NPS Form 10-900
OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

198

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.

RECEIVED 2280
MAR 24 2014
NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Spingarn Senior High School
Other names/site number: _____
Name of related multiple property listing:
Public School Buildings of Washington, D.C., 1862-1960
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing

2. Location

Street & number: 2500 Benning Road, NE
City or town: Washington, D.C. State: DC County: _____
Not For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐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 _X_ 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 _X_ 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

DAVID MALONEY DC SHPO 3/21/2014
Signature of certifying official/Title: **Date**

DC HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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

Signature of commenting official: **Date**

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

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

✓ entered in the National Register

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:) _____

for Edson N. Beall 5.12.14

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private:	☐
Public – Local	x
Public – State	☐
Public – Federal	☐

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s)	x
District	☐
Site	☐
Structure	☐
Object	☐

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		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.)
EDUCATION/School

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)
20th CENTURY REVIVALS/Colonial Revival

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)
Principal exterior materials of the property: _Brick_

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

Spingarn High School is located at 26th Street and Benning Road, NE in the Carver/Langston neighborhood of northeast Washington, D.C. The high school is an 8.71-acre part of a larger complex of public school buildings occupying an extensive site consisting of 27.25 acres of land overlooking a fairway of the Langston Golf Course and the Anacostia stream valley below. Spingarn occupies part of the same parcel of land as the Hugh M. Browne Junior High School (1932), Phelps Vocational School (1934) and Charles Young Public School (1937), all public school buildings constructed for African Americans during segregation. The parcel of land was formerly owned by the federal government (land was partly reclaimed from the Anacostia River) and was set aside as a school site in an exclusively African-American neighborhood. The National Register-listed Langston Terrace Dwellings are located immediately west of the school building, and part of the 18-hole Langston Golf Course, also listed in the National Register, is located to its east within Anacostia Park, along the west bank of the Anacostia River.

Spingarn High School is the first school building in the complex of four schools as approached from Benning Road. Built in 1950, the school (and its complex) occupies a commanding position atop the plateau overlooking the Anacostia River. The building is a large and stately, three-part Colonial Revival-style brick building with a modified H-shaped plan, formed by two

open courtyards located at the center of the two long wings, flanking a central pavilion. The building rises two principal stories atop a full ground floor, and although structurally of concrete, it is clad with red brick walls. The building is trimmed with wood around the doors and windows and at the cornice. Each of the building's wings creating the open-courtyard rectangle is covered by a hipped roof. The late use of the Colonial Revival style at Spingarn is appropriate as it relates to its older siblings, and it parallels the vocabulary of earlier high schools on the campus.

Narrative Description

Exterior Description

The imposing Colonial Revival-style, three-part brick school building atop its plateau is approached from the south from Benning Road revealing the building's south end elevation as the first public view. However, the building's east-facing elevation perpendicular to Benning Road is its principal façade and serves as the primary entrance to the school. This façade is divided into three parts consisting of a seven-bay-wide central pedimented pavilion and eleven-bay-long wings to either side. The central pavilion is brought forward from the side wings in two stages, and is characterized by five large, segmental-arched entry doors at the raised ground level of the building with two floors above, framed by giant-order pilasters suggesting a portico with a triangular pediment. The central pavilion is reached from the lower parking lot and ground level by two flanking flights of stairs leading to a broad landing/front courtyard at the front of the school. The stairs ascend to either side of a large brick retaining wall forming the base for the open court. A flagpole is located at the center of this retaining wall at the level of the landing.

A short flight of concrete stairs extending across the five center bays of the central pavilion leads from the open court to the entrance doors of the school. These entrance doors are tall, segmental-arched openings cut into the raised base level of the building which is delineated from the principal floors above by a broad, limestone watertable. The openings are wide enough for paired doors with glass transoms above. The solid metal doors are replacements, having replaced original raised panel, metal doors, as indicated in the original architectural drawings. The doors are deeply recessed into the brick wall with wood paneling in the side and top reveals. The segmental arches are formed by long and narrow gauged bricks with limestone keystones on-center. A narrow balcony rises immediately above these five central doors and is supported by oversized limestone brackets symmetrically spaced above and between the entry door openings. The stone brackets are scrolled and carved. The brick wall of this ground floor, between the doors is laid with recessed bricks every seventh course, giving the impression of a rusticated base.

The two stories above the entrance doors have five single windows symmetrically arranged and separated by giant order limestone pilasters. All of the window openings are framed with limestone sills and lintels with a central keystone. The windows have all been replaced with 12/12 double-hung sash that deviate from the original 8/12 configuration that is shown in the original drawings. The central window on the second story is longer than the flanking ones,

historically providing access to the narrow balcony. This window retains its original pair of 4-light transoms, but rather than a pair of multi-light doors beneath it, there is currently a boarded-up opening (not apparent if original casement doors are intact behind it). The concrete balcony is cantilevered, supported visually by the stone brackets with a wrought iron railing. At each of the openings, the railing has a cross-shaped pattern set within a circle and itself enclosed within a square, all in wrought iron. Between these cross-shaped patterns are straight rails interspersed with diamond-shaped decorative panels.

The limestone pilasters support the pavilion's limestone cornice, capped by a triangular pediment similarly of limestone. The cornice has a plain freize and architrave, incised in V-cut lettering with the name of the building: SPINGARN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL all in uppercase lettering. The hyphens to either side of the central section are slightly recessed from the center part, but still project from the side wings. They have single windows in all three floors, with those of the ground level having grates over them. Both the watertable separating the raised ground level from the upper stories and the cornice extend across the hyphens, as they do across the wings. The cornice in the hyphens is capped by a short parapet, as the pediment of the pavilion extends only across the five-bay central section.

The side wings extend eleven bays long to either side of the central pavilion. They are symmetrically arranged with single windows on all three floors and single doors located at the second bay from the outside edge of each wing at the base level. The watertable and corniceline continue across the wings from the central pavilion, just as the base offers recessed brick rows to imply rustication. The 12/12/ double-hung windows are all replacements, . The broad limestone frieze of the wings is capped by a projecting, molded cornice while the hipped roofs rise above.

The south end elevation faces Benning Road and is fifteen bays log, defined by single window openings on all three stories. The building topography has been excavated along this side so that the below-grade level is fully exposed, and the base level that is on-grade on the front elevation, rests atop the basement level of limestone. A sizeable greenhouse projects from the center of this end wall. It has limestone walls with a brick band at the upper level and is covered with a half-hipped, clear wire-glass roof. A large, segmental-arched opening is located on the south front, while a stair leads to a narrower passage providing access at the greenhouse roof level.

To either side of the greenhouse, the base of the main building is brick, and as elsewhere, has implied rustication, a limestone watertable between the base and upper stories, and a limestone cornice at the cap. The windows are all single, double-hung replacements with wood trim set into the brickwork. The window openings have concrete sills but no lintels.

The north end elevation is similarly 15 bays long with each bay being articulated by single double-hung windows. The base level here is a ground level, raised just slightly above a limestone foundation. The limestone watertable separating the base from the upper stories, and the limestone cornice both continue around the building to this side wall. The windows are all single, double-hung replacements with wood trim set into the brickwork; openings have concrete sills but no lintels.

The west (rear) elevation faces a grassy hillside and has a less orderly appearance that includes service infrastructure, characterized most notably by a tall brick cylindrical chimney. The elevation consists of three general parts including the end walls of a portion of the side wings with a tall, one-story gymnasium wing which is an extension of the center auditorium block. The side wings are covered with hipped roofs, while the gymnasium has a flat roof. A lower, one-story boiler room wing is located behind the eastern end wing with a tall brick chimney shaft tucked into the corner between this east end wing and the auditorium wing.

The end wings on this elevation have rusticated bases with the limestone watertable continuing around the wall to separate the base from the upper stories. Each of the three floors has single, double-hung replacement windows defining each of the eight bays. At the base level of the north and south wings, a double door in the second bay from the outside edge provides secondary entries into the building. Historically, these entries had paired wood doors, since replaced with solid metal ones. The door into the south wing is reached by a flight of stone stairs with iron railings set atop concrete base walls; the door in the north wing is accessed by a handicap access ramp.

The gymnasium wing is a one-story wing that is set upon an implied rusticated base of brick and covered with a flat roof. The windows, tall steel sash covered with grates, rest upon the limestone watertable and extend to just below the cornice line. A brick parapet rises slightly above the cornice.

The boiler room wing, tucked between the gymnasium wing and the north end wing is a much lower one-story building of brick with implied rustication. The two exposed walls have single window openings, now boarded up, and a single door on the north end. The roof is flat with vents atop it. The chimney is at the corner of the buildings rising well above the roofline of the school. It is set upon a square brick base, is constructed of radial brick, and has a cylindrical form which tapers as it rises. An enclosed brick addition abuts the base of the chimney and the auditorium, providing access to the roof of the service building.

Interior Description

The interior of Spingarn is arranged with parallel corridors running north and south at the front and rear of the building on either side of the central courtyards and with east-west corridors at the north and south ends intersecting them. The entry doors in the central pavilion open into a large vestibule that in turn opens into a lobby that offers, to either side, access to the front, north-south corridors, and straight ahead, entry to the auditorium. The north-south running corridors are double loaded with classrooms, offices and restrooms opening onto them. The inside rooms have windows opening onto the central open courts of each of the building's long wings. These front north-south corridors then intersect east-west corridors that run from the front of the building to the rear, with classrooms opening off of the corridor to the outside of the building. The corridors run along the interior wall of the wings, past the open courts, providing ample natural light to the corridors and classrooms. The east-west corridors are reached from the exterior by the single doors in the second bays at the end walls of the building's wings on both the east and west elevations.

Beyond the open courts towards the west rear of the building, these east-west corridors then intersect a second north-south corridor that runs along the rear of the building. This rear corridor has offices against the rear wall on one side and classrooms on the other. The classrooms, on the interior wall of the corridor look out to the open courts. The corridor extends past the courts and provides a connection between the auditorium in the front part of the central pavilion and the gymnasium wing that extends off the auditorium towards the west side.

The second and third floors are similarly arranged with parallel corridors running through the front and rear wings of the school and perpendicular ones running along either end wing. Unlike the first floor rooms that are a combination of offices and classrooms, the rooms on the upper floors are almost exclusively classrooms.

Integrity

The property retains high integrity. It is located in its original location and setting as part of a campus of four public school buildings overlooking the Anacostia River. It retains its original design, materials and craftsmanship with virtually no changes to the massing and details. The only addition of note on the exterior is a small extension atop the rear boiler room. The most significant change involves the replacement of windows and doors. On the interior, the school retains its original configuration of space in its hallways, classrooms, and in its large central auditorium and gymnasium, though certain interior finishes have been replaced. As for the grounds, there is modern fencing, some accessibility ramps, and additional paving. Across 26th Street from the east front of the school are a modern football field and additional parking.

Despite the loss of the original windows and doors, the building retains integrity of design, materials and workmanship. The high school is no longer a functioning school, yet it is still readily understood as a school, and thus retains its integrity of feeling and association.

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.)

- [x] 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.
- [x] 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

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)
EDUCATION
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance
1952-1960

Significant Dates
1952; 1954

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder
Merrell Coe, Municipal Architect

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.)

Spingarn Senior High School meets National Register Criteria A and C under the Multiple Property Document, *Public School Buildings of the District of Columbia, 1862-1960* with Architecture and Education as the Areas of Significance. Spingarn meets Criterion A for its important associations with segregation in the nation's capital. Spingarn was constructed in 1951-1952 to serve African American ("colored") students during the final period of school racial segregation in Washington, D.C. The school was, in fact, the *last* high school to be built for African American students in D.C. where the public schools followed a system of school segregation since 1862 when the city established a separate "Colored" school system. Before the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, the 1896 Supreme Court case, *Plessy v. Fergusson* sanctioned racial segregation in education and public facilities under color of state law, also known as the doctrine of separate but equal.

Spingarn was erected to relieve the overcrowding of the other segregated high schools and had been planned for that purpose since the late 1930s, even before the death of its namesake, educator and literary critic Joel Elias Spingarn, one of the first Jewish leaders of the NAACP. Material shortages because of World War II and the Korean War delayed its construction, while the desegregation lawsuits of the late 1940s and early 1950s likely encouraged the District to finally construct the building as a half measure to satisfy African American residents and keep alive a "separate-but-equal" regime in public accommodations. Two years after the school opened, the process of desegregation began. Spingarn was thus the last "black" high school, as it was also the first one built in 36 years. Its opening was a major event, drawing such national luminaries as W.E.B. Du Bois, Paul Robeson and John Hope Franklin.

Spingarn meets Criterion C as an example of a public school building and more particularly as the last of the Colonial Revival-style school buildings constructed in the District of Columbia. The building falls under the Multiple Property Document sub-type "The Public School Buildings of Municipal Architect Merrel Coe." Beginning in the second decade of the 20th century, and largely based upon influence by the Commission of Fine Arts, the city's Office of the Municipal Architect adopted the Colonial Revival style as the preferred style for public school buildings in the District. This red brick classicism prevailed throughout the mid-20th century. After World War II, however, and under the direction of Municipal Architect Merrel Coe, the District turned to a more functionalist, modern vocabulary, although the idea of a central entrance pavilion and portico was carried on in an "implied" manner in many of the modern schools of the 1940s and 1950s. Despite Coe's preference for a more modern design aesthetic, Coe employed the Colonial Revival-style form and vocabulary at Spingarn, most likely so that it would fit in sympathetically with the three other school buildings on the site.

In addition to being the last public school building designed in a Colonial Revival style, this project was one of the last products of the Office of the Municipal Architect, established in 1909, and also one of Merrel Coe's last schools, at least as the superintendent of its construction.

The Period of Significance for Spingarn Senior High School extends from 1952 when the school building opened until 1960, the end-date of the Period of Significance for the Multiple Property document. As the story of Spingarn is tied up with the history of the racial segregation and desegregation of public facilities, is it crucial to include the entire 1950s, the period of desegregation and of the consolidation and reorganization of the formerly dual school systems. An end-date of 1960 captures this era, and also coincides with the attendance of some of the school's most illustrious graduates, such as Elgin Baylor and Dave Bing, and Spotswood Bolling, the namesake of and plaintiff in the Supreme Court case *Bolling v. Sharpe*.

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

Education: Spingarn Senior High School is significant in the Area of Education as the last "Colored" public high school built in the District of Columbia before the Supreme Court decision of 1954 put an end to segregation in the public school system. Completed in 1952, Spingarn was built to serve the growing African American student population in the northeast section of the city. Upon its opening, the school offered a diversified curriculum in academic, business and shop subjects to meet the needs of students in that area. The opening of the high also greatly relieved over-crowding in the city's other three high schools for African Americans.

Spingarn Senior High School was named for Dr. Joel Elias Spingarn (1875-1939), a scholar of international reputation. He was awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by Columbia University in 1895 and served that institution for several years as Professor of Comparative Literature. He spent practically a quarter of a century as an officer in the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People. He was Chairman of the Board of Directors of that organization from 1913-1919, treasurer from 1919-1930 and served as president from 1930 until his death in 1939. He founded the Spingarn award in 1913, an award which has been bestowed annually since its establishment.

Spingarn High School was the last of four public school buildings to be constructed as part of a campus of school buildings on this parcel of land which had been set aside by 1931 specifically as a "school site." The idea to develop a "school site" began in 1927 when D.C. real estate developer Charles Sager commenced the construction of houses on land that stood above the newly reclaimed mud flats of the Anacostia River and directed their sales to African Americans. By 1931, Kingman Park consisted of 230 houses and 350 more were being planned.[1] To accommodate the increased numbers of African American students in northeast, and to fulfill a longstanding need to build more schools for the city's black population, the city established a 42 ½-acre school site near the Anacostia River, Benning Road and the Kingman Park neighborhood upon which it planned to build a "platoon" grade school, a junior high school, a high school and an athletic field and stadium. The first of the schools to be constructed was the Charles Young Public School. This school opened in October 1931 and was named for United States Army

[1] "750 Homes Planned for Kingman Park: C.D. Sager Acquires More Land for Colored Development," *The Washington Post*, February 15, 1931.

Colonel Charles E. Young, the highest ranking black officer in the Army up until his death in 1922. In 1932, Browne Junior High School was built and named for Hugh M. Browne, a Howard University professor and prominent educator. Browne Junior High School was the first junior high school for black students in Northeast D.C. In 1934, Phelps Vocational School was built on the site, but the city had not yet erected a senior high school as planned.

The new schools significantly boosted interest from homebuyers in the area. During the 1930s, house sales in Kingman Park and adjacent neighborhoods took off, primarily attracting purchase by middle-class African American families whose heads of household worked for the federal government. In 1935, immediately behind the school site, the Public Works Administration began construction of Langston Dwellings, a public housing complex designed in the International style in part to provide a "successful demonstration of the possibilities of...low-rent housing." Its construction, from 1935 to 1938, marked the beginning of the federal government's active involvement in the replacement of substandard alley dwellings that had long plagued Washington with a planned community specifically designed for needy black families. At its completion, Langston Dwellings was widely accepted and praised and is listed in the National Register. Development in this northeast section of the city, which was slow moving well into the 20th century, was taking off.

In 1939, engineer and civic leader Howard D. Woodson championed the construction of a high school at the site, noting that "A senior high school at the school center at Kingman Park would be a boon to about 1,000 pupils from the Northeast and Southeast who live east of Eighth Street and now attend high school in the Northwest, where all our senior high schools are grouped and also over-crowded."[2] The District had opened both Wilson High School and Anacostia Junior-Senior High Schools to white students in the 1930s, after a long hiatus of high school construction. Despite this plea and those of others, no high school would be constructed on the site for another decade.

Then, in 1949-1950, the city committed to build a senior high school on the "school site." Drawings of the new school were prepared in December 1949 by the Office of the Municipal Architect, under the supervision of Merrell Coe, and in January 1950, a contractor won the $2,877,700 low bid to construct the "new" Spingarn High School.[3] Construction was completed in 1952 and dedicated in December of that year.

The city's decision to build the school to educate African American students in the community was so significant and important that dignitaries from around the country came to Washington for the December 11, 1952 dedication. Principal speaker at the historic dedication was noted historian, Dr. John Hope Franklin, then a history professor at Howard University. Dr. Franklin addressed the ills of segregation during his keynote address. In attendance at the school's dedication ceremony, including honored guests, were Mrs. Edward Spingarn, wife of Joel E. Spingarn, and their son, Christopher Spingarn; noted historian and professor, Dr. W. E. B.

[2] Howard D. Woodson, Letter to the Editor, "Northeast," *The Washington Post,* January 15, 1939.
[3] "$2,877,700 Bid Wins Contract for New Spingarn High School," *The Washington Post,* January 27, 1950.

Dubois; opera singer and actor, Paul Robeson; Mrs. Charles Drew, widow of Dr. Charles Drew; and Mrs. Martha K. Simpson, president of the Kingman Park Civic Association.

Letters and telegrams were sent by Spingarn medalist and other well-wishers, including Walter White, former NAACP staffer, who became an anti-lynching and fair employment advocate; Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, Judge William H. Hastie, an educator, lawyer, judge, and the first African American Governor of the United States Virgin Islands; Dr. Ralph Bunche, a political scientist, diplomat and 1950 Nobel Prize recipient; Mrs. Mary Bethune, founder of National Council of Negro Woman, and Bethune-Cookman College; Dr. Mordecai Johnson, the first African American president of Howard University. Dr. Purvis J. Williams was appointed by the District of Columbia School board as the first principal of Spingarn High School.

In May 1954, less than two years after the opening of Spingarn, the Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education* ended segregation in public schools. By July 1, the city was re-zoned and new integrated boundaries for each school level were submitted to the Board of Education. The difficult task of integrating the administrative and supervisory structure of the schools with dual philosophies, methods of control, teaching practices, pupil achievement measurement, and record-keeping was begun. By the fall of 1954 the dual segregated system was transformed into a single integrated system.

Architecture: Spingarn High School is significant in the area of Architecture as the city's last public school building to be executed in a traditional red brick Colonial Revival style of architecture. The high school was constructed in 1950-1952 under the Office of Municipal Architect Merrel Coe (1946-1954). During the 19-teens through the 1930s, the Office of Municipal Architect with the influence of the Commission of Fine Arts had essentially adopted the Colonial Revival style for the city's public school buildings. Municipal Architect Albert Harris (1921-1934) embraced the style, employing it on all varieties of school forms that he developed while Municipal Architect. His successor Nathan Wyeth (1934-1946) continued to design in the Colonial Revival style during the 1930s, but began in the 1940s to transition away from the historically derived and established style to a more streamlined Moderne aesthetic. Merrel Coe (1946-1954) is credited with moving school design toward a more functional, modern style. His public school buildings were generally flat-roofed reinforced concrete structures with brick-faced concrete block and glass curtain wall construction. Coe used architectural concrete in the style of John Earley, steel awning sash grouped in classroom bays, and other new materials to enrich school building facades. Coe's designs were functional, where different activities were placed in separate building blocks easily identified on the exterior. Coe's design for Spingarn High School deviated from this modern aesthetic and returned to the Colonial Revival style in public school buildings, making it not only Coe's only Colonial Revival-style building, but the only post-World War II public school building to be executed in the style.

Coe's choice of the Colonial Revival style for Spingarn is not documented, but was likely based on the history of the site and Spingarn's relationship to the other school buildings forming the campus. The three other schools were all built in the 1930s and were all red brick schools designed in the Colonial Revival style. Although Spingarn was not built in the 1930s, it had

been the city's intention at that time to do so. When construction finally went forward 20 years later, Coe designed the school to fit in architecturally with the others and all appear to be part of a cohesive campus collection. Coe modeled the school's plan—an H-shaped plan with interior courtyards and central auditorium and rear gymnasium—upon those developed for high schools by his predecessor Nathan Wyeth in 1936.

Although not emblematic of Coe's work as Municipal Architect, Spingarn High School meets the registration requirements for the property sub-type: The Office of Municipal Architect Merrel Coe (1946-1954) in the Multiple Property Document *Public School Buildings of Washington, D.C.: 1862-1962,* as a notable and deliberate exception to his work and to the school's association with desegregation of the public school system in Washington, D.C.

Merrell Coe (1896 – 1965)

Merrell Abraham Coe was born in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, on October 19, 1896, and died in Clearwater, Florida, on February 16, 1965. His family moved to Lincoln, Nebraska, where his father Cland Coe worked as a grocer and Coe completed just one year of high school. Yet, between July 1915 and July 1917 Coe worked as a draftsman for the Lincoln Telephone and Telegraph Company before a two-year stint in the Navy. After four months as a draftsman in a Lincoln architectural firm, Coe moved to Washington, D.C. where he was employed by the firm of Donn & Deming from November 1919 until March 1920 and again from March 1921 to March 1922. In the interim, Coe worked as an architectural draftsman for Zink-Sparklin from April 1920 until February 1921; in January 1921 the firm placed second in the competition for the Court of Honor and viewing stands for President Clarence Harding's inauguration. Coe returned to Nebraska in April 1922 where he was in charge of all architectural work of the C.H. Larson & Company architecture and engineering firm until May 1923. During this period Coe began a lengthy process of gaining academic credentials in architecture. In 1919 he began the International Correspondence School's four-year home-study course in architecture which he completed in 1923.

When Coe returned to Washington in June 1923 he went to work for the Municipal Architect's office as a senior architectural draftsman, a position he held until he was hired in June 1925 by the Washington office of Voorhees, Gmelin and Walker in the same position until January 1928. The New York firm opened a Washington office when they became the architects for the Chesapeake & Potomac Telephone Company. While holding these positions, Coe moved forward with his formal education. In 1924 he entered the Emerson Institute, a college preparatory school with both day and evening classes, to earn a high school diploma. A year after graduation in 1926, Coe was admitted to George Washington University's architectural program; he completed eighteen months of course work. A base built on practical experience before supplementing it with academic training was not uncommon in the early twentieth century, but it was unusual that such a route resulted in as much professional success as Coe achieved.

When Coe rejoined the Municipal Architect's office in 1928 it was as an associate architect; two years later he was appointed chief of the architectural division and by 1934 was classified as a senior architect "with full responsibility for the design and planning all projects with nominal

supervision by the Municipal Architect" (Nathan Wyeth). One obituary claimed he designed Wilson, Roosevelt, and Coolidge High Schools. Four years later, under a Public Works Administration program to provide architects with work, Coe was appointed the coordinator between the District government and the several Washington firms hired to make designs and draw up specifications for some of the city's buildings built under the federal program. In 1940 he was designated to be the acting municipal architect when Municipal Architect Nathan Wyeth was absent. During the World War II Coe was on active duty as a Navy commander in the Civil Engineer Corps.

Coe accompanied Wyeth to the latter's last meeting of the Commission of Fine Arts on May 14, 1946, at which they presented designs for five schools. At the commission's next meeting on June 21, Coe, as acting municipal architect, submitted designs for two additional junior high schools, Kelly Miller for black students in Tenleytown and Sousa for white students in Anacostia. Although somewhat modern in design, Kelly Miller still retained many vestiges of the Colonial Revival traditions adhered to by the municipal architect's office since the early 1900s. Sousa, on the other hand, was resolutely modernist, the three stories of one end of its entrance wing a broad semicircle marked by ribbon windows. With one exception, Coe designs for schools were modernist in style and were functional and utilitarian, because, the architect asserted, the savings of one-sixteenth of the cost of those funded by Congress in 1947 encouraged the legislators to fund sixteen buildings in 1948. Coe's cost-cutting measures included a minimum of trim, concrete instead of terrazzo floors in corridors, and less expensive light-colored pressed brick and plaster walls. (WP, 8/23/1947, p. B1) Douglass Junior High School (1950) in Southeast for black students was one of Coe's best modern school designs, low and horizontal with wide expanses of windows. Spingarn High School in northeast, built to relieve overcrowding in schools for black students, was designed to be Colonial Revival in style at a cost of $3.6 million, "the last word in high school planning…and the first public school building built in Washington since the war to have prewar finishes such a corridor wainscoting and terrazzo floors in corridors." (WP, 11/23/1949)

Aside from his school designs, Coe's largest project was a 125-bed pediatrics building at the Gallinger Hospital complex for crippled children, designed in 1948 as a modernist block. The simple but elegant treatment of its exterior brickwork marks Coe's functionalist aesthetic at work in his design for the Cleveland Park Library (1952-53). In 1953 the Office of the Municipal Architect was abolished to be replaced by the Office of Design & Engineering under the Department of Buildings and Grounds. Coe held the position of supervising architect in the Office of Design and Engineering until his retirement to Florida in 1956.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

"Apart but Feeling Equal- To Spingarn Alumni, Brown Ruling In 54 Brought Mostly Ambivalence," *Washington Post*, 19 June 2004, p 8

"Dave Bing honored as 'pride' of group," *Washington Afro-American*, 24 July 1982.

"Dr. Williams is Named As First Principal of New Spingarn High," *Times Herald*, 19 June 1952.

"Final Plans Approved for Spingarn School Costing $3,600,000," *Evening Star*, 5 November 1944.

Fitzpatrick, Sandra and Maria R. Goodwin, *The Guide to Black Washington* (Hippocrene Books, New York, (1993).

"Impressive Rites Mark Dedication at Spingarn," *Washington Afro-American*, 19 December 1953.

"New Spingarn High Approved After Tour by Board Group, *Washington Post*, 25 June 1952, p.23.

"Segregation Rapped at Spingarn Dedication," *Evening Star*, 12 December 1953.

"Spingarn Cost Set at $2,000 a Pupil with Roof Built to Last 100 Years," *Washington Post*, 13 May 1953, p. 27.

"Spingarn Name for New School Lauded," *Washington Tribune*, 17 May 1941.

"Spingarn, Newest High School, Mirrors Changing Community," *Washington Post*, 19 May 1957.

Whiffen, Marcus. *American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to Styles* (M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, 1969)

"750 Homes Planned for Kingman Park," *Washington Post*, 15 February 1931, p. R1.

"1,200 Attend Dedication of Spingarn High School," *Times Herald*, 12 December 1953.

"$2,877,700 Bid Wins Contract for New Spingarn High School," *Washington Post*, 27 January 1950

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

__X__ State Historic Preservation Office
____ Other State agency
____ Federal agency
____ Local government
____ University
____ Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 8.71 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates
Datum if other than WGS84:_____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 38.898017 Longitude:-76.971039
2. Latitude: Longitude:
3. Latitude: Longitude:
4. Latitude: Longitude:

Or
UTM References
Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☐ NAD 1983

1. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
2. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
3. Zone:	Easting:	Northing:
4. Zone:	Easting :	Northing:

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

Spingarn Senior High School is located at 2500 Benning Road, NE and occupies 8.71 acres of the 27.25-acre Parcel 160/45. The boundaries have been drawn to include the school building and its immediate site. The boundaries are bounded on the south by Benning Road, NE, on the north by the driveway separating Spingarn High School from Charles Young School, on the east by 26th Street, NE, and on the west by the western edge of parcel 160/45. The western edge of the parcel has a fence along the property line separating the school site from the neighboring Langston Terrace Dwellings.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries include that part of the historic "school site" parcel dedicated to Spingarn High School, consisting of 8.71 acres. The parcel in its entirety includes four school buildings and consists of 27.25 acres.

---

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Frazer Walton, Jr. Pres., and Veronica E. Raglin, Sec.
organization: Kingman Park Civic Association
street & number: 1913 D Street, NE and 408 21st Street, NE
city or town: Washington, D.C. state: _____ zip code: 20002
e-mail _____
telephone: 202 398-8920 or 396-7653
date: March 2014

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.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Spingarn Senior High School

City or Vicinity: Washington, D.C.

County: State:

Photographer: Kim Williams

Date Photographed: March 2014

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

View looking northwest at south and east elevations
1 of 14

View looking northwest showing east elevation
2 of 14

View looking west showing east façade
3 of 14

View looking northwest showing center pavilion of east facade
4 of 14

View looking west showing center doors on center pavilion, east facade
5 of 14

Detail of brackets supporting balcony on east facade
6 of 14

View looking southwest showing north and east elevations
7 of 14

View looking southeast showing north and west elevations
8 of 14

View looking east showing north elevation
9 of 14

View looking east showing northern end of west elevation
10 of 14

View looking southeast showing gymnasium wing on west elevation
11 of 14

View looking northwest showing gymnasium wing on west elevation
12 of 14

View looking east showing south and west elevations
13 of 14

View looking east from east front of school looking across Anacostia River with Benning Road Bridge at right of photo.
14 of 14

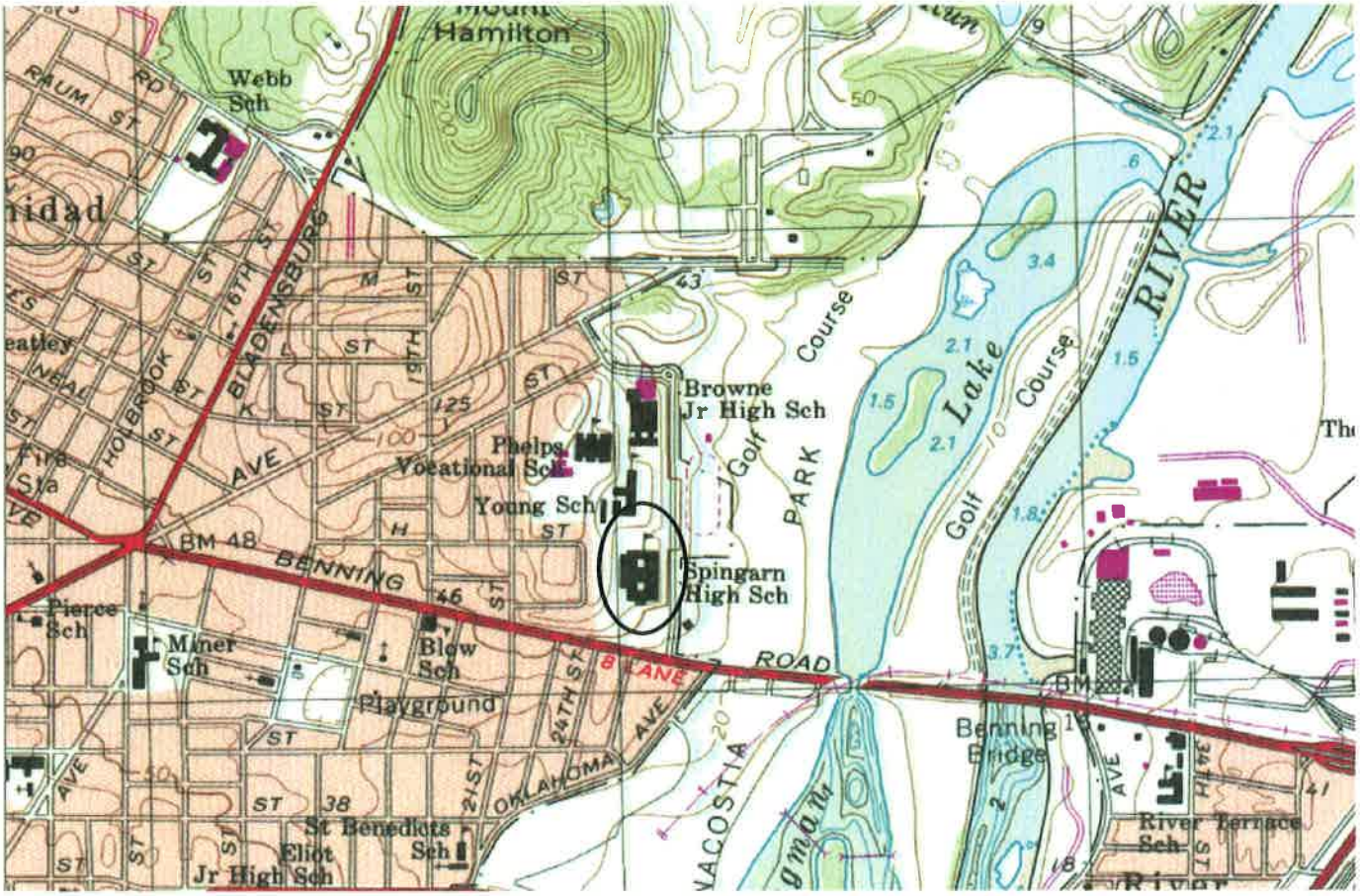
Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Spingarn Senior High School
Name of Property
Washington, D.C.
County and State
Public School Buildings of the District of Columbia, 1862-1962
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Maps and Images Page 1



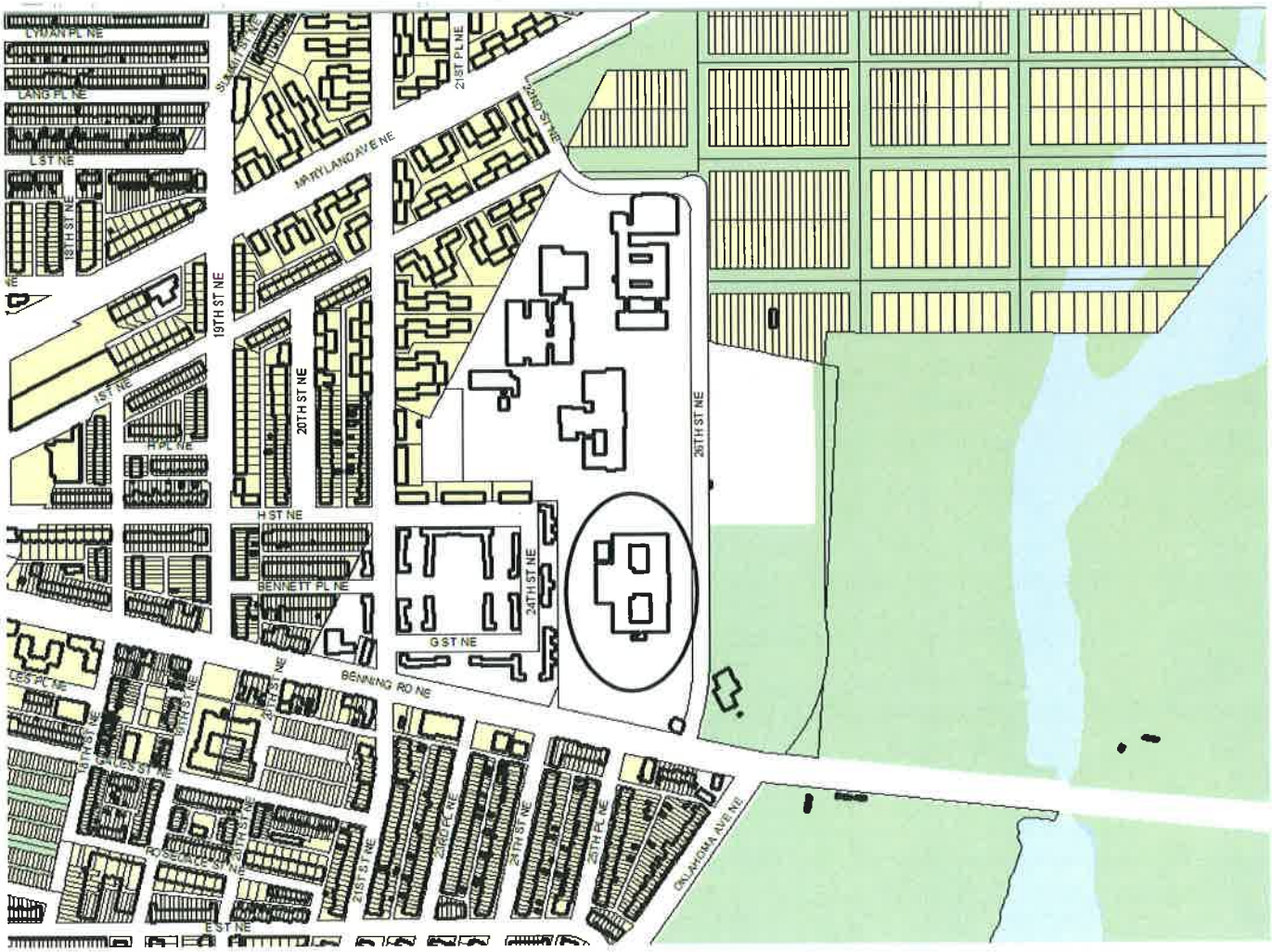
Spingarn Senior High School
2500 Benning Road, NE
(USGS Quad Washington East)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Spingarn Senior High School
Name of Property
Washington, D.C.
County and State
Public School Buildings of the District of Columbia, 1862-1962
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Maps and Images Page 2



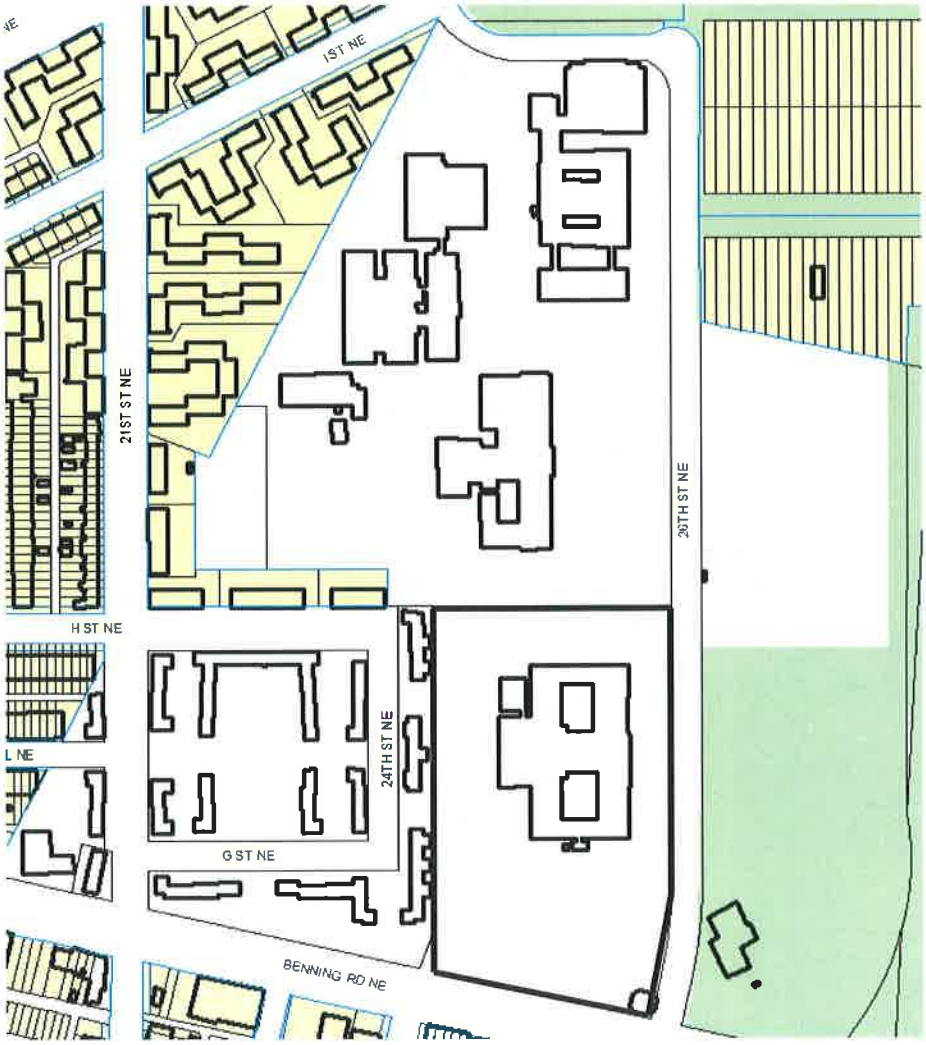
Spingarn Senior High School Site Map
(District of Columbia Geographic Information System/DC Office of Planning)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Spingarn Senior High School
Name of Property
Washington, D.C.
County and State
Public School Buildings of the District of Columbia, 1862-1962
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Maps and Images Page 3



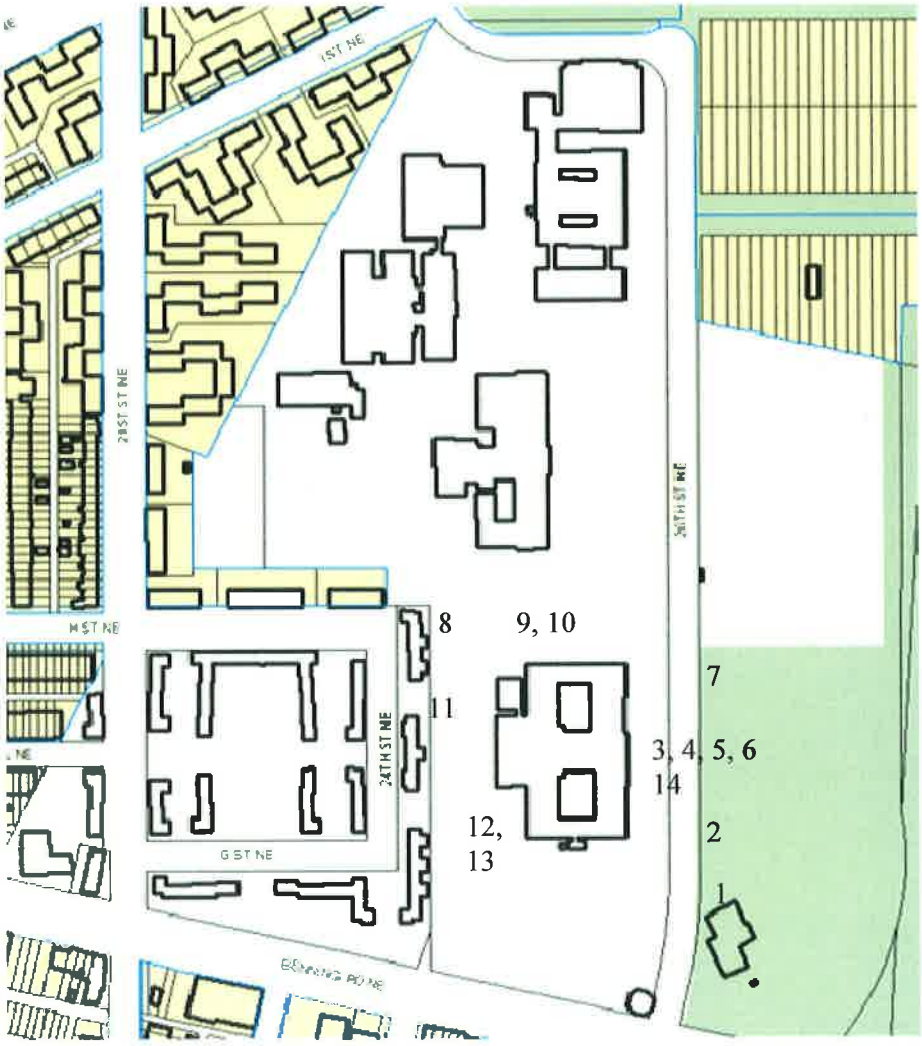
Spingarn Senior High School showing National Register Boundaries
2500 Benning Road, NE
(From DC GIS)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Spingarn Senior High School
Name of Property
Washington, D.C.
County and State
Public School Buildings of the District of Columbia, 1862-1962
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Maps and Images Page 4



Spingarn Senior High School showing National Register Boundaries
Key to Photographs
(From DC GIS)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Spingarn Senior High School
Name of Property
Washington, D.C.
County and State
Public School Buildings of the District of Columbia, 1862-1962
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Maps and Images Page 5

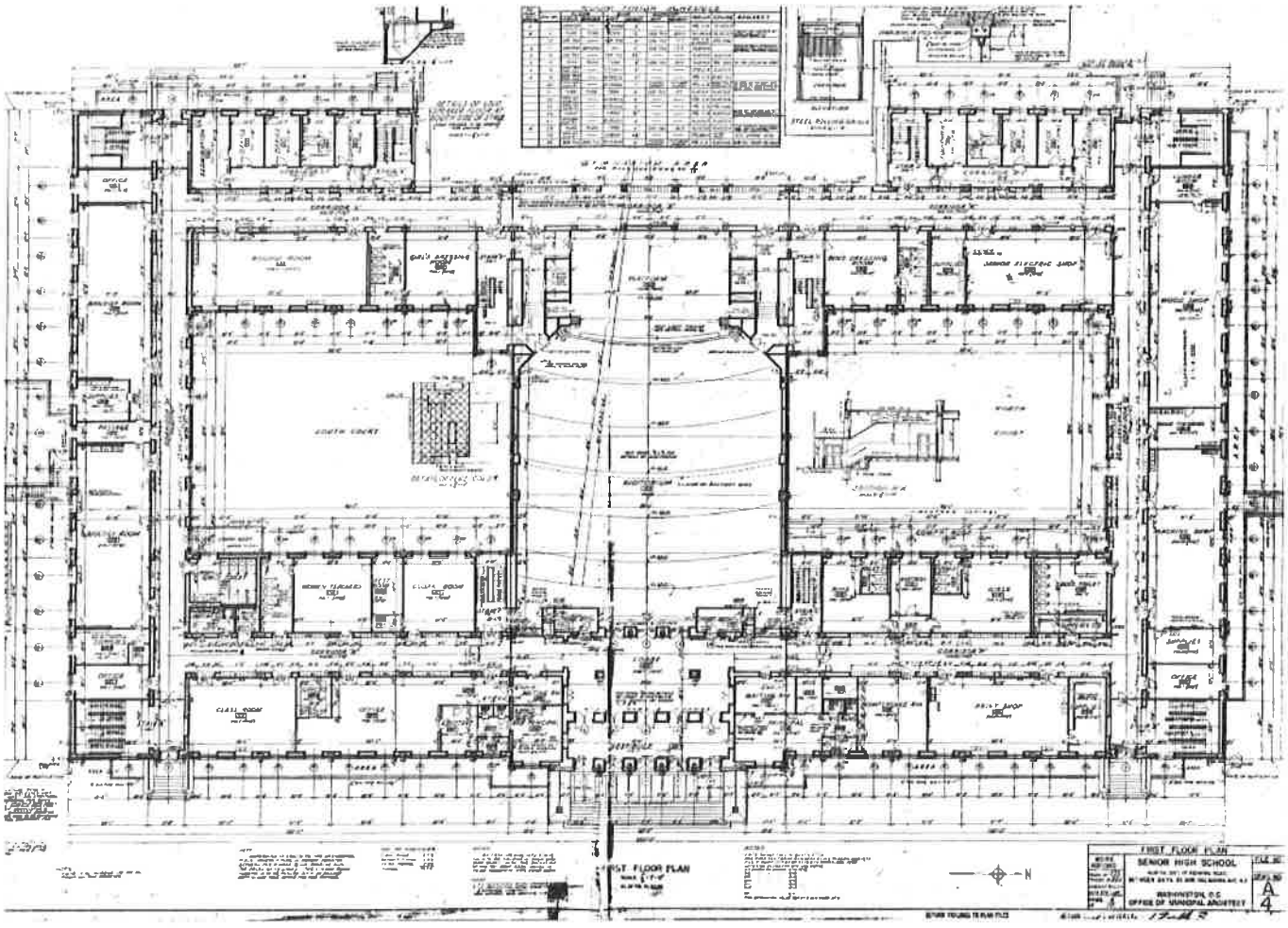
Spingarn Senior High School
Baist Real Estate Atlas, 1959, Volume 4, Plate 12

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Spingarn Senior High School
Name of Property
Washington, D.C.
County and State
Public School Buildings of the District of Columbia, 1862-1962
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Maps and Images Page 6



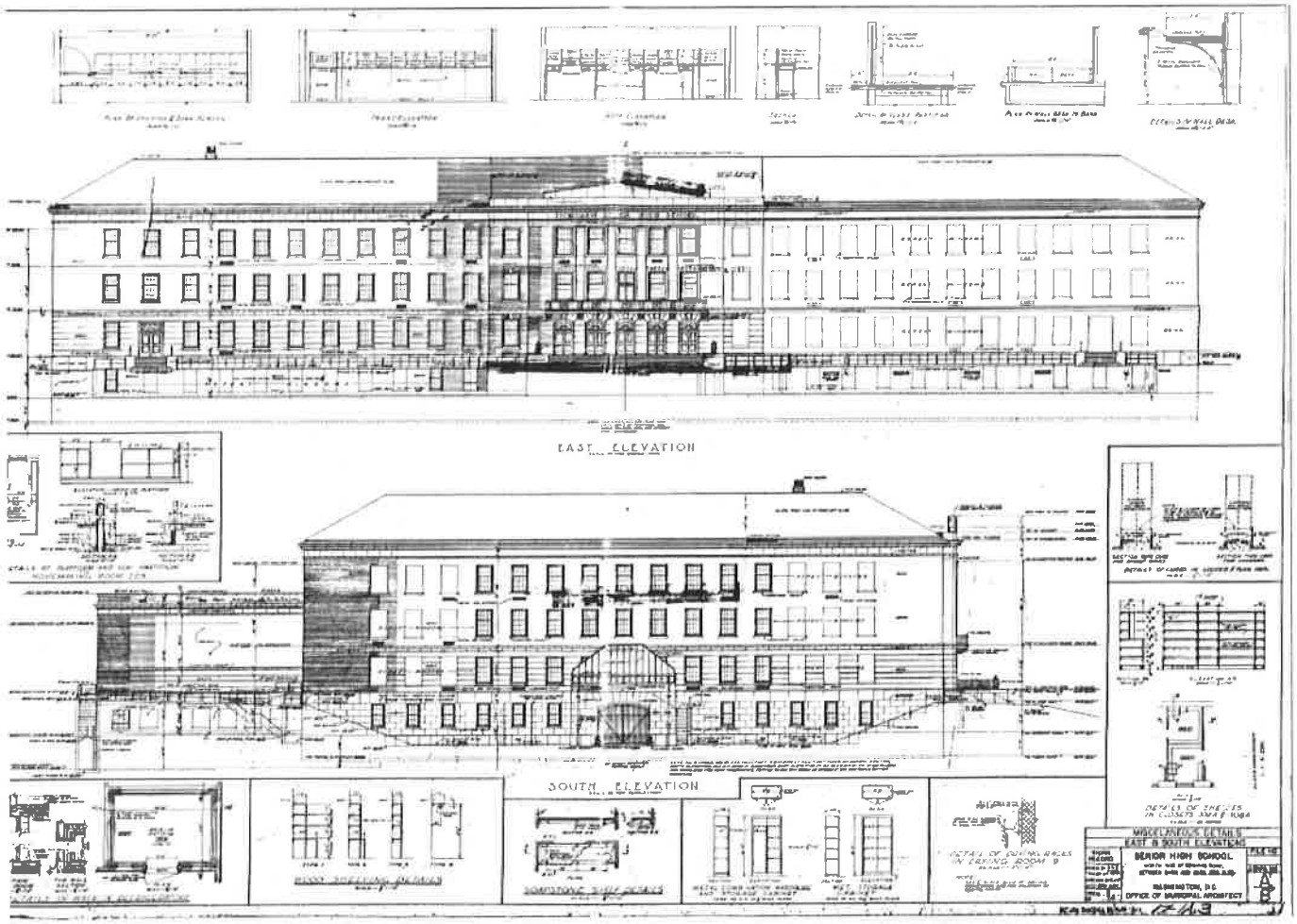
Spingarn Senior High School
First Floor Plan, Office of the Municipal Architect, 1949
(District of Columbia Department of General Services)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Spingarn Senior High School
Name of Property
Washington, D.C.
County and State
Public School Buildings of the District of Columbia, 1862-1962
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Maps and Images Page 7



Spingarn Senior High School
Elevation Drawings, Office of the Municipal Architects,1949
(District of Columbia Department of General Services)

JOEL ELIAS SPINGARN
SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

SPINCARN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

SPINGARN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

FALLOUT SHELTER