

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE



HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
APPLICATION FOR HISTORIC LANDMARK OR HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGNATION

New Designation X for: Historic Landmark Historic District
Amendment of a previous designation
Please summarize any amendment(s)

Property name Morse School (Africare House)
If any part of the interior is being nominated, it must be specifically identified and described in the narrative statements.

Address 440 R Street, NW

Square and lot number(s) Square 509, Lot 197

Affected Advisory Neighborhood Commission ANC 6E

Date of construction 1883 Date of major alteration(s) 1985-1987

Architect(s) District's Office of the Building Inspector Architectural style(s) Georgian Revival

Original use School Present use Office

Property owner 440 R Street Partners, LLC

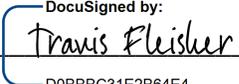
Legal address of property owner 770 P Street, NW #902 Washington, DC 20001

NAME OF APPLICANT(S) 440 R Street Partners, LLC

If the applicant is an organization, it must submit evidence that among its purposes is the promotion of historic preservation in the District of Columbia. A copy of its charter, articles of incorporation, or by-laws, setting forth such purpose, will satisfy this requirement.

Address/Telephone of applicant(s) Address same as above; 240-620-6653

Name and title of authorized representative Travis Fleisher

Signature of representative  Date June 10, 2020
DocuSigned by:
D0BBBC31E2B64E4...

Name and telephone of author of application EHT Traceries/202.393.1199

Date received
H.P.O. staff

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Samuel F.B. Morse School

Other names/site number: Africare House

Name of related multiple property listing:
Public Schools of the Washington, D.C., 1862-1960

2. Location

Street & number: 440 R Street NW

City or town: Washington State: DC County: USA

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide **X** local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A ___ B **X** C ___ D

<p>_____ Signature of certifying official/Title:</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
<p>_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

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

Signature of commenting official: _____ **Date** _____

Title : _____ **State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government** _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:
___ entered in the National Register
___ determined eligible for the National Register
___ determined not eligible for the National Register
___ removed from the National Register
___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____

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
-

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

Site

Structure

Object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing

Noncontributing

1

buildings

sites

structures

objects

Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION=School

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE=Organizational

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

7. Description

Architectural Classification

Late 19th-Century Georgian Revival¹

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: _____

Narrative Description

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

Summary Paragraph

The former public school building at 440 R Street NW, is located on Assessment and Taxation lot 197 on Square 509. The block is bound by R Street NW to the north, 5th Street NW to the west, Warner Street to the south, and New Jersey Avenue to the east. The lot itself backs onto alleys at the south (rear) and east property lines. A plat and description of the boundaries of this portion are attached hereto. 440 R Street NW was originally constructed as an elementary school and has most recently been used for private office purposes. The two-story plus basement Georgian Revival style brick building was designed 1882 by the District's Office of the Building Inspector, approved and signed by G. J. Lyendecker, Major of Engineers for the U.S. Army, and was constructed in 1883. The building was constructed to appear as a symmetrical composition, with entrances centered in its east and west elevations. The fenestration pattern is largely symmetrical; typical windows are replacement wood-clad aluminum. Typical first and second-story window openings feature stone lintels and contain six-over-six hung windows topped with three-light pointed-arch fixed transoms. In 1985, the west elevation was significantly altered with

¹ Antoinette J. Lee, "District of Columbia School Building Survey: Morse School," DC Historic Preservation Division (September 30, 1987).

Samuel F.B. Morse School

Name of Property

Washington, DC

County and State

the addition of a three-story projecting entry vestibule. While the interior of the building has undergone extensive renovations to meet the changing needs of tenants and despite the addition of the new vestibule, the building retains a high level of integrity of appearance on the exterior.

Narrative Description

The building at 440 R Street NW was constructed in 1883 as Morse Elementary School and is highly typical of late-nineteenth century eight-room school buildings in Washington, DC designed and constructed by the Office of Building Inspectors in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The rectangular mass of the building is two stories plus basement but features three-story central bays at the façade (north elevation) and west elevation. The west elevation contains the building's primary entrance. The brick masonry building sits on a brick foundation, features a partially-exposed basement, and is topped with a hipped roof clad in metal or membrane. The building is eight bays wide (69 feet) and eight bays long (89 feet). A water table with a slightly projecting string course above the basement windows extends across each elevation. A series of brick string courses at the sill lines connecting the window lintels between the first and second stories provide structure to the building's composition, as do stacked brick corner pilasters and a projecting corbeled brick cornice with dentil detailing.

The building's façade looks north onto R Street NW and features a central pavilion bay that rises to a low third story. The hipped-roof central pavilion is clad in composition shingles. It slightly projects from the main plane of the façade, which is comprised of three bays on either side of the pavilion. Windows at the façade are typical, except for the third story of the central pavilion which features three narrow, triple-arched, four-over-four hung windows.

The west elevation features a contemporary brick and glass central pavilion containing the building's primary entrance. The pavilion, which dates to 1987, projects prominently from the main plane of the elevation and rises to three stories. The first story of the pavilion features glazed openings with arched transoms on three sides; the west-facing opening contains fully-glazed double doors. The first and second stories of the central pavilion are visually differentiated by a corbeled brick cornice. The second story of the pavilion features two west-facing, elongated, fixed windows with steep pointed arches. These paired windows are situated above the entrance doors. The north and south planes of the pavilion's second story feature full glazing with prominent metal mullions. The stringcourses and cornice of the main building are continued at the projecting pavilion. Above the main building roofline, the pavilion is capped with a west-facing brick gable and is otherwise fully glazed with prominent metal mullions. The gabled pavilion extends to the east, connecting with the hipped skylight at the midpoint of the roof to create an interior atrium.

The remainder of the west elevation (on either side of the central pavilion) features typical windows; however, the first and second-story fenestration north of the pavilion is not evenly spaced. The first and second-story fenestration pattern south of the pavilion is symmetrical and is consistent with the rest of the building. The basement fenestration was infilled in the 1980s to accommodate new ramps leading to the central pavilion.

Samuel F.B. Morse School

Name of Property

Washington, DC

County and State

The south elevation of the building features a basement story that is partially exposed at the west and east portions and is fully exposed at the central portion. The fully exposed central portion features two metal egress doors installed in historic openings during the 1980s. The doors are topped with brick-infilled segmental arches. The first and second stories feature typical fenestration and detailing.

The east elevation of the building features basement fenestration. At the central bay of first story, the east elevation features metal double doors topped with a fixed slightly-arched transom. The doors, transom, transom arch, and brick clad surround all date to the 1980s. The doors are capped with a corbeled brick cornice and flanked by slightly projecting brick pilasters that extend through the second story. Two elongated paired windows situated above the entrance doors and brick cornice span the first and second-story floor plates. Fenestration and detailing at the east elevation are otherwise typical.

The building is centered on the northern boundary of an irregular 10,813 square-foot lot (Lot 197). Narrow grassy areas are located at the base of the façade and east elevation. The south elevation backs directly to the rear alley, and the west elevation abuts a large side yard with mature trees and a brick-paved hardscaped courtyard. The western portion of the site includes concrete ramps flush with the west elevation that provide ADA access to the primary building entrance. It also includes four metal lampposts and symmetrical planting beds. Two short flights of steps lead from the brick-paved parking lot to the primary entrance. The parking lot is outside of the property's boundary. Access to the site is restricted by a contemporary iron security gate with pointed tips that mimic the pointed arch window openings found throughout the building.

Alterations to the building and site that have occurred during the late twentieth century are discussed in detail in the Site History and Integrity sections to follow.

Interior

The interior of the building was completely remodeled in the 1980s; however, the intention of the building's original pinwheel design remained. Original historic fabric appears limited to the east stairway with stone flooring at the entrance landing and treads and wood stair risers. A small amount of wood framing appears to remain in the attic.

From the building's primary entrance at the west elevation, brick and glass walls form an interior entrance hall leading to a lobby and atrium. The hall is capped with a full skylight that connects to the building's three-story atrium and central skylight. The west stair situated within the entrance hall features open risers and a curving wood banister. The west stair provides access to the second and third floors, whereas the stair at the far east side of the building provides access to all the basement, first and second floors. The basement floor features a large conference room and offices. The ground floor features a large conference room and an employee lunch room/kitchen. The second and third floors feature private offices, large offices, conference rooms, and equipment areas surrounding the center atrium core of the building; all partitions throughout the building interior are gypsum board.

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Education

Architecture

Period of Significance

1883

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

District's Office of the Building Inspector (approved and signed by G. J. Lyendecker, Major of Engineers for the U.S. Army) (1883)²

Joseph Handwerger (1985-1987 renovation)

² Research did not uncover the original drawing set.

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

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

The building at 440 R Street NW was constructed in 1883 under the Office of the Building Inspector/Architect of the Capitol to serve as an elementary school for white students. Like many segregated schools in the District of Columbia dating to the late nineteenth century, Morse School shifted in use over the years and was adapted to meet the changing needs of the District's student population. In 1911-12, the building was converted to a "special school" to accommodate non-traditional students enrolled in specialized classes. When opened, it served as the only public school building used entirely for special classes in the District. The school partially reverted to use as an elementary school and was transferred to the "Colored Division" in 1930; however, specialized uses such as evening classes, veterans' classes, and barbering classes continued through the mid-twentieth century. In the 1950s, the school was temporarily utilized by the District as office space for school administrators. The Morse School struggled to maintain steady enrollments and appears to have deteriorated in condition due to inadequate funding and delayed maintenance. It was categorized as a surplus school in 1976 and was sold in 1981 to the non-profit Africare. The building at 440 R Street NW is a testimony to the challenges and triumphs of the District Public School system and is significant at the local level under DC Criterion B (History) and D (Architecture) and National Register Criterion A (Events) and C (Architecture) for its association with public school buildings of Washington, DC. The proposed Period of Significance is 1883 to correspond to the year of the building's construction.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

440 R Street NW is located between Fifth Street NW and New Jersey Avenue NW, in the Shaw neighborhood of Washington, DC. The original school building was designed by the District's Office of the Building Inspector; the original architect within the Office has not been conclusively identified; however, the drawings were approved and signed by G. J. Lyendecker, Major of Engineers for the U.S. Army.³ The Georgian Revival style building opened as the Morse Elementary School in 1883. The school's namesake, Samuel F.B. Morse (inventor of the telegraph), does not appear to have had a direct connection with the school, as is the case with many other DC public schools.

³ The D.C. School Building Survey by Antoinette J. Lee for the D.C. Office of Historic Preservation, conducted September 30, 1987, states that no construction documents were uncovered for the Morse School. One signed, undated basement plan was uncovered; the plan was approved by G.J. Lyendecker, Major of Engineers, U.S. Army and Engineer Commissioner for D.C. and Architect of the Capitol Edward Clark. Research conducted while compiling this landmark application did not uncover the basement plan. The plan is not held by National Archives and Records Administration, the D.C. Historic Preservation Office, or the Department of General Services.

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

The school was originally constructed as an elementary school for white students, but went through numerous transitions in the twentieth century to serve various needs of the District. The school was transferred between school divisions on a number of occasions and accommodated various uses including but not limited to: a white school, a colored school, a special school (e.g. evening and veterans' classes), office space for school district administrators, and a boys' junior high school.

The property is significant under Criterion A and C due to its history as a late-nineteenth century District public school. Under Criteria A, the building conveys important information concerning the history of development of public school system in Washington, DC. Specifically, it reflects the evolution of public education for African Americans and women; changing philosophies of education; development of both elementary and junior high schools; administration of the public schools and the effect of federal and local politics on schools; development of Washington neighborhoods, including urban renewal projects; and segregation, desegregation, and integration. See Site History section to follow.

Under Criteria C, the building conveys information about planning and design philosophy of public school architecture under the Office of the Building Inspector, a period that spanned from 1874 to 1897. 440 R Street is an excellent example of Georgian Revival style public school buildings built in the late nineteenth century in the District. Although eight-room brick schoolhouses were once ubiquitous throughout the District, many have since been demolished or have been extensively renovated. The surviving building at 440 R Street NW is a nineteenth century visual landmark in the Shaw neighborhood that continues to reflect its historic character.

The proposed Period of Significance is 1883 to correspond with the year of the building's construction. Despite physical changes, the extant building retains integrity and remains historically significant for its role in the history of public schools and its representation of the architectural styles and vocabularies employed in school building as designed by the Office of the Building Inspectors between 1847 and 1897.

Public School System in Washington

The following historic context about public school system and the associated school buildings in Washington, DC is condensed and edited from the "National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form: Public School Buildings of Washington, DC, 1862-1960" authored by Tanya Edwards Beauchamp in 2001.⁴ Her study identifies eight building periods for public school buildings:

- I. A model for the New Republic, 1862-1874
- II. The Office of the Building Inspector, 1874-1897

⁴ Tanya Edwards Beauchamp, Associates. "National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form: Public School Buildings of Washington, DC, 1862-1960." United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service. September 1, 2001. Note that the Multiple Property Documentation Form incorporates in part "Public School Buildings of the District of Columbia, 1804-1930," prepared in 1988 by Antoinette E. Lee, historian for District of Columbia Public Schools.

Samuel F.B. Morse School

Washington, DC

Name of Property

County and State

- III. The Architects in Private Practice, 1897-1910
- IV. The Office of the Municipal Architect, Snowden Ashford, 1909-1921
- V. The Office of the Municipal Architect, Albert L. Harris, 1921-1933
- VI. The Office of the Municipal Architect, Nathan C. Wyeth, 1934-1946
- VII. The Office of the Municipal Architect, Merral A. Coe, 1946-1954
- VIII. The Office of Design and Engineering/Architects in Private Practice, 1954-1960

A Model for the New Republic, 1862-1874

In 1804, four years after the District of Columbia became home to the federal government, a 13-member Board of Trustees was created to oversee public education. The board was headed by then-President of the United States, Thomas Jefferson. The United States Congress served as the primary provider of funding for the District's public schools. The initial intent of the public schools' governing body was to provide education to white children whose parents were unable to pay tuition at private schools. Regarded as "charity schools," the schools were ultimately hindered by their goal to educate only a portion of the youthful population, which often only stabilized poverty and inequality. In contrast to the early federal funding provided for white schools, black students depended on private citizens and religious groups to support their education and fund the building of their schools. Following the District's Emancipation in 1863, organizations such as the National Freedman's Relief Association and other relief organizations also took up the cause of education for the black population.

Despite widespread upheaval during the Civil War, the future of the District of Columbia's school system became more secure as the city's population rapidly grew. In response to the unprecedented population growth, the council of the City of Washington levied a tax to fund the erection of new school buildings within its boundaries and embarked upon an ambitious plan to create a system of free public schools unsurpassed in the nation. In the earliest years of the city, small frame buildings and adapted structures accommodated school classrooms. However, the Civil War and post-Civil War era reflected a departure from these early structures, which often fell short of students' and educators' needs. Between 1864 and 1875, the District provided funding for the construction of seven innovative, architecturally distinct buildings that were designed by German-born and prominent Washington-based architect Adolf Cluss.⁵ These buildings were architectural statements intended to impart a sense of grandeur. As Dr. F. S. Walsh of the Sub-board of Trustees for the Third District noted, "it is our duty to educate the taste while imparting other instruction; and when we remember how many of our early tastes and impressions were formed in the school-house and surroundings, we cannot do wrong in having it as attractive as possible."⁶

⁵ Some of this grouping were not designed by Cluss individually, but by the firm of Cluss and Kammerhueber.

⁶ Dedication of the Wallach School Building, "Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of the Public Schools, 1865, p. 55, as cited in Section E, page 6 of "National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form: Public School Buildings of Washington, DC, 1862-1960."

Samuel F.B. Morse School

Name of Property

Washington, DC

County and State

The Office of the Building Inspector, 1874-1897

In 1874, Congress took over the debts and financial affairs of the City of Washington and abolished home rule. As part of this, the school system underwent several reorganizations with the black and white schools operating in a segregated system each with their own superintendent. Four years later, the federal government officially took over the affairs of the District of Columbia via the Organic Act of June 11, 1878.⁷ The Organic Act provided for the city to be governed by three District Commissioners, one of which was the Engineer Commissioner (a member of the Army Corps of Engineers), responsible for the construction of public works and public buildings in the District, including school buildings.

From 1874 through 1897, the design of school buildings progressed from the individualized designs of Adolph Cluss to a more generic and consistent style that could be reused with minimal adaptations. The Office of the Building Inspector, specifically Building Inspector Thomas B. Entwistle and his successor John B. Brady, prepared and supervised much of the new school building construction.

The steps involved in producing a new school building during this period commenced with the acquisition of a site. Once the site was acquired, the Office of the Building Inspector prepared architectural plans and specifications and submitted them to the District Commissioners for approval. During the late nineteenth-century, Architect of the Capitol Edward Clark was associated with municipal architecture as both a designer and as an inspector of designs; he frequently signed his name to the drawings, indicating that he either had designed or inspected the buildings. Lowest bidders on construction bids received contracts and were supervised by the Building Inspector's staff during the construction of the building. When completed, the District Commissioners approved the name for the school.

Many of the school building designs produced by the Office of the Building Inspector during this period (1874-1897) called for red brick, were designed in the Romanesque Revival style, and bespoke simplicity, efficiency, and durability in form and detail. Although simply designed, they often had a central pavilion topped with towers with conical roofs and symmetrical wings. The exterior brick was embellished with brick pilasters, string courses, molded brick and belt courses, pressed metal cornices, and terra cotta trim. Some buildings were arranged with asymmetrical massing, but most were designed with balanced massing, usually a central pavilion flanked by identical sections. Their interior plan was generally based on a central open hall that was surrounded by a series of adjacent classrooms. The early schools constructed by the Office of Building Inspectors were four-room structures with a cloakroom arranged around a hallway and playroom. The growth in population during the 1880s and 1890s necessitated the construction of larger schools, thus, eight-room, two-story buildings became the norm. The eight-room school buildings often had separate entrances for boys and girls, four classrooms on each floor clustered

⁷ The Organic Act of 1871 repealed the individual charters of the City of Washington and Georgetown and combined them with the County of Washington to create a single entity under a single District government. The Organic Act of 1878, a three-member Board of Commissioners replaced the short-lived territorial form of government.

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

around a center hallway. As the population continued to grow and land became more expensive, large school buildings consisting of twelve, sixteen, and twenty-four rooms were built.⁸

Successful designs were replicated and used for both white and black schools. When one school became overcrowded, it was the practice to construct a new building on an adjacent lot or within a few blocks, or to append annexes to the original buildings. Building new schools was often contentious; the presence of a new white school was typically viewed as an enhancement to the real estate values of a community, the potential construction of a colored school in the same area was conversely viewed as a threat.

The Architects in Private Practice, 1897-1910

By the late 1890s, the familiar red brick schoolhouse was out-of-step with changing aesthetic standards. Pressed by the growing number of professional architects, the federal government opened a select number of federal government building projects to competition. This model was followed by the District, and the decision was made to invite private architects to prepare designs for school buildings under the supervision of the Office of the Building Inspector.

In 1900, the U. S. Congress enacted legislation that gave complete authority of the public schools to the District's Board of Education under a single superintendent. As a result, the entire school system was reorganized and divided into eleven divisions. Divisions 1 through 6 included white schools in the City of Washington. Representing the County of Washington, Divisions 7 and 8 included both black and white schools. Divisions 9 through 11 embraced black schools in the City of Washington. School building constructed in the first decade of the twentieth century differed from those designed by the Building Inspector because they exhibited a greater variety in styles and building materials. They also reflected national advances in the technology of ventilation, heating, and lighting.

The 1906 Compulsory Education Act, which required all children in the District between ages 8 and 14 to receive education, clarified authority for the District of Columbia Public Schools by setting out responsibilities of the Board of Education, the District Commissioner, and the U. S. Congress, and by delegating executive authority to the Superintendent of Schools. It also appointed the Schoolhouse Commission, which released a report in 1908 that recommended the abandonment of old school buildings and the construction of new ones. By 1906, the divisions of the school system had been adjusted to include up to 15 schools arranged geographically and separated by race.⁹

The 1906 Compulsory Education Act also introduced special schools and classes, a program developed to provide a more focused educational track for children with mental or physical

⁸ Gabriela P. Harris, "Historic Schools in Washington, DC: Preserving a Rich Heritage" (master's thesis, University of Maryland, College Park, 2008), 22.

⁹ Later this classification would be simplified as Division 1 for white schools and Division 2 for black schools. The assignment of white and black schools to separate divisions continued up to the integration of the school system in 1954 when new jurisdictions were established.

Samuel F.B. Morse School

Name of Property

Washington, DC

County and State

handicaps, into the District of Columbia public school system.¹⁰ This program largely catered to students that had not been enrolled in the public school system because of their handicaps prior to the passage of the 1906 Act. Special classes were organized as needed, and either occupied a single room in a public school or occupied an entire building. Typically, special classes allocated for white students were grouped into a separated building referred thereafter as a “special school”, while special classes allocated for colored students were almost always established in a classroom located within the existing school building. In addition to developing programs for children with handicaps, a special school devoted to assimilating immigrant children was established and referred to as the Americanization School.¹¹

The Office of the Municipal Architect, 1909-1954

In 1909, the U. S. Congress reorganized the Engineer Commissioner's building department and created the position of Municipal Architect, under the supervision of the Engineer Commissioner. The formation of the Municipal Architect's Office mirrored the creation of city architecture offices in other urban areas. Private architects participated in the municipal design process according to the workload of the Municipal Architect's Office. In 1910, with the creation of the US Commission of Fine Arts, which was responsible for reviewing federal government buildings within the District of Columbia, the District Commissioners asked that the new review body to approve designs for new public school buildings in addition to municipal buildings.

Although the system of school governance established by the Organic Act of 1906 remained in force for sixty years, it received constant criticism and conflicts between the Congress, the Commissioners, the Board of Education, the Superintendent, and the citizens of the District of Columbia persisted. In the years from 1926 to 1936 support for an elected school board grew, but it was not until 1968 that an 11-member elected Board of Education was created.

District public schools were separated by sex for much of the nineteenth century, evidenced by separate boys' and girls' entrances to many school buildings. Despite lingering segregation (both by race and gender), the twentieth century public school system was increasingly diverse in the sense it served a student population that was broader than the traditional K-12 population. Programs were offered in Americanization, industrial education, and business education, and facilities were provided for dental and medical clinics, home gardening, and school banks.

As the black and white population shifted throughout the city, black schools were converted into white schools and vice versa. By 1946, segregation in the schools (white schools now grouped in

¹⁰ *An Act Providing for compulsory education in the District of Columbia*, Public Law 203, 59th Cong., 1st Sess. (June 8, 1906), 219; *Report of the Board of Education to the Commissioners of the District of Columbia 1913-1914* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1915), 143, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433076004229&view=1up&seq=154> (accessed November 2019).

¹¹ *Public-School System, District of Columbia*, 70th Cong., 1st Sess., 1928, S. Doc. 58, 74, https://books.google.com/books?id=SoX8lY3qe_MC&pg=PA73&lpg=PA73&dq=ungraded+vs.+special+schools+district+of+columbia&source=bl&ots=pST5jazxh2&sig=ACfU3U1mm_YXmloOK_Vup7hqK8Nm7xuy4w&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjSyJTSueXlAhXLwFkKHdX7Cs0Q6AEwDHoECAgQAQ#v=onepage&q=ungraded%20vs.%20special%20schools%20district%20of%20columbia&f=false (accessed November 12, 2019).

Samuel F.B. Morse School

Name of Property

Washington, DC

County and State

Division 1 and black schools in Division 2) was finally recognized as inextricably linked with racial discrimination. Additionally, the struggle for equal funding of black schools was abandoned in favor of the total end of the dual system as the majority of Washington's population became increasingly black and the national civil rights movement gained in power.

While white families increasingly chose to live in the suburbs in the post-war years, black families largely remained in the city, limited by voluntary adherence to racially restrictive covenants and other discriminatory housing practices. Black schools, always underfunded, were overcrowded while white schools were underutilized. The District schools did not fully desegregate until the U.S. Supreme Court outlawed separate educational facilities in 1954 under *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*. In its celebrated ruling, the Court held that segregated schools were, by their very nature, unequal. Following the ruling, the District quickly moved to dismantle the segregated schools. Because Washington was both the nation's capital and the first city to desegregate its schools, it became a focus of national attention.

Also in 1954, at the request of Congress, the Engineer Department was reorganized as the Department of Buildings and Grounds with centralized operation and maintenance of all District buildings and grounds. The Office of the Municipal Architect was abolished. The work of the new Office of Design and Engineering which replaced that of the Municipal Architect now clearly evolved from design to contract administration, planning, inspection, and supervision. Private architects and engineers were furnished design manuals with carefully developed criteria and standards aimed at ensuring a uniform approach to school design.

In the late-twentieth century, many of the District's earliest schools were demolished due to disrepair or to allow for the construction of new commercial or residential buildings. The surviving school buildings bear silent testimony not only to national trends in educational theory and aesthetic tastes, but to local conditions that provided separate facilities for races and sexes.

Site History

During the early and mid-nineteenth century, the area north of Massachusetts Avenue, then called the "Northern Liberties," was largely rural in character and removed from the core of the city, considered to be "in the woods as there were but few houses and business places to adorn the many acres of land that were covered with trees, brush, etc. at the time."¹² The 1857 topographical map produced by Albert Boschke illustrates the lack of development of the area, and also depicts the Reedy Branch Creek tributary crossing Square 509.

Following the Civil War, population growth required the widespread urban development north of Massachusetts Avenue. The 1887 Hopkins and 1888 Sanborn maps show a mixture of brick and frame dwellings filling most of the lots in Shaw. Because small school buildings could not

¹² Michael Andrew Fitzpatrick, *Shaw, Washington's Premier Black Neighborhood: An Examination of the Origins and Development of a Black Business Movement, 1880-1920*. A Thesis Presented to the Graduate Faculty of the University of Virginia in Candidacy for the Degree of Master of Arts. Department of History, University of Virginia (1989), 8.

Samuel F.B. Morse School

Name of Property

Washington, DC

County and State

accommodate the booming student population, several large eight-room, two-story schools were constructed north of Massachusetts Avenue. One of these schools was Morse Elementary School, addressed as 440 R Street NW.

The school building 440 R Street NW was designed in 1882 as an elementary school for white students. The building was designed within the District's Office of the Building Inspector, and was approved and signed by George J. Lyendecker, Major of Engineers for the U.S. Army. The building, christened as the Morse School, was constructed in 1883 at a cost of \$23,670.¹³

By October 1883, *The Washington Post* reported that the two-story eight-room building was "entirely finished, with the exception of placing the iron stairway in position."¹⁴ The building originally featured separate entrances for girls and boys. Historic Sanborn and Baist maps indicate the property spanned lots 76 through 87 (now, assessment and taxation lots 193 through 197) of Square 509. The school building itself spanned lots 83 to 87. Two outbuildings located to the southwest and southeast of the school building sat within lot 97 and lots 80-81; a wooden structure connecting the two brick outbuildings with the school building spanned lots 81 through 87. The western portion of the portico structure was demolished at some point between 1924 and 1928, and the remaining portion of that structure and the outbuildings were demolished at some point between 1928 and 1931. Lots 76 through 82 were used for recreation purposes, including open space and a playground, and were originally surrounded by an iron fence.¹⁵

When it officially opened in 1883, the Morse Elementary School was a Division 2A elementary school that enrolled only white students.¹⁶ The namesake of the school was Samuel F. B. Morse (1791-1872), a painter and inventor who is best known for inventing the telegraph. Morse constructed a telegraph line between Washington, DC and Baltimore in 1843.¹⁷ Research did not reveal an explicit connection between Morse and the property at 440 R Street NW, nor any particular reason why he was selected as the namesake.

District Board of Education records indicate that during the 1895-1896 academic year, the Morse

¹³ Antoinette J. Lee, "District of Columbia School Building Survey: Morse School," DC Historic Preservation Division, (September 30, 1987). Note that History Quest suggests the building was constructed in 1900 (per the DC Office of Tax & Revenue); however, this information is inaccurate.

¹⁴ "The New School Buildings," *The Washington Post*, October 26, 1883, 4.

¹⁵ "Window Smashing is Started Again," *The Washington Times*, November 26, 1910, 4.

¹⁶ "The New School Buildings," *The Washington Post*, October 26, 1883, 4.

¹⁷ F.R.M., "Samuel F. B. Morse, 1791-1872," *The Scientific Monthly*, volume 53, number 3 (September 1941), 282-284. Morse is lesser known as an artist but deserves recognition in that arena as well. His years at Yale and those following his graduation in 1810 were spent studying art. He moved to England after graduating and became one of the founders and the first president of the National Academy of Design, which was organized in 1825. His interest in electricity grew gradually, but by 1832 he set himself to the task of developing wire telegraphy. He started by making rough drawings, then by making models, molds, and castings. He completed his first apparatus in 1836 and gave an exhibition in 1837. He obtained his first patent from the United States government in 1840, and in 1843 Congress passed an appropriation for a telegraph line between Washington, DC and Baltimore, which was put into use on May 24, 1847. Morse later took up experiments on sub-marine cables.

Samuel F.B. Morse School

Name of Property

Washington, DC

County and State

School was transferred to Division 2, and in 1906-1907 it was transferred to Division 4.¹⁸

The 1905-06 *Annual Report of the District Board of Education* revealed that by this time, the Morse School was serving students from the first through eighth grades, with a total of eleven classes over eight rooms. It was also reported that the school building provided excellent light and water closets, and good ventilation, play rooms, and yards.¹⁹ However, in 1907, *The Washington Post* reported that the school was experiencing dampness in the basement due to water seepage, and J.B. Nichols, medical inspector of schools, reported that the heating apparatus was inadequate and the school was too cold.²⁰

In 1911-1912, five years after the passage of the 1906 Compulsory Education Act, the Morse School was transformed from an elementary school with traditional classes into a special school for ungraded and atypical white students, thereby relieving space constraints that other schools were facing by reserving a classroom for special classes.²¹ Specifically, students classified as ungraded were “for the most part of incorrigible children who present social behavior problems” and those classified as atypical were determined to be “mentally deficient to such a degree as to be unable to profit by instruction in regular classes, but still they are not feeble-minded in the sense that they should be confined in institutions such as a social menace.”²² When opened, it served as the only the only public school building used entirely for special classes in the District. As reported in the *Washington Herald*, the school ceased having traditional classrooms, and instead offered students “a cooking department, carpenter shop, room for cutting and tailoring, and a model room for dressmaking [all that] occupy one whole floor of the building.”²³

Throughout the first quarter of the twentieth century, the Morse School remained in fairly good condition. In 1916, a defective furnace caused a fire to break out in the building. All 150 children were escorted out of the building safely, and very minimal damage appears to have occurred.²⁴ In 1921, funding was provided to overhaul the school’s heating system.²⁵ In February 1930, the *Evening Star* reported favorably on the school’s conditions:

“...devoted to special work. Its total enrollment is 87 and its total sittings 100. The pupils are divided as follows: Primary class for boys and girls, 17; a class for over-age boys, 20;

¹⁸ Information about school uses and Division transfers was sourced from the Morse School vertical file held by the Charles Sumner School Archives.

¹⁹ *Report of the Board of Education 1905-1906* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1906), 49, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=osu.32435031070873&view=1up&seq=57> (accessed November 11, 2019).

²⁰ “Morse School Too Cold,” *The Washington Post*, December 29, 1907, 12.

²¹ *Report of the Board of Education to the Commissioners of the District of Columbia 1913-1914*, 144.

²² In addition to providing classrooms for atypical and ungraded students, DC Public Schools provided special classrooms to care and educate children who were quarantined on account of contracting a contagious disease (Health Schools), to cure children with defects of speech such as lisping and stammering (speech improvement classes), and to provide special facilities for underweight and anemic children (open window classes). (*Public-School System, District of Columbia*.)

²³ “Notes of the Schools,” *The Washington Herald*, September 29, 1912, 3.

²⁴ “Fire in Morse School; Children Escorted Out,” *Evening Star*, October 3, 1916, 9.

²⁵ *Minutes of the Board of Education of the District of Columbia, July 1920 to June 1921* 11 (1921): 2, Charles Sumner School Museum and Archives, Washington, DC.

Samuel F.B. Morse School

Washington, DC

Name of Property

County and State

a class for over-age girls, 12; an ungraded class for younger boys, 10; ungraded class for older boys, 12; speech class for boys and girls, 10. Two of the classrooms are used for sewing and cooking instruction for girls in nearby buildings and those in the Morse. The lighting and heat in this building are satisfactory and there is no crowding. The toilets are old style. There is a manual training shop for boys in the basement and one play room, in which the children eat their lunches. There is a fairly satisfactory outside playground. There is no principal's office and the teachers' room is small. The furniture in the class rooms is generally old and dilapidated, except in two rooms. There is not ground enough to permit outside work, such as gardening, which is considered beneficial for pupils of these special schools."²⁶

On July 1 of 1930, the Morse School underwent several administrative changes. First, in order to accommodate the changing demographics of the neighborhood, the Morse School was reclassified from a White School to a Colored School. It was also transferred from a Division 9 school that was used by "atypical classes," to Division 11 for use of elementary school pupils.²⁷ Additionally, the Morse School and the nearby Twining School were consolidated into a school group. The following year, the two schools were consolidated with the Cleveland School.²⁸ In 1939, the *Evening Star* reported the Board Commissioners' "plans for a 16-room school, including an assembly and gymnasium, to replace the Twining and Morse schools."²⁹ The Morse School was identified as insufficient for continued school use. "The principals have no office and the teachers have no restroom, and [there] is no provision for heat in classroom halls."³⁰

In 1940, it was announced that the Morse-Twining replacement project was projected to cost \$90,000 for a new site acquisition, \$7,350 for plans, and \$350,000 for construction.³¹ It does not appear that action was taken on the project, however, until 1948, when the *Minutes of the Board of Education* revealed that plans were again being considered for the construction of a school to replace the Morse and Twining Buildings.³² By this time, declining enrollment in the school system had resulted vacant classrooms, which were subsequently used to house certain field officers of divisions 10-13.³³ A resolution passed by the Board of Education of the District of Columbia resolved to "[d]iscontinue the use of the [Morse School, Division 11] for elementary school classroom purposes from and after October 19, 1949, but retain [the] building for other school purposes."³⁴ Once closed, students who had previously attended the Morse School were

²⁶ "Special Schools Held Makeshifts," *The Evening Star*, February 4, 1930, 4.

²⁷ *Report of the Board of Education 1930-1931* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1931), 4, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.b3030321&view=1up&seq=7> (accessed November 11, 2019).

²⁸ *Report of the Board of Education 1931-1931*, 43, (accessed November 11, 2019).

²⁹ "18,775,197 Asked in 1941 in School Estimates," *The Evening Star*, August 23, 1939, 5.

³⁰ "Schools," *The Evening Star*, March 3, 1940, 3.

³¹ "Schools," *The Evening Star*, March 3, 1940, 3.

³² *Minutes of the Board of Education of the District of Columbia* (1948): 61, Charles Sumner School Museum and Archives, Washington, DC.

³³ The field officers were previously housed in the old Dennison building on S Street between Thirteenth and Fourteenth Streets, NW, which was fully vacated after the officers' relocation.

³⁴ *Minutes of the Board of Education of the District of Columbia* 66 (September 21, 1949 to November 2, 1949): 62.

Samuel F.B. Morse School

Name of Property

Washington, DC

County and State

transferred to the new Winfield Scott Montgomery Elementary School, No. 248.³⁵ The Morse School was photographed by John Wymer in the midst of its transition on October 11, 1949.

By the beginning of 1951, administrative offices for Divisions 10-13, evening classes, and classes for veterans were all housed within the Morse School. Barbering classes appear to have been introduced and provided a space within the school building soon thereafter. In January 1954, the administrative offices and the barbering classes appear to have moved out of the building, but the evening and veterans classes ensued. In February 1954, Morse once again transitioned, this time back into an elementary school within Division 2. Over the next several years, however, the aging school building fell into disrepair. In 1965, a piece in the *Washington Post* decried the condition of Morse School: "Children who live in condemned houses are the same children sent to school in buildings (like Perry and Morse) which have been condemned."³⁶ Little action was taken to resolve the building's condition.

On April 4, 1968, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated. Riots erupted throughout the District and caused considerable destruction to the commercial corridors running throughout the District, including in Shaw.³⁷ The devastation trickled into the surrounding neighborhoods. Recovery of the Shaw area after the riots wouldn't really begin to recover until the 1980s, when the Metro system was under construction and a Shaw station was planned.

Following the riots, the school building again ceased to be used as an elementary school, and instead was used to house a myriad of different programs. In 1971-1972, the Morse School became a Boys' Junior High School. By 1975, the Morse School housed the Morse Crisis Intervention Center for DC junior high school students with "emotional or behavior problems...who could not adjust to the normal classroom setting."³⁸

By the mid-1970s, the District's public school system was plagued by declining enrollment and lean budgetary allowances. Recognizing the potential opportunity to take over an underutilized school building, administrators of the Muhammad University of Islam Number Four, an accredited private school for kindergarteners through twelfth graders that had outgrown its home in the basement of the District's Black Muslim temple on New Jersey Avenue NW, identified the Morse School as a desirable site for relocation due to its proximity to the temple. In 1975, administrators of The University began negotiating the purchase of the building with the DC public school system. As the Morse School had not yet been declared a surplus school, the District's Board of Education commenced the process of declaring the school surplus with the intent of selling the building to The University.³⁹

³⁵ Kelsey & Associates, Paul Kelsey Williams, "Historic Survey of Shaw East," for the DC Historic Preservation Division, Department of Planning (2001-2002) 27.

³⁶ "The Schools of the Slums," *The Washington Post*, October 2, 1965, A14.

³⁷ Kathryn Schneider Smith, *Washington at Home: An Illustrated History of Neighborhoods in the Nation's Capital*. Windsor Publications, Inc., Albany, New York (2010), 210.

³⁸ Lorenzo Middleton, "City's Muslims in Dire Need of New School," *The Evening Star*, October 8, 1975, 42.

³⁹ Lorenzo Middleton, "City's Muslims in Dire Need of New School," *The Evening Star*, October 8, 1975, 42.

Samuel F.B. Morse School

Name of Property

Washington, DC

County and State

Africare

In November 1976, the *Evening Star* reported that “school officials decided in May that [the Morse School]...as an empty and deteriorating hulk of brick and peeling plaster...was no longer fit for students of any age.” In addition to the Morse School, the District’s Board of Education voted to close the Carbery, Blair, Dent, and Crummel Schools because they no longer housed regular elementary programs. Instead, the aforementioned school buildings were either used as office space, storage space, or for special programs – all uses that could be relocated to functioning school buildings.⁴⁰ While the Morse School was declared a surplus school, it was ultimately not sold to the Muhammad University. Instead, the building sat vacant.

In 1981, as part of a push initiated by Mayor Marion Barry Jr., the District government aimed to sell twenty-seven surplus properties (including schools, police buildings, and fire stations) that, according to a city spokesman, were “either unused or grossly underutilized.”⁴¹ In December 1981, following decades of transition and various school and school administration uses, the District sold Morse School as a surplus property to the nonprofit organization Africare for \$159,000.⁴² Africare is a private, nonprofit organization that carries out hundreds of charitable programs in rural Africa. The projects typically involve villagers directly involved in the solution of “their agricultural, economic, educational, and health problems.”⁴³ Prior to the purchase of 440 R Street NW, Africare had rented office space at 1601 Connecticut Avenue NW. By relocating to R Street NW, the organization acquired considerably more square footage and could avoid high rents.⁴⁴ In an interview with the *Washington Post*, Africare founder and Executive Director C. Payne Lucas said, “There were plenty of places in the suburbs where we could have found cheap land...but we wanted to make a statement, to make a connection between Afro-Americans and Africa.”⁴⁵

The full conversion of the Morse School into Africare’s international headquarters took nearly six years. First, a zoning variance had to be obtained from the District to change the function of the property. Engineers were hired to study the soundness of the structure, and the Washington-based architectural firm of Joseph Handwerger was engaged to oversee the transformation of the school.

Joseph Handwerger (1931-2018) was born in Mobile, Alabama and attended the University of Alabama on an ROTC scholarship. Upon graduating in 1953, he served in the United States Air Force and then received his master’s degree in Architecture from the Harvard Graduate School of Design in 1959. He then practiced for one year in Stockholm, Sweden, before moving to

⁴⁰ Lorenzo Middleton, “School Closings Become a Fact of Life in Area,” *The Evening Star*, November 4, 1976, 22.

⁴¹ Marc Kaufman, “DC Plans Sale of 27 Properties as Surplus in ’81,” *The Evening Star*, April 21, 1981, 73.

⁴² “D.C. Sells 3 Surplus Properties,” *The Washington Post* (December 12, 1981), F11; Kelsey & Associates, Paul Kelsey Williams, “Historic Survey of Shaw East,” for the DC Historic Preservation Division, Department of Planning (2001-2002) 27.

⁴³ Benjamin Forgey, “Morse School’s Admirable Revival,” *The Washington Post*, March 5, 1988, B1.

⁴⁴ The 4,655 square feet of rented office space on Connecticut Avenue cost Africare \$84,940 a year; the Morse School would provide 15,900 square feet and building ownership would strengthen Africare by providing a margin of financial safety.

⁴⁵ Benjamin Forgey, “Morse School’s Admirable Revival,” *The Washington Post*, March 5, 1988, B1.

Samuel F.B. Morse School

Washington, DC

Name of Property

County and State

Washington, DC and founding Joseph Handwerger Architects. Handwerger is primarily known for embassy enhancement projects, including a modern addition to the Indonesian Embassy at 202 Massachusetts Avenue NW and design work on the US Embassy in Tegucigalpa, Honduras.⁴⁶

In 1983, using Handwerger's preliminary drawings, a Bethesda, Maryland-based firm Scharf-Godfrey, Inc. provided a pro-bono estimate of \$959,000 for the renovation. Africare set aside \$200,000 of its own unrestricted funds and began fundraising for the remainder. Fundraising efforts included mailed brochures and contribution requests of Africare chapters worldwide. A fundraiser held in April 1984 hosted by then-Mayor Barry and the C&P Telephone Company was held at the unconverted Africare House site. In July 1984, C. Payne Lucas secured a \$250,000 challenge grant from the Kresge Foundation. Lucas was also able to secure \$275,000 from the Royal Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; \$63,000 from General Motors; and \$24,000 from the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association. Additional lesser donations brought Africare to its fundraising goal.⁴⁷

The intent of the project extended beyond the need to secure useable office space. Promotional literature for the Afrika House fundraising campaign used the phrase, "House of Africa," and declared "In Washington, DC, the capitol city of the United States, Africa has no single, all-encompassing, outward and visible symbol. Africare House will be that symbol."⁴⁸ Also in its fundraising campaign, Africare staff emphasized the positive benefit the project would have on Shaw, a largely African American neighborhood, which was still recovering from the 1968 riots that caused significant damage to the neighborhood.⁴⁹ The renovation of 440 R Street NW can be considered one of the first community initiatives in the revitalization of Shaw.

The physical conversion of the Morse School into the Africare House began on September 30, 1985. As reported in the *Washington Post*, architect Joseph Handwerger and project architect Edwin Daly maintained the original exterior walls and most window openings, but altered the building in four major respects: a high entrance bay was appended front and center at the west elevation; an old "pigeon attic" was converted to a conference room and spaces added at the rooftop level, the building's central space was gutted and reconfigured to open dramatically to a skylight; and the exterior painted bricks were painted light gray. Original high ceilings were altered to accommodate conventional acoustical panels. Post-renovation, almost nothing of the original interior remained.

In defense of the interior gut job, Handwerger compared the Morse School to Adolph Cluss's Sumner School and declared, "The Morse school was genuinely plain Jane; it had nothing near that kind of architectural stature, nor was it part of an overall setting making authenticity in detail

⁴⁶ "Joseph Handwerger Obituary," *The Washington Post*, June 19-21, 2018.

⁴⁷ Penelope Campbell, *Africare: Black American Philanthropy in Africa*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2011), 59-60.

⁴⁸ Brochure as quoted in Penelope Campbell's book, *Africare: Black American Philanthropy in Africa*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2011), 60.

⁴⁹ Penelope Campbell, *Africare: Black American Philanthropy in Africa* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2011), 60.

Samuel F.B. Morse School

Washington, DC

Name of Property

County and State

a must.”⁵⁰ As explained by Handwerger, “The guiding idea here was to create within the old structure a space where the play of light on plain wall surfaces was to be the primary architectural experience.”⁵¹

A review published in the *Washington Post* applauds Handwerger overall, declaring “His architectural approach deftly combines minimalism and a respect for the existing structure. Crisp contextual details include a steel fence whose pickets reflect the building’s peaked windows and, inside, rectangular openings above office doors that recall the prototypical schoolroom transoms of the original. And the old cruciform plan remains indelibly present in the arrangement of offices around the court. Above all, the splendid new entry-way weaves old and new together in a modest but memorable way.”⁵²

The new brick and glass entrance bay extends about 15 feet from the original building elevation and rises to a gabled pavilion roof that sits about a dozen feet higher than the original cornice. The second-story side walls of the new entrance bay are fully glazed, and brick throughout the new entrance bay mimics the historic brick patterning. One slight criticism levied at Handwerger by *Washington Post* critic Benjamin Forgey was that “the sleek glass doors are perhaps too abstract and insubstantial in relation to all those bricks and their period detailing.” But Forgey concludes:

Basically, this is a strong, appealing addition. The gable, reflecting the angle of existing windows, and the glass walls enable one to anticipate the extraordinary, light-filled central court that is the building’s principal interior feature. Offices and, on the top floor, a fine library, a language lab and the conference room (all open to the public) are organized around this court. Riserless stairwells, with cantilevered landings, are suspended within it. The court contributes greatly to a splendid working environment- one senses the openness from each of the surrounding office areas, and face-to-face communication between departments is easy and visible. Furthermore, the court makes a terrific place for more formal gatherings.⁵³

Work was completed to the point where staff could move in by March 1987. Scharf-Godfrey’s early budget estimate in 1983 had been far exceeded, in part because of rising construction costs during the life of the fundraising campaign. The total cost, including related expenses such as furnishings, equipment, and moving fees, came to more than two million dollars. However, the renovated building met the needs of Africare at that time. Receptions for heads of state, such as Nelson Mandela of South Africa, were held at Africa House, and ambassadors of African nations held and continue to hold briefings and news conferences there. Additionally, the doors of the renovated building were opened to the public, offering ample, attractive space for public congregation and study.

⁵⁰ Benjamin Forgey, “Morse Schools Admirable Revival,” *The Washington Post*, March 5, 1988, B2.

⁵¹ Benjamin Forgey, “Morse Schools Admirable Revival,” *The Washington Post*, March 5, 1988, B2.

⁵² Benjamin Forgey, “Morse Schools Admirable Revival,” *The Washington Post*, March 5, 1988, B2.

⁵³ Benjamin Forgey, “Morse Schools Admirable Revival,” *The Washington Post*, March 5, 1988, B2.

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

Integrity

Despite physical changes to the building and site, 440 R Street NW retains sufficient integrity to convey its significance under Criterion A and C. The period of significance spans from 1883, the year of the building's construction, to 1981, when the District sold 440 R Street NW to the nonprofit, Africare. The building underwent a substantial exterior and interior renovation in 1985-1987 that involved the addition of a west entrance pavilion, glazed skylight and atrium roof; replacement of original windows at the first and second stories; replacement of doors at the side elevations; and thorough interior remodeling and installation of elevators.

Although the building does not entirely represent the eight-room schoolhouse built in 1883, the extant building continues to convey its role in the history of public schools and is a representation of the architectural styles and vocabularies of the late nineteenth century. The façade has not been altered beyond replacement windows in their original openings, and the changes to the west elevation have not substantially impacted the building's Georgian Revival style.

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

“18,775,197 Asked in 1941 in School Estimates.” *The Evening Star*. August 23, 1939. p5.

Baist, G. W.

1903-1919. Baist’s Real Estate Atlas, Surveys of Washington, District of Columbia. Vol 1, Plate 32. G.W. Baist, Philadelphia. On File at the Library of Congress, Map and Geography Division, Washington, D.C. Electronic file obtained online at <https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3851bm.gct00131c/?sp=27&r=-0.208,-0.017,1.276,0.811,0>

1924-1954 Baist’s Real Estate Atlas of Surveys of Washington, District of Columbia. Vol 1, Plate 32. G.W. Baist, Philadelphia. On File at the Library of Congress, Map and Geography Division.

“Board Asks District to Raze Wallach and Old Tyler Schools.” *The Evening Star*. April 7, 1949.

Boschke, A. Map of Washington City, District of Columbia, seat of the federal government: respectfully dedicated to the Senate and the House of Representatives of the United States of North America. 1857. Electronic document on file at EHT Tracerics, 440 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C.

Campbell, Penelope. *Africare: Black American Philanthropy in Africa*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers. 2011.

Charles Sumner School Archives (Images, Meeting Minutes, Vertical File).

“DC School Properties to be Seized; Control Board Moves to Dispose of Surplus.” *The Washington Post*. April 2, 1997.

“DC Sells 3 Surplus Properties.” *The Washington Post*. December 12, 1981.

Drawing Set: Africare House, Washington, DC. Joseph Handwerger, AIA. April 18, 1985. Electronic file held by EHT Tracerics, Inc.

EHT Tracerics. Historic School Buildings Survey of D.C. Public Schools, Volume 2. 1989. Washington, D.C. Document stored at EHT Tracerics, 440 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C.

“Fire in Morse School.” *The Evening Star*. October 3, 1916.

Fitzpatrick, Michael Andrew. *Shaw, Washington’s Premier Black Neighborhood: An Examination of the Origins and Development of a Black Business Movement, 1880-1920*.

Samuel F.B. Morse School

Washington, DC

Name of Property

County and State

A Thesis Presented to the Graduate Faculty of the University of Virginia in Candidacy for the Degree of Master of Arts. Department of History, University of Virginia. 1989.

Forgey, Benjamin. "Morse School's Admirable Revival." *The Washington Post*. March 5, 1988.

F.R.M. "Samuel F. B. Morse, 1791-1872." *The Scientific Monthly*, Volume 53, number 3. September 1941.

Harris, Gabriela P. "Historic Schools in Washington, DC: Preserving a Rich Heritage." A Thesis Submitted to Faculty of the Graduate Program in Historic Preservation School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation University of Maryland, College Park. Spring 2008.

Hopkins, G.M. Surveys and Plats of Properties in the City of Washington, District of Columbia. G.M. Hopkins, Philadelphia. 1887. Electronic document on file at EHT Traceries, 440 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, D.C.

"Joseph Handwerker Obituary." *The Washington Post*. June 19-21, 2018.

Kaufman, Marc. "DC Plans Sale of 27 Properties as Surplus in '81." *The Evening Star*. April 21, 1981.

Kelsey & Associates, Paul Kelsey Williams. "Historic Survey of Shaw East." For the DC Historic Preservation Division, Department of Planning. 2001-2002.

Lee, Antoinette J. "District of Columbia School Building Survey: Morse School." DC Historic Preservation Division. September 30, 1987.⁵⁴

Middleton, Lorenzo. "City's Muslims in Dire Need of New School." *The Evening Star*. October 8, 1975.

Middleton, Lorenzo. "School Closings Become a Fact of Life in Area." *The Evening Star*. November 4, 1976.

"Morse School Too Cold." *The Washington Post*. December 29, 1907.

"New Education Board to Elect Blair President." *The Washington Times*. June 27, 1912.

"Notes of the Schools." *The Washington Herald*. September 29, 1912.

"Portables to Get Wiring for Lights." *The Evening Star*. December 19, 1929.

⁵⁴ The survey of the Morse School informed "Public School Buildings of the District of Columbia, 1804-1930," prepared in 1988 by Antoinette E. Lee, historian for District of Columbia Public Schools.

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

Sachse, Adolph. The National Capital, Washington, D.C. Sketched from Nature. 1883-1884.
Electronic map obtained online from the Library of Congress at
<https://www.loc.gov/item/75693178/>.

Sanborn Map Company. Insurance Maps of Washington, D.C. Vol. 1. Sanborn Map Company,
New York. 1888. Electronic document obtained online from the Library of Congress at
https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn01227_001/.

“School Buildings Inefficiently Heated.” *The Washington Post*. December 27, 1884.

“Schools.” *The Evening Star*. March 3, 1940.

“S.F.B. Morse, The Artist.” *The Washington Herald*. May 2, 1909.

“Special Schools Held Makeshifts.” *The Evening Star*. February 4, 1930.

“The Schools of the Slums,” *The Washington Post*. October 2, 1965.

Tanya Edwards Beauchamp, Associates. “National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property
Documentation Form: Public School Buildings of Washington, DC, 1862-1960.” United
States Department of the Interior, National Park Service. September 1, 2001.⁵⁵

“The New School Buildings.” *The Washington Post*. October 26, 1883.

“Window Smashing is Started Again.” *The Washington Times*. November 26, 1910.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

⁵⁵ The Multiple Property Documentation Form incorporates in part "Public School Buildings of the District of Columbia, 1804-1930," prepared in 1988 by Antoinette E. Lee, historian for District of Columbia Public Schools.

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: Charles Sumner School Archives

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 10,813 square feet

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 38.912370

Longitude: -77.018130

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary of the property contains all of current lot 197 of Square 509.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

This is the property's legal description, as delineated in the land records of the District of Columbia.

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Alyssa Stein, Katherine Wallace, and Emily Eig/Architectural
Historians
organization: EHT Traceries
street & number: 440 Massachusetts Avenue NW
city or town: Washington state: DC zip code: 20001
e-mail eht@traceries.com
telephone: 202-393-1199
date: May 2020

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Samuel F.B. Morse School
 Name of Property

Washington, DC
 County and State

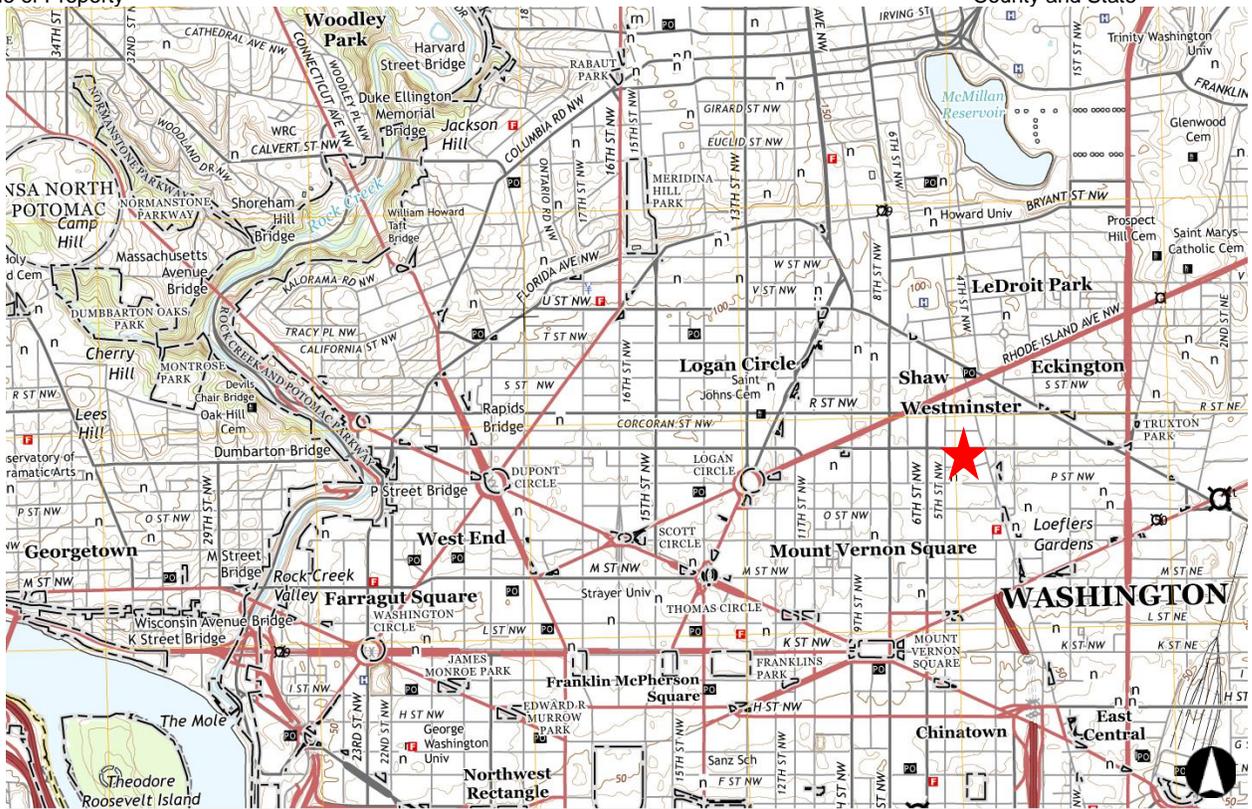


Figure 1: Detail from 2014 USGS Washington West quadrangle, showing the location of 440 R Street NW (starred).

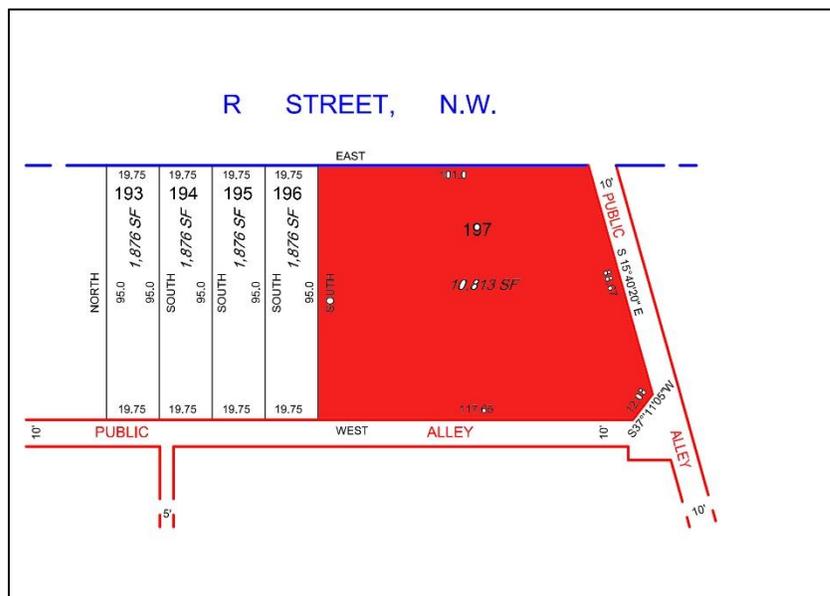


Figure 2: Boundaries of Lot 197 of Square 509, shaded red. Source: DC Office of the Surveyor (not to scale).

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

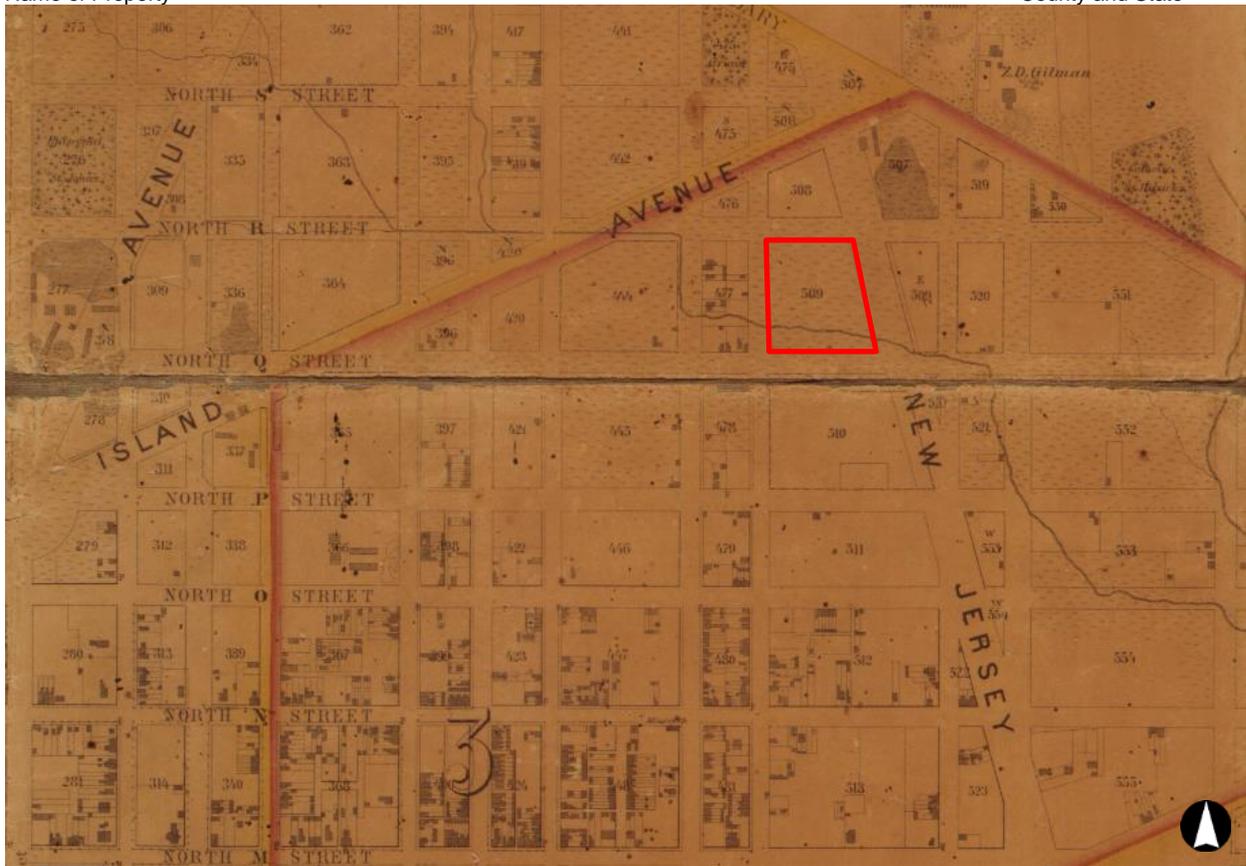


Figure 3: 1857 Boschke map. Square 509 outlined in red. Source: Library of Congress.

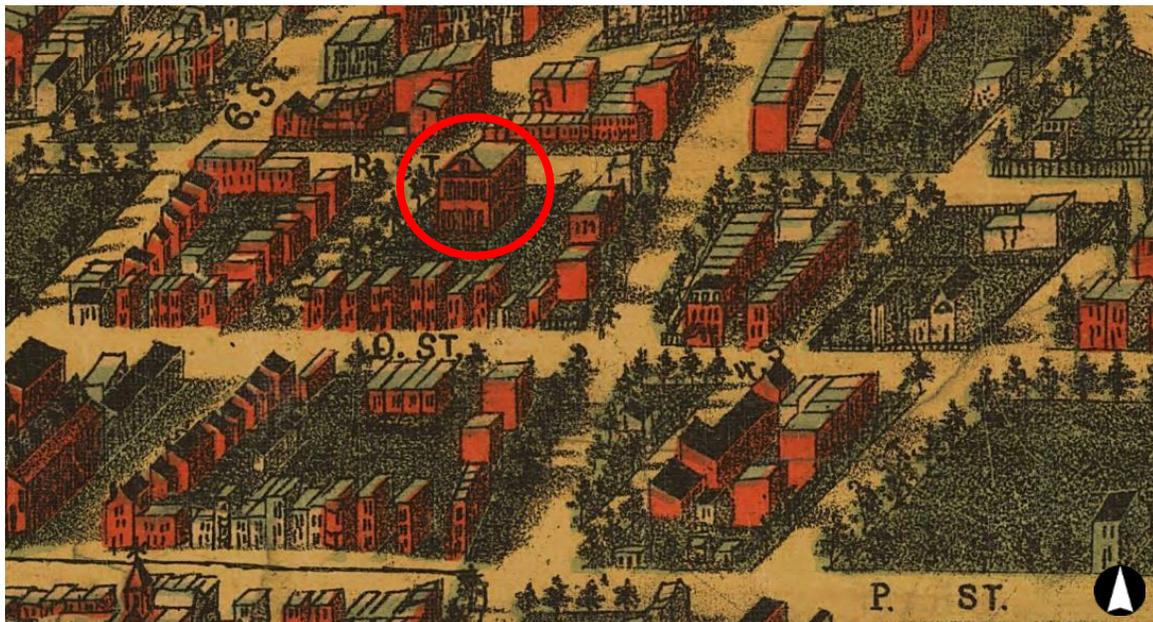


Figure 4: 1883-84 Sachse map. Morse School circled in red. Note that this map confirms the construction of 440 R Street NW, but does not appear to depict accurate as-built conditions. Source: Library of Congress.

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State



Figure 5: Morse School, looking southeast from R Street NW (1895-1905). Source: Historical Society of Washington_PSC 092

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

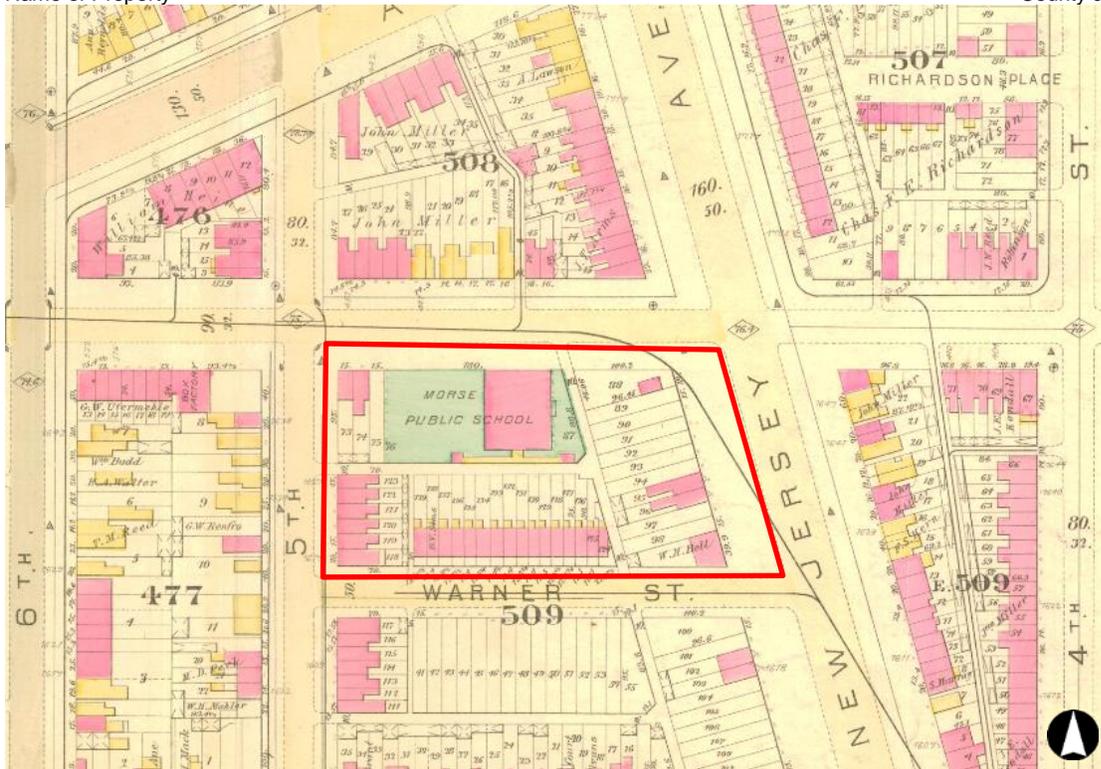


Figure 6: 1887 Hopkins map. Northern half of Square 509 outlined in red. Source: Library of Congress.

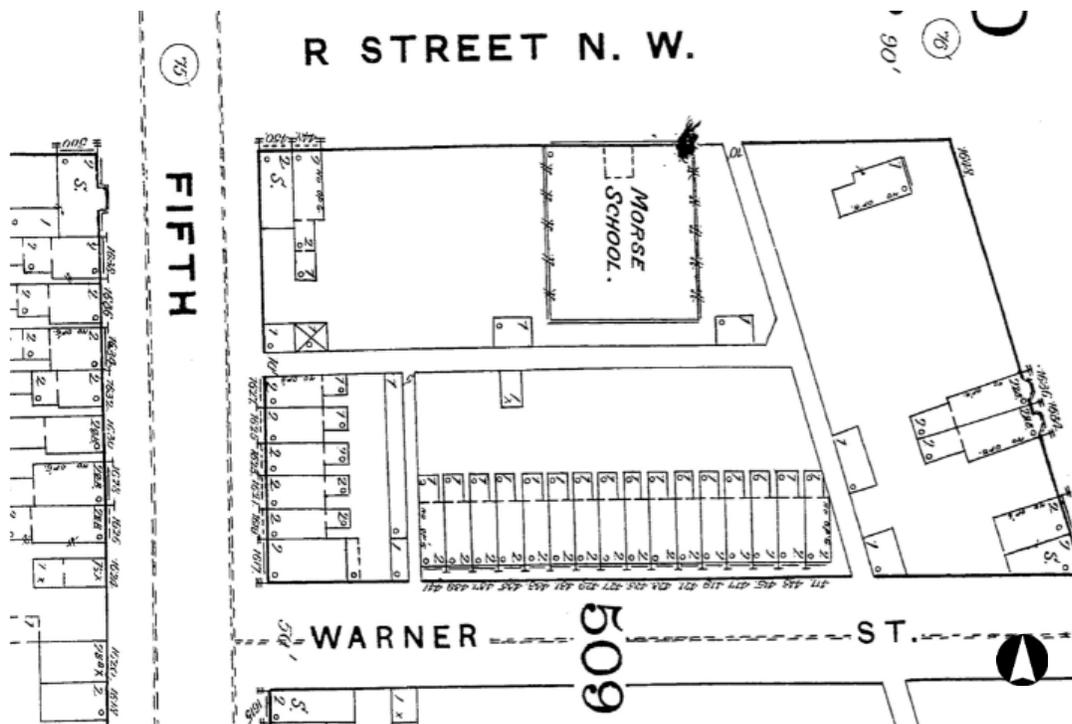


Figure 7: 1888 Sanborn map, vol.1 plate 23a. Source: Library of Congress.

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

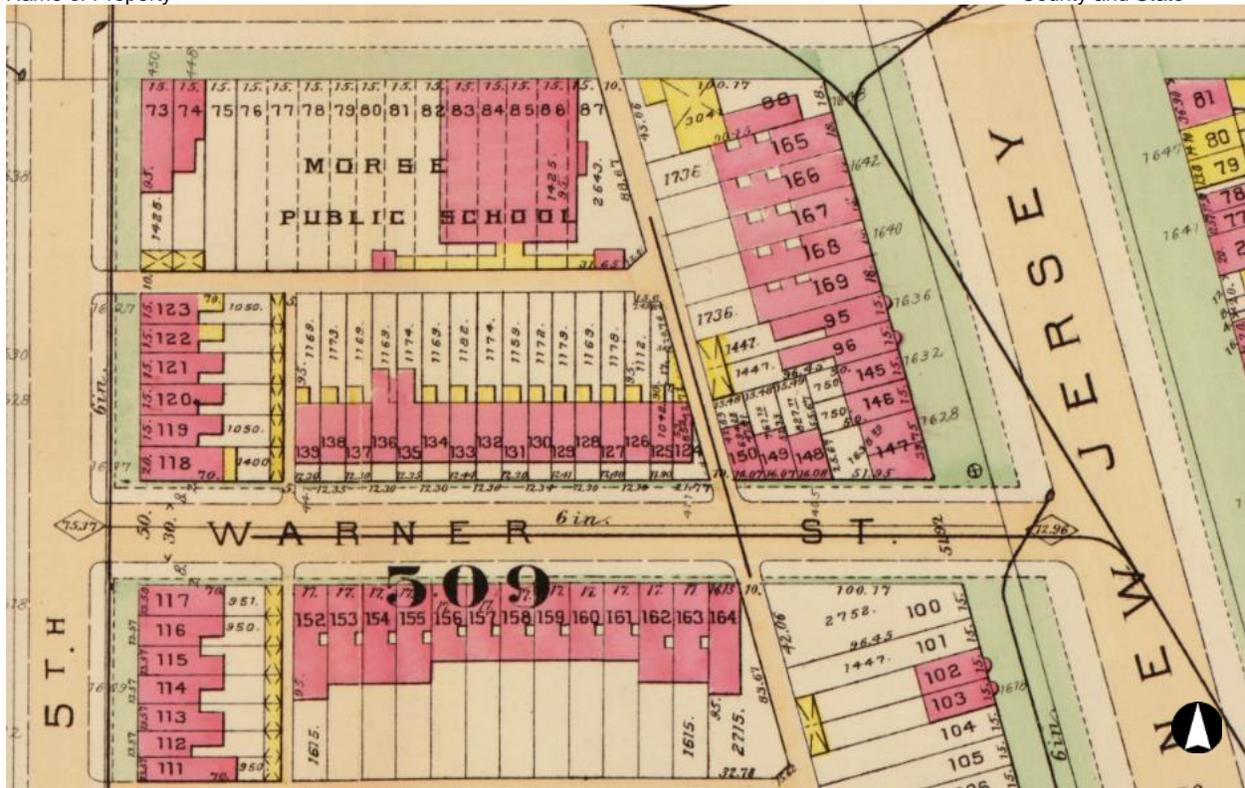


Figure 8: 1903 Baist map, vol. 1 plate 32. Source: Library of Congress.

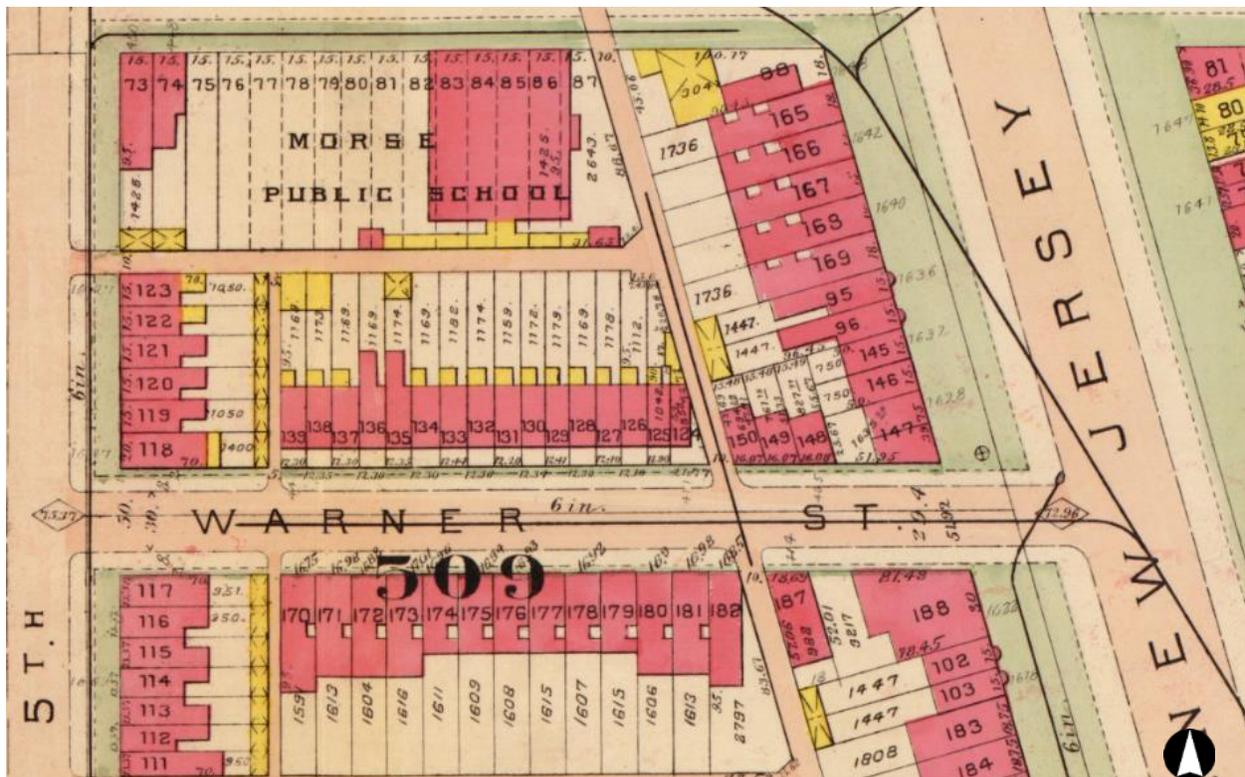


Figure 12: 1909 Baist map, vol. 1 plate 32. Source: Library of Congress.

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

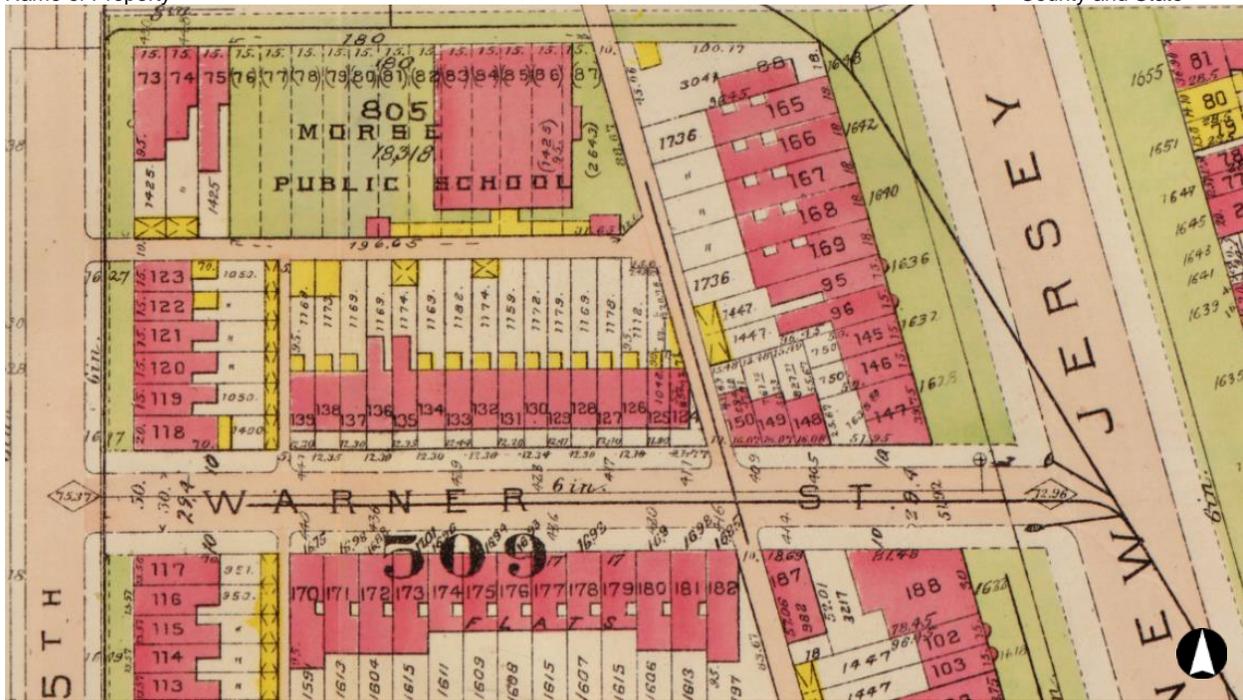


Figure 13: 1919 Baist map, vol. 1 plate 32. Source: Library of Congress.

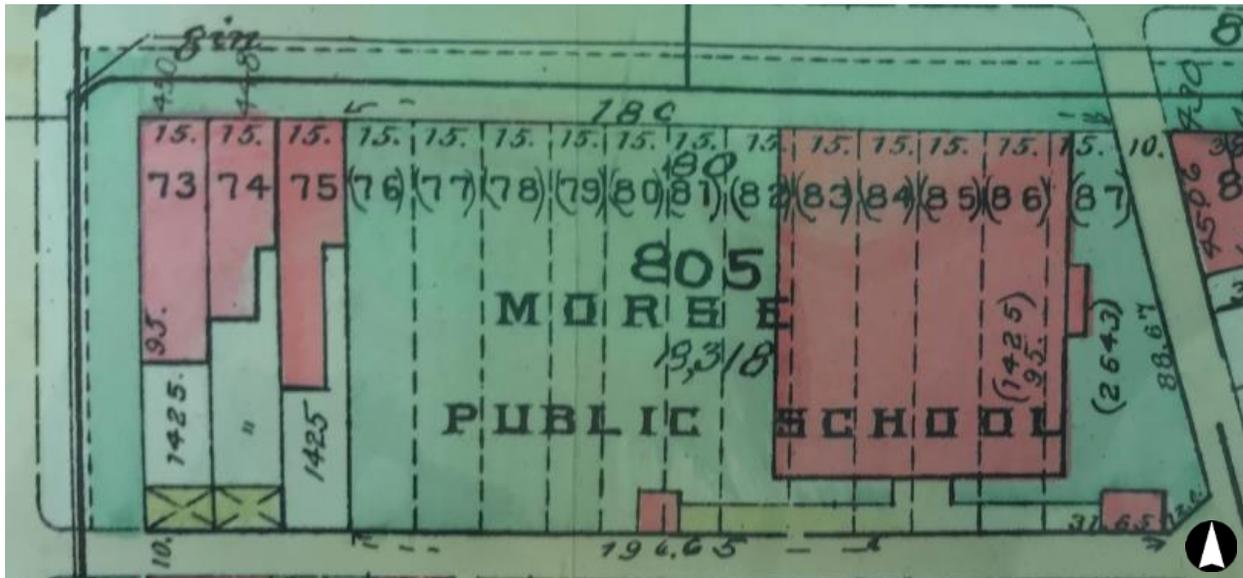


Figure 14: 1924 Baist map, vol. 1 plate 32. Source: Library of Congress.

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

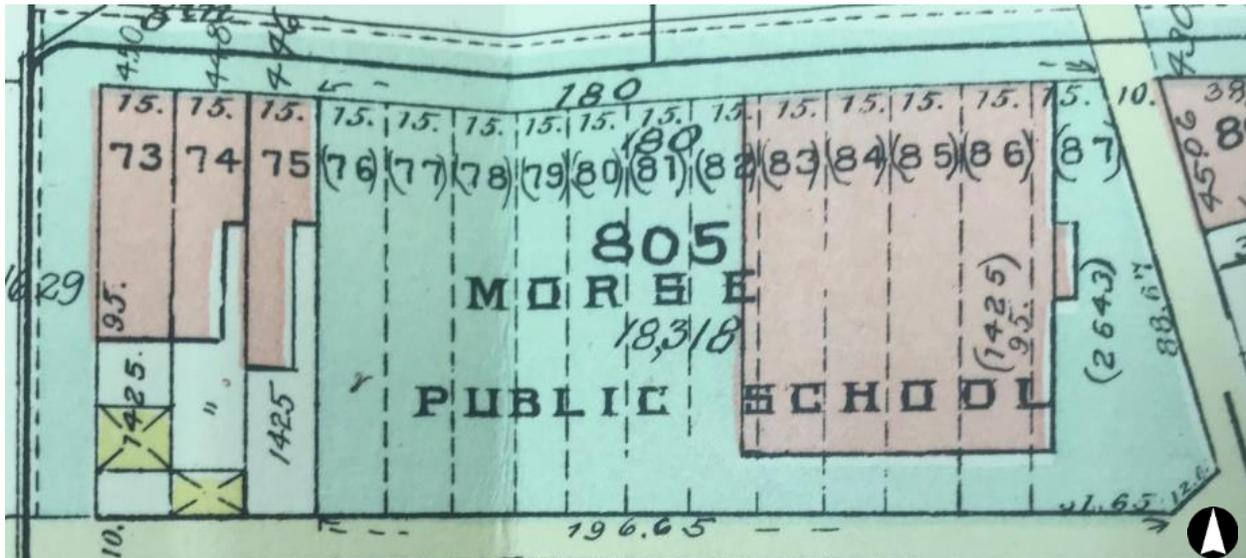


Figure 15: 1931 Baist map, vol.1 plate 32. Source: Library of Congress.

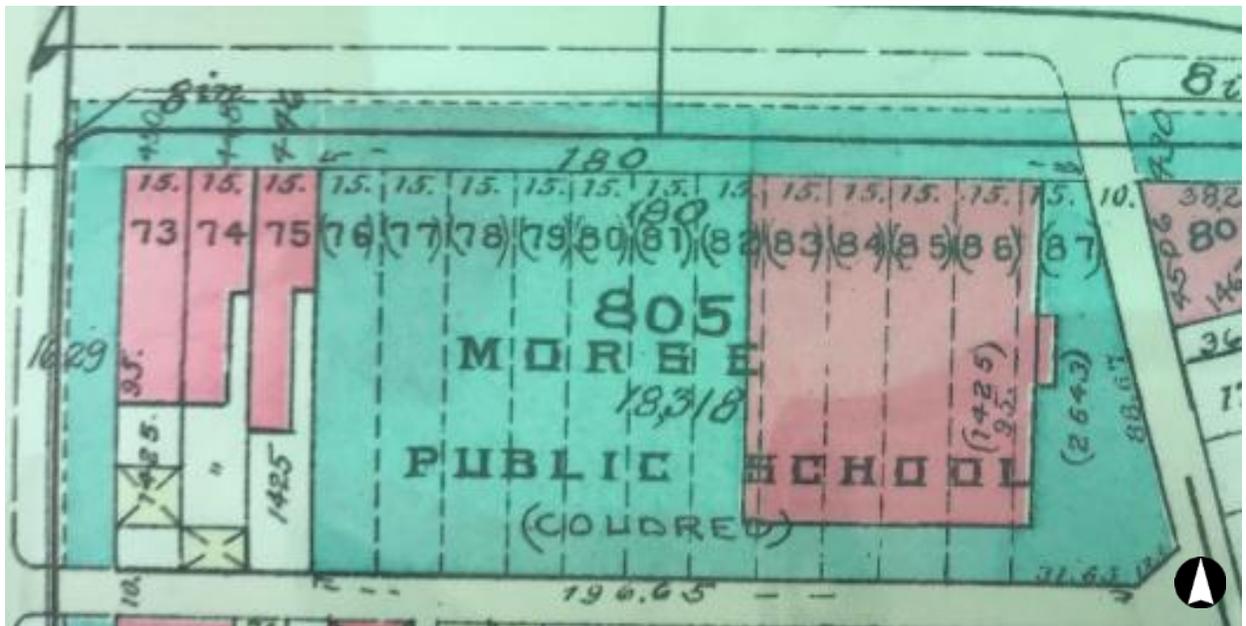


Figure 16: 1937 Baist map, vol. 1 plate 32. Source: Library of Congress.

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State



Figure 17: West and north elevations of the Morse School, view southwest (1949). Source: Historical Society of Washington_WY 1067.23

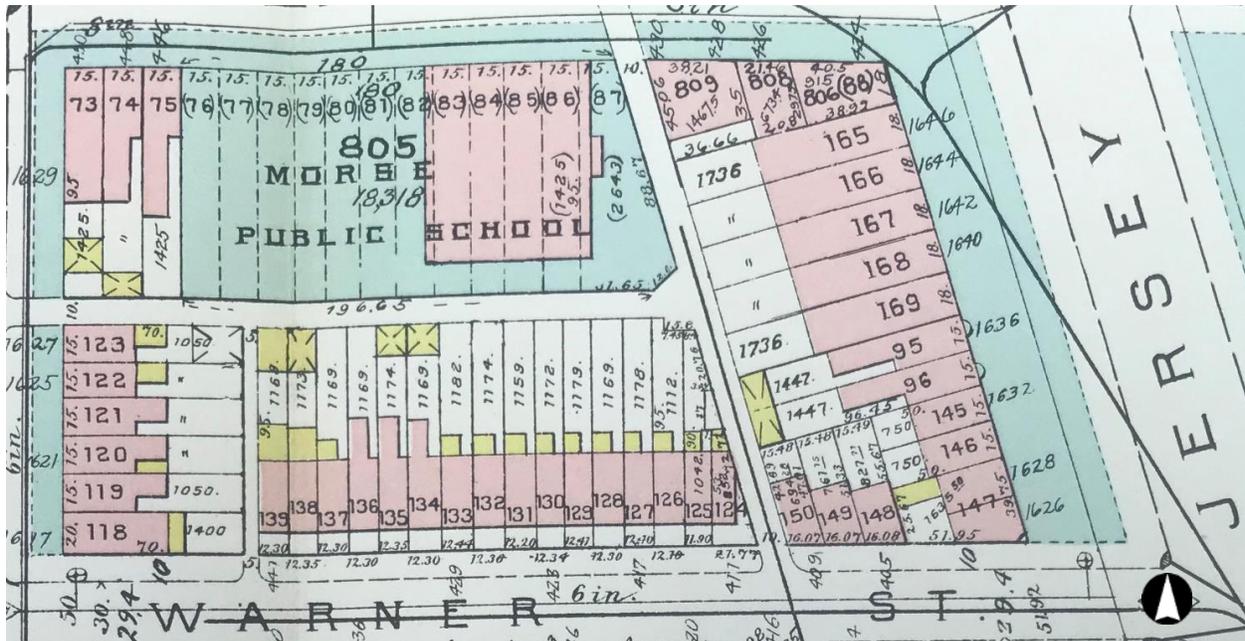


Figure 18: 1960 Baist map, vol. 1 plate 32. Source: Library of Congress.

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State



Figure 19: North and west elevations of Morse School, view southwest (c.1950-60s). Source: Charles Sumner School Archives.

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State



Figure 20: North elevation of the Africare Building, view south (24 August 1987). Source: The Charles Sumner School Archives.



Figure 21: West elevation of the Africare Building, view east (24 August 1987). Source: The Charles Sumner School Archives.

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

Photographs

Photo Log

Name of Property: Morse School (440 R Street NW)

City or Vicinity: Washington

County: State: DC

Photographer: Alyssa Stein and Katherine Wallace, EHT Tracerics, Inc.

Date Photographed: October 30, 2019

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



Photo 01: Façade (north elevation), looking south

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State



Photo 02: Site (west/northwest portion of property), looking southeast



Photo 03: Façade (image left) and west elevation (image right), looking southeast

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State



Photo 04: West elevation, looking east

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State



Photo 05: West elevation, looking north

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State



Photo 06: South (rear) elevation, looking northeast

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State



Photo 07: Basement egress doors at south (rear) elevation, looking north

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

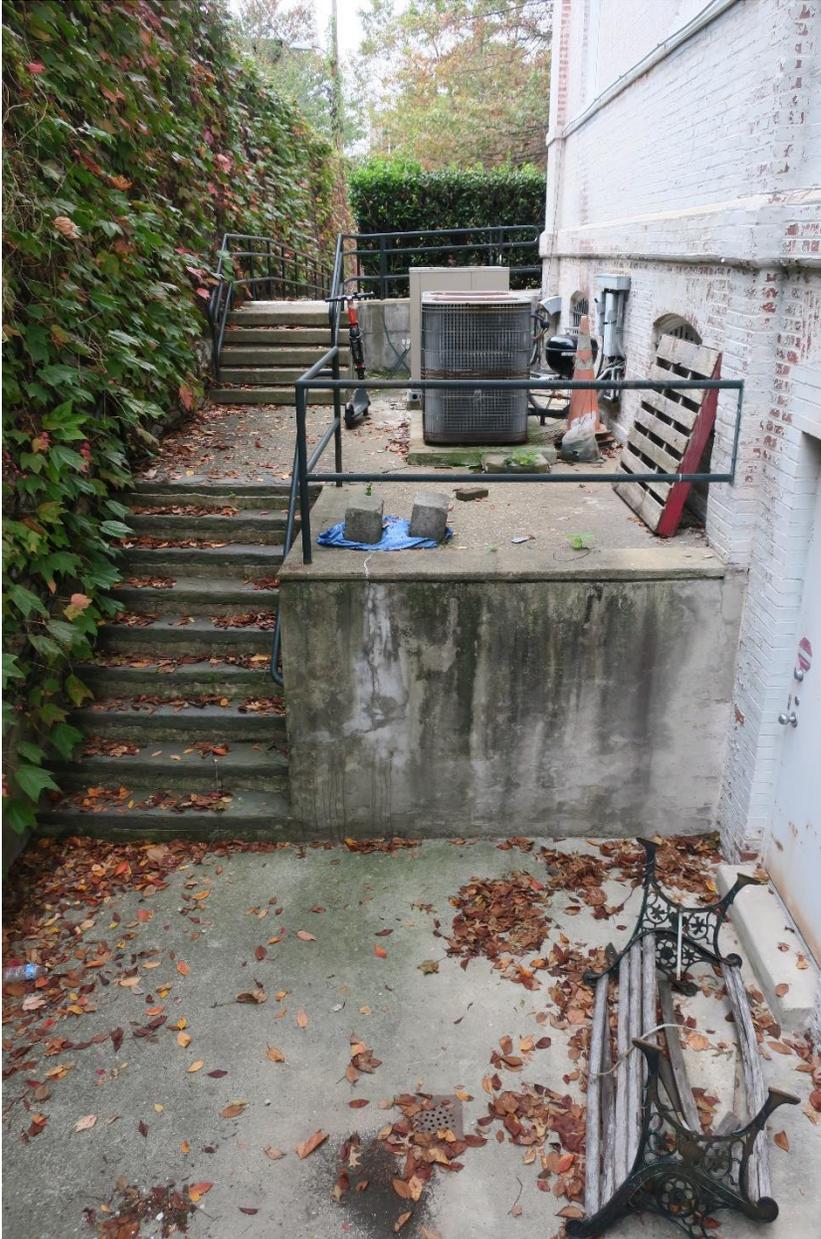


Photo 08: Site (south portion of property), looking west

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State



Photo 09: DC_440 R Street NW_0007.tif: East elevation, looking northwest

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State



Photo 10: DC_440 R Street NW_0008.tif: Entrance at east elevation, looking west

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State



Photo 11: Interior view of entrance hall, looking east to the lobby

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

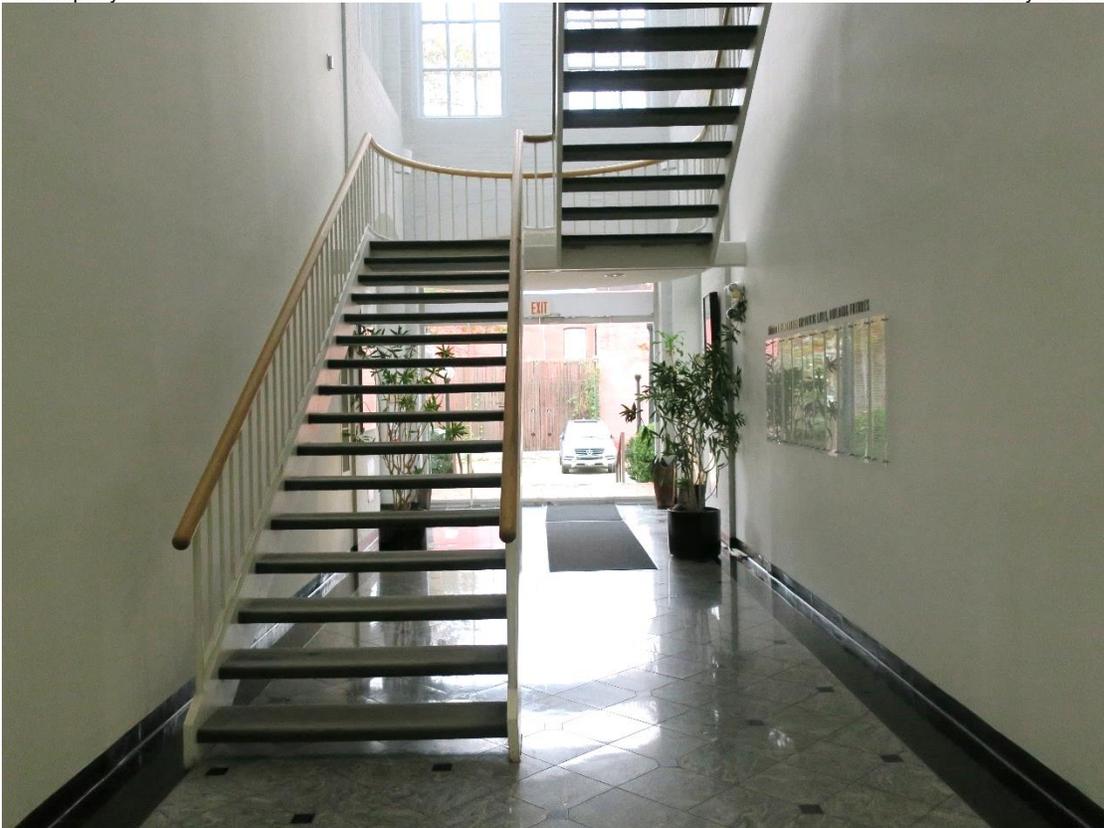


Photo 12: Interior view of entrance hall, looking west to the primary entrance

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

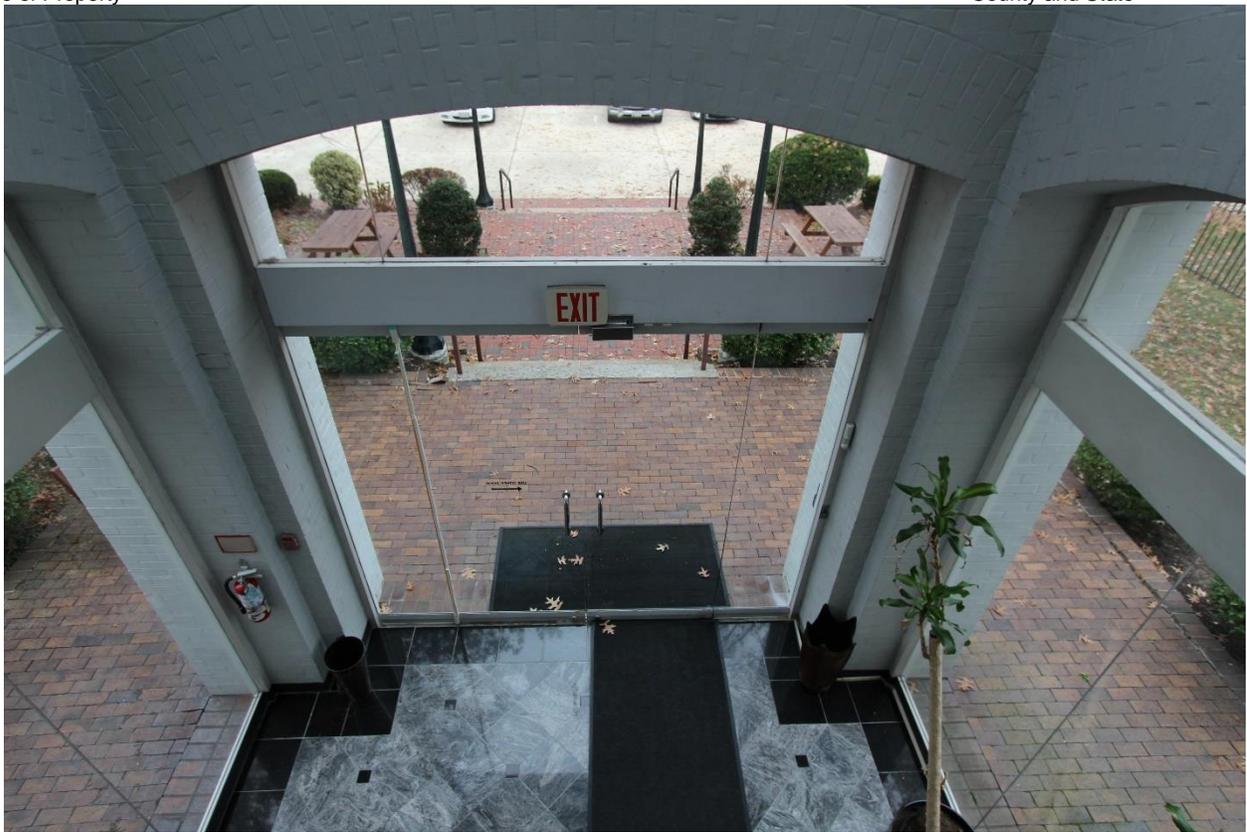


Photo 13: DC_440 R Street NW _0016.tif: Interior view of primary entrance, looking west

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State



Photo 14: Interior view of lobby, looking southwest

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State



Photo 15: Interior view of central skylight

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State



Photo 16: Interior view of east stairwell, looking east to egress doors

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State



Photo 17: Interior view of basement, looking south



Photo 18: Interior view of first-floor meeting room, looking southeast

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State



Photo 19: Interior view of east stairwell between the first and second floors, looking east

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State



Photo 20: Interior view of second-floor offices, looking south

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State



Photo 21: Interior view of second and third floors, looking northwest

Samuel F.B. Morse School
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State



Photo 22: Interior view of third floor, looking north

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.