

NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
Office of Archives and History
Department of Cultural Resources

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Huntersville Colored High School

Huntersville, Mecklenburg County, MK2285, Listed 8/20/2009

Nomination by Mattson, Alexander and Associates

Photographs by Mattson, Alexander and Associates, February 2008



Façade view



Rear view, 1953 elementary school/cafeteria addition

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of property

historic name Huntersville Colored High School

other names/site number Torrence-Lytle High School

2. Location

street & number 302 Holbrooks Road not for publication N/A

city or town Huntersville vicinity N/A

state North Carolina code NC county Mecklenburg code 119 zip code 28078

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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 ___ nationally ___ statewide X locally. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official Date

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
___ entered in the National Register	_____	_____
___ See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
___ determined eligible for the	_____	_____
___ National Register	_____	_____
___ See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
___ determined not eligible for the	_____	_____
___ National Register	_____	_____
___ removed from the National Register	_____	_____
___ other (explain): _____	_____	_____

Huntersville Colored High School
Name of Property

Mecklenburg County, N.C.
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

private
 public-local
 public-State
 public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

building(s)
 district
 site
 structure
 object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register
N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION: school

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Vacant/not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Colonial Revival
International Style

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick
roof Asphalt
walls Brick
Glass
other Concrete
Wood

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

See Continuation Sheet, Section 7, Page 1.

Huntersville Colored High School
Name of Property

Mecklenburg County, N.C.
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 a grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION

ETHNIC HERITAGE/black

Period of Significance

1937-1958

Significant Dates

1937

1953

1957

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

See Continuation Sheet, Section 8, Page 1.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

See Continuation Sheet, Section 9, page 1

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 # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, Charlotte, N.C.

Huntersville Colored High School
Name of Property

Mecklenburg County, N.C.
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 4.94

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing
1 17 515000 3917000
2

Zone Easting Northing
3
4
 See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

The National Register boundary is defined by the current tax parcel (Parcel Identification Number 01909304) and is depicted on the accompanying Mecklenburg County tax map.

Boundary Justification

The National Register boundary for the Huntersville Colored High School encompasses the three contributing resources historically associated with the development of the school: high school (1937; expanded 1957); elementary school/cafeteria (1953); and gymnasium (1957), and provides an appropriate setting.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Richard Mattson and Frances Alexander

organization Mattson, Alexander and Associates, Inc. date 11 November 2008

street & number 2228 Winter Street telephone (704) 376-0985

city or town Charlotte state NC zip code 28205

12. Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

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

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

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

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

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission

street & number 2100 Randolph Road telephone (704) 376-9115

city or town Charlotte state NC zip code 28207

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

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

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Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

7. Narrative Description

Constructed in 1937 and expanded in 1953 and 1957, Huntersville Colored High School (later renamed Torrence-Lytle High School) is located at the south end of the Town of Huntersville. The school occupies a roughly five-acre tract at the southeast corner of Holbrooks Road and Central Avenue in the historically African American neighborhood of Pottstown. The tract consists of the high school building that faces west onto Central Avenue, a gymnasium with an attached classroom wing located directly behind the school to the east, and a separate elementary school building/cafeteria sited south of the gymnasium. The surrounding streets are characterized by modest, one-story dwellings constructed or extensively renovated in the latter part of the twentieth century. Modern recreational fields occupy the adjacent tract east of the school complex.

High School Building (1937; expanded 1957)

Facing west, the high school building combines a variegated red brick, Colonial Revival main block built in 1937 with modernistic wings constructed in 1957. The 1937 building consists of a one-story, brick veneered, rectangular main block with an auditorium wing projecting from the center of the rear elevation. The auditorium wing has a basement level. Hip roofs, covered in asphalt shingles, cap both the main block and the rear wing. The façade (west elevation) has a central, gable-front, entry porch flanked by matching sets of tall, single and grouped windows. The façade would be symmetrical except that the northernmost bay of the façade is windowless. A large, simple, brick panel laid in a running bond with a border of soldier courses and cast stone corner blocks defines this bay. Unless otherwise noted, all the windows in the 1937 building are now covered in plywood but retain original triple hung, nine-over-nine light, wood sash with brick sills and lintels. The entry porch has been altered with ca. 1957 concrete posts and a concrete deck. Metal doors have replaced the original double leaf, wood doors. Painted metal panels now cover the decorative brickwork and cast stone trim that originally embellished the entrance. A projecting water table extends around the entire 1937 school building.

The side (north and south) elevations of the 1937 school are now partially obscured by two-story hyphens that link the original building with the two 1957 wings. The narrow hyphens join the original building in the middle of the north and south elevations, and portions of these side elevations remain exposed. On the north elevation, west of the hyphen, are paired, nine-over-nine light windows; a bricked-in window is found on the east side of the hyphen. The south elevation has a simple, brick panel that matches the decorative panel found on the front elevation. As with the façade, the rear (east) elevation has single and grouped windows that emit natural light to the classrooms. South of the auditorium wing, a shed-roofed stairway with a metal railing descends to the boiler room.

The rear auditorium wing has tall, brick pilasters that define the three bays along each of the side and rear elevations. The side elevations have matching fenestration with single leaf doors and narrow, four-over-four light windows located in the easternmost bays and nine-over-nine light windows in the other bays. The grade slopes away from the rear of the school, and the original stairways that led to the auditorium side entrances have been removed. The original wood-paneled door, capped by a transom, remains on the auditorium's north side which includes a later, wooden stairway. The south side has a replacement door, and the stairway is now gone. The rear elevation consists of brick pilasters but is otherwise blank.

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Although suffering from water damage and neglect, the interior of the 1937 building remains substantially intact and in stable condition. The interior has a T-shaped corridor system. The main entrance opens into a short hall that terminates at the entrance to the auditorium wing which is situated in the center of a long, transverse corridor. Classrooms flank the corridor north and south of the auditorium, and a library is located on the north side of the entrance hall. The walls and ceilings of the building are plaster, and some original chair rail remains, but sections have been removed. Classrooms retain original wood baseboards, wood blackboard surrounds, and three-light transoms. Some horizontal paneled, wood doors survive, but most are now gone. One cloakroom retains its plaster walls and wood-paneled doors. Now in deteriorated condition, linoleum tile (laid in the 1950s) covers most of the original pine floors, but exposed wood flooring remains in the hallway. In the northeast classroom, the water-damaged plaster ceiling was removed, exposing the wood ceiling and rafters. The auditorium wing has wood floors and the original raised stage with two small dressing rooms. The stage is flanked by entrances with original horizontal paneled doors leading to the sides of the stage and the exterior doors.

Inspired by the International Style, the two-story, modernist wings (1957) stand in sharp contrast to the original school. Influenced by factory designs of the early twentieth century, the two classroom wings are similar, flat-roofed boxes with exposed, reinforced concrete construction defining the floors and bays. Unless otherwise noted, the bays along both floors of the facades of the north and south wings are filled with matching, alternating bands of glass block (top), steel sash, awning windows (middle), and metal panels (bottom).

The two wings are attached to the side (north and south) elevations of the 1937 building by two-story, two-bay hyphens that contain stairwells. Sharing the geometric and boxy design of the two wings, the hyphens have windowless, brick bays adjoining the 1937 building and well-lighted entry bays abutting the 1957 classroom wings. Each of the two-story entry bays contains an off-center entrance with double leaf, steel doors, a divided light transom, and a single side light. Above the entrances, square, fixed light, steel sash windows, some of which are now boarded over, extend the entire height of the second story. The entrances are sheltered by flat-roofed, concrete framed porches.

The side elevations of the two wings (next to the hyphens) have flat, brick walls punctuated only by two, asymmetrically placed, steel sash, awning windows. The north elevation of the north wing has a projecting end bay that contains an entrance to the building as well as stairwells, restrooms, and storage areas. Similar to the entry bays to the hyphens, this north entrance has steel, double leaf doors framed by square, steel sash transom and side lights and capped by square, steel sash windows. The entrance is covered by a flat-roofed porch with brick side walls. Other than the entrance bay, the north elevation is punctuated only by four, irregularly placed, steel sash, awning windows. The end (south) elevation of the south wing has a central entrance that matches the design of the one on the north wing with square, steel sash, windows surrounding the double leaf doors and filling the concrete framed second story atop the flat-roofed entry porch.

Although some water damage is also present within the wings, the interiors remain substantially intact. They consist of classrooms and corner bathrooms and closets arranged along center halls. The classrooms are separated from the corridor by partial-height, concrete block walls topped by corrugated fiberglass panels that allow natural light into the classrooms. Glazed concrete block walls face the hallways. The classrooms have original wood doors and operable, louvered transoms. There are

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concrete floors and ceilings which include exposed concrete ceiling beams and corrugated metal panels. Original, modernist, metal light fixtures are suspended from the classroom ceilings. The concrete stairways in the wings and hyphens have simple metal rails and newels. The two hyphens have concrete block walls and steel, double leaf doors, topped by steel sash, three-light transoms on the first floor and matching, steel sash windows that fill the entire wall on the second floor.

Elementary School Building./Cafeteria (1953)

Sited behind the high school and south of the 1957 gymnasium, the 1953 elementary school is a long, one-story, rectangular, red brick building. This school is linked to the rear of the high school by a covered walkway with a flat-roofed, steel canopy supported by slender, steel columns. The modern design of the school features a low-pitched, gable roof, covered in asphalt shingles, with a broken ridge line that allowed for facing clerestory windows that run the length of the building. Comprised of steel sash, awning windows (intact though now painted), the two clerestories served as skylights for the classrooms. The exterior walls of the school have a veneer of over-sized brick. The four classroom bays along the east and west elevations are clearly defined by broad bands of glass block above a single row of horizontal, steel sash, awning windows (many now boarded). The north end of the main block, where the cafeteria is located, has banks of steel sash, awning windows along the west and north elevations. A flat-roofed boiler room extends from the north elevation and is marked by a tall, brick chimney stack, steel sash windows on the side (east and west) elevations, and steel, double leaf doors on the north elevation. The two original boilers remain intact.

The well-preserved interior includes a center hallway flanked by classrooms. Each classroom includes a corner bathroom. There are concrete block walls, acoustic tile ceilings, and slate veneered windows sills throughout the building. The classrooms, bathrooms, and closets have ceramic tile floors while the hallway and cafeteria have terrazzo flooring. The exposed concrete posts and ceiling beams reveal the building's reinforced concrete construction. Transoms top classroom entrances which include original wood doors with single, vertical windows. Many metal, modernist light fixtures, original to the building, are suspended from the ceilings.

Gymnasium (1957)

Facing north onto Holbrook Road, the gymnasium is sited behind the high school to the east. The large, brick veneered, steel framed gymnasium has a gable-front roof with rows of steel sash, awning windows under the eaves along the east and west elevations allowing natural light into the basketball court. The corrugated metal roofs are modern replacements. Exposed, flared, steel I-beams serve as posts and rafters to support the projecting eaves and engaged porch roofs along the front (north), rear, and west sides of the building. The main elevation features three projecting, one-story, gable-front bays that mark the entrance and corner concession stand/office. The two glass-walled, entrance bays have been altered slightly with the addition of a prefabricated, metal and glass vestibule and replacement glass and metal framing. The corner office bay, at the northwest corner, has a brick exterior. The main stairway to the entrance of the gymnasium has been reconfigured with a new concrete deck and stairway and an access ramp on the west side. The rear elevation has a subsidiary, gable-front storage bay with shed extensions.

Housing locker rooms, a one-story, gable-roofed wing has an engaged walkway extending along the west elevation to connect with a classroom wing south of the gym. Constructed as the high school band room

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and agricultural building, this gable-roofed rear wing has banks of steel sash, awning windows along the east and west sides. Now used by the Town of Huntersville as an equipment storage and repair facility, the wing has been altered by a modern, frame garage bay on the south elevation and a metal canopy along the east elevation with wood posts and an enclosed end bay. Enclosed by security fencing, the surrounding area east of this wing and behind the main gymnasium are also used for equipment storage and parking.

The interior of the gymnasium consists of a front lobby, a large basketball/athletic court, and locker rooms along west side. As with the exterior, flared, steel I-beams, visible throughout the gym and rear classroom wing, reveal the steel-frame construction of the building. The lobby has a ceramic tile floor and a concrete block concession stand and bathrooms on the west side. Original wood doors survive throughout the interior, opening into the locker rooms, bathrooms, offices, and storage closets. Large, metal, double leaf doors open into the basketball court which has the original wood flooring and folding wood stands. The gymnasium has painted brick walls filling the bays between the structural I-beams. The two locker rooms along the west side of the gym have glazed, concrete block walls, ceramic tile floors, and acoustic tile ceilings. The interior of the rear classroom wing has concrete block walls and ceramic tile floors.

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8. Statement of Significance

Built in 1937, and expanded in 1953 and 1957, Huntersville Colored High School, renamed Torrence-Lytle High School in 1954, meets National Register Criterion A for both education and ethnic heritage. Consisting of the main high school building (1937; expanded 1957), a detached building (1953) containing a cafeteria and elementary school, and a freestanding gymnasium (1957), the school complex testifies to the advancement in African American education in Mecklenburg County during the early to mid-twentieth century. Huntersville Colored High School stands as one of the few remaining, substantially intact, public schools erected for black students in the county and is the only surviving African American facility to offer a secondary education from its opening in 1937 to its closing nearly three decades later. The 1937 building is also a fine example of the Depression-era public schools built under the auspices of the Public Works Administration (P.W.A.), one of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal relief agencies. In its original, one-story, red brick, Colonial Revival design, with later two-story, modernist additions, separate gymnasium, and spacious grounds, this school illustrates North Carolina's progress in providing public education for African Americans from the 1930s to the 1950s. The school played a pivotal role in the academic and social life of black students in northern Mecklenburg County until 1966 when students were reassigned to racially integrated schools.

The period of significance extends from 1937, when Huntersville Colored High School opened, to 1958. Although the complex continued to function as a public school until 1966, the property does not have the exceptional significance required under Criteria Consideration G to extend the period of significance to within the last fifty years.

Historical Background/Education and Ethnic Heritage Contexts

African American Schools in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

In common with North Carolina as a whole, the construction of public schools in Mecklenburg County occurred slowly after the Civil War. In 1865, the federal government organized the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (Freedmen's Bureau) which established public schools for former slaves. Subsequently, the North Carolina State Constitution in 1868 created a uniform, public graded school system and authorized limited tax dollars for the construction of schoolhouses and the education of "all the children of the State between the ages of six and twenty-one years". In 1873, a white graded school opened in the Mecklenburg County seat of Charlotte, and the following year a school for African American students was established in the city. Despite the formation of a statewide graded school system, all public schooling was severely underfunded amidst North Carolina's post-Civil War economic travails, and both these schools were short-lived facilities that had to be supported by private as well as public financing. When African American novelist, Charles W. Chesnutt, taught summer school in Mecklenburg County in 1874, he discovered that local officials had exhausted the meager school funds for black students in the construction of a schoolhouse. There were no available funds to pay a teacher. He found another black school located in a church, which "was a very dilapidated log structure, without a window" (Hanchett 1989: 388-389; Hood 8:13-14; Crow et al. 1992: 154-156; Noble 1930: 202-203, 401; Woodard 2002: 8:1-2).

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In 1875, North Carolina voters amended the constitution, dividing the school system into three separate systems serving white, African American, and American Indian students. However, funding continued to come entirely from the counties and local communities, and money for the schools remained scarce. In 1897, North Carolina began appropriating funding from the state coffers for the operation of the public school system, but the apportionment of public money was inequitable with black and Indian schools receiving far less funding than the white school system. Indeed, although African Americans paid taxes for the building of schools, few such institutions for black students were constructed entirely with public funds. Tax dollars went largely into white facilities while black schoolhouses were often constructed with donations of land, labor, and money from the African American community. Consequently, there were too few black schools, and many of these were substandard construction. In Mecklenburg County, only one African American school, the 1899 Bethesda School, survives to the nineteenth century. With such chronic underfunding, one in five white adults in North Carolina was illiterate at the beginning of the twentieth century, but one-half of all African American adults could not read (Anderson 1988: 4-32; Hanchett 1989: 388-389; Crow et al. 1992: 153-154; Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, Files; Gray and Stathakis 2002).

Northern philanthropic groups and churches offered some private financial support for black education, but they concentrated on teacher training. Philanthropies such as the George Peabody Fund and the John F. Slater Fund and religious groups such as the American Missionary Association mainly supported preparatory schools and colleges. In North Carolina, the Presbyterians established Barber-Scotia College in Concord and Charlotte's Biddle Institute (later Johnson C. Smith University); the Episcopalians founded St. Augustine College in Raleigh where the Baptists opened Shaw University; and the Methodist Church started Bennett College in Greensboro. In 1879, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church established Zion Wesley Institute in Concord, but moved the school to Salisbury in 1882 and renamed the institution Livingstone College in 1887. Livingstone College was exceptional among these historically black schools in that the school was conceived and operated entirely by African Americans. All these schools enrolled students from a wide range of educational backgrounds and thus included classes for illiterate and semi-literate pupils as well as for those who were academically qualified for a college curriculum (Crow et al., 1992: 153-154; Hanchett 1989: 392-394).

Public schooling for both African Americans and whites throughout the state began to improve during the early years of the twentieth century. In 1903, the North Carolina General Assembly approved a measure to lend money and direction to the counties for school construction. The state passed a law that required all plans for public schools to be approved by the State Superintendent. In 1907, the General Assembly appropriated funds to support a statewide system of public education and authorized the establishment of secondary schools for whites in rural areas. By 1910, public elementary schools for blacks also began receiving state money, and in 1913, the state created the office of Supervisor of Rural Elementary Schools to promote black education (Lefler and Newsome 1973: 589-591; Crow et al. 1992: 154-155; Leloudis 1996: 183).

In general, the reforms of the early twentieth century brought significant improvement to the public school systems of North Carolina. However, funding and reform efforts were not applied equitably with public schools for whites receiving more funding and better equipment than schools built for African American children. For example, between 1900 and 1918, 5,070 new rural schools were built for whites, but only 1,293 were opened for African Americans. Black rural and city schools were typically smaller than those

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for whites, and funding for facilities, teachers, and books lagged well behind the tax dollars provided for white schools (Crow et al. 1992: 154-156; Long 1932: 3).

In addition, secondary education for African Americans was almost nonexistent across North Carolina during this period. High schools were available only in a few of the larger cities in the state, in private academies, or through the preparatory departments of black colleges. In North Carolina, the first public secondary schools for African Americans were not built until 1918, and most of these early high schools offered only one to two years of curriculum (Crowe et al. 1992: 155).

Starting in the 1920s, major new campaigns were launched at both the state and local levels to modernize the public school system for both whites and blacks. Chronic school overcrowding and the beginnings of the school consolidation movement generated growing public support for bond issues and tax dollars to support education. The North Carolina legislature passed a series of appropriations for special building funds in 1921, 1923, 1925, and 1927. During this period, ninety-nine of the state's one hundred counties borrowed money from these funds to erect over 1,000 schools. In 1921, the Division of Negro Education in the State Department of Education was established which included a full-time director and an inspector authorized to supervise the building of secondary schools for black students. However, throughout the 1920s, schools offering secondary education to blacks were concentrated in just a few counties including Durham, Forsyth, Guilford, Wake, and Mecklenburg. In Mecklenburg County, the first African American secondary school, Second Ward High School (now gone), opened in Charlotte in 1923. The county opened no other high schools for blacks until the 1930s (Long 1932: 3; Hanchett 1998: 136, 202; Crow et al. 1992: 156).

Some of the newly opened public high schools and private academies offered academic subjects that prepared black high school students for college, after which many would enter the teaching profession. However, with often only one to two years of instruction, many of the high schools of this period, including Huntersville Colored High School, emphasized vocational education and the practical arts, drawing inspiration from Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute. In addition to the fundamentals of reading, writing, and arithmetic, these high schools taught boys agricultural methods as well as a variety of trades such as blacksmithing and carpentry while girls were instructed in home economics (Crowe 1992: 157-158; Hanchett 1998: 202).

The cause of black education in the South received an additional boost in the 1920s from the Julius Rosenwald Fund of Chicago. Although the Rosenwald Fund concentrated its efforts on rural elementary schools, the philanthropy also supported the building of high schools and facilities in urban locations. Active until the Great Depression, the Rosenwald Fund took a "bricks and mortar" approach to educational advocacy, focusing its efforts on school design and construction. The new facilities for black students were financed using a combination of both Rosenwald grants and local funds and conformed to a specific set of design guidelines. Between 1927 and 1932, the Rosenwald Fund constructed 5,300 schools for African American students in the South, including 813 facilities in North Carolina, more than in any other state. The majority of Rosenwald schools were built in the tobacco counties of the northern Coastal Plain or in the cotton belt of the southern Piedmont, notably Mecklenburg County (which had twenty-six schools) and Anson County (twenty-seven schools), where the African American populations were the highest. Of the twenty-six Rosenwald schools erected in Mecklenburg County, McClintock School (1923), Billingsville School (1927), and the 1929 Newell School all survive (Hanchett 1987: 1-5,

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15; Hanchett 1989; Anderson 1988: 205-215; Leloudis 1996: 211-228; Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, Files; Mattson, Alexander and Associates, Inc. 1999; Gray and Stathakis 2002).

African American Schools during the Great Depression: The Public Works Administration

By the 1930s, many counties across North Carolina had opened public high schools for African Americans. However, despite the building campaigns of the 1920s, most of these secondary schools were housed in the same building with the elementary grades. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, the building of African American schools, especially secondary schools, received a major boost from federal New Deal relief agencies. Huntersville Colored High School and a collection of other black high schools in Mecklenburg County were constructed with the aid of the Public Works Administration (P.W.A.). One of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's many New Deal programs, the P.W.A. was created in 1933 to offer financial assistance for various public works including school construction. For state and local projects, the program provided thirty percent of the funding in the form of grants and lent the remaining seventy percent to county, city, or state governments. Nationwide, the P.W.A. spent some six billion dollars and financed the construction of 34,000 public facilities. In North Carolina, the P.W.A. expended eighty-six million dollars for over 900 projects including the Blue Ridge Parkway which employed nearly 7,000 workers. Between 1933 and 1937, the P.W.A. devoted sixteen million dollars nationally to African American projects including nine million dollars for schools. In that period, this federal program supported the construction of 225 black schools and the expansion and improvement of 118 others (Weaver 1938: 366; Leuchtenburg 1963: 133-134; Badger 1981: 51-52; Abrams 1992: 52-54).

History of the Huntersville Colored High School

In Mecklenburg County, two local African American leaders, Franklin Lytle and Isaiah Dale ("Ike") Torrence, were instrumental in the formation of the new black high school in Huntersville. Born a slave, Franklin Lytle became a prominent farmer in northern Mecklenburg County. He and his wife, Lois Alexander, a schoolteacher, reared five children, all of whom were graduated from college. Their sons attended Biddle University (later Johnson C. Smith University) in Charlotte, and their daughters went to Barber-Scotia College in nearby Concord. Employed as farm agent, Lytle was a civic leader and champion of education in the local black community. He helped establish Lytle's Grove Colored School, a Rosenwald school (now gone), and assisted in the purchase of land for the Huntersville Colored High School (Murphy and Gray 2004: 4; Mattson 1990; Caldwell 2008).

In July and September 1936, Ike Torrence appeared before the Board of County Commissioners to support the allocation of funds for the improvement and construction of black schools in Mecklenburg County. The minutes of the September board meeting read, "Ike Torrence, negro citizen and taxpayer, asked for schools in the county for children who had passed the seventh grade and wanted to go to high school". In 1935, the Mecklenburg County Board of Education had submitted a proposal to the P.W.A. requesting funds for "school administration of a permanent nature". In July 1936, the board agreed to appropriate money totaling \$35,300.00 for "the construction of a new school building and auditorium in Huntersville Township". The P.W.A. would grant the money for thirty-percent of this cost. At this same meeting, the board also approved money for the construction of four other African American high schools and one black elementary school. Between 1937 and 1938, all these schools were completed with P.W.A. assistance, establishing African American high schools across Mecklenburg County. In addition to Huntersville Colored High School, Pineville Colored High School (southern Mecklenburg County); Plato

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Price High School (western Mecklenburg County); J.H. Gunn High School (eastern Mecklenburg County); and West Charlotte High School all opened to serve black high school students (Board of Commissioners, Mecklenburg County, Minutes, 3 September 1935, and 8 July 1936; Anderson 1988: 186-188; Crow et al. 1992: 157; Murphy and Gray 2004: 3-5; Gray 2006: 6; Hanchett 1998: 235).

The architect of the Huntersville Colored High School has not been identified, but it seems likely that a local Charlotte architect, possibly Willard G. Rogers, was responsible for the design. With the granting of federal P.W.A. funding in 1936 and 1937, the Mecklenburg County Board of Education assigned prominent local architect, William H. Peeps, to oversee a construction program that would erect schools across the county. The various school projects were divided among nearly all of Charlotte's professional architects, and three projects in northern Mecklenburg County were granted to Willard G. Rogers (1863-1947), a native of Cincinnati who had been architect to mill engineer and industrialist, Stuart Cramer, as well as a partner of Charlotte architect, C.C. Hook. Rogers designed a twelve-room school building for Cornelius, north of Huntersville, a gymnasium for the Davidson Graded School, and the Davidson Colored School. The Davidson Colored School originally included nine grades and was expanded to eleven grades in 1940. However, in 1946, Davidson Colored School became exclusively an elementary school. Now called the Ada Jenkins School, this facility still stands in Davidson (Gray 2006; Gray 2008).

Huntersville Colored High School was sited at the south end of Huntersville in the African American enclave known as Pottstown. Pottstown derived its name from black landowner, Otha Potts, who was also a brick mason and entrepreneur. The school was led by Principal, Isaac T. Graham, who served in that capacity until the school closed in 1966. In 1953, the nearby elementary school for black children, a Rosenwald school, was closed, and Huntersville Colored High School was expanded as a union school, containing grades one through eleven. A cafeteria and additional classrooms for the elementary grades were constructed in a separate building sited behind the high school. A year later, the high school was renamed Torrence-Lytle High School in honor of Ike Torrence and Franklin Lytle. In 1957, two wings were designed (the architect is not known) and constructed on the north and south elevations of the high school. The flanking wings accommodated twelve more classrooms and a science laboratory. Also in 1957, the gymnasium was built with a wing to the south that accommodated the agricultural department and the high school band room. By 1966, the school had 964 students, forty-five teachers, a librarian, a guidance counselor, an assistant principal, and five custodians (Murphy and Gray 2004: 4-5; Board of Commissioners, Mecklenburg County, Minutes, 10 July 1935, 3 September 1935, and 8 July 1936; Caldwell 2008).

From its opening in the late 1930s until its closing in the mid-1960s, the Huntersville Colored High School played a vital role in the lives of African Americans in northern Mecklenburg County. Young men and women from farms and communities throughout the area attended the school, which held the promise of better lives beyond the sharecropping and domestic service that so often defined the lives of blacks during the Jim Crow era. Although many high schools both before and after World War II focused their curricula on the fundamentals and practical, vocational courses, Huntersville Colored High School also offered an array of academic subjects that prepared students for either college or more skilled jobs. In addition to courses in agricultural methods, typing, shop, and home economics, the Huntersville school taught English, French, biology, chemistry, history, and mathematics as well as supporting a full-time librarian (Caldwell 2009).

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In its curriculum, the high school reflected the ambitions of the African American community in Huntersville which saw a high school, and possibly a college, education as a means of escaping the toils and limitations of farming. For blacks in Huntersville, several factors drove these aspirations and optimism. With its textile mills, factories, warehouses, and broad commercial base, a rapidly urbanizing Charlotte just south of Huntersville provided more job opportunities for African Americans, but ones which often required skills and schooling beyond the elementary grades. In addition, the proximity of several black colleges—Johnson C. Smith in Charlotte, Livingstone in Salisbury, and Barber-Scotia in Concord—made post-secondary education seem more feasible to local families. Finally, World War II broadened the experience and aspirations of many African Americans, and the integration of the military during World War II provided new opportunities for African Americans, many of which demanded technical skills and expertise beyond the vocational model of earlier high schools. As a local historian of the school recalls, many of the brightest students who attended Huntersville Colored High School in the early 1950s did not go to college, but rather entered the military because of these career opportunities (Caldwell 2009).

As the principal black high school in this portion of the county, the facility was a focal point for athletics and other social and cultural events. The gym was the site of basketball games and weekly dances (“sock hops”). Former student, David Beatty, remembers that homecoming games in the early 1960s were held at nearby Davidson College, accompanied by a parade down Main Street. The school symbolized African American betterment amidst Jim Crow segregation and racial prejudice while preparing youngsters for jobs and even college (Walker 1996: 1-6; 217-219; Beatty 2003; Murphy and Gray 2004: 5-6; Caldwell 2004; Caldwell 2008; Perlmutter 2008).

The school's long era as an African American scholastic institution in northern Mecklenburg ended in 1966. In 1963, North Carolina passed its first anti-segregation law, and through the decade, schools in Mecklenburg County and across the state were gradually integrated. Between 1965 and 1966, students at Torrence-Lytle High School were reassigned to racially integrated schools, especially nearby North Mecklenburg High School. The high school building and elementary school/cafeteria subsequently became an alternative learning center operated by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (C.M.S.). The two buildings are currently vacant. The 1957 gymnasium is now a recreational center while the rear wing is used by the Town of Huntersville for repairing and storing equipment. The Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission has recently acquired the high school building, and plans for its restoration are in progress (Murphy and Gray 2004: 2006; Perlmutter 2008).

Huntersville Colored High School (Torrence-Lytle High School) remains an institutional landmark in Huntersville, illustrating the progress in African American education in Mecklenburg County during the early to mid-twentieth century. Built in 1937 with funds provided by the P.W.A., the school is also a tangible reminder of the role of the federal government—in tandem with the efforts of local black leaders—in advancing African American education during the Depression. Huntersville Colored High School stands as one of the rare surviving, substantially intact public schools erected for black students in Mecklenburg County during the era of school segregation.

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12. Additional Documentation

Photographs

The following information pertains to each of the photographs:

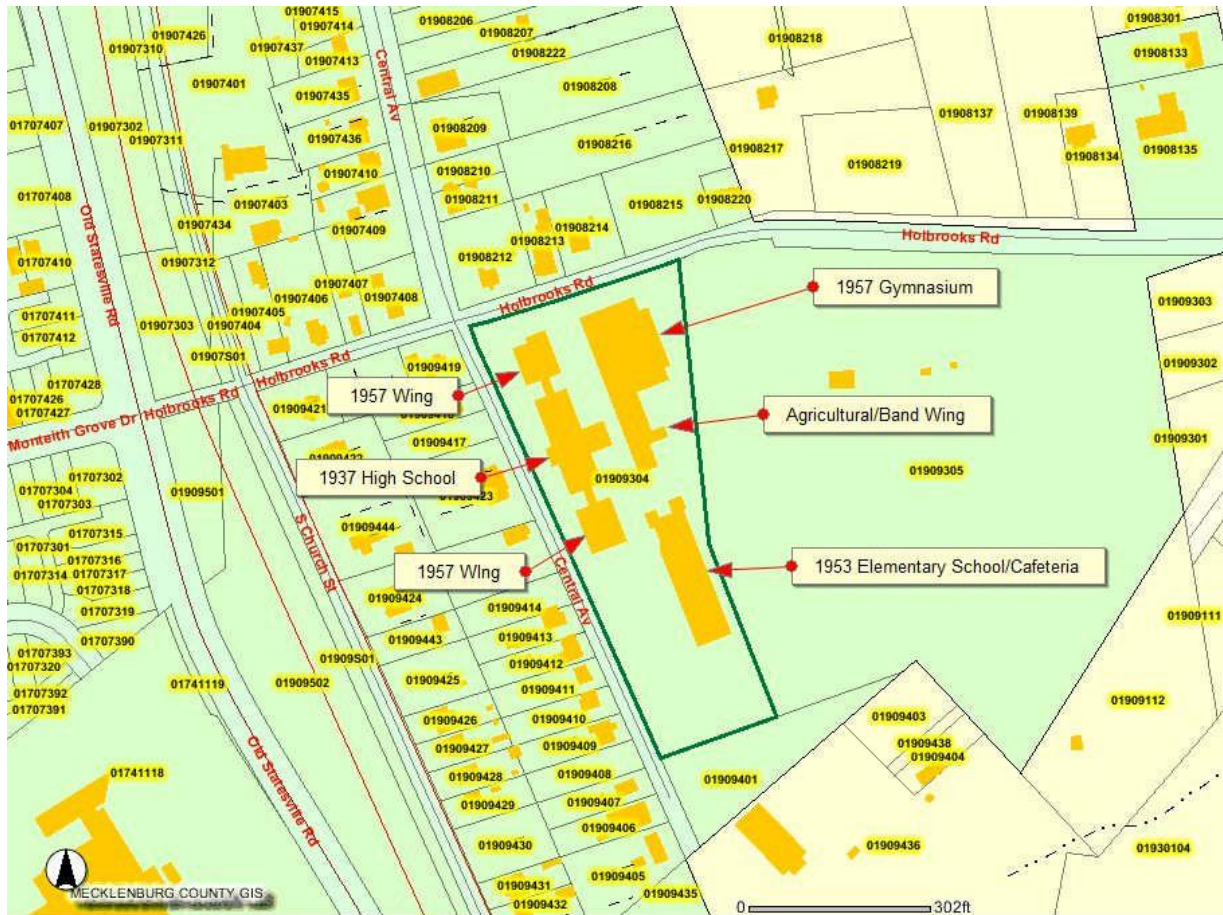
Name of Property: Huntersville Colored High School
Location: Huntersville, North Carolina
County: Mecklenburg County
Name of Photographer: Mattson, Alexander and Associates, Inc.
Location of Negatives: Survey and Planning Branch
North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources
109 E. Jones Street
Raleigh, North Carolina 27601-2807

Date of Photographs: February 2008

1. Facade (West Elevation), High School, View Looking Northeast
2. Facade, 1937 High School Building, View Looking Northeast
3. Façade, 1957 North Wing, View Looking East
4. Façade, 1957 South Wing, View Looking Southeast
5. South Elevation, 1957 South Wing, View Looking North
6. East (Rear) Elevation, 1957 North Wing, View Looking Southwest
7. East (Rear) Elevation, 1937 High School Building, View Looking West
8. Main Hallway, 1937 High School Building
9. Classroom, 1937 High School Building
10. Auditorium 1937 High School Building
11. Hallway, First Floor, 1957 North Wing
12. Classroom, 1957 North Wing
13. Façade (North Elevation) and East Elevation, 1957 Gymnasium, View Looking West
14. Main Entrance, North Elevation, 1957 Gymnasium, View Looking Southeast
15. Lobby, 1957 Gymnasium
16. Basketball Court, 1957 Gymnasium
17. South and West Elevations, 1953 Elementary School/Cafeteria, View Looking Northeast
18. West Elevation, 1953 Elementary School/Cafeteria, View Looking North
19. Classroom, 1953 Elementary School/Cafeteria
20. Cafeteria, 1953 Elementary School/Cafeteria

SITE PLAN and TAX MAP

**Huntersville Colored High School
Mecklenburg County, North Carolina
(PIN No. 01909304)**

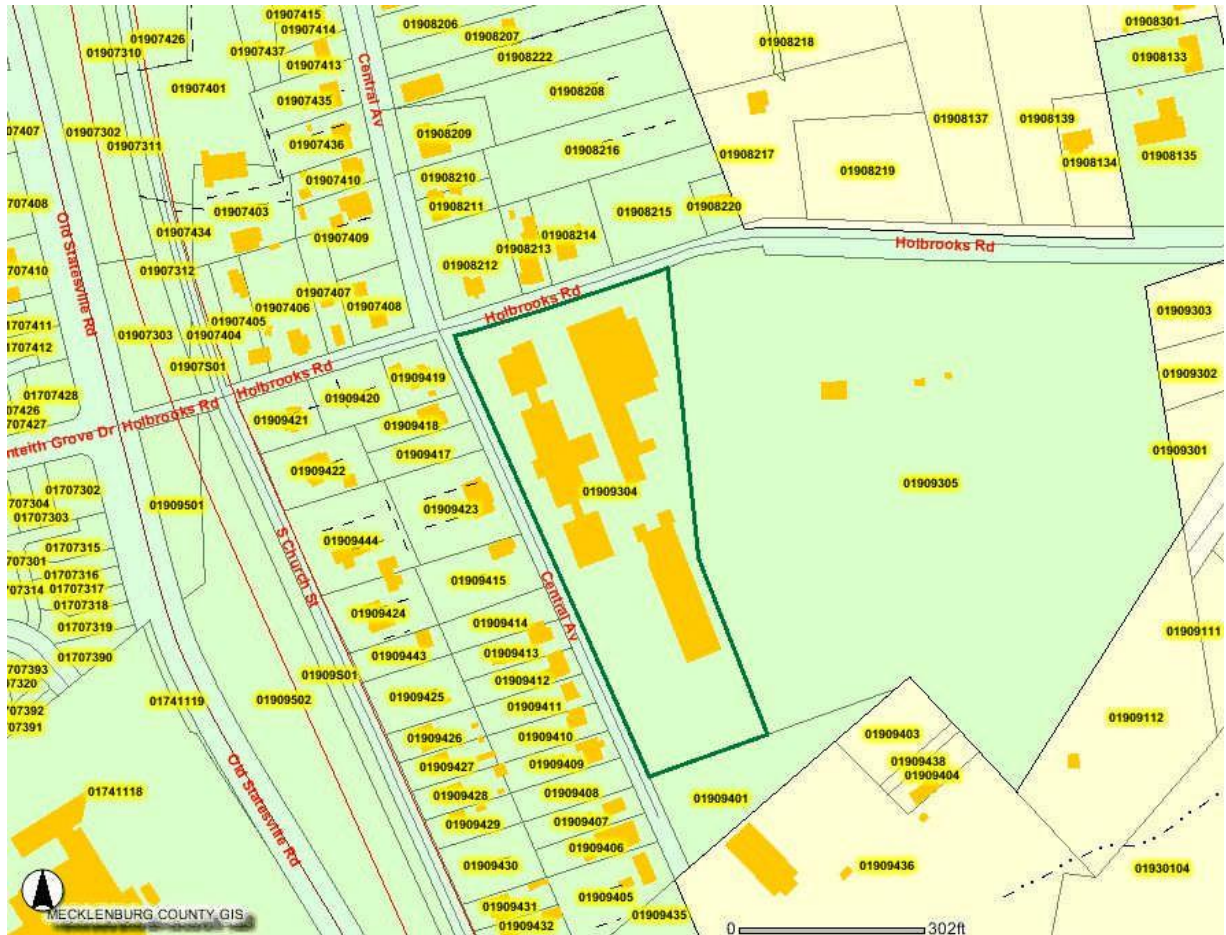


Source: Mecklenburg County Tax Map

HEAVY LINE INDICATES NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARIES

NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARIES

**Huntersville Colored High School
Mecklenburg County, North Carolina
(PIN No. 01909304)**



Source: Mecklenburg County Tax Map