

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Witherspoon Street School for Colored Children

other name/site number Princeton Nursing Home

2. Location

street & no. 35 Quarry Street not for publication

city or town Princeton Borough vicinity

state New Jersey code 021 county Mercer zip code 08542-3144

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 nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature]
Signature of certifying official/Title

1/6/05
Date

John S. Watson Jr., Assistant Commissioner Natural & Historic Resources/DSHPO

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.
 - See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 - See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

[Signature] 3/9/05

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	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

Education - school

Current Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

Health Care - sanitarium

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals - Colonial Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete
walls Brick
roof Slate/Asphalt shingle
other _____

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

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 7

8. Description

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

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

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 8

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

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

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 9

Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions)

Ethnic Heritage - Black

Education

Period of Significance

1909-1948

Significant Dates

1909, 1939, 1948

Significant Persons

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Walter B. Harris, architect for original building

Alexander Merchant, architect for 1939 addition

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property .75

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	18	528630	4467031	3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2				4			

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

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

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Julie P. Carmelich, Architectural Historian

organization ARCH2, Inc. date September 2003

street & number 16 Wernik Place telephone 732-906-8203

city or town Metuchen state NJ zip code 08840

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

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

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

Photographs

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

Additional items

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

Property Owner

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

name J. Robert Hillier, Waxwood LLC

street & number 2846 River Road telephone 609-452-8888

city or town New Hope state PA zip code 18938

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

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Witherspoon Street School for Colored Children,
Princeton Borough, Mercer County, NJ

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INTRODUCTION

The Witherspoon Street School for Colored Children, located at 35 Quarry Street, was historically used as a school building to house approximately 200 African-American students, teachers, and administrators from both Princeton Borough and Princeton Township. The present appearance of 35 Quarry Street is the result of three building campaigns in 1909, 1939 and 1966 (see Photograph 1). At the time of construction in 1909, the main block was an eleven-bay (south façade) by seven-bay (west elevation) painted brick structure with Colonial Revival details. An addition was built in 1939 to accommodate the growing black student population in Princeton. The addition connects to the main block at the east elevation. When the addition was added, rooms were created for assembly/gymnasium space, home economics instruction, and locker rooms, which gave the school an appearance similar to its current appearance. Several alterations were made to the main block including, brick re-facing, a copper-clad cupola, and a pedimented Colonial Revival door surround, which replaced the original arched opening.

When the school closed its doors in the 1960s, the building was purchased for use as a nursing home, at which time the interior was renovated. Most of the original interior finishes were removed or buried beneath new material at the time of the renovation. Today, the school retains very little architectural integrity from its original construction in 1909. The school has, however, maintained a significant amount of its exterior details and design from the 1939 building campaign. Overall, the building's exterior has maintained a medium-to-high level of architectural integrity from its period of significance.

SETTING

The school is set amongst a densely settled residential area. The neighborhood is an older community, in that most of the building stock is well over fifty years of age. According to land title information and historic map research, the school's property in 1909 extended only about halfway through the block toward Maclean Street when the original section of the school was constructed. Landholdings were extended in 1927-28 and again in 1939 before the 1939 addition was built. The 1939 purchases finally extended the school property to Maclean Street. In 1949 one additional holdout lot on Maclean Street was purchased to make the frontage continuous. At some point after 1955, a 54-space parking lot was created on this portion of the school property. A combination of chain link and picket fences extend along the east and west property lines. A small yard with shade trees and shrubs is located along the southern property line. In addition, an iron picket fence runs the length of the southern property line.

EXTERIOR

The building is roughly L-shaped in plan. While historic photographs show the school originally clad in painted brick, the building was re-faced using a Flemish bond during the construction of the 1939 addition and renovation. The building is two-and-one-half stories at the south façade, but three stories at the north (rear) elevation with a full basement story. Both the main block and the 1939 east addition have hipped

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roofs with gray asphalt and slate shingle roof cover, respectively. A wood cornice with modillion moldings surrounds the roofline at the south and west elevations of the 1909 main block (see Photograph 2), while an unadorned cornice surrounds the roofline at the north, east, and west elevations of the 1939 addition. There is also brick quoining at the corners of each elevation with the exception of the north (rear) projecting ell.

There is a cupola centered on the roof of the main block that rests on a wood base, finished to resemble stone (see Photograph 3). The cupola is constructed of wood and faced in copper, with a copper balustrade featuring turned spindles and newel posts with urn finials. The cupola's tower has arched louvered openings at all four elevations with arched window surrounds and keystones. The corners of each side are chamfered. The cupola is capped with a tent-shaped roof, above which rests a finial.

MAIN BLOCK

South Façade

The first and second stories each feature three bays with a center entry at the first floor. The east and west window bays are symmetrical with five eight-over-eight sash windows (see Photograph 4). The window bays were banded together during the 1939 addition and renovation; however, the original configuration was maintained at the basement level, which features the original 1909 window frames and sash (see Photograph 5). The window openings were shortened after the 1966 renovation to accommodate interior drop ceilings. As a result, the 1939 wood window frames and surrounds remain, but there are now wood panels above the window sashes to fill in the additional spaces in the window openings. The window sills are stone.

The center bay features the main entry at the first story and paired eight-over-eight sash windows with panel in-fill at the second story. The main entry is another remnant of the 1939 renovation and features a Colonial Revival style doorframe and surround (see Photograph 6). The entry includes a set of paired, black metal doors with beveled panels above and two square panes with embedded chicken wire below. A ten-pane transom is above the doors, also with embedded chicken wire glass panes. Surrounding the entry doors is a Colonial revival style frame that features fluted pilasters. The pilasters support an unadorned entablature, which in turn, supports a pedimented frontispiece.

The basement level has four bays east and west of the main entry with six-over-six wood sash windows. The easternmost window bay is hooded with a venting apparatus projecting into the small courtyard at the south elevation. Air conditioning vents have been cut into the exterior brickwork below the second and fourth windows of the east and west bays at the first and second floors.

With the exception of the replacement windows, this elevation has not changed since the 1939 alterations.

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West Elevation

The west elevation of the main block has been considerably altered since its 1909 construction (see Photograph 7). Formerly a seven bay elevation with two full stories and a half-story basement level, all but the center window bays have been bricked-in at the first and second stories. The southern three bays were bricked-in during the 1939 campaign. Floor plans from the 1939 construction indicate that new blackboards were installed at the interior of this elevation and, therefore, would block the windows. The northern three bays were bricked-in at a later time, most likely during the 1966 alterations. Fortunately, the stone sills and splayed brick lintels with a contrasting stone keystone were not removed at the time of the alterations. The center bays at the first and second floor feature smaller openings with sash windows and paneled in-fill.

Like the south façade, the basement level of the west elevation has maintained its original window configuration. The three southernmost windows are full-sized six-over-six sash windows with stone sills. Like the center bays at the first and second floors, the central basement bay is a narrower opening with a two-over-two sash window. The northernmost basement windows have been altered to accommodate various ventilation equipment.

North Elevation

The north elevation of the main block is three stories high with quoins at the northwest corner (see Photograph 8). A projecting furnace vent runs between the third and fourth bays to the roof. The second and third stories have ten bays each. Each window bay has six-over-six sash windows with wood panel in-fill. While the windows are vinyl replacements, the frames are from the 1939 renovation and addition. The windowsills are flat stone. The second story windows are the only windows with lintels. There are air conditioning vents cut into the brickwork below the first, third, fifth, seventh, and ninth window bays of the second and third stories. The fifth bay of the second and third stories is slightly larger than the rest and has a set of paired sash windows filling the opening.

The north elevation's ground floor features a similar window configuration, with the exception of a door at the third bay and a one-story brick addition adjacent to the furnace vent that was constructed during the 1939 building campaign to remove an original fire door and covered passage. Other alterations to this elevation include the removal of an entry at the first story, below the paired sash windows at the fifth bay.

East Elevation

There is no east elevation of the main block as the 1939 Addition was built off this elevation.

1939 ADDITION

South Elevation

Just east of the 1909 main block is a one-bay connector, inset from the main block and the rest of the east addition (see Photograph 9). This inset portion of the addition serves as a visual separation between the

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older main block and the newer addition. It features a single eight-over-eight double hung sash window at the second story and a set of paired six-over-six sash windows at the first story. Air conditioning vents have been cut into the brickwork just below each window. Prior to the 1966 alterations, the first-story bay featured an entry with double doors similar in design to the main entry and a ten-light transom above.

The remaining portion of the 1939 addition's south façade is a two-story, hipped roof building with symmetrical bays and a central projecting entry. To the east and west of the projecting entry is a single two-story bay with six-over-six sash windows at the first and second stories.

The projecting entry has a flat roof with a parapet and a decorative pedimented frontispiece (see Photograph 10). There are brick quoins at the corners of the entry (see above-referenced Photograph 9). Small octagonal windows are located at the east and west elevations of the entry, and a circular window surrounded by swags and garlands is at the center of the pediment (see Photograph 11). The entry features double doors with alternating rectangular and square beveled panels. The door is recessed within the frame and there is a six-light transom above. Flanking the door and frame are brick pilasters below scrolled brick brackets. Above the transom is a splayed brick lintel with a brick faux keystone. Above the lintel and supported by the scrolled brackets is a segmental arched pediment with a brick dentil course.

West Elevation

Unlike the south façade, the west elevation of the 1939 addition does not abut the west elevation of the main block. Instead, it is located at the northeast end of the main block as part of the rear ell addition and is connected to the main block by an elevator shaft (see Photographs 12 and 13). The west elevation is three stories with a rough concrete foundation. There are three symmetrical bays at the second and third stories, each with a set of five banded eight-over-eight sash windows at the north and center bay and a single eight-over-eight sash window at the southernmost bay. The windows have retained their early 1939 wood frames, although the windows are modern with upper wood panels to conceal an interior drop ceiling. The windowsills are stone and air conditioning vents have been cut into the brickwork below the sills at the second and fourth windows at the north and center bays.

The first floor has been modified to accommodate a covered patio. The northern bay has only four banded windows as the southernmost opening was converted to a door. Likewise, the south sets of banded windows have been replaced with floor-to-ceiling casement windows. A projecting hip roof canopy supported by round columns covers this entire portion of the first floor. The southernmost bay is a single eight-over-eight sash window identical to the second and third floors above it.

North elevation

A three-story, one-bay central stair shaft divides the north elevation of the 1939 addition's west end. The second and third story bays of the stair shaft feature six-over-six sash windows, while the ground floor has a fifteen-pane French door with fifteen-pane sidelight windows (see Photograph 14). A modern entry and entry surround is located at the west elevation of the stair shaft. At the ground floor, on either side of the

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stair shaft, is a set of paired eight-over-eight sash windows. There are no windows on either side of the stair shaft at the second and third floors.

At the east end of this elevation, the first story interior space of this area recently served as the kitchen/cafeteria for the nursing home, and as a result, this elevation has undergone significant alteration since its construction in 1939. For example, the paired windows at the western bay have been shortened and a flat roofed canopy now bi-sects the upper portion. In addition, one of the paired windows was replaced with a louvered vent. Remnants of the windows' previous design exist in the copper flashing and stone sills. The east bay was almost entirely bricked-in with the exception of a large circular vent. This bay consisted of an entry door and still maintains its decorative copper canopy with scalloped edging. At the second story, the western bay has also been bricked-in, but the original stone windowsill remains as a remnant of its earlier function. The east corner is quoined.

East Elevation

The south end of the 1939 addition's east elevation is a two-and-one-half-story, six-bay elevation with paired six-over-six sash windows in each bay of the first and second story with the exception of the northernmost bay, which is a single eight-over-eight sash window. The interior of this elevation was originally a two-story assembly space/gymnasium for the school, and this elevation originally featured two-story arched windows with stone arched lintels and keystones. There is a half-story basement level, also with only five bays. With the exception of the southernmost bay, which is a single eight-over-eight sash window, each bay features a set of paired eight-over-eight sash windows. Air conditioning vents have been added below the first, second, third, and fifth window bays of the second floor. The cornice matches the south elevation's, with wood moldings and modillions.

The north end of the east elevation is a full three stories tall. The dominant feature of this elevation is a two-story, polygonal bay window in the center of the elevation. The bay window's center bay has three banded eight-over-eight sash windows. Flanking the center bay are two smaller bays with single sash eight-over-eight windows. Finally, the bays closest to the exterior sidewall feature small four-over-four sash windows at the second floor only.

Dividing the north and south of the east elevation is a recessed entry that features a set of double doors covered by a triangular bisecting canopy, north of which is a small bricked-in window. The two north bays at the first, second, and third stories feature eight-over-eight sash windows with upper panels, with the exception of one at the second story bay, which has a six-over-six sash window.

INTERIOR

As stated above, the building is roughly L-shaped, with interior corridors running east-west through the main block and north-south through the 1939 addition (see Photograph 15). The corridors intersect at the southeast end of the building. There are currently three stairwells and one bank of two elevator shafts. The main block has one stairwell at the center bay of the south end of the building. Prior to the 1966

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renovations, there was another stairwell in the main block at the north elevation. The 1939 addition also has one stairwell in the middle of the east side of the corridor. There was another stairwell at the north end of the addition; however, that was most likely removed during the 1966 reconstruction when a new stair shaft was built off the west end of the north elevation of the 1939 addition. The elevator shaft (located on the west side between the main block and the addition) is also a later alteration.

The ground (basement) floor currently features service-oriented rooms, including the kitchen and dining room, physical therapy and recreation rooms, the laundry, and boiler rooms (see Photographs 16, 17, and 18). The 1939 addition contains primarily patient oriented space, while the 1909 main block tends to be geared towards facilities management. The floors are linoleum tile and the walls are plasterboard (see Photograph 19). There is an area in the laundry room where the original tile is visible; however, it is underneath several layers of linoleum and asbestos tile.

The main stairwell at the south end of the main block has not been altered since the 1939 construction campaign (see Photograph 20 and 21). The steps are steel with imbedded steel safety treads. The banister is also steel from the ground floor up to the second floor. A glazed ceramic tile wainscot lines the stairwell. At each of the upper floor landings, a doorway with a smoke screen separates the stairwell from the main corridor. This element is original to the 1939 alterations.

The first and second stories are almost identical. These floors are devoted to the patient rooms, which line each corridor (see Photographs 22 and 23). At the intersection of the two corridors is a nurse's station. Linoleum tile now covers what were once wood floors, and dropped acoustic tile now covers the plaster ceiling.

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SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT

Summary Paragraph

The Witherspoon Street School for Colored Children, located at 35 Quarry Street, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A. The school is significant its contribution to the ethnic heritage of the Borough of Princeton, Mercer County, New Jersey, as it served as the elementary school for African-American children from both Princeton Borough and Princeton Township. In addition, the school is further significant for the desegregation policy initiated in 1948. Later termed the "Princeton Plan," the policy was renowned for its innovative approach of combining racially segregated neighborhood schools. The Princeton Plan became a model for other communities faced with the same issue; however, the results were not always as successful. The school's period of significance runs from 1909 when the school was constructed, to 1948 when the Princeton Board of Education desegregated the school district. During a tumultuous time of change and fluctuating race relations, the Witherspoon Street School served as a safe haven for the community's African-American school children taught by African-American teachers who lived and worked in the community.

New Jersey's Early African-American History

African-Americans were brought to New Jersey as slaves as early as 1664, when the English took control of the region from the Dutch. By 1680, there were 120 slaves in the province of East Jersey, which was roughly three percent of the population in that area.¹ Slaves were used primarily as farm hands, working the fields in the State's agricultural regions. Through the eighteenth century, the slave population grew; by 1726, the total population of New Jersey was 32,442, including 2,550 slaves; by 1790, the population was 104,139, of which 11,423 were slaves.²

Slaves in New Jersey were granted very few liberties. However, in a 1786 act of the State Legislature, the importation of slaves into New Jersey was prohibited, which lead the way for the process of gradual manumission of slaves in the State.³ Towards the end of the eighteenth century, there were a number of laws enacted to ease the lives of New Jersey slaves. For example, the Act of 1789 stated that no slave who had been a resident for at least one year could be removed from the State without his consent. In addition, the act decreed that slaves had to be taught to read, and it was illegal to abuse a slave or treat him inhumanely.⁴ While these laws served to benefit the lives of slaves, there were just as many laws that served to restrict the lives of the growing number of free African-Americans in the State. For example, according to the 1790 U.S. census, there were only 2,762 freed slaves and other free persons in New Jersey.⁵ Although the first state constitution, drafted in 1776, "granted suffrage to all people worth fifty

¹ New Jersey Historical Commission 1984, 3.

² *Ibid.*

³ Moss n.d., n.p.

⁴ Calligaro 1967, 170.

⁵ *Historical Census Browser* n.d., n.p.

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pounds who have been in the county where they planned to vote for one year,”⁶ This unusually expansive provision lasted only until 1807, when a state statute restricted the franchise to white men. The passage of this law more or less coincided with the beginning of a rapid rise in New Jersey’s freed black population, which was driven by the enactment of a gradual emancipation act in 1804. The growing number of freed men and women in New Jersey caused concern to many whites, and by the late eighteenth century this African-American population began losing certain freedoms. For example, under a statute of 1798, all free black men and women were required to register with the State and carry a license at all times. Furthermore, African-Americans were permitted to be witnesses in court, but only to testify against another African-American in a criminal trial.

In the nineteenth century, New Jersey passed several anti-slavery initiatives, such as an 1820 act that freed the children of slaves, and set up an indentured servant system. In addition, “by an act of 1846, slavery was formally abolished, except that those who were already slaves were required to serve until discharged, and no master could discharge his ‘servant’ unless the slave consented.”⁷ This act abolished slavery in the State, but created in its place a lifelong apprenticeship for the former slave. According to the 1860 census records, there were still eighteen slaves/apprentices living in New Jersey.⁸

New Jersey’s economy was closely tied to the South, and therefore, was slower than the other northern states to force the manumission of slaves. Newark, for example, was dubbed a “Southern workshop” for its leather products found their major market in the South.⁹ Many New Jersey voters were against the election of Abraham Lincoln, and by the end of the Civil War, New Jersey’s democratic legislature refused to ratify the Thirteenth Amendment, which abolished slavery. It, ultimately, went into effect without New Jersey’s vote, but it serves as an example of the racial climate in New Jersey by the mid-nineteenth century.

The Great Migration between 1915 and 1930 brought 1.5 million southern blacks to the North. By 1930, the black population in New Jersey was over 200,000¹⁰ and African-Americans constituted almost 5% of the State’s population. Life, however, was still difficult for this minority group. They continued to face both social and economical adversity. For example, “although Negroes constitute[d] less than 5% of the State population, Negro deaths [we]re 8% of the total; infant mortality, 12%; deaths from tuberculosis, 20%; unemployment, twice the percentage for whites. Of all juvenile delinquents convicted, 24% [we]re Negroes.”¹¹ Furthermore, in 1936, nearly a quarter of the relief recipients in the State were African-American.¹²

⁶ New Jersey Historic Commission 1984, 4.

⁷ Calligaro 1967, 170.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ New Jersey Historic Commission 1984, 7.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹¹ Federal Writers’ Project of the Works Progress Administration for the State of New Jersey 1939, 123.

¹² New Jersey Historical Commission 1984, 10.

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History Of African-American Education In New Jersey

From the colonial era through the first half of the nineteenth century, education in the State was not a free institution. Access to a good education was available primarily to the wealthier classes who could afford to hire tutors or send their male sons to academies. It was not until 1867 that the New Jersey Legislature passed an act to develop a system of public education in the State. The act established a state-run system where "...the general supervision and control of public instruction in the State of New Jersey shall be vested in a State Board of Education, which board shall consist of the Trustees of the School fund, the Trustees of the State Normal School, appointed as hereafter provided, together with the treasurer thereof..."¹⁴

Even before the Civil War, free African Americans began to organize groups for their own betterment. National conferences of African-American men were organized to discuss issues concerning their role in the United States, as well as, their own communities.

The agenda of these conventions included recommendations pertaining to emigration and colonization, vocational training and work opportunities, proper home training for children, the formation of societies for promoting intellectual improvement and correct moral conduct, and the philosophy which should direct educational facilities for Negroes.¹⁵

The information gained at these conventions was then disseminated throughout individual communities. One outcome of these national conventions was the creation of makeshift schoolhouses for small groups of school-aged children who would meet to learn educational fundamentals from an elder in the community.

By the mid-nineteenth century, many educational institutions for African-American children were established in New Jersey; among them was the precursor to the Witherspoon Street School, which for the purposes of this nomination is called the "first Witherspoon Street School." This first school was run by an ex-slave and Christian missionary, Betsey Stockton. There was also a school for African-American children in Rahway, which in 1849 successfully petitioned the Legislature to require the Rahway Board of Education to allocate part of its public education funds to the school.¹⁶ Schools for African-American children (and adults) were formed throughout the State, although segregated school systems were primarily established in the State's central and southern regions. For districts that maintained segregated school systems, a policy of separate but equal was supposed to be applied.

Segregation in education became deeply entrenched in America by the mid-nineteenth century. In some areas blacks requested separate schools to bring their children into contact with sympathetic teachers who knew the youngsters' needs. However, black disenchantment

¹³ Connor 1976, 7.

¹⁴ "An Act to Establish a System of Public Instruction for the State of New Jersey" 1867, n.p.

¹⁵ Wright 1971, 102.

¹⁶ Calligaro 1967, 173.

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occurred as Negroes assessed those programs and facilities instituted on their behalf. A series of black protests focusing on pernicious aspects of segregation brought this issue to a climax.¹⁷

Between 1870 and 1910, African-Americans in New Jersey were deeply divided over the question of integrated versus segregated public schools.

As the public school system developed after 1871, cities in the northern counties – influenced...by New York City – began to eliminate their racially separate schools. In 1881, however, a controversy arose in Fair Haven, Monmouth County, when blacks demanded the right to send their children to the white school. A school desegregation law enacted in that year was upheld by the State Supreme Court in 1884. The law protected children against being forced to attend schools according to race or nationality...However, the law did not prevent local school officials from offering segregated facilities in the lower grades that might be voluntarily accepted.¹⁸

In the southern and central counties, the established black schools continued. Many African-Americans charged that they were inferior to white schools in physical facilities and quality of education. The blacks who supported them, however, “considered them compatible with the advancement of the race because they provided a measure of autonomy and self-determination. Segregated schools, they noted, not only offered blacks teaching and administrative opportunities, but also spared black pupils the racial indignities often encountered in integrated classrooms.”¹⁹

By 1919, there were still fifty-two segregated schools in the State and the number continued to grow, reaching seventy segregated schools by 1935. Despite the lack of regard for minority education in New Jersey, the number of African-American teachers also increased in the years 1919-1930 from 187 to 418, an increase of 123%,²⁰ which was a sign that affordable, undiscriminating higher education was beginning to become available to New Jersey’s African-American population.

Princeton And The Witherspoon/John Street Community

Princeton and the Witherspoon/John Street community can be viewed as a microcosm of the larger social, political, and economic climate within New Jersey. In many respects, the African-American population of Princeton had to overcome the same struggles and adversities as the rest of the State’s black population, while also facing other challenges particular to the town.

¹⁷ Connor 1976, 5.

¹⁸ Wright 1971, 51-52.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 52.

²⁰ The Interracial Committee of the New Jersey Conference of Social Work 1932, n.p.

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The Witherspoon/John Street neighborhood in Princeton Borough has a rich and interesting history. As early as the late eighteenth century, this area of Princeton had been an African-American enclave. A self-sufficient community for over one hundred years, the Witherspoon/John Street neighborhood had African-American-run businesses, churches, community groups, and schools.

Witherspoon Street was first surveyed in 1755 to link the center of Princeton with the roads into Somerset County to the northwest.²¹ One of the area's first residents was Caeser Trent, an African-American firewood dealer who purchased a quarter of an acre lot circa 1792. By 1804, the street became known as African Lane for its predominantly black population. John Street, also known as John's Alley, was established at this time as well. The African-American population in the Witherspoon/John Street neighborhood increased as freed slaves flocked to Princeton after manumission decrees in Somerset and Middlesex Counties after 1810. "Further definition of the neighborhood came in the 1830s and 1840s when some of the side streets were established. The 1852 Borough map shows both Green and Quarry Streets with a number of houses along each."²²

Contrary to some reports, the African-American population in Princeton during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did not develop through students attending the university. The school, in fact, forbade students to bring their own slaves; instead, the University required students to hire the local African-American workforce, which developed from original slave families in the area.²³ The 1810 tax records indicate that an estimated 110 slaves lived in Princeton. By the 1840 census, however, there were only twelve slaves listed in Princeton, while there were over 600 free blacks living in the Borough.

Most free African-Americans carried on the trade that they had learned as slaves, remaining as farm hands, blacksmiths, and hackmen. However, some black Princetonians became businessmen. Peter Scudder and Anthony Simmons, for example, were both ex-slaves who, during the 1820s, operated food shops along Nassau Street.

Princeton was not an easy place for African-Americans to live during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Princeton was, for example, was the seat of New Jersey's Colonization Society. The American Colonization Society was formed in December 1816 in Washington D.C. "The Society's aim was to establish a colony in Africa to which Negroes would be 'repatriated.' It was believed that only in Africa would Negroes be able to 'enjoy all the inalienable rights of man.'"²⁴ The ideas of the American Colonization Society were much maligned by the African-American community. In 1837, an anti-colonization meeting of free black inhabitants of New Brunswick met to condemn attempts to colonize

²¹ Princeton Joint Historic Sites Commission 1981, n.p.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Miller 1973, 3.

²⁴ Calligaro 1967, 169.

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African-Americans in Africa and pledged to support William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolitionist movement.²⁵

Around this time, black members of the First Presbyterian Church on Nassau Street were “asked” by the white parishioners to establish a church in their own neighborhood. According to the Inventory of the Church Archives of New Jersey Presbyterians, property for the Witherspoon Street Church, located at the southwest corner of Witherspoon and Quarry Streets, was purchased in 1843 and the church was built the same year.²⁶ Betsey Stockton, the Witherspoon/John Street community’s first schoolteacher, was one of the first members of the new Witherspoon Street Church.

Life in the Witherspoon/John Street neighborhood was not without negative outside influences. “One result of the increasing numbers of free blacks in New Jersey was a proportionate increase in hostility toward them.... The result was that many ex-slaves often chose to move out of the area in which they formerly lived.... This pattern was reflected in Princeton, where the black population declined from 1840 to 1850 from 637 to 534.... The population of the blacks in Princeton would not [again] reach its 1840 level until 1900.”²⁷

By the turn of the century, Princeton began to transform itself from a small rural college town to a sophisticated residential community. Several changes occurred that would transform the nature of the Witherspoon/John Street neighborhood forever. First, the sesquicentennial celebration of Princeton University in 1896 heralded the rapid expansion of its undergraduate enrollment and the founding of a Graduate School. In addition, the eating club system on Prospect Street was also beginning to establish itself as part of university life. These changes had an impact on the Witherspoon/John Street community, as the university’s new demands drew on the African-American residents to provide the relatively unskilled labor for such positions as cooks, janitors, maintenance men, and waiters.

In addition to Princeton being a hotbed for the colonization movement, the university was known as a southern university north of the Mason Dixon line. In fact, throughout most of the nineteenth century, more than half of the student population of each entering class was from the South. With the exception of a few attendees to the seminary, the University did not accept African-Americans until the mid-twentieth century. In 1947, Princeton graduated its first black students. John Howard was the first African-American to graduate from Princeton University on February 5, 1947.²⁸

By the early twentieth century, “a new group of people came to live in Princeton, a group distinct from the old resident families or people with ties to the university.”²⁹ These new residents were wealthy New

²⁵ Wright 1971, 103.

²⁶ New Jersey Historical Records Survey Project 1940, 62.

²⁷ Miller 1973, 7.

²⁸ *A Princeton Time Line* n.p., n.d.

²⁹ Miller 1973, 15.

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Yorkers who sought an escape from the congested urban center. This new breed of residents also demanded the types of services that African-Americans of the time provided. African-Americans became the maids, butlers, chauffeurs, and handymen of the new wealthy Princeton residents.

The African-American population in Princeton was “transformed by changes in the university and in the nature of the town from a small, self-centered and highly independent community into one which became highly dependent on the university and the white townspeople for their economic livelihood.”³⁰ Although the local African-Americans sacrificed their economic independence, the opportunities must have been enough to sustain the community since the African-American population in Princeton grew considerably between 1890 and 1910. “In 1890, the [B]orough population was 3,422, of which 585 were black. By 1910, the [B]orough population had increased to 5,136, of which 1,148 were black.”³¹ Many of the new African-American residents came from the South to fill the need for labor in the town.

In 1929, plans were announced to develop a commercial square in the heart of town. The plan called for the demolition of some of the oldest buildings in Princeton and the abolition of a “slum section,” which happened to house primarily black residents.³² In *Here I Stand* by Paul Robeson, one of Princeton’s most respected citizens, he wrote, “the Princeton of my boyhood...was for all the world like any small town in the deep south. Less than fifty miles from New York and even closer to Philadelphia, Princeton was spiritually located in Dixie.”³³ Robeson portrayed an unflattering picture of Princeton at the turn of the twentieth century. “Under the caste system in Princeton the Negro, restricted to menial jobs at low pay and lacking any semblance of political rights, or bargaining power, could hope not for justice but for charity.”³⁴

Service positions, however, were not the only job opportunities available for African-Americans in Princeton. There was still an active black business community along Witherspoon, Baker, and John Streets. Walking in this area one could find black-owned florists, barbershops, candy stores, beauty parlors, restaurants, and clothing stores all servicing African-Americans as well as white clientele. For example:

Christine Moore Howell (1899-1972) was the proprietor of Christine’s Vanity Parlor on Spring Street. In addition to the salon she wrote about beauty culture and had her own cosmetics line. Moore was also the first African-American appointed to the Board of Beauty Culture Control. Having studied in France, Moore primarily served a white clientele in her shop but had a very active role in her own community.³⁵

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Robeson 1958, 10.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

³⁵ Historical Society of Princeton, Exhibition Text 1996, n.p.

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Despite Princeton's "caste system," or maybe because of it, the Witherspoon/John Streets community was a tight-knit community. Residents were devoted to their churches, the YMCA community center, and the Witherspoon Street School. The local YMCA, for example, would sponsor delegations of local African-American men to attend national and regional conferences. In 1939, seventeen men, including Howard Waxwood and Simeon Moss, represented the Witherspoon YMCA at the 11th Annual Laymen Institute held in Atlantic City.³⁶ The same article mentions clubs for young men as well, including the Aviation Club and the Young Men's Club. Likewise, church activities were also very important, as upcoming events and sermons were listed weekly in the local newspaper.

The 1930s and 1940s brought another wave of professionals and business people to Princeton, along with a new group of lower-middle class residents, primarily Italians. In addition, the university expanded again. The combination of these factors created more commerce, a higher cost of living, and a high demand for property and lower cost housing.

In 1956, an Urban Renewal Plan was proposed to "renew the blighted Witherspoon area."³⁷ The plan called for tearing down homes and building public housing. A strong community resistance eventually forced the Mayor to appoint an advisory committee – the Witherspoon-John Street Citizens Committee – to review the proposal. The committee concluded that the plan could not assure the "future integrity of the John-Witherspoon area" and more importantly that it was "impossible to justify upon moral grounds the residential containment of Negro citizens."³⁸ Nevertheless, the plan was brought to a vote, but was defeated and the majority of homes in the area remained in owners' hands, where many remain to this day.

The Witherspoon Street School For Colored Children

The development of the Witherspoon Street School for Colored Children can be traced back to the 1830s, when Betsey Stockton began teaching a school for Princeton's African American children. In 1847, the town school superintendent noted that Stockton had been teaching this school for ten years and had 45 registered pupils. The building he noted simply as "School House of wood—rectangular, neat and convenient."³⁹ This schoolhouse stood on the west side of Witherspoon Street south of the Mount Pisgah AME Church, where it is shown to be situated by a 1860 map of Princeton.⁴⁰ This was the first Witherspoon Street school. Also in 1860, town superintendent H.M. Blodgett described this first building as "both comfortable and convenient, having been, during the year, repaired at an expense of fifty dollars.

³⁶ *Princeton Packet*, CLIII, no. 34, n.p.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Princeton Township, NJ. Superintendent of Schools. Records, 1847-1868. C.321. Historical Society of Princeton, Princeton, NJ.

⁴⁰ Map of Princeton, 1860. Copy in Princeton University Historic Map Collection, #3424. Firestone Library, Princeton, NJ.

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The school has been well conducted by a female teacher (colored) and is thought to exert a healthful influence among the colored population. Average daily attendance thirty-five."⁴¹

The school was not without supervision from the Board of Education. In 1858 the board created a committee whose duties it was to "look particularly after the interests of [the first Witherspoon Street School], and report its state, from time to time, to the board."⁴² In addition, the Board hired all new teachers and managed the bookkeeping. In 1872, a new building was constructed to house this school, funded by district school taxes. This second building for the school was built (and still stands) at the northwest corner of Witherspoon and Maclean streets. The contract for its construction was awarded to Josiah Wright, a local architect and builder. As this building was being completed, an arson fire destroyed its predecessor.⁴³

The Board of Education continued to monitor this second Witherspoon Street School and maintain its facility. In 1881, the Board's Committee on Enlargement of the Witherspoon Street School delivered plans drawn by Mr. D.N. Wright for the purpose of building an addition to the existing school.⁴⁴ Later that year the Board resolved to enlarge the school with an "addition of 12 feet in width in the rear" for a total cost of \$625.00.⁴⁵

The Board of Education hired (and fired) all teachers at the school. In 1886, Reverend William D. Robeson, Paul Robeson's father, was hired to teach in the primary department of the Witherspoon Street School during the illness of another teacher.⁴⁶ Reverend Robeson remained on staff at the school until 1889 when the Board resolved that "two teachers are adequate for instruction in the Witherspoon Street School at the present time and that the further services of Mr. Robeson be dispensed with."⁴⁷ Since there are no available statistics on how many children attended the Witherspoon Street School at this time, it is impossible to determine if two teachers were enough to cover the entire student body. What is known, however, is that the teachers were underpaid in comparison to their counterparts at the all white Model School. According to the 1916-1917 report to the County Superintendent, teacher's salaries ranged as follows:

Teachers at:	High School	\$1000-1100
	Grammar School	\$625-850
	Witherspoon School	\$500-750

⁴¹ State Board of Education 1860, n.p.

⁴² Princeton Borough Board of Education March 18, 1858, n.p.

⁴³ *Princetonian* [town paper], November 30, 1872; *Princeton Press*, April 26, 1873, June 21, 1873, April 25, 1874.

⁴⁴ Princeton Borough Board of Education June 29, 1881, n.p.

⁴⁵ Princeton Borough Board of Education July 7, 1881, n.p.

⁴⁶ Princeton Borough Board of Education October 21, 1886, n.p.

⁴⁷ Princeton Borough Board of Education July 29, 1889, n.p.

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It was not until 1923 that the teachers at the Witherspoon Street School were paid on the same scale as the teachers at the Model School.

By 1907, the students and teachers outgrew the first Witherspoon Street School. In the 1907 Annual Report by the County Superintendent, it was noted that, "two additional classrooms were added in Princeton; one in the Model School and one in the Witherspoon Street building. Both these buildings have now reached their capacity and the crowded conditions of the rooms in the Witherspoon Street School has [sic] made, for the past two or three years, an addition to this building imperative."⁴⁸

Chronicling the construction of the third "Witherspoon Street" School at 35 Quarry Street is made more difficult by the unavailability of newspaper microfilm of the *Princeton Press* for 1907 and 1908. An isolated copy of the *Press* from July 11, 1908 has been found to carry an advertisement for proposals for the construction of a brick schoolhouse that can be inferred to mean the Quarry Street building. This advertisement indicates that the plans for the building were prepared by Walter B. Harris. Harris (1865-1935) was a Princeton architect and civil engineer and a member of the Princeton University engineering faculty for nearly fifty years.⁴⁹ There are small articles in the *Press* during 1909 that allude to the construction of the new school, but only in relation to the Board of Education's sale of the original schoolhouse in order to help fund the new school.

The Board of Education sold the several parcels of property advertised on June 1 and received very good prices. . . . The Witherspoon Street school property, fronting on Witherspoon and Maclean Streets, was purchased by William Moore for \$4100, while John Robeson was the successful bidder for the adjoining lot....The sales aggregated \$6310 and the entire amount will be applied toward the cost of the new school house [sic] for colored children on Quarry Street.⁵⁰

Later that same month, the dedication and commencement exercises of the Witherspoon School were held in the auditorium of the new school.⁵¹ The construction cost of the new school was \$22,996.⁵²

During the last years of the First World War, there was discussion of adopting the "six-six plan," which would create two schools of grades K-6 and a combined junior/senior high school. According to the 1918-1919 report to the Superintendent of Schools of Mercer County,

[a] conference was held with the assistant commissioner of High Schools in May 1918. He informed the Princeton authorities that the State would not sanction such an organization [the six-six plan] in a district with an enrollment of less than 100 in the combined seventh

⁴⁸ State Board of Education 1907, n.p.

⁴⁹ *Princeton Press*, July 11, 1908, PUL; *New York Times*, November 22, 1935, p.23.

⁵⁰ *Princeton Press*, June 5, 1909, n.p.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, June 19, 1909, n.p.

⁵² *Ibid.*, September 11, 1909.

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and eighth grades. While Princeton has an enrollment that exceeds that, it does not have that number of white children.

The colored children have always been taught in a separate building through the eighth grade. Not only was the race question an important factor to be considered before combining these upper grammar grades, but a study of the marks of the colored children in the Eighth Grade State Efficiency Tests and a careful review of the work of the colored children in our local High School seemed to lead to the conclusion that while the grade was numerically the same in the schools, the actual work done in the colored school was inferior to that in the white schools...⁵³

If the perception at the time was that African-Americans were intellectually inferior to whites, it was likely due to the fact that students at the Witherspoon Street School received substandard facilities, instruction, and materials. According to Marion Wright's groundbreaking study, *Education of Negroes in New Jersey*, "[n]egro children in Princeton were not permitted to attend the junior high school until after they completed the ninth grade. Parents objected to this because Latin was not taught in the eighth grade of the colored school as it was in the junior high school. This arrangement also deprived the boys of instruction in shop work." Furthermore, a former student at the Witherspoon Street School commented, "[w]e got used books. When the children at the Nassau Street School were through with their books, we got them. They were marked up, pages out, outdated. All kinds of things were wrong with those books."⁵⁴ The policy of providing the students at the Witherspoon Street School with hand-me-downs meant the Borough spent less per pupil at the Witherspoon Street School than at the Nassau Street School. Also second-hand were three wood-frame annexes that were added to the school in 1927-28. These had been used at the white school on Nassau Street but became available after completion of the Princeton High School eased crowding there. According to the board of education, these temporary buildings could not be heated in the winter and were fire hazards. To make room for these annexes at the Quarry Street site, the rear yards of 18, 20, 22, and 24 Maclean Street were purchased in 1927 and 1928.⁵⁵

Like the original construction of the school at 35 Quarry Street in 1909, the 1939 addition and exterior alterations to the building went just as unnoticed by the public at large. In 1938, there was a debate between the Borough and the Township Boards of Education as to how they were going to settle the issue of overcrowding at the Witherspoon Street School. Up to that time, and until the desegregation of the Princeton school system in 1948, Princeton Township had been paying the Borough to send their African-American school children to the Witherspoon Street School. It was ultimately settled that the Borough would construct an addition to the existing school and continue to enroll students from the Township. The new addition, added in 1939 to the east side of the 1909 building, was designed by well-known New

⁵³ *Report to the Superintendent of Schools of Mercer County 1918-1919*, n.p.

⁵⁴ Historical Society of Princeton, *A Community Remembers - African American Life in Princeton, A self-guided walking tour* n.d., n.p.

⁵⁵ *New York Times*, June 30, 1927; *Princeton Packet*, June 28, 1927, September 3, 1927, May 19, 1928; *Princeton Herald*, September 16, 1938.

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Brunswick architect Alexander Merchant. Merchant (1872?-1952), had been in practice since who had designed several schools in New Brunswick and Highland Park and the music building at the New Jersey College for Women (Douglass College of Rutgers University).⁵⁶ With this addition, students at the enlarged Witherspoon Street School were able to enjoy for the first time a gymnasium and a domestic science classroom. A cafeteria was added in 1948, when more and more children could not return home for lunch.

The Princeton Plan

For all intents and purposes, the Witherspoon Street School maintained the status quo until 1948, when Princeton elementary schools were integrated following a mandate of the 1947 New Jersey State Constitution, which prohibited segregation in the public schools.⁵⁷ There was much discussion about the best way to integrate the two elementary schools. Ultimately, the Board of Education created what would later become known as the "Princeton Plan." This concept, which primarily involved the "pairing" of schools with predominantly white students with schools composed predominantly of African-American students, was later adapted by other school systems across the nation, with varying degrees of success.

In Princeton's schools, the 1948 desegregation plan established that the Nassau Street School (historically, the elementary school for white children) would house kindergarten through fifth grades. The Witherspoon Street School was transformed into an intermediate school for grades six through eight. The teachers and administrators were integrated as well with many teachers continuing to teach the grades they always taught. The two principals, Howard Waxwood and Chester Stroup, remained at their respective schools, so that Mr. Waxwood remained administrator of the Witherspoon Street School and Mr. Stroup administered the Nassau Street School. African-American students from Princeton Township were enrolled in the Township's own elementary school on Valley Road. The total number of Borough students at the time was 2,300 with African-Americans representing eleven percent of the student body.⁵⁸

The Princeton Plan was innovative for its adaptability to other communities and for the way it integrated not just the students but also the entire school system. In an article from the *Newark Evening News*, the reporter wrote,

[w]ith [Princeton] community support, the move toward integration began by getting the teaching staffs of the two schools together...Children from the entire borough were then brought together. This was accomplished by having Nassau house the kindergarten through fifth grades and Witherspoon, five blocks away, the sixth through eighth grades. Simultaneously, the school system's faculty was integrated.

⁵⁶ Obituary of Alexander Merchant, *New York Times*, July 29, 1952.

⁵⁷ Handelman 1994, n.p..

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

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The Princeton solution was made possible because of the small geographic area of the borough and the size of the student body, about 900. But integration leaders, who hail the "Princeton Plan," contend it could also be employed within the framework of a neighborhood pattern in a large city if transfers and redistricting do not eliminate segregation.⁵⁹

Educators and politicians alike repeated the idea that the Princeton Plan could translate to other communities often. In a report titled *The New Jersey Story Concerning the Development of Racially Integrated Public Schools*, Assistant Commissioner of Education Joseph L. Bustard commented on Princeton's method of desegregation, noting that the community's integration was so seamless that "Princeton's experience was duplicated in many other communities in the State."⁶⁰

Further evidence that the Princeton Plan was considered a sound solution to the problem of segregation comes from an article in the *New York Times*, which outlined the six possible courses of action to integrate the Englewood school system in Englewood, Bergen County, New Jersey. The article evaluated the six possible plans including the Princeton Plan, measuring "their merits and deficiencies."⁶¹ The Princeton Plan was ultimately not the chosen plan to desegregate the school system because of the apparent "complicated administrative problems" it would cause, although these problems were not elaborated on in the article.

For all its success in Princeton, the Plan, in fact, was not always adaptable to larger communities. Opposition to racial segregation was at a fevered pitch by the mid-1960s. Large cities such as New York City, Chicago, and Cleveland were facing segregation issues based on districting and neighborhood demographics. The idea of pairing one predominantly white school with a similar, predominantly Black school in order to eliminate segregation was tried in these cities with limited success. For example, New York City tried to desegregate their schools using the Princeton Plan, but the school board was met with hostility and protest.

Housing patterns had long segregated New York City, but by 1964, the City was in the midst of desegregating ten schools. The City's Board of Education proposed pairing ten New York City schools: five with predominantly white students and five with predominantly Black students. The plan would affect approximately 6,000 pupils; of the 6,000 approximately 400 students would have to be bused to their respective new schools.⁶² However, on the first day of school, September 14, 1967, nearly "275,000 children stayed home in a boycott and the hundreds of mothers who told them to do so took to the streets to

⁵⁹ Schnurman 1962, n.p.

⁶⁰ Bustard 1952, 14.

⁶¹ Slocum 1962, n.p., n.d.

⁶² "Reading, Writing, and Racial Unrest..." 1964, n.p..

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protest the school board's integration plan – a device called “cross-bussing,” and based roughly along the lines of the Princeton Plan.⁶³

To better understand why the Princeton Plan did not work in New York City, it is important to understand the extraordinary set of circumstances surrounding the Princeton integration. An article titled, “The Princeton Plan: Others Study New Jersey Town's Integration of Schools,” appeared in the *Wall Street Journal* on April 20, 1964. The article outlined three reasons why the Princeton Plan was so successful in Princeton: Distinctive Elements, Proximity of School, and No Organized Opposition.

According to the article's author, Stanley Penn, Princeton is distinctive because, “it is...highly prosperous, with many handsome homes,” it has a small minority population, and “[f]inally, the town derives an intellectual complexion from the presence of Princeton University, Princeton Theological Seminary and Westminster Choir College, and from various research institutions in the general area.”⁶⁴ In addition, Mr. Penn writes that another important factor was that, “they already had precedent on their side for the single high school had been integrated long before...”⁶⁵

Another important reason why the Princeton Plan was so successful was the proximity of the schools. They were only about one-half mile apart and within walking distance for all students. Mr. Penn also points out, in contrast to New York City, that the African-American population of school aged children in Princeton was only about 11%, and therefore “never...posed a social threat in the sense that there was any possibility the white pupils might become a minority or near-minority.”⁶⁶

Finally, there was no organized opposition to the plan, as there was in New York City. While several parents chose to relocate their children to different schools, there were no boycotts, protests, or threats of any kind surrounding the integration of Princeton's elementary schools.

Penn's article on Princeton and the Princeton Plan is timely, as it contrasts the reasons for Princeton's success with the upheaval surrounding New York City's desegregation campaign in 1964. The author sums-up the article by citing a New Jersey educator who stated,

[Princeton] had a big advantage at the time it integrated. Not only is it a forward-looking town, but there were none of the inflamed feelings about race relations then that you have today. And because Princeton is small, you didn't have the upheavals that are involved in mass transfers of Negro and white children. It all probably comes down to this: The Princeton Plan was good for Princeton, just as the Smith Plan would be good for Smithville.⁶⁷

⁶³ “Cross-Busing – Now It's Here” 1964, 44-46.

⁶⁴ Penn 1964, n.p.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

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According to Chester Stroup, principal of the Nassau Street School, the first day of school with the new integrated system was “just like every other first day of school. The children arrived and signed in and found out who their teachers were.”⁶⁸

While most of the area residents viewed the integration of the Princeton school district positively, there was some dissent. Some white parents chose to enroll their children in private institutions. In retrospect, some of the most vocal opponents of Princeton’s integration were African-Americans. Buster Thomas, who finished eighth grade in 1948 as a member of the last segregated class in the district, stated “[i]f I had had a choice of whether to attend an integrated or segregated elementary school, I would have stayed at the segregated school.” Many Black residents felt that the faculty and administration of the Witherspoon Street School instilled a sense of pride in its students and prepared them better for the outside world than did the integrated schools.⁶⁹

Conclusion

The Witherspoon Street School for Colored Children was significant within Princeton for its role within the Witherspoon/John Street neighborhood. Like the Witherspoon Street Church and the local YMCA, the school was a dependable, supportive fixture in the community. For almost one hundred years, African-American teachers who lived and worked in the community taught the community’s African-American school children. During a century of change and fluctuating race relations, the Witherspoon Street School became a safe haven for the neighborhood children who might otherwise face discrimination from white teachers and peers. More than anything, the Witherspoon Street School was a place that, at a time when African-Americans in Princeton were marginalized within society, stood as a symbol of pride and advancement for generations. In addition to this important local role, the Witherspoon Street School for the Colored also gained significance for its representation of a mid-twentieth century desegregation plan that became known as the “Princeton Plan.” This plan, which was successful within Princeton, was generally controversial when attempts were made to apply it to other communities.

⁶⁸ Handelman 1999, n.p.

⁶⁹ *Princeton Packet* “Witherspoon School Staff Taught Lessons and Pride,” n.p.

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Witherspoon Street School for Colored Children
Princeton Borough, Mercer Co., NJ

Section number 10 Page 1

Verbal Boundary Description

The Witherspoon Street School for Colored Children, located at 35 Quarry Street, Princeton Borough, Mercer County, New Jersey, is situated on Block 17.03, Lot 93. The property is roughly a rectangular lot. For the purpose of this nomination, the boundary does not include the 54 space parking lot at the rear of the building. Therefore, the boundary includes the southern property line, which measures approximately 185 feet and fronts onto Quarry Street. The western property line runs approximately 200 feet to the beginning of the parking area between the rear of the school and Maclean Street. The northern property line runs approximately 185 feet along the southern edge of the parking lot. Finally, the eastern property line runs approximately 200 feet from the southern edge of the parking lot to Quarry Street.

Boundary Justification

Historic map research indicates that until at least 1956, the school's northern boundary ended several feet from its north elevation (see Historic Map/Boundary Justification Continuation Sheet). Therefore, the boundary has been delineated to include the lot on which the school was historically located.

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Witherspoon Street School for Colored Children
Princeton Borough, Mercer County, New Jersey

Section number Photographs Page 1

For all photographs:

Property Name: Witherspoon Street School for Colored Children
Property Location: 35 Quarry Street, Princeton Borough, Mercer County
Photographer: Julie P. Carmelich, Tyreen A. Reuter
Date: July, 2003
**Location of
Negatives:** ARCH², Inc.
16 Wernik Place
Metuchen, New Jersey 08840-2422

Photograph No. 1 of 23:

View: Main Block, detail of the south elevation's cornice.

Photograph No. 2 of 23:

View: Main Block, the south face of the cupola.

Photograph No. 3 of 23:

View: Main Block, south elevation.

Photograph No. 4 of 23:

View: Main Block, detail of the banded windows located at the first floor, west bay of the south elevation.

Photograph No. 5 of 23:

View: Main Block, detail of an original window located at the ground floor.

Photograph No. 6 of 23:

View: Main Block, detail of the south elevation's main entry door and door surround.

Photograph No. 7 of 23:

View: Main Block and 1939 Addition, south elevation.

Photograph No. 8 of 23:

View: 1939 Addition, detail of the entry of the 1939 addition.

Photograph No. 9 of 23:

View: 1939 Addition, detail of the parapet located above the entry.

Photograph No. 10 of 23:

View: Main Block, west elevation.

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Witherspoon Street School for Colored Children
Princeton Borough, Mercer County, New Jersey

Section number Photographs Page 2

Photograph No. 11 of 23:

View: 1939 Addition, west elevation.

Photograph No. 12 of 23:

View: Main Block, north elevation.

Photograph No. 13 of 23:

View: 1939 Addition, west elevation.

Photograph No. 14 of 23:

View: 1939 Addition (west end), detail of rear entry.

Photograph No. 15 of 23:

View: Main Block, first floor: view looking east along the interior corridor.

Photograph No. 16 of 23:

View: Main Block, first floor: view towards the interior main entry door.

Photograph No. 17 of 23:

View: Main Block, first floor: view looking towards the first floor firewall.

Photograph No. 18 of 23:

View: 1939 Addition, ground floor: view looking east towards large bay window.

Photograph No. 19 of 23:

View: 1939 Addition, ground floor: interior view of the kitchen.

Photograph No. 20 of 23:

View: 1939 Addition, first floor: view looking north along the interior corridor.

Photograph No. 21 of 23:

View: 1939 Addition, ground floor: interior view of the large recreation room.

Photograph No. 22 of 23:

View: Main Block, first floor: representative patient room.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Witherspoon Street School for Colored Children
Princeton Borough, Mercer County, New Jersey

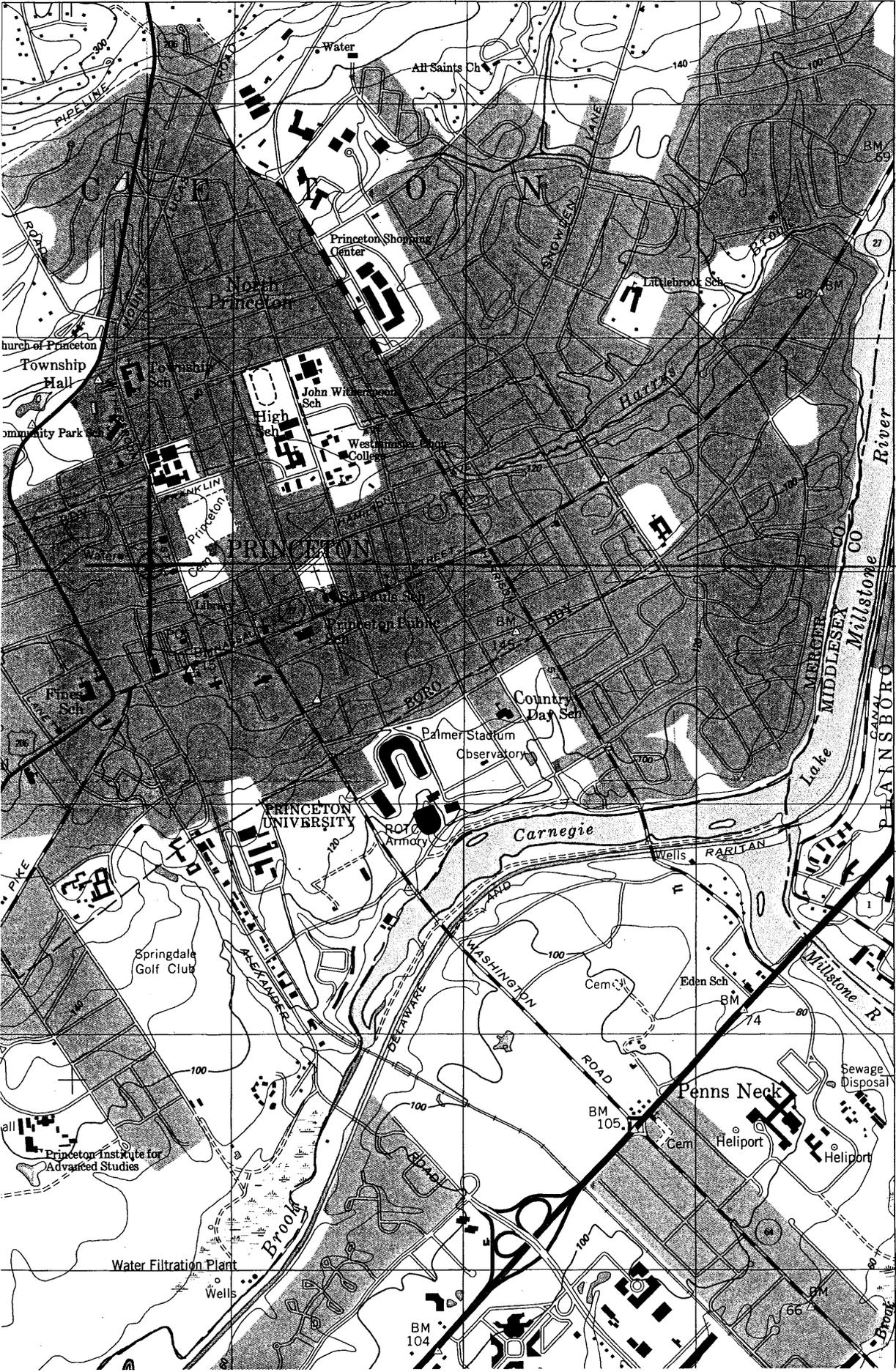
Section number Photographs Page 3

Photograph No. 23 of 23:

View: Main Block, first floor: representative patient room.

PRINCETON QUADRANGLE
NEW JERSEY
7.5-MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

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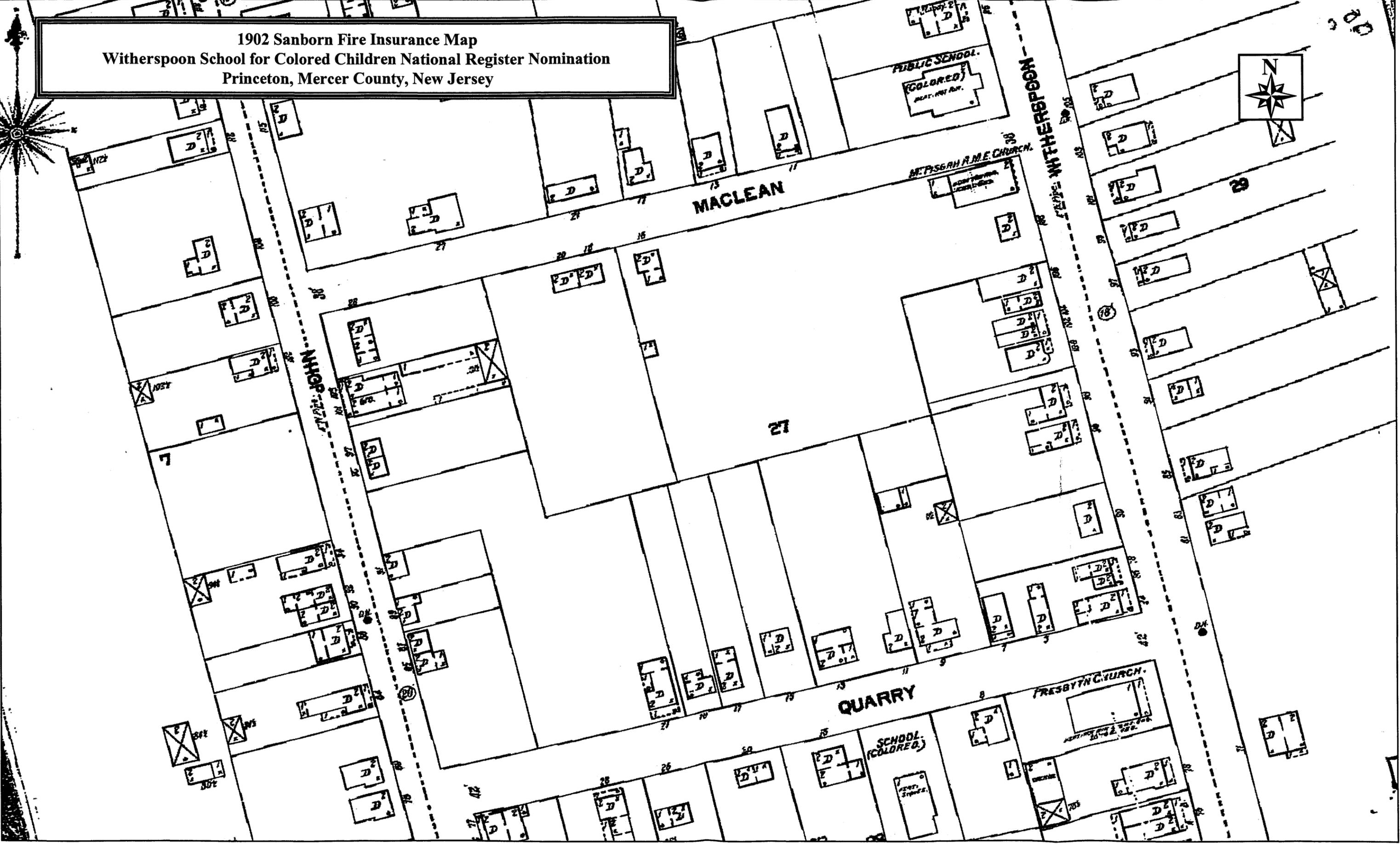


69
 170 000 METERS
 68
 67
 66
 65
 20'
 64

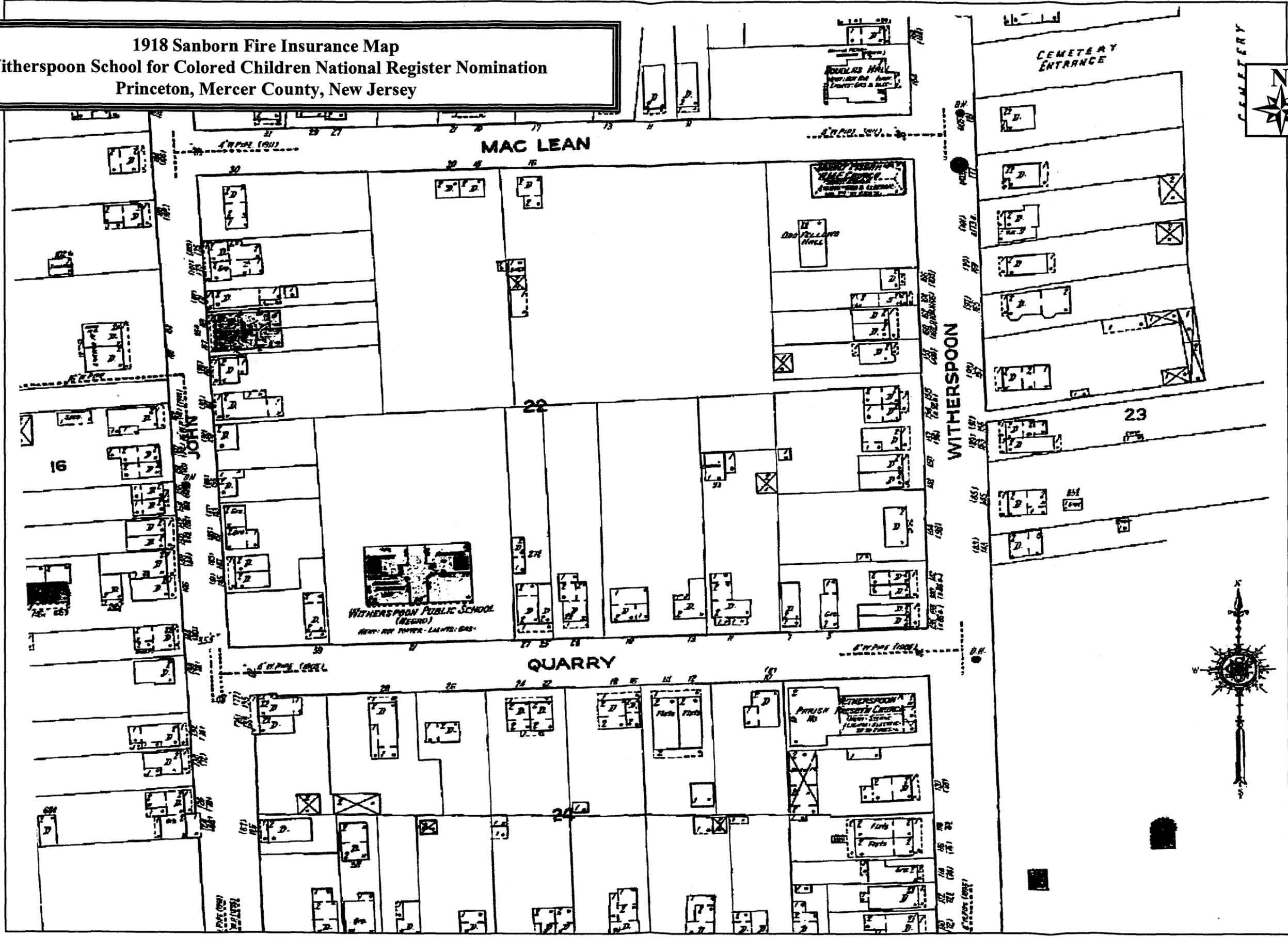
*Witherspoon street school for
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 Princeton Borough, Mercer Count
 New Jersey*

*Zone 18
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 N 4467031*

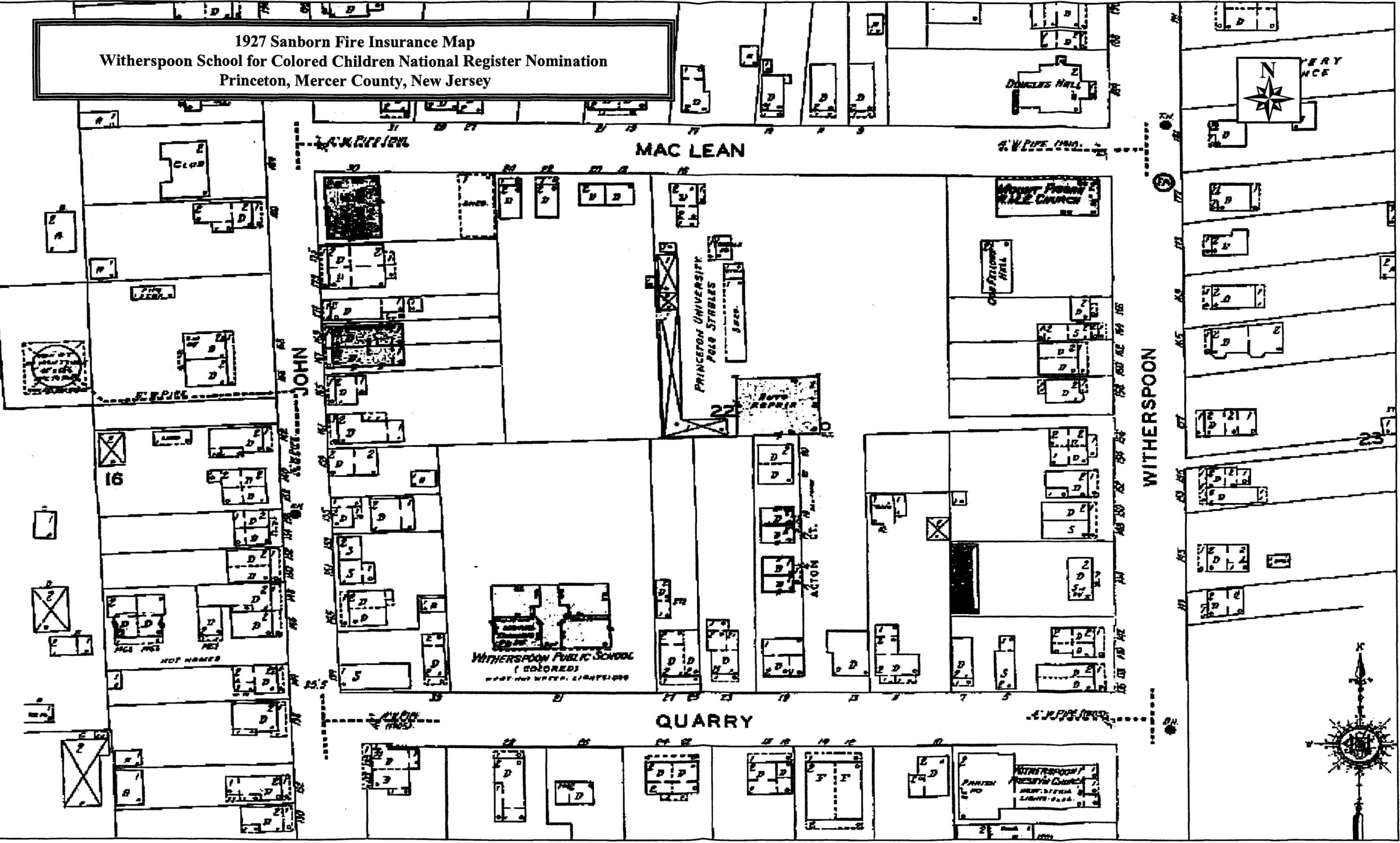
1902 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map
Witherspoon School for Colored Children National Register Nomination
Princeton, Mercer County, New Jersey



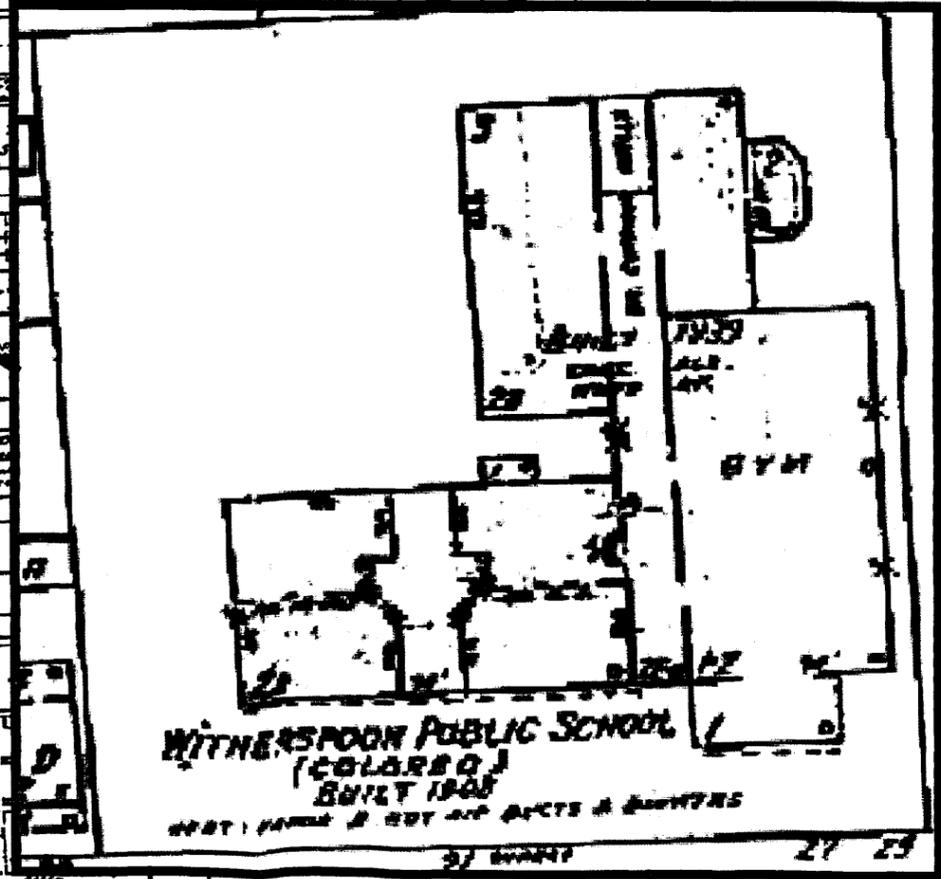
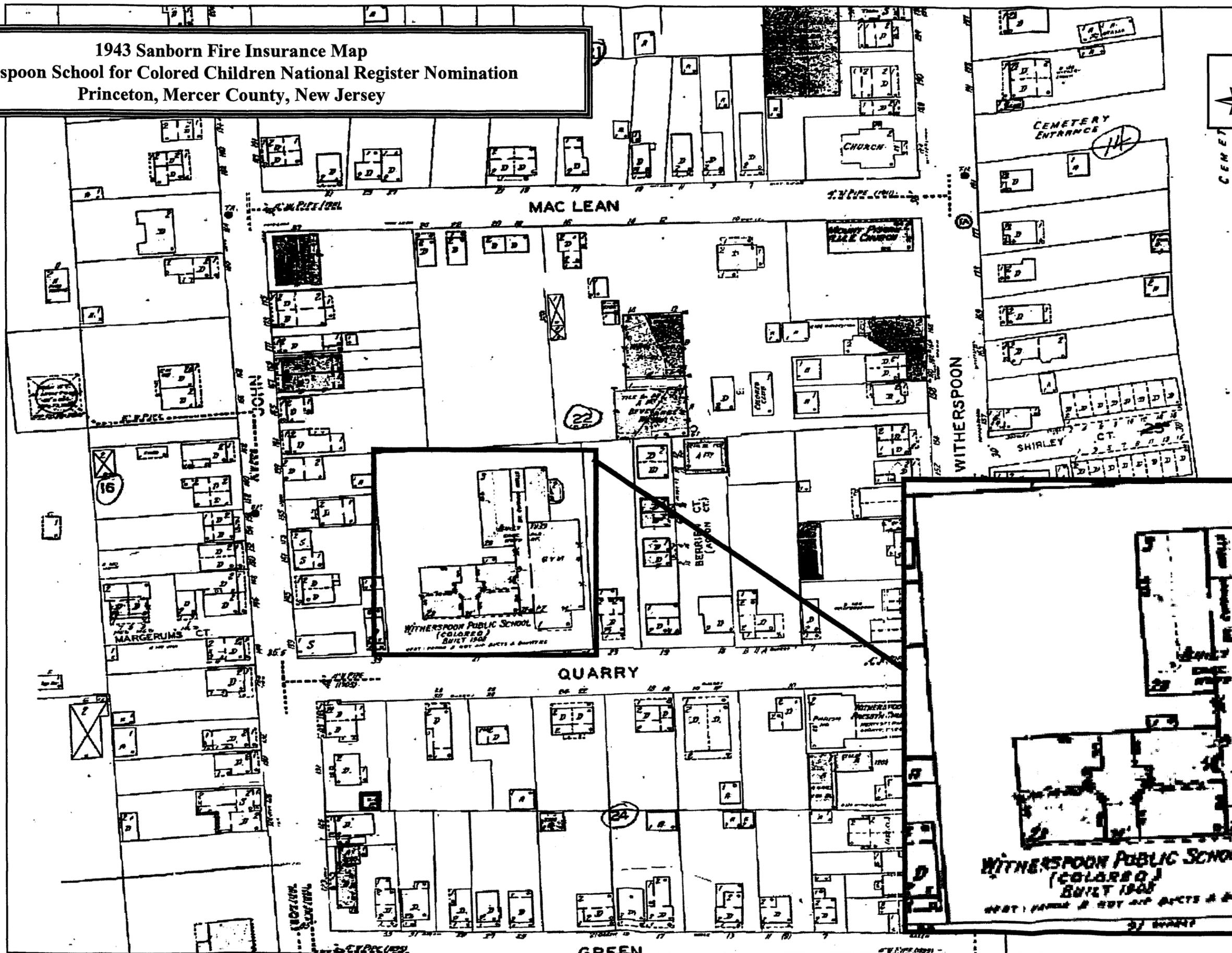
1918 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map
Witherspoon School for Colored Children National Register Nomination
Princeton, Mercer County, New Jersey



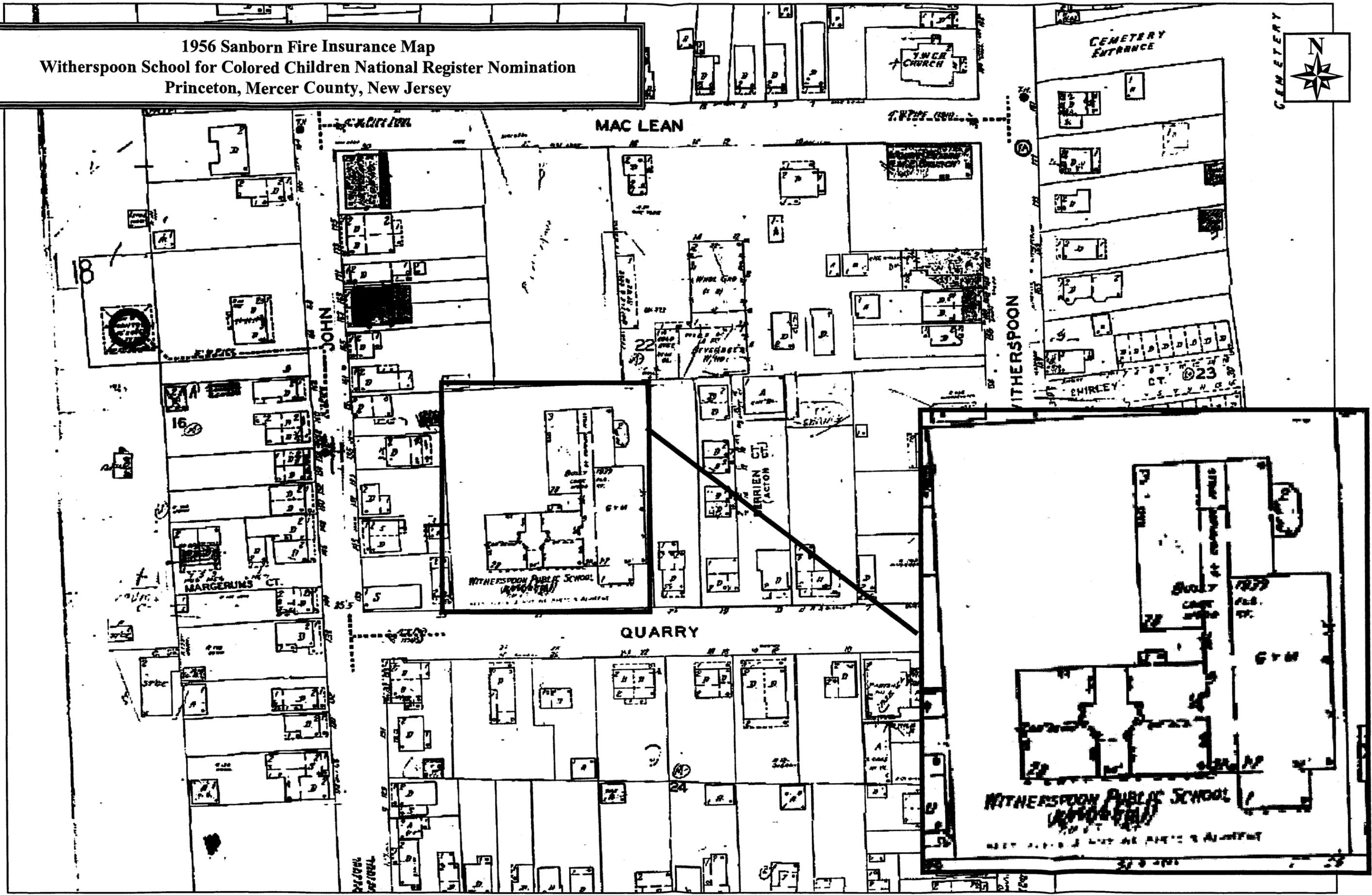
1927 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map
Witherspoon School for Colored Children National Register Nomination
Princeton, Mercer County, New Jersey



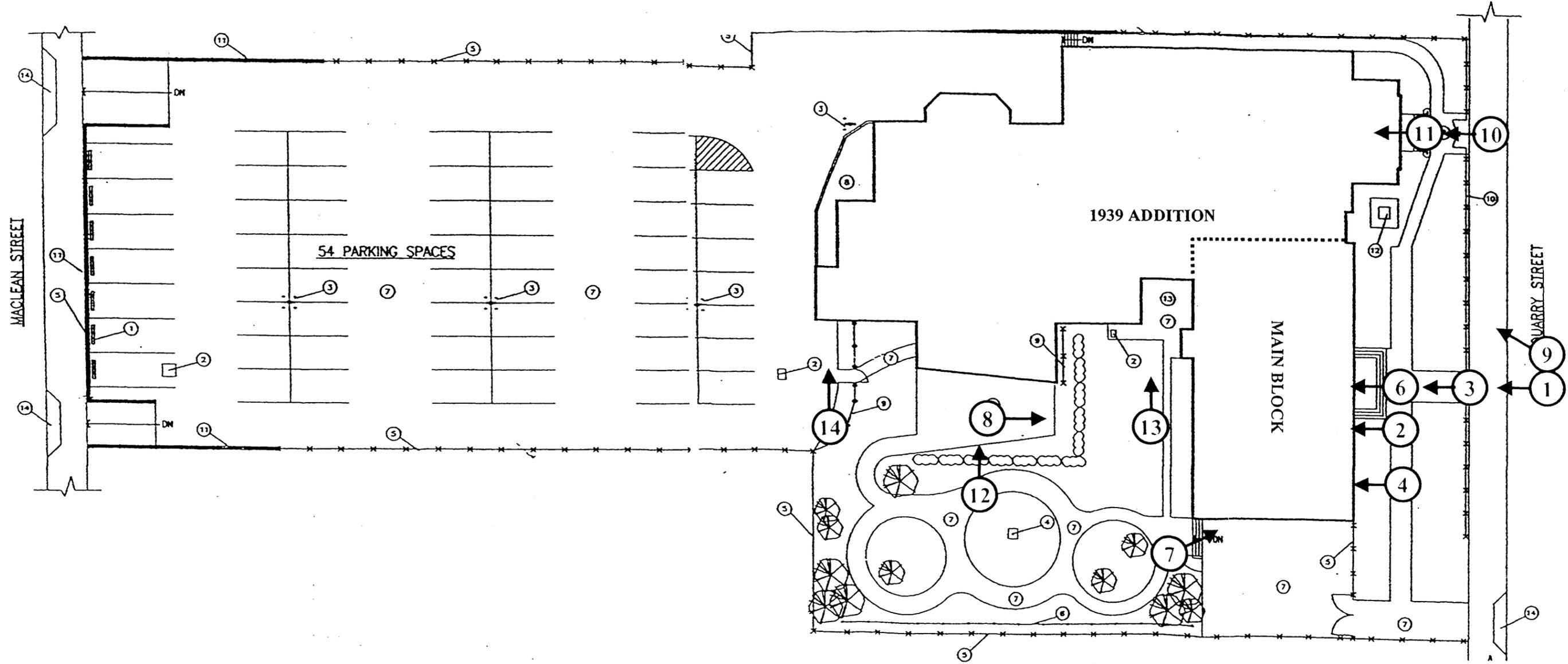
1943 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map
Witherspoon School for Colored Children National Register Nomination
Princeton, Mercer County, New Jersey



1956 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map
Witherspoon School for Colored Children National Register Nomination
Princeton, Mercer County, New Jersey



Exterior Site Map and Photograph Key
Witherspoon School for Colored Children National Register Nomination
Princeton, Mercer County, New Jersey



Interior Site Maps and Photograph Keys
Witherspoon School for Colored Children National Register Nomination
Princeton, Mercer County, New Jersey



GROUND FLOOR

FIRST FLOOR

