

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 of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Lenoir High School  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number 100 Willow Street n/a not for publication  
city, town Lenoir n/a vicinity  
state North Carolina code NC county Caldwell code 035 zip code 28645

### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u>2</u>	<u>4</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>3</u>	<u>7</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object		<u>7</u> objects
			<u>7</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: n/a  
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

### 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  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  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official: [Signature] Date: 6-27-90

State or Federal agency and bureau: \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau: \_\_\_\_\_

### 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- 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): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/school

WORK IN PROGRESS as multiple dwelling  
RECREATION & CULTURE/auditorium

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

Classical Revival

foundation brick

walls brick

roof built-up

other cast stone

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

**Summary**

The former Lenoir High School is representative of the more impressive school buildings built in North Carolina cities in the early 1920s. The school is situated in the 100 block of Willow Street between Harper Avenue and College Avenue, and occupies the entire large block of almost 6.5 acres<sup>1</sup> with its playing field at the rear. A two-story brick Classical Revival-style building with cast stone detailing, the school was erected in 1922 and opened for classes in January, 1923<sup>2</sup>. Architects for the building were the firm of Benton & Benton of Wilson, N.C.<sup>3</sup> Located in a modest twentieth century residential neighborhood, the school faces east towards churches situated on neighboring corners. The original stone retaining wall surrounds the front lawn on the Willow Street and Harper Avenue sides.

In each decade from the 1930s through the 1960s, overcrowded conditions brought additions and new buildings to the school. The site plan thus includes a complicated collection of six buildings, many connected and with later additions, built at different times for specific purposes, all school-related and all brick. These in turn are often joined by high brick walls. Extant buildings include the 1922 school with its 1962 addition, the 1935-1937 band building with additions, 1947 gymnasium, concrete bleachers, 1952 press building, ticket booth, 1957 concession buildings, 1960s field house, and modern cinder-block bathroom. A 1954 industrial arts ("shop") building was demolished in 1989. The playing field remains at the rear (west). Many of these buildings were associated with the school's sports programs and because of their construction dates they are non-contributing elements of the Lenoir High School district. However, they do not detract from the nominated property. The gymnasium is compatible stylistically with the earlier buildings; the other buildings, all toward the rear of the property, are small and inoffensive. The entire nominated property has always been associated with the original school, whose athletic facilities grew and changed with the growth of the school and its sports program. The sketch plan attached and descriptions below will help to explain the property's layout.

**Main School Building (A, Contributing)**

A number of features typically associated with the institutional Classical Revival style characterize this building. The two-story brick structure is laid in common stretcher bond of pressed rusticated brick and accentuated with cast stone trim. Typical of the style, a few pieces of refined ornament are placed at focal points on an otherwise plain facade.

The massive front facade stretches 220 feet; it is broken into a five-part massing by projecting end bays and a slightly projecting and ornamented central entrance bay.

Two broad steps lead from a new paved circular entrance drive to the front entrance. Above the double front door is a four-center pointed arch with six-pane transom. On each side is a pair of cast stone banded and fluted pilasters supporting a cast stone frieze with triglyphs. At the entrance bay's second story are three nine-over-nine windows, separated by plain wooden mullions and framed with a cast stone surround. This grouping rests on a narrow balcony with broad solid cast stone balustrade and cartouche at each end. The brick parapet above is raised and indented with a horizontal open balustraded panel of cast stone. The flat roof behind is not visible from the ground.

See continuation sheet

The two narrow bays flanking the entrance are slightly recessed and each has one nine-over-nine sash with cast stone sill on both first and second levels. Between the windows a rectangle of raised brick course creates a panel the width of the windows. The brick parapet over each of these bays steps lower than the central raised parapet, and the small

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cast stone open panel of four balusters sets off the larger panel of the central parapet. Above the northernmost of these narrow flanking bays rises a brick chimney with cast stone cap.

Further recessed and stretching out 60 feet to either side are the classroom bays which repeat the triple nine-over-nine windows on both first and second levels. In each bay a horizontal brick panel rests atop a brick belt course over the first floor windows. These windows have cast stone sills but lack the cast stone surround of the central bay. A simple cast stone water table continues the sill of the first floor windows. The parapet above is unadorned brick. This and the adorned central parapets are finished with cast stone coping.

At each end of the long front facade is a bay thirty feet wide and projecting slightly more than thirty feet. Quadruple windows, rather than triple, are found at first and second levels with long raised brick panels between; the parapets of these end bays have the open balustraded panel of the central entrance. Due to the rolling topography, the northern end of the building includes windows at the basement level, repeating the patterns above.

Both the north and south elevations of the main building are brick expanses punctuated with the triple window and panel pattern of the front classroom bays, but rather than symmetrically arranged, on each elevation these bays are shifted to the west. Above, the simple unadorned brick parapet is repeated. Water table and sills are the only cast stone detailing. In each of these side elevations is an entrance centered among the four window bays. Raised brick courses with brick dentils create the surround, and at the second level a vertical rectangle of raised brick contains two narrow vertical windows with cast stone sills.

Projecting from the central portion of the west or rear facade is the original auditorium, today continuing its original use as a meeting hall, owned by the City of Lenoir and serving as a public auditorium. Here, large paired steel-sash windows open onto the rooms behind the stage. The only ornamentation is the brick buttresses separating the bays on rear and sides; these are capped with a cast stone coping.

Along the original west facade and to the north of the auditorium is the 1962 classroom addition (a). Two-stories and flat-roofed, the wing is made up primarily of vertical rows of Hopper windows, hinged at the bottom with a ratchet in the middle allowing the window to open out to about a 45° angle. The rows are separated only by metal mullions, and separated from the windows of the other level by pale green masonite panels divided by the same metal mullions. This addition connects the main building to the 1935-1937 band building discussed below.

### Interior

The main building has a central hall plan; the original school offices, today the manager's office, are north of the entrance hall. The front hall meets a north-to-south corridor off of which are doors leading to apartments. Originally classrooms, these are flooded with light from the triple and quadruple grouped windows. Straight across from and west of the entrance is the auditorium. A change to the building's plan was made in 1990 when lobbies were added to the basement and first floor levels to provide separate entrance to the south side of the public auditorium. The school's bathrooms were removed to provide space for the lobbies. The two original interior stairwells remain. The newels are metal: square panelled Classical posts with simple square bases and flat capitals. The balustrade is composed of simple metal square balusters and wooden handrail.

Interior finish of the exterior brick walls is painted plaster directly on the brick.<sup>4</sup> Most original interior walls are partitions, three-inch thick lath with plaster on both sides; they are not load-bearing.<sup>5</sup> New partitions were added to create spaces inside each apartment. The majority of the floor covering is hardwood flooring over sleepers which were poured into concrete floors. In the corridors, in some areas of the administrative suite and in ground floor portions of the south wing are terrazzo floors over the original concrete.<sup>6</sup> Only the northern half of the basement level was developed for use; the southern half is not excavated.

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In 1935 the Lenoir High School Band building was begun, with Robert Clemmer of Hickory serving as architect and Captain James C. Harper, band director, significantly contributing to the design.<sup>7</sup> Their collaborative effort produced the three-story brick building which faces north onto Harper Avenue. Because of a lack of funds, two-thirds of the total planned structure was completed and opened in 1937. The remainder of the original plan was completed in 1962,<sup>8</sup> at the same time that the classroom addition was built connecting the band building to the main building.

The central entrance bay on Harper Avenue projects slightly and, like the front facade of the earlier described main building, has two small flanking bays which also project from the remaining six bays of the band building. The brick exterior rises unbroken to a parapet cap of cast stone, with the two flanking bays raised to meet the higher central bay. Windows of the flanking bays are narrow six-over-six; with the exception of the entrance bay, other windows are twelve-over-twelve with brick sills. A brick belt course skirts the building just above the first floor windows.

The building's ornamentation is centered in its central entrance bay, with entrance doors recessed between two large brick pilasters with bases and caps of stone. Double twelve-over-twelve windows with brick sills are found on the second and third levels.

Over the front entrance is a limestone replica of the registered trademark of the Lenoir High School Band. The band's seal was designed by Captain Harper's sister, Margaret, who for several years had been a professional artist in New York. It was registered with the U.S. Patent Office in June, 1934.<sup>9</sup> Above the seal is a decorated cast stone frieze.

**Interior**

The seal is found again in the interior on the linoleum floor of the hall just inside the front entrance. Along both sides of the hall, the floors are decorated with musical notes. The most striking feature of the band building is its rehearsal hall on the second floor. A black and white tile floor meets four tiers of curved wooden platform with solid stylized Art Moderne end railings. A semi-circular recess provided space for Captain Harper to stand and conduct, with the only flat wall in the room just a few feet behind him. The other walls curve to form a semi-circular room. Two oddly-triangular spaces are thus left in each corner. The rehearsal hall was known for its acoustical accuracy. In addition to the rehearsal hall, the interior has several individual practice rooms, each with an open intercom system connected to the director's office. Captain Harper was known to interrupt a student's practice through the intercom to inform of a missed note.

The girl's locker room also remains in undisturbed condition with wooden lockers in a variety of shapes and sizes. The building has suffered severe water damage from numerous leaks in the roof; however, the city has plans to reroof the building in May of 1990.

**Gymnasium** (E, Non-contributing)

Constructed in 1947,<sup>10</sup> the Gymnasium is a two-story brick building with cast stone water table continuing the sill line of the first floor windows and a cast stone belt course above the windows of the second level. Wide concrete steps lead from the sidewalk on College Avenue to the first floor entrance of three sets of double doors. Above the entrance is a long cast stone panel with the word "Gymnasium" inscribed in large letters. The brick parapet rises to a simple broad pediment over the central bay and is topped with a cast stone cap. Windows are metal casement with bars on the first floor. At the second floor level of the central bay is a horizontal row of seven Hopper windows separated by mullions. It is believed that this gym and that at Granite Falls, N.C., high school were built from the same plans but with differences: the plans called for two lobbies each with three sets of double doors. Granite Falls's

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gym followed that plan, while Lenoir's omitted one of the lobbies and a portion of the dressing room space in the basement.<sup>11</sup> Several additions and alterations to the basement dressing room and storage areas were carried out at the LHS gym over the years. Today the gym is used by the city's recreation department; its basement houses the city's building maintenance equipment and offices.<sup>12</sup>

Other Resources

Added in the 1950s were several structures associated with LHS football: during the 1951 season the football program was moved to the field at the former Davenport College in Lenoir while a tile drainage system was installed and the field was regraded to achieve a proper slope for drainage. At the same time concrete bleachers were built along the College Avenue side of the football field with a brick press box (23' x 8') built at the top of the bleachers above the 50-yard line (F). Concrete bleachers were already in place at the eastern end zone (D) before the 1952 remodeling of the stadium. Wooden "knock-down" bleachers remained in use along the Harper Avenue side for visitors.<sup>13</sup> The brick wall on the College Avenue side which includes a small brick ticket booth at the entrance (G) was also built. This work was completed in time for the 1952 season; the field was dedicated to devoted custodian Mac Cook and named Cook Stadium.<sup>14</sup> Lenoir's football field was generally recognized as the finest high school stadium in western North Carolina.

In 1954 the industrial arts building was built (since demolished) and in 1957 the brick concession building (25' x 10') located between the entrance and the field was added (H). Behind the school near the playing field is a one-story brick building (J) which was built in the late 1960s for the bricklaying classes of Lenoir High School; it was built by students of the bricklaying class.<sup>15</sup> A small cinder-block bathroom building (I) at the northeastern corner of the football field near the gate to Harper Avenue was also built by LHS students in the 1960s.<sup>16</sup> All of these are non-contributing due to age.

In 1977 Lenoir High School closed<sup>17</sup> and the building became the Willow Street Middle School<sup>18</sup> for several years. It has been vacant since June of 1981 and will soon open its doors as housing for the elderly, with the auditorium serving as a public meeting hall.

Endnotes

1. Property Record Card, Caldwell County; Map. No. 13, Block No. 2, Lot No. 7, Caldwell County Tax Office.
2. Lenoir News-Topic, December 21, 1922 and January 4, 1923.
3. Record of the Board of Trustees, Lenoir Graded Schools, August 2, 1921, and November 25, 1921.
4. Architectural and engineering survey, prepared by Clemmer Bush Sills Abernethy, Architects, Hickory; March 14, 1988.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.

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7. Hammond, Frank Milton: "James Cunningham Harper and the Lenoir, North Carolina High School Band," A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Education, Greensboro, 1973, pp. 27-29.
8. Hammond, p. 30.
9. Hammond, pp. 30-31.
10. "Lenoir City Administrative Unit, Lenoir City Schools, Lenoir, North Carolina," compiled by Hartley & Thompson, Architects, Lenoir, North Carolina, November 15, 1966.
11. Interview, Bill Cross.
12. Interview, John Day.
13. Interviews.
14. Interviews.
15. Interview, Joe Gibbons.
16. Interviews.
17. Hickory Daily Record, January 9, 1988.
18. Property Record Card, Caldwell County.



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appropriated for public schools. This was the beginning of the continuing and now regular appropriation from the legislature for public education.<sup>6</sup>

In 1900 a new governor was elected. Charles B. Aycock had campaigned on a democratic platform that proposed educational improvements. Although Aycock championed white supremacy, he also is remembered as the Education Governor, for he laid the foundations on which the state based its public education program.<sup>7</sup> Aycock advocated a uniform school system throughout the state with the use of state and local funds for its support. He asserted "the equal right of every child born on earth" to have an educational opportunity. He successfully argued that public education was good use of tax monies, an investment returned by an educated work force which would bring better industry to the state so all would benefit.<sup>8</sup>

Aycock's efforts produced swift results. A state appropriation in 1901 provided money to equalize local schools of the state and to bring those in the poorer counties up to the same standards as those of the richer.

By the 1920s North Carolina led the nation in building rural consolidated schools.<sup>9</sup> In the late 1920s and early 1930s there remained a number of one- and two-teacher schools being conducted in inadequate wooden buildings, but by the late 1930s most had been abandoned in favor of brick consolidated schools.<sup>10</sup>

Lenoir High School is representative of this emerging statewide effort to update schools and school buildings. Built in 1922, it was among the forerunners of this trend.

#### Architectural and Historical Background

Ample record survives to chronicle the history of the school. The year 1920 was a formative one for the Lenoir High School, for it was in that year that the major decisions regarding its construction were made. In January, a committee of the Board of Trustees of Lenoir Graded Schools was appointed to investigate the possibility of buying the J.R. Wilson property for the purpose of erecting a new school building.<sup>11</sup> By late May the decision to purchase had been made,<sup>12</sup> and in September, in a special session of the Board, a resolution was passed to raise funds to buy the property and to execute two notes of \$11,250 each.<sup>13</sup>

At the end of that year, on December 30, a motion was made by the Board to "have a bill prepared and introduced in the Legislature authorizing the school district to vote on a maximum bond issue of Two Hundred Thousand dollars to pay for the lot recently bought for school purposes and erect a new building on same, using so much of the funds as might become necessary..."<sup>14</sup> After much discussion of the cost of school buildings and equipment and the possibility of carrying a bond issue sufficient to cover these needs, it was decided by unanimous vote of the Board in March of 1921 to ask the citizens of the Lenoir Graded School district to vote a bond issue of \$150,000, "...for the purpose of erecting and equipping such buildings as are needed, and to pay for the lot recently purchased by [the] School Board."<sup>15</sup>

Apparently the bond issue passed, because it was in August of 1921 that the firm of Benton & Benton Architects of Wilson, N.C., and Richmond, Va., was employed by unanimous vote to make plans and



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specifications for the new school building.<sup>16</sup> Benton & Benton was a partnership formed in 1915 by Charles C. Benton and his brother Frank Warhall Benton, both of Wilson. The popular firm often worked outside of Wilson. Before going into partnership with his brother, Charles Benton had worked with another Wilson architect, Solon Balias Moore. In 1935 the brothers dissolved their partnership; Charles then practiced with his sons (Henry, an engineer, and after 1940 C.C. Jr., an architect) until his death in 1960. After 1935 Frank Benton practiced alone until his death in 1960 or 1961.<sup>17</sup> The Board's Records indicate that it was Charles who met with the Board and who was the firm's main contact on the Lenoir High School project. In later years Charles C. Benton's taste for colonial style architecture gave him the nickname "Charles Colonial Benton."<sup>18</sup>

The record is unclear as to whether proposals were sought and received from other architects. It is clear, however, that bids were sought from various contractors, and in October, 1921, the Board opened the bids and selected contractors.<sup>19</sup> Although it is not known when, it is known from the Board's Record that Harbin Construction Co. was hired and soon thereafter, fired. The Joe W. Stout Construction Company of Sanford, N.C., was then retained as general contractor and it was that company which completed the project.<sup>20</sup> Stout worked with Benton & Benton on the ca. 1922 Selma Graded School;<sup>21</sup> because of this and the Record's references to Charles Benton, it appears that the architect was involved in the decision to hire Stout.<sup>22</sup>

A few changes made to the school grounds during construction are clear from the Record. In October of 1922 a committee was appointed to look into building a rock wall along Harper Avenue and Willow Street.<sup>23</sup> The committee apparently had the wall built, as it remains today retaining the lawn at its elevation above the sidewalk. The next month a motion was made to "leave off the driveway in front of the building as set forth in the plans, and build a concrete and cement walk from front of building straight to Willow Street."<sup>24</sup> The decision to eliminate the driveway reserved a large, tree-covered front lawn as an inviting and attractive setting to the school for many years. Today an asphalt circular drive leads from College Avenue to the front entrance.

While the hope was for the school to open its doors for the fall term in 1922, the new building was not completed; classes therefore were assembled in the new school for the first time on Wednesday, January 3, 1923. Equipment continued to be installed and work proceeded around the building and on the grounds.<sup>25</sup>

The building embodies many of the characteristics of the new healthful design of school facilities: brick, with an auditorium, central corridors, large classrooms and plentiful windows for light and ventilation. The school's programs also demonstrate the comprehensive approach of improvements to education.

In April of 1923 the Board authorized a music department, to teach music and sight-singing,<sup>26</sup> and in the following year the soon-to-be-famous band was begun. Although today it is chiefly remembered for its band, which is discussed in more detail below, the Lenoir High School was distinguished in many areas. During the 1920s and 1930s, the school's debating teams participated in the State Debating Contest in Chapel Hill and brought many honors to the school. The girls' basketball team won the state cup for several years.<sup>27</sup> In the 1940s, LHS had an excellent drama department, winning awards for acting as well as for writing original plays, and in the 1950s the school was rated academically among the top classical schools in the state. Also in the 1950s, the school's athletics program became "one of the finest under Preston Mull."<sup>28</sup>

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The school's physical plant was expanding as well. The three-story band building was built on Harper Avenue in 1935-1937 with plans to complete the structure at a later date. In 1947 the gymnasium facing College Avenue was erected, and the industrial arts, or "shop" building was completed in 1954. The small concession and press buildings were also constructed in the 1950s.<sup>29</sup>

Significant expansion was soon necessary. By the 1960s enrollment at Lenoir High School was at an all time high of 750 students, due in part to integration which brought students previously enrolled at Freedman High School.<sup>30</sup> To meet the immediate need for extra classrooms, the large rooms of the College Avenue Baptist Church's education building, located just across the street from the school, were used.<sup>31</sup> Accordingly, in 1962 a three-story classroom addition was made to the main building, and in the same year the band building received its long-awaited addition. It was this construction which connected the band building to the main building.

The Lenoir High School closed its doors in 1977 when it merged with Gamewell-Collettsville High School to form West Caldwell High, and moved to a new building.<sup>32</sup> The former high school property was then used as the Willow Street Middle School until 1981.<sup>33</sup> The main building was vacant and the industrial arts building used for training for the handicapped until the recent rehabilitation. The industrial arts building (shop) was demolished in 1989.

#### Captain James C. Harper and the Lenoir High School Band

It is the band for which the high school received national acclaim. Captain James C. Harper was responsible not only for the band's creation but also for its continued success. In 1921 he became involved with Lenoir's newly-formed American Legion band which lasted only two years. Because band instruments had been acquired through local contributions, Captain Harper felt a responsibility to continue a local band. He was principal of Lenoir High School as well as teacher of several classes.<sup>34</sup> He argued that the equipment and instruments be donated to the school and in March of 1924 the Legion members agreed, with Harper willing to instruct the new band without charge until a regular director could be obtained.<sup>35</sup> The Lenoir High School band started that year; classes met in what later became the kitchen.<sup>36</sup>

As Hammond states in his dissertation on Captain Harper:

It is interesting to note that Joseph Maddy, the first Supervisor of Instrumental Music in the United States, had, just five years earlier, received a \$15,000 donation from George Eastman, which made possible the founding of the Rochester, New York, High School Band. A.R. McAllister of Joliet, Illinois, had started his now famous high school band only ten years earlier in 1913. High school bands were few in number and not widely publicized, so Harper's task of convincing the Legionnaires that the high school needed a band was a formidable one.

In 1926, Harper's band participated in the first band contest held in North Carolina.<sup>37</sup> It was held in Greensboro, and the contesting bands came from Greensboro, Winston-Salem, and Lenoir. Lenoir's band placed third.<sup>38</sup> The following year three additional bands, from Asheville, Shelby and Chapel Hill, entered the band contest. They were grouped in two classifications by size, and that second year of competition, Lenoir won in its class. For several years Lenoir's band represented the smallest community entering the contest; however, it soon began to perform in the most advanced group.

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Harper states

"Lenoir continued to win in Class B until it was becoming evident that other contestants were failing to enter Class B since it was obvious that Lenoir was destined to win them all. To save the contest Lenoir volunteered to compete in a classification higher than its own. This meant that its band competitors came from high schools many times larger than Lenoir High School and with larger music budgets, professionally trained directors and larger student bodies to choose from."

After the depression when schools were rebuilding their bands, Lenoir was asked to refrain from competing in the state contest. Instead, the Lenoir Band attended and played for exhibition only. From 1936 until its demise with the closing of the school in 1977, the band received top honors in the North Carolina State Band Contest, and ranked first or first division in several national band contests.<sup>39</sup>

In 1977 the Lenoir High School Band was the oldest continuous band program in North Carolina. (The two bands that antedate Lenoir did not function for several years during the depression.) In his "Reminiscences," Captain Harper says that the only two which survived the 1929 depression were the Central High School of Charlotte and the Lenoir High School, "neither of which received much tax money, and so were less affected when tax money was cut off."<sup>40</sup>

By 1933, overcrowded classroom conditions had been made more acute by the elimination of many services during the depression years.<sup>41</sup> Although bond issues to increase tax burdens were being rejected at polls throughout the country, seven communities in North Carolina approved tax increases supporting local schools for the academic year 1933-1934. One of these was Lenoir, and newspaper accounts attributed the vote to the value placed on the band by the citizens of Lenoir.<sup>42</sup> It is interesting to note The Charlotte Observer's claim that in 1934, ten years after the creation of the Lenoir High School band, every college band in the state had representatives from the Lenoir band.<sup>43</sup> (Certainly this refers only to white colleges, as Lenoir High School was not racially integrated.)

With the success of the band came the need for a facility adequate for practice, library, storage and office. Captain Harper retained Robert Clemmer, an architect in nearby Hickory, to help design the building. This was not an easy task, as there were no band buildings at universities, and only two high schools with band buildings in the United States, one in Iowa and the other in Texas. Clemmer and Harper had access to the plans of each, which had been published.<sup>44</sup> A particular problem was acoustics. Little information was available and Clemmer had no experience with acoustics, so Harper researched and studied. The result was plans for a three-story building. About \$32,000 in contributions was raised, including \$10,000 in the school fund. This was about two-thirds of what was needed; thus about two-thirds of the planned structure was built and completed in the fall of 1937. (The rest of the plan was carried out in 1962 when the classroom wing was added to the main building.)

The dedication of the band building, held on November 2, 1937, included much ceremony: A contemporary account stated that

"...school band directors came from up and down the Atlantic seaboard and school music celebrities from busy posts came to the opening. Newspapers in North Carolina and neighbor States carried headline stories of the new building and the

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opening event; WBT, leading radio station of the State, came down [sic] from Charlotte to broadcast a ceremonial band program; Dr. Austin A. Harding [sic], president of the American Bandmasters' Association and Director of Bands at the University of Illinois, came to deliver a dedicatory address; and A.A. McAllister, director of the famous Joliet Township High School Band, unavoidably detained at the last moment, sent his son, Forrest, grade school band director of Joliet, with a stirring message of congratulation."<sup>45</sup>

Bernard Hirsch, former band director at the high school in Marion, N.C., succeeded Harper as Lenoir High School band director in 1958.<sup>46</sup> Harper was named director emeritus, remaining active with the band until it dissolved in 1977 with the merger of Lenoir and Gamewell-Collettsville High Schools to form West Caldwell High.<sup>47</sup> The band continued to win state and national competitions.

Captain Harper died in 1986 at the age of 92. While he began his career as a captain in the Army in World War I and then worked in banking and in the furniture industry, his national reputation came from his exceptional success with the Lenoir High School Band and related musical interests. He was instrumental in organizing the N.C. Bandmasters' Association, serving as president in 1943-1944. He was a member of the American Bandmasters Association (ABA) and the first high school director to become its president. He was named Honorary Life President of the ABA in 1975, of which only seven have been named, including John Philip Sousa, and he was the seventh person elected honorary member of the United States Army Band.<sup>48</sup>

At West Caldwell High School is a memorial library honoring Captain Harper.<sup>49</sup> However, the band's significant music library, known as the "most extensive and complete high school music library in the state,"<sup>50</sup> was donated not to West Caldwell High but to Davidson College. Many say that Captain Harper agreed to donate the collection to the new high school only if the name "Lenoir High School" were retained; the band had its own copyrighted seal which was used extensively on band equipment: on hats, belt buckles, and uniform buttons.<sup>51</sup> When the West Caldwell name was chosen, Harper made his notable donation to alma mater Davidson College.

#### Endnotes

1. Record of the Board of Trustees, Lenoir Graded Schools, August 2, 1921, and November 25, 1921, pp. 188 and 191.
2. Deed book 797, page 131, December 20, 1982.
3. Preslar, Charles J., Jr., ed. A History of Catawba County, 1954, Compiled and Published by Catawba County Historical Association, Inc., p. 154.
4. Ibid, p. 150.
5. Ibid, p. 149.
6. Preslar on page 150 cites "State School Facts," published monthly by the State Department of Public Instruction.

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National Park Service

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7. Powell, William S. North Carolina, A History, 1977, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., and Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, p. 183.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., p. 184.

10. Ibid., p. 185.

11. Record, January 28, 1920, page 176.

12. Ibid. p. 180.

13. Ibid. p. 181.

14. Record, December 30, 1920, page 182.

15. Record, March 14, 1921, p. 182.

16. Record, August 2, 1921, p. 188.

17. Bainbridge, Robert C. and Kate Ohno: Wilson, North Carolina: Historic Buildings Inventory, 1980, City of Wilson, N.C. Department of Cultural Resources and U.S. Department of the Interior, p. 234.

18. Ibid.

19. Record, October 31, 1921, p. 189 .

20. Record, November 25, 1921 and October 9, 1922, pp. 191, 200, and 202.

21. Greco, Thomas A., ed.: Historic Architecture of Selma, North Carolina, 1980, The Town of Selma, the N.C. Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, p. 34.

22. Record, November 15, 1921, p. 190.

23. Record, October 16, 1922, p. 200.

24. Record, November 27, 1922, p. 202.

25. The Lenoir News-Topic, September 7, 1922, p. 1; also December 21, 1922, p. 1; also December 28, 1922, p. 1; also January 4, 1923, p. 1.

26. Record, April 9, 1923, p. 209.

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27. Unidentified newspaper, Thursday, February 26, 1925; located in the clippings file of the Caldwell County Public Library.

28. Unidentified, undated newspaper article (postdates 1974); located in clippings file of the Caldwell County Public Library.

29. "Lenoir City Administrative Unit, Lenoir City schools, Lenoir, North Carolina," compiled by Hartley & Thompson, Architects, Lenoir, North Carolina, November 15, 1966; Also see "Caldwell County 1977-78 Survey of Facilities." Both documents on file at offices of Caldwell County School Board.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.

32. Lenoir News-Topic, February 17, 1986, p. 1. Also see Mason, Vicki: entry for "(Former) Lenoir High School" from her survey of northwestern North Carolina.

33. "Caldwell County 1977-78 Survey of Facilities;" located at offices of Caldwell County School Board. Also see Hickory Daily Record, January 9, 1988.

34. Lenoir News-Topic, February 17, 1986, p. 1. Also see unidentified, undated newspaper (postdates 1974); located in the clippings file of the Caldwell County Public Library.

35. Hammond, Frank Milton: "James Cunningham Harper and the Lenoir, North Carolina High School Band," A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Education, Greensboro, 1973, pp.20-22.

36. Unidentified, undated newspaper article (postdates 1974); located in clippings file of the Caldwell County Public Library.

37. Hammond, p 23.

38. Harper, James C.: "Reminiscences of James C. Harper, Sr., Lenoir, N.C."

39. Hammond, p. 25.

40. Hammond, p. 25 and Harper's "Reminiscences."

41. Hammond, pp. 25-26.

42. Lenoir News-Topic, November 7, 1934, editorial.

43. The Charlotte Observer, February 11, 1934. (From Hammond, p. 26.)

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44. Hammond, p. 28.
45. "Lenoir Dedicates Her School Band Building," The School Musician, IX (December, 1937), p. 12.
46. Lenoir News-Topic, October 9, 1986.
47. Lenoir News-Topic, February 17, 1986, p. 1.
48. Ibid.
49. Lenoir News-Topic, October 9, 1986.
50. Unidentified, undated newspaper article (postdates 1974); located in clippings file of the Caldwell County Public Library.
51. Lenoir News-Topic, October 9, 1986.

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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"Caldwell County 1977-78 Survey of Facilities;" located at offices of Caldwell County School Board.

Caldwell County Deed Books.

Caldwell County Tax Map. No. 1.

Caldwell County Property Record Card, Caldwell County Tax Office.

Clemmer Bush Sills Abernethy, Architects, Hickory: Architectural and engineering survey, March 14, 1988.

See continuation sheet

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

Specify repository:

Caldwell County Public Library  
Caldwell County School Board

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property approx. 6.5 acres

UTM References

A 

1	7	4	5	0	9	6	0	3	9	7	4	0	6	0
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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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B 

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Zone Easting Northing

D 

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The property is outlined in bold on the attached tax map from Caldwell County (Map 13, Block 2, Lot 7). Its eastern border is Willow Street, northern is Harper Avenue, southern is College Avenue, and western is rear property line.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The property consists of the entire lot which is historically and physically associated with Lenoir High School and which today remains the entire acreage associated with the school, its associated buildings and playing field.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Langdon Edmunds Oppermann date draft 2/90  
organization Preservation and Planning Consultant telephone 919/721-1949  
street & number 1500 Overbrook Avenue state NC zip code 27104  
city or town Winston-Salem



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Greco, Thomas A., ed.: Historic Architecture of Selma, North Carolina, 1980, The Town of Selma, the N.C. Department of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History.

Hammond, Frank Milton: "James Cunningham Harper and the Lenoir, North Carolina High School Band," A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Education, Greensboro, 1973.

Harper, James C.: "Reminiscences of James C. Harper, Sr., Lenoir, N.C."

Hickory Daily Record.

Interviews: Rooster (R.L.) Bush, LHS class of 1942.  
Virginia Seehorn Cobb, LHS class of 1922 and drama teacher 1942-?.  
Bill Cross, LHS coach 1951-1959 and advisor during the 1969 undefeated season.  
John Day, Assistant City Manager, City of Hickory.  
Joe Gibbons, LHS class of 1970, compiling information on LHS athletics.  
Judy Prestwood Klein, LHS class of 1961.  
Lloyd Rash, LHS class of 1930.  
Ted Seehorn, LHS class of 1931.

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"Lenoir Dedicates Her School Band Building," The School Musician, IX (December, 1937), p. 12.

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Mason, Vicki: entry for "(Former) Lenoir High School" from her survey of northwestern North Carolina.

Oppermann, Langdon Edmunds: National Register Nomination for Highland School, Hickory, 1990.

Preslar, Charles J., Jr., ed. A History of Catawba County. Compiled and Published by Catawba County Historical Association, Inc., 1954.

Powell, William S. North Carolina, A History. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., and Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1977.

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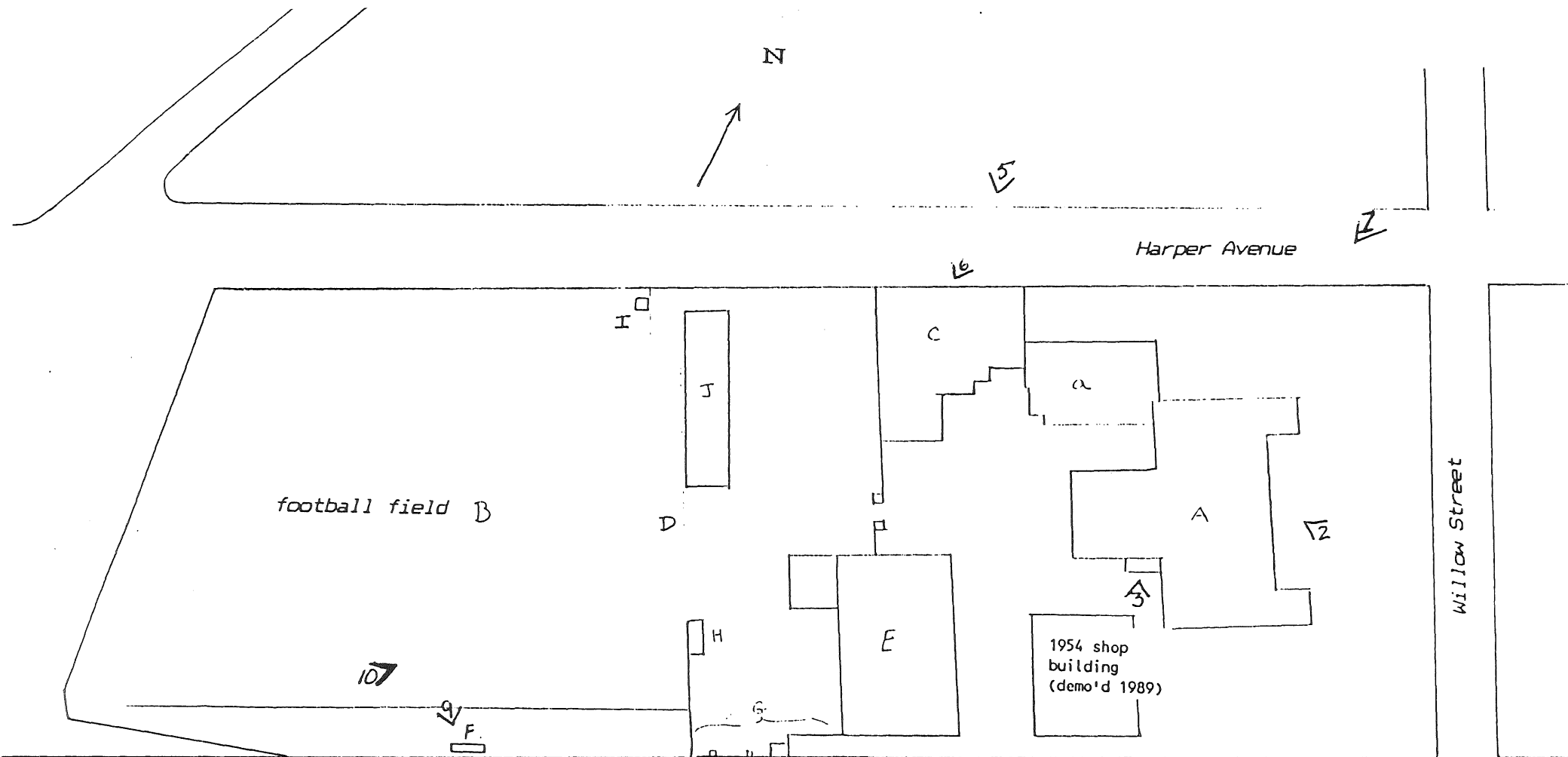
Lenoir High School

The following information is true for each of the 10 photographs which accompany this nomination.

Name of property:	Lenoir High School
Location:	100 Willow Street Lenoir, NC (Caldwell County)
Photographer:	Langdon Edmunds Oppermann
Date of Photo:	April 1990
Location of original negative:	SHPO Office NC Division of Archives & History Raleigh, NC 27611

Photo # (Bracketed letters are keyed to sketch map)

- 1 Front facade, main building (A)  
Photographer facing S
- 2 Entrance, main building (A)  
Photographer facing W
- 3 Rear lobby addition (1990), main building (A)  
Photographer facing N
- 4 Front conference room, main building (A)  
Photographer facing N
- 5 Front facade, Band Building (C)  
Photographer facing S
- 6 Entrance detail, Band Building (C)  
Photographer facing S
- 7 Rehearsal Hall, Band Building (C)  
Photographer facing W
- 8 Gymnasium (E)  
Photographer facing NW
- 9 Press Box (F)  
Photographer facing SE
- 10 Rear of complex showing football field (B)  
and bleachers (D) in foreground  
Photographer facing NE



Lenoir High School  
100 Willow Street  
Lenoir, NC 28645

Caldwell County

- A = 1922 school building
- a = 1962 addition
- B = 1922-1923 football field with 1952 drainage improvements
- C = 1935-1937 band building
- D = concrete end zone bleachers (date unknown)
- E = 1947 gymnasium
- F = 1952 press building and College Avenue bleachers
- G = 1952 ticket booth, wall and entrance gate
- H = 1957 concession building
- I = 1960s cinder block bathroom
- J = late 1960s bricklaying class building

Contributing Buildings  
school building  
band building

Contributing Structure  
football field

Non-contributing Buildings  
gymnasium  
concession building  
bathroom building  
bricklaying class building

Non-contributing Structures  
press building and bleachers  
concrete end zone bleachers  
ticket booth, wall and  
entrance gate

△ = Photo, keyed to photo list

not to scale

