

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Princeville School

other names/site number Princeville Graded Colored School; Princeville Town Hall

### 2. Location

street & number S. side US 258 (Mutual Blvd), .3 mi E of NC 64 <sup>N/A</sup>  not for publication

city or town Princeville <sup>N/A</sup>  vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Edgecombe code 065 zip code 27886

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Jeffrey Crow SHPO 11/17/00  
Signature of certifying official Title Date

State of Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Princeville School  
Name of Property

Edgecombe County, N. C.  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

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

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Education: School

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/Not In Use

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Craftsman-influenced

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Weatherboard

roof Tin

other Wood

Brick

**Narrative Description**

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

(See Section 7 attachment)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Ethnic Heritage: Black

Education

Architecture

Period of Significance

late 1930s-1960

Significant Dates

late 1930s

1960

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

not known

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.) (See Section 8 attachment)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (See Section 9 attachment)

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

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 NCDAH
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University UNC-Chapel Hill and East Carolina
- Other

Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.38 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1 8	2 7 1 9 0 0	3 9 7 4 5 1 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description (attached)  
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (attached)  
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Penne Smith and Ellen Turco/Nomination Preparers (Michelle Kullen, Asst. Researcher)

organization Penne Smith date August 30, 2000

street & number P. O. Box 456 telephone 757-258-1501

city or town Williamsburg state VA zip code 23187

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

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

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

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

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

Property Owner

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

name Town of Princeville

street & number P. O. Box 1527 telephone 919-823-1057

city or town Princeville state NC zip code 27886

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

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

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Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 1Princeville School  
Princeville, N. C. (Edgecombe County)*ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION*

## SITE

The former Princeville School, constructed between 1935 and 1940, stands on the south side of N.C. Highway 258, approximately .3 miles east of the NC Highway 64 intersection. This building is within the town of Princeville, North Carolina, on the south bank of the Tar River across from Tarboro. Princeville, which became a town in 1885, twenty years after freed slaves created a small settlement there, was one of the first incorporated African American communities in the country.

This former school most recently served as Princeville's town hall from 1960 until 1999. Its 1.38-acre site is comprised of the school, an attached former fire station, and a large parking lot, part of which were once playing fields. Temporary trailers behind the school are now headquarters for town officers while the building is being restored. In terms of landscape, mature oaks, pines, and pecan trees are on the grounds; there is, otherwise, nothing left of what plantings were in place when the school was built. At the school's front elevation is a low concrete block wall and some small shrubs are still in place on the raised earth behind the wall.

## EXTERIOR

The Princeville School was not a Rosenwald School. Built between 1935 and 1940, there is no documentation that it was constructed with the aid of Julius Rosenwald's foundation. However, as many African American schools throughout the South had done between 1913 and 1945, Princeville's town fathers and the school principal apparently obtained building plans from the Rosenwald Fund's school house division in Nashville, Tennessee, or worked with a contractor who had access to the plans. The Princeville School's form is a variation of the Rosenwald Fund's "Floor Plan Number 3: Three-Teacher Community School" plan found in their 1924 "Bulletin 3: Community School Plans" (Appendix A). Like the Rosenwald Plan, the Princeville School is a one-story weatherboarded building, eleven bays wide and two rooms deep, with a recessed front-gable center entrance. The school building's high foundation, supported by brick piers with later concrete block infill, was no doubt due to periodic flooding from the Tar River that has historically affected Princeville.

Instead of the side-gable shingle roof shown in the Rosenwald plan illustration, the Princeville School is capped by a hip roof covered in standing seam metal; two interior brick chimney flues are still in place on either side of the entrance bay. Eaves extending outward from the building display Craftsman style-influenced exposed rafter tails, a rare decorative detail on what is otherwise an extremely plain building. Another synthesis of function and decoration is the

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double-door front entrance, lit by large transom panes as well as sidelights and the paired sash doors. Paired and single original nine-over-nine double-hung sash windows light the front/north elevation; a similar band of windows at the rear/south elevation has been altered, but its original placement is still evident. There do not appear to have ever been windows at the side elevations when the school was built; the interior plan indicates that side elevations were where blackboards would have been. A small window was cut into the rear of the school's side/east elevation between 1970 and 1985; the west elevation, covered by the concrete block firehouse side extension, does not appear to have ever had windows.

The school building has received three additions since its circa 1935 construction. Two sympathetic additions built between 1953 and 1960 project unobtrusively from the school's rear elevation (Tarboro 1931 and 1953 Sanborn Maps). Still partly sheathed with original German siding and retaining rafter ends, these two extensions appear to have originally been an enclosed shed porch and a small front-gable rear extension, probably for bathrooms. Six years after Princeville School became Princeville Town Hall in 1960, the rear extension was expanded at its east elevation for HeadStart, a federal kindergarten program. This section, its roof a sloping shed extending from the earlier front-gable extension, has vertical exterior plywood siding, small two-over-two horizontal double-hung sash windows and a front-gable stoop shelter at its east entrance. One window at this extension has since been enclosed. The enclosed shed porch, which now has replacement siding, has a corrugated metal shelter at its rear stair, and three windows at its west elevation, two of which are replacement two-over-two horizontal sash windows. Both extensions are flush against two of the original building's band of paired nine-over-nine double-hung sash windows; the band at the east end of the rear elevation has been replaced by partly-enclosed double-hung sash.

The third addition, adjoining the school's west end, is a two-story, front-gable concrete block building built as the town fire station between 1960 and 1969. Its two-bay garage has been partially enclosed; upstairs are two fixed two-pane horizontal metal and glass windows. The fire siren pole at the gable roof's apex is still in place; the bell just to the east of the former fire station is said to have been the bell for an earlier firehouse.

The Princeville School's interior plan also resembles Floor Plan 3 of the Rosenwald Community School Plans in Bulletin 3. This building has three large classrooms in its northeast, southeast, and southwest corners. Movable partition walls that could be used to create one large open space for school assemblies or other community gatherings once separated the two rear classrooms. This former partition opening has been sealed to create a central passage through the building, leading to the rear extension rooms. The southeast classroom was subdivided into small offices but its original floor plan, thanks to interior fixtures being stripped from flood damage, has been reclaimed.

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At the building's northeast section is a small room and corridor off the main hall, which leads to a smaller classroom. This is where apparently the Princeville School decided to depart from the Floor Plan 3 format. Instead—possibly influenced by Rosenwald Floor Plan 4, also in Bulletin 3—the small room, which has a fixed window facing the main hall, was apparently used as a front office (Appendix B). The small classroom beyond the office may have been used as a classroom or, as was popular with Rosenwald Schools, an Industrial Room where shop and home economics classes would be held. This room retains its original slate chalkboard and plain vertical tongue-and-groove pine wainscoting (there is also a section of this wainscot in the office). Door and window surrounds are plain and its roughly plastered walls also appear to be original, as does the four-panel wooden door. Flood damage necessitated removing the building's dropped acoustical tile ceiling, revealing the original beaded tongue-and-groove board ceiling. The narrow pine floorboards, where not covered with linoleum, are also original.

The rear extension rooms, heavily damaged by flooding from Hurricane Floyd in 1999, do not appear to retain their original interior finish. The enclosed shed section was converted to bathrooms and storage space; the rear extension, where HeadStart classes were once held, was converted to office and storage space, most recently housing Princeville's Public Works department. Other changes the building has undergone due to Hurricane Floyd, besides the recently removed dropped ceilings and linoleum floor coverings, include the loss of original doors and some original windows.

In summary, the circa 1935-1940 Princeville School, though not a Rosenwald-funded school, retains features characteristic of a Rosenwald School. Its exterior weatherboarding, doors, and nearly all windows are original. Its interior retains most of the original floor plan, including open spaces and rare furnishings such as the blackboard; there are wooden auditorium-style folding chairs original to the building, which are now stored off-site.

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**Princeville School**  
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*STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE*

SUMMARY

Constructed in the late 1930s, the Princeville School is nominated to the National Register under Criterion A for education and black ethnic heritage and Criterion C for architecture. For approximately twenty-five years, the building served as the elementary school for the town of Princeville, the nation's first municipality founded by African Americans to be incorporated, in 1885. After the school closed in 1960, the building assumed a new identity as Princeville's town hall until 1999. As a substantially intact simple weatherboarded frame structure, the building exemplifies many schools constructed throughout the South for African American children during the early twentieth century. Many of these African American schools received matching grants made by philanthropists, the most notable of these being Julius Rosenwald, in addition to funds raised by local citizens and county school boards. Although not a Rosenwald-funded school, Princeville School's form and plan are adaptations of the Fund's 1920s standardized designs. Its one known tie to the Rosenwald Fund was a forty-dollar grant in 1932 for a school library.

The Princeville School is associated with events that have contributed significantly to the broad patterns of local history within Edgecombe County and eastern North Carolina. Its very existence is a reminder of the infamous Jim Crow era, when separate schools were built for whites and blacks in the South until desegregation commenced in the 1960s. It is also a testament to the resilience of African Americans, their self-sacrifice and determination of a better education for their children (Hanchett, 427). Princeville School's period of significance begins in the late 1930s, the estimated time of its construction, and ends in 1960, the year it closed as a school and became Princeville Town Hall. Its continued significance after 1950 as the educational landmark of the country's first incorporated town founded by African Americans renders the school eligible for the Register under Criteria Consideration G.

As later partitions and coverings were stripped away after flooding from Hurricane Floyd in September 1999, Princeville School's wooden floors, tongue-and-groove board ceilings, and original floor plan emerged intact. Princeville's local government, which has relocated to a new town hall, is in a partnership with a number of groups including the Princeville Tourism and Historical Society, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and the North Carolina Institute of Minority Economic Development to restore the school and use it for local history exhibits.



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**Princeville School**  
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**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND; BLACK ETHNIC HERITAGE AND EDUCATION**  
**CONTEXTS**

Princeville's site on the south bank of the Tar River is across from the small city of Tarboro, founded in the late eighteenth century. Located in the heart of eastern North Carolina's cotton belt and blessed with navigable water routes, and accessible land routes west to Raleigh and north to Virginia, Tarboro was a lively nineteenth-century regional marketplace for Edgecombe County farmers, as well as for landowners in nearby Martin and Pitt counties. As such, it was also a hub for freed African Americans and runaway slaves when Tarboro was taken over by Union forces during the Civil War. According to local historians, the Tar's south bank was already home to some freed African Americans before the Civil War, who crossed over to Tarboro daily to work as carpenters, blacksmiths, and laborers (Matthewson, 1). By 1865, a group of Freedmen had established a settlement on the low swampy land across from Tarboro known as Freedom Hill. Twenty years later, on February 20, 1885, Freedom Hill was officially incorporated as Princeville, the first incorporated African American town in North Carolina, and today one of the oldest such communities in the country (Matthewson, 1).

Mindful of the value of education, something they had been denied for centuries, Princeville's citizens pushed hard to bring schools to their area even before incorporation. At their instigation Henry C. Cherry, an African-American state legislator from Tarboro, approached the American Missionary Association (A. M. A.) in 1868, requesting that the settlement be sent a teacher. The A. M. A. sent Robert S. Taylor, an African American instructor working in Beaufort County, North Carolina, to Freedom Hill, where he taught for over fifteen years. The local response was enthusiastic; Taylor had thirty pupils in 1870 and, ten years later, the student population was such to support six teachers in the area (Mobley).

Princeville's first public school is said to have been founded in 1883, two years before incorporation. As with many African American schools of the time, the school offered no certificate but a letter of recommendation for the lucky few who were able to go on to college, usually at Raleigh's St. Augustine College or Shaw University (G. Matthewson, June 2000). The location of this first school is unknown, but it is thought to be near the site of the second public school, the Princeville Colored Graded School, which was the site of the present Princeville School.

Established by 1888, the Princeville Colored Graded School was on part of a tract identified as the Lloyd family estate in 1885 (Edgecombe Co. Register of Deeds). Mostly subdivided into homes, small farms, and businesses by 1888, the former Lloyd estate tract fronted Market Street (now Mutual Boulevard), an old route from Tarboro to Williamston. The school, funded by the

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Tarboro Graded School Board, was located on Market Street's south side, three-tenths of a mile east of the bridge to Tarboro. Early accounts of the Princeville Colored Graded School note that, although a new building, it was already strained beyond its means; there were two hundred children attending the school, most of whom were squeezed in fours or fives on wooden benches designed for two (Tarboro Southerner 3/15/1888). Nevertheless, Princeville School's principal, E. L. Thornton, and his assistants were eloquent in their appreciation of Edgecombe County's white citizens funding their new school (Tarboro Southerner, 4/19/1888). Academic acumen at Princeville Colored Graded School continued to grow after Thornton was replaced by William P. Mabson, a Lincoln University graduate, later that year. Under Mabson's sure supervision, the majority of Princeville's children were going to school during a time that black education in Edgecombe County was in decline (Mobley, 28).

During the Princeville Colored Graded School's earliest years, the primary curriculum focused pragmatically upon vocational courses, although academic courses were also taught. Classes usually went only to the fourth grade, and the school term could be as brief as four months (Mobley, 29). However, the school continued to thrive. Tarboro's Graded School Board purchased a small lot immediately east of the school in 1899, which was soon incorporated into the school grounds (Edgecombe Co. Register of Deeds). John Jones, a graduate of Oberlin College, was then principal of the school, a position he held until 1907 when John Perry, who had attended Yale, assumed the job (Matthewson, 2). Perry's energy resulted in the school's first commencement exercises in 1909, where county school superintendent R. G. Kittrell was a keynote speaker. The Princeville Graded School students promoted their industry to Tarboro's white citizens by displays of their shop projects, and there were a number of scholastic awards as well. Public opinion toward the school continued to be favorable the following year, when the local paper praised Perry for the quality of that year's commencement and student exhibitions. Perry, an educator in the mold of Booker T. Washington, believed that his students' vocational skills would provide them more economic stability than a traditional liberal education (Mobley, 29). It was during Perry's tenure that a two-story extension with an assembly room was constructed and connected to the original one-story, front-gable frame school building (Matthewson, 2). This progressive stance continued when W. A. Pattillo succeeded Perry in 1912 and added high school courses to Princeville Graded School's curriculum (Mobley, 30). The relatively progressive nature of the school was at odds with its physical structure. By 1923 the Princeville Colored Graded School was, as with many early African American schools, a deteriorating, eccentrically-planned complex. The narrow two-story and one-story front-gable wings were connected by a one-story hyphen, and each of these front-gable wings had a small side extension, probably for additional classrooms (Sanborn 1923). Access to the building's second floor was via a rear stair (Sanborn 1923 and Ed Bridgers June 2000). The building, heated by an oil stove, had no electricity; however, Princeville would obtain electricity from Tarboro within the year and the school would have lighting by 1931 (Sanborn 1923 and 1931,

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and Daily Southerner 6/5/1923). White citizens were shocked by the school's condition; Don Gilliam, Chairman of the Tarboro School Board, wrote of its crowded space "where the children are being literally packed in the rooms in order to accommodate them." Gilliam described the building as "a veritable firetrap, old, dilapidated and a mockery of our policy of free education for the negro (Daily Southerner, 4/19/1923)."

Princeville's school administrators and many of its citizens would have been aware of the Julius Rosenwald Fund in 1923, if for no other reason than that no less than five Rosenwald Schools were on the drawing board in Edgecombe County (Daily Southerner, 3/12/1923). Julius Rosenwald (1862-1932), who was president of Sears, Roebuck and Company by 1909, centered his philanthropy upon African American education. He and Booker T. Washington formed a partnership in 1912 to build rural black schools in Alabama, a partnership that by 1917 had evolved into the Julius Rosenwald Fund, which was based in Chicago (Hanchett, 395-398). Three years later, Rosenwald opened an office in Nashville, Tennessee, primarily to handle school house design and construction (Hanchett, 400). North Carolina advocates of the Rosenwald Fund and its schools were, first and foremost, Nathan Carter Newbold, the state Director of Negro Education, and William F. Credle, the State Department of Negro Education's Rosenwald Field Agent. Newbold and Credle worked closely with other representatives of philanthropic agencies to encourage county school boards and African American citizens to fund these schools, all of which were designed with an eye to optimal use of light and space (Hanchett, 401-416; NCDPI 1913-1914, 123-126). In 1926, eight more Rosenwald Schools had been built in Edgecombe County and two more—Hickory View and Providence—were under construction (NCDPI 1925-1926, 202; NCDPI 1926-1927, 280). By 1932, when the Rosenwald Fund began to phase out of building elementary schools, twenty-six such schools had been built in Edgecombe County (NCDPI 1932); eleven other African American schools not funded by Rosenwald were also in the county at that time (Daily Southerner, 5/4/1933). These simple weatherboarded school houses, distinctive for their bands of elongated double-hung sash windows, recessed entrances, and Craftsman style exterior details, were a marked improvement over the county's ramshackle black schools that could barely hold their pupils.

In May 1923 the Tarboro School Board passed a \$130,000 bond issue to pay off debts and build new schools within its township; \$5,000.00 of the bond issue was slated to build a new school in Princeville (Daily Southerner, 5/16/1923). However, no school replaced the Princeville Colored Graded School for at least ten to seventeen years after the bond issue passed. East Tarboro Colored High School (later W. A. Pattillo School, demolished 1999) was completed in 1924 at a cost of \$32,000, most of which came from the bond issue and some from the Rosenwald Fund (Credle, 5/1924; also, Howse Interview, 8/16/2000). According to local history, the floods that had ravaged Princeville in 1919 and 1924 concerned many local residents, who considered closing the local school and sending all students to the new East Tarboro school. In the end,

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feeling prevailed that Princeville should keep at least its first six grades (M. Matthewson, 2; Bridgers June 2000). Maps from the early 1930s show that the old Princeville Colored Graded School was still being used. Former students who attended Princeville's school from 1925 until 1934 confirmed that the old school was still in use; there were seven and a half rooms at that time in the very overcrowded, deteriorated building, whose second floor had served as temporary housing during the 1924 flood (Bridgers, June 2000; M. Matthewson, 1). It was during this period that the school received a forty-dollar disbursement from the Rosenwald Fund; given in 1932, it was intended to help support the school's library (NCDPI 1931).

On July 3, 1935, W. F. Credle, North Carolina's Schoolhouse Planning Director, wrote W. A. Mahler, Tarboro's Schools Superintendent, about conditions in the city schools. His review of the Princeville Colored Graded School was scathing:

This is an antiquated, dilapidated two story structure, wholly unsuited for school purposes, and an ever present hazard to the lives of the people and pupils who use it. Plans for its immediate abandonment should be quickly made. Its further use will really be a violation of the safety laws of North Carolina and the city and county officials should take every step to remove themselves from liability for any injury that may come to occupants of this building (NCDPI/DSP).

The earliest published mention found of the present Princeville School was in 1944. By that time the former Princeville Colored Graded School had finally been demolished and the present Princeville School, a one-story, weatherboarded hip roof building on a raised brick pier foundation, stood in its place. It is probable that the new school was constructed before 1940 with funding from the Works Progress Administration. Contemporary outbuildings once surrounding the school no longer exist; the concrete block privy said to be used in the 1950s was destroyed in 1999. But the school, a four-classroom building, has remained quite intact. By the 1940s the Princeville School was housing younger pupils, so it is not clear if the industrial room was ever used as such. In 1944, the teacher-student ratio at Princeville was approximately one to forty-four; however, if earlier student enrollment numbers are correct, this was a comparatively manageable ratio (Daily Southerner, 8/24/1944).

Instructors who made the transition from old to new school included Helen Walston, who received her bachelor's degree from Fayetteville State Normal School; Miss Walston was to become the first female principal of Princeville School from 1943 to 1954 (M. Matthewson, 2). The second female principal of the school, Mary Ward Matthewson (1922?-1983), began teaching there in 1944. The descendant of free black farmers in southern Wayne County, Mrs. Matthewson studied at Shaw University in the late 1930s and briefly taught at the Fremont

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(N. C.) School before marrying Princeville businessman, Glennie Matthewson, Sr. (G. Matthewson, June 2000). Sometime before 1950, Mrs. Matthewson attended Columbia University's summer school for teachers, a program frequented by a number of North Carolina's African American teachers and administrators; by 1954 she was principal of Princeville School (NCDPI; M. Matthewson, 2). Besides her teaching career, which was to span nearly thirty years, Mrs. Matthewson was a local historian, but vitally interested in Princeville's future as well as its past.

In 1960, a new Princeville Elementary School with eight classrooms was built nearby and the former school was converted into Princeville town hall. Shortly after its conversion, a two-story concrete block fire station was added to the east end of the former school; in 1965 part of the town hall was reconfigured for HeadStart kindergarten classrooms. A open shed was added behind the fire station for town equipment, and a small playground was built behind the school (M. Matthewson, 4). By 1998, the town government wanted to expand its complex without altering the former school, which had become one of Princeville's few surviving historic buildings. To that end, municipal officials and townspeople formed the Princeville Tourism and Historic Society, working with the National Park Service and other agencies to develop the town as a historic site. At that time, it was decided that the former school would be restored to its original appearance. Later that year, the September 1999 hurricane that devastated Princeville, conversely, helped to strip away much of the building's later fabric, revealing that a great deal of its original form and interior finish had survived.

**ARCHITECTURE CONTEXT**

Although not a Rosenwald-funded school, the former Princeville School nevertheless displays and embodies the distinctive characteristics of that organization's standardized school designs. How this came to be is not known. Conjecturally, school administrators either requested or had access to older Rosenwald School plans in the late 1930s, at which time the Rosenwald Fund had phased out of building elementary schools. However it came by the plans and appropriated them for its own design, the Princeville School is exemplary of these early twentieth-century African American rural school buildings. The exterior façade employs a typically Rosenwald tidy functionalism, from its bands of double-hung windows at its front and rear elevations to the exposed rafter ends that, projecting from the roof's eaves, protected the building from moisture. Although its north-south orientation is at odds with traditional Rosenwald practice that schools should have east and west lighting (Hanchett, 401), the Princeville School's natural lighting, thanks to the large window bands, was exceptional, especially in the building's front classrooms. In keeping with the Rosenwald Fund's precepts, school's functions could be extended to community events; the two rear classrooms, originally separated by a movable partition, served a dual function as an assembly room for local citizens as well as students. Interior finish was

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simple, little more decorative than a plain beaded board wainscot or plain door and window surrounds. These schools in their handsome simplicity were as much a focal point of local pride as a brick consolidated school in the white part of town; they also created a place of local assembly other than churches or stores.

The school's builder may have been a white contractor, David Harris of Tarboro. His firm, David Harris and Sons, has been associated with many of the Rosenwald Schools built in Edgecombe County from 1923 to 1930; Harris is said to have gotten the work by submitting lower bids (Taves, 50). Given his experience with Rosenwald School plans, it is likely that Harris could have quickly adapted them for Princeville School's needs.

Of the thirty-seven African-American schools built in Edgecombe County, five besides Princeville School are known to have survived into the 1980s; these surviving structures were either adapted to outbuildings or left vacant (Taves, 50-51). The Princeville School is, therefore, a part of Edgecombe County's African American school context, as elaborated in Henry Taves' 1985 survey report. Taves documented only five former schools still standing outside of Tarboro. Providence School near Hartsboro, a front-gable building with two large classrooms and three smaller rooms bisected by a center hall, was in ruinous condition in 1985. Two other schools have been rehabilitated into houses; Keech School at Dogtown was converted into a house soon after closing in 1948, and Mount Olive School near Rocky Mount was rehabilitated into a duplex in 1978. Two two-room plan Rosenwald Schools in the rural communities of Coakley and Kingsboro have served local farmers as packhouses for some years; remarkably, the former Coakley School still had some of its original school desks and chairs in 1985. Of these former school buildings, the Princeville School is the most intact within and without, making it Edgecombe County's best preserved African American school to survive the twentieth century.

The history of African American schools, those preceding, during, and just after the Rosenwald movement, is an important chapter in this county's cultural and architectural development. The rarity of these once-numerous Edgecombe County black schools emphasizes how crucial preservation of the Princeville School and other early twentieth-century minority schools is to expression of the county's heritage.

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## SECTION 10

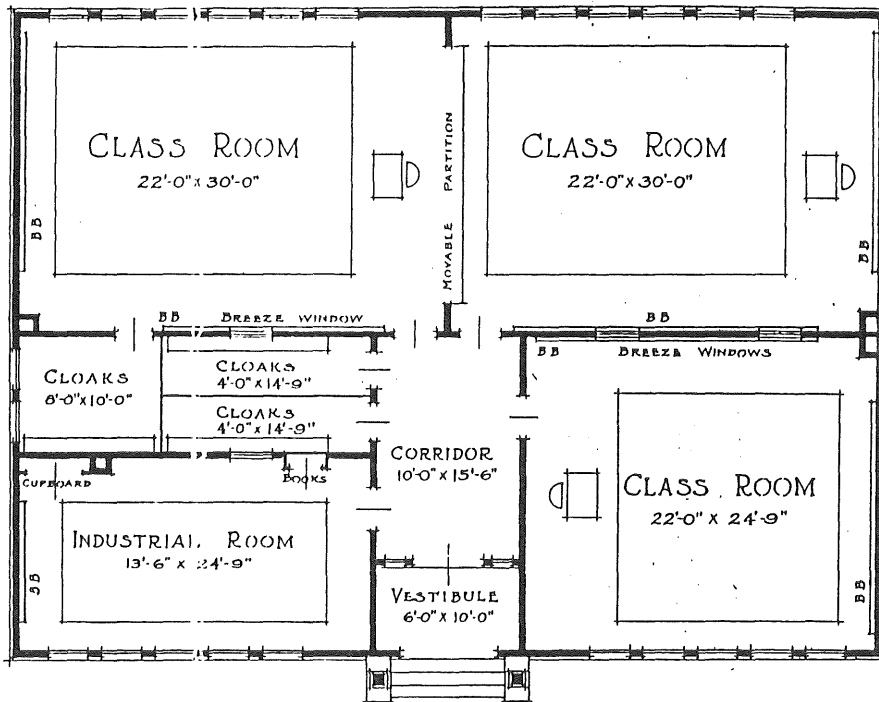
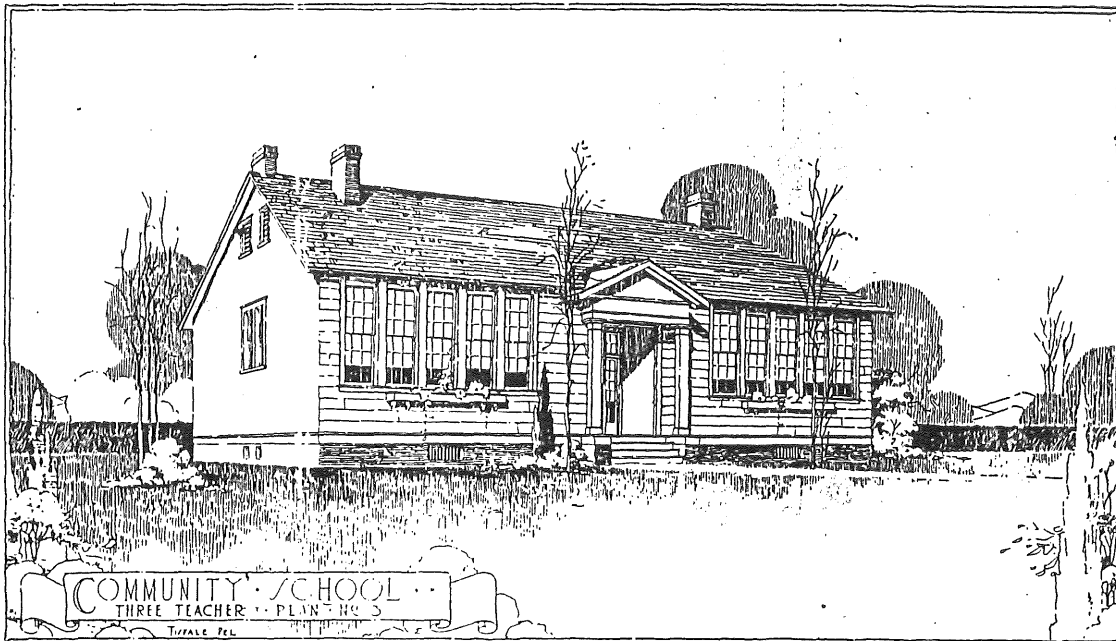
### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property is identified by the enclosed Princeville, Edgecombe County, GIS tax map 4738.19, and is hatched. The map's scale is 1" = 117' and constitutes part of the original Princeville Colored Graded School lot obtained by the Tarboro School Board between 1885 and 1899. The lot, which comes to 1.38 acres, measures 152' x 379' x 159' x 371'.

### BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property represents the entire lot historically associated with the Princeville School.

COMMUNITY SCHOOL PLANS

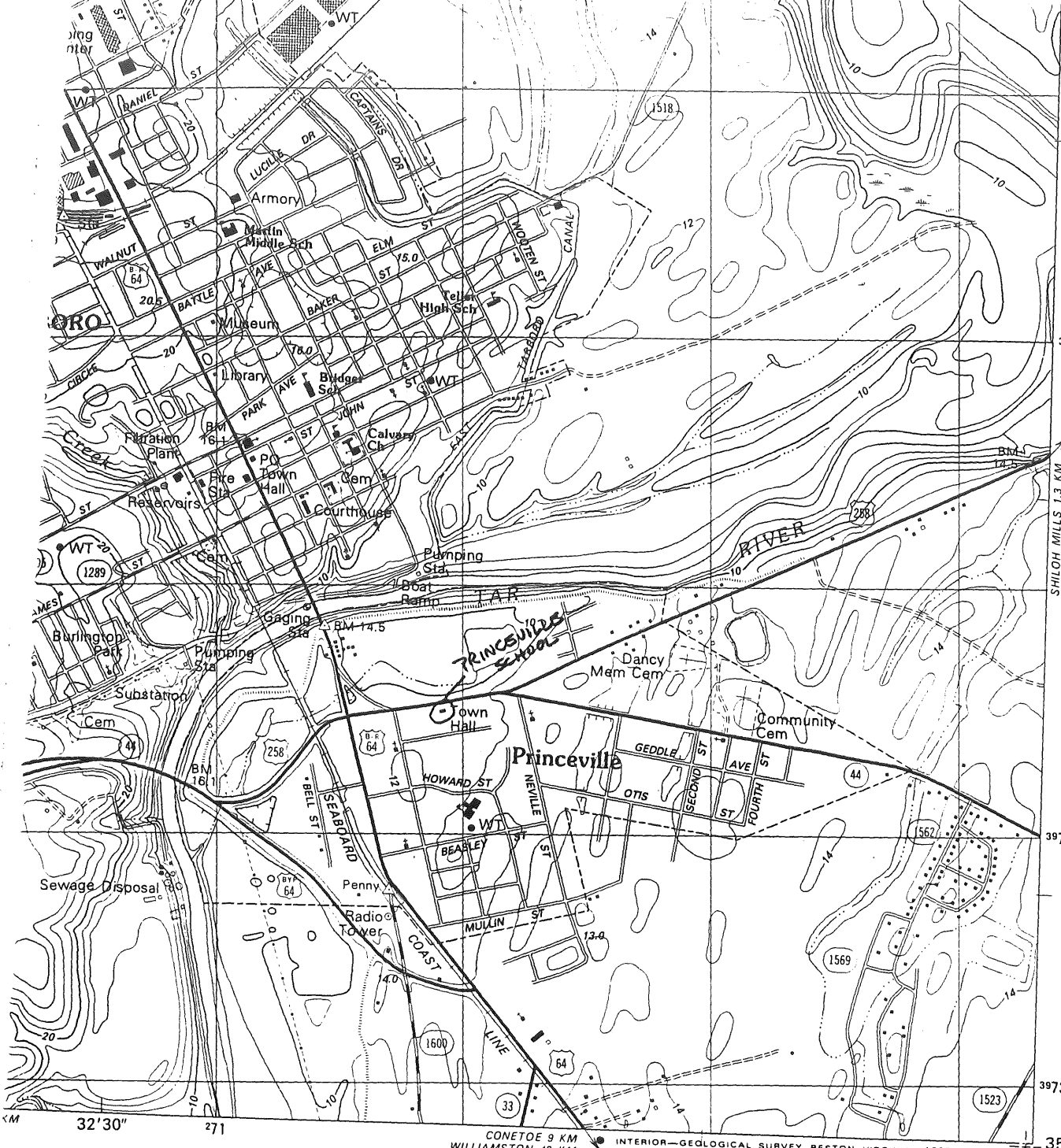


FLOOR PLAN NO 3  
THREE TEACHER COMMUNITY SCHOOL  
TO FACE EAST OR WEST ONLY

- 5 1.5240
- 6 1.8288
- 7 2.1336
- 8 2.4384
- 9 2.7432
- 10 3.0480

To convert feet to meters  
multiply by .3048

To convert meters to feet  
multiply by 3.2808

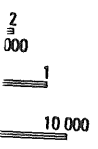


Princeville School  
Edgecombe Co., N.C.

JUNE 18

Easting  
271900

Northing  
3974510



QUADRANGLE LOCATION

CONTOURS AND ELEVATIONS  
IN METERS

**ROAD CLASSIFICATION**

- Primary highway, hard surface .....
- Secondary highway, hard surface .....
- Light-duty road, hard or improved surface .....
- Unimproved road .....
- Interstate Route (thick line with shield)
- U. S. Route (line with shield)
- State Route (line with circle)

**TARBORO, N. C.**  
NE/4 TARBORO 15' QUADRANGLE  
N3552.5-W7730/7.5

1981

DMA 5455 I NE-SERIES V842

(CONETOE)  
5555 N SW

