

**Survey and Research Report**  
**On The**  
**Long Creek High School Gymnasium, Grandstand and**  
**Concession Stand**





**1. Name and location of the property:** The property known as Long Creek High School Gymnasium, Grandstand, and Concession Stand is located at 9213 Beatties Ford Road, Huntersville, N.C. 28078. To see a brief video of the property go to <http://officialcharlottehistory.ning.com> and click on "Video" at the top of the page.

**2. Name, address, and telephone number of the current owner of the property:**

Mecklenburg County

600 East Fourth Street

Charlotte, N.C. 28202

Telephone: (704) 336-2472

Also contact Mike Raible of the Auxiliary Services Department of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Schools. Telephone: 980-343-6050

**3. Representative photographs of the property:** This report contains representative photographs of the property.

**4. A map depicting the location of the property:** This report contains a map depicting the location of the property. The coordinates of the property are: Gymnasium 35.21.1.26N 80.53.24.94W. Grandstand 35.21.4.54N 80.53.25.02W. Concession Stand 35.21.03.05N 80.53.23.22W



**5. Current Tax Parcel Reference and Deed to the property:** The tax parcel number of the property is 023-063-11. The most recent deed to this property is recorded in Mecklenburg County Deed Book 23401 page 417.

**6. A brief historical sketch of the property:** This report contains a brief historical sketch of the property prepared by Dr. Dan L. Morrill.

**7. A brief architectural description of the property:** This report contains a brief architectural description prepared by Stewart Gray.

**8. Documentation of why and in what ways the property meets the criteria for designation set forth in N.C.G.S 160A-400.5.**

**a. Special significance in terms of its history, architecture and/or cultural importance:** The Commission judges that the property known as Long Creek High School Gymnasium, Grandstand and Concession Stand possesses special significance in terms of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations:

1) The Long Creek High School Gymnasium and Grandstand are the only surviving structures from the initial phase of Federally-assisted school construction in Mecklenburg County.

2) The Long Creek High School Gymnasium, Grandstand and Concession Stand were among the first structures funded by New Deal relief programs to which the Mecklenburg Board of Education also committed funds.

3) The Long Creek High School Gymnasium, Grandstand and Concession Stand, because they were the first publicly-owned recreational buildings in the immediate neighborhood designed to serve substantial numbers of people, are tangible reminders of how the New Deal relief programs changed rural life in Mecklenburg County.

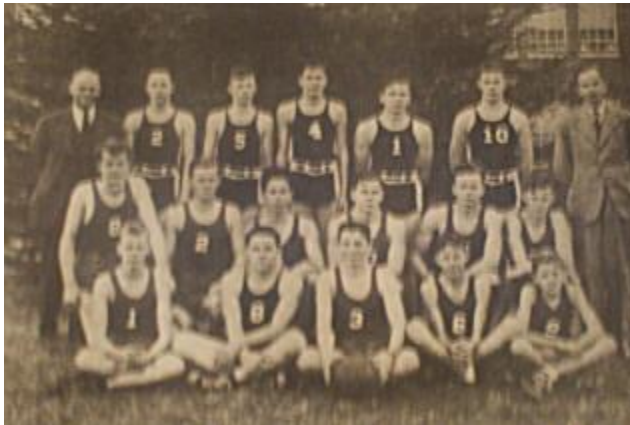
**b. Integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling and/or association:** The Commission contends that the architectural description prepared by Stewart Gray demonstrates that the property known as the Long Creek High School Gymnasium, Grandstand and Concession Stand meets this criterion.

**9. Ad Valorem Tax Appraisal:** The Commission is aware that designation would allow the owner to apply for an automatic deferral of 50% of the Ad

Valorem taxes on all or any portion of the property which becomes a "historic landmark." The current appraised value of the improvements on the site is \$4,176,700. The current appraised value of the 22.04 acres of land is \$555,000. The total current appraised value is \$5,163,500. The property is zoned R. The property is exempt from the payment of Ad Valorem Taxes.

**10. Portion of the Property Recommended for Designation.** The Gymnasium, the Grandstand, the Concession Stand, and the ground upon which each sits.

### **A Brief History of the Long Creek High School Gymnasium, Grandstand, and Concession Stand**



**1947 Long Creek Boys Basketball Team    1947 Long Creek Girls Basketball Team**

**From the 1947 *Souvenir* Yearbook**

**From the 1947 *Souvenir* Yearbook**

Long Creek High School opened in 1923 as part of a program of comprehensive school consolidation in Mecklenburg County.<sup>1</sup> The Long Creek High School Gymnasium and Grandstand were constructed in 1934 initially under arrangements approved by the Mecklenburg County Board of Education on January 1, 1934. <sup>2</sup> ". . . actual work on the various gymnasiums will be started as soon as the material is placed on the grounds," reported the *Charlotte Observer*.<sup>3</sup> The Civil Works Administration, a Federal agency established in 1933 to create temporary construction jobs for the unemployed, provided the wages for the project; and the local community donated the building supplies. "The Board enthusiastically approved the proposition," stated the Board minutes, "commending the fine spirit and initiative of the local communities in providing the necessary material to complete the work on these gymnasiums."<sup>4</sup> The Long Creek High School Gymnasium was one of eight facilities of its general type constructed in Mecklenburg County under the

arrangements outlined above, the others being at the high schools then in the local school districts of Huntersville, Paw Creek, Pineville, Sharon, Oakhurst, Berryhill, and Bain.<sup>5</sup> Only the Long Creek Gymnasium survives from this initial round of construction.<sup>6</sup>



**The Paw Creek Gymnasium, like six other County School gymnasiums built in 1934, has been destroyed. The Long Creek Gymnasium is the sole survivor.**

One can only speculate as to why the Mecklenburg County Schools refused at first to contribute money to the building of the Long Creek High School Gymnasium and the nearby rock rubble Grandstand. Perhaps it was simply the disinclination to raise taxes in the harsh years of the Great Depression. Not to be discounted is the fact that considerable skepticism did exist among the business and political leaders of North Carolina concerning the "make work" programs of the Roosevelt administration. According to the *Charlotte Observer*, some believed that such initiatives represented unwarranted "paternalism" and threatened to undermine local and State control of public education.<sup>7</sup> Conservative Democrats, including Governors O. Max Gardner and John Eringhaus, pushed for North Carolina to establish its own programs to deal with the social dislocations associated with the Great Depression. Also critical of Roosevelt's New Deal relief efforts was U.S. Senator Josiah W. Bailey.<sup>8</sup>

### **Senator Josiah W. Bailey**

In the end these protestation of opposition could not stem the flow of Federal money to assist the poor and unemployed. Between 1932 and 1935 communities throughout North Carolina, including Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, benefited from a broad array of public works funded primarily by Washington. These included the reconstruction in Eastover of the former United States Mint Building, the building of a grandstand in Independence Park, the placement of a baseball field in Huntersville, the extension of a section of Queens Road to connect with East Morehead Street, the construction of American Legion Memorial Stadium, and soil erosion control along Wilkinson Boulevard, to mention just a few.<sup>9</sup>

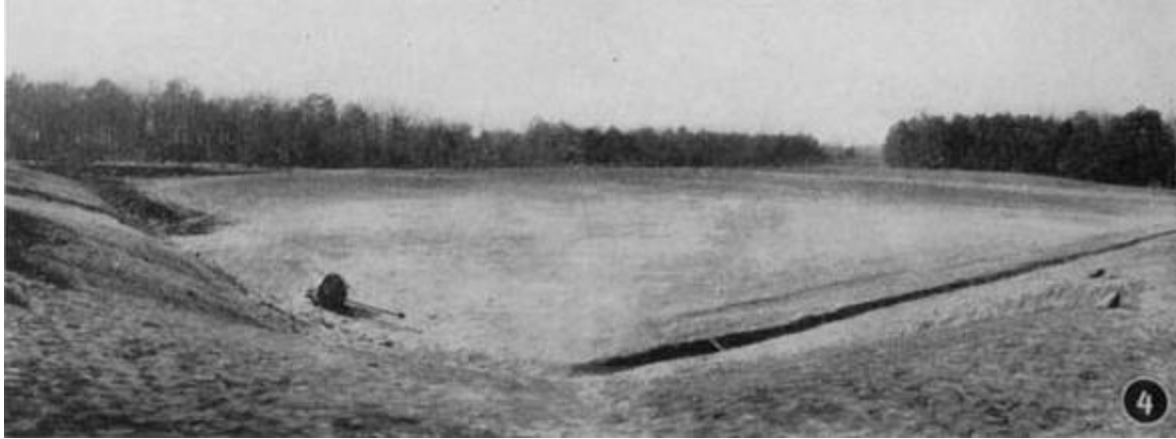




Reconstructed and Relocated Former U. S. Mint Building



Grandstand in [Independence Park](#)



### **Baseball Field in Huntersville**

It is reasonable to assume that the baseball field at Long Creek High School was built at approximately the same time and under the same program. The baseball field at Long Creek High School most likely qualifies for historic landmark designation and could be processed for designation at a future date.



### **Queens Rd. - E. Morehead St. Connector**



## American Legion Memorial Stadium



### **Erosion Control On Wilkinson Boulevard**

North Carolina school authorities were especially interested in using the unprecedented Federal relief programs of the early New Deal to build school gymnasiums for indoor sports and as community gathering places. Designs varied according to the skills of the local labor force, the desires of the community, and the type of materials the residents could provide. The State Board of Education and the State Insurance Commission approved each plan.<sup>10</sup>



**Illustrations of various gymnasium designs: 1-Pender County, 2-Northhampton County, 3-Goldsboro in Wayne County, 4-Woodland in Northhampton County, 5-Richlands in Onslow County, 6-New London in Stanly County.**



**interior of gymnasium in Apex, Wake County.**



**Interior of Long Creek High School Gymnasium**

Many today do not realize that Mecklenburg County was overwhelmingly rural in the 1930s. One can imagine how excited the hard-working farm families were to have a place where their children could hold dances, play basketball, volleyball, and other indoor sports, and where neighbors could readily assemble in a publicly-owned building. No doubt many rural residents were

therefore pleased when the Mecklenburg County Board of Education voted on September 28, 1934, to participate directly in paying part of the bill for the eight gymnasiums then under construction. ". . . upon motion made and carried, it was agreed to allow \$1200 toward completing the eight gymnasiums," proclaimed the Board minutes.<sup>11</sup> The *Charlotte Observer* reported the next day that the County Board of Education "threw the weight of its indorsement (sic.) toward completing the eight gymnasiums."<sup>12</sup> The Long Creek High School Gymnasium and Grandstand are the sole extant reminders of this significant building program to improve school facilities in Mecklenburg County between 1932 and 1935 and therefore, in the opinion of the Historic Landmarks Commission, have special significance.



### **Mecklenburg Farmers At Work.**



### **Mecklenburg Farmer's Wife Making Axe Handles.**

Prepared by: Dr. Dan L. Morrill and Stewart Gray

Date: October 1, 2008

## Architectural Description

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1. *The Mecklenburg Times* (February 12, 1925). The original school building has been demolished. J. W. Wilson, "Mecklenburg County Schools 1944-1960," an unpublished manuscript in the collection of the Carolinas Room of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Library.
2. "Minutes of the Mecklenburg County Board of Education," January 1, 1934. There is no documentary evidence that the grandstand and concession stand were built at the same time as the gymnasium. The proof is inferential. The foundation of the gymnasium is composed of the same material as that of the grandstand. Federal relief efforts funded several rock edifices in Mecklenburg County, including a grandstand at Independence Park and a wall bordering a cemetery. For a comprehensive presentation of Federally relief projects in North Carolina from 1932 to 1935 see *Emergency Relief in North Carolina. A Record of the Development and the Activities of the North Carolina Emergency Relief Administration, 1932-1935. North Carolina Emergency Relief Commission*, State administrator, Mrs. Thomas O'Berry. Edited by J.S. Kirk, Walter A. Cutter [and] Thomas W. Morse. Hereinafter cited as Kirk, Cutter, and Morse. Online edition at <http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/emergencyrelief/emergencyrelief.html>
3. *Charlotte Observer*, January 2, 1934.
4. *Minutes of the Mecklenburg County Board of Education* (January 1, 1934).
5. *Charlotte Observer*, January 2, 1934. The schools at Cornelius and Newell already had gymnasiums, neither of which survives.
6. Telephone Interview of Mike Raible of the Auxiliary Services Department of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools by Dr. Dan L. Morrill, September 25, 2008.
7. *Charlotte Observer*, September 29, 1934.
8. Milton Ready, *The Tar Heel State. A History of North Carolina*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005, pp. 323-327. Other Federally-assisted public works in Mecklenburg County included the following.



**Filtration System for the "Negro Public Swimming Pool."**



**Bridge across creek.**

9. Kirk, Cutter, and Morse.

10. Kirk, Cutter, and Morse, p. 221.

11. "Minutes of the Mecklenburg County Board of Education," September 28, 1934.

12. *Charlotte Observer*, September 29, 1934. The Civil Works Administration was disbanded in March 1934. Thereafter, Federal funds for the eight gymnasiums came from the Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.).