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: Roanoke Rapids Junior-Senior High School
   other names/site number: Roanoke Rapids High School

2. Location
   street & number: 800 Hamilton Street
   city, town: Roanoke Rapids
   state: North Carolina
   code: NC
   county: Halifax
   code: 083
   zip code: 27870

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: 1 buildings  sites  structures  objects
   Noncontributing:Total
   Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0
   Name of related multiple property listing: NONE

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
   State or Federal agency and bureau
   Date: 11-18-88

   In my opinion, the property □ meets □ does not meet the National Register criteria. □ See continuation sheet.
   Signature of commenting or other official
   State or Federal agency and bureau
   Date

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
The Roanoke Rapids' Junior-Senior High School is located in the 800 block of Hamilton Street in the town of Roanoke Rapids. The school is centered on two blocks, bounded by Hamilton Street on the west, Washington Street on the east, Seventh Street on the north, and Ninth Street on the south. The school is a substantial example of the "classic Elizabethan" or Tudor Revival style.

Stately and impressive in form and size, the Roanoke Rapids Junior-Senior High School was constructed using elaborate detailing on the exterior and interior. Constructed with shell face brick, the school is a T-shaped, three-and-one-half story, nine bay, semi-fire-proof structure with a combination flat-top and gable roof and a projecting, crenellated entrance tower. The front and side elevations are laid in Flemish bond brick, while the rear elevation is laid in 1:5 Common bond. The building is trimmed with "tile, [pre-cast] concrete stone and pottery."

The gable roof still retains its original slate, but the flat top, once a built-up roof of felt and tar, is now composed of a single-ply membrane or rubber roof. The edge of the roof is trimmed with a pre-cast stone balustrade. At either end of the facade, shallow pavilions are quoined with concrete stone. The second and third floor facade of these pavilions feature an oriel window, each floor having five grouped sash windows of 6/9 lights. Pre-cast quatrefoils form the oriel's apron between these floors. A balcony tops the oriel with two gargoyle water spouts placed just below the balustrades and the attic is lit by three lights. The entire pavilion culminates in a gable with obelisks at the corners and a stately seated lion for the apex stone.

Windows are paired, each with 6/9 lights, then surrounded by concrete stone and grouped in sets of three. The same arrangement is found on the side elevations, except that the middle of the elevations are broken by a group of windows containing a sequence of 4/6, 8/12, and 4/6 lights. The attic windows are single paneled. Copper downsputs are topped with scuppers. At the left corner of the building, a cornerstone reads: 'Hobart B. Upjohn architect' and 'Roanoke Rapids school district / junior senior high school 1920.'
The central, front entrance of the high school is its most impressive feature. Three bays wide and four complete stories high, this square projecting pavilion has taller octagonal corner towers. Comprised of brick, each of the towers' edges is quoin with concrete stone and the top is crenellated. Three-light windows are periodically placed to light the stair or closets within. Three sets of double doors, each containing three drop arches, mark the entrance. Each set is surrounded by a compound drop-arched portal with moulded archivolts rising from slender attached columns. The tympanum is filled with small panes of frosted glass. Composed of concrete stone, the surrounding wall is pierced with random bricks for decoration. Above and between the doors are cast the letter "R" and the school's name in Gothic lettering: Roanoke Rapids Junior Senior High School. The second and third floors have three sets of paired 6/6 sash windows. The fourth level has two sets of paired six-light windows with a plain moulded space between. The pavilion is topped with more crenellations.

The rear elevation is void of all decoration and is flat roofed. A special fire-proof feature is two open exterior stairwells at the rear of the main section of the building. They run from the ground to the third floor, eliminating interior staircases and the risk of any fire spreading. "The stair tower is completely surrounded by fire-proof material and stairs are made of channel strings and slate treads. The doors entering the same are fire-proof."

The interior was constructed with as much care to detailing as the exterior. Just inside the main entrance, a steep, wide flight of stairs reaches the main floor. The walls of concrete stone contain drop-arched entrances and reach up two levels to a beamed ceiling. Plaques commemorating individuals and committees involved in the building's construction are set into arched niches at the second floor level. Atop the stairs, three more sets of double, glass doors with tympana, repeating details seen in the front doors and surrounds, complete the entrance.

The school was originally built with an auditorium, indoor track and pool, gymnasium, and other luxuries. The pool is now covered and the gymnasium houses the library; but the auditorium has remained virtually untouched. With a capacity for seating two thousand people, the auditorium is fifty feet high with excellent acoustical properties. The stage is equipped with dressing rooms, located on the mezzanine floor. Over the stage, an automatic skylight still exists, constructed in the event of fire in the scenery, thus "providing an outlet for smoke and flame and relieving the pressure on the fire curtain." The end rows of the original seats are marked with "RHS" for Roanoke Rapids High School. The chandeliers are also original. A plaster Greek frieze, by painter Arthur Covey, surrounds the entire auditorium, and a similar motif has been placed around the three sides of the stage. Balustrades to the balconies are of stained wood. Some water damage has occurred, but otherwise the auditorium retains its original splendor.
Some of the detailing originally found in the classrooms and halls remains. Oak doors are stained and have transoms. Many blackboards still have the original chalk trays supported by wooden brackets. Hardwood floors are visible in classrooms, but were covered with carpeting in the halls. Most of the original coved ceilings were covered with modern materials. Closets, foyers, and a few bathrooms, however, retain the coved effect. All windows are replacements.

The school property takes up two city blocks and now contains additional buildings. The Board of Trustees of the Roanoke Rapids Graded School District wishes only to nominate the junior-senior high school building to the National Register, but the surrounding structures should be briefly noted. A one-story brick building (#2) northeast of the high school once housed the sixth grade, but is now the business school. A wood-framed vocational building (#3) exists due east of the high school. A two-story, brick junior high school building (#4) was erected in 1924 southeast of the main structure. In c.1958, a music/physical education building (#5) was constructed to the south of the school; and the Armory (#6), to the far south, was later incorporated into the school system. To the north of the high school, a football field with bleachers exists.

NOTES

1 The Roanoke Rapids Herald, September 16, 1921.


3 The Roanoke Rapids Herald.
8. Statement of Significance

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

- [ ] nationally
- [x] statewide
- [ ] locally

Applicable National Register Criteria

- [x] A
- [ ] B
- [x] C
- [ ] D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)

- [ ] A
- [ ] B
- [ ] C
- [ ] D
- [ ] E
- [ ] F
- [ ] G

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)</th>
<th>Period of Significance</th>
<th>Significant Dates</th>
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<td>Architecture</td>
<td>1921-1938</td>
<td>1921</td>
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<td>Education</td>
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State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Roanoke Rapids Junior-Senior High School building, an outstanding example of its type in North Carolina, is a significant reflection of socio-economic trends in Roanoke Rapids and of the community's unusually strong commitment to good public education during the early twentieth century—a time characterized in North Carolina by rapid improvements in the quality of school systems and buildings. Completed in 1921 as a junior-senior high school on Hamilton Street, in close proximity to three of the city's textile mills and between the towns of Roanoke Rapids and Rosemary, the building served students in a school district created in 1907. Planned by a school board influenced to a large degree by local textile manufacturers John L. and Samuel F. Patterson, the structure exhibited not only the dedication of local people to a good school system, but also the influence of the city's textile mills on everyday life. Designed in the "classic Elizabethan" style by Hobart Brown Upjohn, a nationally prominent architect who worked extensively in North Carolina, the structure was one of the largest, costliest, and best designed public school buildings built in North Carolina during this period. Thus, it epitomized the desire among North Carolinians to improve the quality of its public school facilities. The building, with its large auditorium, indoor track and swimming pool, and extensive classroom space, was larger than necessary when constructed, but the farsighted planning of the school board insured the structure's continued utility as a high school and nucleus of the school buildings that were subsequently built. In many ways the design and arrangement of the junior-senior high school mirrored the concepts espoused by school planners in North Carolina and elsewhere in the United States.

CONTEXT: EDUCATION

The development of public schools in Roanoke Rapids during the early twentieth century was directly related to the city's origin and growth as one of North Carolina's important centers of textile manufacturing. The late nineteenth century's industrial revolution spurred the development of scores of textile mills in North Carolina, particularly in the Piedmont. In the 1890s a significant amount of northern capital fostered this trend. The pace of the textile industry's growth quickened during the first third

- [ ] See continuation sheet
of the twentieth century, causing North Carolina to lead the nation in the manufacture of cotton products. Expansion of these mills, in the words of two historians, was viewed virtually as a "patriotic enterprise, and manufacturers were considered philanthropists and public benefactors."

The town that came to be known as Roanoke Rapids developed, beginning in 1890, when Thomas Leyburn Emry and several investors from Virginia and Philadelphia formed the Great Falls Water-power, Manufacturing and Improvement Company--later the Roanoke Rapids Power Company--to dam the Roanoke River and generate electricity. Samuel F. Patterson supervised construction of the hydroelectric plant. Textile mills soon followed. Samuel F. Patterson, who divided his time between Roanoke Rapids and another manufacturing enterprise in Maryland, invested in and managed the Roanoke Mills company, which was incorporated in 1895 and completed in 1897. Patterson and his brother John were intimately involved in founding or managing two later companies--Rosemary Manufacturing Company and Patterson Mills. Samuel F. Patterson, in particular, also made significant contributions to the development of Roanoke Rapids and its institutions. Two villages that had grown as a result of manufacturing plants near the river were incorporated as Roanoke Rapids in 1897. The town grew rapidly, from 1,009 in 1900 to 3,369 in 1920. The General Assembly incorporated Roanoke Rapids as a city in 1931, combining it with the town of Rosemary, which had grown up around Rosemary Manufacturing Company. This new city contained over 8,500 residents.

In a time characterized by active support for building new schools and lengthening school terms in North Carolina, such growth necessitated the creation of a public school system. The General Assembly in February, 1907, authorized the creation of a graded school district for Roanoke Rapids and appointed nine men, including John L. Patterson, as the first board. The board was given the authority to issue bonds for school construction and equipment. Later that year voters in Roanoke Rapids overwhelmingly voted in favor of creating a school system. During the next ten years the school board acquired land, raised money through bond issues, and built two buildings for the new school system. Despite occasional shortfalls in funds, the board maintained high standards, setting longer terms than those mandated by the state. Samuel F. Patterson joined his brother as a school board trustee in 1910.

CONTEXT: ARCHITECTURE

During the period in which the graded school system in Roanoke Rapids was becoming established, many school officials in North Carolina and elsewhere advocated the design and construction of school buildings that met practical needs and reflected simple but good architecture. Often stressing the importance of a healthful, well-lighted environment free from the risk of fire, educators sought buildings that included ample classroom and laboratory space, an auditorium, a gymnasium, and other amenities. Planners stressed the importance of utilizing "L," "T," "H," or "U" plans, so that later additions would not cut off light from the original structure. Some large buildings with an "H" plan.
featured classrooms on each side of a transverse corridor in the main portion of the building and a central auditorium projecting from its rear. It was expected that the "socialized schoolhouse" would permit use by the community of the auditorium and library without disturbing classroom work. Advocates of modern schools emphasized the importance of hiring professional architects, rather than local builders, to achieve such goals. Some of these architects chose designs that reflected the influence of Elizabethan-period architecture.9

Designed by New York architect Hobart B. Upjohn and constructed during the period 1920-1921, the junior-senior high school building in Roanoke Rapids exemplified these ideas. It far surpassed in scope and quality of design any structure previously built for the Roanoke Rapids Graded School District. During a post-World-War I boom in school construction in North Carolina, the new school in Roanoke Rapids stood out as one of the largest, costliest, and best designed schools. This strong local commitment to quality was particularly striking because of the relatively small size of Roanoke Rapids. A new high school building completed about the same time in New Hanover County cost $400,000, while the junior-senior high school in Roanoke Rapids cost $500,000. This figure represented a significant portion—perhaps as much as one-third—of the total expenditures for school construction during the same period in twenty-seven North Carolina towns considered by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction to be in the same population class as Roanoke Rapids. The Elizabethan style of the school in Roanoke Rapids compared favorably to that of the Morris High School in New York City, designed by C. B. J. Snyder, and surpassed in execution schools built in the same style in Lexington and Smithfield in North Carolina.10

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Crowded conditions in the Roanoke Rapids Graded School District by the late 1910s necessitated the construction of the junior-senior high school building.11 At the request of the school board, the General Assembly authorized bond elections in 1917, 1919, and 1920 to raise over $500,000 for expansion of school facilities in Roanoke Rapids, including the junior-senior high school. Voters overwhelmingly approved each bond issue. The board in May, 1919, appointed a committee (C. A. Wyche, chairman; J. A. Moore; S. F. Patterson; J. L. Patterson; and A. M. Proctor) to secure a site and plans for the building. In June of that year the board purchased sixteen lots on Hamilton and Washington streets, including land on both sides of Eighth Street. This site lay between Roanoke Rapids and Rosemary.12 The committee hired New York architect Hobart B. Upjohn, a specialist in church and college architecture. Upjohn presented plans to the board in January, 1920.13

Under the supervision of a new building committee, which included S. F. Patterson, work commenced after the official groundbreaking ceremony on March 15, 1920. Without
the aid of a general contractor, Patterson directed most of the work himself, saving the school system an estimated $50,000. C. H. Byrd, who had worked with Patterson in building an addition to one of his mills, served as construction superintendent, and K. C. Towe undertook office work related to the project. Halifax Builders Supply Company of Roanoke Rapids furnished over $50,000 worth of supplies for the project, but the school board did not hesitate to look outside North Carolina for some materials and contractors. A Connecticut firm, Economy Concrete Company, supplied concrete stone, and the William H. Jackson Company of New York City installed the swimming pool.¹⁴

With the exception of the auditorium, completion of which the board authorized S. F. Patterson to oversee, the building was ready for use in time for classes in September, 1921. Unusually large for a town the size of Roanoke Rapids, the three-story junior-senior high school contained 24 classrooms, including a manual training room, domestic science facilities, and a chemical and biology laboratory. The huge auditorium seated 2,000 persons. The basement area below the auditorium featured a gymnasium with track area, a swimming pool, and showers. Special care was taken to make the building safe from fire. Upjohn considered the window treatment--steel sash set in wooden frames--to be a unique feature.¹⁵ They certainly permitted ample light to enter classrooms.

Local citizens embraced the new facility as a monumental testimony to their philosophy of education: the training of healthy, well-rounded citizens capable of maintaining a democracy. According to the local newspaper, the building exemplified the "classic Elizabethan style . . . in outward respect to the venerable buildings in the great centers of learning at Oxford and Cambridge."¹⁶ Just as important, locals expected the school to become "the center of our community life . . . ."¹⁷

It also became the center of a growing complex of buildings. The school board acquired additional property in the area and expanded the physical plant. A junior high school building rose near the high school building about 1924, and an industrial arts facility and extra classroom space followed in the early 1930s. A grant from the federal government in 1939 enabled the school board to build an elementary building near the high school. A music-physical education building and modern cafeteria followed in the late 1950s.¹⁸

Still in use today, the Roanoke Rapids High School remains an impressive reminder of a textile community's farsighted commitment to quality education for its children.

NOTES


²Lefler and Newsome, North Carolina, 513.

4Allen and Travis, Halifax County, 18-19; History of Roanoke Rapids, 98-99; Welcome to Roanoke Rapids, 35.


6Lefler and Newsome, North Carolina, 590-592.


8Cochrane and Cowen, "Roanoke Rapids Graded School District," [5-12].

Ayers and others, Healthful Schools, frontispiece view of Morris High School, New York City; Blair, Schoolhouse Planning, 9, 46, 48, 53; The Roanoke Rapids Herald, September 16, 1921. This special issue gave a thorough description of the Roanoke Rapids Junior-Senior High School and the local philosophy of education. For a summary of county-by-county expenditures for school systems that graphically shows the unusually high level of expenditures in Roanoke Rapids during the 1920-1921 school year, see Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1920-1921--1921-1922, 22-45.

Edwin Akers, Zeb Denny, and Ed Henderson, A City's Heritage (S.1: s.n., 1972?), 34, hereinafter cited as Akers and others, A City's Heritage; Minutes of the Board of School Trustees of Roanoke Rapids, April 26, 1917, Roanoke Rapids Graded School District Central Administrative Office, hereinafter cited as School Trustees Minutes, with appropriate date.


The Roanoke Rapids Herald, September 16, 1921.

The Roanoke Rapids Herald, September 16, 1921; "Junior-Senior High School," 61-62.

The Roanoke Rapids Herald, September 16, 1921.

The Roanoke Rapids Herald, September 16, 1921.

For an example of land acquisition, see Roanoke Rapids Power Company to Board of School Trustees of Roanoke Rapids, January 24, 1923, Book 340, p. 350, Halifax County Deeds. In this transaction the board paid $35,000 for 4 tracts of land, 2 of them in the area of the High School. For a discussion of the building program during the 1920s through the 1950s, see Cochrane and Cowen, "Roanoke Rapids Graded School District," [15-17] and Akers and others, A City's Heritage, 34, 55-56.


10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 1.55 acres

UTM References

A 1,8 2,6 2,1,4,0 4,0 3,7 9,2,0

B Zone Easting Northing

C D Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

A rectangular parcel enclosing the main building, drawn in pencil on Halifax County Tax Map No. 461, being the central 1.55 acre portion of Parcel 82. The west boundary of the parcel extends 300 ft. along the east edge of Hamilton St., the north boundary extends 225 ft. along the north side, the east boundary extends 300 ft. along the rear (parallel to Hamilton St.), and the south boundary extends 225 ft. along the south side, returning to Hamilton St.

Boundary Justification

Only the immediate surroundings of the main school building are being nominated. The 7.65 acre campus contains five other school buildings constructed at various later dates, and these are not included in the nomination. The main building is framed on the front and sides by landscaped lawn, and has paved parking areas in the rear.


News and Observer (Raleigh).


The Roanoke Rapids Herald.


