

HISTORICAL MITIGATION FOR THE RONALD E. MCNAIR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Charleston County, South Carolina

Terracon Project No. 73197288

July 2020



Prepared For:

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Terracon

Environmental



Facilities



Geotechnical



Materials

**HISTORICAL MITIGATION FOR THE DEMOLITION OF
THE RONALD E. MCNAIR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
CHARLESTON COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA**

FINAL REPORT

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August 2020

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

Terracon Consultants, Inc. (Terracon), on behalf of Hussey Gay Bell (Client) and the Charleston County School District, has completed historical documentation of the Ronald E. McNair Elementary School located at 3795 Spruill Avenue in North Charleston, Charleston County, South Carolina (Figures 1 and 2). This investigation is intended to mitigate the adverse effects (demolition) on the school, which was previously determined to be eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The project is being done for compliance with the South Carolina Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management's (OCRM) Coastal Zone Consistency Certification and was carried out according to a Revised Mitigation Plan dated November 22, 2019 (approved by the South Carolina State Historic Preservation Office on December 12, 2019). The project was conducted under the terms and conditions of a Master Service Agreement (MSA) between Terracon and Hussey Gay Bell, dated May 7, 2019, and in general accordance with Proposal No. P73197288, dated December 13, 2019.

Fieldwork for the Architectural Documentation was conducted in January 2020. The documentation of the McNair School included high resolution photography of the interior and exterior of the building. Exterior photographs were taken to capture the architectural details and plan of the school as well as environmental views capturing the landscape and setting. Interior photographs were taken to illustrate the interior rooms, structural elements, and decorative features. Architectural drawings of the building were provided by Hussey Gay Bell and included drawings of the interior and exterior of the structure. Historical research was conducted at the Charleston County Deeds Office and the South Carolina Room in the Charleston County Public Library and at the South Carolina Department of Archives and History in Columbia. Other information was accessed through the America's Historical Newspapers Database.

With completion of this document, Terracon recommends that demolition of the Ronald E. McNair Elementary School be allowed to proceed as planned.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Terracon Consultants, Inc. (Terracon), on behalf of Hussey Gay Bell (Client) and the Charleston County School District, has completed historical documentation of the Ronald E. McNair Elementary School located at 3795 Spruill Avenue in North Charleston, Charleston County, South Carolina. This investigation is intended to mitigate the adverse effects (demolition) on the school, which was previously determined to be eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The project is being done for compliance with the South Carolina Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management's (OCRM) Coastal Zone Consistency Certification and was carried out according to a Revised Mitigation Plan dated November 22, 2019 (approved by the South Carolina State Historic Preservation Office [SHPO] on December 12, 2019). The project was conducted under the terms and conditions of a Master Service Agreement (MSA) between Terracon and Hussey Gay Bell, dated May 7, 2019, and in general accordance with Proposal No. P73197288, dated December 13, 2019.

The Ronald E. McNair Elementary School, constructed in 1942, is located at 3795 Spruill Avenue in North Charleston, Charleston County, South Carolina (Figures 1 and 2). The property was recorded as the Ben Tillman Graded School (SHPO Site Number 1526) during the *City of North Charleston Historical and Architectural Survey* conducted by Preservation Consultants, Inc. in 1995 (see Appendix A for the survey form and photographs). According to the SHPO's comments on the survey, the building was determined eligible under Criteria A for its significance in Community Planning and Development and Social History

Fieldwork for the Historical Documentation was conducted in January 2020, by Architectural Historian Mills Dorn, M.H.P. William Green, M.A., RPA, was the Principal Investigator for the project. The report was prepared by Mills Dorn and William Green.

This report has been prepared for compliance with the South Carolina Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management's (OCRM) Coastal Zone Consistency Certification. The investigation and report meet the qualifications outlined in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archaeology and Historic Preservation (Federal Register 48:44716–44742). Photographic and architectural documentation has been completed in compliance with the SHPOs Statewide Survey of Historic Properties Program, as outlined in the *Survey Manual: South Carolina Statewide Survey of Historic Properties* (2018) and standards outlined by the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Architectural and Engineering Documentation* (1983). The Architectural Historian for the project, Mills Dorn, meets the Secretary of Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards for a Historian and Architectural Historian (36 CFR Part 61).

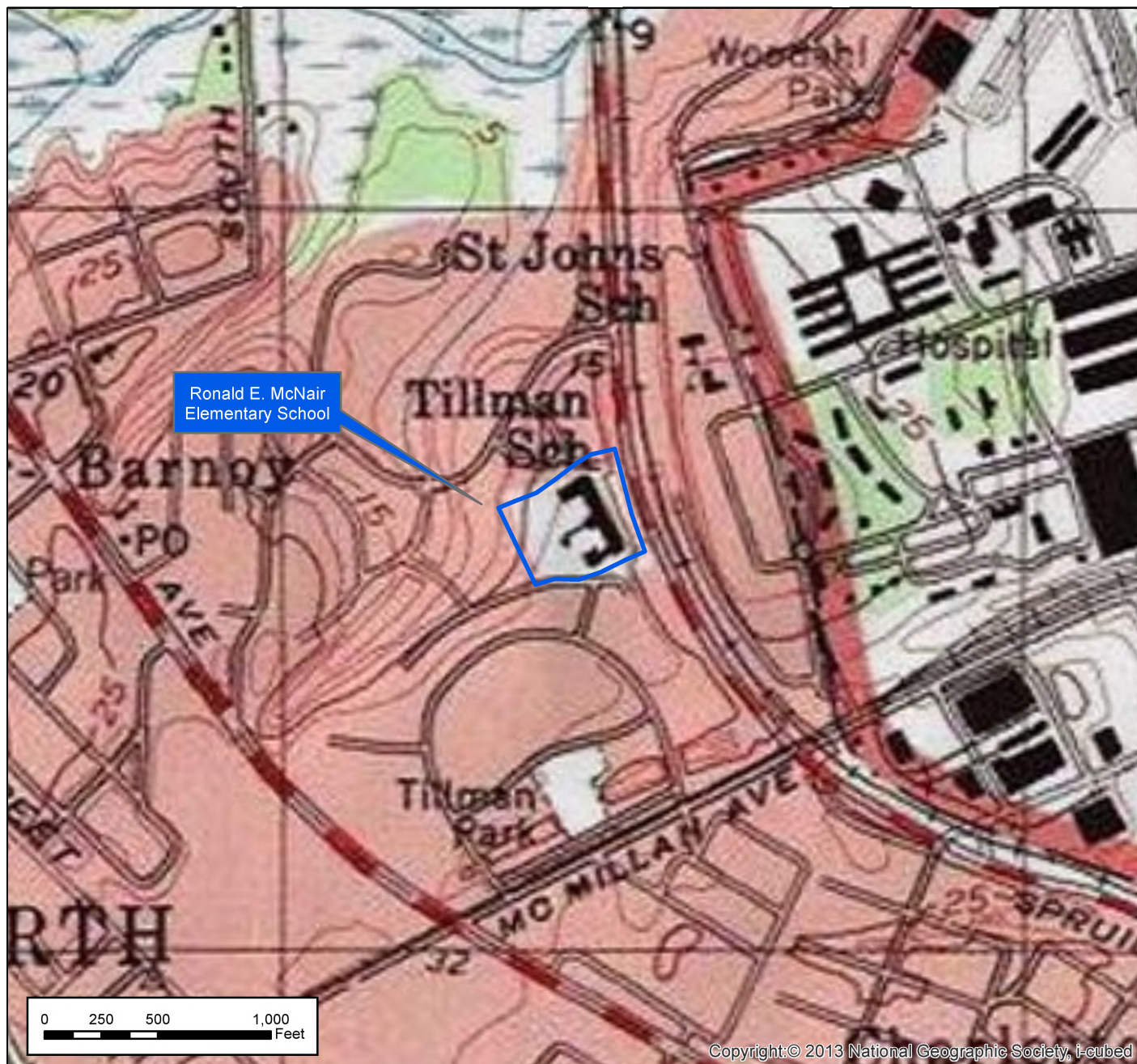
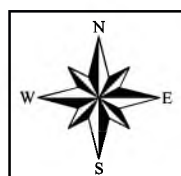
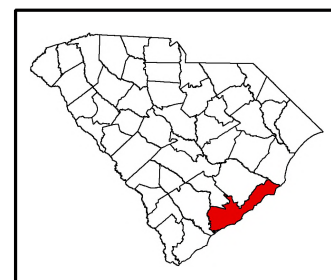
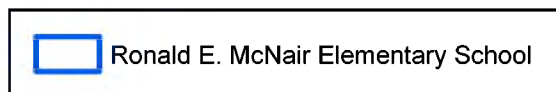


Figure 1. Location of the Ronald E. McNair Elementary School.
Base Map: Charleston, SC (1958, PR 1979) 7.5' USGS topographic quadrangle.



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USGS TOPOGRAPHIC MAP

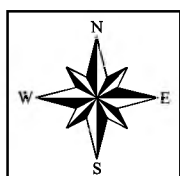
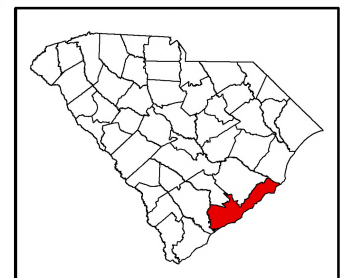
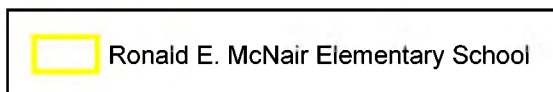
RONAL E. MCNAIR
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
CHARLESTON CO., SC

Figure

1



Figure 2. Aerial imagery showing the location of the Ronald E. McNair Elementary School.
Base Map: Charleston, SC (1958, PR 1979) 7.5' USGS topographic quadrangle.



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| RONAL E. MCNAIR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHARLESTON CO., SC |

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2.0 HISTORIC CONTEXT

2.1 Early Settlement

The Spanish first explored what today is the South Carolina coast in 1521 with the expedition of Francisco Gordillo and his cousin, Pedro de Quexo. Through a ruse that lured a group of the Indians to their ships, they captured 70 men with the intent of selling them as slaves in Hispaniola. From one of these slaves, they were told stories of the region's natural bounty. Tales of the area's abundance spread throughout Europe, which inspired Spanish explorer Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón and 600 colonists, including Francisco de Chicora, to establish the colony of San Miguel de Gualdape in 1526, probably near present-day Georgetown. Although the colony failed, this was Europe's first settlement in continental North America.

The next attempted settlement of what became the southeastern U.S. occurred in 1562. French explorer Jean Ribault and 28 men established the outpost of Charlesfort on Parris Island in what is now Beaufort County. Ribault, who had sailed back to Europe for supplies, could not return to his newfound colony because war had broken out and he was detained as a prisoner in London. Due to the lack of supplies and leadership, Charlesfort failed within a year. Soon after, in 1562, the French, under the leadership of René Goulaine de Laudonnière, established a settlement called Fort Caroline along the banks of the St. John's River near Jacksonville, Florida. The settlement was destroyed in 1565 by troops under the command of Cuban governor Pedro Menéndez de Avilés.

In 1566, Avilés established the settlement of Santa Elena at the same location as Charlesfort on Parris Island. The settlement housed 650 Spanish settlers, including the family of Pedro Menéndez de Avilés, Jesuit missionaries, and soldiers. Santa Elena became the first Spanish capital of La Florida and was the base of operations for Spanish explorations into the interior led by Captain Juan Pardo. In 1587, Santa Elena was abandoned due to repeated attacks by local Indian groups and the survivors moved to St. Augustine, which then became the Spanish capital.

In 1585, the English made their first attempt at permanent settlement in North America on Roanoke Island. Two colonies were established in 1585 and 1587 by Sir Walter Raleigh, however both failed. The first large English colonization effort began in the early 1600s and was comprised of two different groups. The first group followed William Hilton from townships in the Massachusetts Bay Colony to establish a settlement along the Cape Fear River in North Carolina; however, this venture only lasted two months. In 1663, Carolana was renamed Carolina and it was granted to eight Englishmen: William Berkeley, John Colleton, Edward Hyde, George Monck, William Craven, and John Berkley, who were then known as the Lords Proprietors of Carolina. The Lords Proprietors had extensive powers to establish civil structures, collect taxes, and maintain order. However, due to their inefficient governance, settlement did not reach its potential. In 1663, Proprietor John Colleton first communicated with the Lords Proprietors concerning the settlement of the Carolinas by Barbadians. English planters from Barbados were restricted by the amount of land available in Barbados and wanted to acquire more land for farming. While waiting

Historical Mitigation

Ronald McNair Elementary School ■ Charleston Co., SC

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for acceptance of their settlement proposal, an expedition of 200 Barbadians under Captain William Hilton on the ship *Adventure* set out in August 1663, to explore the Carolina coast. Hilton's expedition was organized to explore from the Cape Fear River southward. As a result of this expedition, a petition was sent to the Lords Proprietors requesting that the Barbadians from the expedition be allowed to purchase a tract of a thousand square miles in Carolina to be called the Corporation of the Barbadian Adventurers. Although the Proprietors rejected the proposal, the account of Hilton's voyage drew great interest in settling Carolina (Thomas 1930:75-80).

On May 29, 1664, John Vassall, a Barbadian Planter, landed a colony of settlers on the Cape Fear River in North Carolina, founding the first Charles Towne. A fortified town was built on the east side of the river just upstream from Old Town Creek. The colony grew rapidly, and by 1666 it was described as containing about 800 people living in scattered homesteads along the river. These settlers produced agricultural products for export primarily to Barbados. By the fall of 1667, however, the colony had been abandoned due to lack of support from England and dissension among the colonists. Although the colony failed, it became the impetus for the founding of a more permanent settlement to the south in South Carolina, also named Charles Towne.

In 1669, William Sayle, leading more than 100 colonists, briefly settled on the western side of the Ashley River in South Carolina. Port Royal was the original destination, though it was quickly determined to be undesirable for settlement. In 1670, Sayle reserved 600 acres at "Oyster Point" located at the convergence of the Ashley and Cooper rivers. By 1680, colonial officials had relocated the government there and named the settlement Charles Towne, which became Charleston in 1783 (Duff 2018). Two years later, laws were enacted to establish a militia and to build roads in Charleston and the surrounding area (Prentiss 1872:7). In the late 1600s, five baronies—Fairlawn, Wadboo, Cypress, Whiskinboo, and Rephoe—were established in Berkeley County, which included Charles Towne at that time. These baronies were eventually divided into smaller plantations (Cross 1985:31-38).

Charleston quickly became established as a commercial center, and as a result, development in other regions of South Carolina did not occur until later. It was the center of trade for the British empire, with the "golden years" of commerce lasting from the 1730s to the 1820s, allowing for quick profits for those that planted crops such as rice and indigo. In the 1730s, patents for land graves and caciques were honored allowing a small number of men to hold large amounts of land. The headright system also let planters secure 50 acres of land for each slave purchased (Rogers 1969:9). By 1731, warrants had been issued for approximately 60,000 acres (Cross 1985:25). During this time, South Carolina comprised three counties—Craven, Berkeley, and Colleton. Europeans comprised the majority of the colony's population during early settlement; however, by the early 1700s, Africans surpassed European colonists as the majority. European colonists largely consisted of British and French Huguenots followed by Scots-Irish settlers. In 1708, approximately 3,900 white freemen, women, and children, 120 white servants, 4,100 African slaves (including children), and 1,400 Indian slaves (including children) were in Carolina. During this time, more African slaves came through the port of Charleston than any other place on the continent (Fick 1992:10).

2.2 Development during the eighteenth century

By the start of the eighteenth century the population and economy of Charleston grew tremendously. Trading was the main economic booster during this period. Along East Bay street were many wharves where ships docked to load commodities that were shipped to Europe. The port of Charleston became one of the most important trade centers in the British colonies. The importance of the port also made it a target and its location on the coast made it vulnerable to attack. In 1718, the city was blockaded by the pirate Edward Teach, also known as Blackbeard. Several citizens were taken prisoner and held for medical supplies. After receiving the supplies, the people were returned unharmed and Blackbeard left the area traveling up to North Carolina and Virginia (Lambert 2019).

The seaport in Charleston also influenced the culture of the city. As with many port cities the influences of Europe and the Caribbean made their way into the culture of the residents of Charleston. During the early development of the city many of its inhabitants made their way to the colony from many different areas in Europe as well as other European colonies in the Caribbean (Greene 2016). One of the ways that this cultural influence can be seen is through the architecture of the city. After the movement on the city to its current location at Oyster Point, the town began to flourish and by the start of the eighteenth century it contained more than 100 houses. The first architectural development within the town was a wall that surrounded the city, constructed of brick and tabby with bastions and a drawbridge. Within the wall the city was laid out in a Baroque grid plan with a central square. During the 1730s the architecture of the city's structures followed a Post-Medieval and Jacobean style, constructed with half-timbering or stone and having steeply pitched roofs. A large majority of these structures were destroyed by fires that occurred during the eighteenth and nineteenth century (Poston 1997:24–25).

As the city's development increased so did the population. By the early 1700s, immigrants in the city originated from many different areas. The large majority of the residents English Anglican immigrants, the children of Barbadian sugar planters. Large numbers of French Huguenots also arrived and became successful in the city. From elsewhere in Europe came groups of Scots, German Palatines, and Sephardic Jews. With the increase in population and production of agricultural goods in the city many African slaves were also brought to the area. The initial groups of slaves brought to the South Carolina Colony were brought by the Barbadians in the early founding of the city. As time went on many more were brought to the colonies, with over forty percent entering North America through the port of Charleston and Sullivan's Island. The numbers of slaves living in the area developed a culture known today as Gullah, a mixing of African cultural traditions and language with regional cultures and language in the colonies (Bah 2016).

The economy of Charleston during the eighteenth century was primarily based on agricultural goods. During the era of the Lords Proprietors there was a search to find crops that could be produced in the Carolina colonies that could be monopolized and marketed to Europe. The experiences gained from early settlement in Virginia by the English and Barbadian planters that

settled in the Charleston area helped to push the cultivation of crops such as cotton, rice, tobacco, and flax, along with other exotic commodities such as olives, grapes, and silk. The first crop that took hold in the Carolinas as a cash crop was rice. Introduction of rice occurred in the 1690s, leading to the formation of plantations around Charleston, Georgetown, and elsewhere along the Carolina coast. During the 1730s rice was over produced in the colony causing a flooding of the market and leading to a decade of economic depression in the 1740s. Planters in Charleston then began to diversify their crop production and the production of indigo was started. During the Colonial Period in South Carolina Indigo production provided a competitive advantage to the British empire. However, as the British began to raise colonies in India, South Carolina Indigo fell out of favor for Indigo produced in India and other Asian colonies. Other economic goods were produced in this period such as naval stores, but they never grew to be a large part of the economy (Wheaton et al 1983:21-24).

2.3 Revolutionary War

At the start of the American Revolution Charleston had grown to become the fourth largest city in the Americas. The size and large commodity-based economy made the city an important resource to hold on to. Due to this the residents of Charleston were in large part supportive of the colony remaining in the hands of Great Britain, unlike the other colonies in America that became upset by increased taxes and regulations posed by the British. In South Carolina tensions began to grow due to the colonists wanting self-government. The first hostile actions that brought the revolution to South Carolina took place on the night of April 21, 1775, when a group seized arms and munitions in various armories around Charleston (Gordon 2003:15-21).

The British moved to attack Charleston during January 1776. After learning of the movement of the British toward South Carolina, the General Assembly lead by John Rutledge organized a force to defend the city lead by Colonel William Moultrie. Colonel Moultrie decided to construct a fort to protect the entrance to Charleston Harbor. The fort was constructed on Sullivan's Island, posing as a geographic obstacle shielding the harbor entrance. Construction was started on the fort in March 1776 by the 2nd SC Regiment commanded by Col. Moultrie. The fort consisted of palmetto logs filled with sand between the walls to stop enemy projectiles (Lewis 2019:2). The British attacked the fort on June 28, 1776, which consisted of a land assault on the north side of Sullivan's Island and a naval attack at Breech Inlet.

The attack was held off by the soldiers at Fort Moultrie and lead to an embarrassing defeat for the British. For the Patriot forces in Charleston this emboldened the Patriots in South Carolina. This led to the British focusing their forces to the north (Lewis 2019:3-4). However, the Revolution returned to Charleston in May 1780 when the British attacked Charleston again and captured the city. The British held the city until December 14, 1782, when they left, taking many of the residents of Charleston that remained loyal to the British Crown (Greene 2016).

2.4 Early Nineteenth Century

After the Revolution, Charleston continued to flourish as a city. In 1783 the city became officially incorporated and the name was changed from Charles Town to the present name Charleston. Other developments consisted of the development of the city's architecture. During the early part of the nineteenth century new buildings that were constructed consisted of Federal and Greek-revival styles. These improvements led to a defining moment in the city's history. Local politicians began to link the city with other markets and large investments were made in the railroad that linked the city with other production centers in South Carolina and across the eastern United States (Greene 2016).

During 1860 the city was also the location of the Democratic convention that led to a split in the party. Later in that year the city was also the scene of the Secession Convention that voted to bring South Carolina out of the Union. These events led to the beginning of the Civil War (Greene 2016).

2.5 Civil War

After the succession of South Carolina from the Union, Fort Sumter, located in Charleston Harbor, was held by a garrison of U.S. troops that became the last foothold of the U.S in the newly formed Confederate States of America. Tensions began to rise after the refusal of the U.S. troops to leave the fort. These tensions came to a head in April 1861 when Southern forces fired on the fort. This event was the start of the Civil War. U.S. troops would return to the city in 1863, shelling the city and forcing many of the residents to move out (Greene 2016).

By 1865, the war had taken a toll on Charleston leaving many of the buildings destroyed by enemy shells and a fire in 1861. To salvage records many of them were sent to the state capital in Columbia. However, many were lost during General William T. Sherman's march through the city. After the occupation of Charleston by Federal Troops the city became the capital of North and South Carolina. Freed slaves moved to the city during the occupation. Many of the people of color also stepped forward during the period of reconstruction and held positions of leadership in the city. After reconstruction ended these people were again forced out of these positions and the white elite resumed their political positions. This led to many different race riots in the city, taking place from 1866 to 1919 (Greene 2016).

In addition to riots and war during the mid to late nineteenth century many natural events affected the city. A large earthquake hit the city in 1886 causing \$6 million in damage and 83 deaths. Hurricanes also hit the city in 1885, 1893, and 1911. These hurricanes severely affected rice production in the area, which could never recover (Greene 2016).

2.6 Nineteenth Century

During the early part of the nineteenth century small economic improvements were made to the city; however, many of them failed, which led to Charleston falling behind the rest of the state in development. Restrictive alcohol and vice laws that had been put into place by South Carolina Governor Benjamin Tillman severely hurt business owners that depended upon tourism. One positive affect that this lack of economic development had on Charleston was the preservation of the historic architecture throughout the city. With the outbreak of World War I in Europe, the preservation of Charleston's past helped to draw tourists in and led to the phrase, "America's most historic city," being crafted by the city's mayor Tom Stoney during the 1920s (Greene 2016).

One key economic boost that came to Charleston was the relocation of the United States Navy Base from Beaufort County to North Charleston in 1901. Benjamin Tillman, who was by then a U.S. Senator, lobbied to have the base moved to the city. A location was settled on north of Charleston, approximately 10 miles north of the existing port. The large amount of land that was once home to many historic plantations along the Cooper River made the location an ideal area to construct the naval yard (Reed et al. 2009:6).

2.7 Development of the Charleston Navy Yard

The Charleston Navy Yard grew very slowly after its move to the area, employing only 1,200 people. This changed very quickly in 1917 when the U.S. entered World War I. Soon the navy yard employed over 5,000 civilians and an additional 1,000 women working in the navy's clothing factory. During the period of the navy yards use in 1917–1918 the training center taught over 25,000 Navy personnel and constructed many buildings including a 1,000-bed hospital. Workers in the yard repaired many naval vessels and constructed many ships including one gunboat and eight submarine chasers. In a short time the U.S. Navy had converted the once open plantations and marshland surrounding the Cooper River into a vast industrial landscape (Reed et al. 2009:6).

After the end of World War I and the beginning of the Great Depression, the Charleston Navy Yard was faced with dramatic cut backs and threats to decommission the navy yard. In 1922 the yard was saved from decommissioning by Senator Cotton Ed Smith. Even with this support the yard struggled to maintain importance. During the 1920s the navy yard's workforce shrank to only 479 employees. However, during the 1930s the Charleston Navy Yard was revived by New Deal policies set in motion by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Determined to build up the United States Navy, President Roosevelt approved funding of \$300 million to build up the U.S. Navy. The result for the Charleston Navy yard was tremendous construction activity. During the 1930s the Charleston Navy Yard was responsible for the construction of naval destroyers. The first completed destroyer, named *Sterret*, was completed in 1938 followed shortly by two more ships completed by the end of 1939 (Reed et al. 2009:7–8).

This increase in ship production and repairs led to a large influx of workers. In 1935, the Charleston Navy Yard created an apprenticeship program that insured a constant flow of qualified

workers for the yard. By 1939 employment at the naval yard had risen to 2,100 and continued to grow into the 1940s with a total of 9,000 employees by 1941. By the start of World War II, the Charleston Navy Yard had grown to play a key role in support for the United States' entrance in to the war (Reed et al. 2009:7).

With the start of the war the navy yard continued to grow. This growth in employment lead many new residents to flock to Charleston. To house these new workers infrastructure had to be constructed in and around the new North Charleston area. To complete these improvements the U.S. Navy worked with local and federal agencies to improve conditions around the city and construct schools, day-care centers, and housing units. By 1945, over 20,000 housing units had been constructed in the area (Reed et al. 2009:7-10).

After the conclusion of World War II, the Charleston Navy Yard once again saw a decrease in employment, reaching a low of 4,614 workers. The rise of the Cold War during the 1950s spared the ship yard's closure. Throughout the Cold War years the navy yard would evolve in many ways to keep up with military technology. One of these evolutions would be the use of nuclear power. During the 1970s and 1980s the navy yard's work revolved around nuclear weaponry and the use of submarines. However, with the collapse of the Soviet Union bringing an end to the Cold War the navy yard was once again in danger of closing. In 1995, South Carolina's political leaders in Washington and Charleston were unable to revive the navy yard and it was deactivated (Reed et al. 2009:11).

2.8 Development of North Charleston

The growth of the Charleston Navy Yard in the early 1900s led to growth north of the historic city of Charleston. Starting in 1912 a group of prominent local Charleston residents began to charter corporations in the North Charleston area. The corporations were the North Charleston Corporation, North Charleston arms Corporation, and North Charleston Water and Light Corporation. The purpose of these charters was to develop approximately 5,000 acres of land between Philbin's Creek and Noisette's Creek north of the Charleston Navy Yard. The land that was developed by the corporations established large manufacturing plants that would support the naval yard and boost the economy of Charleston. The first investors in the North Charleston Area were some of the cities wealthiest and most prominent individuals who were promoting the city's future and economic development. These investors included Robert Goodwyn Rhett, Robert L. Montague, Edward W. Durant, Henry Buist, Tristram T. Hyde, and James O'Hear. Together these men would search out new industries to bring to the Low Country and pushed for federal funds to help improve Charleston (Sinclair 2001:168-171).

The original hub of North Charleston was located around Park Circle. This area consisted of two concentric circles surrounded by a square with four streets extending out: these streets were named for the developers of the area Rhett, Montague, Durant, and Buist. In the center of the circles was a small park. Industries that were brought into the area outside of the Charleston Navy Yard consisted of the E.P. Buton Lumber Company and the General Asbestos and Rubber

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Company (GARCO). These industries created mill villages where employees and their families were housed. The influx of residents in the area saw brought utilities to the area to support the residents and in 1915 a trolley service began that connected the area with downtown Charleston (Kleinschmidt 2006:5).

Continuing to grow in 1935 the North Charleston Public Service District was established to provide utilities to the area of North Charleston. The outbreak of World War II brought a population boom to North Charleston due to increased employment at the Charleston Navy Yard. This created a need for housing developments and the construction of new schools, including the Ben Tillman School (the original name of the Ronald E. McNair Elementary School). Many of the houses were quickly built prefabricated housing developments such as the Ben Tillman Homes, Liberty Homes, and Palmetto Gardens. Other businesses and churches soon appeared to support the increase in population (Kleinschmidt 2006:6).

In 1971, residents of North Charleston voted to create the City of North Charleston. This was challenged by the City of Charleston but was upheld and North Charleston was officially incorporated in June 1972. Though the city is relatively new it has grown to encompass approximately 60 square miles and is home to 80,000 residents, making it the third largest city in South Carolina. After the closing of the Charleston Navy Yard, the Charleston Naval Complex Redevelopment Authority was formed in 1996 to replace the lost jobs from the naval yard's closure. Today approximately 6,000 people are still employed in the old navy yard (Kleinschmidt 2006:7–8).

3.0 RONALD E. MCNAIR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

3.1 History of the Ronald E. McNair Elementary School

During the increase in population caused by the United States' entrance into World War II and the increase in employment at the Charleston Navy Yard, there was a need to develop housing for workers employed by the naval yard and other industries. The City of Charleston in cooperation with the United States Navy planned to construct housing, schools, and other buildings to support this population increase (Reed et al. 2009:7-10). In 1942, South Carolina received funding for defense housing projects to be constructed in the state. In all the state received funding for nine housing projects. Charleston received the most funding, being awarded \$11 million dollars for six housing projects and an additional \$2 million dollars for defense public works. One of the six housing projects being constructed was the Ben Tillman Homes, which was initially proposed to contain 400 housing units costing \$1,449,537 (Charleston News and Courier, February 22, 1942:29) The housing development was likely named for South Carolina Congressman Ben Tillman for the persistent lobbying that he undertook to get the Navy to construct the shipyard in Charleston (City of North Charleston 2020)



Figure 3. Ben Tillman Homes in July 1945 (News and Courier 1945).

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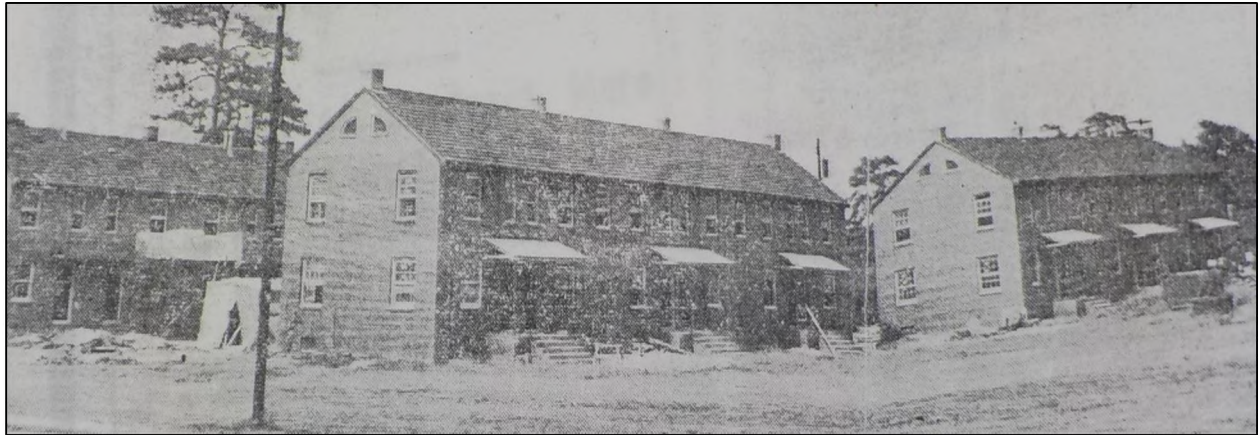


Figure 4. Ben Tillman Homes in 1942 (Charleston County Public Library).

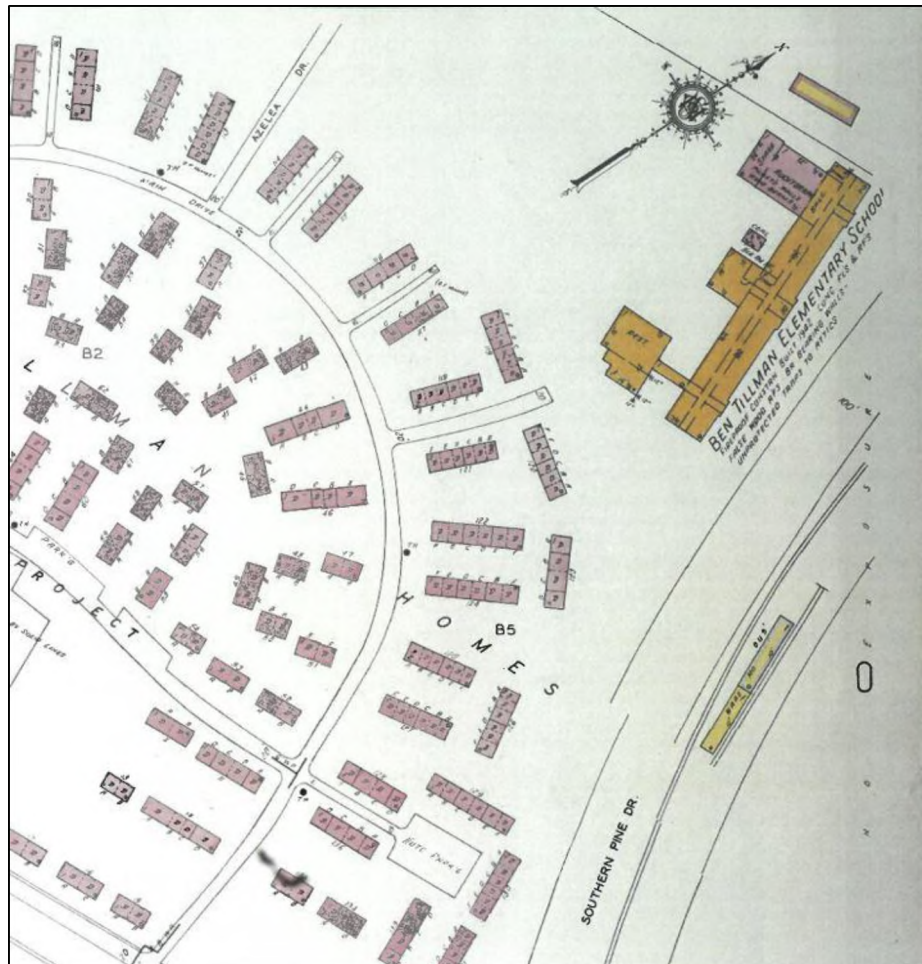


Figure 5. Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. Map of Charleston, South Carolina Depicting the Ben Tillman Elementary School and the Ben Tillman Homes in 1944 (Sanborn Map Co. 1944:0085).

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The Ben Tillman housing development was designed by local Charleston architect David B. Hyer. David B. Hyer was the superintendent of construction for the Charleston Navy Yard and later became an influential Modernist Architect designing many buildings in Charleston and Orlando, Florida. Other buildings designed by Hyer include the Buist School, St. Barnabas Lutheran Church, Andrew B. Murry Vocational School, Julian Mitchell School, and many more. The development was surveyed in 1940 and construction of the housing development was started in 1942 by Long Construction Company (Post and Courier, October 8, 1940:12). Along with the Ben Tillman housing development (Figures 3 and 4) a school was proposed for the children of the defense workers that would live in the housing development.

Before the construction of Ben Tillman Elementary school there was a total of eleven elementary schools in North Charleston's Cooper River School District 4. These schools consisted of three white schools and eight African American Schools, in 1928. White schools located in the district were North Charleston Elementary, Chicora Elementary, and Ladson Elementary. African American elementary schools in the district were Four Mile and Redmount Elementary Schools, located south of North Charleston; Six Mile, Liberty, and Saxon Elementary Schools, located near Midland Park; and Ashley Phosphate, Ladson, and Lincolnville Elementary Schools, located north of North Charleston. During the build up of the Navy Yard the Cooper River School District soon began operating a maximum capacity. Between 1937 and 1938 the enrolment in Charleston's public schools increased 57 percent. Many of the schools in the area during this period were enlarged and improved by the Public Works Administration (PWA). By the start of World War II, bringing even more student enrollment in the district the construction of new schools was needed (Chicora Elementary School 2020).

In December 1942, 3.066 acres of land was purchased by the Housing Authority of the City of Charleston to construct the Ben Tillman School (Charleston County 1942). Construction of the school started in January 1943. The building was designed by David B. Hyer, who was the architect for the Ben Tillman Homes directly adjacent to the proposed school (Figure 5). The Housing Authority awarded the bid for construction of the school to Daniels Construction Company who had the lowest bid of \$372,200 (Charleston News and Courier, December 29, 1942:12).

The initial plan was for the Ben Tillman School to be opened by December 1943 (Figure 6) (The Charleston Evening Post, November 13, 1942:2); however, slight delays in construction prolonged the opening until January 18, 1943 (The Charleston Evening Post, January 18, 1943:11). The school was constructed to have 31 classrooms and a capacity of 1,200 (Charleston Evening Post, November 13, 1942:2). The final inspection of the school was made by engineers led by Charles Elmore from PBA located in Atlanta, Georgia. Harry Morse, the superintendent of the Cooper River School District made the announcement of the opening of the Ben Tillman School and appointed W.B. Goodwin as the first principal (The Charleston Evening Post, January 18, 1943:11).

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In 1963 South Carolina's public schools were the last schools in the south to begin desegregation. Starting with Charleston County School District, in September of 1963 eleven African American students attended formerly all-white schools in Charleston (Dobrasco 2020). In 1964 the Ben Tillman school became one of the first two all-white schools in the Cooper River School District to host African American students. On June 10, 1964 Cooper River School District superintendent Gordon Garrett announced that four African American Students would be attending Ben Tillman Elementary School and Garrett High School. The two students that attended Ben Tillman Elementary School were Janet Christopher and Robert Neeley, children of a Navy enlisted man stationed at the Charleston Naval Yard (The High Point Enterprise, June 11, 1964:10).

One of the School's most notable principals was Albert Cleveland Corcoran. Corcoran graduated Clemson Agricultural and Mechanical College in 1919 with a degree in Textile Industry. While at Clemson he wrote the schools alma mater (Clemson University 1919). Corcoran started as a teacher in the Charleston County School District in 1933 and taught at North Charleston High School and Elementary School, Ladson Elementary, and Midland Park Elementary. His last employment with the school district was a principal of the Ben Tillman Elementary School. Corcoran served the school as principal shortly after its opening in 1943 and held the position for 26 years before his retirement. Corcoran was praised as being one of the best educators of his time. To Honor Albert Cleveland Corcoran with the naming of a new elementary school in Northwood Estates named A.C. Corcoran Elementary in 1969 (The News and Courier, May 16, 1969:6).

The name of the school was changed in February 1987 to the Ronald E. McNair Elementary School to honor astronaut Ronald E. McNair from Lake City, South Carolina who was killed in the 1986 explosion of the Space Shuttle Challenger. This change was requested by the school's staff and students who felt that the name Ben Tillman posed negative connotations due to his outspoken racist political views. The naming of the school after Ronald E. McNair was proposed by Principal Annette Goodwin and a first-grade teach Mary Lou Taylor. McNair was selected by an Image Committee started at the school led by Taylor. According to the committee McNair fulfilled criteria that was established by the committee, being an accomplished scholar, musician, athlete, and family man. Along with the name change the school's mascot was changed to the "Challengers," becoming a child wearing a space helmet. The motto of the school was also changed to "Bound for Greatness." This was the second school to be named after McNair, the first being a junior high school in his hometown of Lake City, South Carolina (Morgan 1987:16). A ceremony was held on National Young Astronauts day with Niki Wenger, finalist for the Teacher-in-Space program as the keynote speaker. The new Ronald E. McNair Elementary School also established a Young Astronauts Club that was comprised of 20 students (The News and Courier, April 26, 1987:2-B). In 1998, the school was honored by receiving the Literary Spot Award, becoming one of only two schools in Charleston County to receive the award (Lawrence 1998:7-D). Due to low numbers of attendees, the school was eventually used to house other schools that needed space during construction on other buildings. One of these schools that was housed at Ronald E. McNair Elementary was the Orange Grove Charter Elementary School, from 2007 –

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2009 (Copeland 2019). Later in 2011 Chicora Elementary School was moved to McNair Elementary School until the new Chicora Elementary School building was completed in 2016 (Chicora Elementary 2020).

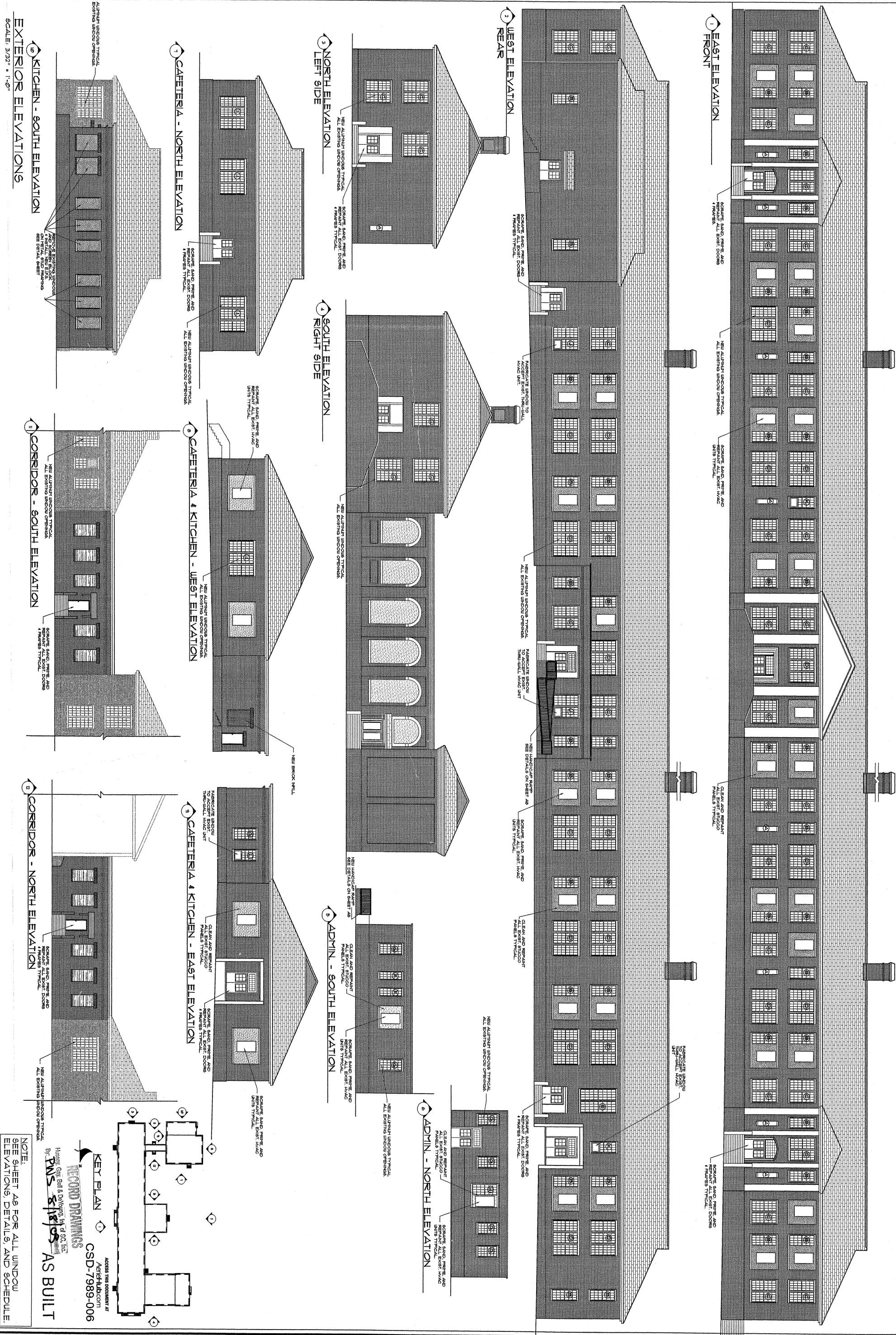


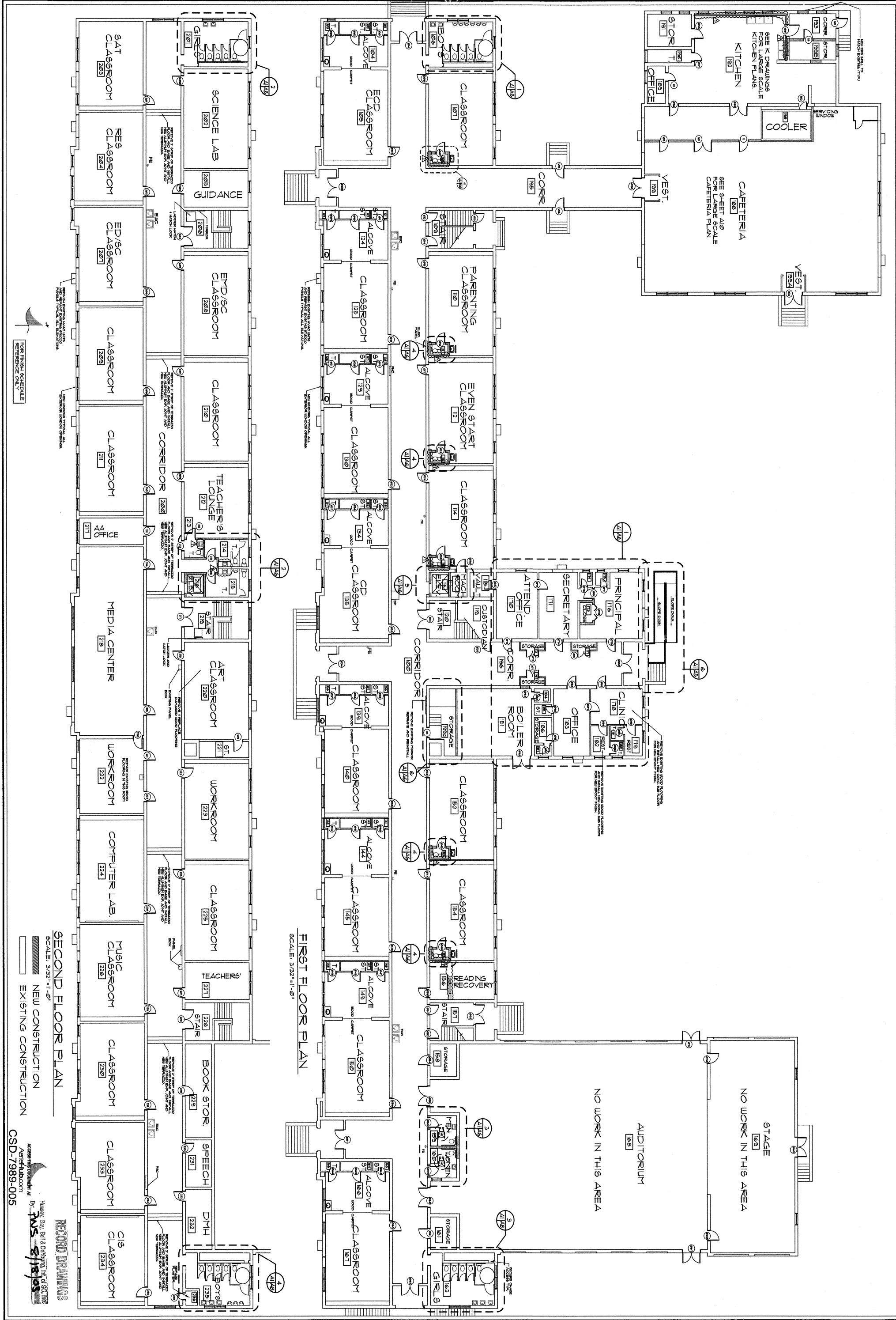
Figure 6. Ben Tillman Elementary School ca. 1942 – 1952 (South Carolina Archives, Series S112113).

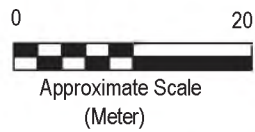
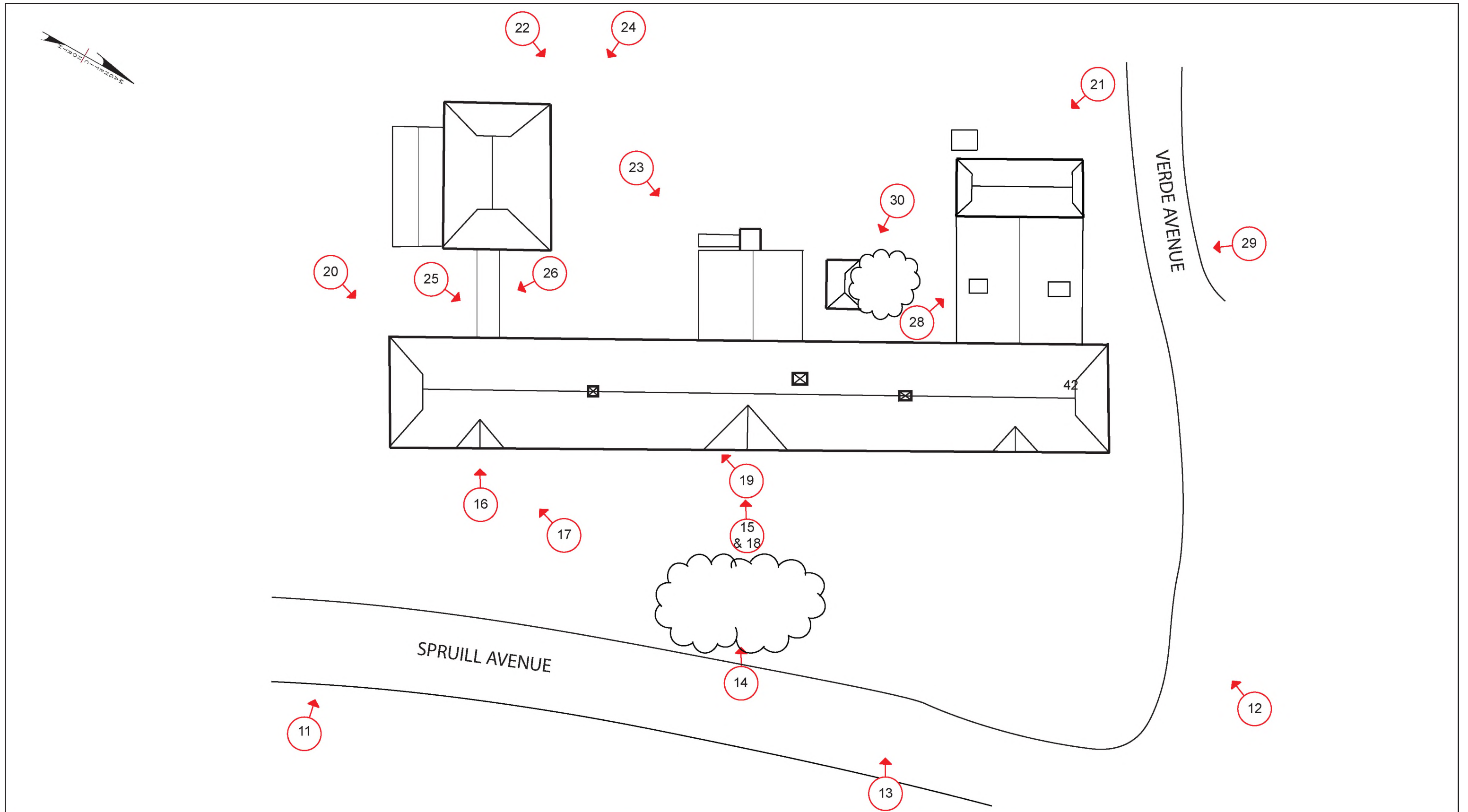
3.2 Architectural Description

Located at 3795 Spruill Avenue, the Ronald E. McNair Elementary School consists of a large symmetrical two-story structure facing the northeast (Figures 7, 8, 11–14). Exterior materials on the school consist of an American Bond brick exterior. Covering the roof of the school is a hip roof sheathed in asphalt shingles. Two brick chimneys are located within the roof surface. The northeast façade of the school consists of three recessed entry doors with steps leading to concrete pathways. The central entry door is defined by a large front facing gable roof with a round gable vent. This central entryway is capped by a flat white concrete lintel (Figure 15).

The entryways flanking either side of the central entry way are covered by flat arches constructed of brick (Figure 16). Windows on the northeast façade of the school alternate between paired, tripartite, and single windows. Some of these windows have been moved to accommodate modern HVAC units. The windows themselves consist of vinyl twelve-over-twelve double hung sash windows that replaced the original windows (Figures 17–19). Located on the northwest and southeast elevations of the school are two additional entryways covered by flat lintels and brick







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| Project Mngr: | MMD |
| Drawn By: | MAD |
| Checked By: | BGG |
| Approved By: | BGG |

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| Scale: | AS SHOWN |
| File No. | 73197288 |
| Date: | July 2020 |

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| PHOTOGRAPH KEY - EXTERIOR |
| RONALD E. MCNAIR SCHOOL MITIGATION |
| CHARLESTON CO., SOUTH CAROLINA |

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| Figure |
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Figure 11. McNair Elementary School, facing northwest.



Figure 12. McNair Elementary School, facing southeast.

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Figure 13. McNair Elementary School, facing southwest.



Figure 14. McNair Elementary School, facing southwest.

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Figure 15. Central entryway, facing northwest.

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Figure 16. Front entryway located south of center, facing southwest.

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steps (Figure 20). Windows on these elevations mimic the windows of the front façade and consist of double and single double hung sash windows.

Three rear wings extend off of the southwest elevation of the building (Figure 21 and 22). These wings consist of a central flat roofed wing with a central recessed rear entry door; this wing houses the administration offices for the school as well as a nurse's station and bathrooms. Windows on this wing are the same as the main structure and consist of paired and single double hung sash windows (Figure 23). The southern wing houses the cafeteria. This wing is covered by a hip roof and is connected by a long hallway with a flat roof and windows that have been enclosed. Two entrances are located along this hallway on the north and south. They consist of brick steps leading to a stoop covered by a small shed roof supported by decorative wooden brackets. Windows on the cafeteria consist of tripartite windows identical to the windows located on the rest of the building (Figures 24–26). The northern rear wing of the building houses a large auditorium. This wing is covered by a flat roof with a gable roof section located at the western end. Windows on this wing consisted of large arched roof windows with accented key stone arches. However, the windows have all been removed and are enclosed with stucco siding. Entrances are located on all three sides of this wing and are consistent with the entries located on the cafeteria wing (Figure 27–29). One out building is located to the rear of the building and consists of a hip roof storage shed covered by American Bond brick exterior (Figure 30).

The interior of the school consists of a long interior hallway with a tiled floor running from the southeast to the northwest. Located on either side of this hallway are classrooms (Figures 31–33). Classrooms in the school consist of several different types. The most common type is a simple open room with wood flooring. Other types consist of a large open room with a wooden floor and a small alcove room located to the right or left and a single large media room on the second floor (Figure 35–38). Three stairwells are located in the school: one central stair, one on south east side, and another on the northwest (Figure 40). Located at either end of the building on the first and second floors are bathrooms (Figure 39). The plan of the first and second story are consistent in layout. Located adjacent to the central stairwell is a small elevator, likely added later. In the cafeteria wing the interior consists of a large open eating area and a kitchen and utility space located to the southeast (Figure 41). The auditorium wing consists of a large slightly sloped seating area with a tile floor. This seating area faces a wooden stage area with curtains and a small fly system. Steps on either side of the stage provide access (Figures 42 and 43). The central rear wing consists of many offices and small bathrooms (Figure 34). Located on the northwestern side is a nurse's station. Beneath this wing, with access only from the outside, is a boiler room that houses the current mechanical systems of the school (Figure 44).

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Figure 17. Windows located flanking the central entryway of the main structure, facing the southwest.



Figure 18. Windows located around the central entryway of the main structure, facing southwest.

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Figure 19. Twelve-over-twelve double hung sash windows located on the main structure.

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Figure 20. McNair Elementary School southeast elevation, facing north.



Figure 21. McNair Elementary southwest elevation, facing east.

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Figure 22. McNair Elementary southwest elevation, facing northeast.



Figure 23. Central rear wing, facing northeast.

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Figure 24. Rear cafeteria wing, facing east.



Figure 25. Hallway with enclosed windows and side-entry door.

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Figure 26. Decorative wood work supporting the shed roof above the stoop.



Figure 27. Auditorium wing, facing southeast.

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Figure 28. Auditorium wing showing enclosed windows, facing northwest.



Figure 29. Northwest elevation of McNair Elementary showing the auditorium wing, facing southeast.

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Figure 30. Outbuilding located to the rear of McNair Elementary, facing east.



Figure 31. Central first floor hallway, facing northwest.

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Figure 32. Classroom entry door located on the second floor, facing northeast.

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Figure 33. Central hallway located on the second floor, facing south.



Figure 34. Administrative office first floor, facing northeast.

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Figure 35. Standard classroom located on the second floor, facing northwest.



Figure 36. Media classroom located on the second floor, facing south.

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Figure 37. Standard Classroom located on the first floor, facing west.



Figure 38. Classroom with small alcove area located on the first floor, facing southeast.

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Figure 39. Second floor bathroom, facing west.

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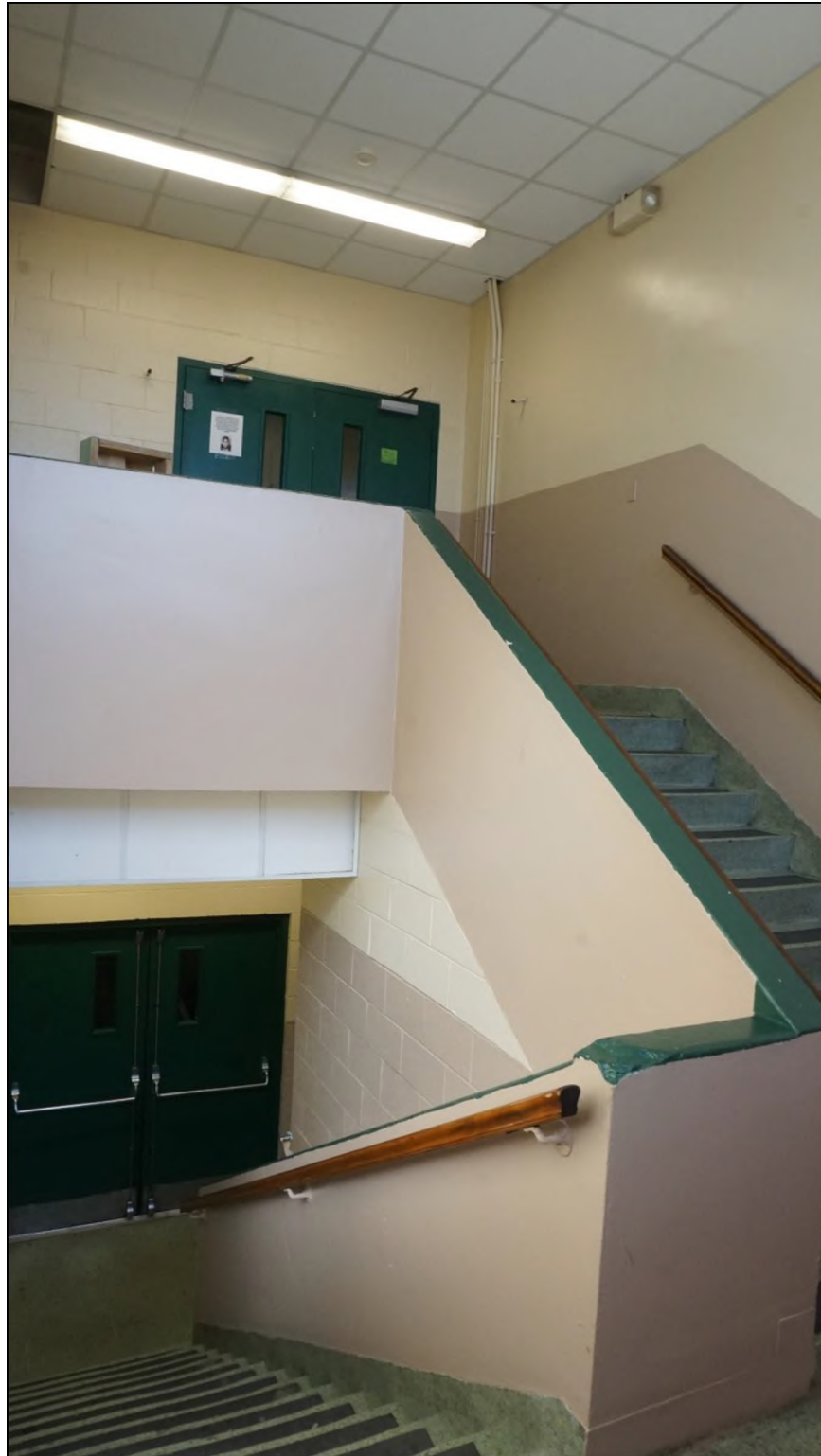


Figure 40. Central stairwell, facing east.

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Figure 41. Cafeteria, facing southwest.

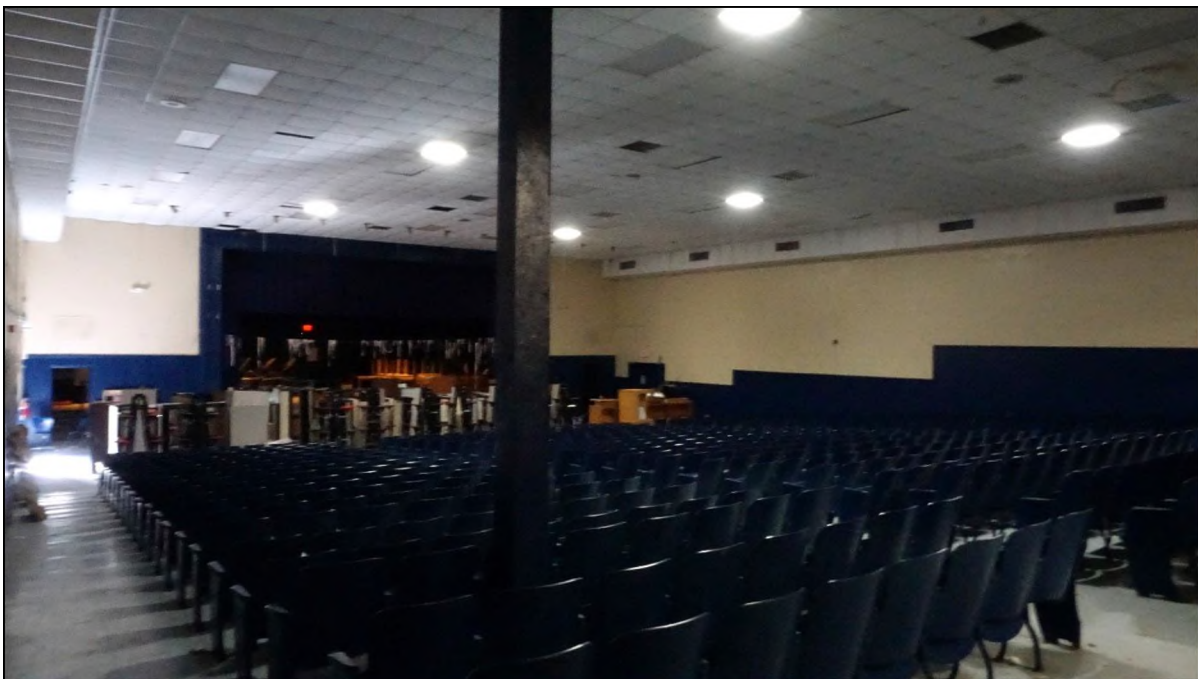


Figure 42. Auditorium, facing west.

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Figure 43. Stage area in the auditorium, facing northwest.



Figure 44. Boiler room, facing north.

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4.0 CONCLUSION

Terracon has completed the historical documentation of the Ronald E. McNair Elementary School located at 3795 Spruill Avenue in North Charleston, Charleston County, South Carolina. This investigation was designed to mitigate the adverse effects (demolition) to the school, which was determined to be eligible for the NRHP in 1995 (Preservation Consultants, Inc., 1995). The project was conducted for compliance with the South Carolina Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management's (OCRM) Coastal Zone Consistency Certification program. With completion of this document, Terracon recommends that demolition of the Ronald E. McNair Elementary School be allowed to proceed as planned.

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APPENDIX A: PREVIOUS SURVEY FORMS AND PHOTOS

South Carolina Statewide Survey Site Form
State Historic Preservation Office
P.O. Box 11669 • Columbia • SC • 29211 • (803) 734-8609



IDENTIFICATION

1. Control Number U / 19 / 0987 / 0891526 2. NR Microfiche index # _____
county census designated place site #
3. Historic name(s): Ben Tillman Graded School
Ronald E. McNair Elementary School
4. Common name: _____
5. Address/location: 3975 Spruill Ave.
City: North Charleston Vicinity of: _____ County: Charleston TMS: 469-03-0-01
6. Ownership: private (1) city (2) county (3) state (4) federal (5) 9. Current use(s): single dwelling (1) multi dwelling (2)
7. Category: building (1) site (2) structure (3) object (4) commercial (3) other (0)
8. Historic use(s): single dwelling (1) multi dwelling (2) commercial (3) 10. Potential: NR (1) NR historic district (2) archaeological (3)
other (0)
11. Status/date: listed individually in National Register / / / / name _____
____ listed as part of NR historic district / / / / Name of district _____
____ contributing ____ non-contributing
____ listed individually National Historic Landmark / / / /
____ determined eligible—owner objection / / / /
____ determined NOT eligible / / / /
____ deferred by review board / / / /
____ rejected by Washington / / / /
____ pending federal nomination / / / /
____ completed Preliminary Information Sheet (PIS) / / / /
____ part of NHL district / / / /
____ DOE process / / / /
____ rejected by review board / / / /
____ removed from NR / / / /
____ removed from survey / / / /
____ demolished / / / /
____ nomination on file/never processed / / / /

12. Number of contributing properties: _____

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION: When other (0) is chosen, enter data on reverse side under category 20 or 21.

13. Construction Date 1942 14. Alteration Date _____ 15. Architectural style or influence _____
16. Commercial Form — circle appropriate response(s)
- | | | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| A) 2-part commercial block | D) stacked vertical block | G) temple front | J) Central block w/wings |
| B) 1-part commercial block | E) 2-part vertical block | H) vault | K) arcaded block |
| C) enframed window wall | F) 3-part vertical block | I) enframed block | 0) other |

17. DESCRIPTION: Select as many responses as appropriate.

- | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| A) HISTORIC CORE SHAPE rectangular (1) square (2) L (3) T (4) U (5) H (6) octagonal (7) irregular (8) other (0) | D) ROOF SHAPE gable (end to front) (1) gable (lateral) (2) hip (3) cross gable (4) pyramidal (5) flat (6) truncated hip (7) gambrel (8) mansard (9) salt box (10) jerkinhead (11) gable-on-hip (12) mono-pitch (14) not visible (15) other (0) | F) PORCH ROOF SHAPE shed (1) hip (2) gable (3) pedimented gable (4) flat (5) engaged (6) partially engaged (7) gable-on-hip or shed (8) engaged porte cochere (9) other (0) | H) WINDOWS single (1) double (2) tripartite (3) grouped (4) decorative (5) display (6) other (0) |
| B) STORIES 1 story (1) 1 1/2 stories (2) 2 stories (3) 2 1/2 stories (4) 3 stories (5) other (0) | E) PORCH WIDTH entrance bay only (1) over 1 bay, less than full facade (2) full facade (3) facade & left elevation (4) facade & right elevation (5) facade & both elevations (6) other (0) | G) NUMBER OF CHIMNEYS ____ exterior (1) ____ interior end (2) ____ interior (3) ____ central (4) ____ flue (5) ____ double shouldered (6) ____ not visible (7) ____ other (0) | I) PANE CONFIGURATION tracery (1) Queen Anne block-glass (2) Prairie/bungalow/craftsman geometric (3) not visible (4) other (0) |
| C) PORCH HEIGHT 1 story (1) 1 story w/deck (2) 2 or more stories (3) 2 or more with tiers (4) roofed balcony over 1 story hip/shed (5) other (0) | | | J) DOORS single (1) 3 double (2) transom (3) fanlight (4) sidelights (5) other (0) |

K) CONSTRUCTION METHOD

masonry (1)
 frame (2)
 log (3)
 steel (4)
 other (0)

L) EXTERIOR WALLS

weatherboard (1)
 beaded weatherboard (2)
 shiplap (3)
 flushboard (4)
 wood shingle (5)
 stucco (6)
 tabby (7)
 brick (8)
 brick veneer (9)
 stone veneer (10)
 cast-stone (11)
 marble (12)
 asphalt roll (13)
 synthetic siding (14)
 asbestos shingle (15)
 pigmented structural glass (16)
 other (0)

M) PORCH DETAILS

chamfered posts (1)
 turned posts (2)
 supports on pedestals (3)
 columns (4)
 posts (5)
 piers (6)
 pillars (7)
 freestanding posts (8)
 balustrade (9)
 apron wall (10)
 turned balusters (11)
 decorative sawn balusters (12)
 slat balusters (13)
 other sawn/turned work (14)
 insect screening (15)
 porte cochere (16)
 other (0)

N) CHIMNEY MATERIAL

brick (1)
 stuccoed brick (2)
 stone (3)
 brick & stone (4)
 other (0)

O) ROOF MATERIAL

composition shingle (1)
 pressed metal shingle (2)
 wood shingle (3)
 slate (4)
 raised seam metal (5)
 other metal (6)
 rolled roofing (7)
 not visible (8)
 tile (9)
 other (0)

P) FOUNDATION

not visible (1)
 brick pier (2)
 brick pier with fill (3)
 brick (4)
 stuccoed masonry (5)
 stone pier (6)
 stone (7)
 concrete block (8)
 slab construction (9)
 basement (10)
 raised basement (11)
 other (0)

Q) DECORATIVE ELEMENT MATERIAL

cast iron (1)
 pressed metal (2)
 terra cotta (3)
 granite (4)
 marble (5)
 cast stone (6)
 brick (7)
 wood (8)
 pigmented glass (9)
 stone (10)
 stucco (11)
 other (0)

R) INTERIOR FEATURES (list)**18. HISTORIC OUTBUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES:**

none (1)
 none visible (2)
 garage (3)
 garage w/living area (4)
 shed (5)
 kitchen (6)

tenant house (7)
 other house (8)
 office (9)
 barn (10)
 tobacco barn (11)
 dairy (12)

crib (13)
 smokehouse (14)
 slave house (15)
 privy (16)
 well (17)
 springhouse (18)

store (19)
 windmill (20)
 chicken coop (21)
 silo (22)
 washhouse (23)
 root cellar (24)
 other (0)

19. SURROUNDINGS: residential (1) residential/commercial (2) commercial (3) rural (4) rural community (5) industrial (6) other (0)

20. ADDITIONAL DESCRIPTIVE COMMENTS: 8 & 9: school, auditorium, and lunchroom. 19: adjacent to housing complex (#1527). J: recessed entries. Three-bay central entry projection with pedimented front gable; outer entry bays have rounded-arched ground-level openings. One-story (CONT)

21. ALTERATIONS I: auditorium windows infilled; metal casement windows at main building.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

22. Theme(s): Education; Military **23. Period(s):** 1941-present **24. Important persons:**

25. Architect(s): **Source:**

26. Builder(s): Federal Works Administration **Source:** documented

27. Historical data The first of six schools built by the Federal Works Administration, Ben Tillman opened in Sept. 1942, its pupils drawn from the 1,000 housing units in Ben Tillman and George Legare Housing Complexes.

28. Informant/Bibliography Charleston Evening Post, 10 July 1947

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

29. Quadrangle name: Charleston **30. Photographs:** print (1) slides (2) negatives (3)

31. Other documentation: survey back-up files (1) National Register files (2) tax act files (3) grant files (4) state historical marker files (5) environmental review files (6) HABS/HAER (7) SCIAA (8) other (0) #

32. Recorder name/firm SF Preservation Consultants **33. Date recorded** 3/23/94

Control Number U 19 0987 0091526
county census designated place site #

20. rear wing across five center bays. Auditorium at northwest (rear of right elevation) has side-gable-on-hip roof; attached to main building by five-bay deep gable connector, with rounded-arched oversized window openings with keystones. Lunchroom at southeast (rear of left elevation) is nearly square, with gable-on-hip roof, and retains 9/9 sash in its triple window openings; principal lunchroom entry has shed portico on ornate brackets. The school is otherwise unembellished, stuccoed cast-cement flat lintels at all window openings and center entry being the sole decorative element.

(Attach photos here)

| Photo # | Photo Index # | View of | N, S, E, W |
|---------|---------------|--|--------------|
| 1 | R8, F36 | Facade | NE |
| 2 | R8, F34 | Facade & Left | NE, SE |
| 3 | R8, F35 | Entry Bay | NE |
| 4 | R8, F33 | Left Elevation & Wing | Lunchroom SE |
| 5 | R8, F30 | Rear | SW |
| 6 | R9, F3 | Rear & Auditorium, View from Ben Tillman Homes | |
| 7 | R8, F29 | Lunchroom Wing | NW, SW |
| 8 | R8, F32 | Lunchroom Entry | NW |

Date Taken/Recorded by: Preservation Consultants















