324413	-95.676105	39.038108
3	15	268338	4324396	-95.676555	39.037946
4	15	268351	4324346	-95.676395	39.037494
5	15	268368	4324386	-95.676209	39.037862

Associated Image Page Numbers in CLI: Page 55



The main entrance steps to Monroe Elementary School. (Mannikko/NPS 2005)

Circulation: Landscape Characteristics, continued

Feature: Full Asphalt Parking Area at Rear of School
Contributing? No
LCS Structure Name:
LCS ID Number
LCS Historic Structure Number:

Locational Data:

Source: GPS- Uncorrected

Point Type: Polygon

Datum: WSG84

Zone: 15 Easting: 268326 Northing: 4324402

Longitude: -95.676701 Latitude: 39.037995

Associated Image Page Numbers in CLI: Page 56



Asphalt parking area at rear of school. (Mannikko/NPS 2005)

Circulation: Landscape Characteristics, continued

Feature: Railroad Right-of-Way
Contributing? Yes
LCS Structure Name: Not Currently Listed
LCS ID Number
LCS Historic Structure Number:

Locational Data:

Source: GPS- Uncorrected
Point Type: Polygon
Datum: WSG84
Zone: 15 Easting: 268410 Northing: 4324352
Longitude: -95.675706 Latitude: 39.037563

Associated Image Page Numbers in CLI: No Image

Views and Vistas: Landscape Characteristics

The Monroe School is visible from three directions. It sits on a fairly open lot and is faced by the open play field on the east, but the view is lightly screened by deciduous trees in front of the school. The views from and of the rear along the alley area are restricted. The open views from the north and east sides of the school today contrast with the historic views because of the increased number of vacant lots. The contributing view of the school is from the northeast, particularly from the intersection of the railroad right-of-way and 15th street. The openness of the play lot should be maintained so that unobstructed views of the school are maintained.

Feature: Enclosed views of residential area at west and south sides of school lot
Contributing? Yes
LCS Structure Name: Not Currently Listed
LCS ID Number
LCS Historic Structure Number:

Locational Data:

Source:
Point Type:
Datum:
Zone: Easting: Northing:
Longitude: Latitude:

Associated Image Page Numbers in CLI: No Image

Views and Vistas: Landscape Characteristics, continued

Feature:	Fairly open view from northeast corner of play lot	
Contributing?	Yes	
LCS Structure Name:	Not Currently Listed	
LCS ID Number		
LCS Historic Structure Number:		
Locational Data:		
Source: GPS- Uncorrected		
Point Type: Point		
Datum: WSG84		
Zone: 15	Easting: 268446	Northing: 4324412
Longitude: -95.675321	Latitude: 39.038112	

Associated Image Page Numbers in CLI: Page 73



Contributing view across the play field to Monroe School, looking southwest (Mannikko/NPS 2005).

Land Use: Landscape Characteristics

The entire site was used for school-related activities during the 1950-1954 period. The front (east facade) of the school served as the main entrance or courtyard and was used as a play yard for court games such as hopscotch, 4-square, jump rope, and jacks. The south and north ends of the school were in grass or gravel/dirt and functioned as play yards, with scattered playground equipment in the south yard. At some point, asphalt was added to the north yard. The south yard was used by primary grades; the north by intermediate grades for basketball, volleyball, tetherball, and organized PE classes. The adjacent play lot was used by the older grades, particularly by boys. It was also used for softball, baseball, football, and intramural track meets for all the black schools in the area. The rear of the school building contained a parking area in recent years, but was probably used for play during the historic period. The boys and girls restrooms had an exit to this area. The lot to the east of the school was historically used for baseball, track, and other organized sports.

Natural Systems and Features: Landscape Characteristics

The site lies within a highly modified urban environment. It may lie within the floodplain for the Shununga Creek, but the two lots are generally level and well-drained.

Topography: Landscape Characteristics

The topography across the site is level, although the east play field lot appears to be slightly more elevated than the school building lot. No changes to the topography appear to have occurred since 1954. The school building has gutter drains that were attached to below-grade drains, entering the ground at each major corner. Not all the gutters appear to be attached to the drainage system; in front, extensions have been placed on the ends of the downspouts and drain onto the adjacent concrete rather than the underground system.

Vegetation: Landscape Characteristics

Vegetation during the period of significance was rather limited. The school yard was generally sparse grass, worn to dirt or gravel by intensive play. Historically, one or two large deciduous trees were located in the center of the south yard and a row was typically present along the front of the school, a trend that continues at present. Historically these trees were most likely elms. Maples were planted between 1969-1973 (Chromada oral interview). Another row of deciduous trees along 15th Street that was historically evident is now missing. The documentation of these features for the period of significance should be supplemented before treatment recommendations are made.

Feature: Line of silver maples along Monroe St

Contributing? Yes

LCS Structure Name: Not Currently Listed

LCS ID Number

LCS Historic Structure Number:

Locational Data:

Source: GPS- Uncorrected

Point Type: Point

Datum: WSG84

Point	UTM	Easting	Northing	Longitude	Latitude
1	15	268376	4324408	-95.676122	39.038064
2	15	268374	4324403	-95.676142	39.038014
3	15	268372	4324397	-95.676164	39.037961
4	15	268370	4324392	-95.676187	39.037912
5	15	268364	4324377	-95.676244	39.037776
6	15	268360	4324363	-95.676296	39.037653
7	15	268355	4324351	-95.676347	39.037539

Associated Image Page Numbers in CLI: Page 72

Vegetation: Landscape Characteristics, continued



Row of Silver Maples along Monroe Street and the front of the school, facing south (CLI Photograph Files/NPS 1994)



Line of silver maples in front of Monroe School, facing north (Mannikko/NPS 2005).

Vegetation: Landscape Characteristics, continued

Feature: Two large deciduous trees in south playground
Contributing? Yes
LCS Structure Name: Not Currently Listed
LCS ID Number
LCS Historic Structure Number:
Locational Data:
Source: GPS- Uncorrected
Point Type: Point
Datum: WSG84
Zone: 15 Easting: 268322 Northing: 4324354
Longitude: -95.676733 Latitude: 39.037562
Zone: 15 Easting: 268331 Northing: 4324351
Longitude: -95.676620 Latitude: 39.037536
Associated Image Page Numbers in CLI: No Image

Chapter 8: Condition Assessment

Condition Assessment and Impacts

Condition Assessment: Fair
Assessment Date: 9/30/1998
Condition Assessment: Good
Assessment Date: 6/22/2005
Condition Assessment: Good
Assessment Date: 9/9/2011

Impacts

Impact Type: Adjacent Lands
Explanatory Narrative: Surrounding neighborhood ma be impacted by proposed Downtown Revialization Project
Impact Type: Structural Deterioration

Chapter 9: Treatment

Approved Treatment Document Explanatory Narrative:

Approved Treatment: Undetermined
Approved Treatment Document: Historic Structures Report
Document Date: 4/5/2000

Approved Treatment Document Explanatory Narrative

The NPS unit of Brown v. Board of Education NHS (Monroe Elementary) has been restored and rehabilitated, and is open to the public. Work on Monroe includes an exterior restoration to the period of significance, with a new tile roof, re-pointing and window restoration. The interior public spaces (hallways) have been restored, and the walls repainted the historic colors based on paint analysis. The wood floors were re-used. The balance of the interior was rehabilitated, including bathrooms and classrooms. On the first floor, the rooms contain a new multi-media exhibit; the second floor rooms are used as office space for the NPS and the Brown Foundation. A new geothermal system is used for heating and cooling. Additional work at the site includes new parking, sidewalks, landscaping and lighting. (LCS 2014)

Approved Treatment Completed: Yes
Approved Treatment Costs: \$5,649,000
Cost Date: 5/17/2004
Cost Narrative: Costs to rehabilitate Monroe School totalled \$5,649,000.

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