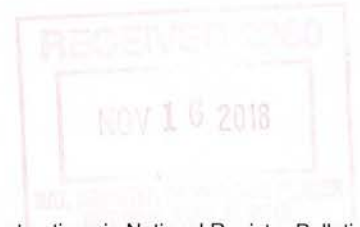


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



# 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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Oconee Street School  
other names/site number East Athens Public School

### 2. Location

street & number 594 Oconee Street

N/A
N/A

 not for publication  
city or town Athens vicinity  
state Georgia code GA county Clarke code 059 zip code 30605

### 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 forth 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

national  statewide  local

William R. Hoover 13 Nov 2018  
Signature of certifying official/Title: Dr. David C. Crass/Historic Preservation Division Director/Deputy SHPO Date  
Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Dept. of Natural Resources  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Title \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register  determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register  removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)

[Signature] 12/31/18  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only **one** box.)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
2	0	<b>Total</b>

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

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION: School

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19<sup>th</sup> AND 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS:

Classical Revival

MODERN MOVEMENT: International Style

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: BRICK

walls: BRICK

roof:

other: METAL (cornice)

CONCRETE (sills, lintels, keystone)

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### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

#### Summary Paragraph

Oconee Street School is in a historic residential neighborhood approximately one mile southeast of downtown Athens, and just east of the Oconee River. The property consists of two contributing buildings: a two-story, three-bay brick classroom building, and a one-story concrete masonry unit and brick "cafetorium" building. The classroom building includes a partially subterranean ground level, due to the sloping topography of the lot. The northeast portion of this building was constructed in 1909. The building includes historic additions dating to 1913 (first floor of southwest (rear) half of the building), 1922 (second floor of southwest (rear) half of the building), and 1933 (projection from southeast corner of the building). The 1956 "cafetorium" building is the latest addition to the property. The classroom building exhibits elements of the Classical Revival style as applied to an institutional building. Exterior character-defining features include a symmetrical primary elevation; a segmental-arched portico with banded piers, keystone, and corbelling; a double-door primary entrance with sidelights and multi-light transom with classical molding; and a classical cornice. The interior has high ceilings and many tall windows for light and ventilation. The 1909 portion of the building has a central hallway, which terminates in a cross hallway added as part of the 1913 expansion of the building. Historic stairs access the second story from the central hallway and cross hallway. There are classrooms on all three levels, and they retain original cloakrooms, as well as plaster walls, wood floors, and beadboard ceilings. A historic beadboard roll-up room divider separates two of the first-floor classrooms. Many interior doors are original, as are most windows. The 1956 "cafetorium" building is a rectilinear building that exhibits elements of the International style, including horizontality; lack of ornamentation; and wide, simple fascia. Having served as both a cafeteria and an auditorium, it is composed of one large open room with a historic stage, a kitchen, and storage space. The buildings are situated on reasonably level terrain near the top of the Oconee Street hill. The land drops off steeply on the west side of the property as it falls toward the Oconee River below. The property is deep and narrow and fronts on Oconee Street to the northeast.

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### Narrative Description

The Oconee Street School is located within the residential neighborhood of Carr's Hill on a deep, narrow lot at the intersection of Oconee and South Poplar streets. The campus consists of a 1909 main school building with multiple additions (photograph 1) and a 1956 cafetorium (photograph 18). The two buildings are centrally located on the lot, and the main building, which faces northeast, has an approximately 170-foot setback from Oconee Street. A wide concrete sidewalk extends from the street to the front steps, bisecting the former schoolyard, which is now a roughly paved parking lot (photograph 16). The buildings are located on relatively even terrain which slopes down slightly to the northwest, allowing for a partial daylight basement in the main building.

#### MAIN BUILDING

The school is a two-story, rectilinear brick building with a partial daylight basement and a small projecting addition on the southeast side (photograph 2). The building includes several historic additions dating to 1913 (the first floor on the rear half of the building), 1922 (the second floor on the rear half of the building), and 1933 (the two-story projection from the building's southeast corner). The 1909 main core and all additions are entirely clad in reddish-brown brick laid in a Flemish bond pattern. The façade is symmetrical, consisting of three bays defined by simple brick pilasters. The central bay is marked by a portico with a short set of stairs leading to the main entrance (photograph 15). On the second floor, within this bay, are two windows. The bays flanking this central bay have four windows evenly spaced along the first and second floors. Windows on the first and second floor of the façade are original, one-over-one wood windows with narrow, non-historic shutters. Circa 1956 planters are found in front of the two bays on either side of the entrance stairs (photographs 14 and 17). At the basement level on the façade, there are three small two-over-two windows in the northwestern bay (photograph 14). The front corners of the building are accentuated by simple brick pilasters, identical to those defining the bays of the façade (photograph 3). Cast stone elements on this façade include the sills and lintels of the windows, the water table separating the basement from the first floor, and a keystone within the one-story portico. A classical, metal cornice is found on the parapet wall of the façade and wraps around the side elevations and additions (photograph 4).

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The projecting portico and front doors which it frames, are two of the most character-defining features of the building. The double-door main entrance has multi-light sidelights and a transom which appear to be original (photograph 15). The wood surround of the double doors includes a classical cornice supported by two brackets. The front doors are wooden, half-light doors with six glass panes over three horizontal panels. Below the sidelights are decorative wooden inset panels, adding to the building's classical details. The entrance is sheltered by the brick portico, which is enclosed on either side and has a concrete floor. The portico features stout, banded corner piers capped by corbelling. A low segmental arch with a cast stone keystone frames the entrance, and this arch is topped by a wood and metal classical cornice which matches the cornice of the building. The portico's parapet has recessed brick panels and cast stone coping.

The southeast side elevation is asymmetrical and is the only elevation in which some portion of the main building and all three historic additions are visible (photograph 5). All windows on the first and second floors of the main block are aligned, except for a replacement window in a partially infilled opening within the second floor of the 1922 addition. This was originally a door that accessed a fire escape slide, which was removed sometime after 1956, according to alumni. Original one-over-one windows are found in all other window openings of this elevation. There are no window openings on the southeast wall of the 1922 addition (photograph 6), and there is no basement level on this elevation, as it is all crawlspace. A non-historic, half-light door is located where the 1913 first-floor addition meets the 1909 main block. This side entrance has a similar, but simpler door surround than the main, front entrance, with multi-light sidelights and transom under a brick, segmental arch. The parapet wall, metal cornice, and cast stone window sills, window lintels, and the water table separating the crawlspace from the first floor continue on this side elevation. However, the cast stone water table does not continue on the 1933 addition. A non-historic wooden ramp provides access to the side entrance on this elevation.

The rear (southwest) elevation is the longest elevation and is asymmetrical (photographs 7 and 10). This elevation consists of the 1913 first-floor addition (including a basement level and crawlspace); the 1922 second-floor addition; and the 1933 two-story addition projecting from the southeast corner. With the exception of one infilled window on the first floor, original one-over-one windows are retained, aligned, and fairly evenly spaced across the first and second floors. At the basement level near this elevation's northwest corner, there is a non-historic flush door and a four-light window. The basement level door appears to have been altered, but according to alumni, a door was historically located here as rooms in this portion of the basement were used for a library and other school purposes. Cast stone window sills, window lintels, and the water table separating the basement from the first floor continue on this elevation, but other features, such as the parapet wall, cornice, and brick pilasters accentuating the corners are not found on this elevation. When the cafetorium was constructed in 1956, a brick wing wall was incorporated into the first-floor stoop entry of this elevation, and a covered breezeway connects this stoop to the cafetorium.

The northwest side elevation (photograph 11) consists of sections of the 1909 main block; 1913 first-floor addition; and 1922 second-floor addition. The six windows within the 1909 block are tightly grouped when compared to those in the 1913 and 1922 additions, although all windows on this elevation are aligned vertically with those above and below. At the basement level are doors to the girls' and boys' bathrooms and a door into the boiler room (photograph 13). Windows on the basement level are small, square windows like those found on the façade (photograph 12); however several windows have been infilled with plywood. Original one-over-one windows, cast stone window sills, window lintels, and water table, and the simple, metal cornice continue on this side elevation.

## INTERIOR

Upon entering the building through the front entrance, a wide central hallway extends to the rear of the 1909 main block (photograph 26). At the end of this hallway is a partially infilled, wide segmental arch that originally contained the building's back door. At the time of initial construction, the 1909 main block appears to have had two large classrooms flanking a central hall on each floor and a narrow cloakroom at the southern end of the western rooms. The single large-classroom-with-cloakroom configuration is retained on the west side of the hallway on both floors (Rooms 1-01, 1-02, 2-01, and 2-02); however, during the historic period, the large classroom on east side of the hallway was divided into two rooms on each floor (Rooms 1-09, 1-10, 2-09, and 2-10).

Within the central hallway is an original staircase, located directly beyond the front door along the hallway's west wall. This staircase is one of the most decorative features of the building (photograph 27). It features turned balusters, a paneled newel post topped with a round cap, dado panels, and vertical beadboard.

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Historic interior finishes throughout the building include wood floors, plaster walls, beadboard ceilings, and trim such as baseboards, cornice molding, and window and door surrounds. Door surrounds are both paneled (photograph 24) and non-paneled (photographs 26 and 32), and window surrounds consist of a sill and lintel with a curved plaster return on the sides (photographs 28 and 45).

When the first-floor rear addition was added in 1913, a cross hallway was constructed, extending across the rear elevation of the 1909 main block. The eastern end of this hallway contains the side entrance with sidelights and transom (photograph 37), while the western end was truncated after construction but during the historic period with the addition of a beadboard wall to create an office (Room 1-03, photograph 34). The north wall of this hallway contains two staircases – one going up to the second floor (photograph 35) and one going down to the basement (photograph 36).

The stair to the basement leads to a similar southeast to northwest hallway at this lower level and provides access to the boiler room (Room B-03), boys' bathroom (Room B-02, photograph 24), and girls' bathroom (Room B-01, photograph 22) within the 1909 main block. A second staircase accessed through a door on the south side of the first-floor cross hallway also connects to the basement, but to the basement area within the 1913 addition (Rooms B-04 & B-05). These rooms were flexible space, used as a library, donation center, and classrooms at various times throughout the school's history (photograph 25).

In addition to the cross hallway, the 1913 first-floor addition includes a large multi-purpose room (photographs 40, 41, and 43) with historic "roll-up" doors (photograph 42). This allowed the large room to function as two separate rooms (Rooms 1-05 and 1-06) or one combined space, as needed. Narrow cloakrooms are located along the northwest (Room 1-04, photograph 46) and southeast ends of this room; however, the southeast cloakroom was modified during the 1933 addition to serve as a hallway providing access to Room 1-07 and its cloakroom, Room 1-08, both of which are within the 1933 addition. At the southwest end of the cloakroom-turned-hallway in the 1922 addition is the building's back door (photograph 38). This door provides access to a small, covered stoop and stairs leading to the breezeway connecting to the cafetorium.

The staircase to the second floor has similar detailing to the staircase in the central hallway of the 1909 main block, with turned balusters and a paneled newel post topped with a round cap (photograph 37). Within the cross hallway on the second floor there is a partially infilled segmental arch with a standard-sized door opening, very similar to the one found on the first floor (photograph 53). This opening connects the 1909 main block to the second-floor 1922 addition. The second-floor is a virtual mirror of the first-floor layout with only minor differences. For example, the western end of the cross hallway on the second floor was truncated during the historic period to create a warming kitchen (Room 2-03, photograph 51) serving the lunchroom located in Room 2-01 (photograph 47). Between the warming kitchen and the lunchroom, the cloakroom (Room 2-02) was modified to hold the serving line for the lunchroom. Another minor difference between the first and second floors is found in Rooms 2-05 and 2-06 (photographs 57 and 58). The wall separating these two rooms is permanent and solid rather than containing roll-up segments as seen on the first floor.

Per previous occupants, the building was renovated in the 1970s and 1980s for office use and multiple partition walls and a suspended-panel ceiling system were installed. In 2017, most of these non-historic elements were removed; however, the ghostmarks of some remain. The heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC) ductwork was installed above the suspended ceiling. When this ceiling system was removed in 2017, the ductwork was no longer supported and collapsed into many of the rooms. In 2005, the roof over the rear section of the 1913 and 1922 additions leaked, damaging the exterior walls and delaminating historic plaster (photographs 41 and 57). When the leak was repaired it was also determined that there were structural issues with the roof, which were addressed by reinforcement of the roof structure with an encased steel beam (photograph 57) to replace a historic wood beam.

#### CAFETORIUM

The cafetorium is a flat-roofed, roughly rectangular building constructed on a partial slab with a crawlspace (photograph 18). The building is clad in brick veneer over concrete block, with painted, exposed concrete block walls on the interior. The brick veneer is laid in a running bond pattern, and a wide cast stone band wraps the top of building on all sides, acting much like a modern cornice. Window openings have a cast stone sills, and typically terminate at the cast stone band. The northeast, or front, elevation (photograph 18) faces the rear of the main building and is symmetrical with a central double- door flanked on each side by three windows. A simple brick wall projects perpendicularly from just west of the front entrance. This entrance area is topped with a flat awning and connects to the breezeway extending from the main building. Although all historic window openings appear to be retained, the majority of the historic windows have been removed or destroyed. Remaining historic windows consist of six horizontal lights and have incorporated awning and

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hopper windows. The two window openings on the southeast elevation are high and small (photograph 19). The southeastern corner of the building is recessed and covered with a flat awning supported by a single metal pole. This entrance leads directly into the building's kitchen and storage areas. The southwest, or rear, elevation is an almost mirror-image of the front with a double-door rear exit (photograph 20). The northwest side elevation has two window openings, one at each corner, and is otherwise devoid of character-defining features (photograph 21).

On the interior, the cafetorium is roughly divided in half with a cafeteria and auditorium space in the western half (Room C-06) and kitchen with storage and prep areas in the eastern half (Rooms C-07, C-08, and C-09). A stage (Room C-03) with multiple storage rooms is found on the western end of the cafeteria and auditorium space (photograph 62). The interior of the building is open to the metal trusses that support the flat roof (photograph 61). The only alterations to the building are the result of a 2007 fire that damaged the roof, cracked some of the front and rear walls, and damaged interior finishes, windows, and doors. Stylistically, the cafetorium has elements of the International style, such as its simple rectangular form evidenced on the floor plans, flat roof, smooth exterior, rejection of ornamentation that does not reflect function, and use of masonry (brick and concrete) with structural steel.

### SETTING

The school is located near the top of the Oconee Street hill and directly across the street from the Oconee Street Methodist Church. Sited on the east bank of the Oconee River, the school is southeast of downtown Athens, east of the University of Georgia, and north of the Oconee Hill Cemetery. The neighborhood was historically a mill community with modest single-family dwellings, and today is a mix of historic and new single-family houses, as well as multi-family residential development targeting a student population.

### LANDSCAPE

Several mature trees are located to the north of the main building's front entrance and at the front of the yard near Oconee Street. Trees along South Poplar Street have been added recently. Vegetation forms a screen along the northwest side of the property as it begins a steep slope toward the Oconee River. This vegetation is thicker toward the rear of the property and includes many mature hardwoods.

A broken sidewalk leads from South Poplar Street directly to the entrance on the southeast side of the main building. A wooden ramp leading from the front northeast corner of the building provides access to this door today. The 1933 addition extends beyond the building's rectangular footprint, and southeast elevation of this addition is less than ten feet from South Poplar Street. Just south of the main building, South Poplar Street jags slightly to the northwest, towards the property, where the street intersects with Little Oconee Street.

The 1956 cafetorium is connected to the rear entrance of the main building by a pipe-columned breezeway and covered stoop (photographs 8 and 9). Two mature oak trees stand to the east side of the breezeway and a mature catalpa stands in the grassy area between the two buildings. Immediately behind the cafetorium (to the southwest) is an open grassy area that extends to the wooded area near the outer edge of the property.

On the northwest side of the main building, a brick wall separates the exits from the boys' and girls' bathrooms found in the basement (background of photograph 11), presumably to keep the boys and girls separated from each other. This side yard is void of additional landscape features, as it was historically used as a playground area for students.

### INTEGRITY

The property possesses integrity of design as the property retains its original rectangular form of both buildings of the complex, with window and door fenestration. Non-historic alterations clearly read as non-historic alterations [e.g. exposed HVAC, modern wood accessibility ramp, non-historic window shutters, and minimal window infill] and are reversible. Both buildings' circulation patterns are intact. On the main building, the circulation pattern is particularly distinguishable through the intact central hallway, rear cross hallway, and cloakrooms immediately adjacent to classrooms. The buildings retain integrity of materials and workmanship as the original and historic exterior materials, such as brick masonry, cast stone elements, most windows, entrances with sidelights and transom, and decorative cornice remain intact. Additionally, interior materials such as wood floors, plaster walls, beadboard ceilings, trim, and many interior doors are intact. The buildings remain in their original location and generally retain their historic setting, feeling, and association.

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**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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION

ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

1909-1968

**Significant Dates**

1909 – main block of school constructed,

1913 – 1<sup>st</sup> floor addition, 1922 – 2<sup>nd</sup> floor addition,

1933 – 2-story addition, 1956 – cafetorium

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

William E. Spink, architect

Heery & Heery Architects, architect

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The period of significance for the Oconee Street School is from 1909 to 1968. It begins with the building's initial construction and includes all historic additions, as well as construction of the cafetorium. It ends in 1968 with the end of the historic period.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

N/A

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The Oconee Street School is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of education as the only extant representative of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century school construction boom in Athens, and the only extant purpose-built school building for Athens City Schools (1885–1955). In 1955, Athens schools were absorbed by the Clarke County School System. Although the present building was not constructed until 1909, the Oconee Street School was one of the first primary schools in the Athens City Schools system, which prided itself on its educational system. The Oconee Street School exclusively served the East Athens mill community as an elementary school and as an occasional community gathering place. The Oconee Street School is also locally significant under Criterion C in the area of architecture as an example of an early 20<sup>th</sup> century urban public school, a significant school type in Georgia as defined in the statewide context *Public Elementary and Secondary Schools in Georgia, 1868-1971*, with an extant mid-20<sup>th</sup> century “cafetorium.” The original main building retains the character-defining features of an urban public school type building in Georgia with its urban location, two-story massing, rectangular footprint, masonry construction, spacious corridors, classrooms with separate cloakrooms, and classrooms designed for division, as outlined in the context. The building was designed by architect William E. Spink, reflecting early 20<sup>th</sup>-century design trends of a large, brick building exhibiting the symmetry and monumentality of the Classical Revival style. The 1956 “cafetorium,” designed by the Athens firm of Heery & Heery Architects, is representative both in style and type of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century period of school construction, exemplifying a common addition to Georgia schools during that period. Overall, the phases of construction are representative of the evolving needs and changing patterns of Athens’ and Georgia’s expanding educational system during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The Oconee Street School is significant at the local level in the area of education under Criterion A, as it is the only extant example of the construction boom which occurred in Athens during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to support the city’s public education system. It is also significant as the only remaining example of a purpose-built school for the Athens City Schools system, which operated from 1885 until the system was absorbed by the Clarke County School System in 1955.

Shortly after enabling legislation in 1885, the Athens City Schools system was formed, and over the next 25 years, there were two major building campaigns to provide adequate facilities for the school system. The first campaign began in 1885 with the construction of the Baxter Street and Washington Street schools, both of which are no longer extant. This campaign also included the repurposing of existing buildings to create the Meigs Street School and the first Oconee Street School. While the Meigs Street School is still extant, it has been significantly altered and has served as a residence since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The repurposed building which held the first Oconee Street School is no longer extant. In the mid-1890s, two more wood-framed schools were constructed, but neither of these survive today.

During the second wave of construction to expand and improve the Athens City Schools system, a new building was constructed in 1909 to replace the repurposed building functioning as the first Oconee Street School. Three other schools constructed during this second campaign were the Childs Street, College Avenue, and Nantahala Avenue schools, all of which are no longer extant. Therefore, the Oconee Street School is the only extant, purpose-built school within the Athens City Schools system.

As home of the University of Georgia’s main campus, Athens has long prided itself on quality education for students at all levels, including its elementary schools. A June 16, 1901 article in the *Athens Daily Banner* heralded the “famous” Athens school system as being “excelled by none in the entire country.” The Oconee Street School was one of the very first primary schools in the Athens City Schools system and exclusively served the East Athens mill community as a day school and night school for the community’s children, as well as an occasional community gathering place. As the community grew, it was necessary for the school to expand to support the growing student population. This led to the three successive additions in 1913, 1922, and 1933, all of which were designed to complement the 1909 main block.

After World War II, Athens saw a pronounced increase in population which resulted in a need for additional facilities, and in 1954 Athens City Schools approved funds for adding classroom space to all five of its elementary schools. This resulted in the construction of the Oconee Street School’s cafetorium in 1956. This building combined a lunchroom with kitchen facilities and an auditorium into one building and freed up space in the main school building for more classrooms. This multi-purpose cafetorium also superseded the existing multi-purpose room (Rooms 1-05 & 1-06) within the 1913



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addition. With the new cafetorium, the multi-purpose rooms in the main building could also be fully designated classrooms, as they no longer needed to be available to provide meeting and performance space. Overall, the phases of construction are representative of the evolving needs and changing patterns of Athens' and Georgia's expanding educational system during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The Oconee Street School is also significant at the local level under Criterion C in the area of architecture as an excellent example of the urban public school type as defined in the statewide context, *Public Elementary and Secondary Schools in Georgia, 1868-1971*. The main school building retains the character-defining features of an urban public school in Georgia including its massing and scale, rectangular footprint, masonry construction, spacious central halls, and numerous tall windows. As described in the statewide context, the urban public school was built throughout the United States and in Georgia, was centrally located and easily accessible by main thoroughfares, and often added classrooms as the population in the area served by the school expanded. The footprint in most cases was rectangular and the mass was dense and compact. School buildings of this type were two to three stories high, contained from four to twelve classrooms, and usually had a basement. Oconee Street School meets each of these specifications.

Wide spacious halls were another common feature of the urban public school, and such halls are found on each floor of the Oconee Street School. The statewide context notes that halls were very important spaces used to display art as well as bulletin or notice boards. Halls were believed to give students a sense of spaciousness.

This sense of spaciousness was also displayed in classrooms of the urban public school type. Classrooms were often quite large and designed so they could be divided multiple times if necessary. At Oconee Street School, various classrooms of the 1909 main block and all additions were divided temporarily and/or permanently throughout the historic period, as the needs of the student body changed. Spaciousness in urban public schools was also conveyed through high ceilings in classrooms and an abundance of large windows, which were deemed necessary for light and ventilation. Oconee Street School exemplifies these principles as well, with multiple windows in every classroom and high, beadboard ceilings throughout the building. Space in classrooms was also maximized by limiting student's personal belongings inside the classroom. This was done by locating a separate cloakroom adjacent to classrooms, as is seen at Oconee Street School. These long narrow cloakrooms had one or two doors or cased openings which directly accessed the classrooms and gave students an area to store their personal items during the school day.

Many materials and finishes typically found in the urban public school type are found at Oconee Street School. These include masonry construction, plastered and painted walls, and wooden floors and windows. Urban public schools were connected to the city's utility systems, such as water and sewage, just as the Oconee Street School was. An article about the selection of the school's location appeared in the June 25, 1908 edition of the *Athens Banner*. This article notes that the approval of the Oconee Street location was contingent upon the Athens Manufacturing Company being granted the right to construct a sewer line through the property. A steam furnace system is another utility commonly found in the urban public school type and present at Oconee Street School. The boiler room at Oconee Street School is located in the basement and presumably heated the school with flues set into the walls and venting into the attic space.

Placement of the school on its lot was another important consideration in urban public schools and varied based on individual circumstances. Due to the Oconee Street School's proximity to the Oconee River and the steep slope near the rear of the parcel, it was likely determined safer to locate some of the recreational areas in the front and side yards of the school, rather than the rear playgrounds seen in many urban public schools. Prior to the construction of the cafetorium in 1956, there was a playfield at the rear of the property, where students played baseball and football. As was typical in urban public schools, Oconee Street School has multiple entrances, with a distinctive main entrance facing the street. The main Oconee Street entrance has a distinctive portico with segmental arch, keystone and corbelling details, and banded brick piers. A wide sidewalk leads to the main entrance, highlighting the accessibility of this urban public school to its surrounding community.

Typical additions to urban public schools included auditoriums and additional classrooms, which often were built later as more space was need and funding became available. In 1913, the Oconee Street School added two classrooms with cloakrooms at the rear of the first floor. This room included a roll-up partition, which could be raised to create a large space much like an auditorium for use by the school or community, or lowered to create two individual classrooms. Additional classrooms were added to the building in 1922 and 1933. Oconee Street School did not get a dedicated auditorium until the construction of the cafetorium in 1956.

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Architects were typically hired to design urban public schools, and often an architect's design was used repeatedly within the same school system. Most urban public schools were designed in the revival styles popular in the early 20th century, such as Classical Revival style, which is utilized at the Oconee Street School. The school's spare ornamentation lacks many of the elaborate features of any particular style, but it does contain the key characteristics of Classical Revival architecture. It is a study in formal and simplified classicism. Architectural elements of a restrained Classical Revival style include a symmetrical composition and the formal arrangement of windows and doors on masonry walls, as well as a centrally located monumental door with transom and sidelights and rectangular, double-hung windows. Pilasters and stringcourses are used to divide the façade and allude to classical architecture.<sup>i</sup> The heavy cornice and the shallow portico with banded piers and an almost flat segmental arch with a keystone are among the most elaborate features of this building and bear the mark of individual architectural expression rather than notable elements of any particular style. The Oconee Street School's 1909 main block was designed by architect, William E. Spink whose plans for the school were accepted by the school system in November 1908.

**WILLIAM E. SPINK**

William Ernest Spink was born on July 25, 1872 and attended high school in Madison, Indiana. He had no formal training in architecture, but rather gained his skill in the field from self-study and experience. Spink practiced architecture in Birmingham, Alabama from 1897 to 1912 before moving to San Francisco, California for several years. He returned to the southeast and began his own firm in New Orleans, Louisiana in 1923. He held architectural licenses with the City of Birmingham, the State of California, and the State of Louisiana. He belonged to the Louisiana Architectural Association, as well as the New Orleans chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA). The scope of his design work was wide, as he is credited with residential, commercial, and public buildings. In the late 1940s he began collaborating with other professionals in the construction of low-income housing projects through the Housing Authority of New Orleans.

In October 1947, Spink's opinion of his work is documented in a telling statement noted in his "Questionnaire for Architects' Roster," a self-reported survey compiled by the AIA. He says:

I do not consider that I have any outstanding examples of architectural accomplishment, except in the practical planning and good construction, but they cover practically every type of building requirements: residences, hotels, apartments, stores, office buildings, gymnasiums, swimming pools, schools, dormitories, churches, theatres, court houses, jails, fire stations, manufacturing plants, warehouses, and cold storage plants.<sup>ii</sup>

This insight is noted at the end of a list of "representative work for which you were or are architects," which quantifies his work in Birmingham, San Francisco, and New Orleans over the course of fifty years. His answer shows his practical aesthetic. This practicality is also reflected in his design of the Oconee Street School building. The monumental effect of the Classical Revival style is felt through the well-ordered design of the masonry, with its aligned fenestration, symmetrical front elevation, water table, window sills and lintels; and not through grand ornament.

Two other notable buildings of Spink's design are the Tuscaloosa County Courthouse and Graymont Elementary School, both built in 1908 and located in Tuscaloosa and Birmingham, Alabama respectively. Graymont Elementary School is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and is a near-twin of the Oconee Street School, although it appears to have been almost twice as deep. While the statewide context notes that urban public school type designs were frequently reused within the same school system, it appears Spink sold his design to school systems in at least two states. Spink began advertising his architectural services in *The Athens Banner* in the summer of 1908 and may have been attempting to establish an office there.

The property also retains its 1956 cafetorium, reflecting postwar changes in architectural design and educational philosophy. "Cafetorium," as defined by Merriam-Webster is "a large room (as in a school building) designed for use both as a cafeteria and an auditorium." The first known use of the word was in 1952. In the statewide context, *Public Elementary and Secondary Schools in Georgia, 1868-1971*, auditoriums are noted as a common later alteration to urban public schools. The context also discusses the prevalence of multi-purpose spaces in the later early modern public school

<sup>i</sup> Pennsylvania Architectural Field Guide. "Classical Revival Style: 1895-1950," Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission, <http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/portal/communities/architecture/styles/classical-revival.html> (accessed April 1, 2018).

<sup>ii</sup> "Questionnaire for Architects' Roster" completed by William E. Spink (firm) for AIA Historical Directory of American Architects, American Institute of Architects, [http://public.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki/AIA%20scans/Rosters/SpinkWilliam\\_roster.pdf](http://public.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki/AIA%20scans/Rosters/SpinkWilliam_roster.pdf) (accessed November 14, 2018).

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type. The Oconee Street School's cafetorium building adheres to almost all considerations given to auditoriums of the early modern public school type. These features include its on-grade location; flexible seating when combined with another use, such as a lunchroom in an elementary school; minimal natural light (especially when compared to the main school building); the stage situated on one side of the space and directly accessible from small, adjacent rooms; and several large exit doors. Also, like other buildings typical of the early modern school type, the cafetorium is a minimalist rectilinear, one-story structure with elements of the International style as outlined in John J.G. Blumenson's *Identifying American Architecture*. These elements include the flat roof without eaves which terminate flush with the plane of the wall, complete absence of ornamentation, and an asymmetrical composition.<sup>iii</sup> Similar to other buildings of the early modern school type, it is a concrete block structure with red brick veneer and exposed concrete block interior walls and has square metal, awning type windows high on the northeast and southwest facades. The Oconee Street School cafetorium was designed by the local Athens firm, Heery & Heery Architects.

#### HEERY & HEERY ARCHITECTS

Heery & Heery Architects was organized in Athens in 1945 with Clarence Wilmer Heery (C. Wilmer) as the founder and principal. C. Wilmer was born in 1904 and graduated from the Georgia Institute of Technology with a degree in architecture in 1926. Prior to starting his own firm, he worked for the Federal Housing Administration from 1935 to 1945. In the 1950s he served as vice president of the AIA, Georgia Chapter and taught at the University of Georgia, training students in residential design, drafting, and perspective. In 1952, C. Wilmer was joined in his practice by his son, George Thomas Heery. George graduated from the Georgia Institute of Technology with a degree in architecture in 1951 and went on to establish a satellite office for the firm in Atlanta, while his father continued operations at their Athens office.<sup>iv</sup> In the 1960s and 1970s, George Heery formed several subsidiary companies, before merging these companies with the mechanical, electrical, and structural engineering firm of J. W. Austin. In 1975, George Heery published *Time, Cost, and Architecture*, which was considered "the book" on construction management at the time. The Heery family interests in the firm were sold to a British group in 1986 and reorganized as Heery Architects and Engineers, Heery Engineering, and Heery Program Management. The company is now known as Heery International, Inc.

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#### Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

*It should be noted that the Sanborn maps and various newspaper articles name this building the "East Athens School" though it appears that this was a misnamed or a generic reference for "the school in East Athens." There was, as mentioned above, an "East Athens School" and a "West Athens School" for African-Americans but the Oconee Street School both pre-1909 and this building was always called the Oconee Street School by Athens City Schools and local residents.*

The history of the city of Athens centers on the Cedar Shoals of the Oconee River, located just below Carr's Hill and the Oconee Street School. During the late 1700s, this area was little more than a trading settlement. Then in 1801, a site for the University of Georgia was selected on the hill above the Cedar Shoals on the west side of the river and the incorporation of the town of Athens followed quickly thereafter in 1806.

#### INDUSTRY AND THE EAST ATHENS COMMUNITY

In 1833, the Georgia Railroad Company was chartered by a group of Athens businessmen, led by James Camak, for the purpose of building a railroad from Augusta west into the interior of the state. The Athens branch was completed in December 1841 and terminated on Carr's Hill very near the Oconee Street School. The line was originally built as a five-foot gauge track and operated with horse-drawn cars until 1847.<sup>v</sup> It was rebuilt to standard gauge in 1886, which may have also been when the line was rerouted to its present (abandoned) alignment bypassing Carr's Hill on the northeast side to cross the Oconee River. No evidence of the original rail alignment exists on Carr's Hill except the former name of Georgia Drive, known previously as "Georgia Depot Street."

Cotton mills were an important part of Athens' economy even before the Civil War, and the city was nicknamed the "Manchester of the South" after the city in England known for its mills.<sup>vi</sup> Industry historically clustered around the Oconee

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<sup>iii</sup> J. G. Blumenson, *Identifying American Architecture: A Pictorial Guide to Styles and Terms, 1600-1945*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1981), 75.

<sup>iv</sup> George S. Koyl, ed., *American Architects Directory*, (New York: R.R. Bowker Company, 1955), 238.

<sup>v</sup> Steve Storey, "Georgia Railroad," <http://railga.com/georgia.html>, Railroad History, (accessed October 17, 2017).

<sup>vi</sup> "Athens, Georgia," Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athens,\\_Georgia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athens,_Georgia), (accessed October 17, 2017).

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River on the east side of downtown. During the Civil War, East Athens was home to the Cook & Brother Armory, the present-day Chicopee Mills complex. Although closed at the end of the war, the complex was purchased by Athens Manufacturing Company in 1870, one of Athens' largest mills for decades and a catalyst of new industry in the city. Railroad improvements combined with post-Civil War efforts to boost the economy through industrial growth across the South led to Athens' speedy industrialization at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

By 1900, the population of Athens east of the Oconee River had grown significantly and the area between downtown and Oconee River was quickly becoming more industrial and commercial pushing additional residential population to the east side of the Oconee River. Historic Sanborn Fire Insurance maps show an increase in industry between downtown Athens and the river. Along Oconee Street in particular, a shift is seen from residential before 1900 to commercial/industrial after 1900. This shift is illustrated by the move of the Oconee Street School from its former building to its current location in 1909. Additionally, in 1903, the East Athens Methodist Church was combined with the Oconee Street Methodist Church and the new merged congregation elected to move the church to Carr's Hill, directly across the street from the Oconee Street School.

#### PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN ATHENS

The effect of new mill jobs in cities such as Athens meant a decrease in the state's rural population as the populace moved to the cities to take advantage of jobs, better educational opportunities for their children, and a wider social network. The best teachers also left the rural areas and went to teach in the cities because the pay was better and the pupils attended on a more regular basis.<sup>vii</sup> In Athens, the establishment of the Athens City Schools system in 1885 was no doubt responding to this growth in the city.

Industry and social welfare philosophies developed concurrently. While the municipal school district sought to take care of the mill children's education, dedicated benefactors and individuals provided for the education and general betterment of the mill communities at large. The East Athens Night School was established in 1897 and was a great success by the early 1900s. The night school, which was held in several buildings in the Carr's Hill neighborhood over the years, provided education for children and adults alike who worked at the mills during the day. A movement for free kindergarten began in Athens in May 1902, and a kindergarten program was soon established within the night school. In 1905, the night school and the kindergarten program were integrated into the Athens City Schools and were thereafter included in the district's annual reports. In 1913, the night school and kindergarten were at least temporarily moved into the Oconee Street School building.

According to the statewide context *Public Elementary and Secondary Schools in Georgia, 1868-1971*, some urban centers had begun public schooling before the advent of the Civil War, and several of the larger cities established public school systems immediately after the end of the war. The 1870 "Act to Establish a System of Public Instruction" passed by the Georgia state legislature included no provision for a local tax for county school districts. However, towns and cities with 2,000 or more residents could establish school systems independent of the county systems and draw its share from the state fund.<sup>viii</sup> State law gave cities the right to levy property taxes for school maintenance and the right to issue bonds for building and equipping schools. Because this tax structure in Georgia permitted taxation for schools only in the cities, city school systems were provided with the potential for additional funds to build more substantial buildings and create far more sophisticated school systems.<sup>ix</sup> In a city like Athens, which prided itself on education, this was a significant incentive and another reason to establish an independent Athens City Schools system.

"On October 15, 1885, enabling legislation was enacted by the General Assembly for an Athens school system, distinct from the county."<sup>x</sup> The Athens City Schools system was established by the necessary two-thirds majority of votes in the city and, unlike the county, benefitted from the support of local taxation, as well an initial bond referendum in the amount of \$20,000 to build schools. The Board of Education, headed by Superintendent E.C. Branson set about to "improve the schools on hand and install new ones, for the schools were then very poorly equipped and there was need of vast improvement." Initially two new 10-room brick school buildings were built, one on Baxter Street in west Athens for

<sup>vii</sup> Ray & Associates, *Public Elementary and Secondary Schools in Georgia, 1868-1971*, (Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Historic Preservation Division, Stockbridge, Georgia), 10.

<sup>viii</sup> Ray & Associates, *Public Elementary and Secondary Schools in Georgia*, 8-9.

<sup>ix</sup> Ray & Associates, *Public Elementary and Secondary Schools in Georgia*, 22-23.

<sup>x</sup> Marion J. Rice, "Metamorphosis of the Clarke County public school system," *Athens Banner-Herald*, October 30, 2001.

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black children and one on Washington Street in downtown for white children.<sup>xi</sup>

Along with the new schools on Baxter Street and Washington Street, a former girls' school on Meigs Street was converted to a primary school to serve the "uptown" white population and the first Oconee Street School was established in an existing building to serve the "downtown" white population.

By the mid-1890s, the Baxter Street School had been converted to a white elementary school, and two new frame schoolhouses had been built in East and West Athens for African American students. The Washington Street School (also called the Washington Academy) in the center of downtown had become the Grammar and High School for white students, leaving three white elementary schools: Baxter Street, Meigs, and Oconee Street schools.

The first Oconee Street School was initially housed in the back of an east downtown store at the top of Oconee Street. In time, the school moved into a former dwelling on Oconee Street. This building, which can be seen on the 1893, 1899, and 1903 Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, was a two-story wood frame structure on the west bank of the Oconee River about halfway between the river and downtown.

By the early 1900s, the repurposed house functioning as Oconee Street School was less than ideal for education. It was heated but without plumbing or electricity and its proximity to a spur track of the railroad and several neighboring industries caused the teachers some concern. An account in 1902 "from one of the smallest pupils at the Oconee Street School" relays, without complaint, the less than desirable atmosphere at the old wood frame building, stating "The train passes near the school house every day. The engine makes a lot of noise. The trestle is near the school house... There is a cotton gin near the school house."<sup>xii</sup>

As early as 1891, the owner of the Athens Manufacturing Company had been lobbying the school systems to relocate the white school for the East Athens community to the east side of the Oconee River. He had even gone as far as offering a piece of land on Carr's Hill that had a view of downtown Athens across the river, but the Oconee Street School continued on the west side of the river for some time before the school board decided to build a new school.<sup>xiii</sup>

#### THE 1909 OCONEE STREET SCHOOL

The 1909 Oconee Street School was constructed at a time of major school building in Athens and across the country. In fact, three other new school buildings were constructed in the Athens City Schools system between 1907 and 1909: Childs Street School (no longer extant), College Avenue (originally the Jackson Street School, then Strong Street School, no longer extant), and Nantahala Avenue School (no longer extant).

According to the *Twenty-Second Annual Report of the Athens City Schools, Session 1907-'08*, "on the 15th day of last January [1907], the city voted by an overwhelming majority to issue \$50,000.00 worth of bonds for the purpose of erecting some modern school houses."<sup>xiv</sup> Additional funds brought the available funding up to \$60,000.00 with which the school district planned "to erect the three plain buildings: one somewhere in the Oconee Street District, one on the Jackson Street lot, and a nice high school probably on the Childs Street lot."

The Oconee Street District noted in the 1907-08 report is defined in an annual report several years later. The Oconee Street district is:

All that section of the city east and south of the following line: Beginning at the river on a line just north of Baldwin Street to the Central Railroad, thence to a line just south of Strong Street, thence back to the river, thence across the river to a line just north of Albertan road, thence to a bend at the top of the hill thence at right angles to Trail creek, thence to the city limits.<sup>xv</sup>

<sup>xi</sup> Rice, "Metamorphosis," 2001.

<sup>xii</sup> "A Credit to the Schools," *The Weekly Banner*, February 7, 1902, morning edition.

<sup>xiii</sup> Patsy Hawkins Arnold and Maxine Pinson Easom (authors of forthcoming book, *Across the River*), interview by Emily Taff, Ray, Ellis & LaBrie Consulting, July 24, 2017.

<sup>xiv</sup> Athens City Schools, *Twenty-Second Annual Report of the Athens City Schools, Session 1907-'08*, (Athens, GA: Banner Job Office Printers, 1908), 13.

<sup>xv</sup> Athens City Schools, *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report of the Athens City Schools, Session 1909-'10*, (Athens, GA: The E. D. Stone Press, 1910), 17.

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In June 1908, the precise site was chosen for the new Oconee Street School, “on Oconee near Oak Street,”<sup>xvi</sup> halfway up Carr’s Hill and across the street from the Oconee Street Methodist Church. Mr. T.P. Vincent, president of the Athens Manufacturing Co. offered \$200 toward the purchase of the lot, reducing the cost from \$1000 to \$800. After a few false starts at construction, plans by architect William E. Spink were accepted in November 1908 for “the East Athens school.” The plans showed a two-story building with a basement and materials of red brick and limestone. The basement would contain a “steam heating plant.” The construction would be under the supervision of City Engineer Barnett at an estimated cost of \$12,000.<sup>xvii</sup>

According to the *Twenty-Eighth Annual Report of the Athens City Schools, Session 1913-‘14*, at the time of completion in 1909, the Oconee Street School building had six classrooms. This suggests that soon after, or during construction the large rooms on the east side of the central hallway were subdivided into two rooms.

Construction began on the Oconee Street School in early 1909. According to the *Athens Banner Herald* there were several delays in material delivery, but the building was finished in September 1909. Students attending the Oconee Street School in 1909 started three days later than the rest of Athens City Schools as construction was not quite complete on the school system’s first day of school.<sup>xviii</sup>

The new Oconee Street School would still serve white students on the east side of Athens, which meant most, if not all, of the students were children of mill workers. African American children attended school at the East Athens School on McKinley Street in another area of east Athens, northeast of Carr’s Hill.

The new Oconee Street School building originally held first grade through third grade, with around 125 students. As school enrollment throughout the city continued to grow, grades were added to the neighborhood primary schools as needed. According to school board reports, in a matter of months following the school’s opening, a fourth grade class was added. Over the next few years more grades were added, with fifth grade added in 1916, sixth grade in 1918, and seventh grade in 1921.<sup>xix</sup>

Before the 1913 school year, the student body was already outgrowing the 1909 building. Two large rooms were added to the back of the building, enabling one of the grades to move “from a hallway into a comfortable room where pupils could have all the conveniences of any modern school.”<sup>xx</sup> These rooms contained roll-up partitions that could be raised to create a large gathering space or lowered to divide the space into two classrooms. Former students, Patsy Hawkins Arnold (1940s) and Maxine Pinson Easom (1950s) remember this space with the partitions down almost all the time to divide the space into two classrooms. The partitions would be raised only occasionally to create a larger gathering space for evening events before the addition of the cafetorium in 1956. The addition of these “two commodious rooms” also enabled the school system to move the East Athens Night School and kindergarten into the Oconee Street School at this time. The kindergarten class appears to have remained at the Oconee Street School, but the night school moved several times during the historic period.

The East Athens Night School had been an educational staple in the east Athens mill community since its inception in 1897. The night school sprang from the social welfare philosophy which ran strong in American industrial towns. A 1904 newspaper clipping describes it as “a unique school where the tuition and the books are all free, and where the children and some grown people who work for a living during the day go and obtain an education at night.”<sup>xxi</sup> The school was often described as one of the most important educational institutions of Athens. It had been housed in various establishments over the years and run by Miss Louie Lane, a local icon and ad hoc “social worker” in the community. She was the daughter of Reverend Charles W. Lane whose congregation was in Carr’s Hill. Although the majority of the night school pupils were mill-working children, by 1901, adult students were also welcome. In addition to the elementary educational standards, classes such as bookkeeping were also taught. These classes prepared students for jobs beyond the factory floor.

<sup>xvi</sup> “Lot secured,” *The Athens Banner*, June 25, 1908.

<sup>xvii</sup> “Plans accepted for school building,” *The Athens Banner*, November 15, 1908.

<sup>xviii</sup> “All records were broken at city school opening,” *The Weekly Banner*, September 3, 1909.

<sup>xix</sup> Patsy Hawkins Arnold and Maxine Pinson Easom, interview by Emily Taff, July 24, 2017.

<sup>xx</sup> Athens City Schools, *Twenty-Eighth Annual Report of the Athens City Schools, Session 1913-‘14*, (Athens, GA: The E. D. Stone Press, 1914), 11.

<sup>xxi</sup> “East Athens Night School,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, September 7, 1904.

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In 1922, two more classrooms were added above the 1913 first-floor addition. The final addition to the main building, a two-story wing with two more classrooms, was added in 1933. The Oconee Street School held first grade through eighth grade classes before a Junior High School was initiated in the 1940s.<sup>xxii</sup>

#### SOUTH POPLAR STREET

The property was not always bounded by South Poplar Street on the southeast side. That street had its southern terminus at Oconee Street until sometime between 1938 and 1944 (according to aerials). In 1938, Little Oconee Street reached a dead end immediately behind the 1909 Oconee School building (where the Cafetorium building stands now). By 1944, the streets around the school were configured as they are today. South Poplar Street can be seen on aerial photographs, extending along the southeast side of the school property, connecting with Little Oconee Street and continuing southwest.

Most of the children attending the Oconee Street School lived within walking distance, and the surrounding area was still primarily associated with the nearby mills through the 1950s. However, students began riding buses to the school in the 1940s or 50s. In 1954, one bus brought children from "Ag Hill" a neighborhood by the University of Georgia campus to Oconee Street School,<sup>xxiii</sup> and by 1964 "approximately fifty children [were] transported" to the school.<sup>xxiv</sup> School buses used the side entrance to drop off children, so it is possible that South Poplar Street was cut through when buses started transporting children to the school. South Poplar Street would also have provided better access for service vehicles, which was particularly important after the construction of the cafetorium.

#### RECREATION AREAS

It is unclear how the rear yard of the school was used in the early decades of the school, but Little Oconee Street appears to have terminated with a dirt driveway directly behind the school during this time. By the 1950s, the rear yard was used as a ball field.<sup>xxv</sup> According to alumni of the school from the 1940s and 1950s, the front and southeast side yards were where the children played during recess, and on May 1<sup>st</sup>, a Maypole was set in the front yard for May Day celebrations. The boys' and girls' bathrooms in the basement level were accessible from the exterior on the north side yard, likely to allow students access to the bathrooms during recess. A brick wall divides the space between the two bathrooms, presumably to keep the boys and girls separated from each other (background of Photograph 11).

#### FIRE ESCAPE SLIDE

At least as early as the 1940s, the small window above the southeast side entrance served as a fire escape (photograph 5). From this small window a slide extended along the northeast side of the 1933 addition toward the ground at the east corner. Former students recall children making a game of trying to climb up the slide from the bottom when school was not in session. The slide was removed in the late 1950s after construction of the cafetorium, according to alumni.

#### SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM

The school did not have a lunchroom until the School Nutrition Program was implemented in the 1940s.<sup>xxvi</sup> Congress finally passed the National School Lunch Act in 1946. The stated goals of the program were "to safeguard the health and well-being of the Nation's children and to encourage the domestic consumption of nutritious agricultural commodities." According to the New Georgia Encyclopedia:

Although participation in the program remained optional, schools that accepted federal funds were obliged to abide by several guidelines. These requirements included agreeing to operate the lunch program on a not-for-profit basis, maintaining accurate records of all purchases and sales, and submitting regular reports to the designated oversight agency in each state. Additionally, the meals served at participating schools had to incorporate as many surplus agricultural commodities as possible and adhere to dietary guidelines outlined by the USDA.

<sup>xxii</sup> Patsy Hawkins Arnold and Maxin Pinson Easom, interview by Emily Taff, July 24, 2017.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Walter James Coile, "Three Athens Elementary School," (bachelor's thesis, University of Georgia, 1954).

<sup>xxiv</sup> Clarke County School District, "Self-Study and Evaluation Report: Oconee Street Elementary School," Athens, GA, 1963-64.

<sup>xxv</sup> Philip Seagraves (student from 1955-60), interview by Emily Taff, Ray, Ellis & LaBrie Consulting, July 20, 2017.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Interview with Patsy Hawkins Arnold and Maxin Pinson Easom.

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At that time, the large room on the west side of the second floor in the 1909 main block became the lunchroom. According to then-principal, Annie Wallace in the school's 1963-64 Report, the lunchroom program "began with a dish of soup for each child being prepared elsewhere and brought to the school." The cafetorium's construction in 1956, allowed this room to return to classroom use.

### THE 1956 CAFETORIUM

After World War II, Athens, like cities across the United States, saw a pronounced increase in population which resulted in a need for additional facilities in the city's schools. In 1954, the Athens Board of Education made provision for adding classroom space in all of its five elementary schools.<sup>xxvii</sup> In his 1954 bachelor's thesis creating a landscape plan for three Athens elementary school, Walter J. Coile described the Oconee Street School property as follows:

"This property is very deep and narrow. It is bounded on the East by Oconee Street, on the South by Little Oconee Street, and on the West and North by wooded, rocky land overlooking the Oconee River. The proposed building [the Cafetorium] is to be constructed at the rear of the existing building on the west side with service facing Little Oconee Street. ... Parking is on the north side of the property just below an embankment. There is a long concrete walk leading from Oconee Street to the front entrance of the building. A bus transporting pupils to and from Ag Hill on the University Campus loads and unloads it[s] passengers at the side entrance facing Little Oconee Street. Also at this end is a fire exit."

The cafetorium building was completed in 1956 as a combination lunchroom and auditorium. According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the first known use of the word was in 1952.

The building, designed by Heery & Heery Architects in Athens, is a product of the 1950s academic construction boom. Typical of mid-century school buildings, the cafetorium is a minimalist rectilinear, flat-roofed, one-story structure reflecting elements of the International style. Inside the building, the kitchen and food prep area of the lunchroom is at the southeastern end, convenient to South Peters Street onto which a service entrance opens. The lunch line formed in this section of the building. The northwestern end is dominated by a raised stage. The center of the room served the dual purpose of lunchroom and audience seating when the tables were pulled away. The construction of the cafetorium allowed the large room upstairs in the main building to be converted back into a classroom. In the floor plans from 1963-64, the large room is shown as a sixth grade classroom.

### DESEGREGATION

The end of the Athens City Schools system coincided with construction of the cafetorium. In 1955, the municipal school district was merged back into the Clarke County School System. Another impetus for the re-merging of the city and county systems was the 1955 equalization legislation, which provided funds for new schools (which were still segregated) to be built or improved in an attempt to stave off integration. Although the neighborhood immediately around Oconee Street School was mostly white into the 1960s, the larger east Athens area (which extended northeast across Oak Street) had a large African American population and those children attended segregated schools a few blocks to the north. Clarke County Schools were desegregated in 1967. Districts were redrawn to include a racial mix of students. Some students had to be bussed to schools in other neighborhoods, and some schools were closed as student populations were merged. Oconee Street School became the neighborhood elementary school for both white and black students in east Athens. The school closed in 1975 probably due to consolidation of schools across the city and an aging population immediately surrounding it, which led to a drop in enrollment.

### 1975 – PRESENT

After the Oconee Street School closed in 1975, it was owned by the Clarke County School District into the 1980s, although it was used by various organizations over the years, including Area Committees to Improve Opportunities Now (ACTION, Inc.) and Clarke Community Services. According to the Athens-Clarke Heritage Foundation, the building was purchased by ACTION, Inc. in 1989. Partition walls were installed in many rooms to utilize the building as office space. These partition walls stopped approximately two feet from the historic ceiling, as a non-historic suspended ceiling had been installed. This suspended ceiling truncated all exterior windows. Additionally, knee walls were installed to create cubicles in several rooms, and throughout the building non-historic faux wood paneling was used to cover the original plaster and carpeting was installed over hardwood floors. In June of 2005, ACTION, Inc. was attempting to sell the

<sup>xxvii</sup> Coile, Walter James. "Three Athens Elementary Schools." Thesis, Department of Landscape Architecture, University of Georgia, Athens, Ga. March 1954.



Oconee Street School  
Name of Property

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building, and the Athens-Clarke Heritage Foundation became involved in advocating for its preservation. Thanks to their efforts and community outcry, plans to demolish the Oconee Street School were never brought to fruition. In 2007, Athens-Clarke Heritage Foundation received a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation to help pay for a study and feasibility report by the Atlanta architectural firm Lord Aeck Sargent. This report gave a brief history of the building, a conditions assessment, and presented several options for reuse. Between February and July 2017, non-historic office finishes were removed by the previous owner.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

- American Institute of Architects. "Questionnaire for Architects' Roster" completed by William E. Spink (firm) for AIA Historical Directory of American Architects, October 29, 1947. [http://public.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki/AIA%20scans/Rosters/SpinkWilliam\\_roster.pdf](http://public.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki/AIA%20scans/Rosters/SpinkWilliam_roster.pdf) (accessed November 14, 2018).
- Blumenson, J.G. *Identifying American Architecture: A Pictorial Guide to Styles and Terms, 1600-1945*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1977.
- Clarke County School District. "Self-Study and Evaluation Report: Oconee Street Elementary School." Athens, Georgia, 1963-64.
- Coile, Walter James. "Three Athens Elementary Schools – Childs Street, College Avenue, Oconee Street." Bachelor's thesis, University of Georgia, 1954.
- Koyl, George S., ed. *American Architects Directory*. New York: R.R. Bowker Company, 1955.
- Lord Aeck Sargent. "A Feasibility Study for the Oconee Street School." Provided by Athens-Clarke Heritage Foundation, 2007.
- Nelson, Linda, and Marjorie White. "Graymont School." *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*, August 16, 2007. On file at the Alabama Historical Commission, Montgomery, Alabama.
- Pennsylvania Historic Commission & Museums. "Classical Revival Style 1895-1950." Pennsylvania Architectural Field Guide. <http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/portal/communities/architecture/styles/classical-revival.html> (accessed April 2018).
- Ray & Associates. *Public Elementary and Secondary Schools in Georgia, 1868-1971*. Historic context on file at the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Historic Preservation Division, Stockbridge, Georgia.
- Rice, Marion J. "Metamorphosis of the Clarke County public school system." *Athens Banner-Herald*, October 30, 2001 [http://onlineathens.com/stories/103001/ath\\_schools.shtml#.Wd-wgROPJp8](http://onlineathens.com/stories/103001/ath_schools.shtml#.Wd-wgROPJp8) (accessed June 16, 2017).

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

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Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

N/A

Oconee Street School  
Name of Property

Clarke County, GA  
County and State

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## 10. Geographical Data

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**Acreage of Property** 1.68 acres  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**  
**Datum if other than WGS84:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)**

1. **Latitude:** 33.952353

**Longitude:** -83.366406

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary is indicated by the heavy black line on the attached parcel map, which is drawn to scale.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

This boundary is the current legal boundary associated with the school. It contains all character-defining features of the property, such as the main school building with historic additions, cafetorium, connecting breezeway, and sidewalk connecting to Oconee Street.

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## 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title Emily Taff & Brian W. LaBrie  
organization Ray, Ellis & LaBrie Consulting, LLC date May 2018  
street & number Rhodes Hall, 1516 Peachtree Street NW telephone (678) 612-2833  
city or town Atlanta state GA zip code 30309  
e-mail brian@rayandellis.com

name/title Laura Beth Ingle  
organization Historic Preservation Division, GA Dept. of Natural Resources date November 2018  
street & number 2610 Georgia Hwy 155, SW telephone (770) 389-7844  
city or town Stockbridge state GA zip code 30281  
e-mail laurabeth.ingle@dnr.ga.gov

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## Additional Documentation

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Oconee Street School  
Name of Property

Clarke County, GA  
County and State

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**Photographs:**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Oconee Street School

City or Vicinity: Athens

County: Clarke State: Georgia

Photographer: Brian W. LaBrie, Ray, Ellis & LaBrie Consulting, LLC

Date Photographed: October 5, 2017

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

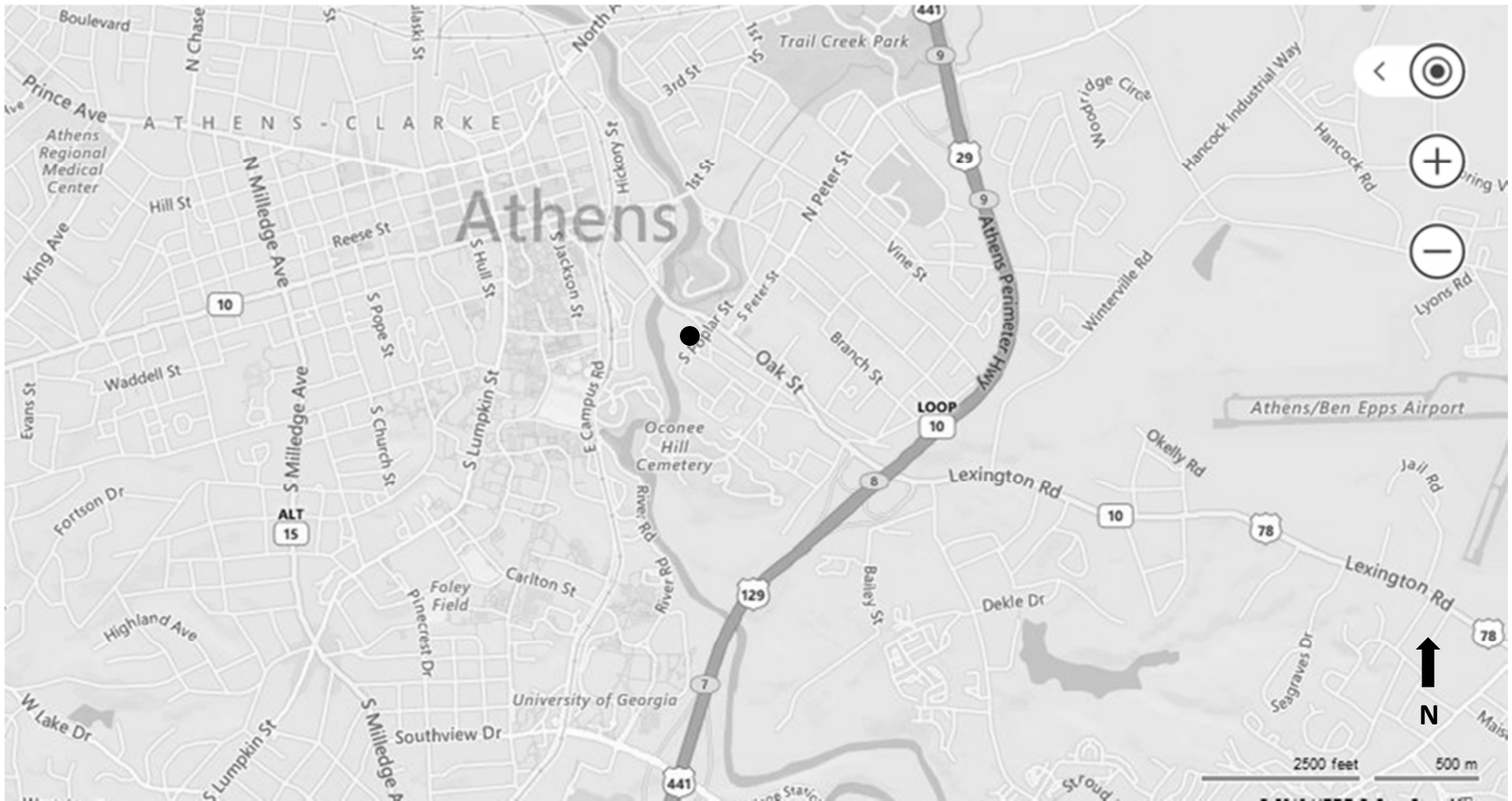
- 1 of 63. Front (northeast) elevation of main school building; photographer facing southwest.
- 2 of 63. Oblique view of main school building; photographer facing west.
- 3 of 63. Detail of corner pilaster; photographer facing west.
- 4 of 63. Detail of cornice; photographer facing west.
- 5 of 63. Southeast side elevation. View of 1909 main block, 1913 first-floor addition, 1922 second floor addition, and 1933 two-story projecting southeast addition; photographer facing northwest.
- 6 of 63. Oblique of 1933 two-story projecting southeast addition; photographer facing west.
- 7 of 63. Oblique of 1933 two-story projecting southeast addition and rear (southwest) elevation; photographer facing northwest.
- 8 of 63. Breezeway connecting the main building and the cafetorium; photographer facing northwest.
- 9 of 63. Breezeway connecting the main building and the cafetorium; photograph facing southeast.
- 10 of 63. Rear (southwest) elevation. View of 1913 first-floor addition, 1922 second floor addition; photographer facing east.
- 11 of 63. Northwest side elevation; photographer facing north.
- 12 of 63. Detail of historic window at basement level; photographer facing southeast.
- 13 of 63. Detail of northwest side elevation. Showing doors to boys' bathroom and boiler room; photographer facing southeast.
- 14 of 63. West side of the front elevation. Showing the main entrance, portion of first floor, basement level, and one of the c.1956 planters; photographer facing south.
- 15 of 63. Detail of main entrance; photographer facing southwest.
- 16 of 63. Sidewalk and former schoolyard, now used as a parking lot. View from the main entrance; photographer facing northeast.
- 17 of 63. East side of the front elevation. Showing the main entrance, portion of first floor, basement level, and one of the c.1956 planters; photographer facing south.
- 18 of 63. Front (northeast) elevation of cafetorium; photographer facing south.
- 19 of 63. Southeast side elevation of cafetorium; photographer facing northwest.
- 20 of 63. Rear (southwest) elevation of cafetorium; photographer facing northeast.
- 21 of 63. Northwest side elevation of cafetorium; photographer facing northeast.
- 22 of 63. Basement level, girls' bathroom (B-01) in the 1909 main block; photographer facing northwest.
- 23 of 63. Basement level, girls' bathroom (B-01) in the 1909 main block; photographer facing southeast.
- 24 of 63. Basement level, boys' bathroom (B-02) in the 1909 main block; photographer facing northwest.
- 25 of 63. Basement level, flexible classroom/library space (B-04) in the 1913 addition; photographer facing southwest.
- 26 of 63. First floor, wide central hallway with original, main staircase; photographer facing southwest.
- 27 of 63. Detail of front, main staircase; photographer facing northwest.
- 28 of 63. Classroom (1-10) in the 1909 main block; photographer facing southeast.
- 29 of 63. Classroom (1-09) in the 1909 main block; photographer facing southeast.
- 30 of 63. First floor, wide central hallway, looking toward the main entrance; photographer facing northeast.
- 31 of 63. Detail of cloakroom (1-02) in the 1909 main block; photographer facing northwest.

Oconee Street School

Clarke County, GA  
County and State

Name of Property

- 32 of 63. Detail of typical historic door in the 1909 main block; photographer facing southwest.
- 33 of 63. Classroom (1-01) in the 1909 main block; photographer facing southwest.
- 34 of 63. Room 1-03 created by truncating the cross hallway in the 1913 addition; photographer facing northwest.
- 35 of 63. Cross hallway in the 1913 addition. View of underside of staircase to the second floor and the side entrance; photographer facing southeast.
- 36 of 63. Cross hallway in the 1913 addition. View of staircase to the basement level and truncated hallway creating Room 1-03; photographer facing northwest.
- 37 of 63. Detail of side entrance; photographer facing east.
- 38 of 63. View of cloakroom-turned-hallway and the building's rear door in the 1913 addition; photographer facing southwest.
- 39 of 63. Classroom (1-07) in the 1933 addition; photographer facing southeast.
- 40 of 63. East half of multi-purpose room (1-06) in the 1913 addition; photographer facing northwest.
- 41 of 63. East half of multi-purpose room (1-06) in the 1913 addition; photographer facing southwest.
- 42 of 63. Detail of roll-up door dividing east and west halves of multi-purpose room; photographer facing northwest.
- 43 of 63. West half of multi-purpose room (1-05) in the 1913 addition; photographer facing northwest.
- 44 of 63. West half of multi-purpose room (1-05) in the 1913 addition; photographer facing north.
- 45 of 63. Detail of historic window in the 1913 addition; photographer facing southwest.
- 46 of 63. Cloakroom (1-04) in the 1913 addition; photographer facing northeast.
- 47 of 63. Classroom (2-01) in the 1909 main block. This room was used as a lunchroom prior to construction of the 1956 cafeteria; photographer facing west.
- 48 of 63. Classroom (2-10) in the 1909 main block; photographer facing east.
- 49 of 63. Classroom (2-09) in the 1909 main block; photographer facing southeast.
- 50 of 63. Second floor, wide central hallway with original, main staircase; photographer facing northeast.
- 51 of 63. Room (2-03) created by truncating the cross hallway in the 1922 addition. This room was used as a warming kitchen prior to construction of the 1956 cafeteria; photographer facing southeast.
- 52 of 63. Second floor cross hallway in the 1922 addition; photographer facing southeast.
- 53 of 63. Detail of second floor, partially infilled segmental arch, which connects the 1922 addition to the 1909 main block; photographer facing east.
- 54 of 63. View of cloakroom-turned-hallway, providing access from the 1922 addition to the 1933 addition; photographer facing southwest.
- 55 of 63. Cloakroom (2-08) in the 1933 addition; photographer facing southeast.
- 56 of 63. Classroom (2-07) in the 1933 addition; photographer facing south.
- 57 of 63. Classroom (2-06) in the 1922 addition; photographer facing southwest.
- 58 of 63. Classroom (2-05) in the 1922 addition; photographer facing southwest.
- 59 of 63. Classroom (2-05) in the 1922 addition; photographer facing northwest.
- 60 of 63. Cloakroom (2-04) in the 1922 addition; photographer facing northeast.
- 61 of 63. Cafeteria/auditorium area (C-06) in the 1956 cafeteria; photographer facing southwest.
- 62 of 63. Cafeteria/auditorium area (C-06) and stage (C-03) in the 1956 cafeteria; photographer facing northwest.
- 63 of 63. Kitchen (C-09) in the 1956 cafeteria; photographer facing north.



**Oconee Street School**

**594 Oconee Street**

**Athens, Clarke County, Georgia**

Source: Bing Maps, 2018


Latitude: 33.952353, Longitude: -83.366406

North:




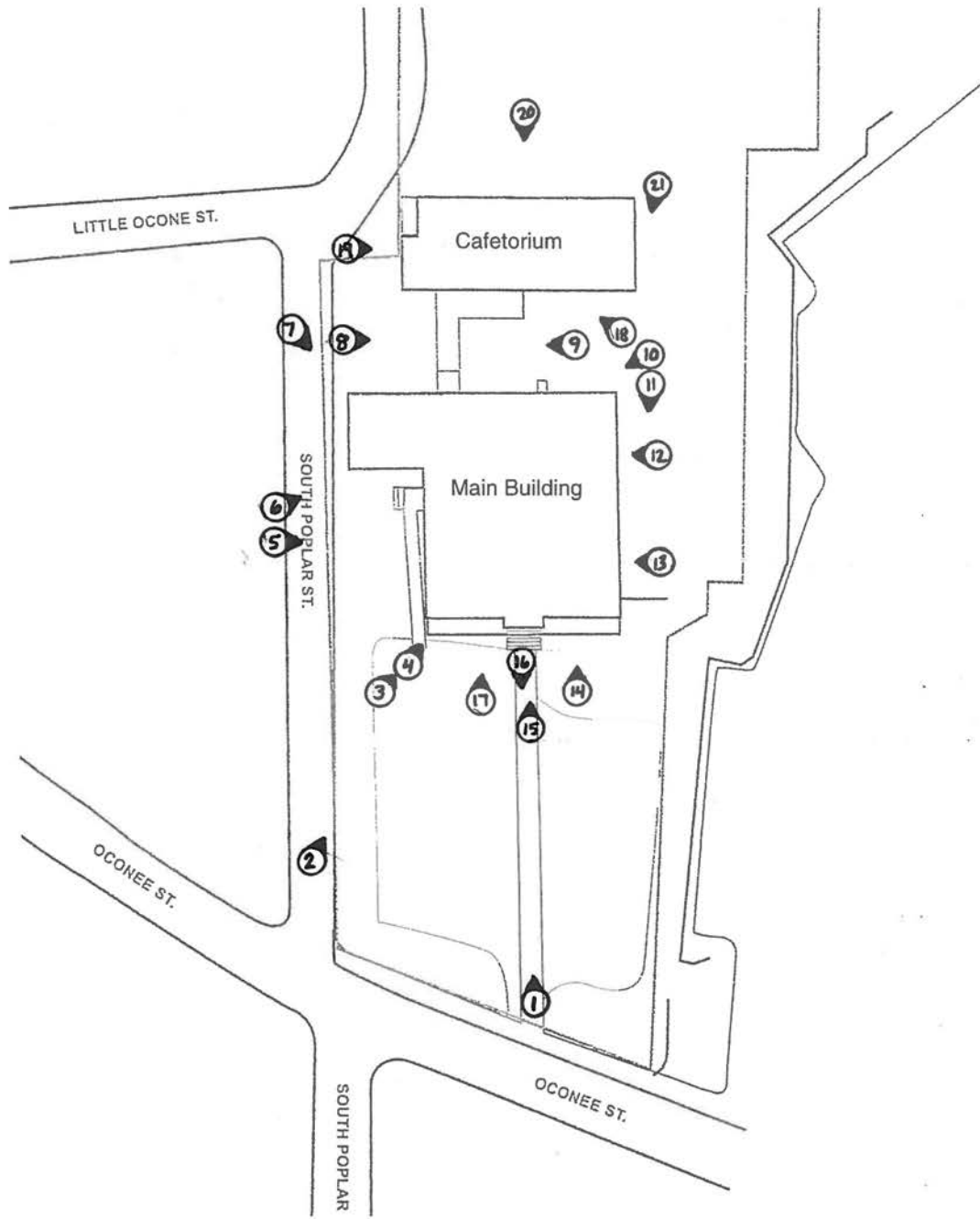



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Athens, Clarke County, Georgia**

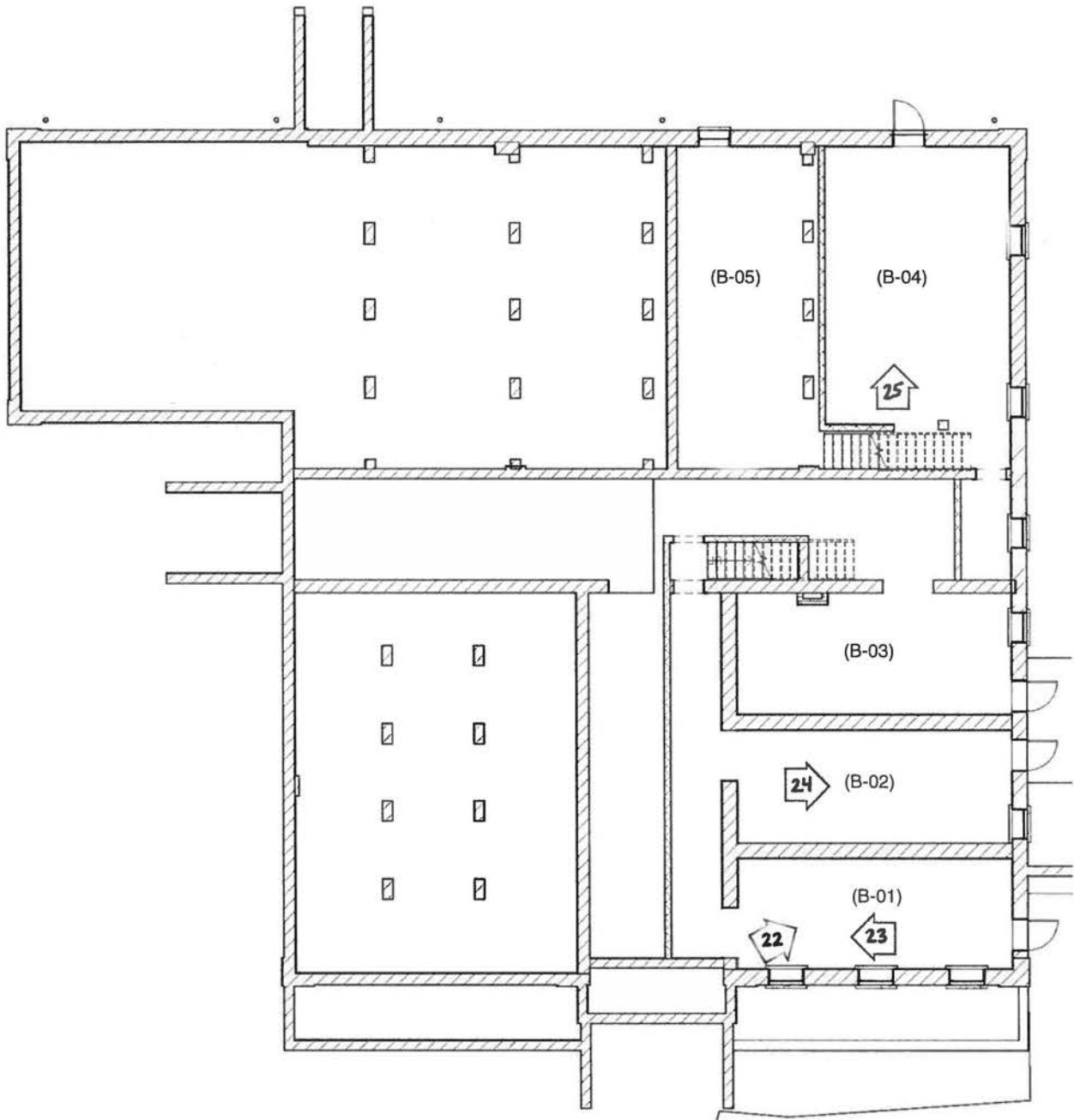
National Register boundary: 

Source: Athens-Clarke County parcel maps  
qPublic

North: 

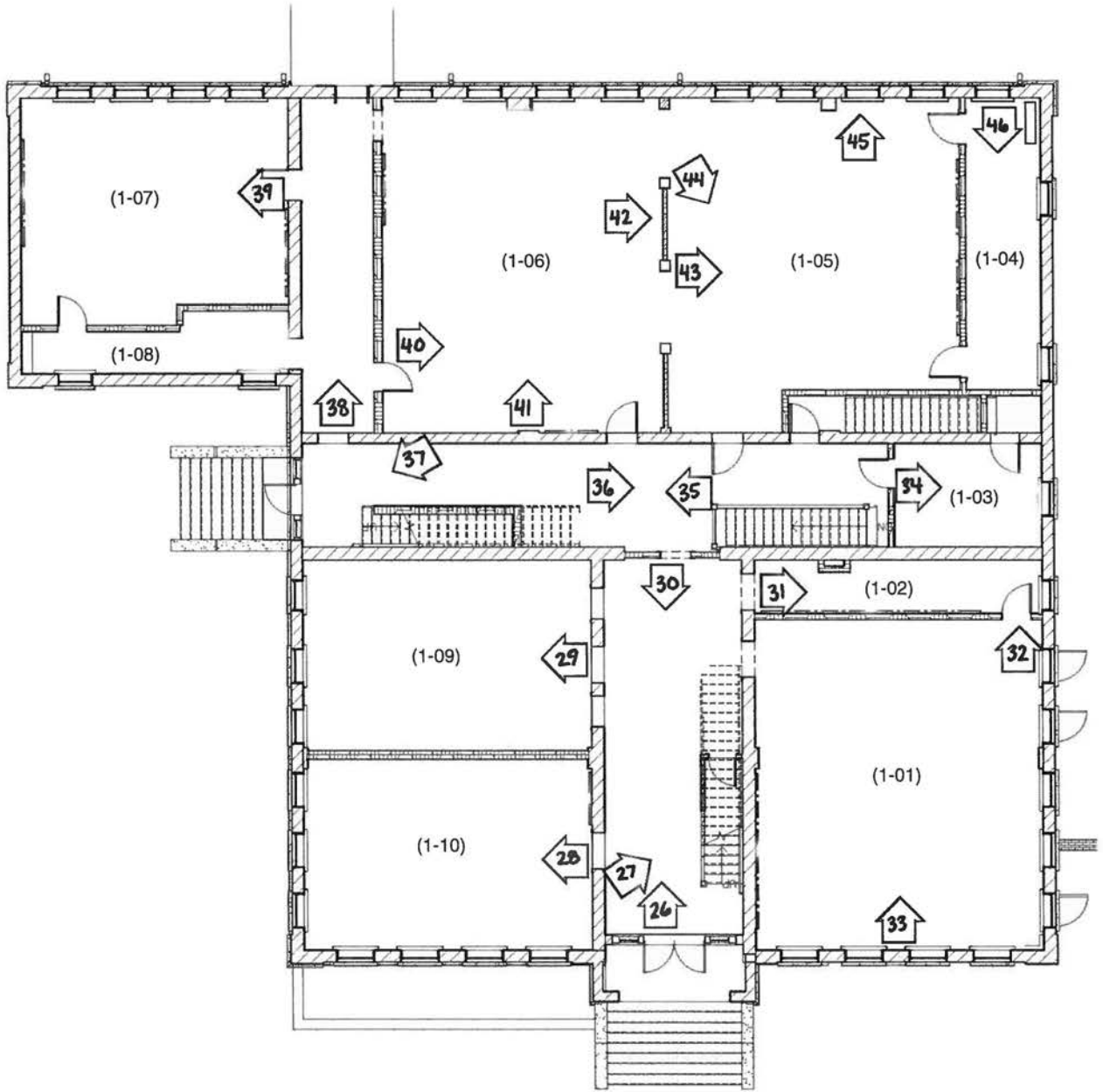


**Oconee Street School**  
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 Site - plan and exterior photo key  
 Photograph # and direction of view: #  
 Not to scale  
 North: 



**Oconee Street School**  
**Athens, Clarke County, Georgia**  
 Basement - plan and photo key  
 Photograph # and direction of view: →  
 Not to scale  
 North: ↓





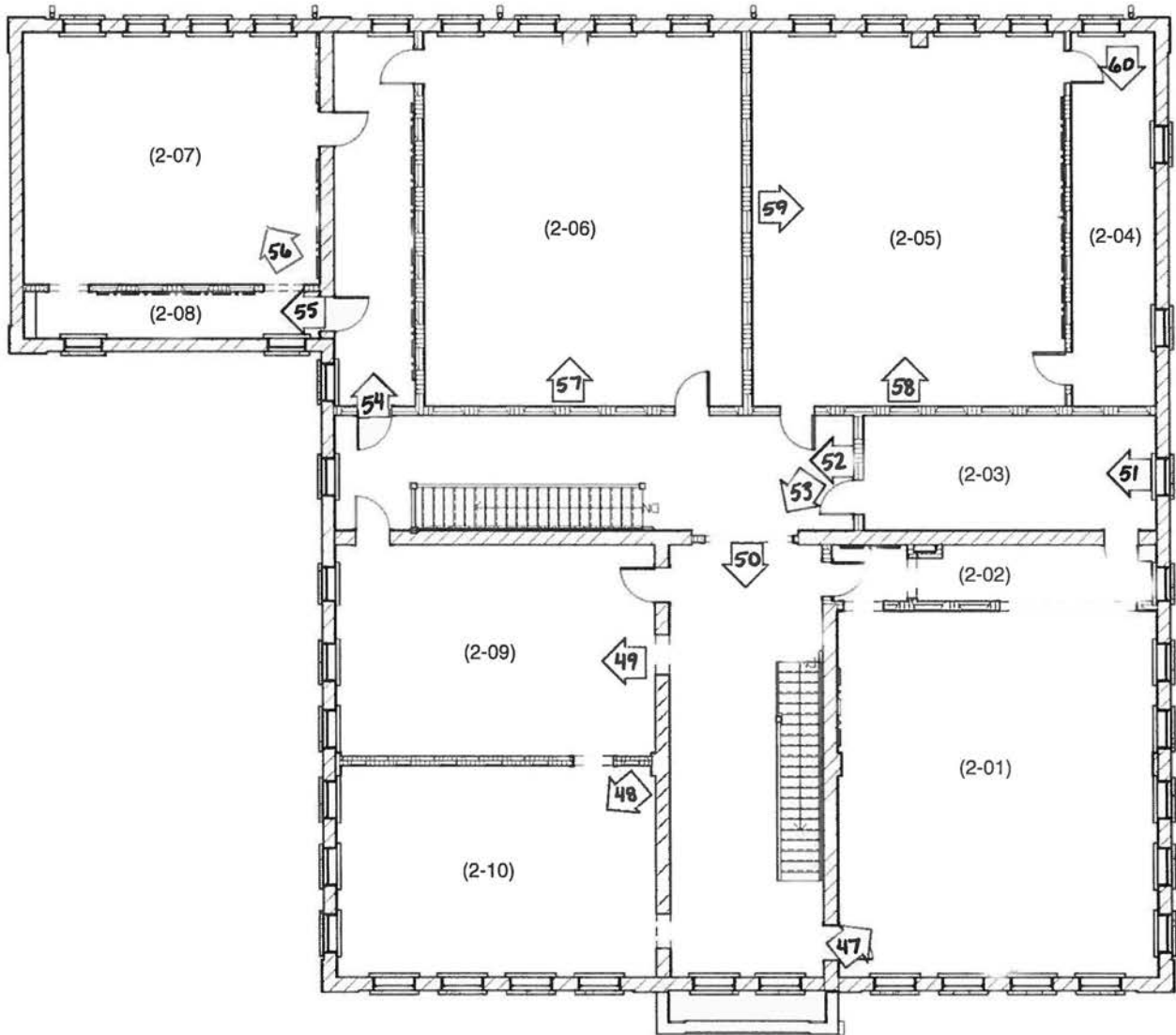
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Athens, Clarke County, Georgia**



First Floor - plan and photo key

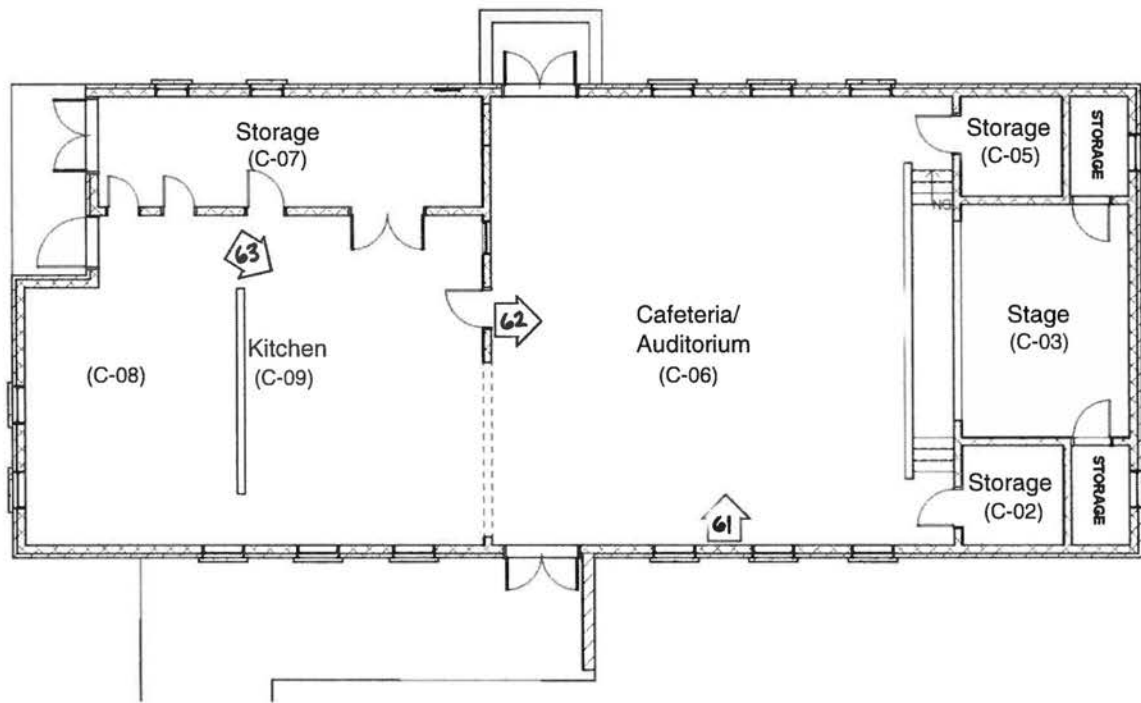
Photograph # and direction of view: →

Not to scale

North: ↙



**Oconee Street School**  
**Athens, Clarke County, Georgia**  
 Second Floor - plan and photo key  
 Photograph # and direction of view:   
 Not to scale  
 North: 



**Oconee Street School**  
**Athens, Clarke County, Georgia**  
 Cafeterium - plan and photo key  
 Photograph # and direction of view: ➡  
 Not to scale  
 North: ↙





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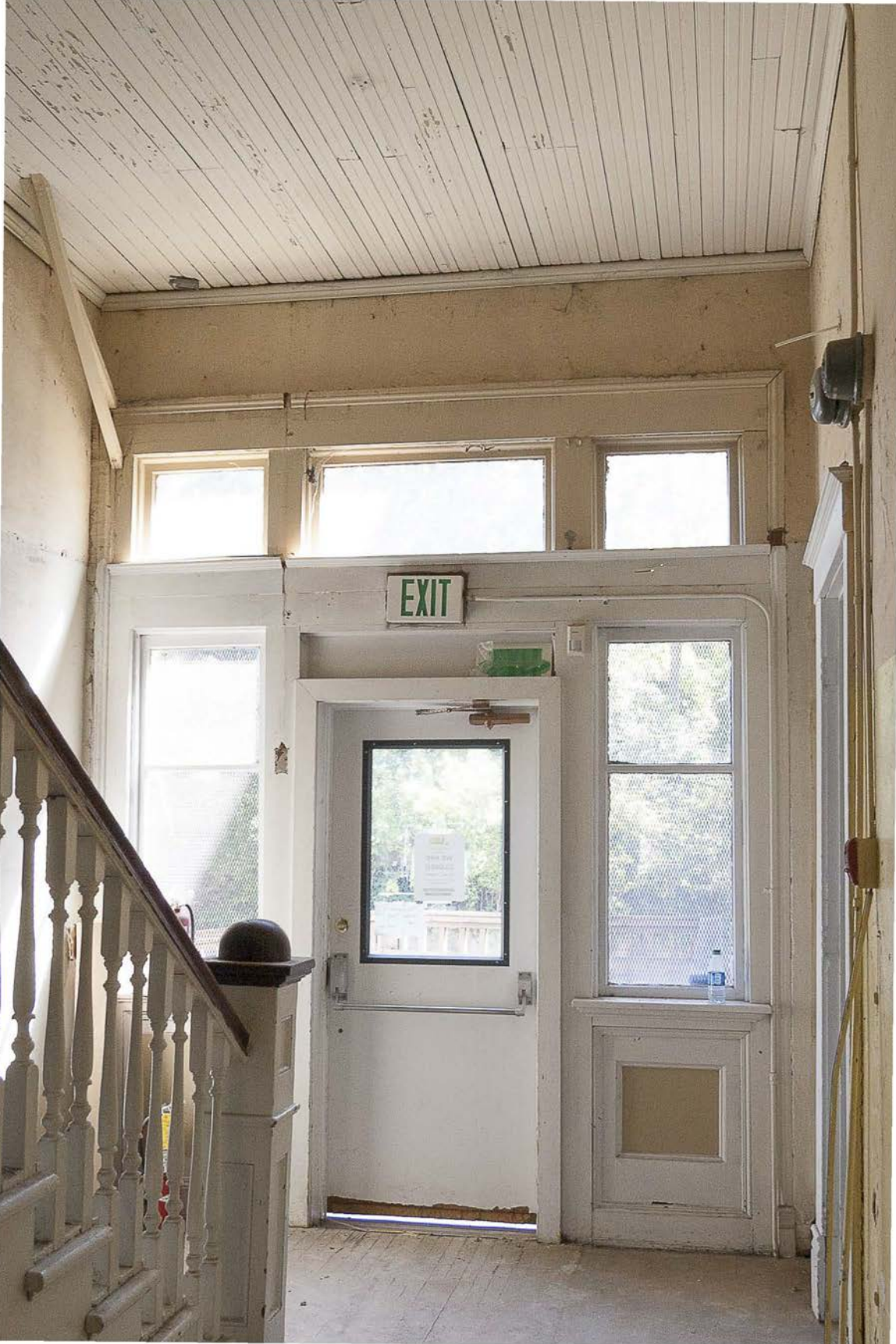






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UNITED STATES

















































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**SAFETY RULES  
FOR HAND TOOLS**

KEEP THEM CLEAN  
KEEP THEM IN GOOD  
REPAIR  
KEEP THEM IN PROPER  
PLACE WHEN NOT IN USE  
USE THE RIGHT TOOL FOR  
THE JOB



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 11/16/2018      Date of Pending List: 12/10/2018      Date of 16th Day: 12/13/2018      Date of 45th Day: 12/31/2018      Date of Weekly List:

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

- |                                       |  |   |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appeal       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PDIL | <input type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape       | <input type="checkbox"/> Photo              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiver       | <input type="checkbox"/> National        | <input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission | <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource | <input type="checkbox"/> Period             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other        | <input type="checkbox"/> TCP             | <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years |
|                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> CLG             |   |

Accept       Return       Reject      12/31/2018 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria:

Reviewer Lisa Deline

Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2239

Date 12/31/18

DOCUMENTATION:      see attached comments : No      see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION DIVISION**

MARK WILLIAMS  
COMMISSIONER

DR. DAVID CRASS  
DIVISION DIRECTOR

November 14, 2018

Paul Loether  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places  
1849 C St, NW, Mail Stop 7228  
Washington, D.C. 20240



Dear Mr. Loether:

The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the nomination for **Oconee Street School in Clark County, Georgia** to the National Register of Historic Places.

- Disk of National Register of Historic Places nomination form and maps as a pdf
- Disk with digital photo images
- Physical signature page
- Original USGS topographic map(s)
- Sketch map(s)/attachment(s)
- Correspondence
- Other: Letters of support

COMMENTS:

- Please insure that this nomination is reviewed
- This property has been certified under 36 CFR 67
- The enclosed owner objection(s) do  do not  constitute a majority of property owners.
- Special considerations: Per 36 CFR 60.13, the mandated 15-day commenting period for the Federal Register notice of a National Register nomination can be shortened or waived when necessary to assist in the preservation of historic properties. We hereby request that for the Oconee Street School nomination this commenting period be shortened to three days.

Sincerely,

Olivia Head  
National Register Specialist