

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

McKinley High School is located on East Boulevard in a light commercial-residential area of Baton Rouge. The two story gray brick building has a long front, two rooms deep, with a small rear wing forming a "T". It is entered at the center through a columnar loggia. The interior features large transomed doors and chair rails. Otherwise it is plain. The exterior is treated with features which are loosely designed to evoke the Italian Romanesque. These features include: (1) the articulation of the facade with paired windows set in round arch bays, (2) the central pavilion with its great round arch encompassing 3 arched windows and its shallow gable top, (3) the use of polychromy in the wide central arch, and (4) the gradual widening of all arches towards the keystone.

Specific dates 1926
Builder/Architect Architects: Jones, Roessle, Olschner - Baton Rouge

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)
Criteria A and C

The McKinley High School Building is locally significant because of the role it has played in the education of blacks in the Baton Rouge area. Prior to its construction in 1926 and opening in September 1927, the only place area blacks could receive a secondary education was at a joint elementary-high school named Baton Rouge High School (1914-1927).^{*} When McKinley was completed, the high school program of this school was phased out. Thus, the McKinley High School was the first school in Baton Rouge constructed solely for the purpose of providing a high school education for area blacks. For many years it served as the only secondary educational facility for blacks within a 40 mile radius of Baton Rouge.

McKinley High School was converted to a junior high school in 1949 when a new high school was constructed on McCalop Street. In 1956 McKinley became an elementary school and then was phased out as a school in 1972. Since that time it has been used by various community groups such as the South Baton Rouge Community Action Service, the South Baton Rouge Health Referral Center, and the South Baton Rouge Head Start Center.

^{*}One presumes that this school (Baton Rouge High School) is the present Perkins Elementary, given the c. 1915 date of the latter and the location. Even if they are one and the same, the building has been modified beyond recognition.

McKinley High School is also significant in the area of architecture as an unusually pretentious black secondary school. Other examples across the state are typically much humbler structures. Most were frame rather than brick, and most had little or no ornamentation. In addition, the building is a local landmark in the South Baton Rouge-upper Highland Road area, most of which has a residential scale.

Major Bibliographical References

Research Report Prepared by Powell A. Casey, 1976, Baton Rouge.

East Baton Rouge Parish School Board Minutes, 1925, 1926, 1927.

East Baton Rouge Parish Courthouse Records

"History of McKinley High School," Report from a Committee of A. H. Jackson, Principal, J. M. Frazier, Jr. and Mrs. F. P. Williams, undated.