

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 Grimes School

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number Hege Drive

N/A not for publication

city, town Lexington

N/A vicinity

state N. C.

code NC

county Davidson

code 057

zip code 27293

### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property

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

Category of Property

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

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
_____	_____ sites
_____	_____ structures
_____	_____ objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</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

State Historic Preservation Officer

Date

10-28-88

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)

EDUCATION: School

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Work in Progress

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Georgian Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Brick

roof Shingle

other Wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Site

The school building sits on a level site, facing East, on Hege Drive in Lexington, about 0.6 mile north of the Courthouse Square. The surrounding part of the site that formerly contained the playing fields are also level, about twenty feet below the grade of the school building, and have been converted to a public park with playground equipment, jogging paths, etc. Directly across Hege Drive from the front entrance of the building is the intersection of the northerly end of Grimes Circle with Hege. The site is secluded, since there is only one way in or out, with Hege Drive being a dead end. The neighborhood in the vicinity of the school is all residential, and the streets are occupied with modest but well-kept houses.

School Building 1935-1936 Contributing

The Grimes School is T-shape in basic plan, and the original part of the building is two stories in Neo-Colonial Georgian style. The original front elevation is divided into three sections to relieve what would otherwise be a monotonous facade: The center section has seven double bays, with two more single bays on each side of the central entry door; and the two side wings have five double bays each. The windows are 9/9 double hung sash, with a keystone over the top center of the first floor windows that is flanked by flat arch brickwork. The walls are brick, laid in Flemish bond, and the side-gabled roof is asphalt shingle.

In addition to the large windows, the building has some other distinctive features. The metal front entry doors are reached by five stone steps, and are at the end of a recessed entry. A decorated rectangular transom above the doors strongly mitigates their institutional severity. On either side of the portico are fluted columns topped by small Ionic capitals supporting a plain entablature with dentils along the top. The entablature is crowned by a large, decorated broken pediment. Exactly over the front door on the roof is a large, octagonal cupola, which sits on a clapboard-sided base decorated by a Chippendale railing and is topped by a weather-vane. The entablature under the eave of the facade also bears some decorative details.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

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Just off the entry vestibule was the principal's office, medical room, and teachers lounge. There were originally six classrooms on the first floor, and eight on the second. Two of the classrooms on the second floor were turned into a library.

The halls on both the first and second floors run the width of the building, and have classrooms and other rooms on either side. The floors are the original hardwood, and are in excellent condition. The classrooms are, as intended, quite light inside, since each has three sets of double windows. The interior classroom doors are simple two-panel, with a small window in the upper panel. They have plain door surrounds that include a three-light transom. Each classroom is equipped with nine lockers, and bathrooms for boys and girls are on either side of the projection booth on the second floor. It is clear that money was saved by cutting back on tile in the Depression-era building: it is only found along the stairwells at either end of the building, around the drinking fountain, and in the bathrooms about 1/3 of the way up from the floor. The remainder of the wall space is painted concrete block.

Making up the other portion of the "T" in the original building is the auditorium which appears to have a 500-600-seat capacity. It is gently raked toward the stage, which is at the end away from the main building. On either side of the stage are doors leading to the dressing rooms that repeat the Georgian theme with broken pediment crowns.

### Additions

There are two additions to the original building. The first is a one-story cafeteria, kitchen and storeroom on the north end of the main building in 1947, that added about twenty-seven hundred square feet. The second is the addition of two more classrooms in a one-story section attached to the south end of the main building, and a one-story multi-purpose room on the back of the auditorium in 1957.

### Integrity

The Grimes School has an unusual degree of integrity, since the original building has been remarkably unaltered from its original. The fact that it was continually used as a school until recently resulted in a consistently high degree of maintenance. The original wood window sash is still intact, and the metal exterior doors also appear to be original. All the decorative exterior details of the entry and cupola are undisturbed. On the interior, the original wood floors of the halls are in very fine condition;

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

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those in the classrooms were covered with tile and carpet over the years. All the interior doors to the classrooms and other spaces, and the wood stairs, with closed wood interior railing (ceramic tile lines the walls) appear to be original and in very good condition. The entry vestibule is likewise exactly as designed and originally built. The ceilings throughout the school appear to have been dropped slightly and covered with modern acoustical tile, and the classrooms are the same as they were originally designed and used.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally  statewide  locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)  A  B  C  D  E  F  G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Education  
Architecture

Period of Significance

1936-1938 (last year  
eligible)

Significant Dates

1935-1936

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Wallace, William Roy

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Summary

The Grimes School is of local educational significance because of the role it played in the school-building program of the 1920s and 1930s for the residents of Lexington, N.C. It was the last one built in that program, thereby completing a system that served Lexington students for a generation. The school has local architectural significance as well, because it was built as a state-of-the-art facility according to the standards of the time, and was designed by a well-known Winston-Salem, N.C. architect, William Roy Wallace (1890-1983). It is one of only two pre-World War II brick schools in Lexington still extant.

Historical Context

Prior to the 1920s, there were few brick school buildings in the state. In 1839, the State was divided into school districts of not more than six square miles, and the district committees were charged to, "at some suitable place in each district, erect a schoolhouse sufficiently large to accommodate at least fifty scholars, and shall procure...land not exceeding five acres...provided the whole shall not exceed the sum of \$125.00..."<sup>1</sup> The post-Reconstruction legislature of 1869 made the counties responsible for schools in their jurisdiction; but no other direction was given to school districts on the construction of schoolhouses until 1902 (with the brief exception of the school year 1869-70), when a bulletin was issued by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction for examples of one- and two-story buildings. A second bulletin was issued in 1914, which contained drawings by a "reputable architect who was familiar with school hygiene." Plans for these buildings were available for \$5.00 per classroom. The new school law of 1903 specified that all plans for public schoolhouses should be approved by the State Superintendent.<sup>2</sup>

See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

It was not until the 1920s, however, that there was a great surge in modern school construction in North Carolina. What made it possible was state appropriations for Special Building Funds in 1921, 1923, 1925, and 1927. Ninety-nine of the one hundred counties of the state borrowed money from the Funds to build 1,081 schools during that period.<sup>3</sup> In Lexington, four modern brick schools were built as a direct result of the availability of these funds: old Lexington High, 1922; Cecil, 1926; Robbins, 1928; and Holt, 1928/9. (Of these, only the Cecil School, which is used as a County Extension center, is still extant.)<sup>4</sup>

With the onset of the Great Depression in late 1929, a decade of school building and better paid and trained teachers gave way to trying to keep the schools that had been built open. This was accomplished in the early 1930s by severe retrenchment in staff and teacher salaries, redirecting transportation routes, state tax reductions, and the state's complete assumption of the responsibility for eight months of public education in 1933. By the mid-'30s, however, the situation began to take a turn upward once again because of two factors: 1) in 1935, the tobacco and cotton farmers received the best price for their crops in several years, and business in general was improving; and 2) the loans and grants available from the Public Works Administration for rehabilitation and new construction of schools.<sup>5</sup>

### Historical Background

Thus in June, 1935, the cities of Lexington and Thomasville requested money for new schools from the Davidson County Board of Education. The Lexington School Board had determined that a new school was needed in the North Ward to serve 600 pupils from the Erlanger Mill village, north Lexington and nearby rural area.<sup>6</sup> In September, 1935, the county school board approved approximately \$100,000 for a site, building and equipment for a new North Ward school in Lexington; \$45,000 would be requested as a grant from the PWA, and the remainder would come from county bonds.<sup>7</sup> William Roy Wallace, an architect from Winston-Salem, was hired to design the building, which was to be done with a view to future expansion.<sup>8</sup> On October 7, 1935, the Lexington School Board selected the Grimes site for a new school on the north side of town, and on the following November 23, a deed was executed between the heirs of the Grimes estate and the Board of Education of Davidson County (which at the time had jurisdiction over all school property and buildings in the county).<sup>9</sup> The site contained 12.58 acres, and cost \$9,375.00.<sup>10</sup>

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

The PWA approved the county's grant, bonds were sold in Raleigh in November, and the construction contracts were let December 2nd to Ward and Thomason of Lexington.<sup>11</sup> The following April, 1936, Lillian Mabry was named principal of the new school, which was scheduled to open on September 7th.<sup>12</sup> However, the building was not ready by then, and delays in the bidding on the equipment, principally desks, put occupancy behind schedule. Since a rented building had been given up that Grimes was to replace, the students had to attend half-day double sessions at Robbins School until it was completed.<sup>13</sup> In an article of October 5 in The Dispatch, the county superintendent described the building as "one of the best elementary structures he has ever seen." The article also carries a detailed description of the new state-of-the-art schoolbuilding:

Fourteen standard size class rooms each have six large outside windows and each is equipped with six overhead indirect electric light. Blackboard and bulletin board space is standard and each room has a baseboard electric outlet to permit use of modern electrical apparatus, including motion picture outfits, radio or whatever might be desired on occasion. The metal encased radiators rest against the walls, about eight inches above the floor so as to leave no place for accumulation of sweeping or other trash. The entire group of lockers along one end of each class room is controlled by one master lock, to which the teacher will carry the key.

The corridors are wide and roomy, with a heavy coat of plaster imposed on the cinder block walls up to more than six feet and this finished with several coats of chestnut paint. The walls above were finished with a cream colored spray paint. The overhead ceiling throughout is of rockboard, nailed on and painted, and there will be no trouble from crumbling plaster such as experienced in some of the other school buildings.

Opening off the corridors or from inside the several rooms are ample closets to provide much space for storage of all such materials as may be needed in the operation of the building. There is a modernly designed medical room, rest rooms for teachers, an administrative suite of three rooms, including the principal's office. The building is wired for the electric clock and bell system, but the clock and bells were left out of the contract to conserve available funds. But these will come later.

Walls in large toilet rooms and in the stair walls at each end of the building are provided with very attractive tile...The heating plant is underneath the auditorium stage

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

and this is complete with the large coal bin already filled and with wood for kindling on hand. An electrically operated pump will aid in condensation and keep the circulation in the entire heating system moving smoothly at all times.

The side windows in the auditorium are high, but the auditorium will be air-conditioned even in the warmest weather through large motor driven fans over the dressing room entrances, which will drive cool air through vents under the stage platform and overhead at the rear...

The building is being provided by Davidson County board of education and county commissioners and a grant of Federal funds through the PWA and has been erected as a PWA project, with William Roy Wallace of Winston-Salem, the county architect for this and the two buildings in Thomasville. The three structures constitute the largest single school building undertaking in the history of Davidson County. While fourteen class rooms are available, the school will open with ten teachers and [a] principal.<sup>14</sup>

The anxiously-awaited desks finally arrived with President Roosevelt's landslide re-election in November, and the first students entered the new halls and classrooms on Monday, November 9, 1936.<sup>15</sup>

The Lexington School Board abandoned the building in 1982, and sold it to the present owners with three acres of surrounding property in March, 1988.<sup>16</sup> The remainder of the site had been sold to the City of Lexington for use as a park in 1986.<sup>17</sup> The present owners are in the process of converting the building for adaptive re-use as housing for the elderly.

### Architectural Context

At the time of its construction, the Grimes school incorporated the very latest in school construction ideas of the decade of the 1930s. Its inverted "T" shape permitted each classroom to be large and airy with lots of light entering through large windows. It is reminiscent of Wren architecture of the late seventeenth century in England, where, after the Great Fire, he replaced many Medieval style churches and public buildings with large-windowed, lighter-appearing structures to permit much greater entry of light. The design was also made with future expansion in mind by allowing wings to be added on either end of the main classroom section. It was, and remains, the only school building of the above described type built in Lexington, since it was the only

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 4

one constructed in the Thirties, and is one of two extant local schools (the other is the Cecil, as noted above) built in the first major statewide school improvement program of the Twenties and Thirties. After the Grimes School, no new school buildings were built in the community until the 1950s.<sup>18</sup>

The architect of the building, William Roy Wallace (1889-1983) of Winston-Salem, N.C., did almost all the architectural work for Davidson County schools from the mid-1930s into the 1950s. A native of Lancaster County, Pa., Wallace learned architecture under the tutelage of Charles Barton Keen, whose Philadelphia firm he joined at the age of 18 about 1907. Two years later, Keen came to Winston-Salem to work on Renolda House for the Reynolds family, and brought young Wallace with him. By the time Renolda House was finished in 1912, Keen had become popular with other wealthy clients, so he maintained an office in Winston-Salem and put Wallace in charge.<sup>19</sup>

In 1922, Mrs. Reynolds persuade Keen to return to build Reynolds Senior High and Reynolds auditorium, and the following year, when they were completed, Keen insisted that Wallace come back to Philadelphia as a full partner. By 1929, Wallace decided he wanted to be on his own, so he moved back to Winston-Salem and set up in business with architect Harold Macklin in the then-new Reynolds Building. In addition to his work for the Davidson County schools, in Winston-Salem he designed, among a number of buildings, the Pine Hall Brick and Pipe Co.; the Old Town Telephone Co. building; the Twin City Club; and the Fries Memorial Moravian Church; Highland Presbyterian Church; and his own Cape Cod home. He continued to go to his office to work until shortly before his death at the age of 93.<sup>20</sup>

## Notes

1. Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of North Carolina for the Scholastic Years 1933-1934 and 1935-1936 (Raleigh: State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1936), p. 68.
2. Ibid., pp 70-71.
3. Ibid., pp. 72-73.
4. Interview with Bob Pope, Lexington School System, 8 July 1988.
5. Biennial Report, cited above, pp. 75, 86-90.
6. The Dispatch [Lexington, N.C.], May 20, 1935, p. 1.
7. Ibid., September 5, 1935, p. 1.
8. Ibid., September 30, 1935, p. 1.
9. The Dispatch, October 7, 1935, p. 1; Davidson County Deed Book 125, p. 80.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5

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10. Davidson County Deed Book 125, p. 80.
11. The Dispatch, October 3, 1935, p. 1; November 14, 1935, p. 1;  
December 5, 1935, p. 1.
12. Ibid., April 9, 1936, p. 1.
13. Ibid., September 17, 1936, p. 1.
14. Ibid., October 5, 1936, p. 1.
15. Ibid., November 5, 1936, p. 1; November 12, 1936, p. 1.
16. Davidson County Deed Book 682, p. 644.
17. Ibid., Book 644, p. 770.
18. Interview cited in note 4.
19. The Sentinel [Winston-Salem, N.C.], February 11, 1983, p. 19.
20. Ibid.

Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of North Carolina for the Scholastic Years 1933-1934 and 1935-1936.  
Raleigh: State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1936.  
----- [1936-1937 and 1937-1938], 1939.

Davidson County, N.C. Deed Books.

The Dispatch [Lexington, N.C.].

Interview with Bob Pope, Lexington, N.C. School System, 8 July 1988.

The Sentinel [Winston-Salem, N.C.]

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: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 2.959

UTM References

A 

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

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

**See continuation sheet**

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

**Entire remaining parcel of school site.**

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dr. William H. Huffman date 8/29/88  
organization Consultant telephone 704-364-8237  
street & number 5045 Beckford Drive state N.C. zip code 28226  
city or town Charlotte, NC

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 1

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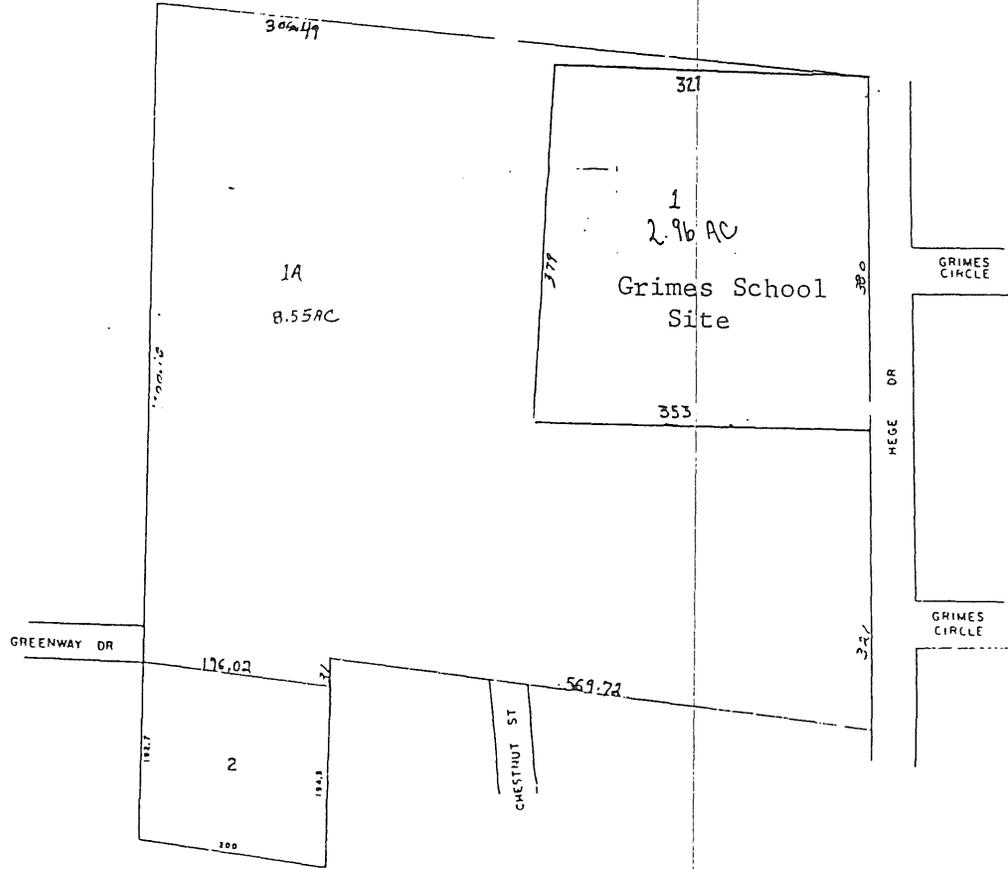
### Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at a point in the western edge of the sidewalk of Hege Drive, in Childer's line being the northeast corner of the subject tract; thence along the western edge of the sidewalk of Hege Drive South 01 deg. 55' 36" West 380 feet to an iron pipe; thence North 85 deg. 45' 31" West 353.17 feet to an iron pipe; thence North 05 deg. 52' 30" East 379.84 feet to an iron pipe in Childer's line; thence with Childer's line South 85 deg. 45' 31" East 327 feet to the point and place of the beginning, containing 2.959 acres, more or less.

Description from Davidson County Deed Book 682, p. 644, by which deed the present owners acquired the property.



22

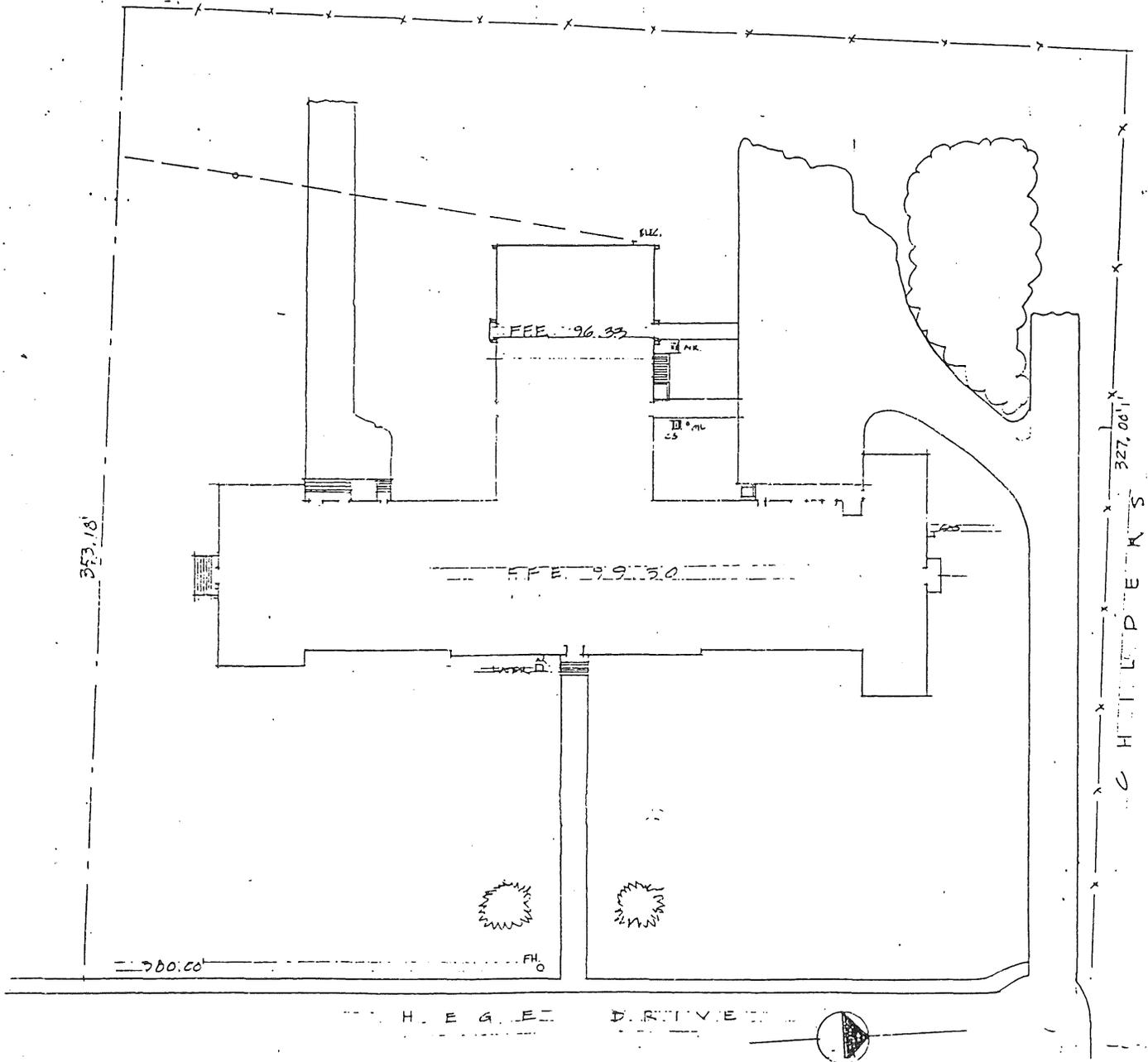


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51

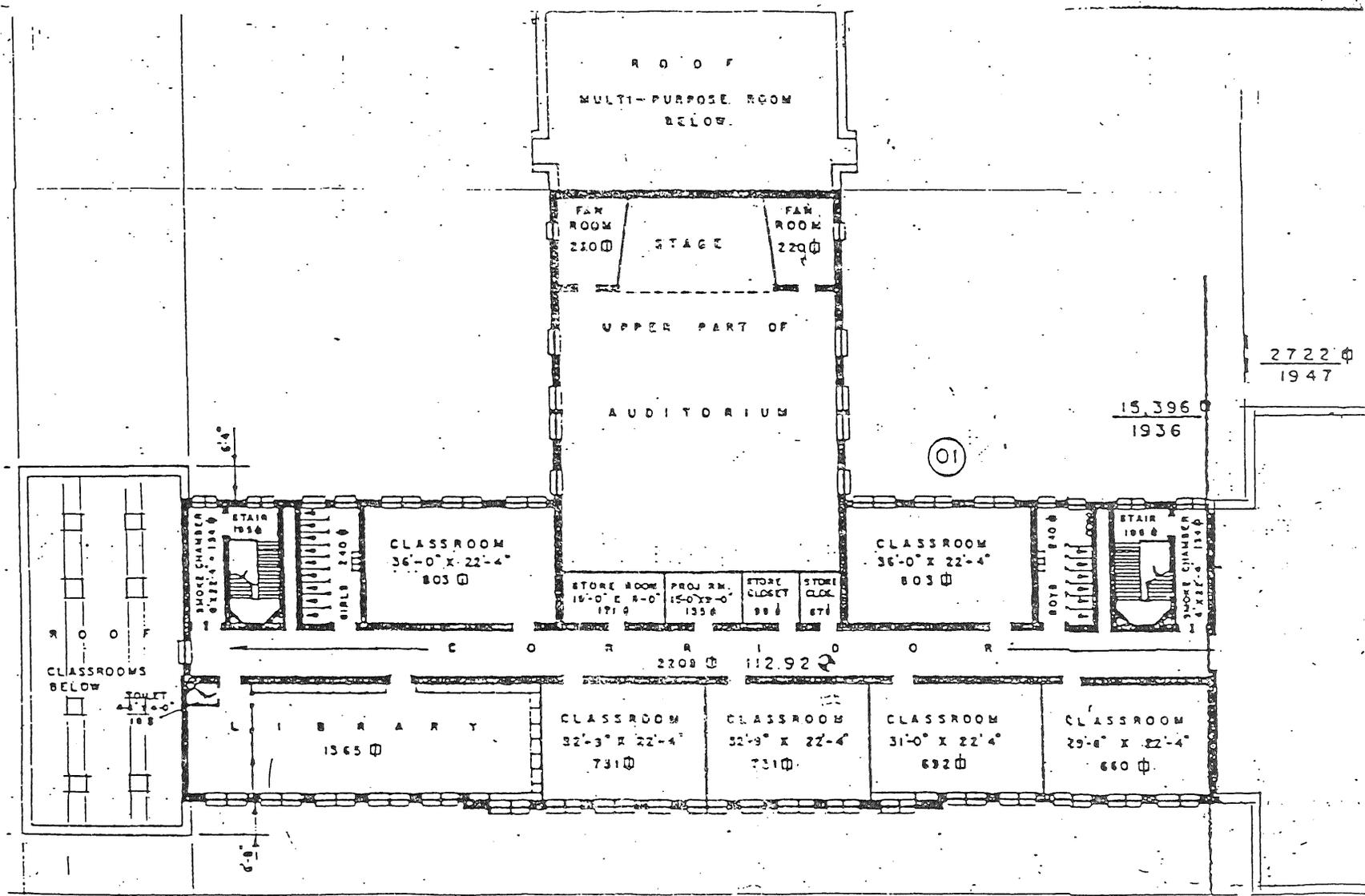
DAVIDSON COUNTY		
SCALE	TOWN OR EDWARDSHIP	PHOTO NO.
1" = 100'	CITY OF LEXINGTON	63
MAP 52 BLOCKS		

CITY OF LEXINGTON PLANK



Grimes School  
Hege Drive, Lexington, N.C.  
Site Plan  
Drawn by  
Dalton Moran Shook, Inc.  
114½ West Fifth Street  
Charlotte, NC 28202 3/88





Grimes School  
 Hege Drive, Lexington, N.C.  
 Second Floor Plan

