

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received NOV 7 1986

date entered DEC 4 1986

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic McCray School

and/or common

2. Location

street & number N.W. Side of N.C. 62, 400 ft. S. of Jct. W/SR1757 not for publication

city, town vicinity of Burlington

state North Carolina code 037 county Alamance code 001

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: proposed museum

4. Owner of Property

name Alamance Board of Education

street & number 609 Ray Street

city, town Graham vicinity of state North Carolina

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Alamance County Courthouse, Registry of Deeds

street & number Courthouse

city, town Graham state North Carolina 27253

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Alamance County Architectural Heritage
Carl Lounsbury has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1980 federal state county local

depository for survey records Survey and Planning Branch, N.C. Division of Archives and History

city, town Raleigh state North Carolina 27611

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The McCray School is located on North Carolina Highway 62 in northern Alamance County. The school and the community in which it is located derive their name from the McCray Post Office which was established in the late nineteenth century. The school is one of the best-preserved examples in rural Alamance County of an early twentieth century one-room school. McCray School stands on a one-acre grassy lot, set back from the road approximately eighty feet. Clusters of oak trees shade the front and back of the building.

Built between 1915 and 1916, the McCray School is a one-story, two-bay, frame structure with a tin gable-front roof. The school is sheathed in plain weatherboard. Ornamentation is limited to the corner boards and the simple molding beneath the eaves on the main elevation. A log sill supported by granite boulders serves as the school's foundation. According to documentary photographs, various other rural Alamance County schoolhouses built during the 1910s shared similar architectural features, but the majority of these schools have been demolished.

The main elevation of McCray School faces south, displays a horizontal six-panel door with plain surrounds, and is sheltered by an attached, nearly full-facade shed tin roof porch supported by a plain post and two decorative turned pilasters. The west end of the porch was enclosed to form a closet when the school was built. Three two-over-two sash windows with missing panes and plain surrounds are located on the east elevation. A smaller four-over-four sash window with similar surrounds is located on the west side of the porch's enclosed end.

According to former students, there were originally two sash windows along the rear elevation, but they were removed during the construction of a rear addition in 1925. An oak tree fell during a storm in 1981 and destroyed the 1925 addition. The tin roof, one-fourth of the weatherboard sheathing on the east and west elevations, and the entire rear wall were replaced with modern materials in 1984; a single two-over-two sash window located on the rear elevation was also added at that time.

The McCray School is one-room deep, and the interior is completely sheathed in two-inch tongue-and-groove paneling. A blackboard stretches almost the entire length of the windowless west wall. A horizontal, white, six-panel door with its original hardware leads into the closet. Nail holes along the closet's left wall mark the places where the children hung their coats. Tongue-and-groove paneling which sheaths the closet's interior is also used as crown molding. Other interior features include the plain white painted surrounds that enframe all of the windows and doors. Incomplete ceiling repairs make it impossible to determine the original location of the wood burning stove.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1915/16 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The McCray School is one of two remaining early twentieth century one-room schools built for black students in rural Alamance County. The property was donated to the black community in 1915 by Albert Graham (1830-1916), a prosperous Alamance County landowner. Andrew Nash, a local carpenter, and community volunteers built the McCray School between 1915 and 1916. The Alamance County Board of Education purchased the school in 1919. A rear addition was erected in 1925. The school continued in operation until the consolidation of four rural Alamance County schoolhouses in 1951. McCray was then used as a community center until an oak tree fell and destroyed the rear addition in 1981. Since that time, various high school vocational education students and McCray residents have been restoring the schools for use as a museum.

Criteria Assessment:

- A. The McCray School is the best-preserved example of an early twentieth century one-room school built for black children in rural Alamance County. It is typical of the educational facilities which served the county's rural black population from c. 1869 to the mid-twentieth century.
- C. The school embodies the architectural features commonly associated with one-room schools in Alamance County and North Carolina, including a rural location, a gable-front roof, weatherboard sheathing, and a lack of ornamentation.

9. Major Bibliographical References

"See Continuation Sheet Item #9".

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 1

Quadrangle name Lake Burlington

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

11	7	6	4	5	6	1	9	1	0	4	1	0	1	4	9	1	6	1	0
Zone	Easting			Northing															

B

Zone	Easting			Northing															

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification

The property being nominated is shown on Alamance County tax map. Township 5, sheet number 5-7. Property is outlined in red. This one acre tract has been associated with the McCray School since the time of its construction.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county N/A code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Shelia A. Bumgarner Preservation Consultant

organization date May 10, 1986

street & number 233 Rader Street telephone (919) 226-5400

city or town Burlington state North Carolina 27215

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service

State Historic Preservation Officer signature William S. Frie, Jr.

title State Historic Preservation Officer date October 15, 1986

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Shelene S. Byers date 12-4-86
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Significance: McCray School Item number

8

Page 1

The McCray School, like the northern Alamance County farm community in which it is located, derives its name from the McCray Post Office, established in the late nineteenth century. Between 1877 and the 1950s, an average of twenty-four small rural black schools, including McCray, were operated by the Alamance County Public School System.² The existence of many rural schools, such as McCray, depended on the patronage of wealthy local citizens.³ Albert Graham (1830-1916), a prominent Alamance County landowner, agreed to sell some land to the "colored people" for a school in 1915, but the deed for the McCray School was not recorded.⁴ Andrew Nash, a local carpenter, and other McCray residents built the small one-room structure between 1915 and 1916.⁵ A McCray School for white students was established in 1901 near the McCray Baptist Church, approximately two miles from the McCray School for blacks.⁶ Prior to the completion of the McCray School, black children in McCray attended school two miles away at the Arches Grove School.⁷

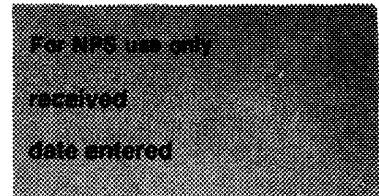
McCray School is a simple, almost austere building. Modern plumbing was never installed, and drinking water was obtained from a nearby farm. A centrally located wood burning stove was the only source of heat. Parents chopped a supply of wood at the beginning of each school term, which ran from October to April. While the majority of rural schools featured rustic homemade benches, the Alamance County Board of Education furnished the McCray School with long, factory-made benches with three, small attached desks for the students.⁸

Similar physical conditions existed in most schools, both black and white, throughout rural North Carolina until state, local, and private funds, as well as public support for rural education, began to increase during the early 1900s and continued to expand over the next three decades. However, as the expense of maintaining a dual school system grew, and the reluctance of white taxpayers to fund black schools was widespread, the use of scattered small schools continued in the rural black communities long after the establishment of modern educational facilities for rural white children.⁹

Little is known concerning the background of the teachers who taught at the McCray School or of their exact periods of employment. Ailene Ducks was the first teacher at the school. Other teachers included Mr. Boydken, Louise R. Fox (1925-1929), Eunice Parker (resigned in 1942), and Merle Brown McCrae who taught at the McCray School from 1929 until the school closed in 1951.¹⁰

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet Significance: McCray School Item number 8 Page 2

The first reference to the McCray School in the minutes of the Alamance County Board of Education is recorded on January 13, 1919 when J. A. Gentry, a local landowner, proposed to move the schoolhouse and erect a building on the property.¹¹ Gentry had purchased three tracts of Albert Graham's estate in 1918, including the McCray School property.¹² After considerable debate, the board decided not to move the school, but agreed to a land exchange if Gentry furnished the deed to the property for the sum of \$35.00. A deed recorded on May 19, 1919 indicates Gentry sold the land to the Alamance Country Board of Education.¹³

The McCray School provided the black residents in this community with a strong focal point, and the parents were actively involved in school activities such as recitals, plays, and fundraisers.¹⁴ By 1925, there were sixty students at McCray, and it became apparent the school was overcrowded. A group of black citizens from McCray petitioned the School Board for an addition in 1925. The board approved, providing the parents were responsible for cutting the trees, hauling the logs to the sawmill, returning the lumber to the site, and hiring a carpenter. The board agreed to pay for the mill work, nails, locks, hinges, and window frames. Eston Parker, A. B. Warren, and Eugene Jeffries, members of the McCray School Committee appointed by the School Board, were responsible for the remainder of the project.¹⁵ The rear addition housed students in grades four through seven.

Few changes occurred at the McCray School during the 1930s. The school term ran six months, which was average for black schools in Alamance County. The term for white schools in the county was eight months. A group of parents, representing the black school districts, appeared before the School Board in 1933, and requested that the school term be extended to eight months. The board agreed to the extension of the school term in the black schools, but it should be noted that the minimum school term in all North Carolina public schools changed from six to eight months in 1933.¹⁶

Eugene Brooks, State Superintendent of Public Instruction in North Carolina from 1919 to 1923, launched a state-wide consolidation plan that merged county rural schools into centrally located, multi-room, modern facilities.¹⁷ The majority of white rural Alamance County Schools consolidated during this period. The McCray School for whites merged with nine other school in 1925.¹⁸ A black delegation, including representatives from McCray, appeared before the School Board in 1937 and 1938, requesting the consolidation of the scattered small rural black schools. The group also appealed for new elementary centers and transportation to these new facilities. J. E. Sellars, Chairman of the School Board, and M. E. Younts, Superintendent of Alamance County Schools, agreed to consider the matter in 1938. The board approved a merger in 1939 that included McCray and would divide thirty black rural elementary schools into ten units.¹⁹ Funds for public education were scarce during and immediately after the Great Depression, and expenditures for black education were often the first to be cut from the budget.²⁰ Consequently, the project was never put into effect.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Significance: McCray School Item number 8

Page 3

Plans to consolidate the rural black elementary schools in Alamance County continued into the 1940s. There were proposals for a four-room school in 1942 and a modern six-room school with an auditorium, central heating, and modern toilet facilities in 1947.²¹ Two years passed before a consolidation plan actually became a reality.

The declining enrollment at the McCray School and three other Alamance County black schools prompted School Board officials to develop a permanent consolidation plan. The board approved the construction of a modern fourteen-room facility in 1949.²² This school was an addition to the Pleasant Grove Elementary and High School built in 1928 and located approximately five miles from the McCray School. The McCray School, which had served the community for sixty-five²³ years, closed when the new consolidated school opened on September 14, 1951.

Many of the one-room schools in Alamance County were torn down during the 1950s. However, the School Board approved a request on October 1, 1951 from the McCray residents who proposed to use the building as a community center. Members of the center agreed to be responsible for the insurance, electric bills, and the maintenance of the property.²⁴ The McCray School continued to serve the community in this capacity until 1981 when an oak tree fell and destroyed the 1925 rear addition. Various local high school vocational education students became involved in restoring the school in 1983 and 1984. The students added a new roof, replaced the sheathing on part of two elevations, and rebuilt the rear elevation. The citizens of McCray assisted the project by holding fundraisers.²⁵

Plans are underway to establish a museum at the McCray School. Benches, school supplies, a blackboard, and a wood burning stove will be installed to recapture the atmosphere of a typical early twentieth century one-room school.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Footnotes

Item number 8

Page 4

¹William L. Spoon, "Map of Alamance County, 1893" (Cleveland: H.S. Stranaman and Company, Engravers, the same date.).

²It is not known how many of these schools, if any, were built before 1877. There were twenty-two Alamance County public schools for black children in 1883 and twenty-nine in 1920. By 1930, there were thirty-one elementary schools for blacks. The majority of these schools consolidated during the late 1940s and early 1950s. In 1949, there were six consolidated black schools and eight small rural schools, including McCray, in Alamance County. Graham (North Carolina) Alamance County Board of Education Minutes, 1877-1925, meetings of 15 January 1883, 5 January 1920; Graham (North Carolina) Report: 1929-1930 Alamance County Organization of Schools, Payroll Department, Alamance County Administrative Office. (Typewritten); and Walter Whitaker, Centennial History of Alamance County 1849-1949 (Burlington, North Carolina: Alamance County Historical Association, 1949), p. 211.

³It could not be ascertained how many of the schools, if any, received the patronage of prominent citizens or were originally associated with a private organization such as the Baltimore Association of Friends which operated schools for whites and blacks in Alamance County, or the Freedmen's Bureau. M.C.S. Noble, A History of the Public Schools of North Carolina (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1930), p. 302; and Dennis Hargrove Cooke, The White Superintendent and the Negro Schools in North Carolina (Nashville: George Peabody College for Teachers, 1930), p. 49.

⁴The deed was never recorded in Albert Graham's lifetime. Alamance County Register of Deeds, Volume 68, p. 372. Alamance County Register of Deeds, Death Certificates, Volume 3, p. 199.

⁵Telephone Interviews with Viola Bradshaw Day and Charles Bradshaw, Burlington, North Carolina, 30 January 1986.

⁶Alamance County Historical Museum, Alamance County The Legacy of Its People and Places (Greensboro, North Carolina: Legacy Publications, 1984), pp. 510-511.

⁷Telephone Interviews with Bradshaw and Day.

⁸Ibid.; and Andrew Gulliford, America's Country Schoolhouses (Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1984), p. 224.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Continuation sheet Footnotes

Item number 8

Page 5

⁹ Increased funding from state and private agencies led to the merger of scattered small rural schools in various counties and the construction of modern schools. This led to the abolishment of the inefficient local school districts and the creation of a centralized county school administration. Many whites, mostly farmers who depended on tenant labor, resented paying taxes to support black education. In some counties, including Alamance, tax monies for schools were divided according to race. Spencer J. Maxcy, "Progressivism and Rural Education in the Deep South, 1900-1950," In Education and the Rise of the New South (Boston: G.K. Hall and Company, 1981), pp. 52-53, 61-62; Edgar W. Knight, Public Education in the South (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1922), pp. 457-460; Louis R. Harlan, Separate and Unequal: Public School Campaigns and Racism in the Southern Seaboard States 1901-1915 (New York: Atheneum, 1969), pp. 123, 130-134; Cooke, The White Superintendent, pp. 60-61; and Minutes 1877-1925, meeting of 5 April 1925.

¹⁰ Interviews with Day and Bradshaw; Interview with Charles Jeffries, Alamance County Administrative Offices, Graham, North Carolina 24 January 1986; Graham (North Carolina), Report: 1929-1930 Alamance County Organization of Schools, Payroll Department, Alamance County Schools Administrative Office. (Typewritten); and Graham (North Carolina) Alamance County Board of Education Minutes, 1932-1948, meeting of 24 February 1946.

¹¹ Minutes, 1877-1925, meeting of 19 January 1919.

¹² The ownership of the school property had never officially transferred from Albert Graham to the black citizens of McCray or the Alamance County School Board. Mrs. Jessie P. Roberts, Graham's daughter, inherited three tracts of land, including the McCray School property, in 1916. She sold the land to J.A. Gentry in 1918. A year later, Gentry sold these same tracts, but retained ownership of the school property. Alamance County Register of Deeds, Records of Wills, Volume 5, p. 215; Alamance Country Register of Deeds, Volume 65, pp. 106-107; Volume 67, p. 41; and Volume 68, p. 372.

¹³ The land exchange consisted of trading "the front corner of the lot on the side toward McCray School (whites) for a similar corner of the rear lot on the same side". There was a disagreement regarding the amount of land Gentry would receive. Consequently, the board rejected the proposed deed on July 7, 1919, two months after the deed was recorded. The minutes do not indicate if and when the final transaction occurred, but it appears the deed was eventually approved. Minutes, 1877-1925, meetings of 7 April 1919, and 7 July 1919; and Alamance County Register of Deeds, Volume 68, p. 372.

¹⁴ Interviews with Day and Bradshaw.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Footnotes

Item number 8

Page 6

¹⁵Graham (North Carolina), Report: 1929-1930 Alamance County Organization of Schools, Payroll Department, Alamance County Administrative Office. (Typewritten); and Minutes, 1925-1932, meeting of 6 July 1925.

¹⁶Minutes, 1932-1948, meetings of 26 June 1933 and 24 July 1933; and Hugh Talmage Lefler and Albert Ray Newsome, The History of a Southern State: North Carolina, 3rd ed. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1973), p. 613.

¹⁷Lefler and Newsome, The History of a Southern State, p. 601; and Knight, Public Education in the South, p. 459.

¹⁸Alamance County Historical Museum, Alamance County, pp. 510-511; and Whitaker, Centennial History, p. 207.

¹⁹The delegation specifically requested for the consolidation of all "one-and-two room schools." Minutes, 1932-1948, meetings of 1 February 1937, 7 November 1938, and 27 June 1939.

²⁰Horace Bond, The Education of the Negro in the American Social Order (New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1966), p. 167.

²¹Minutes, 1932-1948, meetings of 4 May 1942 and 17 January 1947.

²²Graham (North Carolina) Alamance County Board of Education Minutes, 1948-1958, meeting of 14 September 1949.

²³Ibid., 14 September and 1 October 1951.

²⁴Ibid., meeting of 1 October 1951.

²⁵"Old School Restoration Underway," Burlington Daily Times News, 10 October 1984, pp. D1-2.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Continuation sheet Bibliography Item number 9 Page 1

Primary Sources:

- Alamance County Register of Deeds, Death Certificates, Volume 3.
- Alamance County Register of Deeds, Various Volumes.
- Alamance County Register of Deeds, Records of Wills, Volume 5.
- Day, Viola Bradshaw and Bradshaw, Charles. Telephone Interviews, Burlington, North Carolina, 30 January 1986.
- Graham (North Carolina) Alamance County Board of Education Minutes, 1877-1925, 1925-1932, 1932-1948, and 1948-1958.
- Graham (North Carolina) Alamance County Schools Administrative Office, Payroll Department, 1929-1930 Report of Schools's Organization.
- Jeffries, Charles. Interview, Alamance County School Administrative Office, Graham, North Carolina, 24 January 1986.
- "Old School Restoration Underway." Burlington Daily Times News, 10 October 1984, pp. D1-2.
- Spoon, William L. "The Map of Alamance County, 1893," Cleveland: H.S. Stranaman and Company, Engravers, the same date.
- Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910. Alamance County, North Carolina Population Schedule.

Secondary Sources:

- Alamance County Historical Museum. Alamance County: The Legacy of Its People and Places. Greensboro, North Carolina: Legacy Publications, 1984.
- Bond, Horace. The Education of the Negro in the American Social Order. New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1966.
- Cooke, Dennis Hargrove. The White Superintendent and the Negro Schools in North Carolina. Nashville: George Peabody College for Teachers, 1930.
- Gulliford, Andrew. America's Country Schools, Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1984.
- Harlan, Louis R. Separate and Unequal: Public School Campaigns and Racism in the Southern Seaboard States 1901-1915. New York: Atheneum, 1969.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Continuation sheet Bibliography Item number 9 Page 2

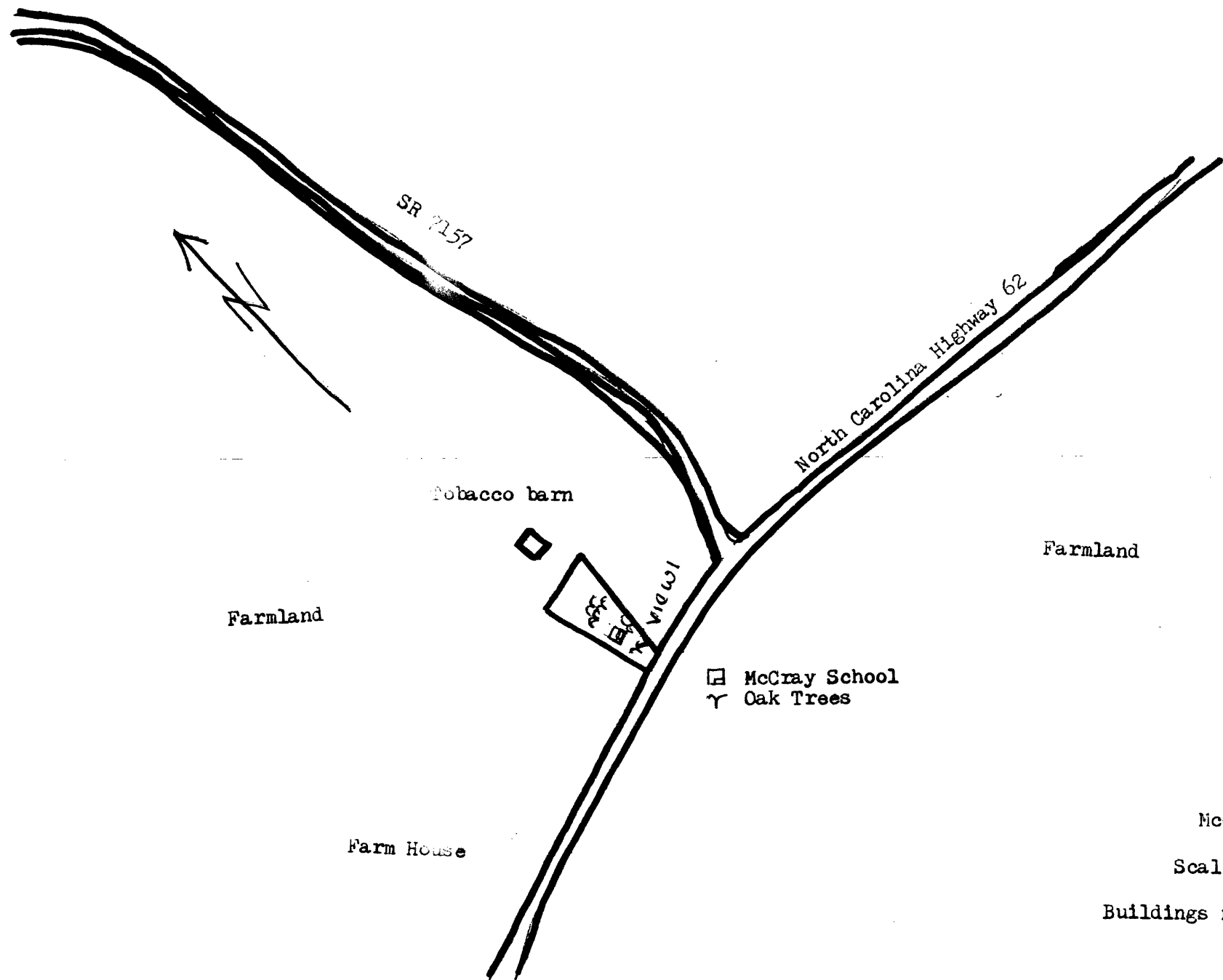
Knight, Edgar W. Public Education in the South. Boston: Ginn and Company, 1922.

Lefler, Hugh Talmage and Newsome Albert Ray. The History of a Southern State: North Carolina. 3rd ed. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1973.

Maxcy, Spencer J. "Progressivism and Rural Education in the Deep South, 1900-1950." Education and the Rise of the New South. Boston: G. K. Hall and Company, 1981.

Noble, M.C.S. A History of the Public Schools of North Carolina. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1930.

Whitaker, Walter. Centennial History of Alamance County 1849-1949. Burlington, North Carolina: Alamance County Historical Association, 1949.



McCray School
Scale: 1" = 400'
Buildings not drawn to scale.