

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 any 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 (former) Sanford High School  
other names/site number West Sanford Middle School

2. Location

street & number 507 North Steele Street N/A not for publication  
city or town Sanford N/A vicinity  
state North Carolina code NC county Lee code 105 zip code 27330

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets      does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant      nationally      statewide X locally. (      See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Jeffrey J. Crow, Acting SHPO 10/16/95  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or 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 or other official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is: Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

     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):

(former) Sanford High School  
Name of Property

Lee Co., 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	
<u>1</u>		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.)

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

Historic and Architectural Resources  
of Lee Co., N.C., Ca. 1800-1942

0

## 6. Function or Use

### Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Category

Subcategory

EDUCATION

school

### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Category

Subcategory

WORK IN PROGRESS

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Classical Revival

### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	CONCRETE
walls	BRICK

roof	ASPHALT
other	METAL

### Narrative Description

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

(former) Sanford High School

Name of Property

Lee Co., N.C.

County and State

## 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.

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

EDUCATION

### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography

(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  
# \_\_\_\_\_

### 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 a 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 fifty years.

### Period of Significance

1924-1945

### Significant Dates

1924

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

Wilson, Berryman & Kennedy

### Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository:

(former) Sanford High School

Name of Property

Lee Co., N.C.

County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** approximately 3 acres

### **UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

	Zone Easting	Northings	Zone Easting	Northings
1	17	664700	3928220	3
2				4

\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

### **Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### **Boundary Justification**

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

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title	<u>J. Daniel Pezzoni</u>		
organization	<u>J. Daniel Pezzoni, Preservation Consultant</u>	date	<u>July 21, 1995</u>
street & number	<u>PO Box 7825</u>	telephone	<u>(703) 366-0787</u>
city or town	<u>Roanoke</u>	state	<u>VA</u>
		zip code	<u>24019-0825</u>

### **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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name	<u>Lee County Art and Community Center, Inc.</u>		
street & number	<u>502 N. Steele St.</u>	telephone	<u>(919) 775-3892</u>
city or town	<u>Sanford</u>	state	<u>NC</u>
		zip code	<u>27330</u>

**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 the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

(former) Sanford High School  
Lee Co., N.C.

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**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION**

**Summary**

Sanford High School is located at 507 North Steele Street in an early-twentieth-century residential neighborhood on the north side of downtown Sanford, North Carolina. The rectangular lot on which the school stands is bounded on the northeast by North Steele Street, on the southeast by Bracken Street, on the southwest by Horner Boulevard, and on the northwest by Weatherspoon Street (see Exhibit A for site plan). Street trees border the lot on its northeast side, and a playing field and basketball court occupy its southwest end. The lot slopes toward its north corner at the intersection of North Steele and Weatherspoon streets, exposing the building's basement level and creating a three-story elevation. The two-story school building is L-shaped in plan, with its main classroom wing fronting on North Steele Street and its auditorium/gymnasium wing following the line of Weatherspoon Street (see Exhibit B for floor plans). The exterior is Classical Revival in character, with brick walls laid in four-course American bond, concrete-faced pilasters and other details, and banks of tall four-over-four-sash windows lighting the classrooms and eight-over-eight-sash windows lighting the auditorium. The interior features a double-loaded corridor plan and a basement gymnasium under an auditorium distinguished by classically inspired molded plaster ornament.

**Exterior**

The school's main elevation on North Steele Street features a slightly projecting center pavilion and terminal pavilions, each defined by concrete-faced pilasters with enriched capitals. The pilasters of the center pavilion support an entablature with "SANFORD HIGH SCHOOL" inscribed on it, and they engage a recessed main entry with a pedimented head and a portcullis-like grate. Fronting the entry is a landing from which two flights of dog-leg stairs with decorative metal railings reach down to the sidewalk. The north terminal pavilion, a full three stories in height due to the slope of the street, provides access to the gymnasium and auditorium, as indicated by facade inscriptions. Behind the grated openings of this pavilion are open-air entrance loggias with stair wells providing access from the level of the gym to the main and balcony levels of the auditorium above. The concrete capitals of the north pavilion portray open books in a surround of acanthus leaves. The south terminal pavilion is the least elaborate of the three, since only classrooms exist behind it. A granite cornerstone at the south corner bears the names of the architect, builder, school board trustees, and the date "1924."

The elevations between the pavilions and on the other sides of the school are articulated by two-story brick piers interspersed with banks of windows and topped with concrete Doric capitals. Concrete cornices and belt courses run at the top and bottom of the piers. The built-up flat roof

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

(former) Sanford High School  
Lee Co., N.C.

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Description (continued)

is concealed behind a simple concrete-coped brick parapet. In the reentrant angle of the rear (southwest) elevation is a semi-subterranean, flat-roofed, stretcher-bond brick-faced cafeteria of simple design dating to 1956. On the Bracken Street elevation is a secondary entrance and side entrances on Weatherspoon Street serve the basement gymnasium.

Interior

The hallways on the first and second floors have glazed brick walls to about shoulder height and plaster wall and ceiling finishes above. Classroom doors have textured glass panels and transoms; transom-like windows also run along the top of the hallway walls, providing light and ventilation. Hallway and classroom floors are generally surfaced with composition tiles. Classrooms typically feature a window wall with three pairs of four-over-four-sash windows, blackboards on the other three walls, and plaster wall and ceiling surfaces above and below the blackboards. Several rooms contain wood cabinets with double-leaf four-panel doors and molded cornices. These cabinets are presumably original furnishings. Administrative offices occupy the central area of the first-floor classroom wing. The stairwells are open to the outside air.

The auditorium at the north end of the building is the principal interior space. The room has a sloping tongue-and-groove floor with runners in the aisles, modern metal and plywood seating, a balcony, a drop ceiling, and richly ornamented side (window) walls now painted off-white. The lower two-thirds of the walls are scored to simulate rusticated masonry; the first-story windows have scored lintels suggestive of jack arches with keystones, and the second-story windows (above the scored area) have enriched surrounds composed of bead-and-reel, egg-and-dart, and acanthus moldings. A bead-and-reel molding also runs at the base of the drop ceiling, and a dentil molding runs above the ceiling. At the auditorium's west end is a stage framed by a rectangular proscenium opening with a border of molded plaster paterae. At the center of the border is a plaster panel depicting a woman playing pipes; flanking the border are round plaster plaques depicting women and children. A modern stage extension conceals paneling under the original apron with tongue-and-groove panels. The paneling is painted black with gold trim--a paint scheme once used throughout the auditorium. Facing the stage is the edge of the balcony, enriched with five plaster panels, the center one depicting griffins and women in a round plaque and the flankers depicting women in various artistic pursuits. One woman sculpts the head of a helmeted warrior, another writes at a desk, a third paints, and a fourth prepares an architectural drawing using a Corinthian capital as a model. Like the panel over the proscenium opening, these panels depict--in an approximate way--the Greek muses. The classical theme is reinforced by a frieze running below the level of the second-story window sills that depicts classically

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 3

**(former) Sanford High School  
Lee Co., N.C.**

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**Description (continued)**

attired male figures on horseback--a decorative scheme based on the marbles of the Parthenon.

Steps at the back of the auditorium stage lead down to dressing rooms (the walls of which are covered with pencilled graffiti) and a tool room. These rooms were created out of a balcony that formerly looked down on the gymnasium, which lies below the auditorium on the school's basement level. The gym has tongue-and-groove floors with a polyurethane finish, painted brick walls, a sheet-rocked ceiling, and showers under the balcony/dressing rooms. A doorway leads from the gym to a partial basement level under the classroom wing containing shop rooms and a kitchen that connects to the cafeteria.

**Integrity Statement**

Sanford High School retains a high degree of architectural integrity. With the exception of the semi-subterranean cafeteria wing added in 1956, the appearance of the school has remained unchanged since the 1920s. The interior, too, is little altered; a few classrooms have been combined or subdivided or have had drop ceilings added, but most retain their original finishes and even furnishings. The auditorium--the principal space from an architectural standpoint--has had its original decorative paint scheme painted over, but it retains its remarkable plaster friezes and figural panels. The main threat to the school's integrity in recent years has been a lack of maintenance, heating, and protection from minor vandalism, but the transfer of the building to the Lee County Art and Community Center, Inc. bodes well for its future preservation.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 4

**(former) Sanford High School  
Lee Co., N.C.**

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**NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

**Summary**

Sanford High School, built in 1924-1925, owes its existence to the economic prosperity experienced by Sanford, North Carolina during the early 1920s. The two-story, Classical Revival building served as Sanford's high school for white students until 1951; in later years it functioned as a middle school and community arts center. A product of the architectural firm of Wilson, Berryman & Kennedy, specialists in public school design, the little-altered building features accomplished concrete and plaster ornament. Sanford High School is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places in the areas of architecture and education as one of the premiere buildings of Sanford's 1920s architectural efflorescence and as a leading representative of the new breed of consolidated schools built in Lee County during the period. The building meets the registration requirements discussed under the heading "Institutional Buildings" in the Section F Associated Property Types section of "Historic and Architectural Resources of Lee Co., N.C., Ca. 1800-1942." Its period of significance begins with the initial year of its construction, 1924, and ends in 1945, embracing the early years of the building's educational associations. Sanford High School is eligible at the local level of significance.

**Historical Background and Education Context**

The history of education in Sanford begins with the establishment of the town in the early 1870s. Inder Tucker, wife of depot agent W. T. Tucker, opened the Sanford Institute in the residence now known as the Railroad House in 1872.<sup>1</sup> The Sanford Institute was followed by the Sanford School, established in 1885 with donations from local citizens, which evolved into a public high school for white students during the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> The high school, a two-story brick building on the corner of Carthage and North Steele streets, soon proved inadequate as Sanford's population expanded from 1,800 in 1908 to 5,000 in 1925, in part a consequence of the introduction of tobacco cultivation to the town's hinterland. Economic prosperity translated into a building boom, and businessmen filled the downtown with highrise hotels and commercial blocks.<sup>3</sup>

The Sanford school board, recognizing the expanded educational needs of the growing town, voted in September 1923 to sell the old high school and construct a new building.<sup>4</sup> Earlier, in 1921, school authorities had acquired a school site on the south corner of North Steele and Weatherspoon streets in the fast-growing bungalow suburbs to the north of the downtown.<sup>5</sup> The school board building committee worked with George Berryman of the North and South Carolina architectural firm of Wilson, Berryman & Kennedy, specialists in public school design, and selected the Chapman-Hunt Company as the general contractor.<sup>6</sup> The school was nearly

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 5

**(former) Sanford High School  
Lee Co., N.C.**

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**Statement of Significance (continued)**

complete in March 1925, when the Henwood-Wakefield Company of Chicago furnished 1,000 auditorium seats, and in May the town's white graded schools held commencement in "the beautiful auditorium of the handsome new school building."<sup>7</sup> Faculty and students took up residence in the fall. Shortly thereafter, in 1927, the W. B. Wicker School (originally known as the Lee County Training School) was completed on South Vance Street for Sanford's black student population.

Sanford High School functioned as Sanford's principal combined high school-graded school for white students until 1951, when high school students were transferred to the newly completed Lee County Senior High School (originally known as Central High School) on Nash Street. After 1956, a cafeteria addition allowed the preparation of lunches for students; before, students went home for lunch. The old high school served as a junior high and middle school until 1976 and thereafter as the Lee County Arts/Community Center, operated by the county commission of Parks and Recreation. Its later occupants included the Lee County Arts Council, the community orchestra and chorus, Central Carolina Community College evening classes, and several youth groups.<sup>8</sup> In the early 1990s, a section of ceiling plaster fell in a classroom, prompting county officials to declare the building unsafe for occupancy. Consequently, a group of alumni and other concerned citizens formed to save and rehabilitate the school, hiring a team of architects and engineers to prepare a rehabilitation feasibility study in 1993 and, as the recently christened Lee County Art and Community Center, Inc., acquiring ownership of the property in 1995. Plans are to rehabilitate the building as an art and community center.<sup>9</sup>

**Architecture Context**

Sanford High School is one of a group of large, functionally integrated high schools constructed in North Carolina during a period of educational reform and increased funding beginning in the 1910s and 1920s and continuing to the present. As architectural historian Catherine Bishir has written of the trend, "large schools were becoming multiuse complexes, with gymnasiums, auditoriums, and other spaces that made them into important community facilities."<sup>10</sup> Locally, Sanford High School and its contemporary, the Lee County Training School (1927), were among the first schools in the county to incorporate specialized spaces such as auditoriums.<sup>11</sup>

Sanford High School ranks among a dozen or so large, architecturally sophisticated buildings erected in Sanford during the town's 1920s construction boom. These hotels, theaters, churches, and commercial blocks were universally constructed of brick--mostly red brick produced at newly-established brick plants in the nearby community of Colon--and several, including the high

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6

(former) Sanford High School  
Lee Co., N.C.

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Statement of Significance (continued)

school, feature molded concrete ornament on the exterior. The Sanford High School and its neighbor on North Steele Street, the First Baptist Church of Sanford (1924-1925), are the best surviving examples of non-domestic Classical Revival architecture in the town, the high school interpreting the classical orders more freely than the church. The molded plaster ornament in the school's auditorium is the most elaborate plasterwork identified in Lee County, and is notable for the quality and variety of its design. The building was designed by the architectural firm of Wilson, Berryman & Kennedy and was built by general contractor Chapman-Hunt Company.

Endnotes

1. Railroad House, *Sanford History*, 16 and 23. The Gothic Revival Railroad House stands at 110 Charlotte Avenue, having been moved there from its original site on Hawkins Avenue in 1962.
2. *Moore Gazette*, May 28, 1885; *Sanford Herald*, September 29, 1932.
3. Sanborn maps; Pezzoni, *History and Architecture of Lee County*.
4. Lee County Board of Education records, Sanford school board minutes.
5. McLaughlin, "Sanford High School;" *Sanford Express*, February 8, 1924.
6. Lee County Board of Education records, Sanford school board minutes; Wells and Dalton, *Virginia Architects*; and corner stone.
7. *Sanford Express*, March 13 and May 29, 1925.
8. McLaughlin, "Sanford High School."
9. Leland, et al., "Lee County Community Arts Center."
10. Bishir, *North Carolina Architecture*, 395.
11. Of the consolidated schools built in Lee County during the 1920s, only the Sanford High School, the W. B. Wicker School, and the Deep River School survive (the Wicker School is unoccupied and in deteriorating condition). Consolidated schools in the communities of Broadway and Lemon Springs have been demolished.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 7

(former) Sanford High School  
Lee Co., N.C.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Note: A number of individuals and organizations assisted in the preparation of this report, foremost among them the sponsor of the project, the Lee County Art and Community Center, Inc., including members Tommy C. Mann and Annie L. Pomeranz, and Linda Harris Edmisten, National Register coordinator with the North Carolina Division of Archives and History in Raleigh.

Bishir, Catherine W. *North Carolina Architecture*. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990.

Lee County Board of Education. Records. Sanford, N.C.

Leland Associates PA, et al. "Lee County Community Arts Center, Sanford, NC." 1993.

McLaughlin, Don. "Sanford High School." North Carolina Division of Archives and History Preliminary Information Request: Study List Application, 1990 (1991?).

*Moore Gazette* (Carthage, N.C.).

Pezzoni, J. Daniel. "Historic and Architectural Resources of Lee County, North Carolina." National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, 1992.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The History and Architecture of Lee County, North Carolina*. Sanford, N.C.: The Railroad House Historical Association, Inc., 1995 (forthcoming).

Railroad House Historical Association, Inc. *Sanford History*. Sanford, N.C.: 1974.

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*Sanford Express* (Sanford, N.C.).

*Sanford Herald* (Sanford, N.C.).

Wells, John E., and Robert E. Dalton. *The Virginia Architects, 1820-1955: A Biographical Dictionary* (forthcoming).

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 10 Page 8

**(former) Sanford High School  
Lee Co., N.C.**

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundaries of the nominated parcel, portrayed in Exhibit A, correspond to the boundaries of the Sanford city block bounded by Bracken, North Steele, and Weatherspoon streets and North Horner Boulevard.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundaries of the nominated parcel correspond to the city block on which the Sanford High School stands, and they correspond to the parcel purchased by Sanford school authorities in 1921 for educational purposes.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**(former) Sanford High School  
Lee Co., N.C.**

**Section number** Photo **Page** 9

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**PHOTOGRAPHS**

Note: Dense tree growth along North Steele Street made a full-facade view of Sanford High School impossible.

1.     1. Subject: Sanford High School (same for all photos)  
       2. Location: Lee Co., N.C. (same for all photos)  
       3. Photographer: J. Daniel Pezzoni (same for all photos)  
       4. Photo date: June 1995 (same for all photos)  
       5. Original negative at NC Division of Archives and History, Raleigh  
           (same for all photos)  
       6. North Steele Street elevation, center pavilion. View facing west.  
       7. Photograph number appears at top of entry (same for all photos)
2.     6. Bracken and part of North Steele Street elevations. View facing northwest.
3.     6. Weatherspoon and part of North Steele Street elevations. View facing south.
4.     6. North Horner Boulevard elevation. View facing northeast.
5.     6. Second-floor corridor.
6.     6. Second-floor classroom.
7.     6. Auditorium.
8.     6. Frieze in auditorium.
9.     6. Gymnasium.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number Exhibit Page 10

Sanford High School  
Lee Co., N.C.

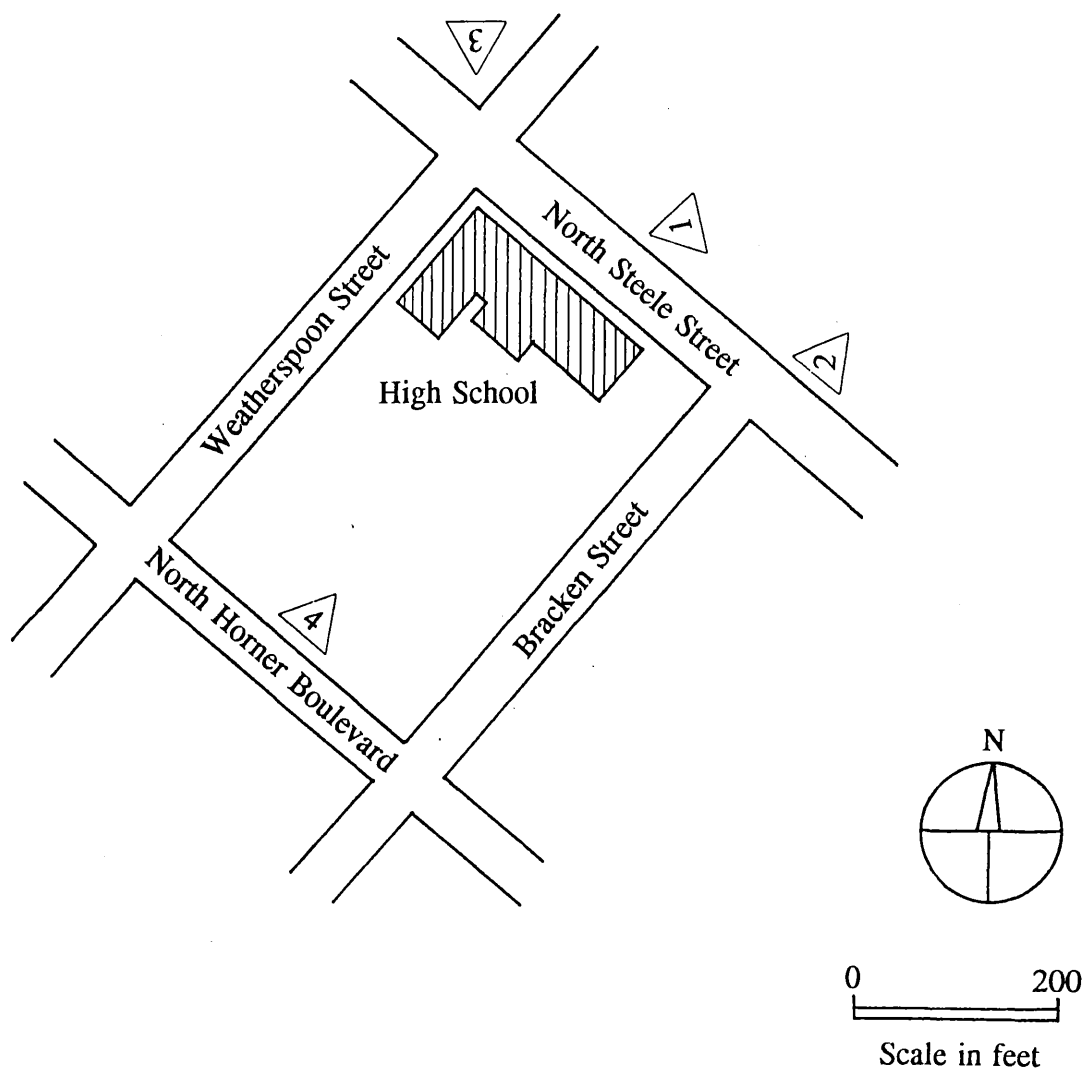


Exhibit A. Sanford High School nominated parcel. Triangles indicate number and angle of photographs accompanying the text.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number Exhibit Page 11

Sanford High School  
Lee Co., N.C.

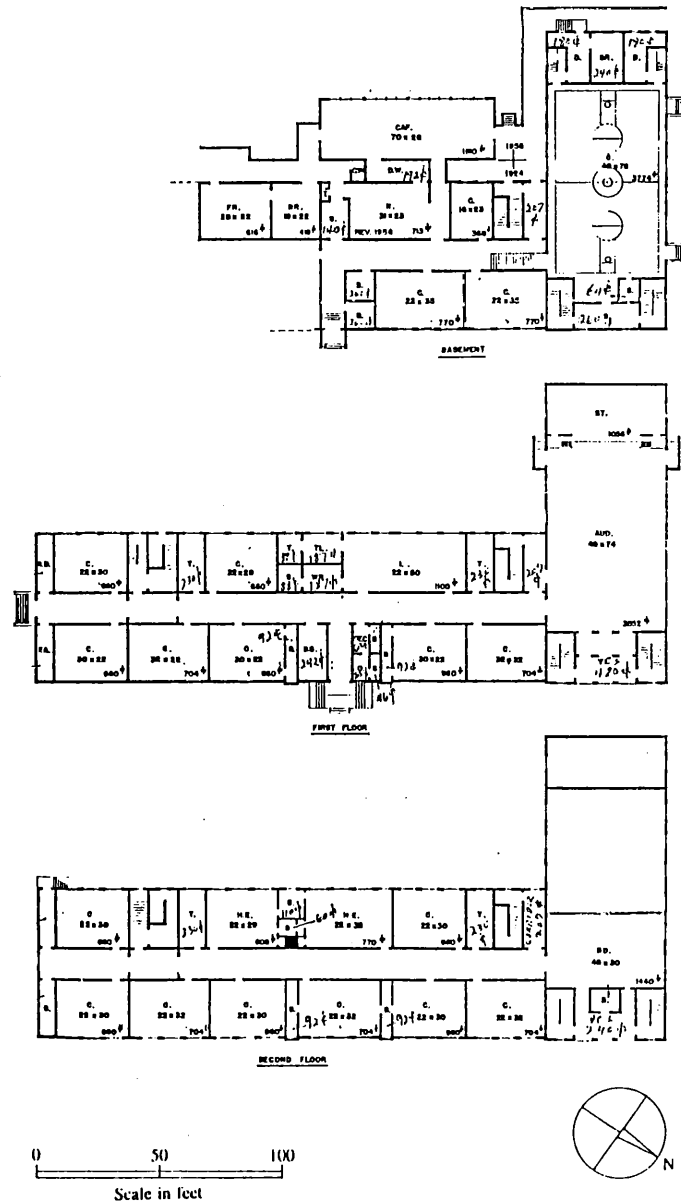
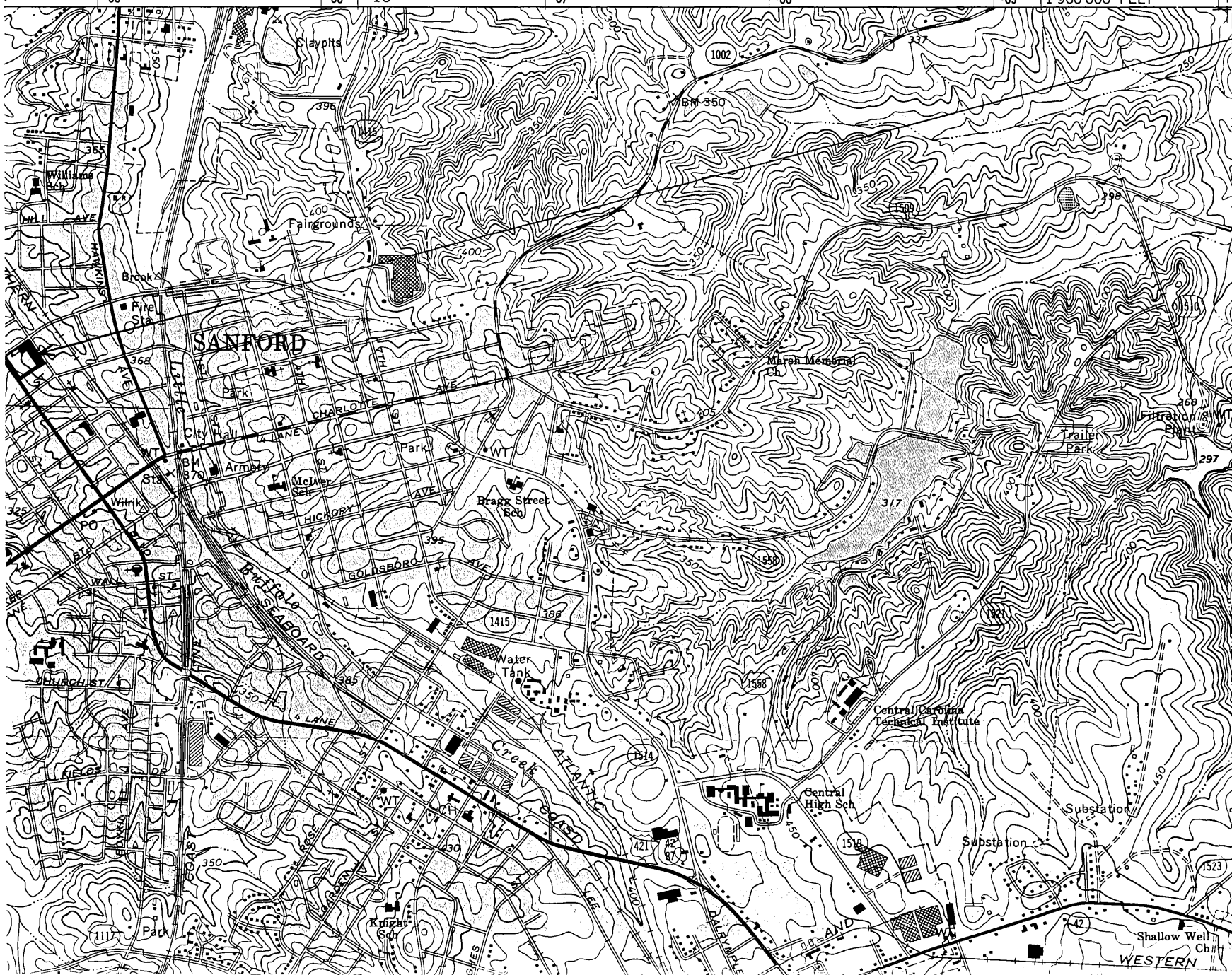


Exhibit B. Sanford High School floor plans from Lee County Board of Education records.

SANFORD QUADRANGLE  
NORTH CAROLINA—LEE CO.  
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

5155 11 SE  
(MONCURE)

665 666 10' 667 668 669 1 960 000 FEET 79°07'30" 35°30'



SANFORD HIGH SCHOOL  
Sanford, Lee Co., N.C.

UTM ref. (zone 17):  
E 664700  
N 3928220  
Sanford Quad.

3929  
3928  
630 000  
FEET  
3927

BROADWAY 5 MI.  
WILLINGTON 19 MI.

