

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Wyman School

other name/site number Excelsior Springs High School

**2. Location**

street & town 100 Dunbar Street N/A not for publication

city or town Excelsior Springs N/A vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Clay code 047 zip code 64024

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Mark A. Miles  
Signature of certifying official/Title Mark A. Miles/Deputy SHPO

June 10, 2008  
Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other, (explain:) _____	_____	_____

Wyman School  
Name of Property

Clay County, MO  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**

(check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	1	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
2	1	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

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

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Function**

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION: School

**Current Function**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Vacant

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> Century Revivals: Classical Revival

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Limestone

walls Brick

roof Asphalt

other Metal

**Narrative Description**

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

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 7

**8. Description**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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

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

**Areas of Significance**

(enter categories from instructions)

Education \_\_\_\_\_

Architecture \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1912 - 1958 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1912 \_\_\_\_\_

1915 \_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Persons**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A \_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 8

**Primary location of additional data:**

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

Excelsior Springs Museum and Archives \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 9

Wyman School  
Name of Property

Clay County, MO  
County and State

### 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.8 acres

#### UTM References

(Place additional boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

1 1/5 3/9/4/1/5/5 4/3/5/5/5/6/7  
Zone Easting Northing

2 / / / / / / / / / / / / /  
Zone Easting Northing

3 / / / / / / / / / / / / /  
Zone Easting Northing

4 / / / / / / / / / / / / /  
Zone Easting Northing

#### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Please see continuation sheet.

Property Tax No. N/A

#### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

Please see continuation sheet.

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10

### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Elizabeth Rosin, Principal and Kristen Ottesen, Associate

organization Rosin Preservation, LLC date March 10, 2008

street & number 215 W. 18<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 150 telephone 816-472-4950

city or town Kansas City state MO zip code 64108

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

#### Continuation Sheets

**Maps** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs:** Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

#### Property Owner

name/title Elan Properties, LLC

street & number 600 Franklin Boulevard, Suite 200 telephone 732-568-0660

city or town Somerset state NJ zip code 8873

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section Number 7 Page 1

Wyman School  
Clay County, Missouri

**SUMMARY**

The Wyman School at 100 Dunbar Street, Excelsior Springs, Clay County, Missouri sits on top of a hill west of downtown Excelsior Springs (*Photo 1*). The three-story rectangular building rests on a limestone foundation. It has a concrete structure, red brick exterior walls, and a flat roof. Large expanses of fenestration dominate all four elevations. Decorative trim includes two limestone beltcourses, a projecting metal beltcourse above the windows, and metal spandrel panels below the banded windows. The interior retains a high degree of original materials as well as its historic layout, although some non-historic partition walls have been erected and vandalism has damaged finishes and mechanical systems. The symmetrical massing, brick construction, limestone trim, and metal paneled spandrels communicate elements of the building's Classical Revival style. East of the school are the historic power plant and a non-historic prefabricated trailer that provided additional classroom space. Overall, alterations to Wyman School have been minimal, leaving the historic form, features, and materials of the building substantially intact and clearly conveying feelings about and associations with the building's period of significance (1912-1958).

**ELABORATION**

**SETTING**

Wyman School sits on the edge of a hill in a residential neighborhood west of downtown Excelsior Springs. Modest single-family homes, many dating to the early twentieth century, compose the neighborhood surrounding the school. The front of the building (east elevation) faces downhill toward town.

A grassy lawn dotted with mature deciduous trees cascades down the hill in front of the building to Dunbar Street. Two concrete stairs/walks rise from the public sidewalk to the two main entrances on the west elevation (*Photo 2*). A paved drive separates the building from Bellmere Road to the north. Behind the school to the east is a large asphalt-paved area that could have been a playground or a parking lot. A second asphalt-paved area covers the ground south of the school. A driveway connects this lot to Henrie Street on the south.



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Wyman School  
Clay County, Missouri

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**EXTERIOR**

Brick parapets obscure the modified bitumen roof. The roof drains into metal through-wall scuppers and downspouts on the south and west (rear) elevations.

The long elevations at the front and rear of the building face east and west respectively. The front (east) elevation has eight bays and the rear (west) elevation has six bays (*Photos 3 and 5*). Fenestration and brick pilasters define the bays. The short elevations (north and south) each have three bays defined by a center column of fenestration (*Photos 4 and 6*).

The building was constructed in two phases. The symmetrical north block, erected in 1912, has five bays on the front (east) elevation and four bays on the rear (west) elevation. On the front, a central projecting bay contains the main entrance in the first story below paired windows in the second and third stories. On all three floors single windows flank the central bay. The bays beyond the single windows each contain a band of four windows. On the rear elevation, the second and third floors have symmetrical arrangements of banded windows. Small single and paired windows pierce the wall at the first story. (*Photo 3*)

The 1915 addition extends south from the original block. It added more classrooms and an auditorium to the school. Although asymmetrical on its own, it is configured to maintain the symmetrical appearance of the primary façade. A projecting bay, matching the bay on the original structure, is adjacent to the original building. Beyond the projecting bay are two additional bays of banded windows in the second and third stories. Small single windows illuminate the first story. On the rear elevation, the addition's second and third stories each have two bays filled with banded windows. A small brick projection at the first story houses the back of the auditorium stage. (*Photo 5*)

Non-historic aluminum windows fill the original masonry openings on all four elevations. Historically, the windows were large three-over-one double-hung wood sashes. The new aluminum windows replicate the original number of windows within each opening, but each window is composed of three sashes instead of two and all of the sashes have single lights. Plywood covers a few first story openings on the north and south elevations.

In addition to the two entrances on the front elevation, the building has a third entrance centered in the south elevation (*Photos 6 and 7*). It leads from the parking lot into the auditorium. The projecting brick entrance mimics the design of those on the front elevation. Non-historic aluminum-framed glazed doors fill all three entrances, although they retain the original divided-light transoms above the doors (*Photo 8*). Where glass has broken, plywood sheets fill the door frames.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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Wyman School  
Clay County, Missouri

There are emergency exit doors in the second and third stories of the north and south elevations (*photos 4 and 6*). The openings in the north elevation retain historic wood doors, but the openings in the south elevation and the fenestration surrounding the doors in the north elevation are non-historic. Metal fire escapes extend from the third story to the ground at both locations.

The architecture of Wyman School illustrates a restrained expression of Classical Revival design. In addition to the symmetrical massing and brick exterior, the most notable feature is the three entrances (two on the east elevation and one on the south elevation) that project from the wall of the building to create shallow entrance vestibules (*Photos 7 and 8*). The vestibules have slightly arched parapets capped with limestone. Below the parapets, galvanized metal cornice moldings trimmed with dentils wrap the exterior walls. The entrance centered in the front of each vestibule also has an arched opening. Historic multi-light arched wood transom windows top pairs of non-historic metal-framed glass doors. A metal bracket projecting from the brickwork above the transom suggests an exaggerated keystone.

Other features that communicate the building's architectural style are more subtle (*Photo 3*). There are metal spandrel panels below each band of windows at the second and third stories, and a stepped metal cornice encircles the building above the third story windows. A thick limestone beltcourse encircles the building between the first and second story windows. The continuous sill below the first story windows forms a second, thinner beltcourse around the original block. At the addition, where the grade drops slightly, this detail becomes a double beltcourse, the upper piece aligning with the original beltcourse (*Photo 2*).

Historic photos document additional ornament that has been lost. Most notably, a galvanized metal, projecting cornice with dentils originally wrapped the north, west and south elevations near the top of the building. The building also had circular medallions applied to the brick wall between the missing cornice and the upper metal beltcourse.

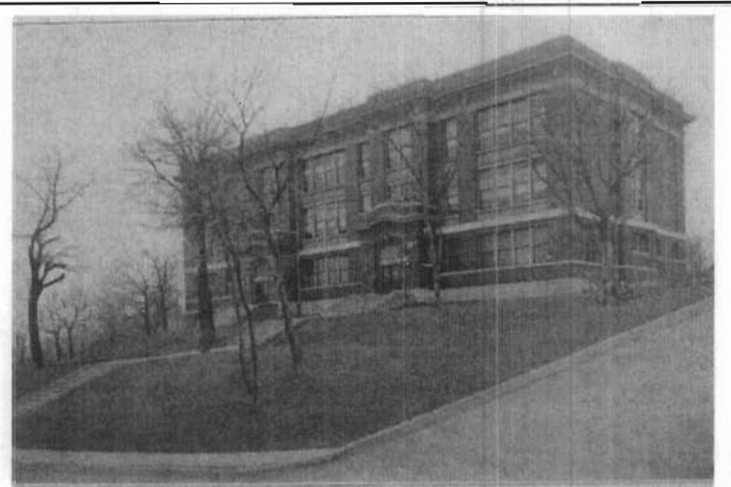


Photo from the Excelsior Springs Museum  
and Archives Vertical File, c. 1916.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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Wyman School  
Clay County, Missouri

**INTERIOR**

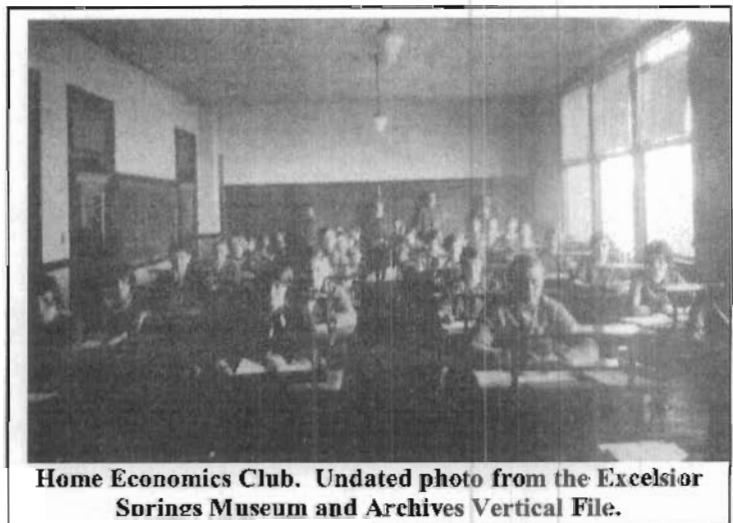
On the first floor, short corridors lead from each entrance to a perpendicular double-loaded main corridor that bisects the building from north to south, creating an extended F-shaped plan. Stair halls rise from the entrance corridors to the secondary corridors on floors two and three (*Floor Plan, page 16*).

Classrooms flank the main corridors on the second and third floors. On the first floor there is a gymnasium and locker rooms west of the corridor and more locker rooms and administrative offices east of the corridor. At the south end of the first floor is the auditorium balcony. The main floor of the auditorium one floor below is the only place where the school has a lower level. Large, open rooms on each floor at the northwest corner of the building housed specialized uses, such as the gymnasium, the library, and science laboratories. While the historic configuration of rooms generally remains intact, in a few locations walls have been removed between classrooms or new partitions have been constructed to subdivide larger spaces. A non-historic partition with paired doors also crosses the main corridor near the south end of the second floor.

Ornamentation in the corridors is limited to wide wood chair rails (*Photo 10*). Most classrooms and restrooms retain historic wood doors with a solid panel in the lower half and glazing in the upper half. They are topped by glazed, operable transoms.

Stairs have concrete treads and simple cast iron railings with square newel posts and balusters and wood handrails (*Photo 9*). Most of the railings have been modified with modern extensions to meet code requirements. Mounted directly on top of the historic railings, the extensions have square metal frames filled with metal mesh.

Interior partition walls are constructed of wood studs covered with metal lath and painted plaster. Painted plaster is applied directly over the perimeter brick walls. Wood-framed blackboards wrap the mid-section of the classroom walls (*Photo 11*). A combination of tongue-and-groove wood planks, linoleum, and vinyl tile covers most of the floors. Some are exposed concrete. One classroom on the second floor has suffered fire damage.



**Home Economics Club. Undated photo from the Excelsior  
Springs Museum and Archives Vertical File.**

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Wyman School  
Clay County, Missouri

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**SECONDARY BUILDINGS**

In addition to the school, the property includes two secondary buildings. Both are located southwest of the school in the paved parking lot/playground area.

Power Plant

A power-plant built in 1913 historically provided the school with heat. The one-story brick building is rectangular in plan (*Photo 2*). A tall brick chimney rises through the flat roof. Single, punched window openings are boarded up. The roof is in poor condition and has partially collapsed into the building. A second story, now missing, housed manual training classrooms. The power plant is a contributing resource to the nominated property due to its age and its functional association with Wyman School.

Classroom Annex

The second outbuilding is a non-historic, prefabricated trailer that was likely used as a classroom annex. It sits east of the power plant. It is non-historic due to its age.

**INTEGRITY**

The Wyman School retains excellent integrity in the areas of location, setting, design, materials, and workmanship. On the exterior and the interior, the property clearly conveys its historic educational function, while the massing, materials, and ornament communicate its vernacular Classical Revival style. Although the original windows have been replaced, the new fenestration fills the historic masonry openings and retains the same general configuration as the original windows. Overall, the building clearly communicates feelings about and associations with its original design and educational function.

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Wyman School  
Clay County, Missouri

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**SUMMARY**

The Wyman School at 100 Dunbar Street, Excelsior Springs, Clay County, Missouri is locally significant under National Register Criterion A for the area of EDUCATION and Criterion C for the area of ARCHITECTURE. One of the last historic school buildings extant in Excelsior Springs, Wyman School is significant as the city's first stand-alone secondary school. Its opening allowed the school district to significantly expand course offerings for high school students and enabled students to graduate well-prepared for future successes. The building's reserved, utilitarian design is also an excellent example of the standardized school architecture advocated by Progressive Era reformers during the early twentieth century. In addition to its extended F-shape plan, these features at Wyman School include its fireproof concrete structure; wide corridors to facilitate egress; and ample windows for light and ventilation. Spaces, such as the auditorium and the gymnasium, enabled specialized instruction. Restrained limestone and pressed metal architectural details convey elements of Classical Revival architecture, which was popular nationwide and commonly applied to educational buildings at this time. The period of significance for this property is 1912 through 1958. This period begins with the date of construction and ends with the fifty-year closing date for periods of significance where activities begun historically continue to have importance but no more-specific date can be defined.

**ELABORATION**

**PUBLIC EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES**

The earliest American schools were generally local, private institutions that served only a limited number of students. There was no standardization of curricula among these schools, resulting in wide differences in learning.<sup>1</sup> During the early nineteenth century, educational reformers, led by Horace Mann in Massachusetts and Henry Barnard in Connecticut, advocated for free, standardized public education for all elementary-age children. By the middle of the century, public education became a reality as most of the nation's cities and towns established elementary schools. All of the states had laws requiring children to attend elementary school by 1918.<sup>2</sup>

The movement to create public high schools followed soon thereafter. By the late 1800s, most cities and towns had high schools, although not all of them had adopted a standardized curriculum. There were more than 20,000 public high schools in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Education in the United States," *The History Channel website*, <http://www.history.com/encyclopedia.do?articleId=208260> (accessed 14 January 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Brenda Spencer, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, *Historic Public Schools of Kansas*, E-4.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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Wyman School  
Clay County, Missouri

In Missouri, an 1874 law gave individual towns control over the organization, grading, and governance of schools within their jurisdiction.<sup>4</sup> The State did not mandate the creation of high schools until 1883, when a second law required local school boards to establish a suitable number of both primary and secondary schools to serve the children in their districts.<sup>5</sup> It was around this time that the Excelsior Springs school district organized, opening its first school in 1885. The school district first offered secondary classes at Isley School. Built in 1890, Isely School also housed elementary classes. Twenty-two years later, Wyman School was the first building in Excelsior Springs built specifically and solely to educate secondary-level students.

A report on the *History of Education in Missouri*, published in 1909, detailed the physical and educational requirements for secondary schools in the state. At the time Missouri had 270 first, second and third-class high schools. These schools were accredited and classified by the University of Missouri and inspected by the State Superintendent. To be ranked first-class, a high school had to offer a four-year course of study with a nine-month annual term. Second-class high schools offered a three-year course of study with a nine-month annual term, while third-class high schools offered a two-year course of study with an eight-month annual term. All accredited schools had to maintain a curriculum that included English, math, science and history. Typical high school subjects were algebra, geometry, geography, chemistry, general history, astronomy, English literature, and English, French, and German languages.<sup>6</sup> The rank of high school programs in Excelsior Springs is unknown, but this report likely provided an excellent guide for Excelsior Springs' school officials when they planned both building and the curriculum for their new high school three years later.

**EARLY-TWENTIETH CENTURY SCHOOL ARCHITECTURE**

As the 1909 Missouri education report illustrates, by the early-twentieth century education advocates sought standardization among school districts to create an even playing field for students from different communities. These efforts affected school curricula, teacher qualifications, teaching materials, and even school designs.<sup>7</sup> Architects and educators published plan books for school buildings, similar to those that popularized residential designs. Their ideal school was two or three stories tall with a symmetrical facade and a flat roof. Limestone, pressed metal, or terracotta trim commonly ornamented the red brick walls with elements of one of the revival architectural styles popular during this period, although the expression of style was typically restrained. Articulated entrances centered on the front elevation and cornices were typically the most ornate elements of school buildings.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Claude A. Phillips, A.M., *A History of Education in Missouri*, (the Hugh Stephens Printing Company: Jefferson City, Missouri, 1911), 60.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, 61.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 70.

<sup>7</sup> Spencer, E-18.

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Wyman School  
Clay County, Missouri

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Safety was also an important consideration. Fireproof materials, such as concrete, steel, and masonry, were widely used on the exterior of school buildings, while combustible woodwork was minimized on the interior. Wide hallways and stairways enabled efficient evacuation of a school in the event of an emergency. Proper placement of radiators reduced potential burns to students and assured adequate paths of egress. Fire escapes were often constructed on the exterior. A separate heating plant kept boilers, another potential fire hazard, out of school buildings.

From the vernacular one-room school house, school buildings evolved to have multiple classrooms arranged on either side of a double-loaded corridor. Typical floor plans were T, I, L or U-shaped.<sup>9</sup> Large expanses of windows admitted natural light and fresh air, and transoms above the classroom doors aided ventilation. Gymnasiums, auditoriums, libraries and cafeterias served specialized functions. Auditoriums and libraries were often utilized by the larger community for meetings and other functions. By the 1910s school buildings also had specially-designed areas for the study of science, home economics, and agriculture, industrial and manual training. Playgrounds or school yards became important as specialized areas for children to play and exercise.

The design of Wyman School perfectly illustrates the standards recommended by early-twentieth century reformers. It is a fire-proof concrete structure with brick walls and wide corridors and stairwells. On the exterior, limestone and pressed metal ornament present restrained elements of Classical Revival architectural styling. On the interior, classrooms flank the main corridor. Banks of windows and transoms above the interior doors provide natural light and promote air circulation to the classrooms. A separate heating plant kept the boiler a safe distance from the students. It also had a second story that housed a manual training classroom. The school had an auditorium for assemblies and performances, and a large paved area behind the school gave the children a place for physical exercise.

**HISTORY OF EXCELSIOR SPRINGS**

Located approximately 30 miles northeast of Kansas City, Missouri and set in a valley surrounded by agricultural lands, the vicinity of Excelsior Springs was sparsely settled until the early 1880s. The founding of the community followed the discovery of restorative mineral springs. In 1880 a farm laborer discovered healing properties in the local water when he applied it to a skin disease. Reverend J.V.B. Flack, a resident of nearby Missouri City, heard of the spring's healing qualities and sent samples to St. Louis for testing.<sup>10</sup> When the results indicated that the waters did indeed contain healing minerals, the land owner, A.W. Wyman, and Reverend Flack platted the land and sold lots, naming the settlement Viginti. Dr. Flack named the spring Siloam.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Spencer, E-20.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> W.H. Woodson, *History of Clay County Missouri*, Historical Publishing Company, Topeka, KS, 1920, 174.

<sup>11</sup> *The Waters of Excelsior Springs: Valley of Vitality*, 2003, 3.

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Wyman School  
Clay County, Missouri

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As word of the healing Siloam Spring spread through advertisement, people flocked to the area. In the first year one hundred houses were built, while an additional one thousand people lived in tents. A hotel, the Excelsior, was constructed near the banks of the spring.<sup>12</sup> Wells drilled to provide water for the growing population revealed the presence of more mineral waters. These new springs contained five different minerals, which in different combinations, offered upward of twenty-two healing cures.<sup>13</sup> The settlement of Viginti incorporated as the village of Excelsior Springs in February 1881.

Excelsior Springs continued to grow. In addition to permanent residents, the sick, invalids, and tourists visited Excelsior Springs to partake of its restorative waters. To accommodate the increasing number of visitors, lodging, restaurants, and amusement venues sprang up. Although the population of Excelsior Springs remained under 2,000 in 1900, the town boasted ten hotels and around two-hundred boarding houses.<sup>14</sup> Hospitals, sanitariums and private clinics were also established to offer treatments based on the healing waters' properties.

Transportation was a key to the community's growth. In 1887, the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad became the first of four railroads to serve the town. At the turn of the century, fifteen trains made daily stops at the Excelsior Springs station of the Milwaukee and Wabash Railroad. Between 1912 and 1933, an interurban railroad operated between Kansas City and Excelsior Springs, making eight daily stops in Excelsior Springs.<sup>15</sup> During one year in the 1920s the interurban delivered 100,000 people to Excelsior Springs; the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad sold around 375,000 tickets to the town; and the Excelsior Springs and Wabash Railroad handled about 31,000 passengers.<sup>16</sup> People also arrived by automobile and bus.

The service and entertainment industries employed numerous local residents in jobs that catered to tourists and visitors. Besides the bath houses and springs, amusements such as walking, horseback riding, driving, an annual fox hunt, fishing, golf, tennis, bowling, dancing, and band concerts were offered in Excelsior Springs.<sup>17</sup> Downtown also had the usual variety of commercial businesses, such as grocers, garages and repair shops, and retailers, to serve the daily needs of the community. Manufacturing was limited to the necessary public utilities, a mineral water bottling plant, an ice and cold storage plant, and a milk company.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>14</sup> Harry Soltysiak, Sheila D. Woods and James Mathias Watson, *Reflections of Excelsior Springs: A Pictorial History of Excelsior Springs, Missouri*, (Heritage House Publishing Company, Inc.: Marcelline, Missouri, 1992).

<sup>15</sup> *The Waters of Excelsior Springs*, 5.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Woodson, 184.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

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Clay County, Missouri

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The town prospered through the early twentieth century. The effects of the Great Depression on Excelsior Springs were minimal thanks to its health-based tourism industry. Using WPA funds, the community constructed the Hall of Waters in 1937 to serve as a central location for the entire mineral water system. It housed a water bar, an indoor swimming pool, mineral baths, and hydrotherapy equipment, as well as the offices of the Excelsior Springs City Hall.<sup>19</sup>

Growth in Excelsior Springs slowed during World War II but resumed in the years that followed. During the 1960s, the resort industry and the mineral water business in Excelsior Springs experienced downturns that affected the health of the community. Excelsior Springs began its rebound in 1974 when it was named an All-American City. In recent years, the downtown has begun to rebound with the renewal of interest in spas and health resorts.

**HISTORY OF EXCELSIOR SPRINGS SCHOOLS<sup>20</sup>**

Shortly after the town's founding, public education was first offered to students in Excelsior Springs. Beginning in 1880, Mrs. Robert Caldwell taught a three-month school term to about forty students in her home. The following year, the school district provided Mrs. Caldwell and her students with facilities in a commercial building downtown. As the community grew, so did the number of pupils. By 1884, the school had moved to the Baptist church, where a curtain divided a larger room into two classrooms. Teachers taught all of the standard subjects except for Latin but did not award grades.

In December 1885, Excelsior Springs' first school building opened. Named Wyman School, for town founder Anson Wyman, it was a four-room building constructed on a hill west of downtown. The building had neither running water nor electricity, and students used kerosene lamps when natural light was insufficient. Principal J.J. Gaines later recalled that the students studied "what they wanted when they wanted." It was not until 1888 that Principal H.H. King expanded and standardized the curriculum to be in sync with the curriculum used elsewhere in the county.

As Excelsior Spring's population boomed, so did that of the schools. New schools were built to serve the growing number local children. In 1886, Excelsior Springs established a school for African-American students. Classes were held in the African-American Baptist Church until the Lincoln School building opened two years later.<sup>21</sup> This school survived until the school district was integrated in the 1950s. In 1890, the Isley School was

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<sup>19</sup> *Greater Excelsior Springs Centennial Family/Community Book*, (Excelsior Springs Chamber of Commerce: Excelsior Springs, Missouri, 1980), 3.

<sup>20</sup> History of the Excelsior Springs school district is from W.H. Woodson, *History of Clay County Missouri*, a9Historical Publishing Company: Topeka, Kansas, 1920) unless otherwise noted.

<sup>21</sup> Elaine Hill, *Schools Play Important Role in Community*, Vertical File, Excelsior Springs Museum and Archives.

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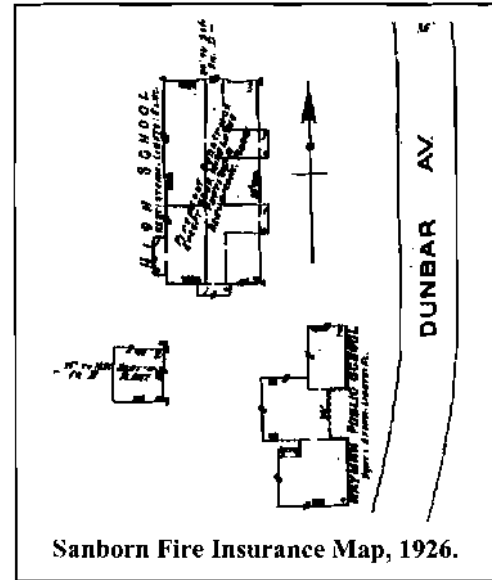
Wyman School  
Clay County, Missouri

constructed to serve students in the eastern part of town. Isley School also housed the first high school classes in Excelsior Springs and offered athletics, including baseball and football. After a fire in 1902, Isley School was rebuilt on the same site and later expanded.

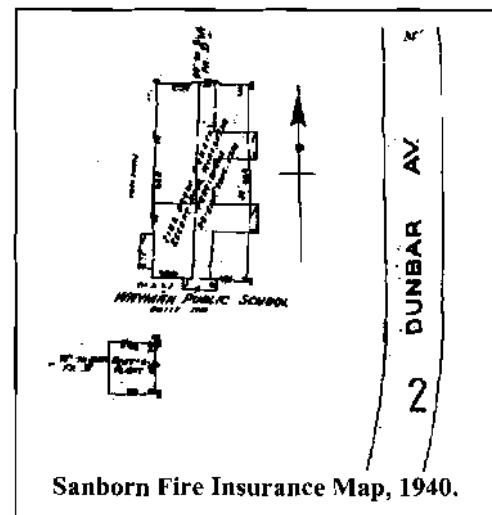
By the early 1910s, the original Wyman School held classes for both elementary and secondary students. The building was overcrowded and its facilities were outdated. Inadequate instructional offerings left high school graduates ill-equipped for the rigors of college.

In 1912, the school board built a new high school (the nominated property) just north of Wyman School. A heating plant, constructed in 1913 southwest of the new building, also housed a manual training classroom on its second floor. Mechanical drawing, domestic science, and music became part of the curriculum. In 1915, an addition constructed on the south end of the high school added classrooms and an auditorium, doubling the capacity of the school. The following year, the school district instituted a junior high program, which it housed in the high school building. The curriculum expanded with the addition of business courses and teacher training in 1916 and vocational training in agriculture and home economics after World War I. A county history written in 1920 described the Excelsior Springs schools as "among the best in the state."

Wyman School and the new high school sat adjacent to each other until sometime between 1926 and 1940. The 1940 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map no longer depicts the old Wyman School, and it refers to the high school as Wyman Public School.<sup>22</sup> The school district built a new high school, East High, in 1930. It is likely that all high school classes were consolidated in the new building at this time, and the old high school became Wyman Public (Elementary) School.



Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1926.



Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1940.

<sup>22</sup> Sanborn Map and Publishing Company, Ltd., *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Excelsior Springs, Missouri*, (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1940), Database online, Available at <http://sanborn.umi.com.proxy.mcpl.lib.mo.us/>; Internet; (accessed December 17, 2007).

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The Excelsior Springs school district continued to grow through the mid-twentieth century. A second high school, West High School, was constructed in 1974. Many of the town's historic school buildings have been demolished, including the original Wyman School and Isley School, which housed the first secondary program. Only the original high school and its heating plant remain on the hill west of downtown.

Classes at Wyman Elementary School ceased in the mid-1990s. A community theater group briefly used the school auditorium, but the building has otherwise been vacant.

**CONCLUSION**

Wyman School was the first building in Excelsior Springs designed specifically to meet the educational needs of secondary students. It included specialized spaces, such as an auditorium, a gymnasium, science laboratories, and manual training classrooms that enabled the school district to offer the full range of courses students needed to succeed in college and in careers following graduation. Wyman School is also an excellent example of school architecture from this period. A reserved Classical Revival exterior cloaks a structure and plan designed to maximize student safety and to provide optimal learning conditions.

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**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

All of Lots 1, 2, 8, and 9, Block 6, Forest Park Addition, a subdivision in the City of Excelsior Springs, Clay County, Missouri, according to the recorded plat thereof, also that tract marked "School" on the Plat of Forest Park Addition and further described as follows: beginning at the southwest corner of Lot 9, Block 6 of said Forest Park Addition; thence south along the east line of an alley, to the north line of Henrie Street; thence southeasterly with the northerly line of Henrie Street, to its intersection with the westerly line of Dunbar Street; thence northerly along the westerly line of Dunbar Street, to the southwest corner of Lot 1, in Block 6 of said Forest Park Addition; thence west along the south lines of Lots 1, 8, and 9, Block 6 to the point of beginning.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The nominated property includes the parcel of land historically associated with the school.

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Clay County, Missouri

**PHOTOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

**Photographer:** Brad Finch  
F-Stop Photography  
Kansas City, Missouri

**Date of Photographs:** December 2007

*Digital images submitted with nomination on CD-ROM*

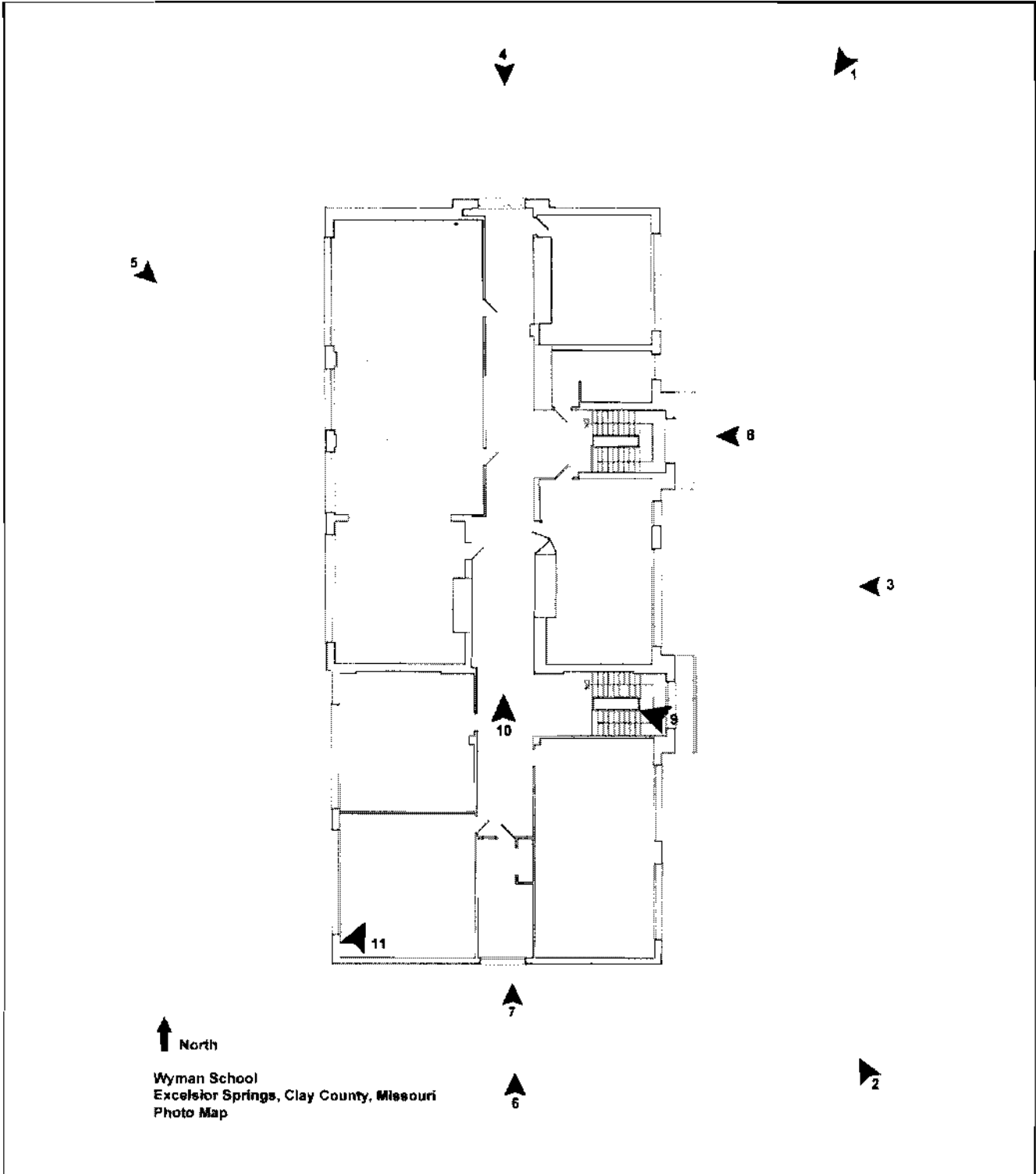
<b>Photograph Number</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Camera View</b>
1.	East (front) and north elevations	Southwest
2.	South and east elevations and heating plant southwest of school	Northwest
3.	Front (east) elevation	West
4.	North elevation	South
5.	North and west elevations	Southeast
6.	South elevation	North
7.	South entrance	North
8.	Typical entrance on front (east) elevation	West
9.	Typical stair hall	West
10.	Typical corridor	North
11.	Typical classroom	Northeast

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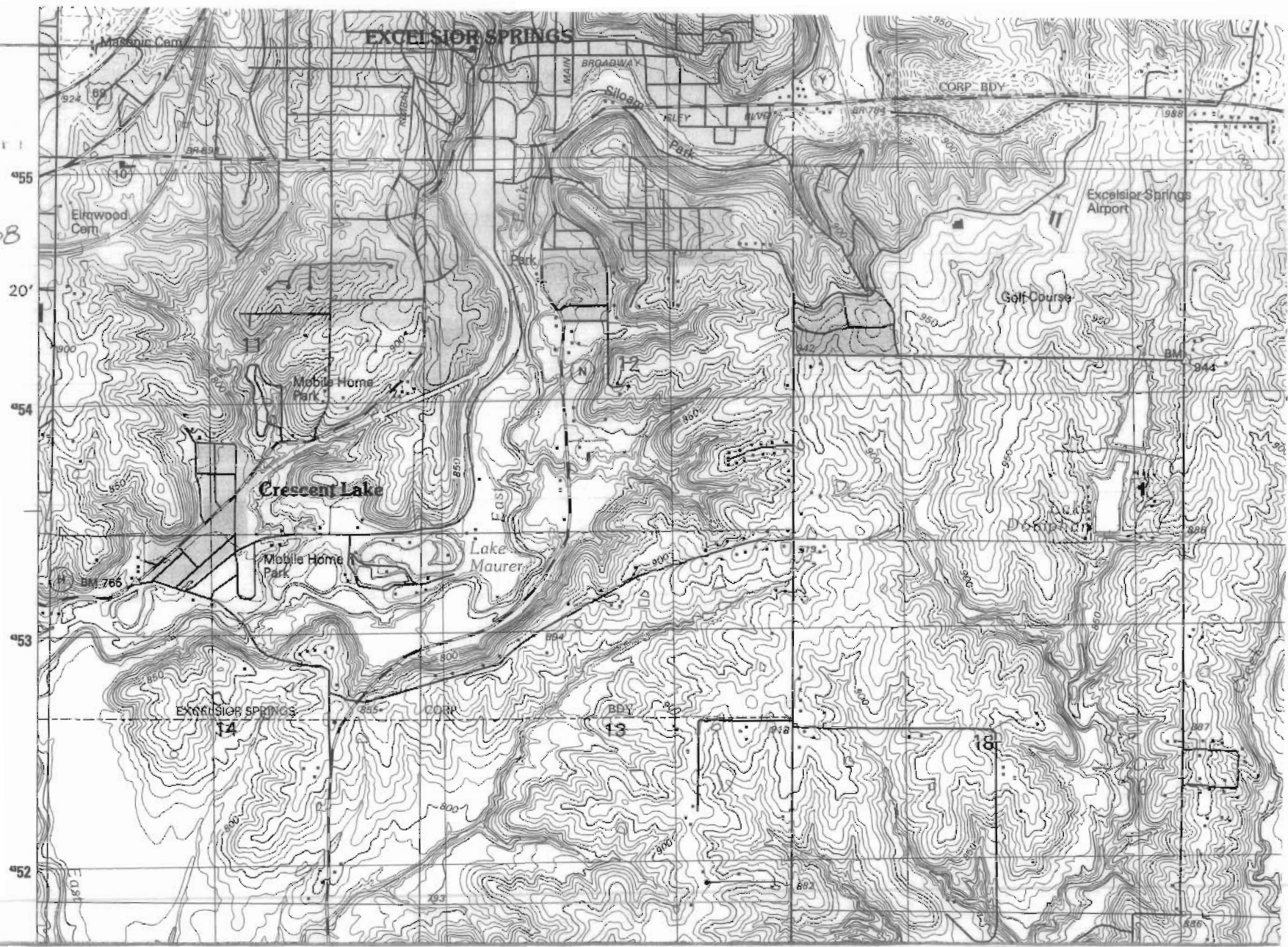
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Nyman School  
Excelsior Springs,  
Missouri  
ITM Reference:  
15/394162/4355538















Excellence Springs  
COMMUNITY  
THEATRE



Excelsior Springs  
COMMUNITY  
THEATRE



**POSTED  
NO TRESPASSING**

**DO NOT ENTER**

NOTICE  
This door is locked for your safety. Please use the main entrance for access.







SCHOOL GYM  
1900