



**HUNTERSVILLE SCHOOL #2  
DESIGNATION REPORT**

508 Dellwood Drive  
Huntersville, NC 28078

**Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission  
Local Landmark Designation Report  
Prepared by Gate City Preservation L.L.C.**

July 2021  
Updated December 2021

# Charlotte-Mecklenburg

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## Historic Landmarks Commission

### HISTORIC NAME(S) OF PROPERTY

- Huntersville School #2
- Huntersville Colored School
- The Little School
- Dellwood Center
- Torrence Lytle Community Center

### ADDRESS OF PROPERTY

- 508 Dellwood Drive, Huntersville, NC 28078

**PARCEL ID #:** 01908102

**DEED BOOK & PAGE:** 24027, 256-259

### ZONING

Amount of land/acreage to be designated

2.787 acres

Interior to be designated

Yes  No

#### Property Owner's Address:

The Town of Huntersville

P.O. Box 664

Huntersville, NC 28070

#### Applicant's Address:

Gate City Preservation L.L.C.

211 Tate Street

Greensboro, North Carolina 27403

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**I. ABSTRACT ..... 4**  
    A. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE  
    B. INTEGRITY STATEMENT  
    C. PROPOSED BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

**II. MAPS AND FLOOR PLANS ..... 5**

**III. ARCHITECTURAL ASSESSMENT..... 7**  
    A. ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE  
    B. ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT  
    C. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

**IV. HISTORICAL..... 9**  
    A. ROSENWALD SCHOOLS IN NORTH CAROLINA  
    B. MECKLENBURG COUNTY ROSENWALD SCHOOLS  
    C. HUNTERSVILLE SCHOOL #2

**V. CHAIN OF TITLE..... 15**

**VI. FINDING AID FOR PHOTOGRAPHS..... 15**

**VII. FIGURES ..... 16**

**VIII. APPENDIX..... 26**

**IX. BIBLIOGRAPHY..... 32**

## I. Abstract

### *Statement of Significance*

Jim Crow laws and segregationist policies of the early 20th century intentionally created vast disparities in educational opportunities for African American students in the United States. When schools were available for African American students, they were often inferior and lacked services, creating roadblocks for social mobility and equal opportunity. Rosenwald Schools were a product of one of the most unique and successful examples of a private and public partnership in the United States to combat educational inequalities. From the 1910s through the 1930s, the Julius Rosenwald Fund aided in the construction of over 800 public schools for African American students in North Carolina. Mecklenburg County boasted twenty-six of these educational institutions, one of which was Huntersville School #2.

Huntersville School #2, located at 508 Dellwood Drive, known as “the Little School” by former students and neighbors, is one of six of surviving Rosenwald schools in Mecklenburg County. Rosenwald Schools were not only a symbol of resistance to segregation, but also a grassroots act to challenge Jim Crow laws and white supremacy.<sup>1</sup> The school remained in operation until 1958. Residents of Pottstown, the predominantly African American community that provided the majority of the school’s student population and still surrounds the building, refused to let the institution languish. Pottstown community members formed Huntersville Better Community Civic Organization to purchase the building and convert it into a community center. Since 1958, the building (alternatively known as the Dellwood Center and the Torrence Lytle Community Center) has been a gathering center and focal point for the African American community in north Mecklenburg County, serving that community (including countless alumni of the school) by hosting recreational programs and camps for children, weddings, reunions, and a host of other local gatherings, as well as providing meeting and activity space for local churches and community groups. Now owned and operated by the town of Huntersville as a recreation center, the building has continuously served the African American community for nearly a century. Accordingly, the building exhibits two distinct period of historical and cultural (as an educational facility, from its 1925 construction to its 1958 closure; and as a civic and cultural center, from 1958 to the present), and has maintained integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association. It is more than a gathering place. It is an invaluable and beloved landmark when generations of African Americans to create change, remain resilient, resist discrimination, and provide strength for one another. Huntersville School #2 is an important artifact representing the history, culture, and nearly a century of the daily lives of Huntersville’s African American community.

### *Archaeological Comments*

No known archaeological features are present at this time.

### *Integrity Statement*

- **Location:** Huntersville School #2 remains in its original location on a forested lot. It is surrounded by a residential neighborhood from the same period of significance.
- **Design:** Although the building retains its form and some historical materials, it has been significantly altered to accommodate its second period of historical and cultural significance as a community

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<sup>1</sup> “The Rosenwald Schools: A Story of How Black Communities Across the American South Took Education into Their Own Hands,” *National Trust for Historic Preservation*, <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=7541c163fb20486598969c7acb559663>.

center. It is clad in German siding (some infilled and some original), many of the window openings have been closed, and non-contributing doors have been installed. The soffits appear to be plywood. The building's main entrance also seems to have changed from its southern elevation to its northern elevation.

- **Setting:** Trees around the building have matured, but the lot itself has remained relatively unchanged since its original construction.
- **Workmanship:** The workmanship of the building as originally constructed is difficult to assess because of significant alterations to the building in connection with the transition of the building to its second period of historical and cultural significance as a community center.
- **Materials:** Like workmanship, the materials of the building as originally constructed are difficult to determine because of extensive alterations to support its ongoing historical and cultural significance as a community center.
- **Feeling:** Although the building has been altered, the feeling remains. The neighborhood still feels a strong connection to the building as “the Little School,” and overall, its form has remained unchanged. When former students visit the structure, they still feel a strong sense of place.
- **Association:** The building is now used as a community center rather than a school.

### ***Proposed Boundary Justification***

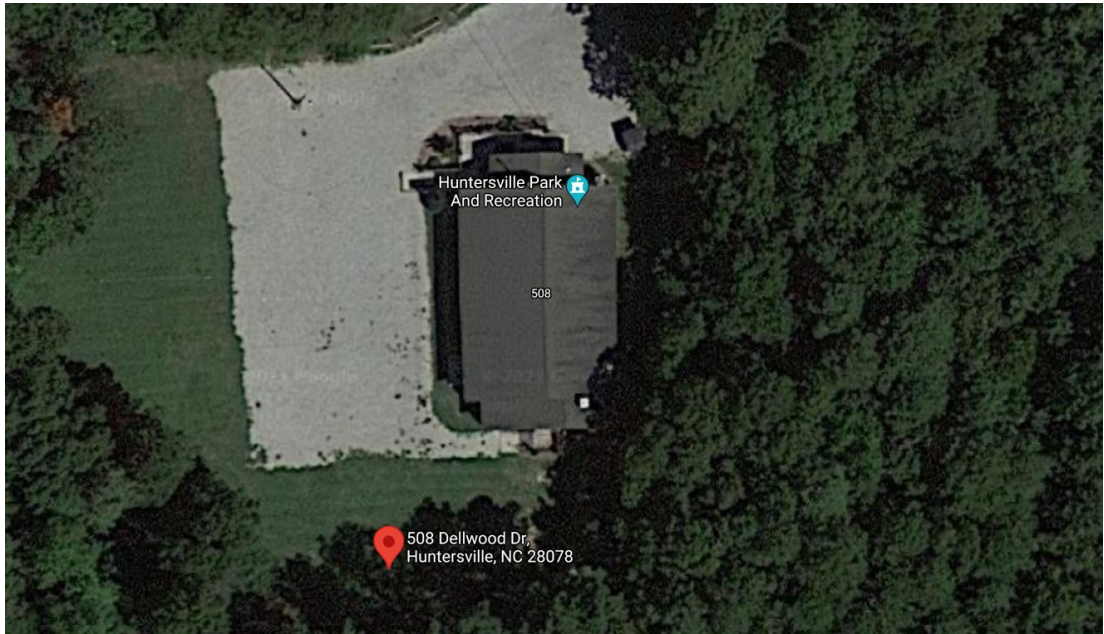
The proposed boundary for local landmark designation is the building's 2.787 acre parcel.

## **II. Maps and Floor Plans**

### ***Mecklenburg County Tax Map***



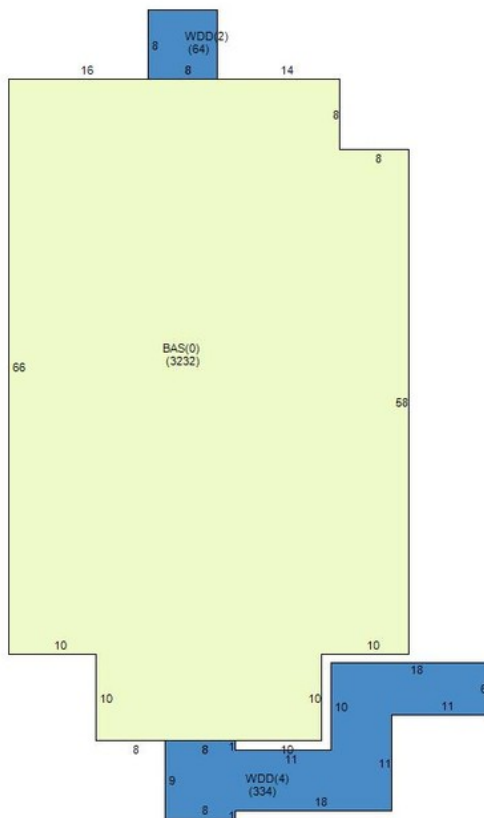
*Aerial Map*



*HPOWeb Map*



## *Architectural Drawings*



### **III. Architectural Assessment**

#### *Architectural Importance*

Between 1918 and 1927, 26 Rosenwald schools were built in Mecklenburg County. Architecturally, all Rosenwald Schools were designed as mid-size facilities with an auditorium which also served as a community center. Each school had to conform to specific design guidelines. All were frame construction, typically accommodating one to four classrooms, with large and numerous windows for ample light and ventilation, important considerations during the Progressive Era. Along with an auditorium or meeting space, there was typically an industrial room for courses in the practical arts and, in many of the rural schools, space was allocated for gardening. Huntersville School #2 has been significantly altered, however its form, location, feeling, and local historical significance remain.

#### *Architectural Context*

In the state of North Carolina, 39 extant Rosenwald Schools are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.<sup>2</sup> To view an interactive map of Rosenwald Schools in North Carolina, visit [NC SHPO ArcGIS](https://www.ncshpo.gov/arcgis/). Extant Rosenwald Schools in Mecklenburg County are Billingsville School in Charlotte (National Register), Caldwell Rosenwald School in Lemley Township, Huntersville School #2, McClintock School in Steele

<sup>2</sup> "Rosenwald Schools," North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

<<https://www.ncdcr.gov/about/history/division-historical-resources/nc-state-historic-preservation-office/architectural-13>>. Accessed June 29, 2021.

Creek, Newell Rosenwald School (Study List), and Smithville School in Cornelius. Although there are six Rosenwald schools still extant in Mecklenburg County, some with higher architectural integrity than Huntersville School #2, the historical impact of these institutions is so significant that all extant properties qualify for designation.

### ***Architectural Description***

#### ***Setting***

Huntersville School #2 is located down a long gravel driveway and situated on a forested lot. Tall trees shield it from newer construction, contributing to the feeling of the property (Fig. 1). A maintained grassy lot and newer tree plantings surround the property.

#### ***Front (North) Elevation***

Huntersville School #2 is frame construction. Over time, the property has been significantly altered to facilitate the transition of the building to its second period of historic and cultural significance as a community center for the surrounding Pottstown community and north Mecklenburg County. The overall footprint of the building has been maintained, with the entrance wing, roof pitch, and gable vents remaining extant with horizontal siding and frame construction (workmanship, design, materials), although the entry door and window configurations have changed. The materials have been supplemented in connection with the building's community center updates. A rectangular block with two front-facing gables to the north and south, make up the main block of the building. Two front-facing gable additions extend from the front (north) and rear (south) elevations. The entrance into the building is located on the north facade, the shorter side of the structure (Fig. 2). The school is covered in German siding. Its soffit is composed of a material that appears to be plywood (Fig. 8-9, 11). The front (north) elevation of Huntersville School #2 is a one-level, two-bay wide facade with two front-facing gables. The brick foundation has been painted gray (Fig. 10). A vent is located in the center of each gable. The roof is constructed of asphalt shingle. An elongated metal chimney vent protrudes from the west side of the front-facing gable extension. On this elevation there is a single entrance door, which is a modern replacement with no lights and a metal door handle (Fig. 7). On this elevation there is a very large, modern ramp constructed of pressure-treated pine to accommodate wheelchair accessibility.

#### ***Side (West) Elevation***

The side (west) elevation of the school has three sets of tall windows, one of the architectural features found in most Rosenwald Schools (Fig. 3). The window configuration consists of four openings, two elongated vertical rectangles made up of three lights and two one-light squares above each vertical window column (Fig. 6). Other than the windows, the rest of this elevation has been enclosed by siding.

#### ***Rear (South) Elevation***

Similar to the front (north) elevation of the school, a front-facing gable addition extends from the back of the main block (Fig. 4). This elevation has one modern metal door with no lights and a metal door handle. On this block, a window has been enclosed by vinyl siding. There is a small crawl space door in the brick foundation and a vent in the gable.



### *Side (East) Elevation*

On the side (east) elevation there is evidence of larger windows that have been enclosed by siding and replaced by six smaller, square windows (Fig. 5). It appears that there were larger, vertical windows on this elevation originally, likely resembling the massing of the windows on the west elevation.

## **IV. Historical**

### **Rosenwald Schools in North Carolina**

Julius Rosenwald, president of Sears, Roebuck and Company became interested in the possibility of funding Black education after reading the autobiography *Up From Slavery* by Tuskegee Institute founder Booker T. Washington in 1911. Booker T. Washington had conceived the idea of enhancing educational institutions for African American students with his staff at the Tuskegee Institute in the early 1900s through his Macon County Project, widely considered a precursor to Rosenwald Schools. Recognized as one of the nation's leading philanthropists, Julius Rosenwald supported a variety of public services. After meeting Washington, Rosenwald set his sights on a large-scale initiative to construct Black public schools across the country and set up the Rosenwald Fund to accomplish this. In its first decade, the Rosenwald Fund spent over \$3,000,000 on rural school construction.<sup>3</sup> The Rosenwald Fund was one of the most successful and innovative partnerships between private financiers and public education initiatives at the time. Rosenwald sought to create more opportunities for African American students, while also creating lasting interracial cooperation during the fraught era of legal segregation and Jim Crowism.

By 1917, Rosenwald had set up a charitable fund to construct schools for African American students in the South.<sup>4</sup> Rosenwald sought interracial cooperation through his program and specified that money for schools would only be granted if 1) the state and county contributed to the construction and maintenance of the building; 2) all citizens, regardless of race, contributed financially; and 3) African American citizens contributed money, labor, or both.<sup>5</sup> Together, Rosenwald and Washington hoped that the initiative would not only build needed schools, but promote interracial cooperation during the era of Jim Crow that would result in lasting, long-term change.<sup>6</sup> The Rosenwald system funded the schools through the state's education department in an effort to build a commitment to Black education at a statewide level. By 1932, 5400 Rosenwald structures had been built, 813 of which were in North Carolina, the most in the nation.<sup>7</sup> This not only included school buildings, but teachers' homes, shops, and in some cases, athletic facilities. Although

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<sup>3</sup> Hanchett, Thomas W. "The Rosenwald Schools and Black Education in North Carolina." Originally published in *North Carolina Historical Review*, Volume LXV, no. 4 (October 1988), pages 387-444. Online edition published 24 November 2014. [https://www.historysouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Rosenwald\\_Schools\\_NC.pdf](https://www.historysouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Rosenwald_Schools_NC.pdf). Online page 11.

<sup>4</sup> Johnson, K. Todd, "Rosenwald Schools," *NCPedia*, 2006, accessed 28 March 2021, <https://www.ncpedia.org/rosenwald-fund>.

<sup>5</sup> Mattson, Richard, and William Huffman. "Historic Architectural Resources of Rural Mecklenburg County, North Carolina." National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1990), page 17.

<sup>6</sup> Hanchett, Thomas W. "The Rosenwald Schools and Black Education in North Carolina," *HistorySouth*, 24 November 2014, page 3, [https://www.historysouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Rosenwald\\_Schools\\_NC.pdf](https://www.historysouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Rosenwald_Schools_NC.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Hanchett, Thomas W. "The Rosenwald Schools and Black Education in North Carolina," *HistorySouth*, 24 November 2014, page 26, [https://www.historysouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Rosenwald\\_Schools\\_NC.pdf](https://www.historysouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Rosenwald_Schools_NC.pdf).

the Rosenwald building program died with Julius Rosenwald in 1932, many Rosenwald schools remained in use until desegregation with the *Brown vs. Board of Education* ruling in 1954. Some schools remained in use well beyond that year.

Rosenwald schools featured efficient designs, that utilized relatively simple frame construction. Rosenwald Schools were generally a significant upgrade from many of the cramped and inadequately built Black schools of the time. Rosenwald schools were built from formal, published plans that adhered to specific guidelines. The guidelines required that schools were positioned on a north-south principal axis with large bays of windows on the east and west sides to maximize natural light, addressing the lack of electricity in some rural areas.<sup>8</sup> The schools also reflected Progressive-era educational thought by featuring an “industrial room” for manual, domestic, and agricultural training, which mirrored the teachings of Booker T. Washington. The open interior of Rosenwald schools also encouraged using the schools as a meeting or community center for adults.<sup>9</sup> Exterior architecture followed the popular Colonial Revival style and were all one story tall. Some larger schools were constructed of brick, although most were designed with clapboard siding. Before 1920, Tuskegee Institute created design plans for Rosenwald buildings for one-teacher schools, and two variations of a five-teacher school with additional plans for an industrial building, outdoor privy, and teacher residences. After 1920, the Rosenwald Foundation tasked the Nashville office director Samuel L. Smith to draw new designs. He created plans for schools ranging in size from one to seven teachers.<sup>10</sup>

In 1921, North Carolina’s General Assembly created the Division of Negro Education as a branch of the State Department of Public Instruction. This division directed the Rosenwald School Program across the state, supervised Black colleges and teacher training, and oversaw Black primary school education.<sup>11</sup> The director of the Division of Negro Education, N.C. Newbold, worked closely with Rosenwald Fund staff to distribute funding and approve Rosenwald School applications. After the end of the Rosenwald Funds, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction maintained control over the public Black schools throughout the state. From 1915 until 1930, spending per Black student in North Carolina increased five-fold, due in large part to the contributions of Black residents and matching Rosenwald fund monies.<sup>12</sup> The Rosenwald School program was a massive effort on the part of both private funders, public money, and individual contributors to drastically further the educational opportunities for African American students in North Carolina.

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<sup>8</sup> Mattson, Richard, and William Huffman. “Historic Architectural Resources of Rural Mecklenburg County, North Carolina.” National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1990), page 28.

<sup>9</sup> Hanchett, Thomas W. “The Rosenwald Schools and Black Education in North Carolina,” *History South*, 24 November 2014, page 20, [https://www.historysouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Rosenwald\\_Schools\\_NC.pdf](https://www.historysouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Rosenwald_Schools_NC.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> Hanchett, Thomas W. “Rosenwald School Plans,” *History South*, <https://www.historysouth.org/schoolplans/>.

<sup>11</sup> Hanchett, Thomas W. “Rosenwald Schools in Mecklenburg County: A History,” *Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission*, 24 February 1987, page 11.

<sup>12</sup> Hanchett, Thomas W. “Rosenwald Schools in Mecklenburg County: A History,” *Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission*, 24 February 1987, page 25.

## Mecklenburg County Rosenwald Schools

Historian Tom Hanchett importantly notes that Rosenwald Schools were not the first Black schools in Mecklenburg County. They were, however, a much-needed upgrade for African American education. Before the construction of Rosenwald Schools, Mecklenburg County's rural Black schools were typically one-room buildings where grade levels rarely went above elementary school. The Freedmen's Bureau provided some schooling for Black students, but only in more populated areas. With no federal presence, and very little state support, rural Black schools were woefully underfunded and lacked adequate resources.<sup>13</sup>

From 1918 to 1930, 26 Rosenwald Schools were built in Mecklenburg County. All of Mecklenburg County's Rosenwald Schools were built in rural, Black farming communities. This high number is likely thanks to the efforts of Dr. George E. Davis, principal fundraiser for North Carolina's Rosenwald schools.<sup>14</sup> Davis attended Biddle University (now Johnson C. Smith University), a historically Black college in Charlotte, where he later became the university's first Black professor in 1885, and later Dean of Faculty. Davis was heavily involved in the development of public schools with his wife Marie G. Davis, a school principal. Dr. Davis worked tirelessly to fundraise for Rosenwald Schools, traveling across the state to solicit public funds and donations from the community. He appealed to church congregations, which offered a safe space for organized activity in the Black community during Reconstruction.<sup>15</sup> As Charlotte was Davis's home city, it makes sense that Mecklenburg County contained such a large number of Rosenwald schools. Historian Tom Hanchett also notes that, although Mecklenburg County had the large city of Charlotte at its center, the surrounding lands were largely rural. Because of the large percentage of rural land, many Mecklenburg County students did not have good access to schools.<sup>16</sup> At the end of the Rosenwald Fund era in the mid-1930s, North Carolina began consolidating schools into larger facilities. Mecklenburg County was divided into fourteen districts by the school board with planned "union schools" containing grades 1-11, displacing the need for the smaller Rosenwald School buildings.

### Huntersville School #2

Huntersville School #2 is located at 508 Dellwood Drive near Holbrooks Road on the southwest edge of Huntersville. The school is in the Pottstown neighborhood, a historically Black neighborhood in Huntersville. Early in its history Pottstown had a primarily agriculturally-based economy where families made a living by working on farms, which include picking cotton. Some Pottstown residents also did domestic work. The opening of the Huntersville Sanitorium in 1928 to the west of Pottstown provided additional manual-labor jobs.

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<sup>13</sup> Hanchett, Thomas W. "Rosenwald Schools in Mecklenburg County: A History," *Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission*, 24 February 1987, page 1.

<sup>14</sup> Mattson, Richard, and William Huffman. "Historic Architectural Resources of Rural Mecklenburg County, North Carolina." National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1990), page 17.

<sup>15</sup> Hanchett, Thomas W. "Rosenwald Schools in Mecklenburg County: A History," *Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission*, 24 February. 1987, page 13.

<sup>16</sup> Hanchett, Thomas W. "Rosenwald Schools in Mecklenburg County: A History," *Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission*, 24 February. 1987, page 15.

Affiliated with the nearby St. Phillips Baptist Church, the original school opened for the budget year 1920-1921. Huntersville School #1 (location unknown and no longer standing) followed the Rosenwald (or Nashville) type 3 building plans (see appendix for illustration).<sup>17</sup> According to the Fisk University Rosenwald Fund Card File Database, Huntersville School #2 was built in 1925 and closely resembles a type 4 design with four classrooms. The school is a frame building with an entry on the short side of the building.<sup>18</sup> The school was constructed to accommodate four teachers and sat on a 3-acre parcel of land. The land parcel was donated by Olin W. Hunter, for whom the town of Huntersville was named after.<sup>19</sup> The total cost for the building was \$5,100. The Rosenwald Fund contributed \$1,100, while the public contributed \$3,200. The final \$800 was contributed by local Black citizens.<sup>20</sup>

In 1937 the Huntersville Colored High School opened in Pottstown, becoming the first public Black high school in Northern Mecklenburg County. Isaac T. Graham was the school's principal. The Huntersville Colored High School building had seven rooms housing both elementary and high school classes, housing a total 181 pupils.<sup>21</sup> In 1938 the former Rosenwald school building and the new high school building were incorporated into a single union school, collectively called the Huntersville Colored School. The high school had an enrollment of 135 students with four teachers, it appears that grades 5-7 shared the new building with the high school students, while the former Rosenwald building, then called the "Little School," served grades 1st through 4th. The school was accredited by the State Board of Education by 1940. Since Huntersville School #2 lacked many resources available at the new building, students often had to travel to the larger facility for such things as the library and cafeteria. Students could either take a bus when available or would walk through the woods.<sup>22</sup> Huntersville Colored School was renamed the Torrence-Lytle School in 1953.

As a union school, both buildings (Huntersville School #2 and the high school building) were under the same administration. The principal, Isaac Graham, served from 1937 until the school's closure in 1966. As a public county school, the district superintendent came by periodically for visits. Most grades had two teachers per grade, depending on school population and teacher availability. Classes usually ranged around 30 students. Torrence-Lytle had feeder years in grades 4, 8, and 9 for area students to transfer into. Every teacher had a homeroom class, and the county required a registrar to take attendance as the school was part of the public county system. Huntersville School #2 had four classrooms and it was heated by a wood stove, stoked by the older students. It had no indoor bathrooms but had several privies near the buildings. Although adjacent to Huntersville town limits, the school was not on the town water supply and had a well of its own to supply the school. The building did have a small kitchen towards the rear. Students had used textbooks

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<sup>17</sup> Hanchett, Thomas W. "Rosenwald Schools in Mecklenburg County: A History," *Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties Commission*, 24 February. 1987, page 38.

<sup>18</sup> Woodard, Sarah A., Sherry Joines Wyatt, David E. Gall, "Industry, Transportation, and Education: The New South Development of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County," *Charlotte Mecklenburg Historical Properties Landmark Commission*. September 2001, <https://files.nc.gov/ncdcr/historic-preservation-office/PDFs/ER%2019-0051.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> Oral history interview conducted by Sonya Laney and Samantha Smith, 14 July 2021. In attendance (Helen Brown Rivers, Varona Wynn, George Whitley, Janelle Harris, Dora Dubose, Bevelyn Sherrill).

<sup>20</sup> "Huntersville School," Fisk University Rosenwald Fund Card File Database, *Fisk University*, 2001, [http://rosenwald.fisk.edu/?module=search.details&set\\_v=aWQ9Mjc2Ng==&school\\_historic\\_name=huntersville&school\\_county=mecklenburg&button=Search&o=0](http://rosenwald.fisk.edu/?module=search.details&set_v=aWQ9Mjc2Ng==&school_historic_name=huntersville&school_county=mecklenburg&button=Search&o=0).

<sup>21</sup> <http://landmarkscommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Torrence-Lytle-SR.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> Oral history interview conducted by Sonya Laney and Samantha Smith, 14 July 2021. In attendance (Helen Brown Rivers, Varona Wynn, George Whitley, Janelle Harris, Dora Dubose, Bevelyn Sherrill).

that were donated from local White schools and were told to take very good care of them, or they would have to pay a fine. The school day included three recess periods for students to enjoy. The students took reading and writing courses, as well as math and natural sciences. Adjacent to Huntersville School #2 on the western side was an empty lot that contained a playground, baseball field, and the outdoor toilets. Student dance troupes from the union school often performed operettas and dramas, culminating in the school's all-important May Day celebration.<sup>23</sup>

The African American community of Pottstown was very tightly knit. Alumni of the school recall there was a family atmosphere at the school. The school sites served as the only places that members of the community could gather other than church. Local government representatives would come to the building to commune with Black residents of Mecklenburg County and it served as a place for important community discussions to be held. Community members have identified the historical traditions and rituals that were born from their relationships with the school. Alumna Helen Brown Rivers says that it is important to remember the history of learning that took place at the school. Rivers said that the education she received taught her how to conduct herself and be successful throughout her life. Another alumnus Bevelyn Sherrill said "without knowing our history, we would perish. All ages have a history with this building since it has been a central part of this community for 96 years." The Huntersville School #2 building represents the determination and resourcefulness that Pottstown residents had to get a fair education for their children.

Alumni of the school recall that the education they received prepared them for changing times. Many alumni went on to university upon graduation. In an oral history interview, alum George White (who attended the school from 1954-1956) says that the education he received never let him down and he was able to hold his ground throughout his life. White recalls the teachers being strict, but fair. He was reprimanded his very first day of school when he was caught trying to turn the clock back in order to have more time for recess. While the teachers were strict, they were also excellent at reaching their students and getting them excited about learning. There was no distinction between students, every person was treated the same. Teachers fostered a spirit of cooperation. When a student was struggling with coursework, teachers usually assigned their peers to assist them.<sup>24</sup> The sense of community and cooperation that was fostered at the school was vital to the growth, strength, and resiliency of the African American population of Huntersville.

After the closure of Huntersville School #2 in 1958, a group of Pottstown community members (chaired by LeRoy Wynn, Isaac Thompson, and Russ Sherrill) gathered together to purchase the mortgage of the school building and use it as a community center.<sup>25</sup> This community group, the Huntersville Better Community Civic Organization (renamed the Huntersville Community Development Association), led important community outreach and civic development for the African American community in Huntersville. The group started by raising funds and obtaining grant money to begin repairs to the building and provide recreation programs beginning in the 1960s. For at least six weeks each summer, the group hosted a free youth summer

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<sup>23</sup> Oral history interview conducted by Sonya Laney and Samantha Smith, 14 July 2021. In attendance (Helen Brown Rivers, Varona Wynn, George Whitley, Janelle Harris, Dora Dubose, Bevelyn Sherrill).

<sup>24</sup> Oral history interview conducted by Sonya Laney and Samantha Smith, 14 July 2021. In attendance (Helen Brown Rivers, Varona Wynn, George Whitley, Janelle Harris, Dora Dubose, Bevelyn Sherrill).

<sup>25</sup> Oral history interview conducted by Sonya Laney and Samantha Smith, 14 July 2021. In attendance (Helen Brown Rivers, Varona Wynn, George Whitley, Janelle Harris, Dora Dubose, Bevelyn Sherrill).

program as a safe place for local students to go while parents were at work. The summer program was staffed by local high schoolers and run by St. Phillips Church's Reverend Campbell and schoolteacher Mr. Beavers. Participants remember such activities as ping pong, games, basketball, baseball, horseshoes, checkers, and even a jukebox, and that the program provided snacks, hot dogs, hamburgers, and ice cream. The summer program gave community children a free, safe place to play when not in school.<sup>26</sup>

Larger events such as sock-hops were held in the gym of Torrence-Lytle on weekends, while the Huntersville School #2 building was widely used for smaller gatherings and groups, weddings, reunions, church services, and community meetings. Churches also used the building for vacation Bible school, which was always well attended. 4-H and the county agricultural extension used the School #2 building for agriculture classes, as well as home economics lessons such as cooking and upholstery.<sup>27</sup> It was and remains a hub of the Pottstown neighborhood and Northern Mecklenburg county's African American population. Torrence-Lytle closed in 1966 when Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools began desegregating.<sup>28</sup> In 2008, the Huntersville School #2 building was sold by the Huntersville Community Development Association to the town of Huntersville.<sup>29</sup> It is currently owned by the town and used by the parks and recreation department as a recreation center. Community groups, such as the Northern Mecklenburg Communities United and the Torrence-Lytle Alumni Association continue to convene in the building for meetings and events. As alumni of the school put it, "the history of the school and the building stands on its own." The building was not merely an educational institution, but a civic gathering space where the Huntersville and Northern Mecklenburg African American community could come together to create change, remain resilient, and provide strength for their neighbors. This building serves as an important artifact in the history of Huntersville's African American community.

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<sup>26</sup> Oral history interview conducted by Sonya Laney and Samantha Smith, 14 July 2021. In attendance (Helen Brown Rivers, Varona Wynn, George Whitley, Janelle Harris, Dora Dubose, Bevelyn Sherrill).

<sup>27</sup> Oral history interview conducted by Sonya Laney and Samantha Smith, 14 July 2021. In attendance (Helen Brown Rivers, Varona Wynn, George Whitley, Janelle Harris, Dora Dubose, Bevelyn Sherrill).

<sup>28</sup> "Fighting to Protect School, Its Legacy," *The Charlotte Observer*, 10 February 2008, page 1B.

<sup>29</sup> Oral history interview conducted by Sonya Laney and Samantha Smith, 14 July 2021. In attendance (Helen Brown Rivers, Varona Wynn, George Whitley, Janelle Harris, Dora Dubose, Bevelyn Sherrill).

## V. Chain of Title

### 1. Book 24027 Page 256-259

- a. Recorded on August 7, 2008
- b. Grantor: Huntersville Community Development Association, Inc.
- c. Grantee: The Town of Huntersville

### 2. Book 9913 Page 298-301

- a. Recorded on September 11, 1998
- b. Grantor: Huntersville Better Community Civic Organization, Inc.
- c. Grantee: Huntersville Community Development Association, Inc.

### 3. Book 2045 Page 387-388

- a. Recorded on June 4, 1958
- b. Grantor: Board of Education of Mecklenburg County
- c. Grantee: Huntersville Better Community Civic Organization, Inc.

### 4. Book 558 Page 329 (consultant could not find this deed)

- a. November 8, 2021 update: Community supporter Varona Wynn located the deed at Book 585 Page 329. At her request, a copy of the deed has been appended to this report as Appendix 6. A copy of the 1952 tax map showing the property has also been added as Appendix 7.
- b. February 9, 2022 update: Upon subsequent review, it was determined that the metes and bounds detailed in this deed incorrectly identify the properties conveyed to the Board of Education of Mecklenburg County, and that the 1952 tax map is based upon that erroneous information. The correct coordinates for the properties conveyed to the Board of Education by this deed are reflected in the map included as Appendix 8.
- c. Recorded on April 23, 1925
- d. Grantor: O. W. Hunter (unmarried)
- e. Grantee: Board of Education of Mecklenburg County

## V1. Finding Aid for Photographs

- Fig. 1: Setting
- Fig. 2: Front (North) Elevation
- Fig. 3: Side (West) Elevation
- Fig. 4: Rear (South) Elevation
- Fig. 5: Side (East) Elevation
- Fig. 6: Windows
- Fig. 7: Door
- Fig. 8: Siding
- Fig. 9: Exposed wood siding
- Fig. 10: Brick foundation
- Fig. 11: Soffit

**Figures**

Fig. 1: Setting





Fig. 2: Front (North) Elevation



Fig. 3: Side (West) Elevation



Fig. 4: Rear (South) Elevation



Fig. 5: Side (East) Elevation



Fig. 6: Windows



Fig. 7: Door



Fig. 8: Siding



Fig. 9: Exposed wood siding



Fig. 10: Brick foundation





Fig. 11: Soffit



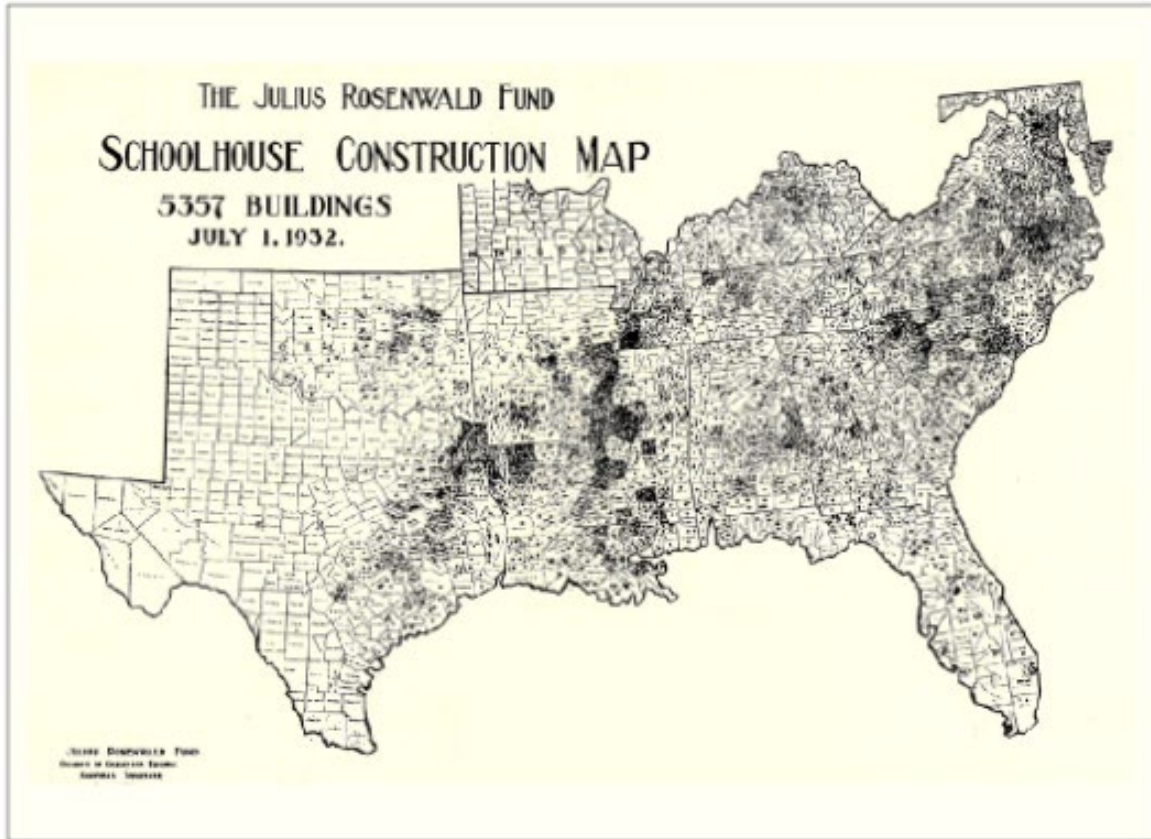
**Appendix**



Appendix 1: Huntersville School (Rebuilt), courtesy of the Fisk University Rosenwald Fund Card File Database.

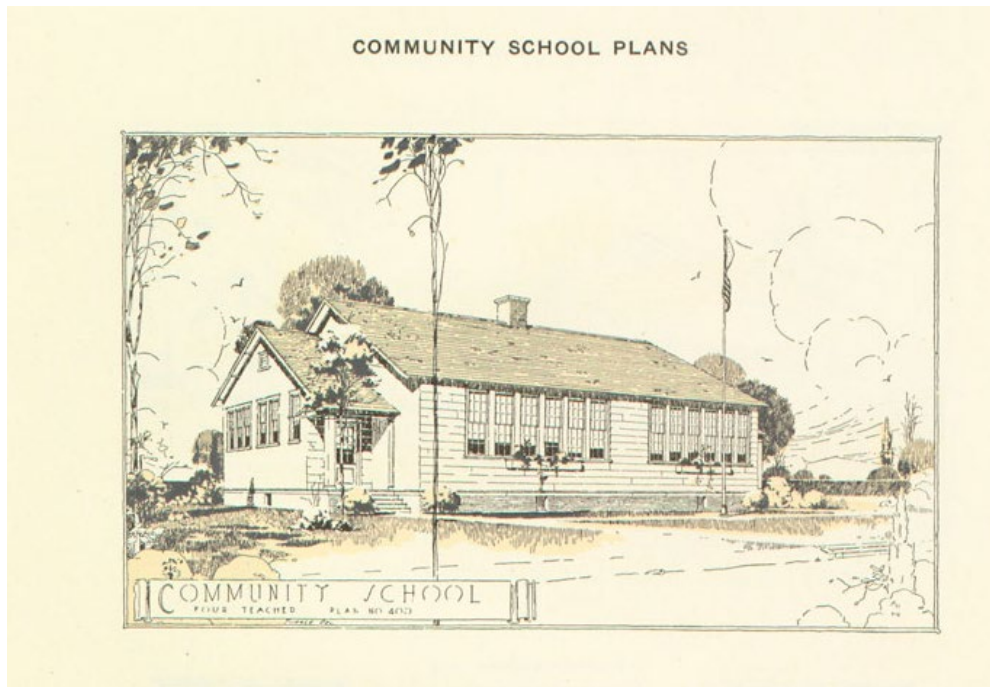


Appendix 2: Huntersville School (Rebuilt), courtesy of the Fisk University Rosenwald Fund Card File Database.

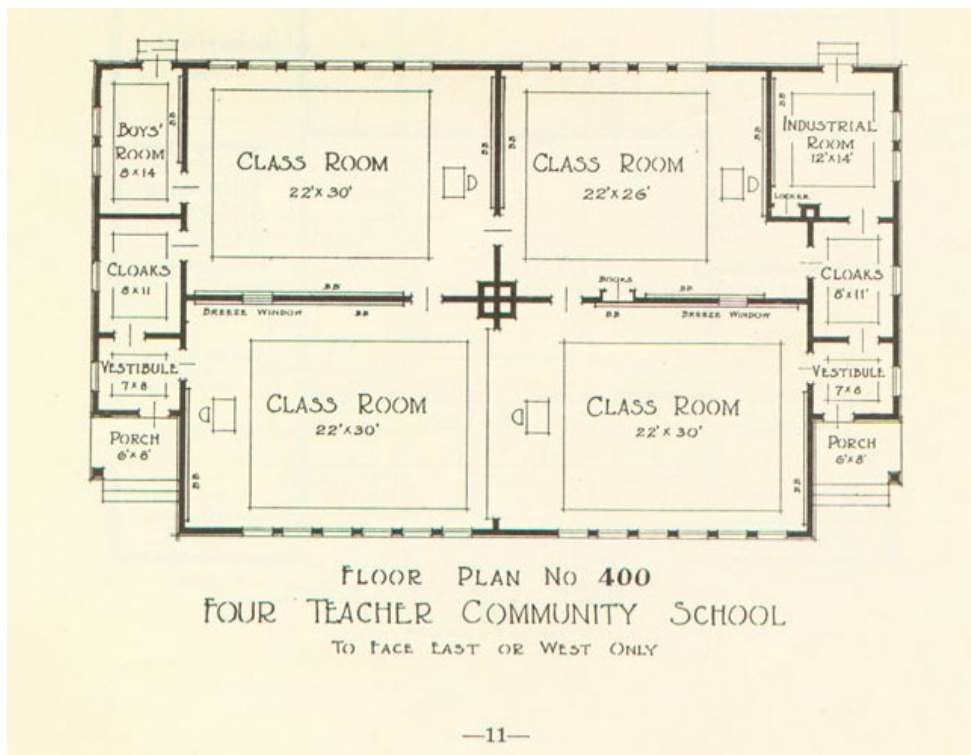


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Appendix 3: Map of Rosenwald Schools in 1932 (the final year mapped). [Fisk University, John Hope and Aurelia E. Franklin Library Special Collection, Julius Rosenwald Fund Archives](#)



Appendix 4: School Plans for four teacher school, Community School Plans, Bulletin No.3 Issued by THE JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND Nashville, Tennessee, 1924.



Appendix 5: School Plans for four teacher school, Community School Plans, Bulletin No.3 Issued by THE JULIUS ROSENWALD FUND Nashville, Tennessee, 1924.

Appendix 6: Property Deed from O. W. Hunter to Board of Education of Mecklenburg County, Mecklenburg County Deeds Book, Book 585, Page 329 (April 23, 1925).

Printed at 1410 2nd by Green City Printing Company, Charlotte, N. C.

State of North Carolina

AMOUNT U.S. FEDERAL REVENUE

Mecklenburg County

WARRANT NO. 509

THIS DEED, Made this 23rd day of April, A. D., 1925, by and between

O. W. Hunter (unmarried)

of the County of Mecklenburg and State of North Carolina party of the first, and The Board of Education of Mecklenburg County, a corporation created and existing under the laws of the State of North Carolina.

of the County of and State of party of the second part.

WITNESSETH, That the said party of the first part, in consideration of Two Hundred and fifty (\$250.00) Dollars,

to him paid by the party of the second part, the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, has bargained and sold, and by these presents do grant, bargain, sell and convey unto said party of the second part and its heirs, assigns and assigns, all these two lots

of land situate, lying and being in Huntersville Township, Mecklenburg County, State of North Carolina, and more particularly described as follows:

FIRST LOT: BEGINNING at a stake in the southeast corner of a 30 foot street, 150 feet south of the south side of Church Street, in the town of Huntersville, a corner of James McAuley's lot, and runs thence with McAuley's line, parallel with Church Street, 50 feet to a stake; thence in a northerly direction, parallel with the 30 foot street above mentioned 150 feet to a stake on the south side of Church Street; thence in a westerly direction with the south line of Church Street 50 feet to a stake in the corner of said 30 foot street; thence south with the line of said street 150 feet to the point of beginning; together with the right of way over the said 30 foot street lying between the lot hereby conveyed and the lot of O.B. Brown and entering into said Church Street.

SECOND LOT: BEGINNING at a stake at the southeast corner of the 30 foot street above mentioned, being the corner of James McAuley's lot, and the beginning corner of the lot above described, and runs thence with McAuley's line S. 16 W. 26 poles to a stake; thence with another of McAuley's lines S. 77 1/2 W. 13 1/3 poles to a pine; thence with another of said McAuley's lines N. 24 W. 12 4/5 poles to a black oak; thence still with said McAuley's line South 64 W. 159 feet to a stake on the east side of a 25 foot street; thence in a northerly direction with said street 195 feet to a stake in Espy Alexander's S. W. corner; thence with said Espy Alexander and O.B. Brown's South or rear line 300 feet to a stake, O.B. Brown's corner, thence with said Brown's line in a northerly direction 50 feet to a stake in said Brown's line and in the west line of said 30 foot street; thence in an easterly direction crossing said street 30 feet to the beginning corner, containing 2 1/2 acres, more or less, and together with the right of way over the said 30 foot street leading into Church Street on the east side of said lot, and being the same street mentioned in Lot No. One above conveyed. Together also with the right of way over the 25 foot strip lying along the west side of the lot herein conveyed and extending between the lot of Espy Alexander on the east and Remus Torrence's lot on the west 25 feet in width into Church Street above-mentioned.

The same being a part of that tract or parcel of land conveyed to O. W. Hunter by J. K. Wolfe and M. C. Hunter by deed dated September 8th, 1924, and recorded in the Register's office for Mecklenburg County in book 553 on page 558.

TO HAVE AND TO HOLD the aforesaid lots or parcels  
 of land and all privileges and appurtenances thereto belonging,  
 to the said Board of Education of Mecklenburg County, its successors  
 and assigns, to its & their only use and behoof forever,  
 And the said O. W. Hunter for himself  
 his heirs, executors and administrators, covenant with the said part of of the second part, its successors  
 and assigns, that he is seized of said premises in fee and law full right to convey the same in fee simple; that the same  
 are free and clear from all incumbrances, that he will warrant and defend the said title to the same against the lawful  
 claims of all persons whomsoever.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, The said part of of the first part of these Presents has hereunto set his  
 hand and seal the day and year above written. O. W. Hunter (SEAL)  
 Signed, Sealed and delivered in presence of \_\_\_\_\_ (SEAL)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (SEAL)  
Chas. H. Allen (SEAL)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (SEAL)

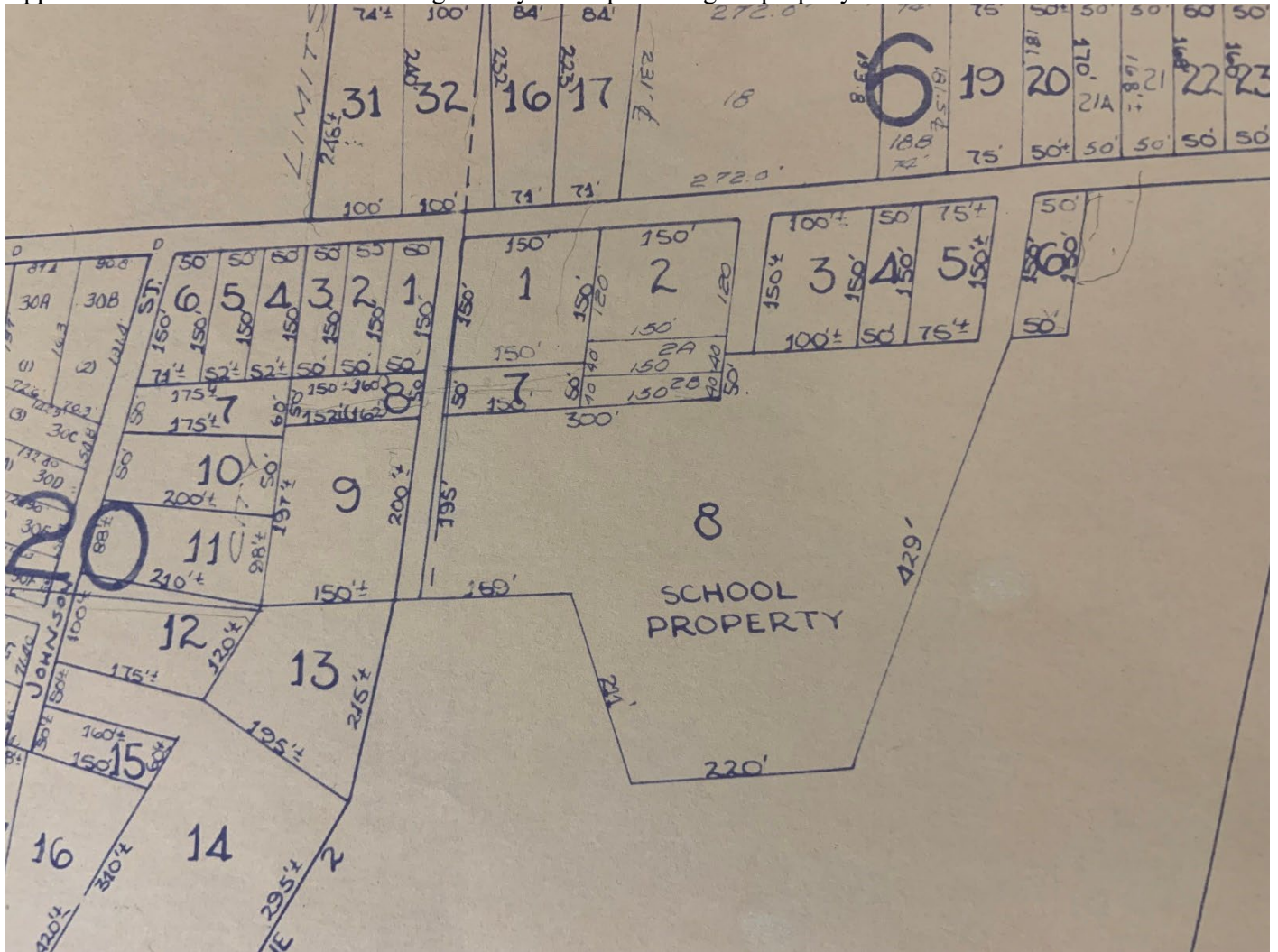
STATE OF North Carolina  
 County of Mecklenburg  
 I, Chas. H. Allen, a Notary Public  
 for said County and State, do hereby certify that O. W. Hunter (single)  
 personally appeared before me this day, and acknowledged the  
 due execution of the foregoing (or annexed) instrument, and the said  
 being by me privately examined, separate and apart from said husband taking voluntary execution of the  
 same, and that signed the same freely and voluntarily, without fear of compulsion of said husband  
 or any other person, and that he still voluntarily acquiesces thereto. Let the instrument and the certificate be registered.  
 WITNESS my hand and Notary Seal this 25th day of April A. D. 19 25.  
Chas. H. Allen, Notary Public  
My Com. Exp. 12/22/25.



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
 County of Mecklenburg  
 The foregoing certificate of Chas. H. Allen, Notary Public of said county is  
 adjudged to be correct. Let the instrument and the certificate be registered.  
 This 18 day of May A. D. 19 25.  
Mary S. Peythress, D.D.V. Clerk,  
 Superior Court

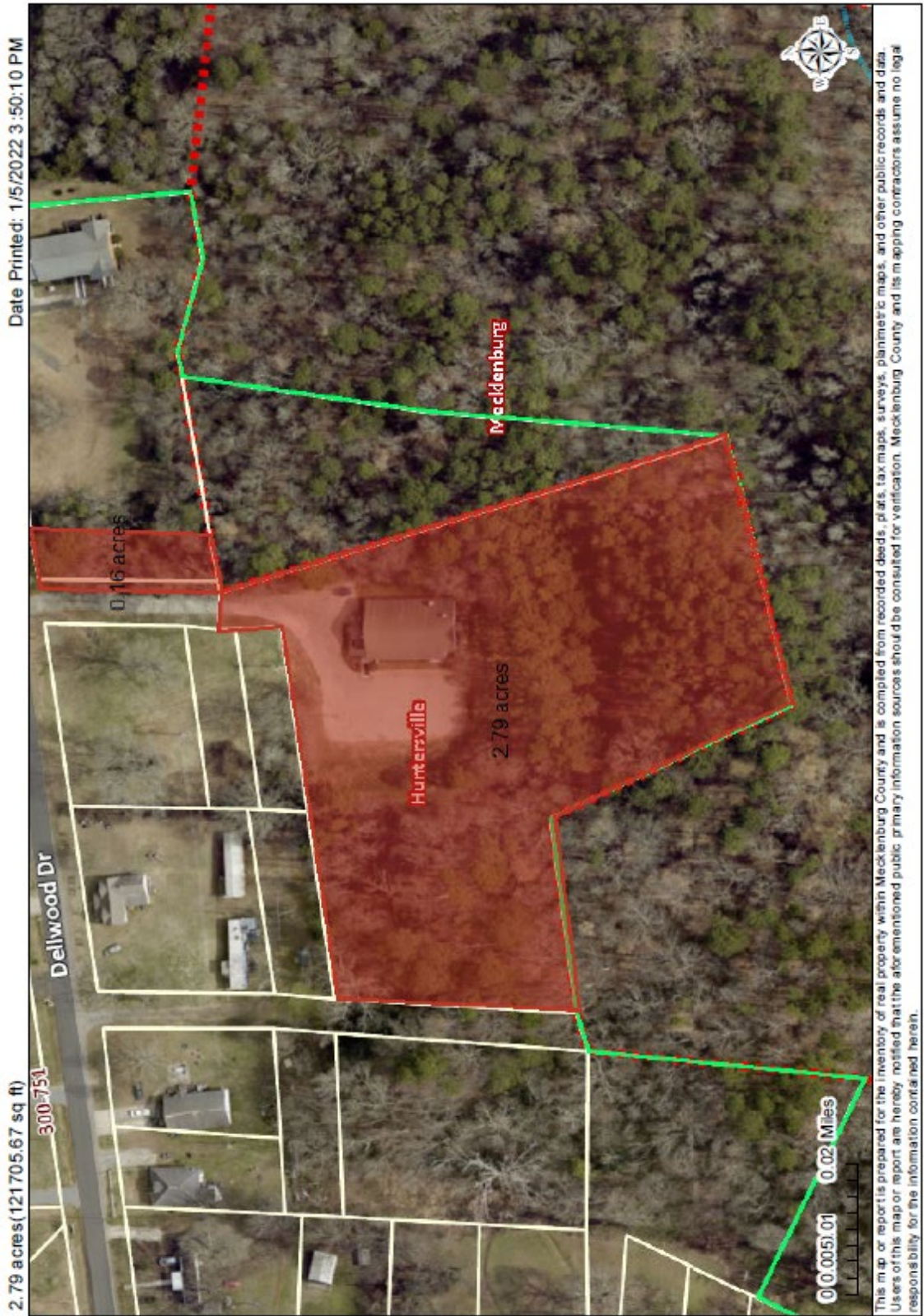
Filed at 1 o'clock, P. M., May 18 19 25  
 Registered at 11:10 o'clock, A. M., May 21 19 25.  
J. B. Renfrow Register of Deeds  
 M. D.

Appendix 7: Detail of 1952 Mecklenburg County tax map showing the property.



Appendix 8: Map reflecting the correct coordinates (area shaded in red) for the 1925 conveyance of properties to the Board of Education of Mecklenburg County by O. W. Hunter via Mecklenburg County Deeds Book, Book 585, Page 329 (April 23, 1925).

### Polaris 3G Map – Mecklenburg County, North Carolina 1930 Deed 776 - 082





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### Oral History Interviews

Oral history interview conducted by Sonya Laney and Samantha Smith, 14 July 2021. In attendance (Helen Brown Rivers, Varona Wynn, George Whitley, Janelle Harris, Dora Dubose, Bevelyn Sherrill).