

**Survey and Research Report  
On The  
Nevin School and Auditorium**

**December 12, 2018**



*Source: Mecklenburg County (iLookAbout)*

1. **Name and Location of the Property.** The property known as Nevins Inc., formerly the Nevin School, is located at 3523 Nevin Rd, Charlotte, NC 28269.
2. **Name, Address, And Telephone Number Of The Present Owner And Occupant Of The Property.**  
\_\_\_\_ Nevins Inc., A North Carolina Corporation  
3523 Nevin Road  
Charlotte, NC 28269
3. **Representative Photographs Of The Property**  
This report contains representative photographs of the property.
4. **A Map Depicting The Location Of The Property.**



5. **Current Deed Book Reference To The Property.** The current deed to the property is recorded in Deed Book 25392 Page 955. The tax parcel numbers of the property are (?)
6. **A Brief Historical Sketch Of The Property.** The report contains a brief historical sketch of the property prepared by Mariel Hamer.
7. **A Brief Physical Description Of The Property.** The report contains a brief physical description of the property prepared by Mariel Hamer.
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.**

**b. Integrity of Design, Setting, Workmanship, Materials, Feeling, And/Or Association**

**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 that becomes a designated “historic landmark.” The current appraised value of the Nevin School is (?)

**10. Portion of the Property Recommended for Designation.** The exterior of the original schoolhouse and the exterior of the auditorium.

**Date Of The Preparation of This Report:** December 16, 2018

**Prepared By:** Mariel Hamer

## **HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION**

### **The Nevin Community**

The Nevin Community emerged in the late-nineteenth century alongside numerous other agrarian communities within Mecklenburg County. The New South campaign following the Civil War ushered the rapid development of Charlotte as a crucial cotton-trading and textile manufacturing center. Charlotte’s industrial development was paralleled by the prosperity of Mecklenburg County’s rural communities well into the early-twentieth century with cotton as the major cash-crop. The railroad enabled many communities to sprout on the periphery of Charlotte. Nevin, however, was located several miles from the nearest railroad forcing the area to rely on the prosperity of wealthy families who operated farms or stores like the Hunters and Wardins, and through community organizations.<sup>1</sup> The lasting implications of Nevin’s proximity to the railroad is evident in its present-day residential composition. Nevin remained largely rural until single-family housing subdivisions carved away its farmland as the city of Charlotte sprawled outward in the middle of the twentieth century.

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<sup>1</sup> Sherry J. Joines and Dr. Dan L. Morrill, “Historic Rural Resources in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina” (Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, 1997)

The rural community likely began to collectively identify itself as “Nevin” in the late 1880s. According to Jean Davis Burris, former Nevin Community Organization President, the name “Nevin” was designated by Mollie Wardin to pay homage to the location in Ireland where her ancestors lived.<sup>2</sup> The Nevin Academy, later the Nevin School, was the first recorded institution to bear the community’s name as of 1889 and was founded by John P. Hunter and his wife Sallie E. Hunter.<sup>3</sup> Two years later, the Hunter family established the Nevin post office at the old family store - designating James C. Hunter as postmaster.<sup>4</sup> The Nevin post office ceased operations in 1902 when new rural routes made it obsolete leaving the Nevin School as the only public institution owing the neighborhood its namesake.<sup>5</sup>

Members of the Hunter family have contributed to the foundation of entire townships and communities throughout Mecklenburg County. Squire John Porter Hunter was born in the Mallard Creek Township in 1852 and eventually became one of the 10 citizens that formed the beginning of Derita known as “Section House.” Hunter was a significant member of the Derita community acting as the magistrate for over sixty years.<sup>6</sup> While living on Nevin Road, he was a member of the District No. 28 Committee for the Mecklenburg County Board of Education. During his reign on the committee, he and his wife donated a half acre of land and 63 books to the district in order for the Nevin Community to build a school before moving closer to Derita.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Davis, Jean E. *NEVIN SCHOOL - WELL REMEMBERED*. 1989. Nevin Community Organization Essay, Charlotte.

<sup>3</sup> SMITH, GAIL. "FOLKS FROM FAR, NEAR SHARE MEMORIES OF PAST SCHOOL DAYS." *Charlotte Observer, The (NC)*, October 14, 1992: 14. *NewsBank*. <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.proxy141.nclive.org/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/0EB6CA1DEC810695>

<sup>4</sup> "School Entertainment." *Weekly Charlotte Observer* (Charlotte, North Carolina), December 5, 1892.

<sup>5</sup> Davis, Jean E. *NEVIN SCHOOL - WELL REMEMBERED*. 1989. Nevin Community Organization Essay, Charlotte.

<sup>6</sup> Conley, Eddie. *June Bug on a String: The History of Derita, North Carolina as Experienced Through the Eyes of a Ten-year-old Boy Growing Up in the 1950's*. Warren Publishing, 2011.

<sup>7</sup> See 3.

Efforts from community organizations were instrumental in developing rural communities like Nevin. The Help Each Other Society was formed in 1915 - cementing the close-knit, altruistic values of the Nevin Community. The organization was modeled after home demonstration clubs and gave an outlet for housewives to better Nevin and as well as an opportunity to gather and socialize.<sup>8</sup> Later known as the Help-One-Another Club, the group fostered the growth of the Nevin School. In 1921, the group purchased the old frame Nevin schoolhouse to be used as a community house for \$50 after they had succeeded in their demands for a four-teacher school building to be built.<sup>9</sup> The club moved the original schoolhouse off the lot towards the creek and added a kitchen - creating a clubhouse for the community. The community house was used for plays, special classes, and often on sundays it was used for religious service - always acting as a focal point of the community where members of Nevin could gather. The clubhouse was eventually torn down in order to accommodate space for the Nevin Auditorium. Other than the community house and the Nevin School, members of the community would later convene at church. Most residents either attended the Statesville Avenue Baptist Church (Figure 1) or the Nevin Presbyterian Church in the first half of the twentieth century.

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<sup>8</sup> "HELP EACH OTHER SOCIETY FORMED." *The Charlotte News*, April 17, 1915.

<sup>9</sup> "NEVIN SECTION IS TO BUILD SCHOOL." *THE CHARLOTTE NEWS* (Charlotte), July 1, 1921.



**Figure 1** Statesville Avenue Baptist Church, Nevin Community. Personal photograph by Pete McGraw. Ca. 1920s.

## **The Nevin School**

The Mecklenburg County Board of Education was formed in 1885 as a response to high illiteracy rates in North Carolina. The Board was primarily responsible for children in rural, unincorporated parts of the country through the early-twentieth century. However during that time, most decisions like hiring teachers and building schools were left up to committees and organizations of the rural communities.<sup>10</sup> The Board did not begin to gain power until compulsory attendance policies were mandated in the 1910s - causing the demand for a larger, more standardized school system. The increased attendance coupled with the development of the school busing system enabled the consolidation of the many rural one-teacher schoolhouses across the county in the 1920s. These rural schools either expanded to become multi-teacher institutions, like Nevin, or were abandoned. As the city of Charlotte continued to prosper and

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<sup>10</sup> Stewart Gray, "Caldwell Station School" (Charlotte- Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, 1996).

expand, new highway systems enabled suburban sprawl to infiltrate the once-agrarian communities that surrounded it. Throughout the '40s and '50s, the majority of the county's rural schools were further consolidated into schools able to support hundreds of students and, like Nevin, were abandoned. The Mecklenburg County school system ran independently from the Charlotte city school system until they merged together to form Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools in 1960.<sup>11</sup>

The Nevin School was first established as the Nevin Academy on March 16, 1889 when Sallie Hunter and John P. Hunter donated a half-acre of land and 62 books to the Mecklenburg County District #28 Public School Committee.<sup>12</sup> In the month prior, John P. Hunter had been appointed to the same committee of District #28 after one of its members resigned.<sup>13</sup> The Nevin School was first erected as a wooden, single-teacher school to become one of the 67 white public schools within the Mecklenburg County school system. The first school was said to be a frame building with a hip roof and the inside featured a stage with a room on either side.<sup>14</sup> As of 1889, there were a total of 6,352 white children in the county and only 2,885 of them were enrolled according to the Mecklenburg County Board of Education.<sup>15</sup> At this time, children of rural communities were often expected to stay home and help cultivate their family's farm - causing the low participation rate.

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<sup>11</sup> Blythe, LeGette. *Hornets' Nest*. Charlotte, NC: McNally, 1961. 219.

<sup>12</sup> SMITH, GAIL. "FOLKS FROM FAR, NEAR SHARE MEMORIES OF PAST SCHOOL DAYS." *Charlotte Observer, The (NC)*, October 14, 1992: 14. *NewsBank*. <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.proxy141.nclive.org/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/0EB6CA1DEC810695>.

<sup>13</sup> Mecklenburg County Board of Education Meeting Minutes, February 1889, UNC Charlotte Manuscript Collection, Book 1, Minutes July 6, 1885 THRU May 31, 1895, Special Collections and University Archives, Charlotte.

<sup>14</sup> See 2.

<sup>15</sup> Mecklenburg County Board of Education Meeting Minutes, February 1889, UNC Charlotte Manuscript Collection, Book 1, Minutes July 6, 1885 THRU May 31, 1895, Special Collections and University Archives, Charlotte.



The compulsory attendance laws passed in the 1910s drove the necessity of larger schoolhouses. By 1921, the original wooden Nevin schoolhouse had expanded to accommodate a total of two teachers but that was not enough for the recently incorporated community. The Help-One-Another Club pressed the Board of Education to allocate funds to build an entirely new school building with room for four teachers. The Board agreed to build a new brick-veneer school building for a \$6,000 contract with W. W. Hawkins - who was also the Board's school commissioner at the time.<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately, the new school building burned to the ground on the afternoon of December 7th, 1922 due to a furnace malfunction - forcing students to return to the old schoolhouse temporarily.<sup>17</sup>



**Figure 2** Oil painting portraying the Nevin School in the 1930s as remembered by former student Pete McGraw. Roberts, Nina Mae Gibbons. *Nevin School*. Ca. 1989. Pete McGraw Residence.

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<sup>16</sup> "CONTRACT IS LET FOR NEW NEVIN SCHOOL." *THE CHARLOTTE NEWS* (Charlotte), July 5, 1921.

<sup>17</sup> "NEVIN SCHOOL HOUSE IS BURNED TO GROUND." *The Charlotte Observer*, December 8, 1922.



The four-teacher, brick-veneer schoolhouse that stands today (Figure 2) was erected in 1923 over the site of the burned schoolhouse with a capacity of 125 students.<sup>18</sup> In order to accommodate each elementary grade level in a four-room building, two consecutive grades would share the same teacher. As of 1925, the elementary schoolhouse served an entire district with a total of 103 pupils - while many of the rural elementary schoolhouses on the periphery of the county were serving less than 50 students. The boundaries of the Nevin district were practically synonymous with the boundaries of the Nevin Community. *The Charlotte News* cites that the Nevin Community “centers about the Nevin school house.”<sup>19</sup> Pete McGraw, who attended Nevin in the early 1930s, remembers the majority of his classmates living between Irvin Creek on Statesville Road up to the north of Nevin Road. According to McGraw, the community was poor but acted “like a family” in the years following the Depression. He and his eight brothers and sisters lived only a block away from the school and were able to go back home to eat a meal prepared by their mother during lunchtime.<sup>20</sup> With the help of local artist Nina Mae Gibbons Roberts, McGraw recaptures the Nevin schoolhouse as he remembers it in the early ‘30s (Figure 2).

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<sup>18</sup> "NEVIN SCHOOL TO BEGIN WORK FOR TERM MONDAY." *Charlotte Sunday Observer*(Charlotte), September 16, 1923.

<sup>19</sup> See 8.

<sup>20</sup> McGraw, Pete. "Nevin School and Community Interview." Interview by author. November 2, 2018.



Class portrait on the front steps of the Nevin School. Personal photograph by Pete McGraw. ca. 1930.



**Figure 3** Nevin School and Auditorium. Folk, Chris. *Nevins School*. Chris Folk Papers, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Charlotte.

An Auditorium was added to the Nevin School in 1940 and connected to the schoolhouse via brick breezeway. Lucian Dale, a reputable Charlotte architect, designed the new auditorium and Ernest Foard was awarded the contract for \$5,329.<sup>21</sup> Dale is known for designing the Walgreens Drug Store at Fifth and North Tryon and for designing the neighboring Derita High

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<sup>21</sup> Mecklenburg County Board of Education Meeting Minutes, April 1940, UNC Charlotte Manuscript Collection 2, Box 4, Minutes 1938-42, Special Collections and University Archives, Charlotte.

School Gym. The *Charlotte Observer* even praised his Walgreens as being “one of the most modern buildings in Charlotte” for the time.<sup>22</sup> The new auditorium provided the school with its first set of indoor bathrooms as well as a stage. Bre Stewart, niece of Pete McGraw who attended Nevin in the early 1950’s, fondly remembers performing a Tom Thumb wedding and once dressing up in Dutch costume for a performance when she was studying world cultures. The auditorium also served as the cafeteria for some time. Stewart recalls going to auditorium and receiving sandwiches or soup made by moms volunteering which she would take back to the schoolhouse and eat at her desk.<sup>23</sup>



Final fifth grade class portrait at the Nevin School. Personal photograph by Brenda Stewart. ca. 1955.

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<sup>22</sup> Dr. Dan L. Morrill, “Derita High School Gymnasium” (Charlotte- Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, 2018).

<sup>23</sup> Stewart, Bre. “Nevin School and Community Interview.” Interview by author. November 15, 2018.

The Nevin Community remained largely rural well into the 1950s, despite the significant expansion of Charlotte, whose center is only four miles away. Stewart remembers a dentist would occasionally come to the school to give dental exams due to how isolated the community was. The seclusion of the Nevin Community allowed teachers to develop cherished relationships with their students and students families - making them admired members of the community. These teachers often taught several generations of some families like the McGraws who had at least two generations attend Nevin.<sup>24</sup> This isolation would eventually lead the Mecklenburg County Board to assess the viability of maintaining the Nevin School toward the end of the 1940s as rural schools began to be consolidated into schools capable of sustaining hundreds of children. However, the people of Nevin were not ready to give up the school even though it was falling behind. In 1949, a delegation from the community met twice with the Board to plea for a cafeteria and for two additional rooms to be added in order to keep the modest-sized Nevin School from being consolidated.<sup>25</sup>

The pleas for a new cafeteria were eventually met by 1952. The Board agreed to erect a “temporary” quonset hut cafeteria for the Nevin School to satisfy its community members - clearly with the intention of later consolidating the school. Quonset huts were typically used for schools as storage - making a cafeteria quonset hut a unique design. The Berry Hill Elementary school, another county elementary school on the periphery of Charlotte, had plans for a quonset hut cafeteria drawn by locally-renowned architect Louis H. Asbury in 1946.<sup>26</sup> It is likely that the Board would have implemented the same or similar plans for the Nevin School cafeteria. Bre

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<sup>24</sup> See 23.

<sup>25</sup> Mecklenburg County Board of Education Meeting Minutes, October 1949, UNC Charlotte Manuscript Collection 2, Box 4, Minutes 1949-1951, Special Collections and University Archives, Charlotte.

<sup>26</sup> Berryhill School Quonset Hut (Mecklenburg County, N.C.)

[Louis H. Asbury Papers, 1906-1975 \(UNCC MC00145\)](#)

Stewart attended the school when the cafeteria was erected and recalls it as a strange, metal building.<sup>27</sup> The “temporary” structure remained on the school grounds for at least two decades before being torn down by Nevins Vocational Training Center. The building’s use as a school cafeteria, however, was temporary. In January of 1955, three years after the cafeteria was built, the students of the Nevin School were consolidated into the new Statesville Road Elementary School. The new school received a total of 341 students including all of Nevin’s teachers and students. The Nevin School was abandoned.<sup>28</sup>

### **Nevins Vocational Training Center**

The Nevin School grounds only remained empty until the Fall of 1959 when it resumed teaching and serving the community in an entirely new and unique way. The old school buildings were adapted to be used as a vocational school to educate and provide developmentally disabled adults of Mecklenburg County with job training and job opportunities. The center is the first direct service training center of its kind in the Carolinas.<sup>29</sup> C.E. Williams and J. D. Ramsey representing the North Carolina Association of Parents and Friends of Mentally Retarded Children first appeared before the County Board of Education in 1956 with interest in securing either the abandoned Nevin School or Paw Creek School to establish an organization to provide special classes for approximately 400-500 children.<sup>30</sup> It was not until 1959 that the group was able to establish the the Nevins Center to serve adults over the age of 16 - the ‘s’ was added to Nevin by mistake.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> See 23.

<sup>28</sup> "New Schools Are Opened In County." *The Charlotte Observer*(Charlotte), January 4, 1955.

<sup>29</sup> "The History of Nevins." Accessed December 17, 2018. <http://nevinsinc.org/the-history-of-nevins/>.

<sup>30</sup> Mecklenburg County Board of Education Meeting Minutes, February 1956, UNC Charlotte Manuscript Collection 2, Box 4, Minutes 1954-1955, Special Collections and University Archives, Charlotte.

<sup>31</sup> See 2.

The center was serving a total of 41 students by 1964 and by 1967, Nevins was forced to expand in order to accommodate over 100 students with a new workshop space and cafeteria. A 6,300 square-foot addition was added to the backside of the auditorium and the auditorium and schoolhouse were renovated. A federal grant covered 90% of the \$65,000 expansion cost.<sup>32</sup> The facility expanded again in the late seventies to include a warehouse and an additional classroom building. Today, known as Nevins, Inc., the organization continues its commitment to the community through providing developmentally disabled adults with the tools and education to find meaningful job opportunities.

## **Conclusion**

The community-oriented, giving spirit of the Nevin School continues to be championed through its present day occupants. Nevins, Inc. has extended the legacy and out reach of the Nevin School's grounds through its dedication to providing charitable services and education for developmentally disabled adults in Mecklenburg County. The organization will soon surpass the Nevin School as the longest reigning tenant on the site but remains a fundamental staple to the Nevin Community - owing the area its namesake.<sup>33</sup>

As the city of Charlotte continues to expand, the Nevin Community's rural identity has almost entirely dissolved into suburbia. The Nevin schoolhouse and Auditorium survives as the most significant and as the last surviving physical manifestation of the Nevin Community's humble beginnings. Additionally, the Nevin School remains as one of the oldest schoolhouses

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<sup>32</sup> *Charlotte Observer* (Charlotte, North Carolina) 82, October 12, 1967: 18. *NewsBank*.

<sup>33</sup> GUBBINS, PAT BORDEN. "NEVIN MONUMENT CLEARS UP CONFUSION." *Charlotte Observer, The (NC)*, June 9, 1993: 14N. *NewsBank*.

standing within the Charlotte township - acting and as a tangible reminder of the city's waning rural past and as a symbol of the close-knit communities, like Nevin, that once encompassed it.

## **ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT**

### **Site Context**

The Nevin School is located approximately 100 ft off of Nevin Road in the Nevin Community of Charlotte, North Carolina. The lot occupied features landscaping with trees and shrubbery added, a paved parking lot, and four main structures. The Nevin Community exists roughly four miles north of Charlotte's central business district. The Nevin Community serves primarily as residential with limited commercial buildings, several churches, and the Nevin Community Park which bisects the entire community - spanning approximately one and a half miles across. Surrounded by suburban neighborhoods erected in primarily in the 1950s and 60s with new neighborhoods continuing to be constructed, the Nevin schoolhouse and Auditorium at Nevins Inc. is the most significant non-residential building from the early twentieth-century in the area and the only business that owes the community its namesake.<sup>34</sup>

### **Nevin Schoolhouse**

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<sup>34</sup> <http://gis.ncdcr.gov/hpoweb/>





Nevin schoolhouse west-facing facade, Nevins, Inc. Personal photograph by author. October 25, 2018.

The Nevin schoolhouse is a simple one story, brick-veneered schoolhouse from 1923 with a mansard roof covered in asphalt singles. The building is rectilinear in plan, 3 by 4 bays deep, and elongated along the north-south axis to maximize sunlight. The brick veneer facade is of stretcher bond with a sill band articulated by a single row of vertically-oriented bricks wrapping around the entire building below the windows. The steeply-pitched mansard roof features low-hanging eaves. The schoolhouse sits upon its original brick pile foundation with non-dimensional lumber girders spanning across the length of the building. There is a small basement for mechanical with a bulkhead entrance slightly left of the chimney on the west elevation.

The facade was originally symmetrical until the north portico was removed to add a brick breezeway for 1941 auditorium addition. Other than the 1941 addition, the facade has

overwhelmingly maintained its original integrity. The east and west facades both feature a brick smokestack protruding slightly from the center and 2 banks of three, tall windows on either side of chimney for a total of 4 banks of windows on either side of the building. The original sash windows have been replaced with muntin-less windows.

The north and south elevations both feature a centrally-aligned entryway with no window opening. The south facade (Figure 4), facing Nevin Road, features a recessed entryway covered with an asphalt-shingle portico roof. The original entrance bay has been replaced with a single glass door and same height windows on either side. A porch extends from the south entry bay with concrete steps protruding from east and west sides. The north entry bay is no longer recessed but protrudes from the building and features an automatic sliding door. A covered-brick breezeway extends from the north entry bay to the auditorium entrance.



**Figure 4** Nevin schoolhouse south, street-facing facade, Nevins, Inc. Personal photograph by author. October 25, 2018.

The integrity of the interior of the Nevin schoolhouse has been severely altered and conceals many original building characteristics. The plaster ceiling has been concealed with a drop ceiling and the median bearing partition wall was removed. Its original roof structure, however, remains intact.

### **Similarity to Rosenwald Schools**

The African American schools built in the 1920s were constructed using professionally organized, cost-effective plans unlike the most of the white rural community schools of Mecklenburg County that preceded them. The Julius Rosenwald Foundation allocated funds for at least 26 African American schools to be constructed in the county between 1917 and 1930. The main criteria for the construction of Rosenwalds schools is white frame construction, long banks of windows, and multiple classrooms centered around a hall or coat room.<sup>35</sup> The first *Rosenwald School Bulletin*, a collection of plans and rules for building Rosenwald Schools, was published in 1920 and was likely circulated among the Mecklenburg County Board of Education - inspiring the designs for the new rural white schools in addition to the new black schools.

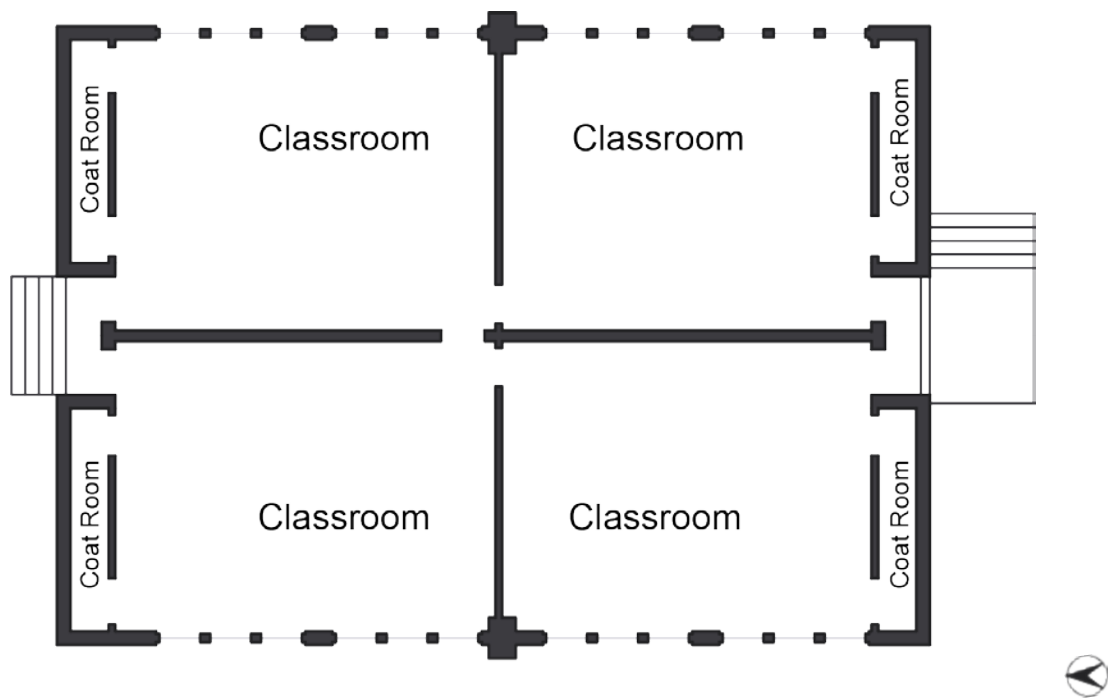
Through demolition plans and witness testimony, the original floor plan of the Nevin schoolhouse can be reconstructed (Figure 5) and articulated as one strikingly similar to a Rosenwald four-room school design (Figure 6).<sup>36</sup> Both of these plans are rectilinear and elongated along the north and south axis with long banks of windows on the the east and west-facing facades to maximize sunlight and natural ventilation. Either school features a median bearing wall that extends along the north and south axis with entrances on either end of of the

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<sup>35</sup> Frances P. Alexander, "The Billingsville School" (Charlotte- Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, 1994).

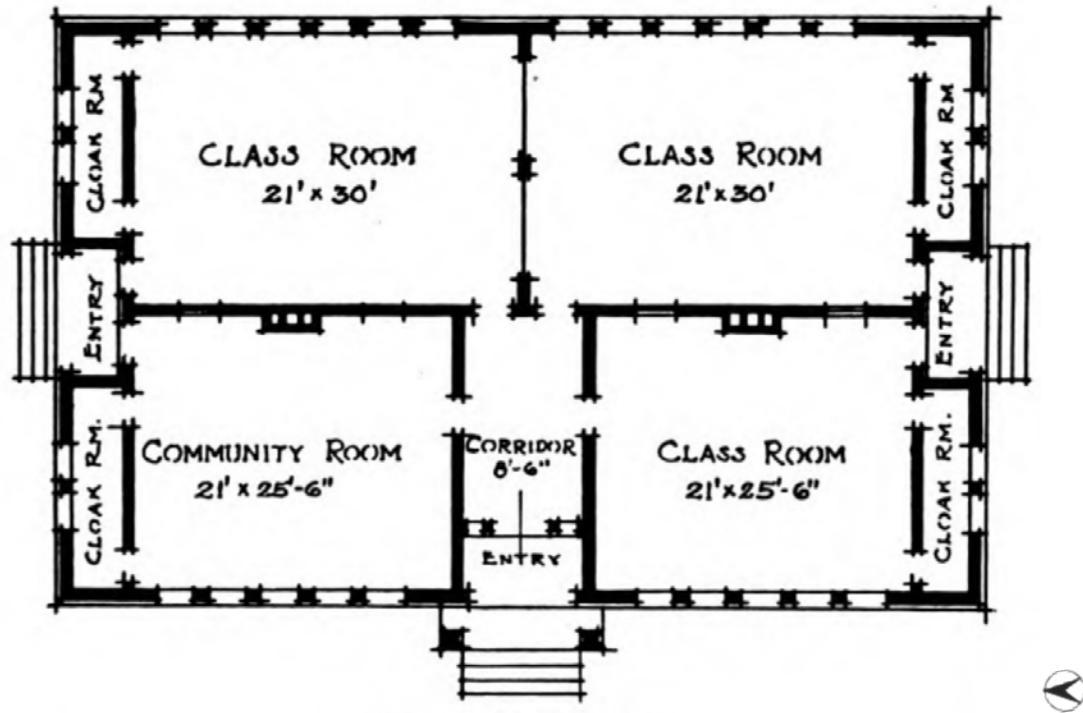
<sup>36</sup> See 23.

axis. Among other similarities, each bay features a cloak room bordering the north and south-facing facades. The plan of this Rosenwald School, like most Rosenwald Schools, was not intended for brick veneer construction making the material of its elevation not comparable to Nevin's. However, a Rosenwald school in Scotland County, NC (Figure 7) features a brick veneer facade that bears strong resemblance to the Nevin schoolhouse's elevation - with long banks of windows extending uninterrupted into the roofline.



**Figure 5** Reconstructed Nevin schoolhouse original floor plan according to witness testimony and architectural drawings. By author.





**Figure 6** Rosenwald School Floor Plan No. 30, a three teacher community school designed to face east or west shares many similarities to the Nevin schoolhouse floor plan. Julius Rosenwald Fund. *Community School Plans*. Nashville, Tenn, 1931.



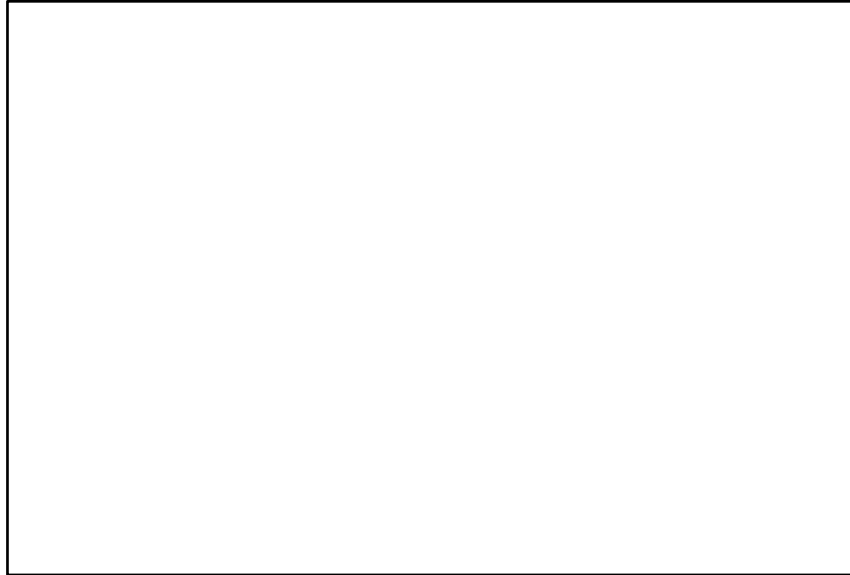
**Figure 7** A brick Rosenwald school in Scotland County, NC with a similar facade to the Nevin School. *Rosenwald Fund Schoolhouse*. Division of Negro Education. Public Instruction Records, State Archives of North Carolina, Scotland County, North Carolina

The most distinguishable difference between these two plans is that the Nevin schoolhouse does not feature a significant point of entry along the east or west-facing facade like in the Rosenwald school's plan. Both the Mallard Creek schoolhouse (Figure 8) and the Caldwell Station schoolhouse (Figure 9) feature a main point of entry along the east or west facade but the Nevin schoolhouse is oriented with its south facade facing a road running east to west - making a main entrance along the east or west facade arbitrary. The Mallard Creek schoolhouse and the Caldwell Station schoolhouse are both oriented facing a road running north to south.

The Nevin schoolhouse shares many similar characteristics with the Mallard Creek School building (Figure 8) and the Caldwell Station (Figure 9) - schools both constructed in the 1920s to serve white, rural communities within Mecklenburg County. All of these structures were erected as two to four-classroom schoolhouses with a steeply pitched roofline, low-hanging eaves, and long banks of tall, sash windows on the east and west-facing facades.<sup>37</sup> Like the Nevin schoolhouse, the Mallard Creek schoolhouse and the Caldwell Station schoolhouse strongly resembles plans for Rosenwalds schools. The numerous parallels between these rural community schools of Mecklenburg county and Rosenwald schools suggests that the Nevin School's design, among other rural white community schools commissioned by the county schools in the 1920s, was planned by the county borrowing inspiration from the efficient design framework outlined in the *Rosenwald School Bulletin*. As the county was erecting Rosenwald schools, the county likely borrowed the same design typologies for rural white schools as an effort to project a new standard vernacular of institutionalized rural schoolhouses,

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<sup>37</sup> Emily D. Ramsey, "Mallard Creek" (Charlotte- Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, 2000).



**Figure 8** Mallard Creek School represents vernacular schoolhouse design for rural communities within Mecklenburg County. Mallard Creek, NC. Emily D. Ramsey, “Mallard Creek” (Charlotte- Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, 2000).



**Figure 9** The Caldwell Station is another example of rural schoolhouse design within Mecklenburg County in the 1920s. Caldwell Station, NC. Stewart Gray, “Caldwell Station School” (Charlotte- Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission, 1996).

**Nevin Auditorium**





The Nevin Auditorium's entrance faces west and connects to the Nevin schoolhouse via brick breezeway. Personal photograph by author. October 25, 2018.

The Nevin auditorium was erected in 1940 using modernist design language with brick and concrete masonry construction. The auditorium strongly differs from the schoolhouse in both design and orientation but both share the same brick materiality which allows for the cohesiveness between the two structures. The auditorium runs along an axis perpendicular to the schoolhouse and its main entrance faces the west, away from the road. Local architect Lucian J. Dale, who designed the auditorium, was known for his modernist designs. Although the auditorium represented a newer style, it was designed to be hierarchically unobtrusive to the existing schoolhouse - sitting behind the schoolhouse's towering mansard roof.

The auditorium features a rectilinear plan 3 by 6 bays deep with the significant entry point on the west facade. The main entrance features two tall, industrial style windows on either side of a double door and an asphalt-shingled portico over the doors. The schoolhouse-facing facade features a door adjacent to the schoolhouse's door under the breezeway, three tall windows, an additional entry point, and a half-sized window. The integrity of the north facade was significantly altered during a building addition in the late 1960s. The windows that lined

this side of the building, symmetrical to the ones on the opposite facade, were sealed and several parts of the wall were punctured to allow the construction of doors to provide circulation into the new attached building. The facade opposite of the main entrance features no significant detail because it would have acted as the back of the stage.

The integrity of the interior of the auditorium has been significantly altered when it was converted to serve as office space and the space was divided into cubicles - however the existing interior structural systems remain largely intact. Opposite of the main entrance would have been a the stage - the letterbox CMU structure which framed the stage is still discernible but hidden due to the addition of office cubicles and drop-down ceilings. The north wall was significantly altered to accommodate the later building addition.

The new auditorium connects to the existing schoolhouse through a brick breezeway. A brick parapet running along the schoolhouse-facing facade of the auditorium creates an imaginary division between the breezeway and the auditorium. The addition of the brick breezeway altered the auditorium-facing facade of the schoolhouse and is the only significant alteration to the exterior of the schoolhouse since it was built in 1923.

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