



HUNTERSVILLE ROSENWALD SCHOOL LOCAL LANDMARK REPORT

508 Dellwood Drive
Huntersville, NC 28078

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission
Local Landmark Designation Report
Prepared by Gate City Preservation L.L.C.

July 2021

Charlotte-Mecklenburg

Historic Landmarks Commission

HISTORIC NAME(S) OF PROPERTY

- The Huntersville Rosenwald School
- Huntersville Colored School
- Huntersville Negro School
- Dellwood Center
- The Little School

ADDRESS OF PROPERTY

- 508 Dellwood Drive, Huntersville, NC 28078

PARCEL ID #: 01908102

DEED BOOK & PAGE: 24027, 256-259

ZONING

Amount of land/acreage to be designated

2.787 acres

Interior to be designated

☐ Yes ☒ No

Property Owner's Address:

The Town of Huntersville

P.O. Box 664

Huntersville, NC 28070

Applicant's Address:

Gate City Preservation L.L.C.

211 Tate Street

Greensboro, North Carolina 27403

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I. Abstract

Statement of Significance

Jim Crow laws and segregationist policies of the early 20th century intentionally created vast disparities in educational opportunities for African American students in the United States. When schools were available for African American students, they were often inferior and lacked services, creating roadblocks for social mobility and equal opportunity. Rosenwald Schools were a product of one of the most unique and successful examples of a private and public partnership in the United States to combat educational inequalities. From the 1910s through the 1930s, the Julius Rosenwald Fund aided in the construction of over 800 public schools for African American students in North Carolina. Mecklenburg County boasted 26 of these educational institutions, one of which was the Huntersville Rosenwald School.

The Huntersville Rosenwald School, located at 508 Dellwood Drive, known as “the little school” by former students and neighbors, is one of six of surviving Rosenwald schools in the state of North Carolina. Rosenwald Schools were not only a symbol of resistance to segregation, but also a grassroots act to challenge Jim Crow laws and white supremacy.¹ The Huntersville Rosenwald School is locally **historically significant** because it serves as an important reminder to an early era of rural African American education and race relations in Mecklenburg County. Its period of significance ranges from its date of construction in 1920 to its last year of use as a school in 1958. After the school closed, the building was used as a community center that served Pottstown and surrounding neighborhoods in northern Mecklenburg County. Throughout its 96-year history, the building had been an important gathering place for the African American community in Huntersville.

Archaeological Comments

No known archaeological features are present at this time.

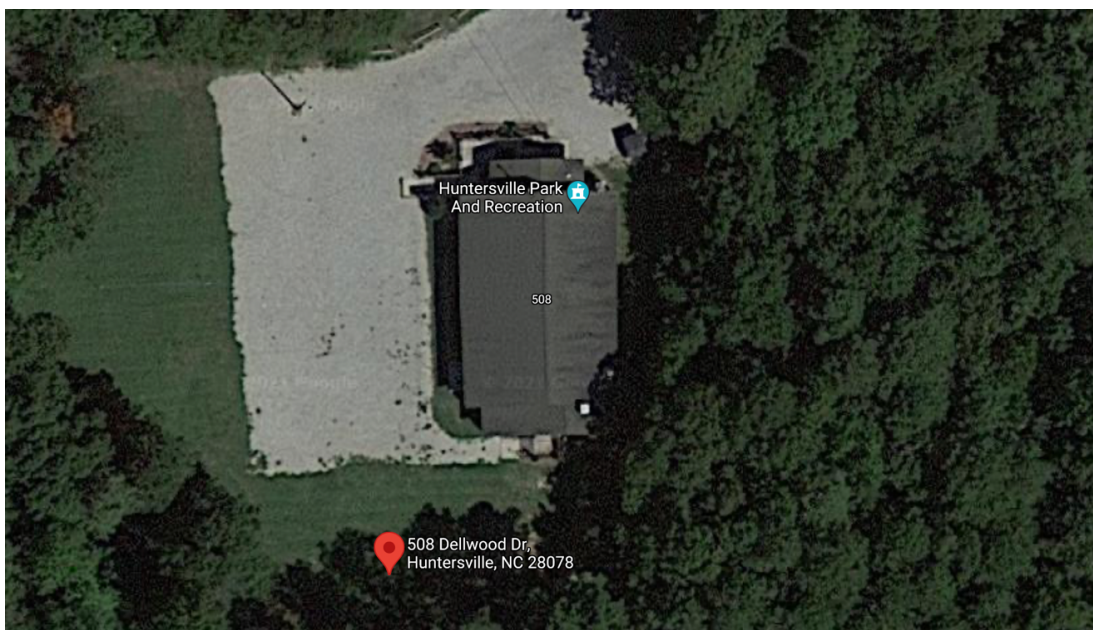
Integrity Statement

- **Location:** The Huntersville Rosenwald School remains in its original location on a forested lot. It is surrounded by a residential neighborhood from the same period of significance.
- **Design:** Although the building retains its form and some historical materials, it has been significantly altered. It is clad in German siding (some infilled and some original), many of the window openings have been closed, and non-contributing doors have been installed. The soffits appear to be plywood. The building’s main entrance also seems to have changed from its southern elevation to its northern elevation.
- **Setting:** Trees around the building have matured, but the lot itself has remained relatively unchanged since its original construction.
- **Workmanship:** The workmanship of the building is difficult to assess because of significant alterations to the building.
- **Materials:** Like workmanship, the materials of the building are difficult to determine because of extensive alterations.
- **Feeling:** Although the building has been altered, the feeling remains. The neighborhood still feels a strong connection to the building as “the little school,” and overall, its form has remained unchanged. When former students visit the structure, they still feel a strong sense of place.
- **Association:** The building is now used as a community center rather than a school.

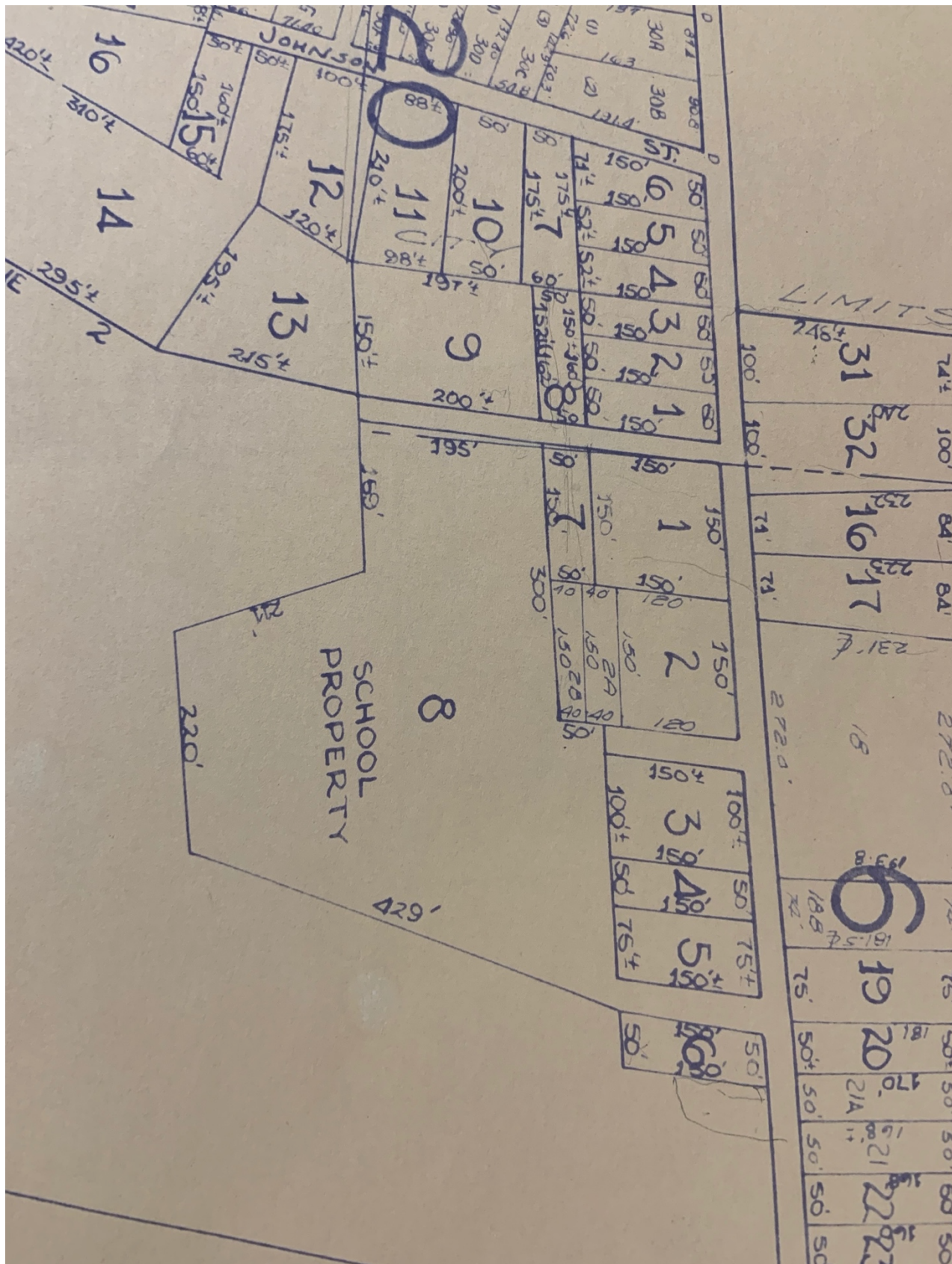
¹ “The Rosenwald Schools: A Story of How Black Communities Across the American South Took Education into Their Own Hands,” *National Trust for Historic Preservation*, <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=7541c163fb20486598969c7acb559663>.

Proposed Boundary Justification

The proposed boundary for local landmark designation is the building's 2.787 acre parcel.

II. Maps and Floor Plans***Mecklenburg County Tax Map******Aerial Map***

Huntersville Tax Map 1952 (#8)



A map of the Mecklenburg area. The word "MECKLENBURG" is written in large green letters in the center. A dashed line runs diagonally from the bottom left towards the top right. To the left of this line, there are several small white building icons. One building is labeled "MK2286 EspyAlexander House 2002" with a green square icon. Another building is labeled "MK1345 Huntersville Rosenwald School" with an orange square icon. To the right of the dashed line, there are more white building icons. One building is labeled "MK2284 Saint Phillip Baptist Church" with an orange square icon. A road labeled "Dellwood Dr" runs diagonally from the top left towards the bottom right. Another road labeled "Serenity St" runs horizontally across the bottom right. There are also some numbers like "799", "13404", "13412", and "11600" near the roads.

[illegible]

III. Architectural Assessment

Architectural Importance

Between 1918 and 1927, 26 Rosenwald schools were built in Mecklenburg County. Architecturally, all Rosenwald Schools were designed as mid-size facilities with an auditorium which also served as a community center. Each school had to conform to specific design guidelines. All were frame construction, typically accommodating one to four classrooms, with large and numerous windows for ample light and ventilation, important considerations during the Progressive Era. Along with an auditorium or meeting space, there was typically an industrial room for courses in the practical arts and, in many of the rural schools, space was allocated for gardening. The Huntersville Rosenwald School has been significantly altered, however its form, location, feeling, and local historical significance remain.

Architectural Context

In the state of North Carolina, 39 extant Rosenwald Schools are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.² To view an interactive map of Rosenwald Schools in North Carolina, visit [NC SHPO ArcGIS](https://www.ncdcr.gov/about/history/division-historical-resources/nc-state-historic-preservation-office/architectural-13). Extant Rosenwald Schools in Mecklenburg County are Billingsville School in Charlotte (National Register), Caldwell Rosenwald School in Lemley Township, Huntersville Rosenwald School, McClintock School in Steele Creek, Rockwell School in Newell (Study List), and Smithville School in Cornelius. Of the twenty-six Rosenwald schools built in Mecklenburg County, the oldest surviving example is Rockwell School in Newell and the largest is McClintock School in Steele Creek township. Two other extant Rosenwald Schools, the Billingsville School (listed on the National Register of Historic Places) and the Rosenwald school in Matthews were both given brick veneers. Although there are six Rosenwald schools still extant in Mecklenburg County, some with higher architectural integrity than the Huntersville Rosenwald School, the historical impact of these institutions are so significant that all extant properties qualify for designation.

Architectural Description

Setting

The Huntersville Rosenwald School is located down a long gravel driveway and situated on a forested lot. Tall trees shield it from newer construction, contributing to the feeling of the property (Fig. 1). A maintained grassy lot and newer tree plantings surround the property.

Front (North) Elevation

The Huntersville Rosenwald School is frame construction. Over time, the property has been significantly altered. A rectangular block with two front-facing gables to the north and south, make up the main block of the building. Two front-facing gable additions extend from the front (north) and rear (south) elevations. The entrance into the building is located on the north facade, the shorter side of the structure (Fig. 2). The school is covered in German siding. Its soffit is composed of a material that appears to be plywood (Fig. 8-9, 11). The front (north) elevation of the Huntersville Rosenwald School is a one-level, two-bay wide facade with two front-facing gables. The brick foundation has been painted gray (Fig. 10). A vent is located in the center of each gable. The roof is constructed of asphalt shingle. An elongated metal chimney vent protrudes from

² "Rosenwald Schools," North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

<<https://www.ncdcr.gov/about/history/division-historical-resources/nc-state-historic-preservation-office/architectural-13>>.

Accessed June, 29, 2021.

the west side of the front-facing gable extension. On this elevation there is a single entrance door, which is a modern replacement with no lights and a metal door handle (Fig. 7). On this elevation there is a very large, modern ramp constructed of pressure-treated pine to accommodate wheelchair accessibility.

Side (West) Elevation

The side (west) elevation of the school has three sets of tall windows, one of the architectural features found in most Rosenwald Schools (Fig. 3). The window configuration consists of four openings, two elongated vertical rectangles made up of three lights and two one-light squares above each vertical window column (Fig. 6). Other than the windows, the rest of this elevation has been enclosed by siding.

Rear (South) Elevation

Similar to the front (north) elevation of the school, a front-facing gable addition extends from the back of the main block (Fig. 4). This elevation has one modern metal door with no lights and a metal door handle. On this block, a window has been enclosed by vinyl siding. There is a small crawl space door in the brick foundation and a vent in the gable.

Side (East) Elevation

On the side (east) elevation there is evidence of larger windows that have been enclosed by siding and replaced by six smaller, square windows (Fig. 5). It appears that there were larger, vertical windows on this elevation originally, likely similar to the massing of the windows on the west elevation.

IV. Historical

Rosenwald Schools in North Carolina

Julius Rosenwald, president of Sears, Roebuck and Company became interested in the possibility of funding Black education after reading the autobiography *Up From Slavery* by Tuskegee Institute founded Booker T. Washington in 1911. Booker T. Washington had conceived the idea of enhancing educational institutions for African American students with his staff at the Tuskegee Institute in the early 1900s through his Macon County Project, widely considered a precursor to Rosenwald Schools. Recognized as one of the nation's leading philanthropists, Julius Rosenwald supported a variety of public services. After meeting Washington, Rosenwald set his sights on a large-scale initiative to construct Black public schools across the country and set up the Rosenwald Fund to accomplish this. The relationship with Rosenwald gave him the resources to do so. In its first decade, the Rosenwald Fund spent over \$3,000,000 on rural school construction.³ The Rosenwald Fund was one of the most successful and innovative partnerships between private financiers and public education initiatives at the time. Rosenwald sought to create more opportunities for African American students, while also creating lasting interracial cooperation during the fraught era of legal segregation and Jim Crowism.

³ Hanchett, Thomas W. "The Rosenwald Schools and Black Education in North Carolina." Originally published in *North Carolina Historical Review*, Volume LXV, no. 4 (October 1988), pages 387-444. Online edition published 24 November 2014. https://www.historysouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Rosenwald_Schools_NC.pdf. Online page 11.

By 1917, Rosenwald had set up a charitable fund to construct schools for African American students in the South.⁴ Rosenwald sought interracial cooperation through his program and specified that money for schools would only be granted if 1) the state and county contributed to the construction and maintenance of the building; 2) all citizens, regardless of race, contributed financially; and 3) African American citizens contributed money, labor, or both.⁵ Together, Rosenwald and Washington hoped that the initiative would not only build needed schools, but promote interracial cooperation during the era of Jim Crow that would result in lasting, long-term change.⁶ The Rosenwald system funded the schools through the state's education department in an effort to build a commitment to Black education at a statewide level. By 1932, 5400 Rosenwald structures had been built, 813 of which were in North Carolina, the most in the nation.⁷ This not only included school buildings, but teachers' homes, shops, and in some cases, athletic facilities. Although the Rosenwald building program died with Julius Rosenwald in 1932, existing Rosenwald schools remained in use until desegregation with the *Brown vs. Board of Education* ruling in 1954. Some schools remained in use well beyond that year.

Rosenwald schools were typically fairly primitive in nature. Simply designed and frame constructed, Rosenwald Schools were a significant upgrade to the typically cramped and inadequately built Black schools of the time. Rosenwald schools were built from formal, published plans that adhered to specific guidelines. The guidelines required that schools were positioned on a north-south principal axis with large bays of windows on the east and west sides to maximize natural light, addressing the lack of electricity in rural areas.⁸ The schools also reflected Progressive-era educational thought by featuring an "industrial room" for manual, domestic, and agricultural training, which mirrored the teachings of Booker T. Washington. The open interior of Rosenwald schools also encouraged using the schools as a meeting or community center for adults.⁹ Exterior architecture followed the popular Colonial style and were all one story tall. Some larger schools were constructed of brick, although most were designed with clapboard siding. Before 1920, Tuskegee Institute created design plans for Rosenwald buildings for one-teacher schools, and two variations of a five-teacher school with additional plans for an industrial building, outdoor privy, and teacher residences. After 1920, the Rosenwald Foundation tasked the Nashville office director Samuel L. Smith to draw new designs. He created plans for schools ranging in size from one to seven teachers, including additional facilities.¹⁰

⁴ Johnson, K. Todd, "Rosenwald Schools," *NCPedia*, 2006, accessed 28 March 2021, <https://www.ncpedia.org/rosenwald-fund>.

⁵ Mattson, Richard and William Huffman. "Historic Architectural Resources of Rural Mecklenburg County, North Carolina." National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1990), page 17.

⁶ Hanchett, Thomas W. "The Rosenwald Schools and Black Education in North Carolina," *History South*, 24 November 2014, page 3, https://www.historysouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Rosenwald_Schools_NC.pdf

⁷ Hanchett, Thomas W. "The Rosenwald Schools and Black Education in North Carolina," *History South*, 24 November 2014, page 26, https://www.historysouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Rosenwald_Schools_NC.pdf.

⁸ Mattson, Richard and William Huffman. "Historic Architectural Resources of Rural Mecklenburg County, North Carolina." National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1990), page 28.

⁹ Hanchett, Thomas W. "The Rosenwald Schools and Black Education in North Carolina," *History South*, 24 November 2014, page 20, https://www.historysouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Rosenwald_Schools_NC.pdf.

¹⁰ Hanchett, Thomas W. "Rosenwald School Plans," *History South*, <https://www.historysouth.org/schoolplans/>.

In 1921, North Carolina's General Assembly created the Division of Negro Education as a branch of the State Department of Public Instruction. This division directed the Rosenwald School Program across the state, supervised Black colleges and teacher training, and oversaw Black primary school education.¹¹ The director of the Division of Negro Education, N.C. Newbold, worked closely with Rosenwald Fund staff to distribute funding and approve Rosenwald School applications. After the end of the Rosenwald Funds, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction maintained control over the public Black schools throughout the state. From 1915 until 1930, spending per Black student in North Carolina increased five-fold, due in large part to the contributions of Black residents and matching Rosenwald fund monies.¹² The Rosenwald School program was a massive effort on the part of both private funders, public money, and individual contributors to drastically further the educational opportunities for African American students in North Carolina.

Mecklenburg County Rosenwald Schools

Historian Tom Hanchett importantly notes that Rosenwald Schools were not the first Black schools in Mecklenburg County. They were, however, a much-needed upgrade for African American education. Before the construction of Rosenwald Schools, Mecklenburg County's rural Black schools were typically one-room buildings where grade levels rarely went above elementary school. The Freedmen's Bureau provided some schooling for Black students, but only in more populated areas. With no federal presence, and very little state support, rural Black schools were woefully underfunded and lacked adequate resources.¹³

From 1918 to 1930, 26 Rosenwald Schools were built in Mecklenburg County. All of Mecklenburg County's Rosenwald Schools were built in rural, Black farming communities. This high number is likely thanks to the efforts of Dr. George E. Davis, principal fundraiser for North Carolina's Rosenwald schools.¹⁴ Davis attended Biddle University (now Johnson C. Smith University), a historically Black college in Charlotte, where he later became the university's first Black professor in 1885, and later Dean of Faculty. Davis was heavily involved in the development of public schools with his wife Marie G. Davis, principal of a Charlotte Black school. Dr. Davis worked tirelessly to fundraise for Rosenwald Schools, traveling across the state to solicit public funds and donations from the community. He appealed to church congregations, which offered a safe space for organized activity in the Black community during Reconstruction.¹⁵ As Charlotte was Davis's home city, it makes sense that Mecklenburg County contained such a large number of Rosenwald schools. Historian Tom Hanchett also notes that, although Mecklenburg County had the large city of Charlotte at its center, the surrounding lands were largely rural. Because of the large percentage of rural

¹¹ Hanchett, Thomas W. "Rosenwald Schools in Mecklenburg County: A History," *Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission*, 24 February 1987, page 11.

¹² Hanchett, Thomas W. "Rosenwald Schools in Mecklenburg County: A History," *Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission*, 24 February 1987, page 25.

¹³ Hanchett, Thomas W. "Rosenwald Schools in Mecklenburg County: A History," *Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission*, 24 February 1987, page 1.

¹⁴ Mattson, Richard and William Huffman. "Historic Architectural Resources of Rural Mecklenburg County, North Carolina." National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1990), page 17.

¹⁵ Hanchett, Thomas W. "Rosenwald Schools in Mecklenburg County: A History," *Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission*, 24 February 1987, page 13.

areas, fewer Mecklenburg County students had access to schools closer to the city.¹⁶ At the end of the Rosenwald Fund in the mid-1930s, North Carolina began consolidating schools into larger facilities. Mecklenburg County was divided into fourteen districts by the school board with planned “union schools,” desegregated schools comprising grades 1-11, displacing the need for the smaller, fairly primitive Rosenwald School buildings.

Huntersville Rosenwald School #2, or “the little school”

The Huntersville Rosenwald School, officially called “Huntersville School #2”, is located at 508 Dellwood Drive near Holbrooks Road on the southwest edge of Huntersville. The school stood in the Pottstown neighborhood, a historically Black neighborhood in Huntersville. Pottstown was primarily an agriculturally-based economy where families made a living by working on farms. Some Pottstown residents also did domestic work and picked cotton. Affiliated with the nearby St. Phillips Baptist Church, the school opened for the budget year 1920-1921. Huntersville Rosenwald School #1 (location unknown and no longer standing) followed the Rosenwald (or Nashville) type 3 building plans (see appendix for illustration).¹⁷ According to the Fisk University Rosenwald Fund Card File Database, the Huntersville Rosenwald School was built in 1925 and closely resembles a type 4 design with four classrooms. The Huntersville School is a frame building with an entry on the short side of the building.¹⁸ The school was constructed to house four teachers and sat on a 3-acre parcel of land. The land parcel was donated by Olin W. Hunter, for whom the town of Huntersville was named after.¹⁹ The total cost for the building was \$5,100. The Rosenwald Fund contributed \$1,100, while the public contributed \$3,200. The final \$800 was contributed by local Black citizens.²⁰

The Huntersville Rosenwald School became Huntersville Colored School after the school district consolidated schools in 1938. During its first year, Huntersville Colored High School had an enrollment of 135 students with four teachers.²¹ The school was accredited by the State Board of Education by 1940. The school later opened up a larger facility about a mile away in 1937, which was renamed the Torrence-Lytle School in 1953. The former Huntersville Rosenwald School building, called “the little school” served grades 1st through 4th. Before Torrence-Lytle was built for high school students, many young teens had to travel into Charlotte to attend Second Ward High School or travel long distances for upper grades. Since “the little school” lacked many resources available at the Torrence-Lytle building, students often had to travel to the

¹⁶ Hanchett, Thomas W. “Rosenwald Schools in Mecklenburg County: A History,” *Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission*, 24 February. 1987, page 15.

¹⁷ Hanchett, Thomas W. “Rosenwald Schools in Mecklenburg County: A History,” *Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission*, 24 February. 1987, page 38.

¹⁸ Woodard, Sarah A., Sherry Joines Wyatt, David E. Gall, “Industry, Transportation, and Education: The New South Development of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County,” *Charlotte Mecklenburg Historical Properties Landmark Commission*. September 2001, <https://files.nc.gov/ncdcr/historic-preservation-office/PDFs/ER%2019-0051.pdf>

¹⁹ Oral history interview conducted by Sonya Laney and Samantha Smith, 14 July 2021. In attendance (Helen Brown Rivers, Varona Wynn, George Whitley, Janelle Harris, Dora Dubose, Bevelyn Sherrill).

²⁰ “Huntersville School,” Fisk University Rosenwald Fund Card File Database, *Fisk University*, 2001, http://rosenwald.fisk.edu/?module=search.details&set_v=aWQ9Mjc2Ng==&school_historic_name=huntersville&school_county=mecklenburg&button=Search&o=0.

²¹ “Accredited Schools, 1942-1954,” Division of Negro Education. Dept. of Public Instruction, *State Archives of North Carolina*, page 6, <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/digital/collection/p16062coll13/id/16030>.

larger facility for such things as the library and cafeteria. Students could either take a bus when available or would walk through the woods.²² Torrence-Lytle became the first public Black high school in Northern Mecklenburg County.²³

As a union school, both buildings (“the little school” and Torrence-Lytle) were under the same administration. The principal, Isaac Graham, served from 1937 until the school’s closure in 1966. The curriculum and agenda were the same, but a need for space necessitated the little school. As a public county school, the district superintendent came by periodically for visits. Most grades had two teachers per grade, depending on school population and teacher availability. Classes usually ranged around 30 students. Torrence-Lytle had feeder years in grades 4, 8, and 9 for area students to transfer into. Every teacher had a homeroom class and the county required a registrar to take attendance as the school was part of the public county system. “The little school” had four classrooms to house grades 1st through 4th. It was heated by a wood stove, stoked by the older students. It had no indoor bathrooms, but had several privies near the buildings. Although adjacent to Huntersville town limits, the school was not on the town water supply and had a well of its own to supply the school. The building did have a small kitchen towards the rear. Students had used textbooks that were donated from local White schools and were told to take very good care of them or they would have to pay a fine. The school day included three recess periods for students to enjoy. The students took reading and writing courses, as well as math and natural sciences. Adjacent to the school on the western side was an empty lot that contained a playground, baseball field, and the outdoor toilets. Student dance troupes often performed operettas and dramas, culminating in the school’s all-important May Day celebration.²⁴

The African American community of Pottstown was very tightly knit. Alumni of the school recall that it was a family atmosphere at Torrence-Lytle. The school served as one of the only places that members of the community could gather other than church. Local government representatives would come to “the little school” building to commune with Black residents of Mecklenburg County and it served as a place for important discussions to be held. In the historic Huntersville Rosenwald school, the community could unite together. The school and community boasted spirits of cooperation, not competition. Community members have identified the historical traditions and rituals that were born from their relationships with the school, both as an educational institution and as a community gathering place. Alumna Helen Brown Rivers says that it is important to remember the history of learning that took place at the school. Rivers said that the education she received taught her how to conduct herself and be successful throughout her life. Another alumni Bevelyn Sherrill said “without knowing our history, we would perish. All ages have a history with this building since it has been a central part of this community for 96 years.” The school building represents the determination and resourcefulness that Pottstown residents had to get a fair education for their children. They repeatedly and successfully advocated for students and welcomed anyone who approached their doors.

²² Oral history interview conducted by Sonya Laney and Samantha Smith, 14 July 2021. In attendance (Helen Brown Rivers, Varona Wynn, George Whitley, Janelle Harris, Dora Dubose, Bevelyn Sherrill).

²³ “Fighting to Protect School, Its Legacy,” *The Charlotte Observer*, 10 February 2008, page 1B.

²⁴ Oral history interview conducted by Sonya Laney and Samantha Smith, 14 July 2021. In attendance (Helen Brown Rivers, Varona Wynn, George Whitley, Janelle Harris, Dora Dubose, Bevelyn Sherrill).

Alumni of the school recall that the education they received prepared them for changing times. Many alumni went on to university upon graduation. In an oral history interview, alum George White (who attended “the little school” from 1954-1956) says that the education he received never let him down and he was able to hold his ground throughout his life. White recalls the teachers being strict, but fair. He was reprimanded his very first day of school when he was caught trying to turn the clock back in order to have more time for recess. While the teachers were strict, they were also excellent at reaching their students and getting them excited about learning. There was no distinction between students, every person was treated the same. Teachers fostered a spirit of cooperation. When a student was struggling with coursework, teachers usually assigned their peers to assist them.²⁵ The sense of community and cooperation that was fostered at the school was vital to the growth, strength, and resiliency of the African American population of Huntersville.

After the closure of “the little school” in 1958, a group of Pottstown community members (chaired by LeRoy Wynn, Isaac Thompson, and Russ Sherrill) gathered together to purchase the mortgage of the school building and use it as a community center.²⁶ This community group, the Huntersville Better Community Civic Organization (now renamed the Huntersville Community Development Association), led important community outreach and civic development for the African American community in Huntersville. The group started by raising funds and obtaining grant money to begin repairs to the building and provide recreation programs beginning in the 1960s. For at least six weeks each summer, the group hosted a free youth summer program as a safe place for local students to go while parents were at work. The summer program was staffed by local high schoolers and run by St. Phillips Church’s Reverend Campbell and school teacher Mr. Beavers. Participants remember such activities as ping pong, games, basketball, baseball, horseshoes, checkers, and even a jukebox. The program lasted all day for a full week. Snacks, hot dogs, hamburgers, and ice cream were also available. The summer program gave community children a free, safe place to play when not in school.²⁷

Larger events such as sock-hops were held in the gym of Torrence-Lytle on weekends, and the school buildings served as meeting places to discuss issues within the Black community. “The little school” building was widely used for smaller gatherings and groups, weddings, reunions, church services, and community meetings. Churches used the building for vacation Bible school, which was always well attended. 4-H and the county agricultural extension also used “the little school” building for agriculture classes, as well as home economics lessons (such as cooking and upholstery).²⁸ It was (and remains) a hub of the Pottstown neighborhood and Northern Mecklenburg county’s African American population. Torrence-Lytle closed in 1966 when Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools began desegregating. The building is currently used as a community center with plans for further renovation.²⁹ In 2008, “the little school” building was sold by the

²⁵ Oral history interview conducted by Sonya Laney and Samantha Smith, 14 July 2021. In attendance (Helen Brown Rivers, Varona Wynn, George Whitley, Janelle Harris, Dora Dubose, Bevelyn Sherrill).

²⁶ Oral history interview conducted by Sonya Laney and Samantha Smith, 14 July 2021. In attendance (Helen Brown Rivers, Varona Wynn, George Whitley, Janelle Harris, Dora Dubose, Bevelyn Sherrill).

²⁷ Oral history interview conducted by Sonya Laney and Samantha Smith, 14 July 2021. In attendance (Helen Brown Rivers, Varona Wynn, George Whitley, Janelle Harris, Dora Dubose, Bevelyn Sherrill).

²⁸ Oral history interview conducted by Sonya Laney and Samantha Smith, 14 July 2021. In attendance (Helen Brown Rivers, Varona Wynn, George Whitley, Janelle Harris, Dora Dubose, Bevelyn Sherrill).

²⁹ “Fighting to Protect School, Its Legacy,” *The Charlotte Observer*, 10 February 2008, page 1B.

Huntersville Community Development Association to the town of Huntersville.³⁰ It is currently owned by the city and used by the parks and recreation department as a recreation center. Community groups, such as the Northern Mecklenburg Communities United and the Torrence-Lytle Alumni Association continue to convene in the building for meetings and events. As alumni of the school put it, the history of the school and the building stands on its own. The building was not merely an educational institution, but a civic gathering space where the Huntersville and Northern Mecklenburg African American community could come together to create change, remain resilient, and provide strength for their neighbors. This building serves as an important figurehead in the history and journey of the Huntersville's African American community.

V. Chain of Title

1. Book 24027 Page 256-259

- a. Recorded on August 7, 2008
- b. Grantor: Huntersville Community Development Association, Inc.
- c. Grantee: The Town of Huntersville

2. Book 9913 Page 298-301

- a. Recorded on September 11, 1998
- b. Grantor: Huntersville Better Community Civic Organization, Inc.
- c. Grantee: Huntersville Community Development Association, Inc.

3. Book Page 387-388

- a. Recorded on June 4, 1958
- b. Grantor: Board of Education of Mecklenburg County
- c. Grantee: Huntersville Better Community Civic Organization, Inc.

4. Book 558 Page 329 (consultant could not find this deed)

- a. Recorded on April 23, 1925
- b. Grantor: O. W. Hunter (unmarried)
- c. Grantee: Board of Education of Mecklenburg County

V1. Finding Aid for Photographs

- Fig. 1: Setting
- Fig. 2: Front (North) Elevation
- Fig. 3: Side (West) Elevation
- Fig. 4: Rear (South) Elevation
- Fig. 5: Side (East) Elevation
- Fig. 6: Windows
- Fig. 7: Door
- Fig. 8: Siding
- Fig. 9: Exposed wood siding
- Fig. 10: Brick foundation
- Fig. 11: Soffit

³⁰ Oral history interview conducted by Sonya Laney and Samantha Smith, 14 July 2021. In attendance (Helen Brown Rivers, Varona Wynn, George Whitley, Janelle Harris, Dora Dubose, Bevelyn Sherrill).

Figures

Fig. 1: Setting



Fig. 2: Front (North) Elevation



Fig. 3: Side (West) Elevation



Fig. 4: Rear (South) Elevation



Fig. 5: Side (East) Elevation



Fig. 6: Windows



Fig. 7: Door

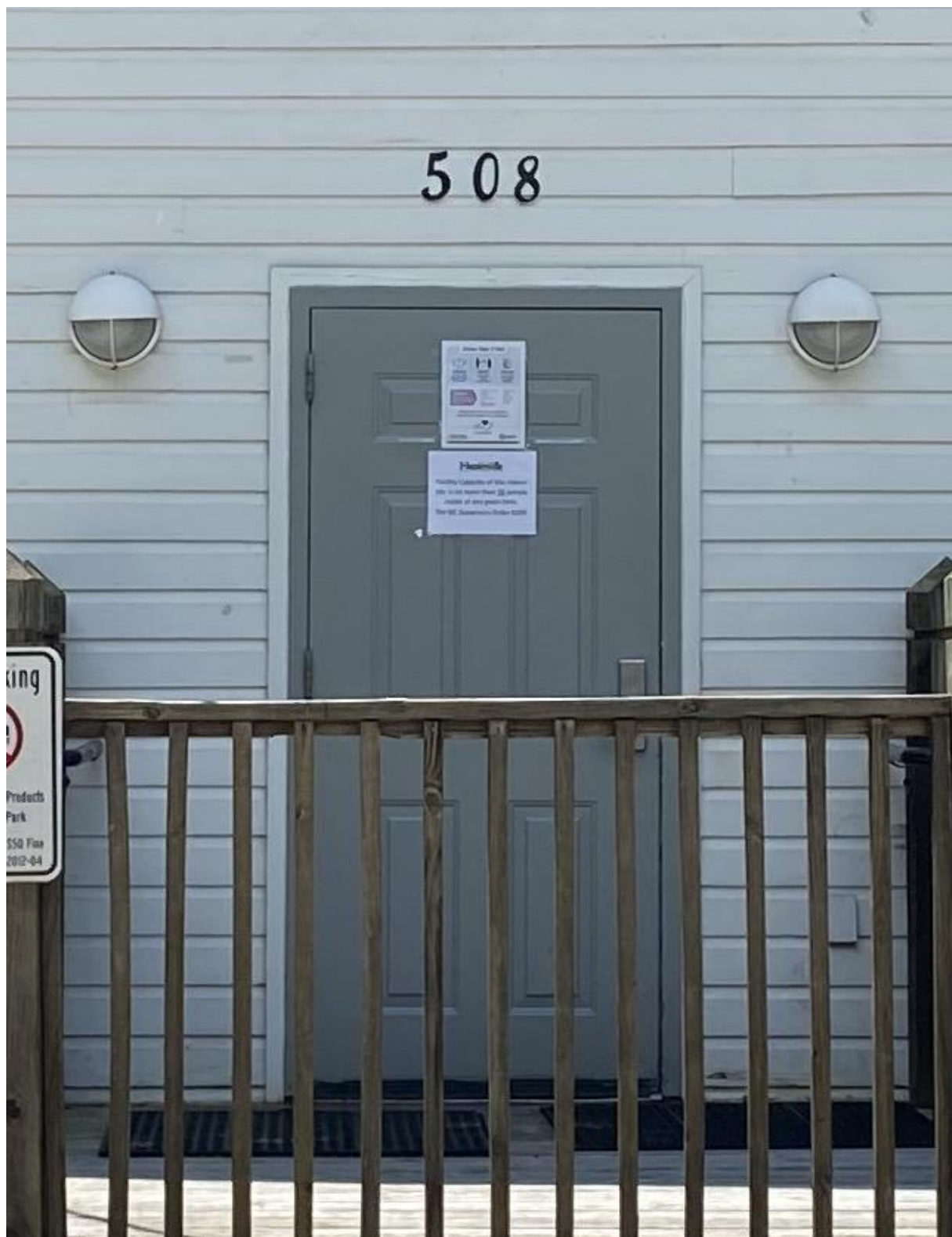


Fig. 8: Siding



Fig. 9: Exposed wood siding



Fig. 10: Brick foundation



Fig. 11: Soffit



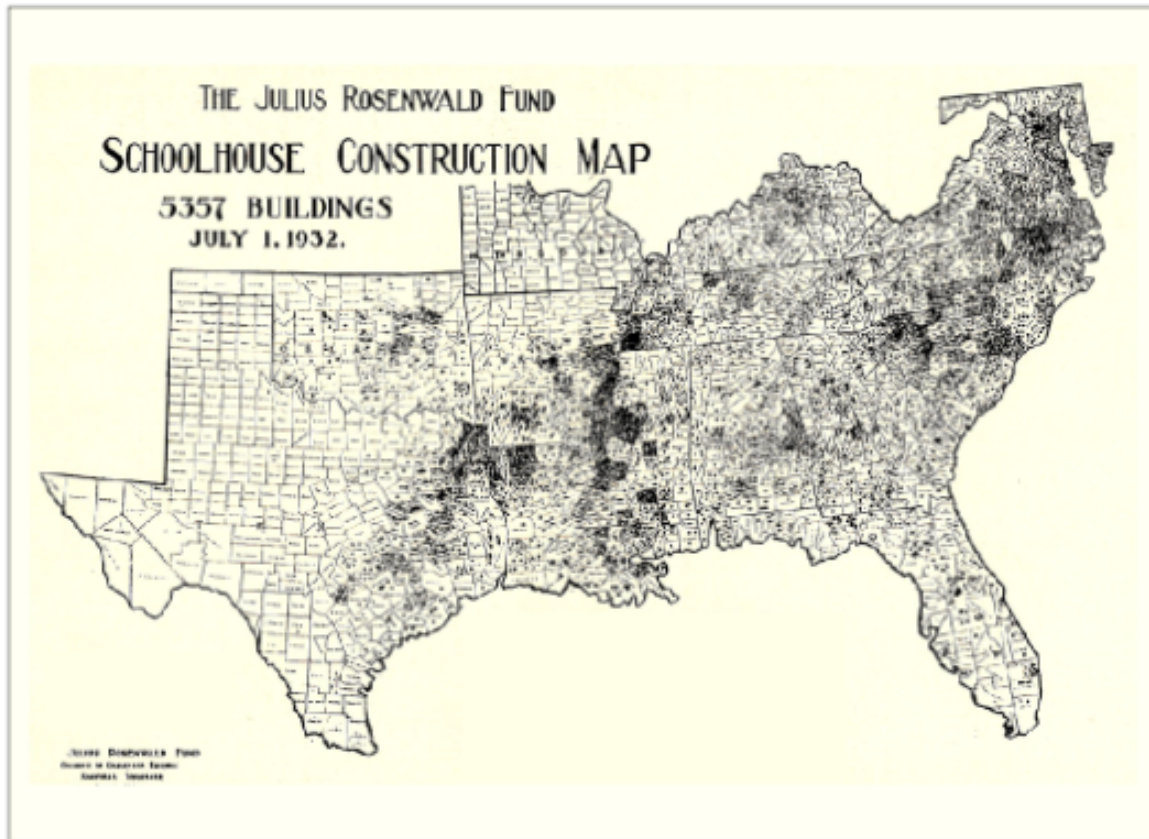
Appendix



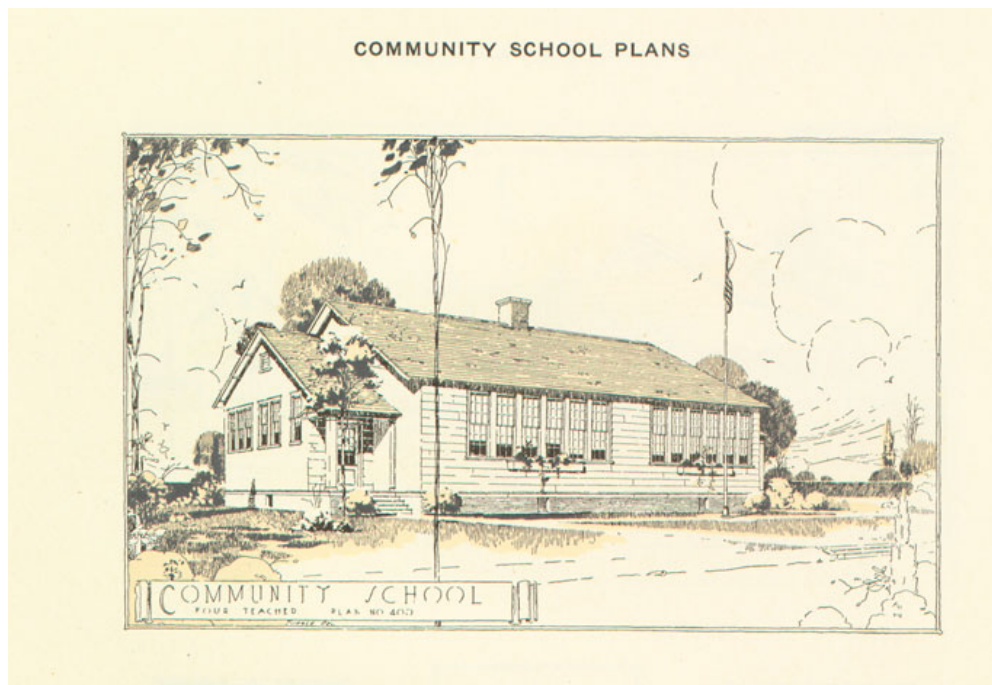
Appendix 1: Huntersville School (Rebuilt), courtesy of the Fisk University Rosenwald Fund Card File Database.



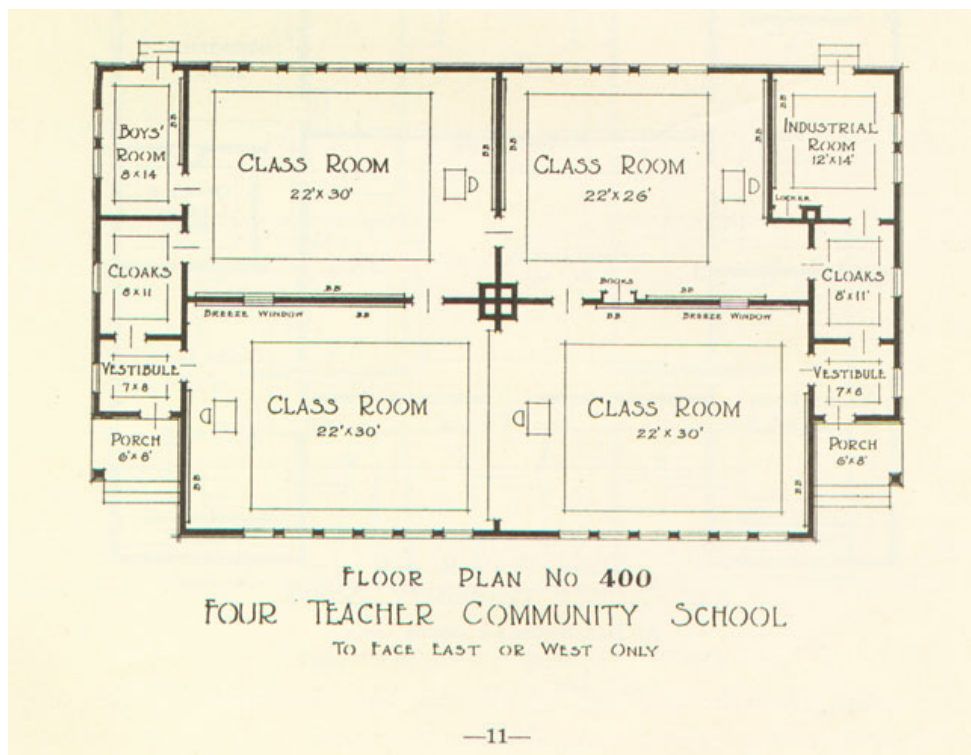
Appendix 2: Huntersville School (Rebuilt), courtesy of the Fisk University Rosenwald Fund Card File Database.



Appendix 3: Map of Rosenwald Schools in 1932 (the final year mapped). [Fisk University, John Hope and Aurelia E. Franklin Library Special Collection, Julius Rosenwald Fund Archives](#)



Appendix 4: School Plans for four teacher school, Community School Plans, Bulletin No.3 Issued by THE JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND Nashville, Tennessee, 1924.



Appendix 5: School Plans for four teacher school, Community School Plans, Bulletin No.3 Issued by THE JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND Nashville, Tennessee, 1924.

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Oral History Interviews

Oral history interview conducted by Sonya Laney and Samantha Smith, 14 July 2021. In attendance (Helen Brown Rivers, Varona Wynn, George Whitley, Janelle Harris, Dora Dubose, Bevelyn Sherrill).

I, THE UNDERSIGNED, HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THE ABOVE STATEMENTS ARE TRUE AND ACCURATE TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF; AND SUPPORT LANDMARK DESIGNATION OF THE PROPERTY DEFINED HEREIN.

I also acknowledge that the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission may require additional information.

Signature of Owner

Date

Signature of Owner

Date

I also acknowledge that the designation includes the interior, interior features and details; exterior, exterior features and details of all structures; and land, unless otherwise noted in the report. Any alterations of the property and/or features designated, requires an approved *Certificate of Appropriateness (COA)* issued by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission.

Signature of Owner

Date

Signature of Owner

Date