

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 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 Rutherfordton-Spindale Central High School

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number Northwest corner of the junction of the Charlotte Road (Business 74) and Bybass 74. N/A not for publication

city or town Rutherfordton N/A vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Rutherford code 161 zip code 28139

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.)

William S. Price, Jr. 12-21-92
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 certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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:)	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

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	
2		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
2		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)

Education/school

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Classical Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Brick

roof Asphalt

other Wood

Narrative Description

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

(See continuation sheet)

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.

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 # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Education

Architecture

Period of Significance

1924-1939

Significant Dates

1924

1925

1938

1939

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

White, Hugh - architect

Breeze, V. W. - architect

Palmer-Spivey Construction Co.

C. M. Morrison Construction Co.

~~Draper, Earle Sumner - landscape architect~~

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

Rutherfordton-Spindale Central High School
Name of Property

Rutherford County, North Carolina
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property app. eight acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

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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 Davyd Foard Hood

organization _____ date 1 September 1992

street & number Isinglass, 6907 Old Shelby Road telephone 704/462-4331

city or town Vale state NC zip code 28168

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 _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

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.

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Rutherfordton–Spindale Central High School, Rutherford County, North Carolina

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Architectural Description

As seen in a documentary photograph taken shortly after the school was completed, the Rutherfordton–Spindale Central High School held a commanding presence at the crest of a hill about midway between the towns of Rutherfordton and Spindale. It stood, and continues to stand, on the north side of the Charlotte Road (then US 74 and now Business 74). Motorists approaching the school—and the town of Rutherfordton—from the east must have been impressed by the great mass of the building crowning the horizon. Designed by Hugh White and erected on an L-shaped plan with a central entrance pavilion, it was so situated that the paired wings (ells) of the building, with their broad southeast and southwest facades, gave the impression of a structure of enormous size. This monumentality and even the height of the hill were enhanced and exaggerated by the work of the landscape architect, Earle Sumner Draper. Instead of laying out a simple straight path from the Charlotte Road up the hill to the school, Draper placed a great, diverting curve at the beginning of the drive, before its upward climb. Travelers, students, and townspeople approaching on US 74 saw the school rising above the tree tops with its drive exiting from the public road and carrying to the northeast in a sweep. On the driveway and coming out of this part circle, they again saw the school ahead and slightly off-axis with the side wings stretching to the northeast and northwest away from the entrance pavilion. In short, both the architect and the landscape architect worked in parallel means toward the same end—to create a handsome monument embodying the pride of the newly consolidated school district.

General Description

As noted before, the school is a three-story masonry building following an L-shaped plan with the entrance in a pavilion at the outside corner of the "L." The building as it appears today is largely the same as completed in 1925. A fire in 1938 damaged only the interior of the classroom wing; the classrooms were rebuilt and refurbished within the existing exterior walls. The building is encircled by an asphalt driveway and the companion Vocational Education Building stands to the north of the main school building and on the north side of the driveway.

The walls of the Rutherfordton–Spindale Central High School are of red brick laid up in common bond and relieved by inset string courses and paneled brickwork which, respectively, mark divisions between floors and decorate large blind sections of the elevations. The principal frieze band carries around the building across the top of the first-story windows and has the appearance of being the top of a water table, thereby making the ground story appear to be the foundation of the building. The brick work of the frieze band is made up of soldier and end courses arranged in symmetrical fashion with accents of cast stone. There are ornamental square-in-elevation devices above the single windows and the center window of the trios. In the frieze band of the cornice, there are square-in-elevation devices of a different design.

The various elevations of the building are arranged in a symmetrical fashion with the size and scale of the window openings suggesting the hierarchy of spaces inside the building which they illuminate. The dominant window type is the rectangular opening holding a trio of six-over-six or four-over-four sash windows. The northwest wing which houses classrooms on all three floors are lined with three tiers of such windows which, in pairs, illuminate the classrooms. The northeast wing contains the gymnasium

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and auditorium which occupy the three above-ground stories and a basement level. The gymnasium and attendant sports facilities occupy the basement and ground story; the main arena is two stories in height and is illuminated by windows set in the exterior ground-level elevation. Directly above there are tall vertical openings which originally held multi-pane windows illuminating the two-level auditorium; these openings were closed up in the early 1970's and covered over with stucco, creating tall inset panels.

The roofline of the school is crowned by a cornice featuring paired applied moldings which enframe a frieze band of ornamental brickwork. This cornice serves as the base of the parapet wall which is continuous around the entire building and is topped by a terra cotta tile coping. The parapet forming the top of the entrance pavilion swells upward to form a segmental arch. Originally, there were like parapet features positioned at the front outside edges of the two wings but these were removed at some unknown time and today the coping of the parapet is otherwise level.

The entrance pavilion faces south, slightly off a true axis, and is the focus of the composition. Here a short flight of steps rises to the stoop; a towering arch-headed frontispiece contains the main entrance. It holds paired modern doors below a blind transom. The recessed door opening is flanked by Tuscan columns which rise to support the entablature forming the base of the arch-headed tympanum. The face of the tympanum is blind and fitted with a bull's eye motive. The frontispiece occupies the ground and first-story levels of the pavilion and is flanked by small single window openings at each level. They contain four-over-four sash and are fitted with cast-stone sills as are all the window openings. The window lintels here and throughout the school feature either end or soldier courses. The second story—third level—of the entrance pavilion has single window openings, holding four-over-four sash, flanking a trio of six-over-six sash windows in the center. The parapet is enhanced with square-in-elevation panels at the outer edges and a tall vertical cast-stone panel in its center that may have been intended to hold the school monogram.

Classroom Wing

The classroom wing of the school has a symmetrical arrangement of window openings on its principal southwest face: this elevation is enframed by the shallow offset projection of the entrance pavilion at its south end and a shallow ell at its west end. On each of the three levels here there are eight large window openings. The ground story openings contain trios of four-over-four sash windows. The wall surface of the first and second stories of this elevation, between the frieze band water table and the cornice, is recessed in a panel-like arrangement defined, per bay, by vertical pilasters that rise flush from the ground story elevation. The window openings of these two levels hold trios of six-over-six sash windows.

The southwest face of the projecting ell has a symmetrical pattern of fenestration at each level consisting of single windows flanking larger rectangular openings holding trios of windows. These single windows hold six-over-six sash at each level whereas the wider center bay follows the pre-established formula of four-over-four sash on the ground story and six-over-six on the first and second stories. The elevation of the northwest end of the classroom wing is also symmetrically designed. Here there are three bays per story, clustered in the center third of the elevation. On ground level the center bay holds

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paired doors which open into the principal, center hall carrying the full length of the classroom wing. Above this doorway, on the first and second stories, there are openings holding trios of four-over-four sash windows; they illuminate the shallow landings at the northwest end of the principal corridors which link those halls with the offset stairwell vertically linking all three floors of the school. The paired four-over-four sash windows in the tier of bays to the left (north) of center bays illuminate the stairwell. The bays to the right (south) of the center bays originally illuminated the girls' toilets on all three floors; these openings have been closed up with inexpensive sheet siding and fitted with exhaust fans.

On the rear northeast elevation of the classroom wing, there is a pendant projecting ell at its north end: its fenestration is identical to that on the face of the ell on the southwest elevation. The main part of the wing's northeast elevation is six bays wide and except for minor variance each bay contains an opening holding a trio of four-over-four sash windows. The tier of bays on the extreme left (east) end are closed up with inexpensive sheet siding and fitted with exhaust fans: they originally illuminated the boys' toilets. At the base of the elevation and parallel with it, there is a poured cement well with steps leading down to an entrance into the basement level boiler room.

Gymnasium/Auditorium Wing

The fenestration and organization of the elevations of the gymnasium/auditorium wing are less symmetrical in the arrangement of elements than on the classroom wing. It is best at this point to refer to the enclosed floor plans of the school which accompany this nomination. Here it can be seen that behind the southern end of the gymnasium/auditorium's southeast elevation there are shallow landings and a pendant stairwell connecting the first and second stories, like those on the west end of the classroom wing. The passages are open to the elements and protected by metal railings and later mesh screening. The stairwell is illuminated by paired four-over-four sash at both levels. The ground floor here has two windows holding six-over-six sash.

The remainder—and larger part—of the southeast elevation of this wing projects forward about two feet. At the ground level there are three symmetrical openings, each holding four-over-four sash windows. They are partially below grade and fitted with a continuous poured cement well protected by pipe-like railings. The first and second story levels of the elevation are treated as one and have three tall vertical, recessed stucco-faced panels. These openings originally held multi-pane windows illuminating the auditorium. The east end of the southeast elevation is largely blind except for a door which opens from the auditorium onto a tall brick stoop. The blind face of the elevation is ornamented with a three-part vertical arrangement of paneled brickwork formed by stretcher and soldier courses with cast stone corner blocks. There is a small window in the upper near-center of the center panel. Originally, there was a crested rise in the parapet here above the wider center panel.

Generally, the pendant northwest elevation of the gymnasium/auditorium wing follows the same format with a like appearance. The only significant exception is that here, above the door from the auditorium, there is the original cast iron light fixture which held a pendant globe.

The northeast end of the gymnasium/auditorium wing has a symmetrical arrangement of doors and windows on each story. The outer bays of the six-bay-wide ground story hold modern metal doors which

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open into stairwells servicing the boys' and girls' locker rooms; there are shallow poured cement stoops at each door. The four center bays hold six-over-six sash with figured glass and illuminate the dressing rooms on the ground story. Below these windows there are pendant windows, partially below grade, with poured cement wells which illuminate the basement level dressing rooms. On the first and second story levels, the center half of the elevation is blind. On the first story there are single windows—one on each side—illuminating dressing rooms. On the second story there are two windows per side which, likewise, illuminate dressing rooms.

Interior Description

The interior finish of the Rutherfordton-Spindale Central High School dates from two periods of construction. The plan and finish of the gymnasium/auditorium wing is original to the 1924-1925 building. It is of a higher quality and a greater visual interest than the plan and finish of the classroom wing, which was rebuilt after the 1938 fire. Even with the assistance of a Federal grant, the rooms were rebuilt inside the exterior walls in a very plain fashion.

As suggested on the exterior of the building, the interior plan of the school is somewhat more complex than the designation of the northeast and northwest wings as the gymnasium/auditorium and classroom wings, respectively, indicate. The major portions of each wing are indeed given to those functions. However, where these two wings conjoin, inside the areas fronted by the entrance pavilion, there is a mix of spaces that includes the offices, private toilets, entrances to both the main and balcony levels of the gymnasium and the auditorium, storage rooms, two staircases, classrooms, and some other service and storage areas. The floor plans which accompany this nomination provide a clear and generally accurate representation of the building except for some minor partitions which have been added in recent years, principally in the former cafeteria and library. The only significant omission is the two-level staircase in the vestibule immediately inside the front door. Here flights of steps descend to the ground story of the school: these paired flights flank a wide flight which rises from the front door to the first story. These steps do not appear on the ground story plan, however they do on the first story plan which is somewhat misleading.

On the ground story the vestibule steps lead into an octagonal hall. Here there are entrances into the principal's and the assistant principal's offices. A wide opening on the northwest opens onto the main corridor which runs the length of the classroom wing. The entire northeast side of the hall is taken up by the stair system for the gymnasium. Here, narrow flights of poured cement steps descend to the main arena level of the gymnasium: they flank a wider, short flight of steps which rise up to the former balcony level of the gymnasium. The floors in the hall are poured cement and the walls and ceilings are plastered and painted. The doors and transoms here date mainly from the original construction and the later refitting of the school in 1938-1939. Some few are even later, hollow-core doors of recent date.

The gymnasium is a full two stories in height and occupies the basement and ground floor levels of the southeast wing. The main arena, with its floor at basement level, is a remarkably intact 1920s space with a wood floor, a tall wainscot of beaded tongue and groove ceiling, and plaster walls. There are steel beams across the ceiling which support the sloped floor of the auditorium; the ceiling itself is fitted with large rectangular accoustical tiles. At the basement level of the arena, there are doorways on both the

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southwest and northeast walls: the other two walls are blind. The five doorways on the southwest wall open into the two aforementioned staircases (descending from the ground story), a classroom, and two storage areas. The storage rooms have poured cement floors, exposed, painted brick walls, and five horizontal panel doors opening into the arena. The doors opening onto the staircases feature six glazed panes above two horizontal panels. All four doors are original: the door to the classroom, which has a rubber tile floor, has been lost.

On the northeast wall there are two doors at the outer edges which open onto the stairwells servicing the boys' and girls' locker rooms; these original doors have six glass panes above two horizontal panels. The door on the east side of the wall opens into the stairwell servicing the boys' locker rooms occupying two levels which do not exactly correspond to those of the main building. Inside the door, a short flight of steps rises to the "basement" level locker room which consists of two unequal spaces. The first is the locker room itself, which is divided by a partition wall separating the dressing space from the room holding the open-front lockers made of screen wire on a 2x4 framework. There is an open doorway into the shower room. These rooms have a utilitarian appearance and have poured cement floors and stuccoed or cement walls. From this level a flight of stairs rises to a landing and the boys' toilet contained in the base of the outside stoop on the southeast elevation. A related flight of steps rises to the second locker room suite, directly above the one below, and the door opening onto the rear stoop on the northeast elevation. The girls's locker rooms in the opposite north corner of the wing are arranged largely the same except that they do not retain their original wire cage lockers.

The balcony across the southwest end of the gymnasium is fronted by a railing of round pipes and has a wood floor of stepped levels which descend to the northeast. In the early 1960s, the entire balcony was enclosed, a secondary, level floor was installed, and the space inexpensively partitioned off for storage, photocopying, detention, and other service uses. Portions of the original stepped level and an early paint scheme are visible in the textbook storage closet here.

On the ground story, the pairs of offices for the principal and assistant principal are largely original in their appearance. The doors connecting them with the hall, like those for all the classrooms, are surmounted by four-pane glass transoms that are hinged for ventilation; the surrounds are of plain boards with applied molded backbands. The assistant principal's office has a perimeter wainscot of tongue and groove ceiling below a molded wainscot; it has been partitioned into two rooms. The safe in this office, made by The Schwab Safe Company of Lafayette, Indiana, is lettered with the slogan "Rutherfordton, Ruth & Spindale Consolidated High School." This office and the school principal's office each have a toilet in the small rooms flanking the front entrance. The principal's office retains its original, handsome wall-hung oak case clock manufactured by The Standard Electric Time Company.

The finish of the corridor carrying the length of the ground floor of the classroom wing is the same as that in the octagonal hall: it has poured cement floors and plaster walls and ceilings. Except for minor fittings, the removal of the cafeteria/kitchen equipment, and the partitioning and refitting of those spaces, the rooms and classrooms on the ground story remain as rebuilt in 1938-1939. The doorways opening into the classrooms and toilets are fitted with four-pane transoms; most of the original 1939 doors, featuring six panes above a single panel, remain; however, all the doors into the boys' and girls' toilets were taken down at some point in the past. Some few other doors have been replaced.

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Although there have been some additional chalkboards and poster/bulletin boards installed in the classrooms, most of them are original to the 1939 rebuilding and retain their original fittings. There are wall-mounted and enframed blackboards, usually two or more to a classroom, fitted with molded chalk trays. Their size varies from classroom to classroom. The original wall-mounted bulletin boards are similarly framed. The tall windows are fitted with Venetian blinds. The classrooms have oak floors, simple molded-top baseboards, and plaster walls and ceilings. The door surrounds, as in the hall, are made of plain boards with a molded applied backband. In the main part of the classroom wing on the ground floor—excluding the northwest end ell—there are three original classrooms, a boys' toilet, and a classroom and guidance offices formed from the former cafeteria.

Each level of the ell on the northwest end of the classroom wing follows the same plan. Per story, it contains two classrooms reached by short halls from the main corridor, a girls' toilet, the end of the main corridor, and a landing connecting the main corridor with a stairwell which is the only one in the building connecting all three stories. Connecting the corridor with the landing is a doorway fitted with double leaf doors surmounted by an eight-pane transom. The doors have nine glazed panes above large molded panels.

The center flight of the staircase in the front vestibule, behind the school's front door, rises to the first story of the school and a generally octagonal hall. Here the principal feature is the series of three double-leaf doors in the northeast wall which open onto the main floor of the auditorium. The wood doors feature six glazed panes above a solid panel. The interior of the auditorium has a sloped oak floor, painted plaster walls with a molded baseboard and a chair rail at shoulder height, and a dropped ceiling fitted with rectangular acoustical tiles in a metal framework. The auditorium follows a double aisle plan with three tiers of seating. The balcony is supported by a pair of piers rising from paneled bases. The apron front of the balcony is sheathed; a Standard Electric Time Company clock is centered in the balcony face.

The open stage is centered on the northwest end of the auditorium and has a bow-front floor which extends slightly forward, to the audience. At each end of the stage there are four steps, in a tight quarter-circle turn, which rise to the floor of the stage. Its large rectangular opening is enframed with plaster moldings featuring acanthus leaves with bell flowers and swags. The concave reveal of the opening is fitted with a panel enframed with a raised molding of laurel leaves. To either side of the stage there are single vertical panel doors which open into shallow passages. These passages, in turn, open onto the elevated stoops on the southeast and northwest sides of the wing. In each passage a short flight of four steps rises to the stage level and then connects with individual dressing rooms and companion storage closets on either side of the stage.

In addition to the three doors servicing the auditorium, the octagonal hall on the first story contains a door opening into the former library space and a passage opening—on the east—onto the landing adjoining the staircase connecting the first and second stories. There is likewise a broad opening on the northwest into the corridor which extends the length of the classroom block. The arrangement of classrooms here is similar to that on the ground floor. The space formerly occupied by the library has been divided into two large classrooms by a partially glazed partition wall.

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A comparison of the floor plans for the three stories of the building shows that the divisions of space become increasingly less complex from the ground floor upwards. The plan of the second story—third level of the building—is quite simple. The second story can be reached only by the two staircases which are offset from the principal corridor carrying the length of the classroom wing. The nine classrooms on this level appear to be retained largely undisturbed in their appearance and fittings from the 1939 rebuilding.

Through doors fitted with nine panes above single panels, there are two entrance ramps into the balcony of the auditorium. These are flanked by vertically sheathed standards. The side-walls of the balcony are sheathed with a wainscot of tongue and groove ceiling. The inner face of the apron, across the front of the balcony, is also sheathed with tongue and groove ceiling; it is topped by a railing of round pipe. The floor of the balcony is made up of eleven graduated levels.

Vocational Education Building

The Vocational Education Building is a one-story brick building, rectangular in plan, and covered with a hipped roof of asphalt shingles. It stands behind and north of the main school building and on the north side of an asphalt driveway which completely encircles the main building. Its elevated site is marked by a low poured cement retaining wall, across its southeast front elevation, which features inset steps on axis with the two principal entrances to the building. The brick is laid up in an unusual bond consisting of three courses of common bond, then a course featuring alternating stretcher and header brick. The walls rise straight from the ground to a shallow wood frieze band which encircles the building and forms the base of a simply-molded cornice. On the southeast face of the roof, there are two louvered, wood ventilators in the form of shallow gables.

The plan of the building departs from a true rectangle on the symmetrical twelve-bay southeast front elevation where there are shallow eaves projecting forward at each end. These eaves are two bays wide and feature nine-over-nine sash windows in each bay. This window type—tall, paired nine-over-nine sash divided by a vertical stile and set in a large opening—is the predominant window on the building. The window sills are simple end courses of brick and the wood window surrounds are simply molded; the top of the openings are flush with the frieze band. The main part of the facade is eight bays wide. At each end of this recessed center section are arch-headed openings protecting recessed entrances. Here there are paired doors below a twelve-pane transom. The doors each have nine panes of glass above two vertical panels. The six center bays are symmetrically positioned and hold windows of the aforementioned type.

The northeast side elevation of the building is five bays wide with symmetrically placed openings holding paired nine-over-nine sash windows. The rear elevation is also twelve bays wide. In the center of the elevation, there is a shallow hipped roof porch with a poured cement floor and square-in-plan posts. It shelters individual entrances into the two separate halves of the building. These doors feature nine glazed panes above two vertical panels. The other ten bays have a generally symmetrical arrangement but their individual openings vary in size. They contain: paired nine-over-nine sash; single twelve-over-twelve sash with figured glass, six-over-six sash with figured glass; and eight-over-eight sash. Near the north end there is a large ground-level opening fitted with paired wood doors. It has low poured cement ramps and was apparently used to move machinery into and out of the building.

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The southwest side elevation is four bays wide and has window openings holding: paired nine-over-nine sash; twelve-over-eight sash; and eight-over-eight sash windows.

The building was designed to house the home economics department for girls and the vocational education department for boys. The interior is evenly divided between these two departments; the two halves do not communicate. The interior finish of the building remains almost completely intact. It includes oak floors and plaster walls rising from a molded-top baseboard. The original ceilings are now hidden by dropped ceilings comprised of metal frames holding rectangular accoustical panels. The door and window surrounds are simply molded. The wood doors have a five, horizontal panel arrangement. The panels are all blind except for the second one down from the top which is glazed. These doors are surmounted by a three-pane transom. The boys' vocational education department consists of four large classrooms, two on either side of a center passage behind the front entrance. It occupies the northeast half of the building. The classrooms retain their original chalk boards with trays and bulletin boards. The hall terminates at the north end with a small restroom which retains its terra cotta tile floor. In the pendant southwest end of the building, there is a like center passage. On its northeast side there are two equal-sized classrooms. On the southwest side there is a large home economics lab fitted with later wood cabinets and kitchen appliances. The rear, northwest corner of this side of the building includes a work room, an office, and a toilet.

The Landscape

It is unclear at present exactly what portions of the existing designed landscape program that forms the setting of the Rutherfordton–Spindale Central High School can be attributed to the work of Earle Sumner Draper in 1925. The one positive attribution is the course of the entrance drive up to the hill top from the Charlotte Road. There are significant foundation plantings along two elevations of the school that appear to date to the rebuilding in 1938–1939 or somewhat later. These occur on the southwest face of the classroom block and the northeast end of the gymnasium/ auditorium wing. They are of roughly the same age and it is uncertain whether they represent a ca. 1939 replanting of the scheme designed and installed by Draper in 1925 or are the work, then or later, of a now unknown designer or nurseryman. The fact that the same plant materials, including abelia, nandina, and hollies, are used as the foundation planting for the new Vocational Building erected in 1939 might suggest that everything dates to 1939; however, landscape architects and nurserymen would likely have used the same stock in 1939 as they would have in 1925, or later in the 1940s. Also to be taken into account is the documentary photograph of the school, probably taken in the early 1940s, which shows tall evergreen trees and very low shrubs.

Of the existing foundation plantings the scheme which remains the most intact is the one along the base of the southwest facade of the classroom wing. Here there is a continuous planting of abelia grandiflora in clusters of three shrubs that is anchored by plantings of dogwood at each end. The transition between the south end of this elevation and the entrance pavilion is further marked by plantings of nandina and holly. At the opposite west end there is a single tall hemlock which masks the blind edge of the projecting ell. The southwest face of the ell is planted with a continuous juniper hedge.

The second most intact planting scheme is the row of spirea planted along the northeast end of the gymnasium/auditorium wing; however, these shrubs appear to be less healthy and less cared for than the

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forementioned abelia. There is a single shrub evergreen standing beside the stoop opening onto the stairwell for the boys' locker rooms. On the northwest side of this wing there is a lone, large Japanese quince near the base of the stoop rising up to the auditorium entrance. The other plantings of hollies here and along the northeast elevation of the classroom wing are of an indiscriminate nature as are modern plantings along the southeast elevation of the gymnasium/auditorium wing.

Integrity Assessment

The presence and appearance of the Rutherfordton-Spindale Central High School and the Vocational Education Building, its companion since 1939, remained largely unchanged into the mid-1950s. In 1956-1957, a cafeteria, the first of a series of four modern, flat-roof buildings, was erected to the northeast of the school. Upon its completion the former cafeteria on the ground story of the school was partitioned to form classrooms. Three years after the completion of the cafeteria, a bond referendum passed which supported the construction of a much larger building. It was completed in the early 1960s and housed a new gymnasium, sports facilities, vocational shop, and science classrooms and laboratories on the third floor. It was built to the north of the main school plant and to the west of the cafeteria. At the same time a small, inobtrusive one-story brick music building was erected to the southeast of the school. A 5,000 seat football stadium was erected to the north of the new gymnasium and completed in 1964. In 1967, a new library and classroom building was erected to the west of the 1925 building. In effect, the 1925 Rutherfordton-Spindale Central High School and the 1939 Vocational Education Building are flanked on three sides by modernistic brick buildings erected in the short period from 1956 to 1967.

At the same time, the trees forming the woodland at the base of the hill have grown up and now tower above the school building, largely concealing it from view and from its purview across the countryside. There is a tunnel sight-line formed by the path of the entrance drive that now carries the eye of the motorist from the busy commercial thoroughfare and the cluttered intersection of Business 74 and Bypass 74 but a hundred feet or so to the southeast.

Given the fact that the building was to be replaced with the new school which opened in August, 1992, and may well have been torn down, little basic maintenance has been carried out on the building for several years. The essential fabric of the building is structurally sound; however, the necessary coats of paint, minor carpentry, and general stewardship that would have kept it in the best order have been neglected. Despite that, and the fact that the main building and the Vocational Education Building are encircled by later brick educational buildings, both buildings retain their essential integrity of form within the context of later buildings of shared educational purpose.

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Summary

The Rutherfordton–Spindale Central High School, located at the peak of a knoll nearly midway between the cities of Rutherfordton and Spindale, is a landmark in the social and cultural life of these communities and important in the architectural and educational history of Rutherfordton and Spindale. The initiative to erect the building came about in the early 1920s when crowded conditions in the public schools of Rutherfordton, Spindale and Ruth (first known as Hampton) encouraged the local officials to consider the concept of a consolidated high school. Consolidation was an important part of the modernization of North Carolina's public schools in the early twentieth century, and the construction of this building was an important confirmation of that effort on the local level. Influenced by the handsome appearance of the Gastonia High School, then under construction, the Board of Education hired its architect, Hugh Edward White, and his firm of White, Streeter & Chamberlain to design the new consolidated high school for Rutherfordton, Spindale, and Hampton. The Palmer–Spivey Construction Company of Charlotte completed construction of the school in 1925.

The Rutherfordton–Spindale Central High School, erected at a cost of about \$285,000, opened for use on 14 September 1925 and served as the regional high school until a fire destroyed the interior of the west wing on 14 April 1938. The Board of Education hired V. W. Breeze of Shelby, North Carolina, to design the refitting of classrooms, library and cafeteria within the existing walls. The repairs were completed with a grant from the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works and the school re-opened for the 1939–1940 school year. The Rutherfordton–Spindale Central High School served as the high school for those communities and Ruth from 1939 until its last senior class was graduated on 1 June 1992. An earlier decision by the local board of education to demolish the building has been reversed and a middle school will occupy the campus.

The Rutherfordton–Spindale Central High School survives and continues to represent its important role in the modernization of public education in Rutherford County in the 1920s. As one of only three known school buildings designed by Hugh Edward White (1869–1939) and the firm of White, Streeter & Chamberlain, the school is an important representative of their oeuvre. The school is also important as the location of one of the few gymnasiums of the period to survive in North Carolina to the present largely intact. With its tall sheathed wainscot, banks of windows on the north and south walls, and a stepped viewing balcony on the west (now partitioned off for storage), it and its attendant dressing rooms are the most historically significant surviving interior spaces in the building.

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Historical Background

In a special article published in *The Rutherford County News* on 14 February 1929, Captain B. L. Smith, the superintendent of the Rutherfordton-Spindale-Ruth School District, recounted the history of education in Rutherford County in the 20th century.

Rutherford County has probably made greater progress within the past ten years than any county in North Carolina. To be sure there was more room for improvement than was to be found in most other counties in the State. The changes have been so great that it is hard for even those in closest touch with the schools to realize the extent of the transformation.

In 1918-19 there were only two brick school buildings in use: namely, the Rutherfordton and the Forest City. The latter was in unspeakable condition and has since been abandoned for school purposes. The total school property was valued at \$57,000.

Today we have twenty-four modern brick buildings housing a large majority of the pupils of the county. With the exception of the Rutherfordton building, which has been reconditioned, every one has been built since 1918-19.

The education revival, started with the floating of a \$50,000 bond issue in Forest City, has brought this county to the rank of seventh among the counties of the State. The valuation of school property has mounted to \$1,312,782.¹

In its day, the Rutherfordton-Spindale Central High School, erected in 1924-1925, was acknowledged as the principal building in this constellation of twenty-four brick school buildings in Rutherford County. It is within this context of tremendous need and extraordinarily dramatic improvement that plans were laid for the construction of the school, that the building was erected, and in which it opened for use on Monday, 14 September 1925.

The Rutherfordton newspaper, *The Sun*, published an editorial endorsing the concept of a consolidated high school on 12 April 1923.

The movement to secure an accredited high school for this section, say Rutherford Township, deserves the hearty support of all who are interested in higher education. Something must be done. It is time for action. If we pull together a great high school can be established within the reach of all the boys and girls of this section. Our present facilities are inadequate. The four schools in mind are overflowing now.

At least a 24-room building should be erected and so arranged that it can be added to, as the community grows. It should cost from \$150,000 to \$200,000. But what is that compared to the wealth and need of the children in our section. It needs the latest and best equipment, such as laboratories, library, athletic equipment and playgrounds. Nothing but a good and modern building will do.

These two paragraphs were part of a three-paragraph editorial that appeared on the eve of a public meeting on the issue scheduled for Friday, 13 April 1923.

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The Sun published an account of the meeting in their next weekly edition, on 19 April 1923, under the headline "Mass Meeting Favors School."

The mass meeting Friday night at the court house in the interest of the new proposed consolidated high school for this section was attended by representative citizens from Spindale and Rutherfordton. It was a very enthusiastic meeting. Owing to the rains the audience was not very large.

Attorney F. D. Hamrick was chairman. Prof. W. R. Hill stated the purpose of the meeting and explained details and steps necessary to go about securing the much desired school.

Short and enthusiastic talks were made by Messrs. S. E. Elmore, O. C. Erwin, M. L. Edwards, C. D. Geer, K. S. Tanner, F. D. Hamrick and others.

A committee composed of Messrs. S. E. Elmore, K. S. Tanner, M. L. Justice, M. L. Edwards, W. R. Hill, C. F. Geer, and F. D. Hamrick was appointed to work out all details, such as location, boundaries, levy, petition, etc., and to get the school project under way as soon as possible.

County-wide discussion on the topic continued through the summer and autumn of 1923. On 29 November 1923, an editorial endorsing the larger concept of "School Consolidation" appeared in *The Sun* citing the many advantages which accrued to the student and the community through the creation of fewer, finer, and better equipped schools.

At its meeting on 3 December 1923, the Board of Education of Rutherford County met, reviewed and endorsed a petition from the Rutherfordton–Spindale and Hampton School District, and sent it on to the county Board of Commissioners. The petition called for the creation of a special school taxing district to be comprised of the Rutherfordton, Spindale and Hampton school districts. It also called upon the commissioners "to order an election under article 18 of the public school law of North Carolina, Codification 1923, to ascertain the will of the people, whether there shall be levied in said special school taxing district a special annual tax of not more than 50 cents on the hundred dollars worth of property to equalize school advantages in said special school taxing district and to supplement the school fund of said district in case such tax is voted."

The Board of Education's action was reported on the front page of *The Sun* on 6 December 1923 under the headline of "New Consolidated High School Soon." The election was scheduled for 26 January 1924 with voting at three polling places, one in each of the three communities making up the proposed special school taxing district. It was determined to hold a new registration for voters in the three districts between 14 December 1923 and 12 January 1924.

There will be two elections the same day conducted by the same officials. One to authorize \$200,000.00 worth of bonds to erect, enlarge, alter and equip school buildings and purchase sites. The other to decide on a special tax of not more than 50¢ on the \$100 worth of property. This will be used to equalize the school advantages and supplement the school fund.

The Sun, on 27 December 1923, carried "Notice of Special School Bond Election" on its front page: this was the legal notice paid for by the county Board of Commissioners. One of what may well have been a

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number of advertisements urging the citizens of the proposed new school taxing district to vote in the 26 January election appeared in *The Sun* on 3 January 1924. It advised voters as follows:

A New Registration Has Been Ordered for This Election and Nobody Will be Permitted to Vote Who Does not Register for Said Election. On account of the crowded condition of the schools at Rutherfordton, Spindale and Ruth new buildings must be erected at once at each of said points or one large building erected accessible to all three of said towns to accommodate the needs and thereby relieve the congestion in the Elementary Schools. This can be done at a much less cost than building three separate buildings and will furnish opportunity for much more efficient work. Register at once and do not fail to cast your ballot in favor of education without increasing taxes in the school election.

Despite the admonition, citizens had continued questions about the matter of increased taxes and other issues, namely the location of the new building. In a front page article on 10 January, County School Superintendent W. R. Hill responded to these concerns with very specific answers. In answer to the question as to the location of the new consolidated high school, Hill replied, "I wish to say that the school house has been definitely located on the hill above the Seaboard depot and the school authorities have secured an option on ten acres of land there." This tract, being the acreage later acquired from the estate of Solomon Gallert, is probably the site on which the school was constructed. Hill deftly handled the matter of taxes and financing for the new school building and also advised *The Sun's* readers that "There will be one Superintendent elected for all three districts who will have supervision over the three elementary schools and the high school."

The creation of the new consolidated high school was overwhelmingly endorsed as reported in a front page article appearing the *The Sun* on 31 January 1924. "Out of a possible 1500 voters, 527 registered and 435 voted for the bonds, nine voted against them and 83 did not vote, which counted against the proposition."

On 1 January 1924, the Rutherfordton–Spindale Special School Taxing District No. 1–7 (hereinafter cited as "R–SSSTD") had obtained an option on a tract of 15 1/2 acres comprising "a part of the Susan S. Harris lands" adjoining the "Hodge Hotel place" from Solomon Gallert. After Gallert's death, the property was deeded to W. C. McRorie, trustee of the R–SSSTD, in June 1924.

Through a series of four deeds, dated between 12 July and 28 July 1924, the remaining acreage comprising the original school site was acquired. On 12 July, Daisy Hodge Martin, the executrix of the estate of Joseph Hodge, conveyed the "Joseph Hodge Hotel property near the S. A. L. Station" to C. L. Miller, trustee of the R–SSSTD. A second deed for the three-quarters of an acre tract, sold for \$4,250, was made to secure the property by Hodge's widow Adline Hodge on 15 July. On 22 July, G. W. and Amice Hodge deeded a tract adjoining the Hodge Hotel and former Harris lands to the R–SSSTD. The final purchase in July was a tract comprising Lots #44 through #55 of the former Harris lands; this property was acquired for \$1,500 from Fred McBrayer. Additional adjoining property was acquired six months later on 6 February 1925 from Mrs. E. A. Taylor and others. This assembled acreage would remain the school campus until 7 July 1936 when an additional lot of the E. A. Taylor property, "on the North edge of Highway #74," was acquired. "Including and embracing all of said lot lying North of said

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highway and all of the real estate now in the possession of the Board of Education of Rutherford County," this purchase was apparently made when the route of the highway was altered. The school board would not acquire any additional property for the campus until 1951.

On 24 July 1924, *The Sun* informed its readers that the "Plans and specifications are about complete, the bonds have been sold and the contract for the new high school will be let soon." The article announced the above-cited purchases of property, totaling twenty-four acres, and stated "The building will be located on the highest peak between the old Hodge home and the National highway." It continued with a description of the proposed facilities:

There will be ample room for playgrounds. The building will be the latest thing in equipment and convenience. Nothing will be left undone to make it the latest and best. It will be three stories high, of nice brick, fireproof and will contain an auditorium that will seat about 1200 people. It will contain 10 recitation rooms, two study halls, laboratories, offices, domestic science, textile, cooking and manual training rooms, also a cafeteria for hot lunches. The very latest in heat, ventilation, electric signals and equipment will be secured.

Despite the optimism in the above announcement, the contract for the new school was not let until early November. Again, *The Sun* carried the news on its front page under the headline "The Contract is Let for Consolidated High School Bldg."

Palmer-Spivey Construction company of Charlotte was last week awarded the contract to build the new consolidated central high school building for this section. Their figures were the lowest of any bidder being \$127,450. Streeter & Chamberlain, architects of Gastonia drew the plans for the building. It will be located on the crest of the hill near the Seaboard depot.

The Carolina Heating company of Raleigh has the contract for the heating system. Work started last week and is to be finished not later than November 1st, 1925.

On the administrative end, the ten sitting trustees of the "Public Schools of Rutherfordton, Spindale and Ruth" tendered their resignation in a letter to the Board of Education dated 27 January 1925. At its next meeting, on 2 February, the Board of Education appointed the new, replacement school committeemen who would have jurisdiction over the high school and the elementary schools in each of the towns. From the group of ten, K. S. Tanner, S. E. Elmore, and J. C. Hampton were named to the new board; they were joined by J. F. Flack and M. L. Edwards.

The construction of the Rutherfordton-Spindale Central High School, begun in the late fall/early winter of 1924, was completed in the summer of 1925. On 23 July 1925, *The Sun* gave an account of the work on the new building in an article announcing the roster of teachers for the local schools.

The new high school is located upon an eminence that gives a view of the surrounding country—villages, forests, mountains—unsurpassed in beauty by anything in this section. The grounds have been laid out by Dr. Draper, Landscape Architect. Work is now under way upon drives, walks, and athletic field. When the grading and plant are completed, the site will be as attractive as any in the state.

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The building itself is a magnificent building of face brick with limestone trimmings. It contains class rooms, library, study hall, auditorium seating 1100, offices, clinic, toilets, teachers' room, industrial arts department, commercial department, science laboratories, home economics department, gymnasium, locker rooms, shower baths, cafeteria, etc. It will be adequately equipped.

The above article announced that the district's schools would open on Monday, 14 September 1925. A later article in *The Sun*, on 10 September 1925, gave further particulars about the opening of the school sessions at the three elementary schools—Rutherfordton, Ruth, and Spindale—and the high school. After stating that the formal public opening of the high school would be announced soon, it continued:

The building is completed, but it is not certain that the equipment will be entirely installed; therefore, it is thought wise to delay the date on which the public is received. Announcement of the date will be made soon.

Apparently, the installation of the equipment proceeded quickly: the public opening of the "New High School" occurred on Friday, 18 September 1925. *The Sun*, on 24 September, carried an account of the opening ceremonies. Superintendent B. L. Smith presided over the morning's program. M. L. Edwards, chairman of the Board of Education, spoke. Next "Prof. W. R. Hill reviewed the history of the institution. He mentioned the names of those who had been connected with its development and paid tribute to all." At the conclusion, "patrons were invited to inspect the building."

The first senior class of the Rutherfordton-Spindale Senior High School was graduated on 4 June 1926: there were twenty-six in the class. Girls and boys basketball teams competed the opening year as did the school baseball team. Because the athletic field had not been completed in time for the fall season of 1925, football was delayed until fall of 1926. Literary societies were formed as were other special interest associations. The school newspaper, *The Broadcaster*, was published in the fall of 1925. A school yearbook did not appear until the Spring of the second year, in 1927, and it was dedicated to J. F. Flack. That fall, on 30 November, the first student council meeting was held and presided over by superintendent B. L. Smith

Smith remained as head of the Rutherfordton-Spindale School District until 1 July 1929 when he resigned and relocated to Shelby, North Carolina, to become the superintendent of that city's school system. By that time the school had long since become fully operational and in 1929 had a student body of 335. L. E. Spikes, principal of the central high school since 1925, was elevated to the position of district superintendent. He was succeeded as principal by Professor F. W. Jarvis who appears to have remained principal until 1934 when he, in turn, was succeeded by C. A. Denson, Denson, in turn, was promoted to district superintendent in 1936 on Spikes's departure for Burlington, North Carolina: his successor as principal at the high school was Moody Bridges. After one year, 1936-1937, Bridges was succeeded by W. B. Robertson.

During the years of the 1930s, as the Depression wore on, both the student newspaper and yearbook were discontinued; however, a concert band and glee club came into existence in this hard-pressed period. The glee club first performed at the graduation exercises on 14 May 1931.

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Having weathered the worst effects of the Depression, tragedy struck the Rutherfordton-Spindale High School in a totally unexpected way in 1938. On 14 April 1938, a fire destroyed the larger part of the west (classroom) wing of the school. An account of the fire appeared on 15 April on the front page of *The Charlotte Observer*.

An April 14 fire of undetermined origin destroyed one wing of the \$300,000 Rutherfordton-Spindale High school at a loss of \$65,000.

The West Wing, which contained classrooms and the cafeteria, was destroyed by the flames, and only the bare brick walls were left standing when the fire had been extinguished after an eight hour battle by firemen of Rutherfordton, Spindale, and Forest City.

The east wing of the building, in which are the auditorium and gymnasium, was not damaged by the flames. The origin of the fire was not known, as there was no fire in the school's heating system, but a theory was advanced that it was caused by defective wiring. The fire was discovered about 7:30 o'clock by pupils arriving for school.

The consolidated school, the largest school in Rutherford County, has an enrollment of 540 students. School and County officials met last night to make arrangements for the remainder of the school term, which was to close for the summer in two weeks. Official said the school carried \$45,000 insurance.

In a report issued by the Rutherford County Board of Education, the cause of the fire was determined to have been faulty wiring and an overloading of the system. The report also raised the estimate of losses from \$65,000 to \$100,000.

The Rutherford County Board of Education had held a special meeting on the afternoon of the 14th to inspect the damages and to lay plans for both the rebuilding and the next academic year. They decided to end the school year, effective immediately, and the class of 1938 was graduated at the Spindale Elementary School on 26 April. The board also directed the county superintendent to seek funding through a W.P.A. or P.W.A. project because only \$45,000 of the loss was covered by insurance. The Board of Education met again on 26 April and decided three important issues: (1) to rebuild the school in a fireproof manner inside the old walls; (2) to employ V. W. Breeze of Shelby, North Carolina, as the architect for the renovation; and (3) to seek a grant from the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works to assist in the rebuilding of the school and the erection of an eight-room vocational building.

The application was successful and on 20 July 1938, the Board of Education held a special meeting to accept the grant from the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works. The grant was to cover forty-five per cent of the project costs and was not to exceed \$44,180. The design work for the school building and the vocational building was quickly completed and the project was put out to bid. On 8 September 1938, *The Rutherford County News* announced the awarding of contracts:

Thirteen bids were received for the building contract and ten bids for heating and plumbing. C. M. Morrison of Shelby was the low bidder for the rebuilding of the main building at \$50,000 and was awarded the contract. Contracts were also awarded to Barger Brothers of Mooresville to construct the new vocational building for \$14,480.00; and to J. L. Powers of Bennettsville, S.C.,

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for a heating system for both buildings at \$10,807.00; and to the Albemarle Heating and Plumbing Company of Albemarle for plumbing at \$5,371.00.

The high school building will be of fireproof construction when completed, with a new steam heating plant in place of the warm air system in the old building. The new vocational building will have eight rooms and will be of brick construction. Heat for this building, which will be located fifty feet from the high school building, will be furnished from the same plant.

The rebuilding of the central high school and the erection of the vocational building were completed in the spring of 1939. On 27 April 1939, *The Rutherford County News* reported on the final inspection of the facility two weeks earlier on 13 April:

With the approval of these contracts, the Rutherfordton-Spindale district has an excellent high school plant. The high school building is practically fireproof, having sub-floors and roof of steel and concrete instead of the wood construction in the old building. Much of the equipment is new. A modern steam plant furnishes heat, replacing the hot air system, which was practically worn out.

Although the senior class of 1939 attended its final year of school in the halls of the Spindale Elementary School, it returned to the newly-restored high school for the commencement ceremonies in the large auditorium on 20 June 1939. J. J. Tarleton, the county school superintendent, was the speaker for the occasion. The school year 1939-1940 opened in the newly refurbished building.

The campus, consisting of the main building, the vocational building, and the outdoor sports facilities, remained in use with few changes to the mid-1950s. During this period, the enrollment had increased dramatically. In 1953, there were 600 students; the school year of 1958-1959 opened with 800 students. Part of this increase came about through the transfer of high school students from Lake Lure.

The first building project to accommodate the ever increasing student body was the construction of a new cafeteria. Chivous Gilmer Harrill of Andrews, North Carolina, designed the building and Graham Construction Company of Hendersonville, North Carolina, began construction on 10 July 1956. It was completed at a cost of \$71,295 and occupied early in 1957. The former space occupied by the cafeteria on the first story of the main building was now free for educational needs and refitted for three classrooms. The gymnasium and auditorium balconies were pressed into service as classrooms. In 1960 voters in Rutherford County approved a 2.8 million dollar school expansion program which included a new East Rutherford High School in Forest City and a half million dollar addition to the campus of Rutherfordton-Spindale Central High School. The new three-story brick and steel building, designed by Clemmer and Horton of Hickory, North Carolina, and erected by Barger Construction Company of Mooresville, contained a new gymnasium and attendant facilities, classrooms for physical education, a shop, classrooms, offices, and attendant spaces for the vocational department. Much of the third floor, which contained ten classrooms, laboratories and related quarters, was given over to science education and, in short order, the building came to be known as the science building. A small one-story brick veneer music building was erected at the same time. Next to be constructed was a 5,000-seat football stadium: it was completed and opened on 4 September 1964. The former football stadium was converted

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to a baseball diamond. The final major building on the campus, the library and classroom facility erected to the west of the main building, was designed by James R. Washburn and erected by A & G Construction at a cost of \$112,418. It was completed early in 1967.

The Rutherfordton-Spindale Central High School served as the high school for those communities and Ruth from 1939 until its last senior class was graduated on 1 June 1992. The proposal to abandon and demolish this building, replaced by a new high school and campus at a separate location, galvanized loyal alumni who formed the Rutherfordton-Spindale Central High School Alumni Association which now boasts a paid membership of some 2,000 alumni. The first All-Class Reunion was held on 14-16 August 1992 and drew in excess of five thousand participants. The Rutherford County Board of Education has reconsidered the issue, and has decided to retain the main building and to refit it for use, and to locate a middle school on the campus of the landmark and much-beloved Rutherfordton-Spindale Central High School.

Education Context

Perhaps the most critical action to correct the lamentable public education policies and practices of nineteenth-century North Carolina was the election of Charles Brantley Aycock as governor in 1900. A former school teacher and later lawyer, Aycock had campaigned throughout the State for universal education and, after entering office, one of his most important steps to achieving this goal was the creation of the Central Committee for the Promotion of Public Education in North Carolina. Charles McIver, James Joyner, and Eugene Clyde Brooks—three men who would become legendary figures in public education in North Carolina—were immediately named to the committee.

In part through a measure authorizing loans for the building of public schools, passed by the General Assembly in 1903, some 3,400 public schools were erected between 1900 and 1915; the majority of these were of either one or two rooms. Their role in educating a generation of North Carolina's school children between 1900 and 1920 was surpassed by the movement for larger, consolidated schools in the 1920s. Few of these one-room buildings survive to the present; however, the large brick schools of the 1920s, such as the Rutherfordton-Spindale Central High School, remain landmarks in many communities.

A key figure in the consolidation and centralization movement was Eugene Clyde Brooks, the Superintendent of Public Instruction. In 1920 he created the Division of Schoolhouse Planning which provided standardized plans and advice for the newly consolidated systems in town and country alike. This new way of thinking about and planning for the education of children saw its expression in two editorials published in Rutherfordton's newspaper, *The Sun*, on 12 April and 29 November 1923; the first advocated a consolidated high school for Rutherfordton Township, while the second one espoused the advantages of school consolidation in general.

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The movement for school consolidation and new construction was extremely successful and particularly important in Rutherford County. The significance of the efforts in Rutherford County cannot be overstated and Captain B. L. Smith did not do so in the comments he made in 1929 which were published in *The Rutherford County News*:

Rutherford County has probably made greater educational progress within the past ten years than any county in North Carolina. To be sure there was more room for improvement than was to be found in most other counties in the State. The changes have been so great that it is hard for even those in closest touch with the schools to realize the extent of the transformation.

In the article he continued by telling the newspaper's readers that in 1918-1919 there were but two brick schools in the county. Within a decade—by February 1929—there were “twenty-four modern brick buildings housing a large majority of the pupils of the county.” Attendance in the county school system dramatically increased in the decade and the average length of term was increased from 103 days in 1918-1919 to 157 in 1927-1928. Likewise, the quality of the teachers and their education showed a marked improvement as did the courses that were offered as well as the number of extra-curricular and athletic programs. In short, the schools of Rutherford County were indeed transformed in the 1920s. The Rutherfordton-Spindale Central High School was a critical part of this process and representative of both the local and state-wide effort to modernize education.

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Architectural Context

Despite the fact that the Rutherfordton-Spindale Central High School does not appear in *The Historic Architecture of Rutherford County*, published in 1983 and based on an architectural survey begun in 1979, the school is significant in the architectural history of Rutherfordton and Rutherford County. Likewise, two other important surviving contemporary school buildings, also part of the great expansion of public education facilities in Rutherford County, are not included in the account of the county's architecture. They are the Cliffside Public School and the Henrietta-Caroleen High School. These omissions can be accounted for in part by the primarily residential focus of the 1979 survey and the fact that only in the past five to eight years has the significance of the State's 1920s educational building been broadly appreciated.

The Cliffside Public School, the Rutherfordton-Spindale Central High School, and the Henrietta-Caroleen High School—erected in that order—are all in the classical revival style which was one of the two principal styles for educational facilities in the building boom of the 1920s. The other, of course, was the scholastic Gothic seen best at the Gastonia High School, Gastonia, and the Boyden High School, Salisbury.

The choice of the Classical Revival style appears to have been a deliberate one in each instance. All three of the Rutherford County schools occupy critical positions as public buildings in their respective communities and thereby achieve a certain monumentality. The two-story brick elevations of the Cliffside Public School, which originally housed grades one through eleven, serve as the background for an unusually heavy Corinthian portico that shelters the central entrance. Supported by the philanthropy of the Haynes Family who owned the mills and village, the building was designed by Louis H. Asbury (1877-1975), a Charlotte architect.

For now unknown reasons, Hugh White and his architectural firm of White, Streeter & Chamberlain did not use a monumental portico in their design for the Rutherfordton-Spindale Central High School. Instead, they marked the junction of the two major ellis forming the L-shaped plan with an offset entrance block. It was dominated by a classically detailed entranceway which rose through two stories of the building and featured a blind arch-headed tympanum holding a bulls-eye motive. Given the contemporary newspaper references to the fact the building was designed to be enlarged at a future date, it is tempting to believe that once the building was doubled in size to form a quadrangle, the architects had in mind the construction of some major classical element such as a portico or dome. But that was never to be: the only expansion of the facility occurred in the form of free-standing buildings.

The third building in this triumvirate of 1920s buildings was the Henrietta-Caroleen High School, built also on the edge of a mill village in southeastern Rutherford County. A memorial plaque beside the front door bears the name of the architect, Leslie N. Boney of Wilmington, North Carolina; the date, 1925, when the building was completed; and the name of the contractor, the Palmer-Spivey Construction Company. While each of the three buildings was designed by a different architect, the Palmer-Spivey Company built both the Rutherfordton-Spindale Central High School and the Henrietta-Caroleen School. Its elevations are enlivened with paneled brickwork, cast-stone and glazed terra-cotta ornament, and a modest two-story portico that appears somewhat spindly when compared to the weighty

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massiveness of the Cliffside portico. Boney was the architect of the New Hanover County High School, of 1919, and the subsequent additions to the building.

It appears obvious, now, that the choice of Hugh Edward White and the firm of White, Streeter & Chamberlain of Gastonia, North Carolina, was based on their design of the Gastonia High School. Construction on the massive Gothic Revival scholastic building began in 1922 but was not completed until 1924 at a cost of a half-million dollars. Textiles were the dominant industry in the economy of both Gaston and Rutherford Counties, and given the close holding of major mills within a relatively few families and stockholders, the Gastonia High School must have been well known to those on the building committee of the new high school.

The career of Hugh Edward White and the firm of White, Streeter & Chamberlain is one that remains to be substantially documented. Nevertheless, there is sufficient knowledge at present to enable the determination that the Rutherfordton–Spindale Central High School was an important product of his and the firm's oeuvre. Hugh Edward White was born in Fort Mill, South Carolina, on 27 June 1869. According to his obituary, he worked in the office of an un-named Atlanta architect for a period before joining the office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury about 1903. He served as an inspector for that Federal agency for fifteen years before relocating in Gastonia in 1918. In the 1921–1922 edition of the *Gastonia, North Carolina City Directory*, Hugh White is listed as the manager of Charles S. Wilson's architectural office then located in the First National Bank Building. Charles Wilson was a Columbia, South Carolina, based architect and the designer of the handsome Joseph Separk mansion in Gastonia. Apparently, White came to Gastonia to supervise the construction of buildings designed by Wilson. Wilson is one of only two architects listed in the directory; the other is J. S. Zimmerman, who earlier was listed in the 1917–1918 edition as the town's only architect.

It would appear that late 1921 to 1922 was a critical period in White's career for during this period he must have left the office of Charles S. Wilson, formed the firm of White, Streeter & Chamberlain, and obtained the commission for the Gastonia High School. Little is known at present of the lives of Charles J. Streeter and Carroll W. Chamberlain, the other two partners in the firm. Given the fact that Mr. Streeter is the only one of the three to be cited as "Architect" in an advertisement for the firm that appeared in the 1923–1924 city directory, it seems apparent that White, who had no known formal training as an architect, formed the partnership in order to carry forward the commission for the Gastonia High School and other work. His obituary states that the firm was dissolved in 1927 and that "Mr. White continued the practice of architecture privately until the time of his death. His son, Hugh E. White, Jr., was associated with him here." The firm is listed at 509 Third Trust Company Building in the 1927–1928 edition of the city directory. In the next edition, 1930–1931, Hugh E. White is listed alone as an architect at 509 Third Trust Company Building. The city's only other listed architect, E. L. Quinn, had an office in suite 418 of the same building.

In August 1936, as White was nearing the end of his career—he died in 1939—he published a monograph entitled *From the Files of Hugh E. White, Architect, Gastonia, N.C.* Most of the illustrated work was located in Gastonia and Gaston County. The Gastonia High School was given prominent recognition; there is a much smaller photograph of the only other school building included herein, the Fort Mill High School in Fort Mill, South Carolina. Twenty-three buildings were illustrated; nine of

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them, including the two schools, were institutional buildings while the remaining fourteen were residences. There were three remodeling projects illustrated with before and after photographs and it seems apparent that the publication was geared to the builders of the smaller houses of the late 1930s.

The fact that the Rutherfordton–Spindale Central High School does not appear in the monograph does not diminish its importance in his career. Work for architects in the Depression years was scarce; clearly, White published the monograph as a promotional effort to secure residential commissions. In it he highlighted his smaller residential work rather than the grand mansions he had designed in the 1920s for textile magnates and other businessmen such as John L. Beal and Samuel A. Robinson. It should also be remembered that given the large amount of school construction in the 1920s, there would be very few if any schools built in the 1930s. Hence, the publication was aimed at potential clients rather than readers looking for a representation of the finest work of his career.

When the school burned on 14 April 1938, the commission to remodel and rebuild the high school did not go to White but to a little known architect by the name of V. W. Breeze. His office was in Shelby, North Carolina, and it seems reasonable to speculate that the commission from the Rutherford County School Board was secured through B. L. Smith who had presided over the opening of the high school in September, 1925, and later, in 1929, had removed to Shelby where he was superintendent of that city's school system. Alternatively, it would have been entirely reasonable for the board to have turned to an architect in the closest neighboring county seat when there was no resident architect in Rutherfordton.

The damages to the school were largely confined to the west wing of the building: the south wing of the school, housing principally the gymnasium and auditorium, were unaffected except for some smoke damage. Following an inspection of the building, it was found that the exterior walls were safe and that the classrooms, cafeteria, and library could be rebuilt within the existing walls. This decision and subsequent action preserved the exterior integrity of White and his firm's design and, today, the building survives as an important example of their work.

The two main public spaces of the south wing survive largely as completed in 1925. Of these, the auditorium is the larger and immediately more impressive chamber and is finished with Classical Revival style details that are focused on the framing for the stage. It is, however, the gymnasium on the two lower levels that is the most architecturally significant space on the interior. Here survives an indoor gymnasium of the 1920s, in virtually unaltered condition, that may well be one of the few such gymnasiums of the period to remain intact in North Carolina. The indoor arena has a wood floor and is encircled by a tall wainscot of vertical flush sheathing topped by a chairrail. Tall bands of windows are set in the second-story level on the south and north elevations. The balcony, the only space for viewing athletic events, is situated on the west side of the arena. After the new gymnasium was erected in the early 1960s, the balcony was closed off, a level floor laid down over the top of the stepped levels, and the space sub-divided and partitioned in a cheap manner for a variety of storage and service uses. If re-opened, the balcony and the gymnasium which it overlooks could achieve a remarkable renewed status as one of the few, if not only, such interior spaces in North Carolina.

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Footnotes

1. The principal source of information on the history of the Rutherfordton-Spindale Central High School has been the history written by Robin Lattimore and edited by Julia Hensley, both graduates of the school. It has been published for sale at the All-Class Reunion held on 14-16 August 1992. Lattimore's two principal sources were a series of interviews he conducted with staff members and graduates of the school and newspaper articles that appeared in *The Sun* and *The Rutherford County News*. In addition to making the draft manuscript history available to this author, he also provided photocopies of many of the newspaper articles whose contents are cited herein. The dates of all the articles are cited in the text. The deeds for the tracts making up the campus of the school are recorded in the Office of the Register of Deeds, Rutherford County Court House, Rutherfordton, North Carolina.

Even though the school was erected as the consolidated high school for the communities of Rutherfordton, Spindale, and Ruth, it has been known as the Rutherfordton-Spindale Central High School for most of its life. Ruth was much smaller than either the town of Spindale or the county seat. Likewise, there is some variance within this report concerning "Ruth" or "Hampton" as the name of the third community in the triad. The settlement was established as Hampton in 1893 and named for contractor Samuel D. Hampton. A post office by that name was established here as well. In time, the railroad asked that the name be changed, since there was another place in North Carolina that bore the name Hampton. Subsequently, the post office was changed to Ruth although the town also continued to be known as Hampton. Both names are used in the documents and newspapers of the 1920s. In 1939 the name of the town was officially changed to Ruth.

Mrs. Richard Penegar, chairman of the Gaston County Historic Properties Committee, provided to the author a copy of the preliminary application for listing the Gastonia High School on the National Register as well as copies of White's obituary. A copy of the monograph on Hugh Edward White survives in the Gaston County Public Library where it and the Gastonia city directories were consulted by this author.

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Rutherfordton-Spindale Central High School, Rutherford County, North Carolina

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The Sun, Rutherfordton, North Carolina. 12 April, 19 April, 29 November, 6 December, 27 December 1923; 3 January, 31 January, 24 July, 13 November 1924; 23 July, 10 September, 24 September 1925.

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Rutherfordton-Spindale Central High School, Rutherford County, North Carolina

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Rutherfordton-Spindale Central High School: Schedule of Photographs

The following information applies to all of the photographs.

Name of Property: Rutherfordton-Spindale Central High School
Northwest corner of junction of Charlotte Road (Business 74)
and Bypass 74
Rutherfordton
Rutherford County
North Carolina

Photographer: Davyd Foard Hood

Date of Photographs: 15 July and 1 September 1992

Location of Original Negatives: Division of Archives and History
109 East Jones Street
Raleigh, North Carolina 27601

1. Rutherfordton-Spindale
Central High School: Entrance pavilion and principal southeast and southwest elevations, looking northwest
2. Rutherfordton-Spindale
Central High School: Rear elevation of the gymnasium/auditorium wing, looking south/southwest
3. Rutherfordton-Spindale
Central High School: Third floor hallway of the classroom wing, looking northwest
4. Rutherfordton-Spindale
Central High School: Typical (ground floor) classroom, looking south/southwest
5. Rutherfordton-Spindale
Central High School: Gymnasium, looking north
6. Rutherfordton-Spindale
Central High School: Auditorium, looking southwest
7. Rutherfordton-Spindale
Central High School: Vocational Education Building, looking north/northwest

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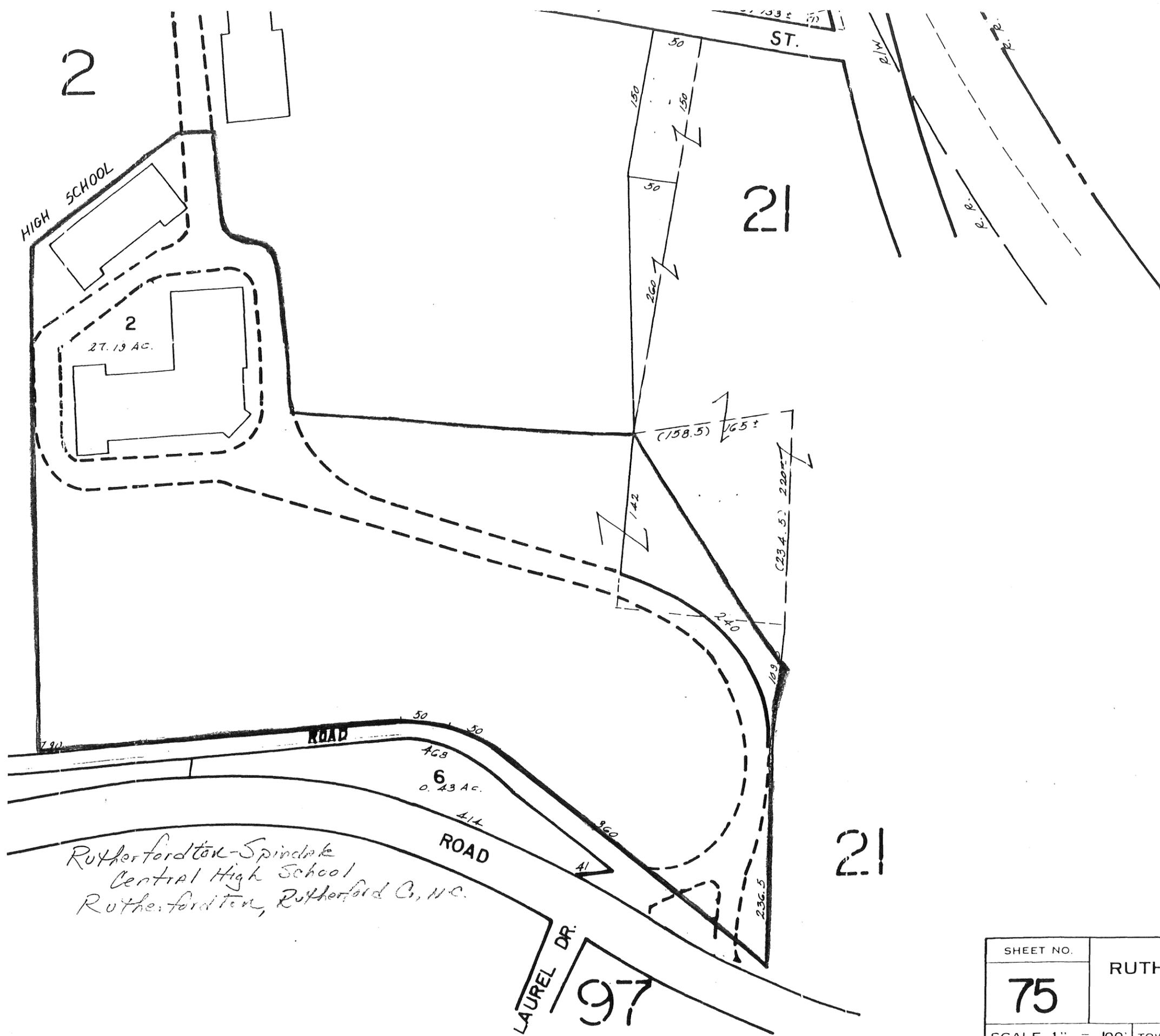
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Verbal Bounday Description

The acreage included in this nomination is outlined in bold on the enclosed copy of a portion of Rutherford County Tax Map 75.

Boundary Justification

The property included in this nomination is that portion of the high school campus which retains its integrity and serves as the site of the historic high school building, the Vocational Education Building, and the entrance drive from the Old Charlotte Road (Bus 74). The remainder of the campus is the site of later educational buildings, sports facilities, and an asphalt-paved parking lot for students and faculty.



SHEET NO.	RUTHERFORD COUNTY TAX MAP FOR TAX PURPOSES ONLY	
75		
SCALE 1" = 100'	TOWNSHIP	RUTHERFORDTON

45594 1:62,500
LAKE LURE 1:62,500

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

Rutherfordton Spindale
Central High School

Rutherfordton
Rutherford County, NC
Northing - 3913840
Easting - 414150

Rutherfordton South
Quadrangle

82°00' 35°22'30" 410000m E 411 412 413 414 415 416
ASHEVILLE 47 MI. LAKE LURE 16 MI. 57'30" 19 MI. TO INTERSTATE 40 GILKEY 4.8 MI. 4654 IV NW (RUTHERFORDTON NORTH)



3914000m N.
3913
COLUMBUS 15 MI.
3912
3911

RUTHERFORDTON

Adaville
Ch

