

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Murphy High School

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 100 S. Carlen Street N/A not for publication

city, town Mobile N/A vicinity of congressional district 1

state Alabama code 01 county Mobile code 097

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<u>N/A</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Mobile County School Board

street & number 504 Government Street

city, town Mobile N/A vicinity of state Alabama

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Probate Court, Mobile County

street & number 101 Government Street

city, town Mobile state Alabama

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Alabama Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1970-present federal state county local

depository for survey records Alabama Historical Commission

city, town Montgomery state Alabama

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Mobile County School Board acquired 38 acres from the Carlen family in 1923 as a site for their proposed new high school complex. Murphy High School is currently situated on that purchased property. At the northern boundary of the campus is the Carlen family homestead which was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979.

The main entrance to the campus is located on S. Carlen Street with primary access provided by a long parkway drive with semi-circular turn-around in front of the Main Administration Building. Campus buildings are symmetrically arranged around this parkway. Circulation between buildings is both facilitated and controlled by inter-connecting covered passageways which are functional as well as being an integral part of Murphy's design.

Seven major buildings were included in the original plan for the complex, six of which were constructed by April of 1926. These included the 1) Main Academic Building which consisted of administrative offices, classrooms, two libraries, faculty room; 2) Auditorium; 3) Domestic Arts Building; 4) Cafeteria; 5) Biology Building; and 6) Manual Training Shop. Soon after, in 1930, the Gymnasiums for both the boys and girls and the olympic size pool were added. Also included as part of the overall plan were a playing field, tennis courts and parking areas.

The campus buildings are designed in the Spanish Colonial Revival Style which was popular during the second and third decades of the twentieth century. Features typical of the style such as red tile roofs, curvilinear gables, ornate low relief carvings, balconies or balconets, straight or arched window and door openings, and stuccoed exterior walls have all been incorporated into the architect's design for Murphy High School. Throughout the campus, the repetition of these elements gives a harmonious and unified effect, although some buildings have more richly detailed exteriors and others rely upon massing and identical materials to achieve this totality of design.

The three most highly decorated buildings--Academic, Theater and Domestic Arts--all face directly onto the parkway. The Academic Building provides a focal point in the plan with its distinctive bell towers visible from every location on campus. The building is primarily two stories in elevation with each story defined by a horizontal band of metal windows. Breaking this two story elevation are the bell towers into which entrance doors have been recessed. It is on the towers that the building's decorative emphasis has been concentrated. Various details present here include: red tile roofs; cartouches in the upper portion of the tower at each of its four corners; semi-circular headed windows enframed by shallow rolling arches; small balconets in front of each of the second story windows; shields placed in circular wreaths; twisted rope decoration which defines a large rectangular panel on the front elevation of the tower; small putti heads which act as corbels for the ends of the rope decoration; square headed windows with splayed sides. In addition, the doors are emphasized by incised voussoir blocks around the arched opening while the transom over each door is infilled with elongated wood spindles.

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The interior of the building contains two libraries, each of which has retained most of their original features--an elaborate wooden truss system in the ceiling, wood book cases and circulation desks. Administrative offices and classrooms have been modernized over the years although their basic layout is unchanged. A small courtyard located at the center of this building was converted to a rose garden in 1962 and is visible from the interior corridor through semi-circular headed windows. Interestingly enough, classrooms were originally contained within the bell towers; however, due to the updating of fire codes in the 1960s, these towers are currently used exclusively for storage.

The Theater which is located to the left of the Academic/Administration Building exhibits many of the same characteristics of the Spanish Revival style already enumerated with regard to the Administration Building. Decorative emphasis is concentrated on the facade. A curvilinear parapet hides the gable roof covered with red tile. Large stylized buttress-like projections with double acanthus consoles at the second story level and finials at the top of the parapet enframe all four levels of window and door openings. Each of the openings is enframed by smooth surrounds--in marked contrast to the rough texture of the stuccoed exterior wall. The openings vary from the small niche with splayed sides in the upper section of the wall to the segmentally headed windows with connecting balcony at the second story level. Enframing the three entrance ways are segmental arches carried on pilasters which have naturalistic capitals composed of curly ferns and rabbits' heads. Above the panelled entrance doors are transoms infilled with spindle work identical to that seen on the Academic Building.

The interior of the Theater has remained substantially unchanged since the time of its construction. The tiled floor in the lobby provides a highly decorative transition from the exterior to the interior space. The auditorium space, with its seating capacity of 1,000 in the combined orchestra and balcony space, still has its original lighting fixtures, window moldings and proscenium arch molding. The only major modification occurred several years ago when the original seating was replaced by yellow and blue seats, reflecting the school's colors.

Facing the Theater is the Domestic Arts Building whose facade elevation is strikingly similar to that of the Theater. Low relief decoration is, however, applied here in a smaller, more concentrated area enframing the upper portion of the entrance doors and defining the division between the first and second floors. An undulating, heavily molded belt course supported by acanthus scroll brackets can be found under the second story balconets. Large rectangular panels infilled with motifs such as urns and owls flank the upper area of the door and pierce the belt course, ending in small finials. This motif echos the applied buttress design and large finials on the curvilinear parapet.

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Several campus buildings including the Biology, Manual Training and Cafeteria Buildings have been designed in a simpler, more severe style. Interconnecting walkways are placed directly against the facades of these buildings and are seen in profile. The bay spans with heavy stuccoed piers and wooden brackets create an important design element seen against the simplicity of the second story and create deep shadows on the ground floors of these buildings. The plain, stuccoed facade ends in a very linear raised parapet. This parapet masks the gable roof and clerestory when seen from the front. Inset at mid-point along the second story facade is a large multi-lighted semi-circular window. The Cafeteria also had this semi-circular window opening; however, as a result of the 1979 hurricane, sheet metal cut to conform to the parapet profile has been applied to the second story facade.

Similar massing, materials, and design elements--gable roof, curvilinear parapet with finials, round headed windows, etc.--are used in both the Boy's and Girl's Gyms. Missing here, however, are the elaborate low relief carvings found on the Theater or Domestic Arts Buildings. While a single building with locker rooms to either side of the pool was proposed in the plan published in 1925, by 1930, the decision had been made to construct two separate gymnasiums, each building adjacent to the pool.

Several newer additions to the campus occurred in 1942, 1950 and 1977. The Technical School added in 1942 was not included in the original campus plan. An attempt to have it blend harmoniously with other campus buildings was made. The one story building has a gable roof, stuccoed exterior and curvilinear parapet defining the entrance door on Wilcox Street.

Also harmonizing in general massing, materials and scale is the Art Building constructed in 1950. It is stylistically similar to the less ornate campus buildings and echos the linear raised parapet found on the adjacent Manual Training Building. The flat facade, metal windows and one bay deep portico are in keeping with the overall Murphy Campus design.

Also constructed in 1950 and included in the original plan for future classroom expansion are two classroom buildings at the rear of the complex. While these buildings have not ornate detailing, the massing, materials and some minor low relief ornamentation over the entrance doors allows them to blend harmoniously with the whole.

The newest building on the campus, constructed in 1977, is the driver education and classroom building located along the South Street side of the campus. It was constructed of concrete block and heavily stuccoed, but is otherwise lacking in any decorative detailing that would make it a more integral part of the campus design.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1926; 1930 **Builder/Architect** Perkins, Fellows & Hamilton, Chicago
George B. Rogers, Mobile

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

ARCHITECTURE:

In architectural terms, the unified Murphy campus is an excellent local example of the Spanish Revival Style applied to school buildings. Features typical of the style such as red tile roofs, low relief carvings, bell towers, curvilinear gables, balconies, stuccoed surfaces with smooth door and window surrounds, have all been incorporated into the design. Inventiveness and whimsy within the confines of the style are perceptible in such things as the capitals on the Theater Building composed of curly ferns and rabbits' heads or in the small putti heads with wings used as decorative corbels on the bell towers. Continuity of materials, scale and massing, in addition to interconnecting covered walkways, contribute to the harmony and unity of the high school campus.

EDUCATION; SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN:

Murphy High School, originally named Mobile High, is locally significant as the only high school in Mobile County from its construction until the middle of the 20th century. Because of this, it also served, inadvertently, as the common denominator of social interaction. Since Mobile County had a relatively small population for many years, students associated with Murphy were able to develop and maintain associations with a wide range of Mobile society.

The school has further educational significance in that it was the first high school in Alabama to offer vocational training, providing classes in printing, sheet metal working, domestic arts and manual training.

INTEGRITY:

Since its construction in 1926 and 1930, Murphy High School has retained the basic integrity of its interior and exterior design. The most notable exterior modification has been the installation of sheet metal across the stepped parapet of the Cafeteria Building after Hurricane Frederick in 1979. Interior spaces include elaborate ceiling truss systems in the cafeteria and libraries.

The plan of the campus as originally conceived has not been altered although some additions such as the Technical School, Art Building and Driver Education Building have been added since the 1940s. Although the original stadium and tennis courts no longer remain, the new facilities are located on the same sites as initially planned.

* * * * *

Barton Academy at 504 Government Street served as Alabama's first public school and was adequate to serve the needs of primary and secondary school students in Mobile County from the time of its construction in the 1830s until the second decade of the twentieth century. With the return of soldiers from World War I who wished to continue their education that had been interrupted by war, Barton's facilities proved to be too limited. In 1922 Mobile County began to plan for the construction of a new high school that would

9. Major Bibliographical References

Perkins, Fellows and Hamilton, Educational Buildings, Blakely Printing Press, Chicago, 1925; Gypsie Van Antwerp, "George B. Rogers: Mobile Architect, 1901-1945," MA Thesis, Tulane University, 1979; Mobile County School Board Minutes; Mobile Press Register, Annual Trade Editions, 1925, 1926, 1931.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 27.6

Quadrangle name Mobile

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1	6	3	9	6	1	0	0	3	3	9	4	8	8	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

B

1	6	3	9	6	1	0	0	3	3	9	4	4	6	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

C

1	6	3	9	5	8	4	0	3	3	9	4	9	0	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

D

1	6	3	9	5	8	4	0	3	3	9	4	4	6	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

E

Zone	Easting				Northing									

F

Zone	Easting				Northing									

G

Zone	Easting				Northing									

H

Zone	Easting				Northing									

Verbal boundary description and justification

Real property located on block bounded by S. Carlen, Clearmont, South and Wilcox Streets, being part of the lot conveyed by Carlen to McGrath which point
SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Anne S. Bantens, Mobile Hist. Dev. Comm. & Ellen Mertins, National Register Coordin.

organization Alabama Historical Commission date 7/8/82

street & number 725 Monroe Street telephone 832-6621

city or town Montgomery state Alabama

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Laverence Oaks

title State Historic Preservation Officer date 9-30-82

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the
National Register

date 11/4/82

John B. ...
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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serve the entire county. It was to include room for a student body of 8th, 9th, 10th and 11th graders--12th grade not having been included in the academic program in Mobile County until the mid-1950s.

In March of 1923 George B. Rogers, a noted local Mobile architect, was selected by the School Board Advisory Committee of the Mobile County Public Schools as the construction supervisor for the county's proposed new high school. Rogers, who had been trained in the Beaux-Arts tradition and had a reputation of being a highly eclectic architect capable of designing in a number of styles is thought to have been primarily responsible for the exterior design of Murphy High School.

Later in March, Mr. Perkins, AIA, of the Chicago architectural firm of Perkins, Fellows and Hamilton, was selected as the architect in charge of the project. This Chicago firm had been responsible for numerous other secondary school projects throughout the mid-west. Several examples of the firm's work in the Chicago area include New Trier, Mishawaka, Manitowoc and Bay City schools. Plans of these schools were published in 1925 in a book entitled Educational Buildings. The plans for Mobile High, Murphy's original name, were included in this publication. As described by Perkins, et.al., the plan upon which Mobile High was based was popularly known as the "unit" or "connected group" plan. Buildings were symmetrically arranged around a central focus usually on sites of 10 to 15 acres. Not only were administrative and classroom spaces considered in this type of plan, but also were numerous amenities such as auditoriums and gymnasiums. The unit plan allowed classrooms, laboratories, study halls and library facilities to be independently arranged so that the confusion of activities could be minimized. Buildings such as the gymnasium or theater were housed in separate buildings from the classrooms so that after hour events would not require that the entire facility remain open. Kitchens and incinerators were also located away from the educational functions so as to minimize disruption from odors. Another strong point in favor of the unit plan lay in the fact that as more classroom or specialized space became necessary, additional facilities could be constructed without damaging the integrity of the overall site plan.

The corner stone of the school was laid on December 14, 1925. By April 26, 1926, the school had opened. Construction costs totaled \$850,000 for the first six buildings with an additional \$200,000 spent on the gymnasium and pool--thus explaining Murphy's local designation of the "million dollar high school."

The school was first known as Mobile High; however, two years after its opening, the school's name was changed to Murphy High in honor of Samuel S. Murphy, a school superintendent who directed public education in Mobile for 25 years.

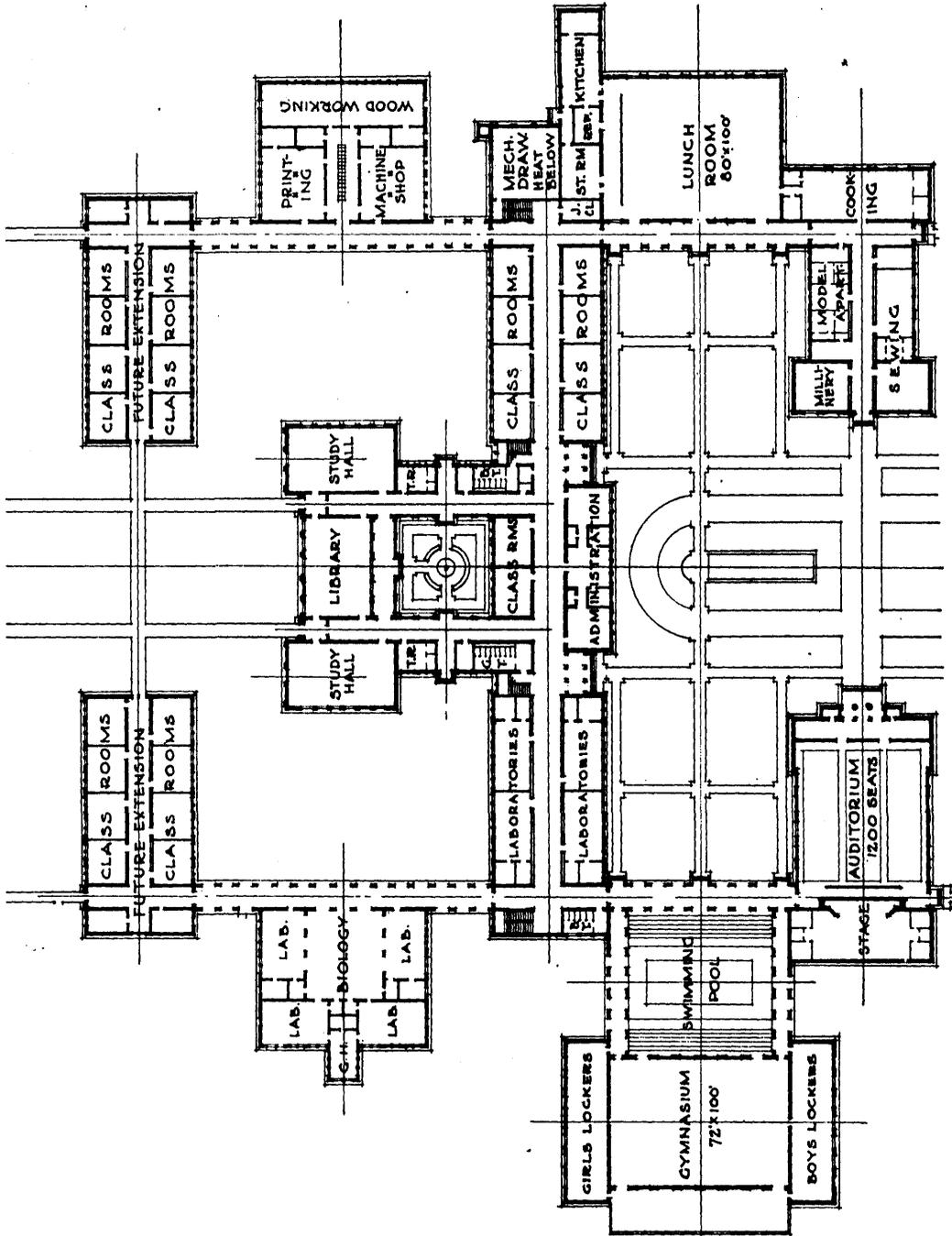
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is 719' south of the south line of Dauphin Street and running thence south 85°16' west 304' thence south 88°35' west 387.3' thence north 85°25' west 179.1' to the east line of South Street thence along said east line of South Street south 00°54' east 1250.7' to the lands of Gretzner thence north 89°37' east 252.3' thence south 01°45' 236.2' thence south 89°55' 506' thence north 00°01' west 119' thence north 88°29' east 76.4' to west line of Carlen Street thence north along said west line of Carlen Street 1381.3' to the place of beginning. Contains 27.55 acres, being part of the former homestead of John Carlen. (c. 1400' x 800')



Group Plan of Buildings, Mobile, Ala., High School. A school for 2000 students which will cost, exclusive of future additions, \$850,000.

DRIVERS EDUCATION

22

CARLEN HOUSE 1843

MURPHY TECHNICAL SCHOOL

INCINERATOR C. 1930

KITCHEN BAKERY

ART BLDG

MANUAL TRAINING BLDG

HEATER B.S.T.

CAFETERIA

CLASS RMS.

16

CLASS RMS.

14

DOMESTIC ARTS BLDG.

STUDY RM.

LIBRARY

COURT

CLASS RMS.

2

MURPHY HIGH SCHOOL

STUDY RM.

3 4 5

BALCONY

CLASS RMS.

19

18

15

CLASS RMS.

STAGE

BAND RM.

BIOLOGY BLDG.

HEALTH

12

POOL

LOCKER RM.

LOCKER RM.

GIRL'S GYM

BOYS GYM

13

LEGEND

- 1926
- 1930
- 1942
- 1950
- 1977



PHOTOS 1-23