

NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
Office of Archives and History
Department of Cultural Resources

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Lincolnton Recreation Department Youth Center

Lincolnton, Lincoln County, LN0384, Listed 12/30/2009

Nomination by Jason Harpe

Photographs by Jason Harpe, September 2009



Façade view



Side and rear view

**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 Lincolnton Recreation Department Youth Center

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 119 East Pine Street not for publication N/A

city or town Lincolnton vicinity N/A

state North Carolina code NC county Lincoln code 109 zip code 28092

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official Date

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources
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 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
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.		
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other (explain): _____	_____	_____

Lincolnton Recreation Department Youth Center
Name of Property

Lincoln County, North Carolina
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>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register
N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RECREATION/CULTURE Sub: SPORTS FACILITY
SOCIAL CLUBHOUSE

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: VACANT/NOT IN USE Sub: _____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Late 19th and Early 20th Century Movements Sub: Bungalow/Craftsman

Materials (Enter categories from instructions) See continuation sheets

foundation Brick
roof Asphalt
walls Wood/Weatherboard
other _____

Narrative Description

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

See continuation sheets _____

Lincolnton Recreation Department Youth Center
Name of Property

Lincoln County, North Carolina
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.

Criteria Considerations

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

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 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Entertainment/Recreation

Period of Significance

1947-1959

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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 # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: Lincoln County Museum of History

Lincolnton Recreation Department Youth Center
Name of Property

Lincoln County, North Carolina
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property .48

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing
1 17 476680 3925350
2 _____

Zone Easting Northing
3 _____
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 Jason L. Harpe

organization _____ date _____

street & number 410 South Cedar Street telephone (704) 477-0987

city or town Lincolnton state NC zip code 28092

12. 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 David A. Abernethy and Doreen W. Yates

street & number 204 North Laurel Street telephone (336) 408-1449

city or town Lincolnton state NC zip code 28092

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.

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Lincoln County, North Carolina

7. Narrative Physical Description

The Lincolnton Recreation Department Youth Center is located at 119 East Pine Street in downtown Lincolnton near the intersection of East Pine Street and North Academy Street, and the property adjoins a lot to the east that the Lincoln County Board of Commissioners leases to the Southern Stars Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), on which lot is situated the historic Pleasant Retreat Academy/Memorial Hall. The property, rectangular in shape, is bordered on the north and west by properties with houses dating to the 1920s, on the east by the historic Pleasant Retreat Academy/Memorial Hall and a tennis court built by the Lincolnton Recreation Department in the 1960s, and on the south by Pine Street. Just east, beyond the Pleasant Retreat Academy, 302 North Academy Street, is the former Academy Street School, built in 1914, that is currently the home of the Lincoln County Building and Land Development office.

A gravel driveway off Pine Street that divides the Youth Center and Pleasant Retreat Academy/Memorial Hall lot provides access to the property. An open, natural area located north of the building is an original landscape area that Lincolnton's Recreation Department utilized for programmatic functions from 1947 through the 1970s. Various shrubs that include nandinas and boxwoods separate the property from contiguous lots at the property's western edge. A brick wall on the Memorial Hall property designed by local architect Paul Rhyne Jr. runs around the Pleasant Retreat Academy/Memorial Hall and divides the Youth Center property from that of the Pleasant Retreat Academy/Memorial Hall. The Southern Stars Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy employed Rhyne to design the wall after the City of Lincolnton established their new recreation program and housed it at the Youth Center.

The Lincolnton Recreation Department Youth Center building is setback thirty-seven feet from East Pine Street with a north-south orientation. The Youth Center's lot is ninety-five feet wide at its north boundary, and is forty-nine feet deep. The building is eighteen feet from the adjoining property at the west boundary, and twenty-eight feet from the brick enclosure at its east elevation. The building is a single-story wood frame building on an exposed basement at the rear, with brick, asphalt, and wood as its basic materials. The property slopes slightly to the west.

The main body has a truncated hipped roof covered in asphalt shingles with simple asphalt-shingled gable roofs sheltering entrances to the basement at the west and north elevations. There are exposed roof rafters under the deep open eave overhangs. The building's foundation is laid in a common bond brick pattern, and the exterior is sheathed in wood weatherboard siding. Two sidewalks from East Pine Street lead to brick steps laid in a semicircle provide access to the central entrance.

The south facade has the original gable-front projecting cloak room (central entrance bay) covered in asphalt shingles with two four-over-four double-hung windows that flank double leaf

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Lincolnton Recreation Department Youth Center
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doors with raised panels. Two louvered attic vents are located under the gable of the central entrance. Flanking the central entrance are ribbons of windows that consist of a six-over-six flanked by two four-over-four double hung windows.

The east elevation has a symmetrical fenestration pattern with two small one-over-one windows at the center separating two banks of five, six-over-six double hung windows.

The west elevation has a one small one-over-one window separating two banks of five, six-over-six double hung windows. One six-over-six window is located to the north of these banks, and two six-over-six windows were added to this elevation when a rear addition was constructed on the building in 1947. There are seven eight-over-eight windows at this elevation that provide light to the basement. Currently, these windows are covered with painted plywood. A simple gable roof covered in asphalt shingles shelters the entry to the basement at this elevation.

The City of Lincolnton built a shed roof addition at the building's north, rear elevation for the Lincolnton Woman's Club in 1947 after the city organized the Lincolnton Recreation Department and moved the Lincolnton Recreation Department Youth Center into the building. Two sets of stairs at this location provide access to the first floor of the building and the basement. Double leaf doors with seven raised panels surmounted by a five-paned transom provide access to the first floor. A simple shed roof covered in asphalt shingles shelters the entry to the first floor, and a simple gable roof covered in asphalt shingles shelters the entry to the basement. There are two six-over-six double hung windows on the 1947 addition. There are three eight-over-eight double hung basement windows currently covered with painted plywood. The entrances were constructed at the western and northern elevations in 1947 after they voted to provide the necessary funds to excavate a full basement as a bowling alley and game room.

Lincoln County constructed the building as a temporary school ca. 1921 with no specific name and four classrooms accessed by a center hall. A stage that served as an auditorium was located at the building's north elevation. Two classrooms lined each side of the corridor, with a large fireplace in first large classroom located west of the hall. Although the current fireplace is not part of the original ca. 1921 school, Betty Gabriel, the Youth Center's first director, remembers this fireplace when the City of Lincolnton opened the Lincolnton Recreation Department Youth Center in 1947. The City of Lincolnton removed the partitions that separated the rooms on either side of the corridor when they renovated the building in 1947. They covered interior walls with paneling in a board and batten pattern during the late 1950s, and removed and recovered the original bead board paneling with pine paneling during the early 1980s.

The building's interior retains some of its original ca. 1921 details that include windows, front door, bead board wall and ceiling paneling that is all underneath pine paneling and acoustical tiles, and chair rail molding, but also has other interior renovations from 1947, and from the 1950s to the 1980s. The central entry provides access to a large open room whose

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floors are one and one-half inch oak decking added during the early 1950s. This flooring spans the entire width of the first floor, and the original ceiling and wainscoting were covered in pine paneling. In the 1950s, the ceiling was dropped and covered with acoustical tiling. The bead board wainscoting was covered with particle board that is painted green. Chair rail molding divides the particle board wainscoting from the pine paneling covering the upper walls of the building's interior. The doors and windows maintain their original plain board surrounds. The building's fireplace is in excellent condition with a common bond brick pattern and a cast iron lintel. The fireplace's hearth maintains the square brick tiles, and each of the building's rooms on the first floor retains the original, wide baseboards with molded caps.

Bathrooms, stairwell, a kitchen, and a room that the City of Lincolnton added in 1947 for the Woman's Club are located along the west wall, towards the north end of the building. The fireplace is located on the wall that separates these rooms from the open space to the south. The stairwell is located between the bathrooms and kitchen, and leads to the center of the basement. It opens to the basement's south elevation. The Woman's Club's room is located at the northwest corner and had pine-paneled walls, a dropped ceiling covered with acoustical tiles, original plain board door and window surrounds, and one and one-half inch oak decking.

The Youth Center's basement is one large room with exposed brick walls, and its ceiling shows the first floor's wood beams and flooring. The basement floor is covered with square tiles, and a frame concession booth is located in the southeast corner. Steel posts span the length of the building from north to south and support the first floor, and the only traces of the bowling alley are square score charts located on the south wall. Located south of the staircase is the boiler and HVAC unit.

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8. Statement of Significance

Summary

The Lincolnton Recreation Department Youth Center is historically significant as the county's first public recreation facility established in 1947. The Youth Center building was constructed as a temporary school building ca. 1921 and the facility closed in 1927. Little is known about the building's usage in the intervening years. In 1947 the four-classroom building was acquired by the City of Lincolnton and extensively renovated on the interior for the new recreational use. A professionally-trained woman director, Betty Gabriel, was hired to lead the newly-established recreation program. The building retains historic integrity from the 1947 to 1959 period of significance when the building was used to conduct important recreational, cultural, and social activities that enriched the lives of Lincolnton's youth and adults. Although the Center continued to function until 1989, the period after 1959 is not of exceptional importance.

Historical Background

The construction of a temporary school building ca. 1921, later the Youth Center, represents Lincoln County's interest in becoming part of the graded school movement in North Carolina and the advancement of public education during the early twentieth century. This movement began during the 1870s and 1880s, but Lincoln County did not embrace the State's push for educational reform until the first decade of the twentieth century. Under the leadership of State Superintendent Calvin Wiley, North Carolina sought through this movement to transition from common schooling to a graded school program where students were graded by age; institute higher standards for teachers; milder discipline; and softer pedagogy.

The Piedmont Seminary, former location of the Lincolnton Female Academy, and the Mary Wood School were the only schools that provided educational opportunities in Lincolnton from the late 1870s to 1900. At this time, education at these schools was free for one term of three months, but the second term of three months required payment. The city and county schools enjoyed success during this period under the superintendencies of Professor D. Matt Thompson and Charles L. Coon, with professional educators such as Miss Kate Shipp, Barron P. Caldwell, Anna McBee, and Margaret Busbee Shipp providing instruction, direction, and thorough training. In 1904, Barron P. Caldwell assumed the role of Superintendent of Public Instruction and garnered the necessary support to help the local schools flourish. Caldwell and other educators and prominent citizens in Lincolnton encouraged the local community to embrace the possibility of a graded school in Lincolnton.¹

¹ Bessie Hoffman Kale Notebook; "Lincolnton City Schools," *Lincoln County News*, 7 October 1935; "History Of The Grammar School," *Lincoln County News*, 12 November 1962."

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In 1905, under much local criticism, the North Carolina General Assembly passed a bill establishing the Lincolnton Graded School special character district. The boundaries of this district were the same as the boundaries of the town of Lincolnton.² Two years later the Board of Aldermen called for an election to raise money to cover the expenses of the schools operating at that time, in addition to securing the necessary funds to build the graded school. The Lincolnton Graded School was completed in 1909, and a primary school was built on North Academy Street in Lincolnton in 1914.³

E.D. Johnston assumed the superintendency of Lincoln County schools in 1919, and one of his first responsibilities was to address the overcrowded conditions in the city schools. The following year Johnston started the movement to increase the number of buildings, and in 1921 the North Carolina General Assembly passed an act calling for school bonds to expand educational facilities in Lincolnton. This movement received the same level of dissention on the local level as did the 1905 movement, but the Board of Trustees held a successful election on March 29, 1921. These approved school bonds built the Lincolnton High School, the South Aspen Street School, an African American school in Freedman, and a temporary educational facility to handle the city's overcrowding and congestion.⁴

Lincoln County built the temporary school ca. 1921 to serve as a temporary location for Lincolnton students in primary school because of overcrowding at the Lincolnton Graded School. Additionally, Lincoln County built the South Aspen Street School and a school in Freedman for African American students between 1921 and 1923.⁵ The term as an educational facility lasted only six years, and by 1927 it became of the home of the Woman's Club of Lincolnton. The building appears on the 1929 Sanborn map bearing the label "Club House." Reference to the "Woman's Club House" is found in various newspaper articles from 1927, and the Woman's Club held receptions for the city schools' faculty members, meetings, square dancing, ballroom dancing, birthdays, and anniversaries at this location.⁶

² North Carolina, *An Act To Make The Territory Within The Town Of Lincolnton A Graded School District*, Private Laws (1905), sec.

³ "20th Century Turning Point For Schools; Lincolnton Gets First All Brick Facility," *Lincoln Times-News*, Mon., Nov. 23, 1985.

⁴ S. Ray Lowder, "A School Building Program for the Lincolnton, North Carolina, Schools" (Master's Thesis, University of North Carolina, 1946), 31; Marvin Brown and Maurice C. York, *Our Enduring Past: A Survey of 235 Years of Life and Architecture in Lincoln County, North Carolina* (Lincolnton: Lincoln County Historic Properties Commission with assistance from the Lincoln County Board of Commissioners, the City of Lincolnton, and the North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1985), 166.

⁵ Sanborn Insurance Map, 1921.

⁶ "Mrs. Sally Celebrates Birthday Anniversary," *Lincoln County News*, Thursday, 8 September 1927; "Woman's Club Entertains For Teachers," *Lincoln County News*, 5 September 1927. The Woman's Club was organized in Lincolnton in 1922. During the Roosevelt Ball for Lincolnton on January 29, 1935, organizers held square dancing at the Woman's Club House with the Vale String Band.

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Lincolnton's Woman's Club is indicative of the proliferation of "organized women" into clubs throughout the South during the New South period.⁷ Clubs for white women were made up of the middle-class and elite who sought similar feminine ideals, intellectual interaction, camaraderie, social reform, and the promotion of libraries and schools. The women that held membership in Lincolnton's Woman's Club also held membership in the Southern Stars Chapter, United Daughters of the Confederacy, in addition to the Jacob Forney Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution.⁸ Just as other women's clubs throughout the South during this period, the Lincolnton's Woman's Club and the United Daughters of the Confederacy hosted Lee-Jackson Banquets, Confederate commemorations, receptions for local educators, and hosted meetings of the Anna Jackson Book Club at the former school building and Memorial Hall. Around 1925 the Southern Stars Chapter permitted one of Lincolnton's female book clubs to operate a lending library available to the general public at Memorial Hall in downtown Lincolnton. This lending library served Lincolnton for nearly forty years, and in 1965 the library was relocated to the former Academy Street School building, situated just east of the Memorial Hall.⁹

Municipal Recreation Programs and Lincolnton's Recreation Department

The organized public recreation movement in cities throughout United States and Canada developed during the first two decades of the twentieth century. The majority of recreation programs that grew out of this movement were managed by municipalities, with the other programs being overseen by playground and recreation associations and organizations, and

⁷ This is how women that made up the rosters of Women's Clubs of this period described themselves. Anastasia Sims, *The Power of Femininity in the New South: Women's Organizations and Politics in North Carolina, 1880-1930* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997); Joan Marie Johnson, *Southern Ladies, New Women: Race, Region, and Clubwomen in South Carolina, 1890-1930* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004). Other women's clubs organized in Lincolnton before the Woman's Club include the Anna Jackson Book Club in 1894, the Southern Stars Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy in 1901, Embroidery Club in 1910, Maids and Matrons Book Club in 1920, and Booklover's Club in 1921. The Sorosis Book Club and Jacob Forney Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution were organized in 1923 and 1928, respectively. "Lincolnton Clubs," Sesquicentennial Edition, *The Lincoln County News*, 7 October 1935.

⁸ Because of their inability to vote and hold political office, white and African American women contributed to social reform, public policy, and made an impact on local politics before they ever received the right to vote. The Anna Jackson Book Club was the first Woman's Club formed in Lincolnton in 1894, followed by the Southern Stars Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy in 1901, Embroidery Club in 1910, the Maids and Matrons Book Club in 1920, the Woman's Club in 1922, and the Sorosis Book Club and Jacob Forney Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution in 1923 and 1928. Minutes, Southern Stars Chapter, United Daughters of the Confederacy. United Daughters of the Confederacy/Memorial Hall, Lincolnton, North Carolina.

⁹ Brown, *Our Enduring Past*, 170.

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privately funded and operated agencies. The stimulus for municipal recreation programs was legislation passed by state governments allowing cities, towns, and counties to manage recreation programs.

Various forces and developments led to the need for recreation and the municipalization of recreation programs. Four movements and their acceptance during the early twentieth century contributed to the positive regard by communities of their responsibility to fund and manage recreation programs. These movements include the park movement; physical education (sports and athletics) in educational systems; kindergarten, day nursery, and nursery school programs; and, the construction of community and recreation centers.¹⁰ The reasons for municipal management of recreation programs included the stability of tax funds, recreation's non-controversial nature, municipal recognition of recreation's ability to fight juvenile delinquency, recreation's popularity, and governmental reform policies regarding public welfare.¹¹ Many cities created departments that held the charge and responsibility of overseeing the management of their recreation programs.

The first recreation facilities in North Carolina were built by the Work Progress Administration (WPA).¹² The WPA was established in April 1935 and superseded the Emergency Relief Administration (ERA), the Civil Works Administration (CWA) in 1934, and eventually the Public Works Administration (PWA) in 1939.¹³ This program provided jobs for the construction of roads, streets and highways, and the repair of bridges, public buildings, and parks. It brought social workers into North Carolina counties to help coordinate the building of swimming pools, gymnasiums, and other recreational facilities. Financial support for county recreation programs in North Carolina's rural counties did not receive votes from county commissioners until the 1940s. Local officials did not support the creation of these programs because they believed that local property taxes should not finance county-wide recreation. They

¹⁰ Harold D. Meyer, "A Preview of Community Recreation," *Social Forces*, vol. 20, no. 3 (March 1942): 358.

¹¹ Weaver Pangburn, "Trends in Public Recreation," *Social Forces*, vol. 4, no. 1 (Sept. 1925):109.

¹² Betty Gabriel Ross, telephone conversation with author, 15 July 2008. Harold Moses, telephone conversation with author, 5 August 2009. Harold Moses holds a B.A. and Master's Degree in Parks and Recreation from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He works as director of the Red Shield Boys Club in High Point in 1952, and athletic director and director of Parks and Recreation for the City of Durham from 1952 to 1966. He taught in the Parks and Recreation administration at North Carolina State University from 1964 to 1966, and became the assistant director of the North Carolina Recreation Commission (NCRC) in 1966. When the NCRC became the Department of Natural Resources, he served as the division chief of the Division of Parks of Recreation. He retired in 1985 but continued to teach Parks and Recreation at the UNC Chapel Hill and NC State until 1989. The information supplied by Moses is based largely on his memory of women in recreation programs in North Carolina because after 1985 the records of county recreation programs were destroyed by the NC Department of Parks and Recreation. Betty Gabriel.

¹³ High Talmage Lefler and Albert Ray Newsome, *North Carolina: The History of a Southern State* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1954), 615-616.

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believed that their county's recreation needs were met by rural recreation activities that included hunting and fishing, and baseball and football at their local schools. Nash County funded the first county-wide recreation program in North Carolina during the early 1940s, and fifty-one other counties established programs before Lincoln County created their recreation program in 1947.¹⁴

As early as 1902, Lincolnton provided the first recreational outlet for young men with their sponsorship of a local baseball team. From the 1920s to the 1930s, young men and women received recreational instruction in Lincolnton at Lincolnton High School, and young men that inhabited local mill villages were afforded the opportunity to participate in the Western Carolina, Sally, and Mid-State baseball leagues. Some of these young men later played semi-professional and professional baseball while other players remained in Lincolnton and imbued upcoming players with the same instruction they received from local coaches such as Charles "Block" Smith.¹⁵

Recreational activities in Lincolnton from the 1920s to the 1940s were not limited to organized athletic programs offered at Lincolnton High School. In August of 1928, Hinson's Bowling Alley, with Charles H. Hinson as manager, advertised the opening of their "up-to-date bowling alley and recreational hall" in the old McLellan Building on the courthouse square in downtown Lincolnton.¹⁶ On December 12, 1929, F. Enzor advertised additional recreational activities in the *Lincoln County News* with the opening of the Pastime Skating Rink under a tent on a vacant lot on East Main Street next to the Lincoln County News office.¹⁷

Early in 1934, the Goodfellows Club of Lincolnton donated \$50 to contribute to the creation of Lake Lincolnton, formerly Horse Show Lake, as a recreational center. Local organizers sought to have the project sent to Raleigh, North Carolina as a potential Civil Works Administration (CWA) project. On February 15, 1934, the *Lincoln County News* publicized that Miss Helen Reinhardt, CWA state administrator for Lincoln County, and the project supervisor Ed Reece planned to visit Mrs. Thomas O'Berry, CWA state administrator, about the Lincolnton High School stadium and the recreational center at Lake Lincolnton. Each party was anxious to have each project approved and ready for inception, and Miss Reinhardt stated her optimism and hopes that the projects would receive approval so that each would begin immediately.¹⁸ On March 29, 1934, the CWA was replaced by the Emergency Relief Administration (ERA), and the previously-funded Lincoln County projects were continued by the ERA until it became part of

¹⁴ Moses telephone conversation, 5 August 2009.

¹⁵ Jason Harpe, *Images of Sports: Sports in Lincoln County* (Mt. Pleasant: Arcadia Publishing, 2007), 9.

¹⁶ "Here It Is: Lincolnton has wanted and needed up-to-date Bowling Alley and Recreation Hall," *Lincoln County News*, 30 August 1928.

¹⁷ "Pastime Skating Rink," *Lincoln County News*, 12 December 1929.

¹⁸ "CWA Officials To Raleigh Friday," *Lincoln County News*, 15 February 1934.

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the WPA in April 1935. The Lincolnton High School stadium project and other projects involving sanitation, streets, a new water tank, and a music program received the necessary federal funding for completion, but the Lake Lincolnton recreation center never came to fruition.¹⁹

During World War II, a group of concerned citizens started a movement to implement a municipal recreation program. At a public meeting in Lincolnton in August 1943, attendees formed a committee whose mission it was to coordinate efforts for the establishment of a park in Lincolnton. These plans included a swimming pool, recreation center, playground equipment, and other amenities. The committee elected at the public meeting included William E. Garrison, chairman; Dr. L. A. Crowell Sr., Robert P. Hinson, Sheldon Roper, Joe Polhill, Mrs. Mattie Lou Alexander, and Miss Maude Mullen, secretary. Garrison appealed to those in attendance by delivering a passionate speech about the sacrifices made by the county's forefathers, the "great inheritance" they left for Garrison's generation to enjoy, and the need for his generation to build a better environment for their children. Garrison and other committee members encouraged the local community to contact any of the committee members and express their opinion on the topic.²⁰

In 1946 the City Council of Lincolnton established the City and County's first public recreation program. Mayor "Mack" Broome and wife Georgia had no children and desired to leave a legacy in Lincolnton that would exist in perpetuity with the creation of a recreation program.²¹ Mayor Broome spearheaded the effort on behalf of City Council to establish the recreation program by allocating \$30,000 of city funds to renovate the Woman's Club House as the new home of the Recreation Department's Youth Center.²² The City of Lincolnton established a recreation commission for:

"the creating and conducting, establishing, maintaining parks, playgrounds, athletic fields, and recreation centers, with authority to conduct any form of recreational or cultural activity that goes to make up the wholesome well-being of the individual during off-hours-rest, leisure and the development of the creative spirit, the humane values that all men and women cherish."²³

¹⁹ "CWA Ceases To Be Today; ERA Takes Its Place," *Lincoln County News*, 29 March 1934; "WPA Supervisor Here On Monday Working On Projects," *Lincoln County News*, 17 March 1938.

²⁰ "Park In Lincolnton," *Lincoln County News*, 2 August 1943.

²¹ "Former Mayor Buried Today," *Lincoln County News*, 16 April 1979.

²² Minutes, April 11, 1946, Lincolnton City Council, Lincolnton City Hall, Lincolnton, N.C.

²³ Minutes, September 8, 1946, Lincolnton City Council, Lincolnton City Hall, Lincolnton, N.C.

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The city approved the creation of the recreation program and financial allocation, and appointed Betty Gabriel as the first director in 1947. The City discussed with Gabriel their plans to establish the Lincoln County's first recreation program the summer after she graduated from Appalachian State Teacher's College, and asked if she had an interest in serving as the director of their program. Unaware of the lack of female directorship appointments in North Carolina, they sought Gabriel's recreation leadership because of her athletic background at Lincolnton High School and her collegiate recreation path. According to Gabriel, the City hired her when there was only one other female recreation director in fifty-two North Carolina counties that had recreation programs.²⁴ The other female recreation director was Augusta Barnett in Asheville.²⁵ Gabriel was an athletic standout in basketball while at Lincolnton High School and had graduated from Appalachian State Teacher's College, now Appalachian State University, in 1947 with a degree in Physical Education. At Appalachian State Gabriel participated in numerous athletic activities. Some of her activities include president of the swimming club, intramural manager of the woman's athletic association, member of the women's varsity volleyball, basketball, softball, and speed ball teams, tennis and badminton doubles, and the Girls A Club. Before assuming the recreation director's position in Lincolnton, she directed a playground for a summer in Louisiana, and served as the director of girls' activities at the YMCA in Fries, Virginia.²⁶ Betty Gabriel served the City's recreation program for nearly fifty years. She started tumbling classes, marble teams, and many other recreational activities. She was inducted into the Lincoln County Sports Hall of Fame in 2001.

By June of 1947 the city reported that the recreation center's renovations were near completion, and the new construction would include the removal of partitions and a stage on the first floor, and a basement to house bowling alleys, ping pong tables, and a general game room. The recreation center, after renovation, included a large ballroom for dances, parties, and special events, a lobby for reading, card games and slumber, a snack bar, and an arts and crafts room.²⁷ The new recreation program, under Betty Gabriel's leadership, was a year-round program that utilized the Youth Center, the property surrounding the Hall, and other locations in Lincolnton. The program's main playground was located adjacent to Lincolnton High School and had tennis courts, badminton areas, and other playground equipment. Gabriel used the property surrounding the Youth Center as a smaller playground for various games and shuffleboard matches.

²⁴ Ross telephone interview, 15 July 2008.

²⁵ Moses, telephone interview, 5 August 2009.

²⁶ Harpe, *Images of Sports: Sports in Lincoln County*, 85

²⁷ "Miss Gabriel of Boger City Appointed Director of New City Recreation Program," *Lincoln County News*, Monday, 16 June 1947.

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From 1947 to 1959, Lincolnton's recreation program undertook a diversified approach with its programs to serve Lincolnton's youth and generate funds to sustain the program. Betty Ross purchased one of the first televisions in Lincolnton for the recreation program and charged adults a quarter to watch sporting events such as the baseball world series to generate funds to pay for the television. Various programs were held at the Youth Center from 1947 to 1959 that include Christmas dances, marble tournaments, folk and square dancing, tumbling classes, Easter egg hunts, ping pong tournaments, Davy Crockett days, dances after Lincolnton High School football games, dress-up parades, watermelon feasts, croquet, tetherball, horseshoes, and hula hoop contests. In 1959 the city's recreation program organized the High School Parent's Committee to not only oversee 'teenagers' night, but to generate interest among parents in the activities of their teenagers. This committee provided refreshments and chaperons for special events after high school athletic events.

Also in 1947, the Chamberlain family, who owned a large home on Sumner Street in downtown Lincolnton, built a wading pool off North Cedar Street for the City's recreation program. The recreation program used this and one other pool before opening a pool at the local VFW during the 1970s and at South Fork Recreation Park in 1979.²⁸

Gabriel and the recreation commission expanded their efforts in Lincolnton during its early years by sponsoring a playground and recreation center for the city's African American community. This effort was not fully realized until the city's recreation program received a lease from St. Luke's Episcopal Church to use the old Saint Cyprian's African American Church on West Church Street in downtown Lincolnton as a "colored" Recreation Center. St. Luke's, under the enthusiastic ministerial work of Rev. Dr. William R. Wetmore, built the old Saint Cyprian's Church during the late nineteenth century as a mission church for Lincolnton's African American Episcopalian communicants.²⁹ Gabriel and the city's recreation program operated the African American recreation center during its first year of operation in 1950 with donations, and in 1951 they received general operating funds from the City of Lincolnton. The city remodeled the building to make it operable for recreational activities. Mrs. Catherine Holloway was appointed director of the African American recreation program, and she served in this capacity even after the program relocated its operation to the former Oaklawn School in Lincolnton.³⁰

The City's recreation program remained in downtown Lincolnton at the Youth Center until the City built the South Fork Park one mile southwest of downtown Lincolnton. They renamed it the Betty G. Ross Park in 1977.³¹ The City of Lincolnton, Lincoln County Board of

²⁸ Harpe, *Images of Sports: Sports in Lincoln County*, 91, 98.

²⁹ Sherrill, *Annals of Lincoln County*, 303.

³⁰ "Recreation Center for Colored Opens Here Today in St. Cyprian's", *Lincoln County News*, 18 December 1950.

³¹ Harpe, *Images of Sports: Sports in Lincoln County*, 86.

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Education, and Lincoln County donated the Youth Center to the Downtown Development Association (DDA) of Lincolnton in 2007, and DDA sold the property to David Abernethy and Doreen W. Yates in 2008.

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Section 10: Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The National Register boundaries follow the parcel lines of Parcel 01117 as shown on the attached Lincoln County GIS map at the one inch = 152 feet scale.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries encompass .48 acres on East Pine Street in Lincolnton, which is a portion of the acreage that was historically associated with the City of Lincolnton's Recreation Department Youth Center. It provides an appropriate setting.

Photographs

The following information pertains to all photographs:

Lincolnton Recreation Department Youth Center
119 E. Pine Street
Lincolnton, Lincoln County, North Carolina

Location of digital images: North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh, North Carolina.