



1125

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

1. Name of Property

historic name Guntersville City School
other names/site number Old Rock School (preferred)

2. Location

street & number 1120 Rayburn Avenue not for publication N/A
city or town Guntersville vicinity _____
state Alabama code AL county Marshall code 095 zip code 35976

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets _____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant _____ nationally _____ statewide X locally. (_____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature]
Signature of certifying official

September 29, 2003
Date

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 commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

- I hereby certify that this 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] Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action

[Signature] Signature of the Keeper 11-15-03 Date of Action

USDI/NPS Registration Form

Property Name Guntersville City School

County and State Marshall, Alabama

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Category of Property

(Check only one box.)

- private
- public-local
- public-state
- public-Federal

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

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing

Noncontributing

1

0

0

0

1

1 buildings

0 sites

0 structures

0 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

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

N/A

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: education

Sub: school

Cafeteria

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: recreation and culture

Sub: theater

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Arts and Crafts Movement/Craftsman Style

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone

roof metal

walls stone

other glass

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition on continuation sheet/s.)

USDI/NPS Registration Form

Property Name Guntersville City School
County and State Marshall, Alabama

=====
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.) N/A

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a 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.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

education
architecture

Period of Significance 1926-1952

Significant Dates 1926, 1935, 1956

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Alred, Gus

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

=====
9. Major Bibliographical References
=====

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS) N/A

- 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 _____

=====
10. Geographical Data
=====

Acreage of Property 2.46

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone Easting	Northing	Zone Easting	Northing
1	<u>16</u>	<u>564120</u>	<u>3801100</u>	3
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 Linda Ford, Preservation Consultant/Christy Anderson/ AHC Reviewer

organization Ford Consulting/Alabama Historical Commission date August 12, 2002

street & number 26 Cherokee Hills/468 S. Perry Street telephone 205/556-5388 334/242-3184

city or town Tuscaloosa/Montgomery state Alabama zip code 35404/36130-0900

=====
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 The Whole Backstage

street & number 1120 Rayburn Avenue/P.O. Box 895 telephone

city or town Guntersville state Alabama zip code 35976

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 1

Name of Property : Guntersville City School
County and State: Marshall, Alabama

The Guntersville City School is located on 2.46 acres of land within the city of Guntersville, Alabama at the corner of Rayburn Avenue and Lusk Street. The edifice is set back from the street and sits atop a slight rise that distinguishes the building from the wooded lot. The school was built in the early-twentieth century (1926) in the Craftsman style. The school retains its Craftsman details with rock facing, exposed rafter tails along the gable and cross hip roof and covered vestibule reminiscent of a bungalow porch with louvered ventilator and exposed knee braces. The Guntersville City School interior still displays wood panel doors with transoms, hardwood floors, original light fixtures, and cloakrooms. The schools architectural integrity is largely intact.

Guntersville City School is a one story, Craftsman style educational building with a floor plan resembling a flat eight. A gable with cross hip roof of metal shingles covers the rubble stone-clad edifice. Wide eaves with exposed rafter tails are part of the typical Craftsman-style roof.

Guntersville City School is a five-part plan educational building that includes a central block with flanking wings and dependencies. The entryway is located in the central block with a projecting gable roof that includes knee braces and envelopes a covered vestibule. The vestibule is entered via an elongated arch with central, recessed, double leaf, plate glass doors, and sidelights. Above the door a transom has been covered. Flanking the doors are 9/9 wood sash windows on the interior walls and on the exterior walls are paired 9/9 wood sash windows. A louvered ventilator pierces the space above the archway. Moving outward from the covered vestibule, the façade is pierced by banks of 9/9 wood sash windows with stone lintels.

Upon entering the front doors, one is in the central hallway, now a lobby. The lobby has flanking offices that were originally the principal's office with a tiny library inside and the main office. Today these rooms function as offices. Dropped ceilings, fluorescent lights and a linoleum floor have replaced original materials in this portion of the school.

Flanking these offices are two classrooms that are now used as a museum of the history of The Whole Backstage, dance studio, storage, and costume room. These rooms include five-panel wood doors with 6-light transoms, as well as 6-light hopper windows with original wood molding, built in blackboards. All of these items are common design features of schools in this time period. Drop ceilings and fluorescent lights have been added.

The museum and dance studio fall on the East end of the building and the storage and costume room are on the West end. The two eastern classrooms are relatively the same size with a few inches difference. The first west room is similarly about thirty-four feet in length. While the furthestmost west room has been divided into a nine-foot storage space and twenty feet costume room.

The central hallway or lobby accesses the centrally located auditorium. Double leaf, five-panel wood doors lead into the auditorium with carpeted floors that lead down to a raised wooden stage with hard wood floors. Metal theatre chairs furnish the room. Plaster covers the walls. In recent years insulation has been added in the attic along with air conditioning and the central stage has been extended and side stages added.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 2

Name of Property : Guntersville City School
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Dependencies emanate on the Western and Eastern end of the school. Each wing has a recessed entryway with an elongated arch, double leaf, wood, five-panel doors with divided, three-lights, and eighteen-light transom with stone lintels. On the interior are two large classrooms, storage rooms and a girl's and boy's bathroom. The classrooms on the West end are now a costume and props room. The classrooms on the East end are used to hold furniture and a music room with a sound room, storage space and a girl's and boy's bathroom. Once again the dependencies are replete with plaster walls, dropped ceilings and fluorescent lights, six-light hopper windows, five-panel wood doors with six-light transoms, and built in blackboards. The bathrooms were updated in the late fifties or early sixties with new ceramic tile floors and ceramic tile walls. The fixtures are miniature in size, adapted for elementary school children.

The rear wing runs the full length of the building and includes six classrooms with two alleys or halls that access the lunchroom that is housed in a separate building. Four of the classrooms measure a little over 30 feet in length and one seems to have combined two classrooms into a space of over 70 feet. This rear wing is closer to its original state with plaster ceilings and suspended lighting, hardwood floors, hopper windows, five-panel wood doors with transoms. The courtyards were accessed from the hall in the rear wing. The courtyards are open expanses of grassy landscape and no furniture or ornamentation. A wide hallway circles the courtyards and auditorium. It is over seven feet wide on the South, West, and East side and over eight feet wide on the North side.

The lunchroom is identical stylistically to the main building with Craftsman detailing that includes a hip roof of metal shingles covering the rubble stone-clad edifice. Wide eaves with exposed rafter tails are part of the roof. There are multiple double leaf, wood panel doors and covered windows around the building. It is a separate building from the main school.

Most of the smaller storage rooms throughout the building were at one time cloakrooms. They have plaster ceilings and walls, suspended lighting and built in, open wooden shelving that was added around the 1940s.

The surrounding lot is over two acres in size and overall flat. The two later additions to the Guntersville City School are hidden behind the main building.

Archaeological Component

Although no archaeological survey has been conducted in association with the Guntersville City School, there exists the potential for subsurface remains on the property.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 3

Name of Property: Guntersville City School
County and State: Marshall, Alabama

Significance

Guntersville City School is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as emblematic of Progressive Era school philosophy and design in early-twentieth century Alabama under Criterion A for education, and Criterion C for architecture. The school may be the most intact and highly articulated example of a Progressive Era public school in the state because of its form, use and type of space, and materials -- especially those that are indigenous to the northeast region of the state.

Public school educational reform begun in the late-nineteenth century reached its height in America in the 1910s and 1920s and focused on providing ideal spaces for optimum learning environments through the design and new construction of educational facilities. The improvement of the nation's general educational system and curriculum of this period resulted in corrective and standardization efforts of school building planning. Progressive Era reformers published detailed specifications on site orientation, types of educational spaces needed, classroom size, construction materials, lighting, heating and ventilation, rest rooms, furniture arrangement, as well as information on playgrounds, gymnasiums, cafeterias, laboratories, and assembly rooms/auditoriums. Modern curriculums required specific spaces to conduct programs in science, art, music, shop work, home economics, dramatics, and recreation.

The 1926 Guntersville City School is an archetypical expression in Alabama of these Progressive era reforms in school design with the added caveat of the use local rubble stone in its exterior walls. The main school building and its associated cafeterias are virtually unaltered and in excellent condition. It's character defining features -- overall plan of perimeter classrooms with a central auditorium; separate cafeteria building; cobble-faced exterior, as opposed to the more traditional brick or wood cladding; original banks of nine over nine wood sash windows; exposed rafters; prominent entry with recessed doors and 18-light transom; courtyard spaces; intact interior spaces and materials; classroom spaces with wood floors, plaster walls, blackboards, coat closets, and original details such as baseboards and paneled doors with transoms; and specialized spaces like the principal's office, shop and home economics rooms, restrooms, and the auditorium -- stand out above other known examples of this kind of mid-sized, early-twentieth century public school in Alabama.

The Guntersville City School helps us understand the history of the ideal public school in Alabama and the nation. In the South the Rosenwald Fund (1913-1937) also contributed to Progressive education, primarily among the African-American communities but with impact on the white portion of the community as well. The Julius Rosenwald School Building Fund Program was a joint effort by Julius Rosenwald, president of Sears, Roebuck and Company, and Alabamian educator, Booker T. Washington. The standardized school plans implemented by the Rosenwald Fund encouraged an acceptance by white communities to build their own schools using these same modern plans. Most of the larger Rosenwald schools were weatherboard clad with some examples of brick buildings. The Guntersville City School features a low-pitched metal roof with exposed rafter tails and knee braces. All of these elements are commonly found in Craftsman-style architecture. The central entrance is reminiscent of a Craftsman porch. The Guntersville City School is exceptional in its regional rubble stone finish.

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Name of Property: Guntersville City School
County and State: Marshall, Alabama

Historical Summary

Known affectionately as the Old Rock School, Guntersville City School, is a consolidated plan school built in 1926. The school was in answer to a group of citizens request for educational advances in Guntersville, Alabama. The School Improvement Association was formed and in January 1924, published a newspaper article identifying schoolroom problems and offering \$500 to build a new facility. The offer depended upon the city of Guntersville matching the donation.

Many local organizations, including the Masonic Lodge and Ku Klux Klan, began donating money to build a new school. The \$500 match was easily made and by the close of the month of January, a town meeting was called to discuss the cost of a new building. The estimated price of an updated school was \$24,900. March 1926 approximately \$15,000 was still needed to build the school and bonds were sold to raise the remaining funds.

Cost was minimized by the donation of land for the school's site. Deed Books from 1925 document the information that Guntersville Realty Company *sold* land to the Guntersville Board of Education for under \$10. William Wright McClendon excavated the land. Using two mules McClendon cleared the ground for construction. Gus Alred built the school and he had help from members of the community who contributed their labor. The edifice was not finished in time for the beginning of the 1926 fall school year. Nonetheless classes were held that fall.

What distinguishes the Guntersville City School are the architectural features chosen for the new building found in the Progressive Movement. The Progressive Movement began in the early part of the twentieth century; the educational movement included the idea of consolidated schools in standardized buildings. These standardized plans were designed to combines smaller one-and two-room rural schools. The schools showcased physical features intended to facilitate better learning and health for the students. Accommodations were made for students such as more windows, modern indoor plumbing, better ventilation, and open spaces.

In the South post-Civil War Reconstruction created a universal public education system with ultimate community control. During the 1880-1890s, one-room schools for both blacks and whites sprung up from corner to corner of the South. Community support provided the enrollment, regular attendance of the students and ran the schools. Property taxes and private contributions built and maintained the facilities. The state supplied slim funds for teachers' salaries, dispersed by state and county superintendents of education. The public-private partnership is exemplified by a petition in Cullman County, Alabama in 1889, "We have had our School meeting, and the majority of the Community has settled upon the location of the School and the party's agree to give land and build a good house, provided we can get a five months winter School." The bargain was sealed with the hiring of a teacher and property location according to public discretion (W.R. Anderson).

The Progressive Movement evolved after the turn of the century when educations was being reformed nationwide. The drive was to "modernize public schools, redesign curricula and extend bureaucratic

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supervision over community schools.” (Link) Governor Andrew Jackson Montague of Virginia and Governor Charles Brantley Aycock of North Carolina lead southern leaders toward progressive education. White schools in the South improved after 1900 with expanding physical plants and developing high school systems and curricula.

Rosenwald School Building Fund Program (1913-1937) was a primarily Southern endeavor of Julius Rosenwald, president of Sears, Roebuck and Company, to promote progressive education among African-Americans. Julius Rosenwald and Alabamian educator, Booker T. Washington of the Tuskegee Institute joined forces to improve African-American educational facilities. Some \$4.3 million donated by Rosenwald pooled with \$44.7 million contributed by the African-American communities was responsible for building approximately 5,357 Rosenwald schools, shops and teachers’ homes by 1932. These projects impacted not only African-American communities but also white communities as well.

The standardized school plans implemented by the Rosenwald Fund encouraged an acceptance by white communities to build their own schools using these same modern plans. Julius Rosenwald established a Southern Office in Nashville, Tennessee in 1920 and hired Samuel Smith to manage it. Smith drew up school plans for Rosenwald Schools and a booklet was published with the title *Community School Plans*. The work included many different plans including five, six and seven teacher schools. These plans illustrate a building with a central auditorium and flanking dependencies containing multiple classrooms similar to the Guntersville Elementary School. The booklet also included contractor’s specifications, advice on site location, size and landscaping. Plans drawn by Smith included minimal Craftsman influences. Bracketing under the eaves was typical of the smaller schools designed by Smith.

Jackson Davis (1882-1947) was a state agent for African-American rural schools for the Virginia State Department of Education. Davis promoted the use of the Rosenwald plans and worked extensively with education in the Southern states and for most of his career with race relations. He helped develop regional centers of education in the South and at the time of his death was president of the board of trustees of Booker T. Washington Institute in Liberia (Link).

Davis toured the South photographing over 5,000 images of rural black and white schools, facilities, teachers and students. He visited “common” schools developed during Reconstruction for both races when “education for southern blacks and whites shared common conditions of poverty, isolation, and under education. Children of both races attended school for a few months a year in shabby and under equipped facilities” Davis traveled mainly in Virginia and the Carolinas but also visited Alabama and other deep South states. On many of these visits, Davis implored small communities to raise money to consolidate schools and build new edifices. Davis and other educational reformers purported progress could only be made with more attractive schoolrooms and school grounds. “Physical improvement of schools, Davis maintained, would lead to pattern of community uplift” (Davis).

Such was the basis for the movement to build Guntersville Elementary School in 1924. The new building was to be a larger, more attractive building to include such modernizations as better lighting, ventilation, indoor plumbing, and open space with a central auditorium. Better lighting included the idea of incorporating natural light for easier reading and air circulation in a time before air conditioning. The

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large banks of 9 over 9 wood sash windows included in the Guntersville City School facilitated these modern ideas.

The matter of air circulation was thought quite important for better health. More windows partially answered this problem but also open-air spaces were promoted. In the Guntersville Elementary School two open-air courtyards with access from the interior of the school, were provided to combat the "high and uniform temperatures, a high degree of moisture in the air, and a lack of air movement" (Stormzand). Six-light hopper windows are found throughout the hallways that allowed air to flow from hallway to classroom.

Another progressive amenity was indoor plumbing. These bathrooms were updated in later years but still bear out the use of child size fixtures for elementary school students. Classrooms had built in blackboards, cloakrooms with movable desks. These details later became standard but that was not entirely the case in the 1920s. In *The Progressive Primary Teacher* of 1928, movable desks and stationery blackboards are presented as innovations. "The primary classroom, then, must move. It is no mere fad or commercial exploitation that has produced the movable furniture for the primary grade."

Desks could be moved, preferably out of straight rows, to clear space for blackboard work. Chairs could be placed in a reading circle, tables could be moved to supply or cloak rooms for construction workspace according to *The Progressive Primary Teacher*.

The jewel in the crown for the Guntersville Elementary School was the centrally located auditorium complete with stage. When the school opened in 1926 the auditorium was used for chapel exercises. Former students of the school note the auditorium as the sight for artistic creativity. Two teachers who used the auditorium for their instruction were Mary Tom Jordan and Mrs. H. A. Bradford.

Jordan taught in the 1930s soon after the school was constructed. The courses taught then were identified as *elocution* and *expression*. *Expression* was similar to today's drama class. In the forties when Mrs. Bradford began teaching, an extra fee was paid by students to take expression and music as part of their everyday curriculum. On Fridays students performed for all 6 grades presenting piano recitals as well as dramatic readings (Townson). During the forties the auditorium hosted public concerts and dramas sponsored by local clubs. The clubs were usually ladies' clubs and these organizations many times pooled their resources with local schools to perform for the town.

The forties and fifties found the auditorium filled with the student body in group sing-alongs. Students began presenting evening productions. These were formal occasions where students performed piano recitals on a grand piano. Dramatic productions were presented with costumes ordered from New York City. In 1945 an active community theatre Guntersville Town Theatre began performing at the Guntersville City School stage.

Piano lessons continued to be offered as part of the school curriculum into the 1950s and violin was added to the repertoire. Expression was no longer a class but dance lessons were available. Charlie Lockmiller of Gadsden taught both ballet and tap dancing lessons to the children of Guntersville

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Name of Property: Guntersville City School
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Elementary. Dance was not included in the everyday curriculum but was an afternoon addition taught after school hours. Over the years the stage of the auditorium was a center for creative encouragement for the students. The idea of creativity for children was included in the progressive movement.

The Progressive Primary Teacher stresses the need to move away from artificial formal atmospheres at school to more naturalism. The author indicates that the first grader has been home for an average of five years, where home and play were of the utmost of importance. Therefore school needed to be modified to be more like home and free with movement and learning activities to assimilate playtime. Acting, expression, and singing are activities that are a form of creativity and play. Hence the stage and auditorium in the Guntersville City School gave resonance to the progressive ideas for primary students.

Pupils of Mrs. Tom Jordan's elocution classes remember learning poems and "pieces" selected by their teacher. Then the pupils performed for the class and sometimes the P.T.A., clubs or the student body when meeting in the auditorium.

The progressive amenities of the Guntersville City School were outdated by the 1970s. The building was replaced by the present day elementary school. Since the seventies various groups such as the Council on Aging, Child Development Center, and The Whole Backstage have occupied the old Guntersville City School. Today the sole occupant, The Whole Backstage, carries on the tradition of using the auditorium and stage to express creativity.

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Name of Property: Guntersville City School
County and State: Marshall, Alabama

References Sited

W. R. Anderson to Solomon Palmer, 1889, Alabama Superintendent of Education Records, *Correspondence, 1868-1916*, Box 1, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery.

Davis, Jackson, *Davis diary*, January 3, 1913.

Jackson Davis, Schools and Community Needs, *Southern Workman* (September 1910), p. 472.

St. Germain, Elizabeth. *Old Rock School—70 Years of public Service*, December/January 1995.

Link, William A. *Jackson Davis and the Lost World of Jim Crow Education*, University of Virginia Library: Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library and The Carter G. Woodson Institute for African-American and African Studies, May 2000.

Link, William A. *About Jackson Davis*, University of Virginia Library: Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, May 2000.

Mansell, Jeff, *The Rosenwald School Building Fund and Associated Buildings (1913-1937)*, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Nomination, August 21, 1997.

Stormzand, Martin James, *The progressive primary teacher*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, c. 1928.

Verbal Boundary Description

The 2.46 acre tract whereon the Guntersville City School is contained on Block 31, lots 1 through 13.

Boundary Justification

The 2.46-acre tract has been historically associated with the Guntersville City School since 1926. This 2.46-acre tract is the tract that was donated for a token sum of less than \$10 to the Guntersville City Board of Education in 1926.

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Section photos Page 9

Name of Property: Guntersville City School
County and State: Marshall, Alabama

Photograph Log

- Photograph 1. South (façade) and East side of the Guntersville City School facing Northwest.
- Photograph 2. South and West side of Guntersville City School facing Northeast.
- Photograph 3. Detail of entryway on South side of school facing North.
- Photograph 4. View of East side of school facing West.
- Photograph 5. Doorway on West side of school facing East.
- Photograph 6. View of interior courtyard on North side of school facing South.
- Photograph 7. North and East side of school with addition facing Southwest.
- Photograph 8. Interior of school showing classroom with transoms.
- Photograph 9. Interior of school with wood, five panel doors.
- Photograph 10. Interior of school showing cloakroom.
- Photograph 11. Interior of auditorium facing South.

The following information is the same for each photograph:

Name of Photographer: Gene A. Ford

Date of Photograph: June, 2002.

Location of Original Negatives: Alabama Historical Commission

468 South Perry Street

Montgomery, Alabama 36130-0900