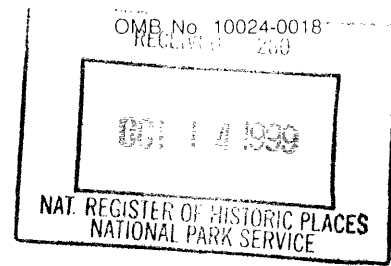


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1366



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 an 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 Billingsville School

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 3100 Leroy Street N/A not for publication

city or town Charlotte N/A vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Mecklenburg code 119 zip code 28205

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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.)

Jeffrey Crow SHPO 10/4/99
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State of 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 official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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.) _____

Edson H. Beall 11/12/99
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Billingsville School
Name of Property

Mecklenburg County, NC
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	
1		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.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Education: School

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/Trade: Organizational

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Craftsman

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Brick

roof Asphalt

other Wood

Narrative Description

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

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.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or 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)

Ethnic Heritage: African American
Education

Period of Significance

1927-1949

Significant Dates

1927

1949

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:

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic
Landmarks Commission

Billingsville School

Mecklenburg County, NC

Name of Property

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approximately 3 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

UTM grid for Zone 17, Easting 5174610, Northing 38946010

UTM grid for Zone, Easting, Northing

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 Frances Alexander, Historian
organization Mattson, Alexander & Associates, Inc. date 1 March 1999
street & number 2228 Winter Street telephone (704) 569-8130
city or town Charlotte state N.C. zip code 28205

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 SHPO or FPO.)

name Charlotte Mecklenburg Board of Education
street & number 701 E. Second Street telephone 704/379-7000
city or town Charlotte state N.C. zip code 28202

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 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 Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7. Page 1**Billingsville School**
Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, N.C.**7. Narrative Description**

The (former) Billingsville School is located in the Grier Heights neighborhood of Charlotte, North Carolina. This historically African American neighborhood is situated approximately three miles southeast of downtown Charlotte. Grier Heights is bounded on the west by Randolph Road, a major thoroughfare leading southeast from the center city, and the C.S.X. rail line and Monroe Road on the east. Nearby are streets of houses dating primarily from the mid-twentieth century to the present. Modern office development now lines four-lane Randolph Road, spilling over onto a few of the side streets that connect Grier Heights to this major transportation corridor.

The (former) Billingsville School sits on a multiple building campus which now includes the modern Billingsville Elementary School. The larger school grounds (roughly eight acres) are defined by Randolph Road to the west, Skyland Street to the north, and Leroy Street to the east. The (former) Billingsville School faces Leroy Street, and its tree-shaded schoolyard setting remains separate from the modern campus to the rear. A driveway on the north side of the original school now leads to the modern complex, and the older school building is connected to the modern facility by a covered sidewalk.

The (former) Billingsville School is a one story, hip-roofed school building of the 1920s with a brick veneer, symmetrical façade, and a steeply pitched, front gable porch. A small, flat-roofed, brick addition was constructed in 1949 along the east elevation, and a brick fire wall marks the junction of the two sections. The brick walls are laid in running bond with a water table created by a row of soldiers. The front porch has box piers, exposed rafters, broad eaves, and a decorative board and batten gable. The recessed entrance has side lights and transom, but the original double-leaf doors have been replaced. Banks of nine-over-nine light, double-hung, wooden sash windows flank the entrance. The rear elevation replicates the tall, nine-over-nine windows, while the side elevations have both two-over-two and six-over-one windows. Steel sash awning windows are found in the addition. The building has two other entrances located on the east and west elevations. The west entrance opens onto the covered walkway which connects with the modern school. The east doorway now opens into the addition. A stairwell by the west door leads to the basement boiler room, and the brick flue sits at the northwest corner of the building.

The building has a T-shaped interior plan. The main entrance opens into a short hall which ends at a corridor running the full width of the building. The south end of the corridor opens into the addition, and double, wood and glass doors separate the two sections. The school was constructed with four rooms, three of which are classrooms, and the fourth was partitioned into a small classroom and office. The hallways have hardwood floors, stucco walls and ceiling, tongue-in-groove wainscoting, and a molded chair railing and baseboard. Some horizontal paneled doors, with molded surrounds and transoms, remain intact although one of the doors into the office is a wood and glass replacement, and one classroom has a six paneled replacement door. The southeast classroom is unaltered, displaying the original vertical wainscoting, stucco walls and ceiling, and hardwood floors. The office/classroom is divided by a plaster partition wall, with two connecting doors, but both retain the stucco walls and vertical wainscoting. The floors in the office are covered in linoleum. The northwest classroom has undergone some modification with the addition of a bathroom in one corner. Housing restrooms and a storage room, the addition has brick walls and linoleum floors.

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Section number 7. Page 2

Billingsville School
Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, N.C.

The (former) Billingsville School retains its architectural integrity and schoolyard setting. The small addition does not obscure the form or plan of the original school, and the only notable modifications are the replacement doors, some of which were required under modern building codes.

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Continuation SheetSection number 8. Page 1**Billingsville School**
Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, N.C.**8. Statement of Significance**

The (former) Billingsville School is nominated to the National Register under Criterion A for both education and African American ethnic heritage. Built in 1927, under the auspices of the Rosenwald Foundation of Chicago, the Billingsville School stands as a landmark in the history of African American education in Mecklenburg County. Billingsville School illustrates both national and local philanthropic efforts to improve the deplorable state of education for African Americans, particularly those living in rural communities, and serves as a reminder of the racially segregated school systems of the pre-Civil Rights era. An important institution in the formerly rural, African American community of Grier Heights, the school is a rare survivor in now urbanized Mecklenburg County. The period of significance extends from 1927, when the building was constructed, to 1949, when this Rosenwald school was added to the Charlotte city school system and the small wing was added to the building. This significant date in the history of the school also corresponds to the fifty-year rule for National Register eligibility. The (former) Billingsville School has been designated a local landmark by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission.

The (former) Billingsville School is one of the three best preserved Rosenwald schools remaining in Mecklenburg County. With systematic school consolidation, beginning in the 1920s, early twentieth century, rural schools have become increasingly rare, and the small, frame Rosenwald schools have been particularly vulnerable to demolition, deterioration, and heavy alteration. Constructed through philanthropic rather than public means, the Rosenwald schools serve as important landmarks in the history of education for African Americans. Billingsville School exemplifies the Rosenwald design and construction in its form, materials, and floor plan. The addition of a brick veneer to the school, made soon after construction, illustrates the support and largess of the Grier Heights community, and the school serves as an important institutional landmark in this once rural African American community in Mecklenburg County.

Historical Background/Historic Contexts for Education and Ethnic Heritage: African American

The Billingsville School was constructed in 1927 in the once rural African American community of Grier Heights. Then located outside the city limits of Charlotte, the small community occupied the area between a farm-to-market route, Monroe Road, and low-lying Briar Creek, southeast of the city. Because of its proximity to the city, the Grier Heights community included a number of land owners, contractors, skilled laborers, and businessmen, and its farm population was lower than areas of the county farther removed from town (Wallace interview).

In the mid-1920s, Grier Heights citizens began petitioning the Mecklenburg County School Board for assistance in creating a community school. The school board advised the neighborhood to wait until the land for a school site could be acquired. Local residents purchased two acres from local landowner and businessman, Sam Billings (1848-1933), the first African American landowner in the community. Billings donated one additional acre of land, and the school was named in his honor (Billingsville Elementary School History: 2). With the purchase of the school site, the Mecklenburg County School Board, in conjunction with the philanthropic Rosenwald Foundation of Chicago, built a one story, frame building in

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Continuation SheetSection number 8. Page 2**Billingsville School**
Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, N.C.

1927. Local resident and concrete contractor, Edward Wallace, Sr., laid the foundation for the school. The school was built according to Rosenwald specifications as a Type 4 school (accommodating four teachers), but almost immediately after construction was completed, the Grier Heights neighborhood raised the funds to have the frame building veneered in brick. A.S. Grier, owner of Grier Funeral Home as well as a store on Monroe Road, donated \$500.00 to the project as well as land for the nearby Grier Heights Presbyterian Church (Billingsville School History: 2-3; Wallace interview).

Like many rural schools for Southern blacks, the Billingsville School was built under the auspices of the Rosenwald Foundation of Chicago. The foundation had been founded by Julius Rosenwald, president of Sears, Roebuck and Company, as a philanthropic organization to promote education for African Americans in the South. Active between World War I and the depression of the 1930s, the Rosenwald Foundation took a "bricks and mortar" approach to educational advocacy, focusing its efforts on elementary school design and construction. Consequently, the most tangible legacy of the foundation is its rural school buildings (Hanchett 1987: 5).

Systematic and universal public education, even for whites, was still in its infancy during the late nineteenth century, and for African Americans, particularly in rural areas, the state of education was deplorable. Although the Freedmen's Bureau had established schools throughout the South after the Civil War, the lack of funding and the demands of farm life meant that schooling was usually rudimentary and often short in duration. The city of Charlotte did not have a system of graded schools until 1882, and rural communities were left to support their own institutions. By 1900, local support for public education, at least for whites, had increased noticeably, particularly as many Southern states, including North Carolina, passed legislation requiring a literacy test in order to vote. This political maneuver, intended to disenfranchise poor whites and blacks, gave impetus to the public school movement, in part by correlating education with political power (Hanchett 1987: 3).

At the same time, the state of education for African Americans began to garner national attention, and philanthropic organizations began to take an interest in the problem. Such charitable foundations as the George Peabody Fund, the John F. Slater Fund, and the Anna T. Jeanes Fund all took on the cause of black education. Most efforts focused on teacher training, through grants to black colleges and universities. However, by the early twentieth century, as a number of organizations began to embrace the notion that educational parity between the races would end racism, these charitable efforts expanded to all aspects and to all levels of education for African Americans.

Incorporated in 1917, the Rosenwald Foundation turned its attention to the problems of poor elementary school facilities, and between 1917 and 1927, rural school construction became the thrust of their mission. Julius Rosenwald had been influenced by Booker T. Washington, and their collaboration spurred the school building program, beginning at Tuskegee Institute, Washington's facility in Alabama, and spreading to Tennessee and North Carolina (Hendricks 1986: 1). Between 1927 and 1932, the Rosenwald Foundation constructed 5,300 schools for rural African American students in the South (Hanchett 1987: 1). The foundation provided not only the funding and architectural designs for the schools, but in an unusual scheme to encourage racial cooperation, required funding from both black and white contributors. The local public school system also had to contribute to the construction and agree to maintain the facility as part of the school system. Rosenwald schools had to conform to certain design guidelines. Each school

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Continuation SheetSection number 8. Page 3**Billingsville School**
Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, N.C.

was to be frame construction, with one to four classrooms. Paint color and window placement, size, and number reflected Progressive Era concerns with ample light and ventilation. Each school was to include an industrial room for instruction in the practical arts, a teaching drawn directly from the writings of Booker T. Washington. In rural areas, two areas were to be set aside for gardens. Even though most Rosenwald schools were middle-sized facilities, with two to four teachers, schools were to include an auditorium, or meeting room, which could also serve as a community center. Often movable partitions were used to convert classrooms into auditoriums (Hanchett 1987: 9).

By World War I, many states had begun including offices of Negro education, as they were then known, as part of the public school administration, and in 1921, North Carolina established a Division of Negro Education with the State Department of Public Instruction. The Rosenwald program was managed by this division, which also had jurisdiction over state-funded colleges, high schools, and elementary schools for African Americans. North Carolina, which had one of the largest Negro education staffs, consequently had the largest Rosenwald program. By 1932, 813 schools had been built in rural communities across the state. With its 633 schools, Mississippi had the second largest campaign, and Texas, with 527 schools, had the third largest Rosenwald program (Hanchett 1987: 11).

In North Carolina, all but seven of the 100 counties constructed schools through the Rosenwald Foundation. Most were built in the tobacco counties of the northern Coastal Plain or in the cotton belt of the southern Piedmont (particularly Mecklenburg and Anson counties), where the African American populations were the highest. As one of the leading agricultural producers in the state, Mecklenburg County had a large rural population, which in the 1920s and 1930s encompassed a black population of 12,000 or 30 per cent of the total rural population (Hanchett 1987: 15). Between 1918 and 1927, twenty-six Rosenwald schools were built in Mecklenburg County, all of which conformed to the one to four room designs and frame construction prescribed by the Rosenwald Foundation. Many local Rosenwald schools actually served eight grades in four rooms; the teacher would instruct one grade while the other studied (Interviews with former McClintock School students). Of the twenty-six Rosenwald schools built in Mecklenburg County, the oldest surviving example is Rockwell School in the Newell community, and the largest is McClintock School in Steele Creek township. Only Billingsville school and the Rosenwald school in the depot town of Matthews were given brick veneers.

After 1920, the Rosenwald Foundation refocused their efforts away from construction to broader programmatic concerns. At the same time, North Carolina began an ambitious school consolidation campaign in an effort to systematize and better administer the emerging network of public schools. The consolidation process was slow, with further delays incurred during the depression and World War II, and full school consolidation was not achieved until the 1950s. In Mecklenburg County, fourteen school districts were created, with a union school served by smaller, feeder schools. Four black union schools were built in 1937, and by the post-World War II period, most rural schools were closed as better transportation permitted consolidating even far-flung rural schools into fewer, but larger campuses. The earliest casualties were the small one and two teacher schools, but five Rosenwald schools (Rockwell, Matthews, Paw Creek-Hoskins, Woodland, and Billingsville) remained in operation into the 1950s. Closed schools were usually sold and converted to other uses. In 1949, Billingsville became the first county school incorporated into the Charlotte school system after the community of Grier Heights was annexed to

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**Billingsville School
Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, N.C.**

Charlotte. Once a rural community, Grier Heights, by the late 1940s, lay in the path of southeastern suburban growth, and with surrounding development, the community was brought into the city.

At the present, there are ten Rosenwald schools remaining in Mecklenburg County, but Billingsville School is only one of three which survives intact. Through the 1950s, Billingsville School was operated as a combined elementary and junior high facility, and construction during this period (in 1952 and 1957) expanded the Billingsville campus, but did not alter the 1927 building or its immediate setting. Additional acreage was purchased, contiguous on the west with the initial three acre tract, and separate buildings, housing classroom buildings, a cafeteria, an office, and a library, were built. Further expansion occurred between the 1960s and 1980s that enlarged the cafeteria as well as adding other classrooms and an auditorium. Currently, the campus includes seven buildings.

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Section number 9. Page 1

Billingsville School
Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, N.C.

9. Bibliographic References

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Billingsville Elementary School history. Records of the Billingsville Elementary School, Charlotte, North Carolina.

Bishir, Catherine. *North Carolina Architecture*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990.

Blythe, LeGette and Charles Raven Brockmann. *Hornets' Nest: The Story of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County*. Charlotte: McNally of Charlotte, 1961.

Hanchett, Thomas W. *Rosenwald Schools in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina: A History*. Records of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, 1987.

Hanchett, Thomas W. "The Rosenwald Schools in North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review* LXV, no. 4 (October 1988).

Hendricks, Wanda. *Rosenwald Schools in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina: A History*. Records of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, 1986.

Huitt, Bobbie, staff of Billingsville Elementary School. Interview with Frances Alexander, May 1994.

"McClintock School," *Charlotte Observer*, n.d. Vertical files, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Library.

McClintock Rosenwald School and Newell Rosenwald School. Survey and Research Report, 2 March 1987. Records of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission.

Perry, Darrell, member of Grier Heights Economic Foundation, Inc. Interview with Frances Alexander, 3 May 1994.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Company. *Charlotte, North Carolina*. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1929, 1953.

Wallace, George A., president, Grier Heights Economic Foundation, Inc. Interview with Frances Alexander, 8 May 1994.

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10. Page 1

Billingsville School
Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, N.C.

10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

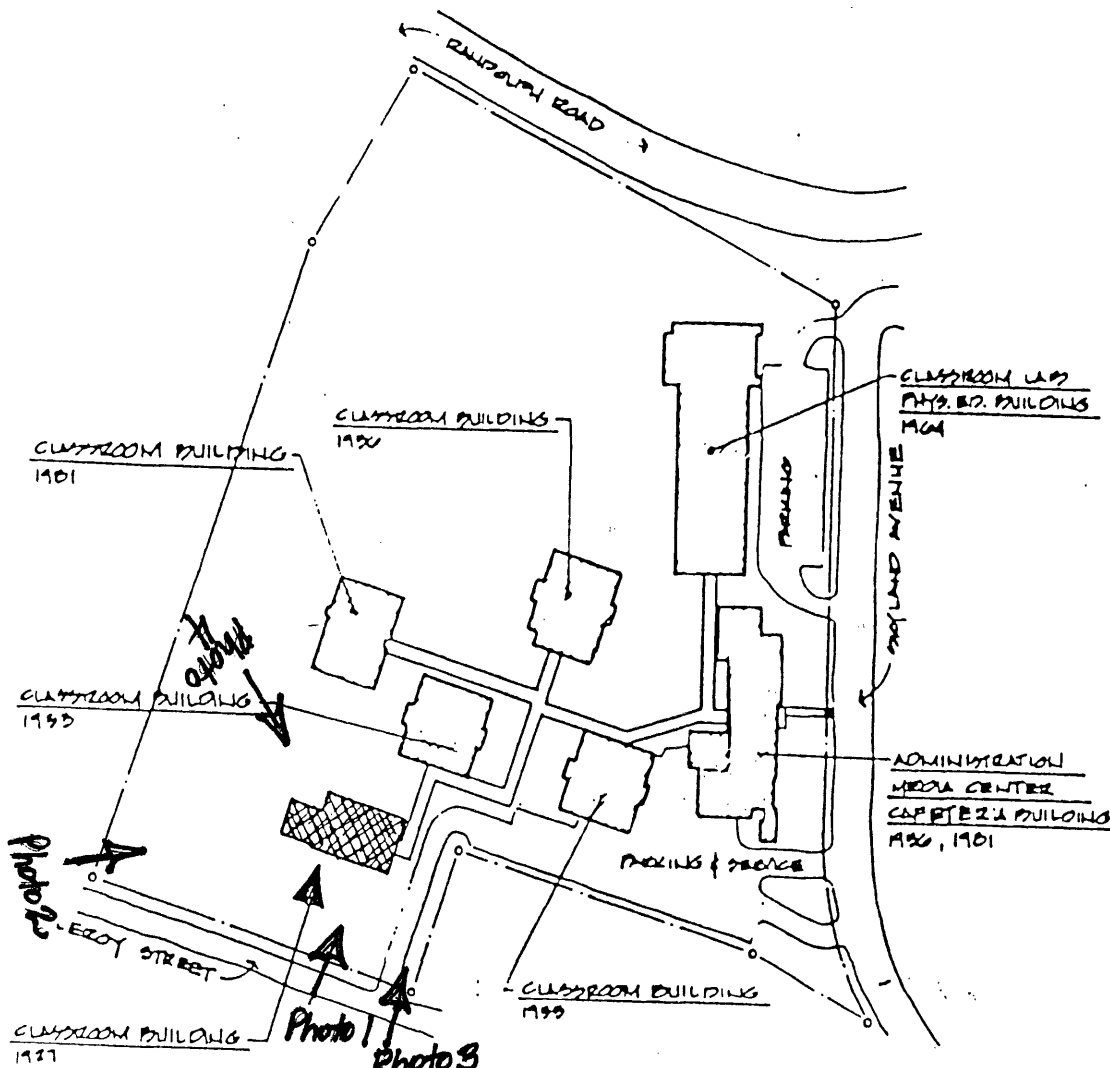
The nominated property consists of approximately three acres of land which is part of a larger 7.9 acre school tract (Mecklenburg County Tax Parcel No. 157-038-08). The nominated parcel is defined by adjacent properties to the north and south and Leroy Street to the east. On the rear (west) side of the building, the nominated boundary encompasses the setting for the original building, but excludes the modern campus. The boundary cuts through the open walkway erected to connect the older building with the new facilities. The National Register boundaries are shown on the enclosed Mecklenburg County, North Carolina tax map.

Boundary Justification

The nominated tract encompasses the 1927 Billingsville School and its tree-shaded schoolyard setting, but excludes the modern campus which extends to the rear of the original school building. The boundary encompasses approximately three acres of land, the original acreage acquired in 1927 for the school.

Site Plan

Billingsville School
3100 Leroy Street
Charlotte, North Carolina



Billingsville Construction and Alteration Dates

Key to Photographs

Source: Billingsville Elementary School

BK. 155

RANDOLPH RD.

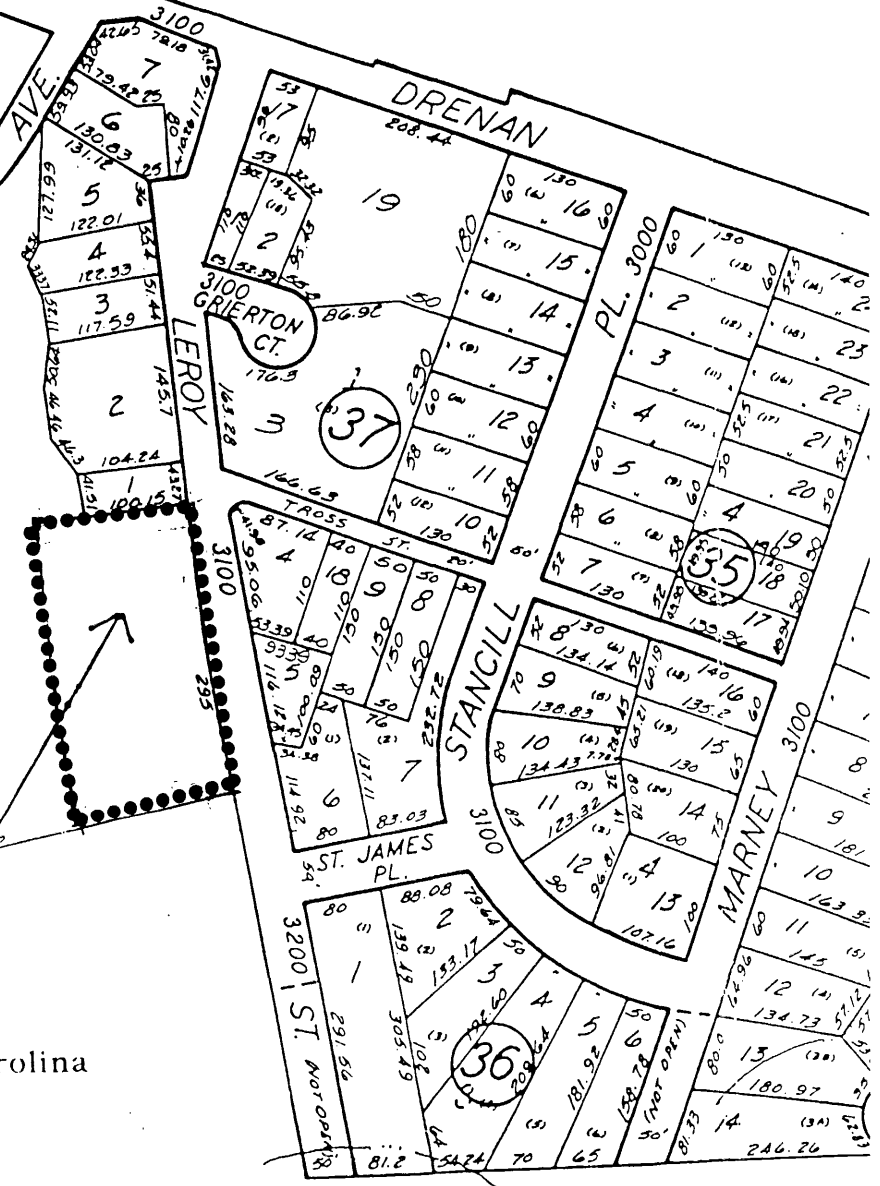
SKYLAND

SCHOOL

7.9 AC±

(38)

Billingsville School
3100 Leroy Street
Charlotte, North Carolina



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Billingsville School
Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, N.C.

The information listed in items 1-5 pertains to all views for this property.

1. Billingsville School
2. 3100 Leroy Street, Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina
3. Mattson, Alexander and Associates, Inc.
4. December 1998
5. Negatives-N.C. Historic Preservation Office

Photo No. 1	Facade (East Elevation), Looking West
Photo No. 2	Facade, South Elevation, and Addition, Looking Northwest
Photo No. 3	North Elevation, Driveway, and Covered Walkway to Modern School, Looking West
Photo No. 4	Rear (West) Elevation, South Elevation, and Addition, Looking Northeast
Photo No. 5	Interior, Classroom in Northwest Corner of School
Photo No. 6	Interior, Corridor, Looking North