

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Holt's Chapel School

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 136 Janiero Road

n/a ☐ not for publication

city or town Oriental

☒ vicinity

state North Carolina

code NC

county Pamlico

code 137

zip code 28571

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

☐ entered in the National Register.

☐ See continuation sheet

☐ determined eligible for the
National Register.

☐ See continuation sheet

☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register.

☐ removed from the National
Register.

☐ other, explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
1	0	structures
0	0	objects
2	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Rosenwald Schools in North Carolina

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

n/a

6. Function or Use**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/school

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL/meeting hall

7. Description**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER/3-Teacher Rosenwald School

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

walls wood

roof metal

other

Narrative Description

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

8. Statement of Significance**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION

ETHNIC HERITAGE/BLACK

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1922-1963

Significant Dates

1922

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

n/a

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Architect/Builder

N/A

9. Major Bibliographical References**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ Previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State Agency
- ☐ Federal Agency
- ☐ Local Government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository: _____

Holt's Chapel School

Name of Property

Pamlico County, North Carolina

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 5.88

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 _____
Zone Easting Northing
2 _____

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing
4 _____

☒ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jennifer F. Martin

organization MdM Historical Consultants Inc.

date April 20, 2023

street & number Post Office Box 1399

telephone 919/368-1602

city or town Durham

state NC

zip code 27702

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15-minute series) indicating the property's location

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Holt's Chapel AME Zion Church

street & number P.O. Box 31

telephone 252-249-1251

city or town Oriental

state NC

zip code 28571

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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Holt's Chapel School
Pamlico County, North Carolina

Introduction

Holt's Chapel School is in a sparsely populated rural area in south-central Pamlico County almost equally distant between the towns of Arapahoe, which is five miles to the west, and Oriental, which lies five miles to the east. Situated in Township Five, the school stands in an agricultural area surrounded by fields and commercial forestland. Holt's Chapel AME Zion Church, a concrete block building constructed in 1945, stands about one-tenth of a mile to the north-northeast at 2911 Kershaw Road. Kershaw Road, the nearest crossroad, is one-tenth of a mile to the north. Oriental Road intersects the east side of Janiero Road one-and-a-half miles to the south. The Neuse River is a little less than three miles to the south-southeast.

The school occupies a nearly-square, 5.88 parcel site on the west side of Janiero Road. The building is oriented to points on a compass as specified by the Rosenwald Fund. Facing east, the school is situated near the middle of the parcel surrounded on the west and south by over four acres of dense forest. A dirt lane set within a grass-covered field and lined by trees extends west from Janiero Road terminating in front of the school. The open field in front of the school occupies over one-and-a-half acres in the northeast quadrant of the parcel. The low-elevation site has sandy soil typical of Tidewater counties in North Carolina.

Holt's Chapel School is a three-teacher-school plan; however, it does not conform to the three-teacher-school plan included in the Rosenwald Fund's *Community School Plans*. The school, with its hipped roof and elongated form, closely resembles Eden Rosenwald School (built 1922) near Enfield in Halifax County, North Carolina and Ware Creek Rosenwald School (built 1921) in Beaufort County, North Carolina. These two schools and other Black schools built in eastern North Carolina in the 1920s followed plans devised by Wilmington, North Carolina architect Henry E. Bonitz. According to historian Henry Taves, the state superintendent of public instruction tapped Bonitz to draw plans for Black schools that would comply with its own guidelines and those set forth by the Rosenwald Fund. The State disseminated these plans to county school boards across the state, just as they distributed Rosenwald Fund plans. Evidence that Bonitz designed Holt's Chapel School could not be found.

Description

Holt's Chapel School
1922

Contributing Building

Holt's Chapel School is a one-story, rectangular building with weatherboard siding whose main block consists of three classrooms set side-by-side under a hipped roof. The front-gabled industrial classroom projects from the center of the main block and is flanked by two smaller cloakroom projections. Two front

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Holt's Chapel School
Pamlico County, North Carolina

porches are inset on each side of the industrial classroom and are sheltered by the overhang of the hipped roof. Wooden stairs, replacements of the original, lead to the original double-leaf, paneled wood doors at the entrances. A wood handicap ramp with a wood balustrade extends from the north side of the north porch. It proceeds in a L shape terminating in front of the school's north façade. The building rests on brick piers with open space between, a common building practice for Rosenwald schools. Three brick flues rise from the new standing-seam metal roof crowning the former school. Rafter tails are visible on the underside of the overhanging eaves.

Profuse natural light provided by copious windows, a significant feature of Rosenwald Schools, comes from the seventeen two-over-two, double-hung wood sash that span the entire rear (west) elevation. On the façade, three windows provide light to the industrial classroom and single windows illuminate each cloakroom. The side elevations lack windows. The original windows were replaced in the 1970s with incompatible sash that impacted the school's architectural integrity. The current windows are not original but were handcrafted and installed in the building in 2021.

The interior retains its original layout and plain finishes typical of Rosenwald Fund schools. The three main classrooms extend side-by-side on a north-south axis across the building's main body. The banks of windows on the west elevation illuminate each room. Removable partitions allow for the creation of one large space. The partitions are oversized doors of rail-and-style construction with beaded board panels. Unlike most Rosenwald schools where classroom walls are either hinged or hung on a rail system, the doors are held in place with slide bolts. Currently, the partition doors between the two southernmost classrooms have been removed but remain in possession of the school's trustees.

The classrooms retain original moldings, trim, blackboards, and paneled wood doors. The southernmost classroom has a blackboard on its east wall and contains the stage. The middle classroom has a blackboard on its north wall. Both the southern and middle classroom currently have plywood-covered floors. The northernmost classroom remains unpainted and retains its original hardwood floors. Entrance to this room is through a modern composite door. The remainder of the interior is painted white. It is likely the entire interior was originally unpainted, but this could not be confirmed. The industrial classroom, which contains a simple kitchen, retains beadboard walls and ceilings but its floor is covered with modern vinyl flooring.

The most significant change has been the conversion of the cloak rooms to bathrooms. Each contains a toilet and wall sink.

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Holt's Chapel School
Pamlico County, North Carolina

Swing set
Circa 1950
Contributing Structure

A tubular steel swing set with attached monkey bars and wood swing seats stands southwest of the building.

Statement of Integrity

The school retains excellent architectural integrity including intact design, workmanship, and materials. The building stands in a rural setting at the location where it was constructed in 1922. Surviving physical features, including overhanging eaves, large windows on its west elevation, the arrangement of interior classrooms and support spaces, and intact interior finishes, convey the building's historic character and assert its integrity of feeling. Its integrity of association comes from its history as a school built for Black children with partial support from the Rosenwald Fund and the building's ability to convey that history through the retention of character defining features.

Statement of Archaeological Potential

The school is closely related to the surrounding environment and landscape. Archaeological remains, such as trash deposits, privy features, and other structural remains which may be present, can provide information valuable to the understanding and interpretation of Holt's Chapel School. Information concerning institutional culture and Black identity, as well as spatial organization of outdoor activities and the character of daily life at the school, can be obtained from the archaeological record. Therefore, archaeological remains may well be an important component of the significance of the school. Earlier deposits associated with the development of the Holt's Chapel community also may be present on the parcel. At this time no investigation has been done to discover archaeological remains on the property, but it is likely that they exist, and this should be considered in any development plans.

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Holt's Chapel School
Pamlico County, North Carolina

Summary

Holt's Chapel School is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places on the local level of significance under Criterion A in the areas of education and Black ethnic heritage. Its significance derives from its association with Black education in Pamlico County from 1922 to 1963, the period during which it enrolled students in a racially segregated school district. One of four schools in the county to receive partial funding and assistance from the Rosenwald Fund, Holt's Chapel School originally served Black students from kindergarten to eighth grade in District Five in the southern portion of Pamlico County. After the school closed in 1963, its students transferred to the elementary department at Pamlico County Training School, which consolidated all Black students in the county at its campus in Bayboro.

Holt's Chapel School also meets Criterion C for its architectural significance as an intact three-teacher rural schoolhouse built with financial support from the Rosenwald Fund and based on a plan issued by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. The intact frame building standing on an open-pier brick foundation displays the character-defining features of a 1920s rural school including the banks of oversized windows on its west-facing elevation. Holt's Chapel School is one of four Rosenwald Fund schools built in Pamlico County. Only one other, Mesic School, a two-room plan, remains standing. Compared to that building, Holt's Chapel School retains a high level of architectural integrity.

The historic and architectural context for Holt's Chapel School is included in the Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF), "Rosenwald Schools in North Carolina." Within the MPDF, specific context is provided in "The Rosenwald Building Program in North Carolina, 1915-1932." Built in 1922, the school meets the registration requirements for Rosenwald School Subtype II for school buildings built in North Carolina between 1920 and 1932 under the supervision of and partial funding from the Rosenwald Fund's Southern Office in Nashville, Tennessee. As a Subtype II building, Holt's Chapel School displays groupings of windows on its west elevation, minimal detailing, a simple rectangular form with slightly projecting porches, and faint Craftsman-style detailing evidenced in its wide overhanging eaves and rafter tails. As an example of model rural school design, Holt's Chapel School includes an industrial room, blackboards along two walls, and cloakrooms.

Holt's Chapel School retains excellent architectural integrity including intact design, workmanship, and materials. It remains in its original location in a rural setting and was built following a design approved by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Holt's Chapel School exhibits a high degree of integrity compared to the one other surviving Rosenwald Fund school remaining in Pamlico County, Mesic School, a two-teacher school located in the rural community of Mesic.

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Holt's Chapel School
Pamlico County, North Carolina

Historic Background and Education/Ethnic History Context (Criterion A)

Pamlico County, like all county educational systems in North Carolina, operated a racially segregated school system until the late 1960s or early 1970s, depending on the county. Despite federal law established by *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896, school buildings, supplies, and furnishings in Black schools in Pamlico County remained inferior to those in White schools for most of the twentieth century. The county paid Black teachers less money than White teachers and denied them training opportunities freely given to their White counterparts. Beginning in the nineteenth century, the Pamlico County school board routinely denied funding and adequate accommodation to Black children despite the persistent requests of Black families. One hundred years of school board records reveal the extent to which White officials charged with providing a sound education to all county citizens denied opportunities to Black children in the county.¹

Leading up to the school's construction in 1922, some effort had been made to build better schools for Black students. In 1915, Nathan Carter (N. C.) Newbold (1871-1957), State Supervisor of Rural Schools, wrote to Pamlico School Superintendent Thomas B. Attmore informing him that the Negro State Teachers Association hired C. H. Moore, a Black professor from Greensboro, to "travel different parts of the State and give what assistance he can towards securing better schools for his race." The agent alerted Attmore that Professor Moore would visit on September 7, 8, and 9, 1915, to observe Black schools and visit several communities in the county.²

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction records indicate Attmore tried to get new school buildings for Black students during his tenure as superintendent. In a March 8, 1916 letter to N. C. Newbold he declared, "I am very anxious to build a new school for the Colored people at Florence." He described their current building located in the small community in eastern Pamlico County as "a very poor, dilapidated, and unsanitary affair." Attmore implored Newbold, "if you can give us aid at this work from the Rosenwald Fund then we will be able to build them a good comfortable [school]house and finish it." Attmore's greater desire, according to his letter, was to build "a chain of good [school]houses for the colored people." To Attmore, having better schools for Black students "would set a great moral example to all the rest of the county, white and colored alike, and show up so well to people passing through Pamlico County."³ Newbold was noncommittal about the Florence School to Attmore in a letter dated March 22, 1916. He responded that he would let him know about the funding but that his office was overwhelmed with

¹ Pamlico County Board of Education minutes on microfilm at the North Carolina State Archives in Raleigh reveal distinct differences in funding between White and Black schools.

² N. C. Newbold to T. B. Attmore, letter dated September 3, 1915, Division of Negro Education, Department of Public Instruction, General Correspondence of the Director, Last Name A, 1915-1916, State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh.

³ T. B. Attmore to N. C. Newbold, letter dated March 8, 1916, Division of Negro Education, Department of Public Instruction, General Correspondence of the Director, Last Name A, 1915-1916, State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh.

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Holt's Chapel School
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applications for Rosenwald Fund money.⁴ Two months later, Newbold informed Attmore that he had recommended funding the school at Florence.⁵ The buildings was a two-teacher school built in budget year 1915-1916 under the Tuskegee Institute for a cost of \$1,500. The Rosenwald Fund contributed \$300, while \$669 came from local and state funds. Black citizens provided \$531.⁶

In 1918, after visiting a school for Black students near Arapohoe, Superintendent Attmore wrote to Newbold again asking for help for a school near the small community in southwest Pamlico County. Attmore wrote on February 9, "my heart goes out to those folks and I wonder if you cannot do something for them with your Rosenwald money." According to the letter, community members built a two-story school seven years earlier but, on his visit, Attmore found it lacking a foundation and needing a new roof. Attmore added "I hate to ask for any help on an old job and on a [school]house that is not built on the present day plan but these people are in need and deserve a great deal. They live in an isolated section and have not had a square deal."⁷ No record of a reply from Newbold could be found in the North Carolina State Archives.

In addition to the superintendent, others involved in education in the county advocated for improved school buildings for Black students. In a letter dated April 30, 1918, Thomas Tazwell Ringer, principal of Pamlico County Training School, a Rosenwald Fund school built in 1914, informed Newbold, "I am now planning to go out in the remote places of the county and encourage the raising of funds to build two new school houses."⁸ Ringer had previously been the supervisor of Black schools in Duplin County.

From July 1, 1921 to June 30, 1922, the county received \$750 from the Rosenwald Fund and \$400 from a source referred to in school board minutes as the Equal Education Bond, either a local or state fund. During the same period, the county spent \$1,622.63 on schoolhouses, sites, and equipment. Total expenditures for white schools were over \$103,000 compared to \$11,880 for Black schools.⁹

⁴ N. C. Newbold to T. B. Attmore, letter dated March 22, 1916, Division of Negro Education, Department of Public Instruction, General Correspondence of the Director, Last Name A, 1915-1916, State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh.

⁵ N. C. Newbold to T. B. Attmore, letter dated May 16, 1916, Division of Negro Education, Department of Public Instruction, General Correspondence of the Director, Last Name A, 1915-1916, State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh.

⁶ Fisk University Rosenwald Fund Card File Database, Fisk University.

⁷ T.B. Attmore to N. C. Newbold, letter dated February 9, 1918, Division of Negro Education, Department of Public Instruction, General Correspondence of the Director, Last Name A, September 1917 to August 1918, State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh.

⁸ T.T. Ringer to N. C. Newbold, letter dated April 30, 1918, Division of Negro Education, Department of Public Instruction, General Correspondence of the Director, Last Name R, September 1917 to August 1918, State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh.

⁹ Pamlico County Board of Education minutes, October 2, 1922, (microfilm), State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh.

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Holt's Chapel School
Pamlico County, North Carolina

The application for Holt's Chapel School, a three-teacher school included in the 1921-1922 Rosenwald Fund budget year, was approved on August 16, 1921. The total cost of \$3,450 was funded by \$1,000 from the Rosenwald Fund, \$450 from local Black citizens, and \$2,000 from local and state budgets. The building was completed on July 17, 1922.¹⁰ County school board records for the period when Holt's Chapel School was constructed do not survive so there is no information surrounding the approval of the building plan by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction or the circumstances around its construction, such as the builders or sources of the design.

Holt's Chapel School opened for students in kindergarten, referred to as primer, through eighth grade in the fall of 1922 serving the communities of Styrontown, Mattocksville, Kershaw, Holt's Chapel and Lovick Neck. Although Holt's Chapel School was a three-teacher school, only two teachers at one time ever taught there. For Holt's Chapel School, the school board employed a professor, equivalent to a principal, and a teacher. The professor, who was always male during the school's history, taught fifth through eighth grade and a female teacher taught primer through fourth grade.¹¹

During the period when Holt's Chapel School was built, educational opportunities differed greatly for White students versus Black children. In 1922, the year Holt's Chapel School was completed, there were fourteen schools for Black students in Pamlico County compared to twenty-six for White children. All schools for Black students were frame while eight White schools were brick. Only one high school was available to Black students. Black students had no busses, while 267 white students rode on the thirteen busses available to them. Twenty-one white school libraries operated compared to three libraries for Black students. While the three libraries for Black children contained 311 books, 1,412 books were available to White students.¹²

A year after Holt's Chapel School was completed, Superintendent Attmore reported to Newbold on the good state of Black schools in Pamlico County. Attmore informed him, "During the last few months, we have completed two good buildings, one three room and industrial room and a one room and industrial room." The three-room school Attmore refers to was Holt's Chapel School.¹³

Throughout most of the history of Holt's Chapel School, an advisory board made up of parents or local individuals supported and advocated for the school. The first advisor listed in the school board minutes in

¹⁰ Julius Rosenwald Fund Roster—Rural Schools, 1921-1925, State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh.

¹¹ Teresa Badger, interview with Jennifer Martin, September 10, 2018.

¹² Pamlico County Board of Education minutes, July 3, 1922, (microfilm), State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh.

¹³ T.B. Attmore to N. C. Newbold, letter dated March 17, 1923, Division of Negro Education, Department of Public Instruction, General Correspondence of the Director, Last Name A, September 1922-August 1923, State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh.

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Holt's Chapel School
Pamlico County, North Carolina

1926 as M. Faison, likely referring to Marshall Faison, a farmer living on China Grove Road in Township 5. The longest serving advisors were James Borden, Colonel Smith, and Ben Dozier, who served in the 1950s until the time when the school closed in 1963.¹⁴

The construction of Holt's Chapel and other schools for Black students failed to alleviate the county's inequality in educational offerings. Regular inspections by State of North Carolina education officials spotlighted the inadequate response to the needs of Black children. In December 1950, Daisy Ruby Walker, State Supervisor of Negro Elementary Schools, reported on her visit to Pamlico County, "we found teachers and pupils in this county struggling against almost incomparable odds—big classes, very, very poor buildings, limited supplies, and no supervisor." Of the nine elementary schools she visited, "it was learned that no Negro school in the county will pass any inspection." Ms. Walker revealed that the superintendent informed her that the county was working on "a building program for the Negro schools."¹⁵

In the late 1940s, the Pamlico County Board of Education began making plans for a new consolidated high school for White students in Bayboro. The Board retained an architect and put out bids for contractors to build the modern campus. Pamlico County Central High School opened in September 1951.¹⁶

The same year the new White high school was completed, Black families expressed dismay at the lack of a building program for schools for their children. The school board minutes for February 1951 record that, "a delegation made up of colored people came before the Board to ask what the progress being made on the colored school building program."¹⁷ The board responded that it planned to act soon but could not agree on how to spend the \$83,000 it had acquired from public funding to put toward Black schools. Some board members wished to build a new building at the all-Black Pamlico County Training School in Bayboro, while others proposed splitting the funds between the training school and a smaller project in Oriental. To settle the matter, the board conferred with Clyde A. Erwin, State Superintendent of Public Instruction. In a letter to the board dated March 8, 1951, Erwin, aware that segregation was under potential legal challenge, cautioned the board to use the funds in a high-profile manner that would result in a substantial building for Black students. In his letter, Erwin warned "in the event of a federal court case in Pamlico County, your Board would, in my opinion, be in a much more favorable position to do a good job at Bayboro rather than to defeat this purpose by spending [money] at Oriental where you could not hope to do anything

¹⁴ Pamlico County Board of Education minutes, 1926-1959, passim, State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh.

¹⁵ Pamlico County, December 8, 1950, Division of Negro Education, Department of Public Instruction, State Supervisor of Elementary Education; School Visitation Reports and Summary, 1950-1951, State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh.

¹⁶ "Quarter-Million Project Gives Pamlico Educational Lift," *News and Observer* (Raleigh), April 6, 1952.

¹⁷ Pamlico County Board of Education minutes, February 5, 1951, (microfilm), State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh.

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Holt's Chapel School
Pamlico County, North Carolina

worthwhile with such a small amount of money." The board followed his advice and moved forward with a new building at the training school.¹⁸

Progress for Black students did not come quickly enough for some families, especially those whose children attended school in rural parts of the county. In 1951, a group of fifty-five Black citizens in Oriental retained attorney M. Hugh Thompson (1898-1974) of Durham to represent them in their effort to integrate schools in the county. Thompson was a prominent civil rights attorney who challenged segregation in public places including schools, hospitals, and recreational facilities. He served as part of a team that argued before the U. S. Supreme Court resulting in the integration of the University of North Carolina.¹⁹ The action of Thompson and his clients came three years before *Brown v. the Board of Education* and was the first lawsuit in North Carolina to challenge racial segregation in schools.²⁰ In a letter dated July 17, 1951 and addressed to the Pamlico County Board of Education, Thompson revealed that he visited the White and Black schools in the county and it was "apparent that there are flagrant discrepancies existing between such facilities, in favor of the children of the white race." He further declared "the children of the colored race are desirous of attending schools provided for white children as such physical facilities and educational opportunities offered are superior to those provided for and offered colored children."²¹

To counter Thompson, the school board invited a group of twenty-five to thirty Black school committeemen to the same August 7 meeting where Thompson's letter was read. The board gave a presentation highlighting their plans to build a consolidated high school for Black students in Bayboro and to carry out maintenance on all the Black school buildings. When the board chair asked by a show of hands how many of the Black school committeemen wanted their children to go to school with white students, none raised his hand. The meeting minutes indicate that the school board's response to lawyer Thompson's letter was that "a large group of the very best colored citizens had spoken" and agreed that White and Black students should remain at separate schools.²² In an article entitled "Pamlico Negroes Endorse Segregation," the *Raleigh News and Observer* newspaper reported that the men "have expressed themselves by unanimous vote as favoring the present system of segregated schools in Pamlico."²³ It remains unknown to what degree the committeemen felt intimidated in their response to the Board's query in such a public

¹⁸ Pamlico County Board of Education minutes, February 26, 1951, (microfilm), State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh.

¹⁹ Amos N. Jones, "The Old Black Corporate Bar: Durham's Wall Street, 1898-1971," *North Carolina Law Review*, Volume 92, September 1, 2014, p. 1876.

²⁰ David Cecelski, "A Civil Rights Milestone—Pamlico County, 1951," David Cecelski: New Writing, Collected Essays, Latest Discoveries (blog), March 1, 2019; "Suit Brought Results in Pamlico," *News and Observer* (Raleigh), September 23, 1956.

²¹ Pamlico County Board of Education minutes, August 7, 1951, (microfilm), State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh.

²² Pamlico County Board of Education minutes, August 7, 1951, (microfilm), State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh.

²³ "Pamlico Negroes Endorse Segregation," *News and Observer* (Raleigh), August 12, 1951.

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forum, but it is likely the Black citizens could not express their true feelings openly in the context of a rural North Carolina county where Jim Crow infused all parts of society.

In October 1951, New Bern attorney Robert Emmet Whitehurst, special counsel to the board, advised that the county had two alternatives to deal with the legal action coming from M. Hugh Thompson and his clients, the group of Black residents in Oriental: "abolish segregation or provide similar and equal facilities in the schools of the two races." He declared that the United States Constitution does not prohibit segregation, but it does require equal facilities. He advised two possible courses of action: to build a new school for Black students in Oriental or convert the white elementary school in Oriental into a school for Black students and move the white students to another school. He pointed out that the latter action would mean a Black school would be located within a White residential neighborhood in Oriental. He concluded that if the board did not act on one of his suggestions, "the Court will probably order non-segregation."²⁴

In December 1951, the Pamlico County school board requested the county commissioners authorize a bond election to raise at least \$100,000 "for the purpose of erecting additional facilities for the colored schools of Pamlico County."²⁵ In March 1952, the bond issue was approved.²⁶

In March 1952, the county's insurance company set a value on each school building. Holt's Chapel was valued at \$2,450 and its contents at \$150. Outside of Pamlico County Training School, Holt's Chapel was the most valuable school building for Black students in the county.²⁷

In April 1952, the board of education released a long-range plan for building Black schools. Instead of integrating, it declared that the Pamlico County Training School would become the site of consolidated schools for elementary and high school students. The plan laid out that as "funds for such purpose are available and as general economic conditions permit...all Negro schools in Pamlico County [would] be consolidated at the Pamlico Training School." School Superintendent A. H. Hatsell instructed architects B. H. Stephens and Son to make plans to build at least six more classrooms, or as many as could be built with \$100,000 bond money, and a gymnasium at the Training School. The plan specified that only elementary schools in Merritt and Oriental would be consolidated at the Bayboro campus, while the remaining, including Holt's Chapel School, would operate as they had.²⁸

²⁴ Pamlico County Board of Education minutes, October 12, 1951, (microfilm), State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh.

²⁵ Pamlico County Board of Education minutes, December 3, 1951, (microfilm), State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh.

²⁶ Pamlico County Board of Education minutes, April 7, 1952, (microfilm), State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh.

²⁷ Pamlico County Board of Education minutes, April 7, 1952, (microfilm), State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh.

²⁸ Pamlico County Board of Education minutes, April 7, 1952, (microfilm), State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh.

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In the fall of 1952, an elementary building was completed at Pamlico County Training School, the first building in a four-phase construction project specifically designed to provide space for elementary-age children. Described in April 1953 as "modern in every detail and which is planned to become the center of all Negro school elementary education in Pamlico County," the one-story, flat-roofed building was designed to accommodate the county's children "into one giant central elementary school." Beginning in 1953, six classrooms, a gymnasium/auditorium, heating plant, and sewage system were added to the new building.²⁹

In a county that in 1917 was the first in the state to employ busses to transport students to school, Black children failed to receive the same transportation as their White counterparts. In October 1953, a Dr. Warren of Oriental spoke to the board about Black children from the town "walking an excessive distance over bad roads to the Holt's Chapel School." The doctor expressed concern for the health of the children who, in some cases, walked five miles to school. The board chair reported that the school system was aware of the situation and were working with State authorities to re-route busses to alleviate the situation.³⁰

One of those Holt's Chapel School students who walked to school was Vernon Cooper (b. 1939), who lived with his family on Cooper's Bend Road. He attended Holt's Chapel School up until the sixth grade and walked four miles each way. In the winter, he and his friends would sometimes stop to build fires along the route to keep warm. He recalls "all the kids in the whole neighborhood went to this school, Holt's Chapel, Styrontown Road, Janiero Road, even some older ones in Arapahoe who didn't have a school, they came here."³¹ By 1956, the county added eight additional busses for Black students.³²

On May 17, 1954, the United States Supreme Court handed down a decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* that "separate but equal" was unconstitutional. The landmark case, which represented five coordinated lawsuits aimed at integrating schools, eventually led to the desegregation of schools and other public places.

Despite *Brown*, most school systems in the American South did not integrate, and instead defied federal law by maintaining separate schools for the races for almost twenty years. Many White school officials and citizens saw the case as more of a warning sign than a reality and worked to stave off integration. School

²⁹ "Pamlico Negroes Get New School," *News and Observer* (Raleigh), April 5, 1953; "Two Negro Schools Are Consolidated in Pamlico County," *News and Observer* (Raleigh), May 24, 1953.

³⁰ Pamlico County Board of Education minutes, October 6, 1953, (microfilm), State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh.

³¹ "A 100-Year Old Building Where Pamlico Students were Educated is Still Relevant," *Sun Journal* (New Bern, North Carolina), September 1, 2021; Vernon Cooper, interview number U-0335 in the Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) at Southern Historical Collection, The Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, UNC-Chapel Hill.

³² "Suit Brought Results in Pamlico," *News and Observer* (Raleigh), September 23, 1956.

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boards, including the one in Pamlico County, leapt into action to build and improve schools for Black students as way to pacify those demanding equal educational opportunity. In August 1954, four months after *Brown*, the school board asked architect B. H. Stephens and Son to prepare plans for fourteen classrooms, a home economics room, science lab, and cafeteria at Pamlico County Training School. The money for construction came from the state's 1953 50-million-dollar bond issue.³³

One year later on August 22, 1955, the board appointed an advisory committee to "study the recent decisions of the Federal Courts in relation to the segregation of races in the public schools and a practical application of said decisions to the Pamlico County School system." The committee was directed to make recommendations to the board "as soon as practicable." The all-White committee included Al Laughinghouse, J. B. Holton, Ray Gatlin, Robert Hardison, Jack Brinson, I. J. Hudson, Paul Delamar, Sam Watson, Roy Watson, and Jessie Foreman.³⁴

In preparation for the 1955-1956 academic year, the county school board voted to consolidate elementary schools for Black students at Vandermere, Maribel, Florence, and Pamlico and send those students to the elementary department at Pamlico Training School.³⁵ In January 1956, the school board sold the buildings.³⁶ By September 1956, a little over 200 Black elementary students remained in small rural schools scattered around the county.³⁷

Many Black families resisted consolidation efforts, including those from Holt's Chapel School. On February 7, 1956, the school board minutes reported, "a delegation from Holt's Chapel School came before the Board and presented a petition stating that they were speaking for the entire community in requesting that Holt's Chapel School should not be consolidated with the Pamlico Training School and that it should remain at its present location and that the school organization remain the same, that is, grades one through eight taught there." The board approved the request and removed the school from the consolidation plan pending state approval.³⁸

In May 1956, Daisy W. Robson, née Walker, State Supervisor of Elementary Schools, visited three Black schools in Pamlico County, including Holt's Chapel School. She reported "classrooms visited exemplified conscientious teaching, and no matter what method of teaching was employed it is felt that some good

³³ Pamlico County Board of Education minutes, August 3, 1954, (microfilm), State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh.

³⁴ Pamlico County Board of Education minutes, August 22, 1955, (microfilm), State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh.

³⁵ Pamlico County Board of Education minutes, August 22, 1955, (microfilm), State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh.

³⁶ Pamlico County Board of Education minutes, January 2, 1956, (microfilm), State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh.

³⁷ "Suit Brought Results in Pamlico," *News and Observer* (Raleigh), September 23, 1956.

³⁸ Pamlico County Board of Education minutes, February 7, 1956, (microfilm), State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh; School board records indicate the school was no longer serving primer (kindergarten) students by 1956.

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teaching and learning were taking place.” She emphasized that the county’s small schools “will need constant repair, adequate facilities, and instructional supplies for carrying out credible work.”³⁹ Throughout the 1950s and into the early 1960s, Robert J. Johnson served as principal and teacher at Holt’s Chapel School with Carthenia Clark Mann as the second teacher.⁴⁰ Ms. Mann, a native of Pantego, Beaufort County, North Carolina, studied at North Carolina College for Negroes, now North Carolina Central University, in Durham.⁴¹

As the county consolidated its Black elementary schools, parents and other supporters continued to bolster Holt’s Chapel School and its teachers, William Sutton Jr., the principal, and Annie Marie Hall. On October 4, 1960, James Borden, Colonel Smith, and Ben Dozier, the school’s advisory committee, requested that the building’s porch, stage, and toilets be repaired. The school board voted to replace the toilets but denied the other requests.⁴²

At the April 2, 1963, Pamlico County Board of Education meeting, board member Lloyd made a motion to close Holt’s Chapel School beginning in the 1963-1964 academic year. Board member Jones seconded the motion, and it was unanimously carried. Holt’s Chapel School would be consolidated with the county’s other Black elementary schools at Pamlico County Training School beginning in the fall of 1963.⁴³

In July 1963, the county board of education sold the school property to the trustees of Holt’s Chapel AME Zion Church and the trustees of Mattocksville St. Stephens Baptist Church. The deed specified that the former school had to be used as a community center for the Holt’s Chapel area. If it ceased to function as such, the deed continued, the property would revert to the board of education.⁴⁴

Four years after Holt’s Chapel School closed, Pamlico County schools were forced to integrate after the United States Department of Education cut off funding to the school system because of its refusal to comply with federal law. On May 5, 1967, Eastern District Federal Judge John D. Larkins signed an order requiring the county school board to assign nine Black teachers to White schools and “to make further desegregation efforts,” which included assigning Black students to formerly White schools. Larkins

³⁹ During the same visit, Ms. Robson also reported on Gatling’s Creek School and Pamlico County Training School, Pamlico County schools, May 10, 1956, Division of Negro Education, Department of Public Instruction, State Supervisor of Elementary Education, School Visitations, 1956-1958, State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh.

⁴⁰ Pamlico County Board of Education minutes, August 25, 1957-July 12, 1960, passim, (microfilm), State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh.

⁴¹ “U. S. School Yearbooks, 1880-2012,” North Carolina College at Durham, 1947, www.ancestry.com, accessed April 20, 2023.

⁴² Pamlico County Board of Education minutes, October 4, 1960 (microfilm), State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh.

⁴³ Pamlico County Board of Education minutes, April 2, 1963 (microfilm), State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh.

⁴⁴ Pamlico County Deed Book 144, page 180, dated July 22, 1963.

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promised to monitor the county and determine that children were "assigned to schools without regard to race or color."⁴⁵

In the 1970s, Holt's Chapel School became a Head Start center to educate young children and later an adult learning facility. Bathrooms were installed in the 1970s.⁴⁶ In 2009, Holt's Chapel AME Zion Church became the sole owner of the school, known as Holt's Chapel Community Center. Former students and others invested in the history of the building work to preserve and restore the building.⁴⁷ Beginning in 2019, the group obtained funding to install a new roof, lights, and central heat and air, and to update the wiring. In late 2021, new handcrafted windows replicating the original sash were installed in place of unsympathetic sash installed in the 1970s.⁴⁸ The group plans to continue their work in restoring the building and bring recognition to its history.

Architectural Context (Criterion C)

Holt's Chapel School, with its intact proportion, massing, and building elements, exemplifies the architectural standards set forth by the Rosenwald Fund in the early 1920s. Although the plan did not strictly conform to a particular model contained in *Community School Plans*, Holt's Chapel School garnered approval because its design met the necessary standards set forth by the Rosenwald Fund. The school retains key features required by the Fund that embodied progressive era ideas about lighting, ventilation, and flexibility in layout. Among these elements preserved in the school is the brick pier foundation that discouraged moisture from entering the building; the tall, double-hung windows on the west wall that allowed for air flow and profuse light; interior partitions that could open to create a large open space where community events and gatherings could occur; and the industrial room (now a kitchen) where practical skills were taught. Further illustrating its conformity to the Fund's standards, Holt's Chapel School remains on the original 5.88-acre parcel where it was built and where space was allowed for playground equipment.

Holt's Chapel is the most intact with the highest degree of integrity Rosenwald Fund school in Pamlico County. One other Rosenwald Fund school remains standing in the county. Mesic School is a two-teacher school approved and built during the period when the Rosenwald Fund operated under Tuskegee Institute

⁴⁵ "Schools Integration Moves Ordered in Pamlico County," *Herald-Sun* (Durham, North Carolina), May 17, 1967.

⁴⁶ "A 100-Year Old Building Where Pamlico Students were Educated is Still Relevant," *Sun Journal* (New Bern, North Carolina), September 1, 2021.

⁴⁷ Teresa Badger, interview with Jennifer Martin, September 10, 2018.

⁴⁸ "A 100-Year Old Building Where Pamlico Students were Educated is Still Relevant," *Sun Journal* (New Bern, North Carolina), September 1, 2021.

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in Alabama before moving to Nashville, Tennessee in 1920.⁴⁹ The front-gabled building with gable returns includes a side-gabled east elevation addition. Windows have been resized and replacement sash installed. Vinyl siding covers the exterior. A circa 1950, side-gabled concrete block building stands in the rear yard. Mesic School does not follow any two-teacher plan issued by Tuskegee or the Rosenwald Fund but likely conforms to a design approved by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Mesic School was built for \$1,250 with \$300 from the Rosenwald Fund, \$200 from local Black citizens, and \$700 from local and state government sources. White donors contributed \$50. On March 7, 1963, after the county consolidated rural Black elementary schools at Pamlico County Training School in Bayboro, the board of education sold the Mesic School and one acre to Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church.⁵⁰ The Town of Mesic acquired the building from the church in 2019.⁵¹ Mesic School remains on a one-acre parcel at 9290 NC 304 in Mesic.

Florence School was a two-teacher school built in budget year 1915-1916 under Tuskegee Institute for a cost of \$1,500. The Rosenwald Fund contributed \$300, while \$669 came from local and state money. Black citizens provided \$531.⁵² Florence School could not be located and is presumed to be gone. It has not ever been documented by the state office.

The original two-teacher building at Pamlico County Training School cost \$1,200 and was built by Tuskegee Institute around 1914 in Bayboro. Black and White citizens each contributed \$100, the Rosenwald Fund gave \$250, and local and state sources provided \$750. The Rosenwald Fund also contributed half the money to build the \$2,000 teacher's home at the training school. Local and state funding provided \$600 and Black residents gave \$400 to build the house under the 1920-1921 budget year. Neither the 1914 building nor the teacher's home remains but buildings from the 1950s that were part of Pamlico County Training School now serve as a part of the Pamlico County Middle School campus.

Holt's Chapel School remains an important landmark in Pamlico County. While over 800 Rosenwald Fund Schools were built in North Carolina, the majority have been lost to demolition or neglect. Holt's Chapel School stands as an intact representation of the progressive-era effort to improve education for Black children during Jim Crow.

⁴⁹ Fisk University Rosenwald Fund Card File Database, Fisk University.

⁵⁰ Pamlico County Deed Book 168, page 42, dated March 7, 1963.

⁵¹ Pamlico County Deed Book 644, page 505, dated January 22, 2019.

⁵² Fisk University Rosenwald Fund Card File Database, Fisk University.

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Geographical Data

Longitude/Latitude Coordinates

1. Latitude: 35.036762
Longitude: -76.752803

Verbal Boundary Description

The National Register boundary is shown by a white line on the accompanying boundary map, drawn at a scale of 1"=200' scale and corresponding with the tax boundary (parcel #6477256831000).

Boundary Justification

The nominated parcel is all of the property currently and historically associated with the school's local level of significance, period of significance, and its historic integrity.

Photos

All photos by Jennifer Martin, MdM Historical Consultants Inc. P.O. Box 1399, Durham, NC, in June 2020 unless otherwise indicated. Digital images located at the North Carolina SHPO.

1. Façade, facing west
2. Northeast corner, facing southwest
3. Southeast corner, facing northwest
4. Exterior Industrial Classroom, facing northwest
5. Details of new window on rear elevation, facing southeast
6. North porch and entrance, view to the west
7. Rear elevation, view to the southeast
8. Swing set, view to the southeast
9. South and center classrooms, view to the north-northwest
10. North classroom and partition wall, view to the south
11. Industrial Classroom, view to the south-southeast
12. South cloak room, view to the east
13. Center classroom with partition wall to the left, view to the east-northeast
14. South classroom including stage, view to the south-southwest