



**NORTH CAROLINA OFFICE**

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September 22, 2020

Renee Gledhill-Earley  
Environmental Review Coordinator  
State Historic Preservation Office  
109 East Jones St., Room 258  
Raleigh, North Carolina, 27601

Dear Ms. Gledhill-Earley:

**Re: Documentation to Fulfill MOA Obligation, Demolition of Cerro Gordo and Tabor City Schools, Columbus County, North Carolina (ER 19-3123)**

The following hard copy items are transmitted, pursuant to the Recordation Plan set forth in the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA):

Historical Background, one per school:

*Cerro Gordo School, Cerro Gordo, North Carolina, 1926-2020*, prepared by Commonwealth Heritage Group, Inc. (Commonwealth), September 2020 (1 Printed Copy, 1 PDF on CD)

*Tabor City School, Tabor City, North Carolina, 1927-2020*, prepared by Commonwealth Heritage Group, Inc. (Commonwealth), September 2020 (1 Printed Copy, 1 PDF on CD)

Labeled Photo Sheets (1 Printed Set and 1 Digital Set on CD, per school)

Site Plan/Photo Key (1 Printed Copy and 1 PDF on CD, per school)

Digital Images (JPGs on CD)

On behalf of our client Szostak Design, Inc., we asked that you provide final comments on the deliverables at your earliest convenience. Please contact me at [mfunk@chg-inc.com](mailto:mfunk@chg-inc.com); 252-641-1444 x. 25 if you have any comments or questions.

Yours truly,

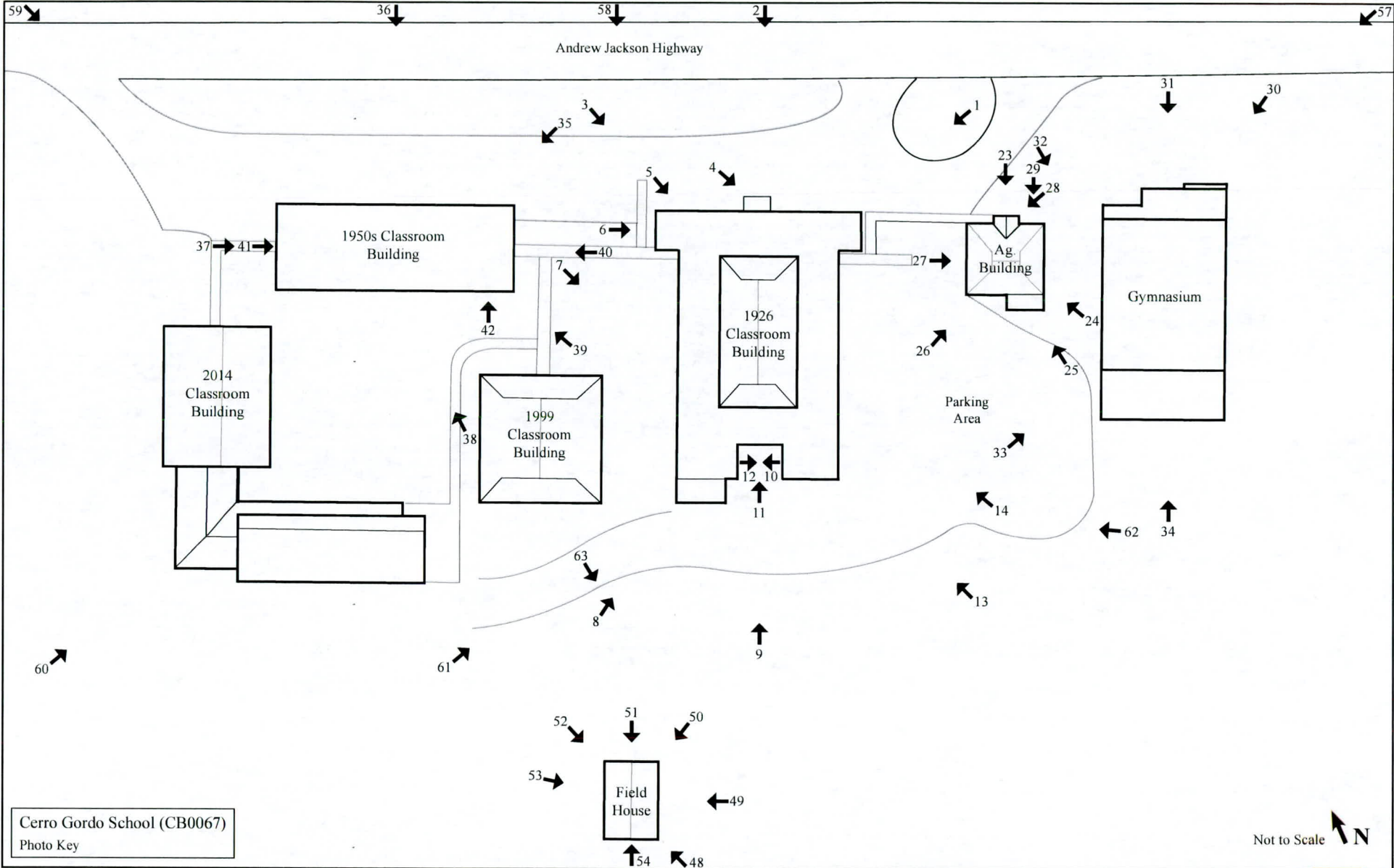
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Megan Funk".

Megan Funk, Architectural Historian  
Project Manager

CC: David Clinton, Szostak Design, Inc.  
Jonathan Williams, Columbus County Schools

**OTHER LOCATIONS**

Alexandria, VA (703) 354-9737   Columbus, OH (614) 549-6190   Dexter, MI (517) 788-3550  
Littleton, MA (978) 793-2579   Milwaukee, WI (414) 446-4121   Ogden, UT (801) 394-0013   Traverse City, MI (517) 262-3376  
West Chester, PA (610) 436-9000





Cerro Gordo School (CB0067), 1926 Classroom Building, Columbus County, NC



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-1926 Classroom Building\_M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_001\_LookingWest.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-1926 Classroom Building\_M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_002\_LookingSouthwest.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-1926 Classroom Building\_M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_003\_LookingSouth.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-1926 Classroom Building\_M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_004\_EntryPortico.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-1926 Classroom Building\_M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_005\_TypicalWindowBay.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-1926 Classroom Building\_M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_006\_LookingSoutheast.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-1926 Classroom Building\_M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_007\_LookingSouth.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-1926 Classroom Building\_M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_008\_LookingEast.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-1926 Classroom Building\_M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_009\_LookingNortheast.jpg



Cerro Gordo School (CB0067), 1926 Classroom Building, Columbus County, NC



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-1926 Classroom Building\_M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_010\_LookingNorthwest.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-1926 Classroom Building\_M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_011\_LookingNortheast.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-1926 Classroom Building\_M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_012\_LookingSoutheast.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-1926 Classroom Building\_M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_013\_LookingNorth.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-1926 Classroom Building\_M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_014\_LookingNorthwest.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-1926 Classroom Building\_M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_015\_AuditoriumLookingNortheast.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-1926 Classroom Building\_M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_016\_AuditoriumLookingSouth.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-1926 Classroom Building\_M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_017\_AuditoriumSeating.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-1926 Classroom Building\_M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_018\_AuditoriumSeatingDetail.jpg



Cerro Gordo School (CB0067), 1926 Classroom Building, Columbus County, NC



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-1926 Classroom  
Building\_M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_019\_AuditoriumSideEn  
trance.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-1926 Classroom  
Building\_M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_020\_OriginalTransoms.j  
pg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-1926 Classroom  
Building\_M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_021\_TypicalClassroom(  
OriginalMaterials).jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-1926 Classroom  
Building\_M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_022\_TypicalClassroom(  
Remodeled).jpg

Cerro Gordo School (CB0067), Agricultural Building, Columbus County, NC



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-AgriculturalBuilding\_M.F  
unk\_09-15-2020\_023\_LookingSouthwest.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-AgriculturalBuilding\_M.F  
unk\_09-15-2020\_024\_LookingNorthwest.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-AgriculturalBuilding\_M.F  
unk\_09-15-2020\_025\_LookingNorth.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-AgriculturalBuilding\_M.F  
unk\_09-15-2020\_026\_LookingEast.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-AgriculturalBuilding\_M.F  
unk\_09-15-2020\_027\_LookingSoutheast.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-AgriculturalBuilding\_M.F  
unk\_09-15-2020\_028\_EntryPortico.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-AgriculturalBuilding\_M.F  
unk\_09-15-2020\_029\_WindowandEaveDetail.jpg



Cerro Gordo School (CB0067), Gymnasium, Columbus County, NC



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-Gymnasium\_M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_030\_LookingWest-Southwest.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-Gymnasium\_M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_031\_LookingSouthwest.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-Gymnasium\_M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_032\_LookingSouth.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-Gymnasium\_M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_033\_LookingEast-Northeast.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-Gymnasium\_M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_034\_LookingNortheast.jpg



Cerro Gordo School (CB0067), 1950s Classroom Building, Columbus County, NC



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-1950sClassroomBuilding  
M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_035\_LookingWest.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-1950sClassroomBuilding  
M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_036\_LookingSouthwest.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-1950sClassroomBuilding  
M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_037\_LookingSoutheast.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-1950sClassroomBuilding  
M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_038\_LookingNorth.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-1950sClassroomBuilding  
M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_039\_LookingNorth-Northwest.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-1950sClassroomBuilding  
M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_040\_LookingNorthwest.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-1950sClassroomBuilding  
M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_041\_TypicalEntryDoor.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-1950sClassroomBuilding  
M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_042\_TypicalWindowBank.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-1950sClassroomBuilding  
M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_043\_ClassroomCorridor.jpg



Cerro Gordo School (CB0067), 1950s Classroom Building, Columbus County, NC



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-1950sClassroomBuilding\_M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_044\_TypicalEntryDoor.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-1950sClassroomBuilding\_M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_045\_TypicalInteriorDoor.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-1950sClassroomBuilding\_M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_046\_TypicalInteriorTransom.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-1950sClassroomBuilding\_M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_047\_TypicalClassroom.jpg

Cerro Gordo School (CB0067), Field House, Columbus County, NC



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-FieldHouse\_M.Funk\_09-1  
5-2020\_048\_LookingNorth-Northwest.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-FieldHouse\_M.Funk\_09-1  
5-2020\_049\_LookingWest-Northwest.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-FieldHouse\_M.Funk\_09-1  
5-2020\_050\_LookingSoutheast.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-FieldHouse\_M.Funk\_09-1  
5-2020\_051\_LookingSouth-Southwest.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-FieldHouse\_M.Funk\_09-1  
5-2020\_052\_LookingSouth-Southwest.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-FieldHouse\_M.Funk\_09-1  
5-2020\_053\_LookingSouthwest.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-FieldHouse\_M.Funk\_09-1  
5-2020\_054\_LookingNorth-Northeast.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-FieldHouse\_M.Funk\_09-1  
5-2020\_055\_NorthClassroom.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-FieldHouse\_M.Funk\_09-1  
5-2020\_056\_SouthClassroom.jpg



Cerro Gordo School (CB0067), Viewshed, Columbus County, NC



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-Viewshed\_M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_057\_LookingEast.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-Viewshed\_M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_058\_LookingSouthwest.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-Viewshed\_M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_059\_LookingSoutheast.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-Viewshed\_M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_060\_LookingNortheast.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-Viewshed\_M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_061\_LookingNortheast.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-Viewshed\_M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_062\_LookingWest-Northwest.jpg



CB0067\_CerroGordoSchool-Viewshed\_M.Funk\_09-15-2020\_063\_LookingSouth.jpg

# Tabor City School

Tabor City, North Carolina

1927-2020



**PREPARED BY:**

*Commonwealth Heritage Group, Inc.*

**P.O. BOX 1198**

**201 WEST WILSON STREET**

**TARBORO, NORTH CAROLINA 27886**

**Megan Funk**

*Architectural Historian*

**September 2020**



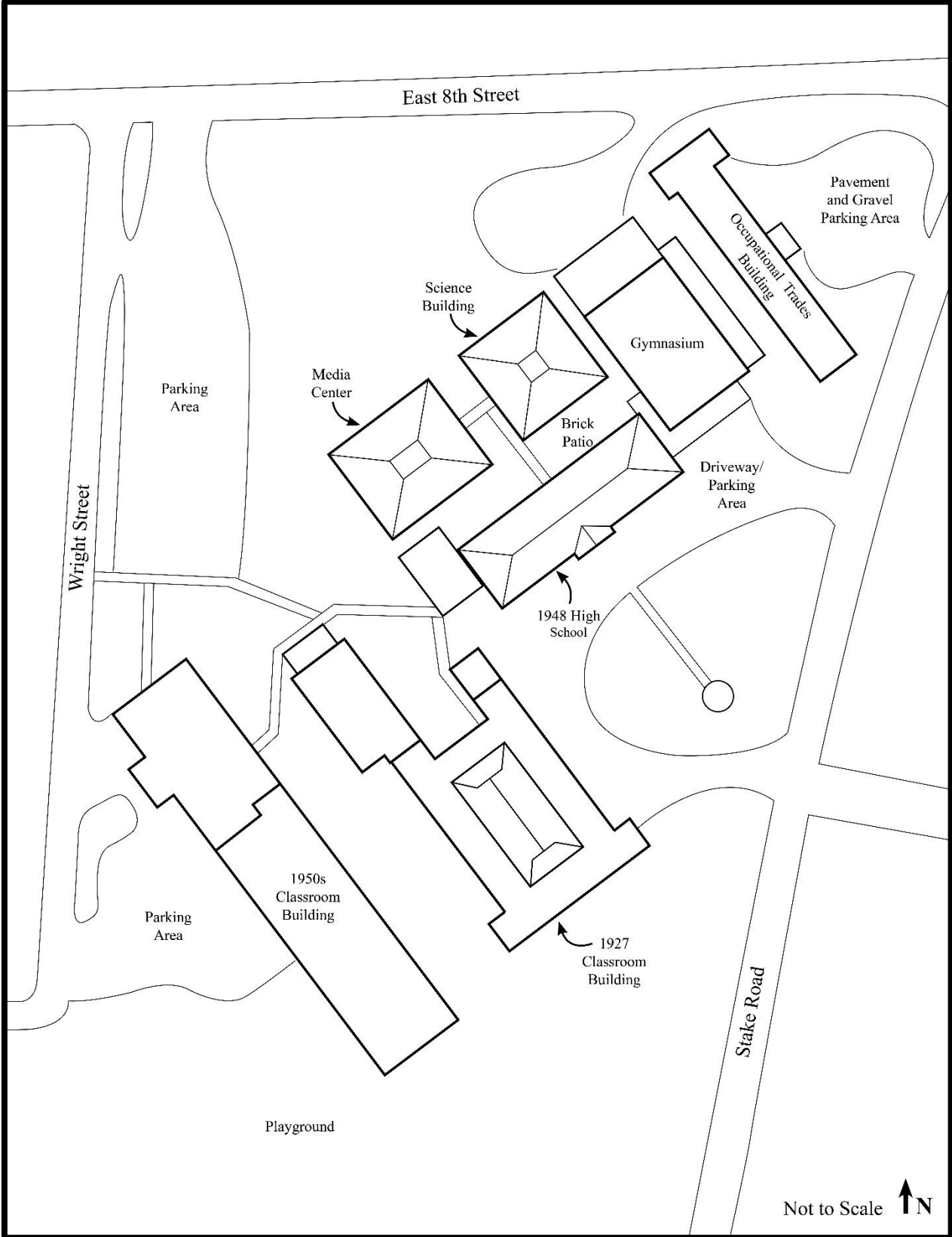


Figure 1: Tabor City School, Site Plan.

**Tabor City School**  
**203 Stake Rd, Tabor City, North Carolina**

***Dates of Construction:***  
1927, 1948, 1950s and 1970s

In 1927, after being served for just over a decade by a 1914 two-story, brick school, Tabor City decided to expand its campus by constructing a new classroom building north of the existing building. In March of that year, the land for the new school was purchased by the Board of Education from Pridgen & Pridgen, Inc. and construction quickly began on the new building.<sup>1</sup>

The school system worked with the architect Leslie N. Boney to design a school that is nearly identical to Cerro Gordo School, which was constructed a year earlier and is located roughly 20 miles north of Tabor City. Boney, who hailed from Wilmington, specialized in the design of educational and institutional facilities, and also designed the 1921 Whiteville High School and the 1939 Columbus County Hospital, now the Columbus County Health Department, as well as many other buildings across Eastern North Carolina.<sup>2</sup>

The 1927 one-story, brick classroom building has a roughly T-shaped plan that consists of a centrally placed auditorium wrapped on the northeast, southeast, and southwest by corridors with classrooms and offices. The auditorium is sheltered by a roof that is hipped except for small gables that rise above its front and rear slopes and the corridors have flat roofs. The southeast corridor, which spans the front of the building, is wider than the rest of the building, extending roughly fifteen feet past the side elevations and lending to the building's T-shaped plan. The northeast and southwest sections extend past the rear of the building as well, and a small addition with a tall brick chimney extends from the rear of the northeast section while a six-classroom wing extends from the rear of the southwest section.

At the center of the school's symmetrical façade is a flat-roofed portico supported by slender paired columns that shelters a double leaf entrance with a long transom. Paired steel-frame windows flank the entry bay and beyond the paired windows are tripled steel-frame windows. The windows are five panes in height, which is typical of the building. Beyond these, the façade is bookended by slightly projecting bays with tripled steel-frame windows flanked by individual steel-frame windows. The side elevations of the southeast section, which are blind, are finished with simple brick patterning and concrete details.

Typical of buildings designed by Boney, the school's cornice and windows are finished with concrete details that are painted white. These details include the coping of the stepped parapet that wraps the building, small diamonds set in the brick above the windows, a belt course that spans the upper portion of the southeast section, including the bays that project from the side elevations, and angled elements and keystones placed in the jack arches of each window. An

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<sup>1</sup> Columbus County Register of Deeds, Deed Book 130, page 562.

<sup>2</sup> Leslie N. Boney, Jr., Charles H. Boney, Sr., and Janet K. Seapker, "Boney, Leslie N., Sr. (1880-1964)," *North Carolina Architects and Builders: A Biographical Dictionary*, ed. Catherine W. Bisher, <https://ncarchitects.lib.ncsu.edu/people/P000529>, accessed January 14, 2020.



unpainted belt course of soldier bricks wraps the building roughly mid-way between the windows and ground as well.

Windows similar to the façade pierce the remaining elevations of the original school building as well as the side elevations of the six-classroom wing. Double-leaf doors placed at the south end of the side elevations provide access to the main body of the building while additional double-leaf doors are located on the side and rear elevations of the six-classroom wing and a single-leaf door and roll-top door exist on the side elevations of the east rear addition, which has no windows.”

Like Cerro Gordo and other schools in the state, Tabor City School was part of a movement to consolidate small schools and to provide a more full-range curriculum for students, particularly upper level students, at a central location. The new school was quick to grow and by the 1932-33 school year served 908 students.<sup>3</sup> This growth necessitated the construction of the six-classroom wing at the rear of the school in 1937. The school also benefitted from the WPA program through the receipt of a tin-roofed gymnasium in the late 1920s or 1930s.<sup>4</sup> An aerial image from 1938 shows the campus including the 1927 classroom building with its new rear wing and the 1914 school (Figure 2).

To further accommodate the growing campus, the Board of Education purchased additional parcels from Pridgen & Pridgen in 1936 and 1939.<sup>5</sup> It also purchased less than one acre from Forney Norris in 1939 and six acres from J. O. and Myrtie McKaskill Prince in 1944.<sup>6</sup> These parcels were purchased in preparation for the construction of the 1948 Tabor City High School building, but also came to accommodate the current gymnasium and the occupational trades building (Figure 3).

The two-story, classically inspired Tabor City High School has a linear plan and is constructed with brick laid in a common bond pattern. The school is sheltered by a hipped, asphalt shingle roof, which has four arched, dormer vents along its forward slope and five along its rear slope. It has a symmetrical, seven-bay façade with a centered full-height, pedimented portico supported by four stone Doric columns and engaged pilasters. The pediment is finished with plain weatherboard siding, a small fanlight, and a dentilled cornice. The portico shelters a recessed double-leaf entry door flanked by three-pane sidelights over panels and topped with a tall multi-light transom. Above the recess, a cast stone signage panel is inscribed with “Tabor City High School 1948.” The recess is flanked by large multi-light, steel-frame windows that are five panes tall and three panes wide with cast stone sills. Four identical windows span the upper portion of the façade below the pediment. The portico is flanked on each side by three bays. The inner bays are composed of four windows—two like those flanking the entrance flanked by narrower (two panes wide) windows—on each story. The final bays contain simple double-leaf doors that have a single large light in each leaf and are sheltered by a minimal, flat awning. Above the doors are large steel-frame windows that are six panes tall and three panes wide.

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<sup>3</sup> Gordon Lewis, *Facts About Columbus County*, (Whiteville, N.C.: The News Report, 1933), 24.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas L. Lewis, compiler, “Tabor City Primary/High School,” in Paschal, *A Historical View of the Columbus County Schools, 1808-1977*, (Whiteville: Columbus County Board of Education, 1977), 158.

<sup>5</sup> Columbus County Register of Deeds, Deed Book 147, page 284 and 285 and Deed Book 156, page 396

<sup>6</sup> Columbus County Register of Deeds, Deed Book 156, page 359 and Deed Book 171, page 473.

The side elevations connect to the one-story, flat-roofed home economics wing on the west and a hyphen that leads to the 1954 gymnasium on the east and are lit on the second story by large, screened openings. The rear elevation is lit by an arrangement of windows similar to those on the façade and is accessed by a centered, double-leaf entrance as well as a single-leaf wooden door that accesses a boiler room.

In the late 1940s the original gymnasium was destroyed by a fire and in 1954 the current gymnasium was constructed east of the high school.<sup>7</sup> The brick, barrel-roofed gymnasium faces southeast toward Stake Road and is lit on its side elevations by banks of steel-frame windows placed just below the eave of the roof. Its blind façade is partially spanned by the one-story, flat-roofed hyphen that connects to the high school and contains three double-leaf doors and two paired, steel-frame windows. A long, one-story, flat-roofed wing this is lit by six steel-frame windows and houses locker rooms spans its northeast (side) elevation. At some point, a small announcer's box was constructed in place of the center window on the northeast elevation and projects from the elevation. An addition was also constructed on the northwest (rear) elevation of the gymnasium where it provided a handicap-accessible entrance, updated restrooms, and additional storage.

In 1955, the campus was enlarged again with the first portion of the occupational trades building constructed east of the new gymnasium and the one-story elementary school building, which housed a new cafeteria. The new elementary school building was constructed west of the 1927 classroom building on the site of the 1914 school, which was lost to fire around the same time as the original gymnasium.<sup>8</sup>

The occupational trades building is a long, one-story, flat-roofed, building that is constructed of concrete block and clad with brick. The building was constructed in multiple phases between 1950 and 1970 and was originally used for occupational trade and woodwork classes but most recently for pre-kindergarten classes.<sup>9</sup> The southern block of the building was constructed first and contained two classrooms—each with an exterior entrance on the southwest elevation—offices, and storage space.<sup>10</sup> Over time, additional classrooms and a garage/shop were added to the north end of the building and a new entry vestibule was added to the northeast elevation. An assortment of windows, including steel-frame and aluminum-frame windows, light the building.

The one-story, brick elementary school building has a linear plan and is sheltered by a flat roof. Like many mid-century buildings, it has few decorative details but does have interesting, enclosed eaves that angle up to meet the edge of the roof. Other characteristics of the building include recessed entrances with double-leaf, wooden doors, sidelights and transoms on the southwest, southeast, and northeast elevations and banks of steel-frame windows that light the southern, classroom section. On the southwest elevation, the window banks are paired with solid

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<sup>7</sup> Lewis (1977), 158.

<sup>8</sup> Houston T. Watts, *Up Date History of Tabor City, North Carolina*, (Tabor City, N. C.: DiggyPOD, 2012), 22.

<sup>9</sup> Timmy Ward (Maintenance Director, Columbus County Schools Board of Education), personal conversation with author, Cerro Gordo and Tabor City, NC, January 17, 2020.

<sup>10</sup> EarthExplorer, Aerial Images from 1951 through 1972, <https://earthexplorer.usgs.gov>, accessed January 2020.



panel entry doors with transoms. Similar banks of windows, but with vinyl frames, light the northwest and northeast elevations of the northern cafeteria section.

The first stages of this expansion are visible on a 1955 aerial image of the campus and a 1958 aerial shows the completed elementary school building as well as the home economics wing, which in addition to three kitchen set-ups also contained administrative offices and a storeroom (Figures 4 and 5).<sup>11</sup>

In the mid-1960s, the 1927 classroom building was remodeled. The remodel included the rearrangement of several rooms, the rewiring of the business department to accommodate additional equipment, and the enclosure of the auditorium, which had previously been open to the surrounding hallways. The occupational trades building was expanded in the 1970s with an additional classroom and the garage and the science building and media center were added to the campus in 1973 and 1976, respectively.<sup>12</sup>

Though constructed a few years apart, the one-story, brick science and media center buildings share similar plans with rectangular footprints, hipped roofs, and apertures flanked by deep pilasters. The buildings, which stand behind the high school building, face one another and have similar facades with centered, double-leaf entrances and apertures at the corners of the elevations—windows on the science building and a door and window on the media center. Their side and rear elevations are unique with windows and doors placed near the center of the elevations instead of evenly spaced across them. On the side elevations of the science building this arrangement includes only doors, while the corresponding elevations of the media center contain one window and one door. The rear elevations have windows arranged in a similar pattern, and the science building has a small bay that projects between the windows. The bay is wrapped with windows that light a small office space. The buildings stand out from the other buildings on the campus through the use of muted, multi-colored bricks instead of red brick.

The expansion of the campus, particularly the addition of the home economics wing and the occupational trades building, displays the school system's efforts to offer more specialized curriculum for its students.<sup>13</sup> Likewise, the 1970s science building and media center are reflective of that era's emphasis on scientific study and modern technology. A set of floor plans provides a glimpse of the campus and the interior arrangements of its buildings including their uses (Figure 6).

In 1992, the high school combined with Nakina and Williams Township High Schools to form South Columbus High and the high school building became a part of the elementary school.<sup>14</sup> Following the construction of the media center, the campus appears to have changed little. Known changes include the addition of canopies that connect the buildings and the abandonment of the high school building's second floor due to handicap-accessibility issues in the 1990s.

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<sup>11</sup> Lewis (1977), 159.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ward, personal communication.

<sup>14</sup> Facebook.com, "Tabor City High School," [https://www.facebook.com/pg/TaborCityHighSchool/about/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/TaborCityHighSchool/about/?ref=page_internal), accessed January 2020.



Figure 2: 1938 Aerial Image Showing the 1927 Classroom Building and the 1914 School to its West (<http://www2.columbusco.org/OldAerials>).

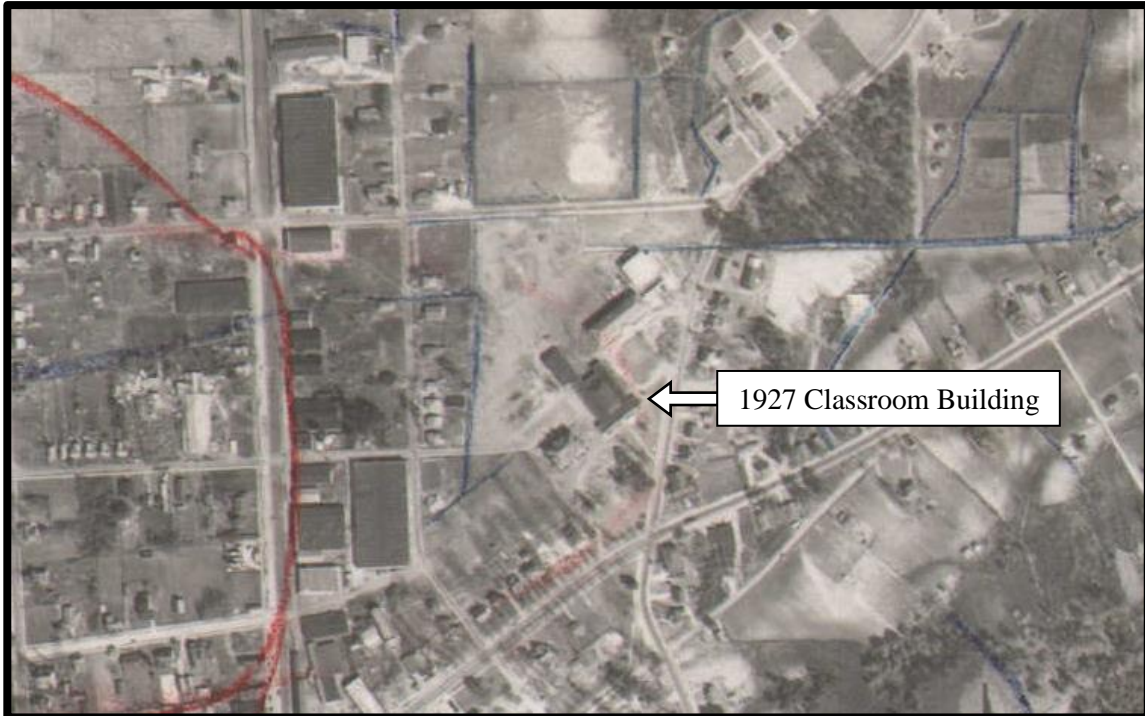


Figure 3: 1951 Aerial Image Showing the 1927 Classroom Building, 1948 High School, Gymnasium and the 1914 School (<http://www2.columbusco.org/OldAerials>).





Figure 4: 1955 Aerial Image Showing the Addition of the Occupational Trades Building to the Campus (<http://www2.columbusco.org/OldAerials>).

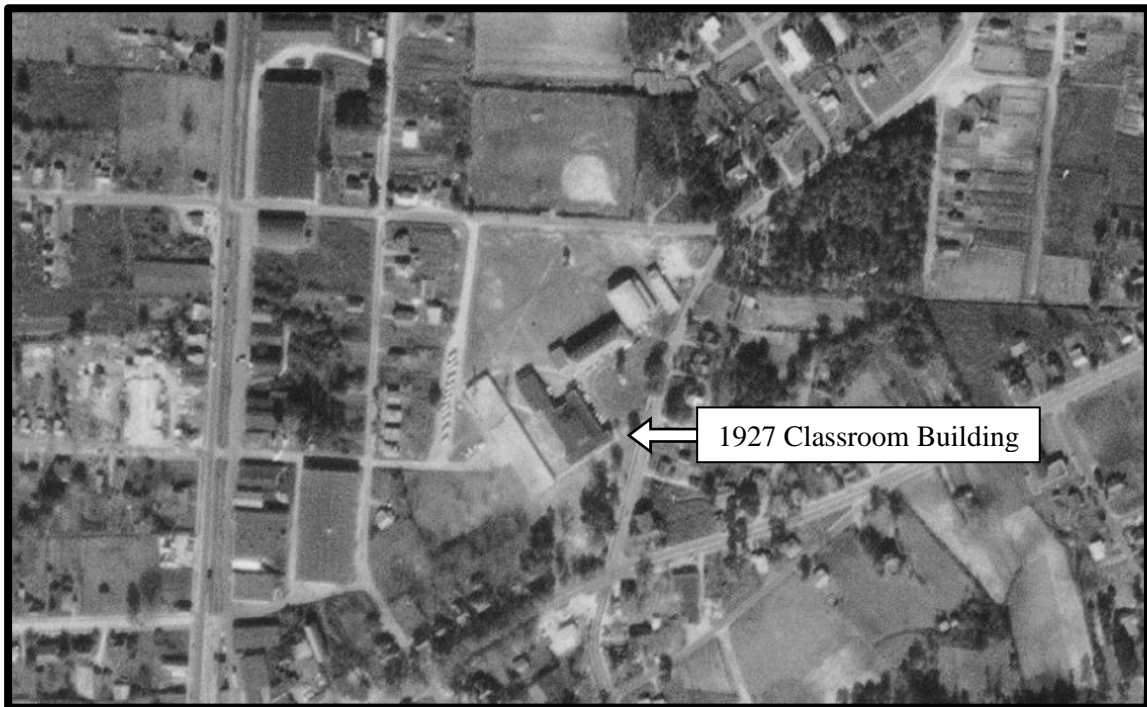


Figure 5: 1958 Aerial Image Showing the Addition of the 1950s Classroom Building (EarthExplorer).

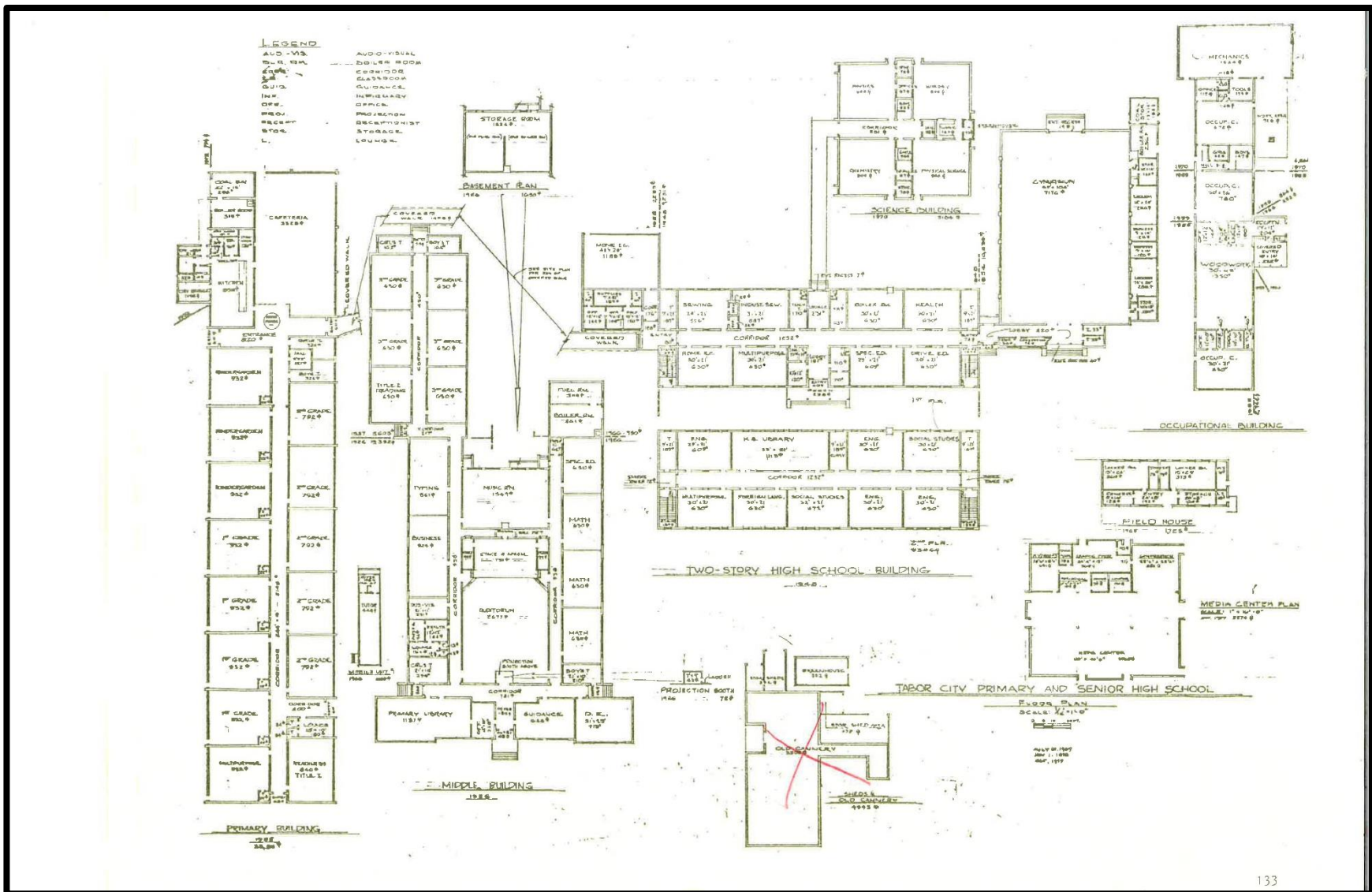


Figure 6: Tabor City School, Floor Plans. Note Inclusion of “Sheds & Cannery” that are No Longer Extant and a “Field House” that was not Identified During the Survey (Szostak Design, Inc.).



## REFERENCES CITED

- Boney, Leslie N. Jr., Charles H. Boney, Sr., and Janet K. Seapker. "Boney, Leslie N., Sr. (1880-1964)," *North Carolina Architects and Builders: A Biographical Dictionary*. Edited by Catherine W. Bisher. <https://ncarchitects.lib.ncsu.edu/people/P000529>, accessed January 14, 2020.
- Columbus County Register of Deeds, Whiteville, NC  
Book 130, page 562  
Book 147, page 284  
Book 147, page 285  
Book 156, page 396  
Book 156, page 359  
Book 171, page 473
- Facebook.com, "Tabor City High School." [https://www.facebook.com/pg/TaborCityHighSchool/about/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/TaborCityHighSchool/about/?ref=page_internal), accessed January 2020.
- Lewis, Gordon. *Facts About Columbus County*. Whiteville, N.C.: The News Report, 1933.
- Lewis, Thomas L., compiler. "Tabor City Primary/High School," in Paschal, *A Historical View of the Columbus County Schools, 1808-1977*. Whiteville: Columbus County Board of Education, 1977.
- Watts, Houston T. *Up Date History of Tabor City, North Carolina*. Tabor City, N. C.: DiggyPOD, 2012.

# Cerro Gordo School

Cerro Gordo, North Carolina

1926-2020



**PREPARED BY:**

*Commonwealth Heritage Group, Inc.*

**P.O. BOX 1198**

**201 WEST WILSON STREET**

**TARBORO, NORTH CAROLINA 27886**

**Megan Funk**

*Architectural Historian*

**September 2020**



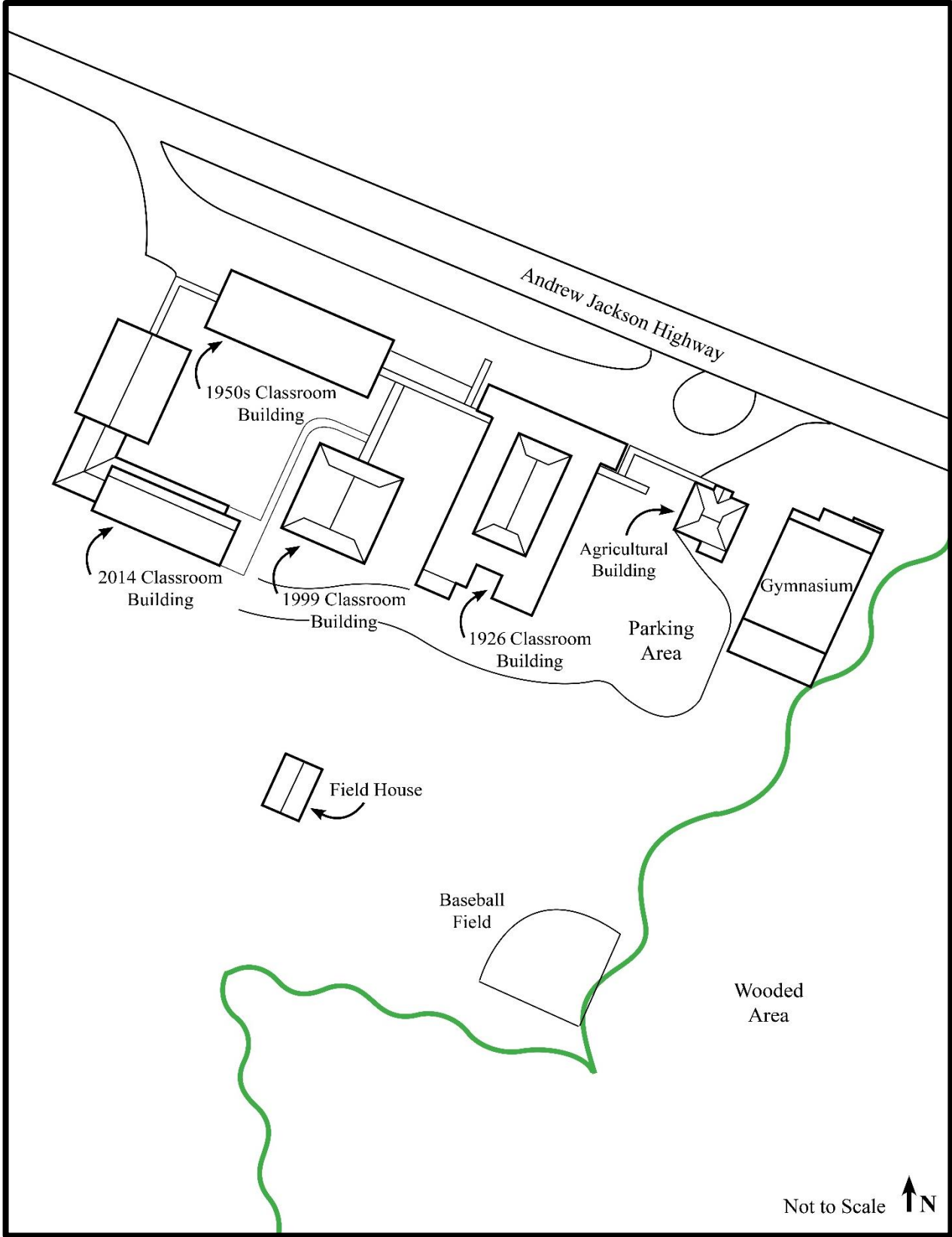


Figure 1: Cerro Gordo School, Site Plan.

## **Cerro Gordo School**

**7685 Andrew Jackson Highway, Cerro Gordo, North Carolina**

### *Dates of Construction:*

1926, 1936, ca. 1940, ca. 1950, 1955, 1999, and 2014

The original Classical Revival-style school on the Cerro Gordo School campus was designed by the Wilmington architect Leslie N. Boney, who specialized in the design of educational and institutional facilities, and constructed by Jewell-Riddle Co. in 1926.<sup>1</sup> At the time, the school was the only building on the campus and consisted of fourteen classrooms, a library, a principal's office, and an auditorium with a projection booth for showing movies. Unlike some earlier schools, the building was also equipped with electric lights and indoor plumbing.<sup>2</sup> Originally, the school accommodated white students from Cerro Gordo, Cherry Grove, Cedar Grove, Porter Swamp, and Hinson's Crossroads schools, offered 11 grades, and operated for eight months. The new school also introduced full-time home economics and agriculture teachers as well as the subjects of biology and civics and offered basketball teams for both boys and girls.<sup>3</sup>

Like other Boney-designed schools, the one-story, brick building has a roughly T-shaped plan. The auditorium is placed at the center of the building and is sheltered by a roof that is hipped except for small gables that rise above its front and rear slopes. Long, flat-roofed sections that contain the classrooms, offices, and library span the north, east, and west sides of the auditorium. The north section, which forms the façade of the building, is wider than the rest of the building, extending roughly fifteen feet past the side elevations and lending to the building's T-shaped plan. The east and west sections extend south from the rear of the school as well, forming a small open space between them.

The school's façade is symmetrical with a flat-roofed portico that was once supported by slender paired columns and square pilasters. Above the portico is a long cast stone signage panel inscribed with "Cerro Gordo School." Paired aluminum-framed windows flank the double leaf entrance, which consists of metal doors with single-pane side lights and transom. Beyond the paired windows are tripled windows, and beyond these the façade is bookended by slightly projecting bays. The bays contain a tripled window flanked by individual windows. All of which are three panes in height.

The façade, as well as the sections that project from the side elevations, is wrapped by a stepped parapet that rises and falls across the elevations and is capped with concrete coping that is painted white. Similar details, that are also painted white, include small diamonds set in the brick above each window, a band that spans the upper portion of the elevations, and keystones placed at the center and upper corners of the jack arches that finish each bank of windows. A belt course of soldier bricks spans the elevations roughly mid-way between the windows and

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<sup>1</sup> NCHPO Survey File, CB0067, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas A. Nance, compiler, "Cerro Gordo Elementary School," in Paschal, *A Historical View of the Columbus County Schools, 1808-1977* (Whiteville: Columbus County Board of Education, 1977), 46.

<sup>3</sup> Ann Courtney Ward Little, ed., *Columbus County, North Carolina: Recollections and Records*. (Whiteville, N. C.: Columbus County Commissioners and Columbus County Library, 1980), 192-193.



ground. Though the side elevations of the north section are blind, they are finished with simple brick patterning and painted white concrete details as well.

An irregular pattern of single and triple windows, like those on the façade but without additional detail, lights the east, west, and south elevations, while white coping and a belt course of soldier bricks finish the elevations. The southernmost bay of each side elevation projects forward slightly and is decorated with simple brick patterning and concrete details, though the pattern is broken on the west elevation by two, non-original, steel-framed windows. A small concrete porch and storage room (part of the kitchen) extend from the west side of the south (rear) elevation and small shed-roofed additions partially fill the space between the east and west sections of the building. The east, west, and south elevation of the auditorium are visible above the main body of the school revealing multipaned clerestory windows.

In 1936, the campus was expanded with the construction of the Agricultural Building, which was also designed by Boney. Though this one-story, brick building is much smaller than the original school, it was designed to complement its Classical Revival details with features such as a small fanlight in the gable of its pedimented porch and a hipped roof with small vented gables that peak above the east and west slopes like that of the central auditorium. Other architectural details of the agricultural building include six-over-six, double hung, wooden sashes, which are now partially covered to accommodate a lower acoustic tile ceiling on the interior, a deep cornice, and a brick chimney that rises from the rear slope of the roof. A small shed-roofed addition extends from the rear elevation. Like many education projects completed in the 1930s, the Agricultural Building was funded by Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works.<sup>4</sup>

In 1937, a frame structure that once stood west of the main building and is no longer extant was adapted for use as a home economics building (Figure 2). Next, in 1938, a corrugated tin gymnasium that is also no longer extant was constructed with funding from the Works Progress Administration (WPA).<sup>5</sup> In 1939, a building that served as a lunchroom was constructed southwest of the school. It had a wood burning stove, tables and benches and allowed the students to enjoy hot lunches on the campus. According to a history of the school compiled by Thomas A. Nance, the lunchroom was of frame construction and was later remodeled to facilitate vocational training. The building remained on the campus through the 1970s. A second lunchroom was housed in a frame building that was originally used for first grade classrooms and stood to the east of the main building. In 1965, the lunchroom was moved into the west wing of the original school building where three classrooms were combined and remodeled.<sup>6</sup>

In the late 1930s or 1940s, a brick building that most recently housed art and band classes, but has also been used as a field house and home economics building, was constructed near the southwest corner of the school property.<sup>7</sup> The building faces east toward the baseball diamond and has a side-gabled asphalt shingle roof with exposed rafter tails. Its façade is symmetrical

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<sup>4</sup> NCHPO, Survey File CB0067. Note the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works became the Public Works Administration in 1935. This undertaking was assigned Project No. NC-1026-R.

<sup>5</sup> Little, 193.

<sup>6</sup> Nance, 48.

<sup>7</sup> NCHPO Survey File, CB0067; "Cerro Gordo Elementary," Floor Plans (Szostak Design, Inc.); and Timmy Ward (Maintenance Director, Columbus County Schools Board of Education), personal conversation with author, Cerro Gordo and Tabor City, NC, January 17, 2020.

with a single leaf entry door flanked on each side by three windows, all of which are missing sashes. Similar windows, which are also missing their sashes or are fully or partially covered, pierce the north (side) and west (rear) elevations and a roughly centered entry door as well as a small cornice-height window or vent also pierce the west elevation. The south (side) elevation is blind. The interior is divided into two unequal classrooms, and the larger, northern classroom, contains an entry vestibule as well as a small restroom in the northwest corner.

In 1949 and 1955, the property was expanded west and east with parcels purchased from A. W. Williamson and his wife and M. O. Blackwell, respectively.<sup>8</sup> The western portion was likely purchased to facilitate the construction of the ca. 1950 classroom building while the eastern portion was likely purchased for the construction of the current gymnasium in 1955. The ca. 1950 one-story, brick classroom building has a linear footprint, a flat roof, banks of multi-light steel-frame windows, a tall brick chimney, and moderately deep eaves that angle upward on the underside and give the simple building a modern touch. The building was designed for lower-grade students and has six classrooms, each of which is connected to a small restroom, offices and storage rooms arranged along a single double-loaded corridor that is accessed by double leaf entry doors at each end of the building.

The 1955 barrel-roofed Gymnasium is located to the east of the Agricultural Building and faces north toward Andrew Jackson Highway. It is constructed of brick laid in a common bond pattern and its east and west (side) elevations are lit by six banks of steel-framed clerestory windows separated by brick pilasters. A one-story, flat-roofed entry wing spans the eastern two-thirds of its façade. It contains a bank of three entry doors on the east and three steel-framed windows on the west. The remaining one-third of the façade contains a second bank of three entry doors sheltered by a flat-roofed awning supported by slender posts. A one-story, flat-roofed wing extends from the south (rear) elevation as well. It is accessed by entry doors on its east, west and south elevations, lit by steel-framed windows, and has a tall brick chimney that rises near the center of its roof.

A 1950 aerial shows the original school and agricultural building, at least four smaller buildings including the field house, and a baseball diamond (Figure 3). Floor plans drafted after the addition of the 1950s buildings show the arrangement and use of the interior spaces. Though the scan is of poor quality, it provides a glimpse of the classroom sizes and how the interior spaces related to one another at the time (Figure 4).

Over time, the school expanded with business and band courses and libraries for elementary and high school students.<sup>9</sup> In 1965, West Columbus High School opened roughly one-half mile east of the studied school on Andrew Jackson Highway, and Cerro Gordo School transitioned from serving all grades to serving only lower grade students. Shortly thereafter, the school integrated with African American students joining the school in 1966.<sup>10</sup> An aerial from 1974 shows further evolution of the campus including the removal of two of the smaller buildings and the extension of the parking area along the eastern side of the original school building (Figure 5).

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<sup>8</sup> Columbus County Deed Book 184, page 291 and Deed Book 205, page 520.

<sup>9</sup> Little, 193.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 194.



Aside from the addition of the metal canopies that connect the buildings, the campus changed little into the 1990s (Figure 6). In 1999, a “pod” style classroom building was added between the original building and the 1950s classroom building.

In 2012, the Columbus County School Board, through the County Commissioners, gave the gymnasium building and a small parcel of land to Ricky J. and Dianne B. Benton, nearby property owners, in exchange for 3.77 acres along the western edge of the campus.<sup>11</sup> The additional land increased the school’s campus to just under 17 acres, which is the amount stipulated by the state school system for school properties, and also made room for the 2014 Classroom Building.

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<sup>11</sup> Szostak Design, Inc., “Preliminary Architectural Feasibility Report, West Columbus Pre-K – 8 School,” Chapel Hill, 2019, 4 and Columbus County Deed Book 1037, page 37.



Figure 2: 1938 Aerial Image of Cerro Gordo School Showing the 1926 School, the 1936 Agricultural Building, and a Smaller Structure to the West that may have Served as the First Home Economics Building (<http://www2.columbusco.org/OldAerials>).



Figure 3: 1950 Aerial Image of Cerro Gordo Campus (Earth Explorer).



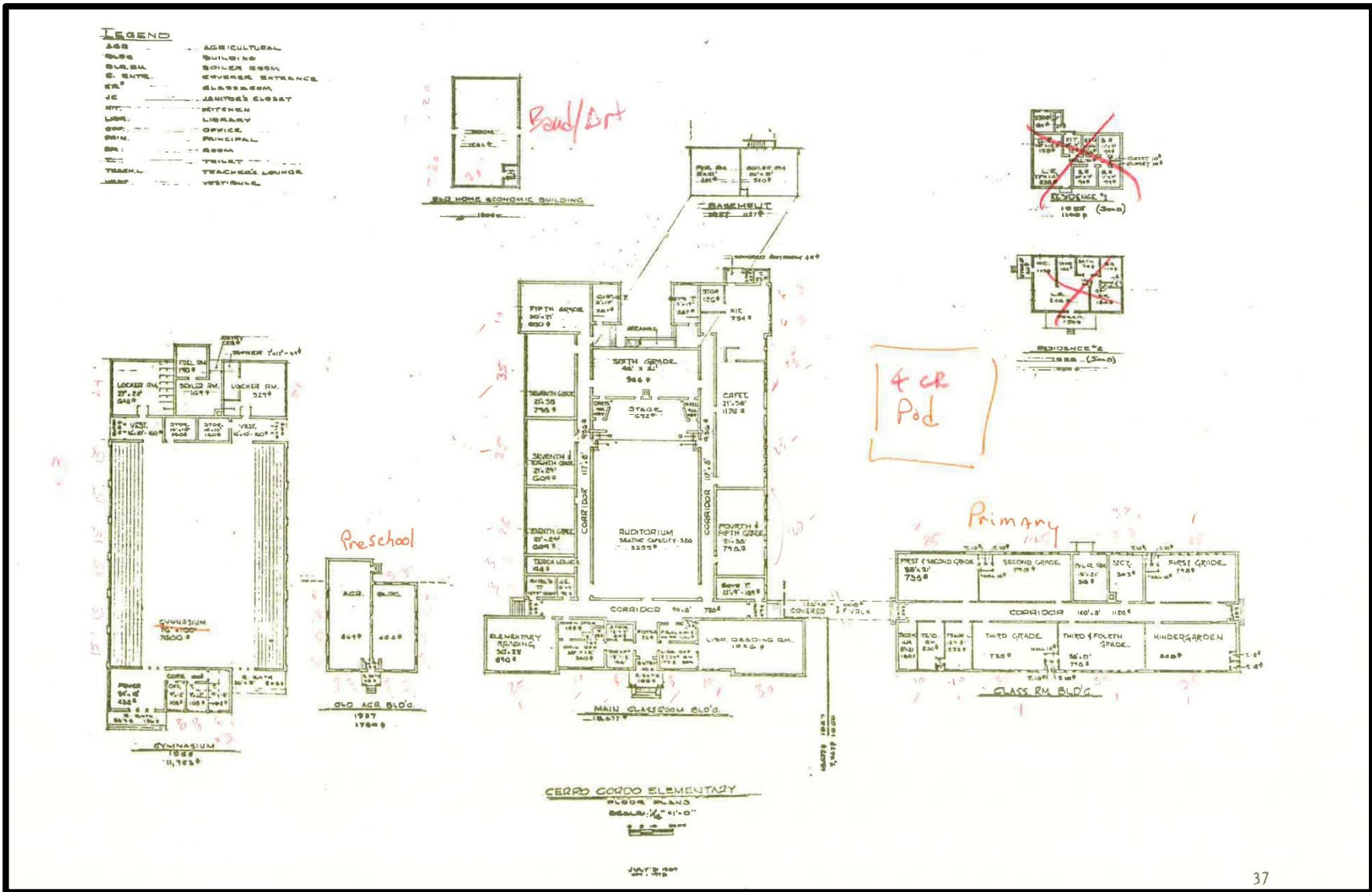


Figure 4: Cerro Gordo Elementary, Floor Plans. Note Inclusion of a Residence (Upper Right) that is No Longer Extant (Szostak Design, Inc.).



Figure 5: 1974 Aerial Image of Cerro Gordo Campus (Earth Explorer).



Figure 6: 1993 Aerial Image of Cerro Gordo Campus (Google Earth).

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