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NAT REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic name Lawnside School

other names/site number Lawnside Public School/Lawnside Elementary School

2. Location

street & number 23 North Warwick Road

N/A

not for publication

city or town Lawnside Borough

N/A

vicinity

state NJ code 034 county Camden code 007 zip code 08045

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance: national statewide local

Paul Beall
Signature of certifying official/Title

Asst Commissioner
Date

1/23/15

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register

determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other (explain:)

Paul Beall
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

3-17-15

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply.) **Category of Property** (Check only one box.) **Number of Resources within Property** (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Ownership of Property		Category of Property		Contributing	Noncontributing	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)	1	1	buildings
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local	<input type="checkbox"/>	district	0	0	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State	<input type="checkbox"/>	site	0	0	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal	<input type="checkbox"/>	structure	0	0	structure
		<input type="checkbox"/>	object	0	0	object
				1	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

N/A

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

Current Functions
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION: School

WORK IN PROGRESS

DOMESTIC: Multiple Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

Materials
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS:
 Classical Revival

foundation: STONE

MODERN: International Style

walls: BRICK

roof: ASPHALT

other: STONE

WOOD

METAL

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Narrative Description

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

Summary Paragraph

The Lawnside School is a two-and-a-half story, brick elementary school building at the intersection of North Warwick Road and Gloucester Avenue in the Borough of Lawnside, Camden County, NJ. Built in 1915-1918 and expanded in 1922, 1925, and 1953, the school can be characterized as a vernacular, Classical Revival building with a vernacular, International Style addition. The building's setting is along the Borough's historic main street, Warwick Road between Brown Street and North Douglass Avenue, within a small late-19th and early-20th century commercial and residential neighborhood. The school's exterior appearance is defined by brick walls on raised stone foundations, banks of large six-over-six metal windows, cast stone and pressed metal detailing, a central main entrance, secondary stair tower entrances, and both hipped and flat roofs. The interior of the school follows a traditional double-loaded corridor plan with former classrooms and offices along the north-south corridor, which is anchored by stair towers at the north end, center, and south end of the building. The 1915 building and 1922 and 1925 additions are generally characterized by concrete and carpeted floors, painted and plastered brick walls, high ceilings, wood wall trim, paneled wood doors, and arched masonry openings. The interior of the 1953 building features plain painted plaster walls, low acoustical tile ceilings, carpet and tile floors, and wood doors with ocular windows. Beginning in late 2012 and continuing through the end of 2013, the school was rehabilitated as affordable senior housing using the National Park Service's Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credit program. As part of this work, the exterior of the school was largely preserved with minimal alteration, and the interior plan, historic features, and historic feature were retained. At the rear of the site, a two-story non-contributing building was constructed for additional housing.

Narrative Description

The Lawnside School was started in 1915 and completed in 1918 as a Centre Township school for the African American community in and around Lawnside. The small school began as a tall, narrow two-and-a-half story rectangular brick building along North Warwick Road in Lawnside Borough (photograph #2). The building's architectural character is rooted in the vernacular Classical Revival style, with simple, balanced facades, a central pavilion with pediment on the main (west) façade, and details like pilasters and keystones. This building was designed with four large banks of classroom windows flanking the centered main entrance on the main (west) facade, with only secondary entrances and unbroken expanses of brick walls on the side and rear (east) walls. On the interior, two stair towers and a single-loaded corridor along the east wall provided circulation between the basement utilitarian space and four classrooms on the upper floors, which were arranged, two per floor, along the west side of the building.

In 1922 and again in 1925, the school was expanded to the east with two, two-and-a-half story brick additions positioned perpendicular to the rear (east) side of the 1915 building (see building plan). The 1922 addition, being designed by the same architect building and within a few years of the 1915 building, features virtually the same the construction, vernacular Classical Revival appearance, and materials as the 1915 building. The addition provided four additional classrooms, two per floor, adjacent to the original 1915 corridor. In 1925, a larger addition with two more classrooms, one per floor, and two offices, was constructed to the north of the 1922 addition and mirrored its size, scale, materials, and features (photograph #5).

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In 1953, the Lawnside School reached its current form and size when a rectangular two-story brick vernacular International Style addition was constructed on the south side of the earlier 1915 school and internally connected through the 1915 building's south stair tower (photograph #1). The plan includes double-loaded corridors connected to two stair towers with classrooms and support spaces along the east and west walls. The interior and exterior character of this later addition reflects the mid 20th-century modern aesthetic of the International Style, which is communicated through the stark walls absent of ornamentation and an emphasis on the horizontal as seen in the window banks.

Until the 1980s, when the Lawnside Board of Education closed the Lawnside School, the Board had maintained and upgraded the school; this included replacing the original windows, upgrading restrooms, and installing new heating and utility systems with exterior metal vents on all facades. In the 1990s, the first floor of the 1953 addition was rehabilitated into medical offices and the remainder of the building remained vacant. In 2013, the school was rehabilitated into affordable housing for senior citizens using the National Park Service's Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credit (RITC, or historic tax credit) program; the project was certified in 2014. Changes to the school as part of the rehabilitation includes the removal of inappropriate late 20th century doors and windows, the installation of new doors and windows based on historic photographs, creation of community space and apartment units in the former classrooms and offices, retention of the building's original plan, footprint, and circulation system, and the preservation of original historic fabric from the 1915, 1922, 1925, and 1953 periods of construction.

Setting

The Lawnside School is located on a 1.36-acre lot near the eastern edge of the municipal boundary for the Borough of Lawnside. The irregularly shaped tax parcel is bounded by North Warwick Road to the west, Brown Street to the north, municipal and undeveloped land to the east, and North Douglas Avenue to the south (see site plan). Within this tax parcel, the school is sited near the western boundary, with the main (west) façade facing North Warwick Road at its intersection with Gloucester Avenue (historic photograph #2). The surrounding neighborhood is a mix of late-19th and early 20th century small scale commercial and residential properties; a small early 19th century church is the school's neighbor to the north, and the mid-20th century borough hall is to the south. Within the site, the school building is surrounded by paved playground areas to the north, east, and south, and by lawn and mature trees to the west. A stepped concrete sidewalk extends from the main sidewalk to the main entrance, and continues to the north and south along the front of the school (photograph #1, 5, 6, 8). One non-contributing building, a two story rectangular brick and clapboard building, is located to the rear (east) of the historic school, and is separated from the historic building by the eastern parking lot. Beyond the new construction, the property is separated from the municipal property to the east by mature tree lines and sections of metal fencing. The National Register boundary for the school is its current tax parcel.

Main (West) Façade

The building's main (west) façade faces North Warwick Road and includes the original main façade of the 1915 vernacular Classical Revival building to the north and the west wall of the 1953 vernacular International Style addition to the south (photograph #1, 4, 8). The façade is united through the use of running bond brick walls with light mortar and banks of large windows, but yet the architectural character of each is identifiable through scale, arrangement of wall planes and windows, and exterior ornamentation.

The 1915 building is organized with a partially raised buff-covered Indiana limestone foundation, a simple two-story common bond brick and mortar façade that is punctuated by four large banks of classroom windows, and a center entrance, all of which is capped by a modest pressed metal Classical Revival Style cornice (photograph #1, 2). The four window banks are arranged with two per floor to either side of the

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main entrance, and, based on a historic photograph (historic photograph #1), originally held five large six-over-six double-hung sash separated by wide mullions. The original wood windows and mullions were replaced in the late-20th century with metal windows featuring a top blind sash and lower awning sash (historic photograph#3). As part of the historic tax credit rehabilitation, the windows were removed, the mullions were reconstructed, and new nine-over-nine aluminum sashes were installed to restore this important character-defining feature. Small glass block basement windows are spaced equally across the façade. Brick detailing on this wall include brick soldier courses above and below the window banks, between the banks, and near the cornice line.

The focus of the 1915 building's main (west) façade is the central pavilion, which is set off from the flat walls by brick pilasters accented by cast stone bases, cast stone capitals, a wide, pressed metal cornice, and roof-level pediment (photograph #1, 2, 3; historic photograph #3, 4). Concrete steps leads to the small concrete and stone landing in front of the doorway. At the first floor, the main entrance is located in the center of the pavilion with 4-over-4 cloakroom windows to either side; it features a set of glazed metal doors below a multi-light transom with a pressed metal Classical Revival surround with pilasters supporting a shallow entablature. A cast stone plaque with the words "Lawnside School" is positioned above the main entrance and is highlighted by surrounding soldier courses of brick and cast stone corner blocks. At the second floor, large windows are centered on the wall and are accented by flat arches with cast stone keystones. A shallow pediment marks the apex of the central pavilion, and its base is in line with the school's cornice. The building's "1915" cast stone date stone sits prominently in the center of the pediment.

The 1953 section of the façade does not have an above-grade foundation, making the windows and roof lower half a story lower than the original building. This wall is divided into two planes, with the section to the north slightly recessed to the east and the section to the south slightly projecting to the west (photograph #1, 4, 8; historic photograph #7). The recessed wall plane is composed of flat brick walls with two banks of six metal windows separated by mullions. The openings are defined by a long soldier course of brick above and a continuous cast stone sill below. The projecting wall is a flat, unbroken expanse of unornamented brick.

North Wall

The north side of the school, facing Brown Street, is composed of the end wall of the original 1915 building and the side wall of the 1925 addition (historic photograph#5). The 1925 construction intersects the 1915 building at the north corner of the east wall at the north stair tower. Despite their different construction dates, these two sections appear to be part of the same wall because they are unified through by the same common bond brick, partially above-grade Indiana limestone foundation, window banks, and pressed metal cornice.

At the 1915 building, the north wall features flat brick walls enhanced by two shallow brick pilasters at each corner and a blind rectangular panel at the top of the wall, which is created by four lines of soldier course brick and cast stone corner blocks. A below-grade entrance to the basement is located in the center of the wall and accessed by a set of concrete steps with an iron pipe railing. A simple wood overhang, with single unadorned wood posts and an asphalt shingle roof, shelters the single metal door and steps. The north wall of the north stair tower to the east is recessed from the primary classroom wall. The wall is a single bay wide and marked by a narrow, shallow hipped roof overhang with a pressed metal cornice several inches below the main roof line. An at-grade secondary entrance is located in the center of the wall and includes a set of metal and glass doors, which are accessed from a concrete porch with brick piers and a hipped roof. The six-over-six window for the upper stair landing is centered over the entrance and includes a blind stucco arch with small square impost blocks and keystone.

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The north wall of the 1925 addition extends eastward and continues the construction, materials, and characteristics of the 1915 school. It includes a partially above-grade Indiana limestone foundation marked by small, equally-spaced windows, common bond brick walls, and two banks of five six-over-six windows separated by mullions, one per floor, that match those on the school's main (west) façade and two narrow four-over-four windows, one per floor. Brick detailing on this wall include brick soldier courses above and below the window banks, between the banks, and near the cornice line. A small one-story, flat-roofed brick utility room is adjacent to the north stair tower porch to east.

Rear (East) Wall

The rear (east) wall of the school includes the east wall of the 1922 addition, the east and south walls of the 1925 addition to the north, and the east wall of the 1953 addition to the south (photograph #5, 6; historic photograph #6). Like the main (west) façade, this wall is unified through the use of similar materials but is markedly different in character because of the 1953 addition's vernacular International Style.

The east walls of the 1922 addition (to the north) and the 1925 addition (to the south) continue the material, design, massing, and character of the 1925 addition's north façade (photograph #5). The east wall stands as a three-bay brick wall above the partially above-grade Indiana limestone foundation. The center bay projects slightly from the face of the wall and includes paired six-over-six windows at the first and second floors. The bays to the north and south are defined by shallow brick pilasters at each outer and inner corner and feature blank walls accented with four lines of soldier-coursed brick and cast stone corner blocks in the shape of vertical rectangles. A below-grade basement entrance is located in near the center of the wall in the southernmost bay and, like the basement entrance on the north wall, includes concrete steps with a metal pipe railing, single metal door, and simple wood overhang. The south wall of the 1925 addition is identical in composition to the north wall, with the partially above-grade Indiana limestone foundation, simply ornamented brick walls, and first and second floor window banks. The pressed metal cornice extends around the 1922 and 1925 additions to the east wall of the south stair tower in the 1915 building.

The 1953 addition, which extends from the south wall of the 1915 building and 1922 addition to the southern edge of the property, makes up the balance of the school's rear (east) wall (photograph #6). The wall is organized in a series of offset planes that step outward to the east to follow the addition's plan. Beginning in the ell adjacent to the 1915 building, the wall plane includes the original 1953 lobby entrance on the first floor and two horizontal rectangular one-over-one metal windows at the second floor. The entrance is marked by sidelights and a glass storefront window in a metal frame that mimic the original door design, a brick soldier course along the top of the opening, the original cast stone sill, and concrete stair landing.

The center wall plane is two-bays wide and includes a new entrance at the north corner, a bank of one-over-one horizontal rectangular windows with continuous cast stone sills to the south of the new entrance and two of the same windows banks on the second floor. The entrance was installed as part of the 2013 historic tax credit rehabilitation to provide ADA access to the historic school. Its design is compatible with the vernacular International Style character of the 1953 addition, with a set of glass doors and transom in a metal frame and a flat horizontal metal roof overhang. The entrance replaced a bank of three windows identical to the windows above and adjacent to the opening.

The south wall plane of the addition is defined by two large banks of six one-over-one metal windows separated by narrow metal mullions each with a brick soldier course at the top and a continuous cast stone sill at the base. Horizontal metal vents are located below the windows and four smaller metal vents are located above and to the side of each bank of windows; all date to the construction of the 1953 wing. In the late 20th

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century, the center two windows at the first floor were replaced with a modern door system; this was removed as part of the 2013 rehabilitation and the wall returned to its original appearance.

South Wall

Lawnside School's south wall is the south end of the 1953 addition that faces North Douglas Avenue (photograph #7, 8; historic photograph #6). Like most of the other walls of this addition, this one is defined by flat plain brick walls and simple fenestration. The wall is three bays wide with a center entrance and banks of windows to either side. The eastern bay includes a bank of five one-over-one metal sash with a continuous cast stone sill; the wall above is a blank expanse of brick. The center bay features a set of metal and glass doors at grade with a flat cantilevered metal roof immediately above the entrance. Paired one-over-one windows with a cast stone sill are located above the door system with a recessed flat panel between the roof overhang and the cast stone window sill. To the west of the entrance, there are two banks of six one-over-one metal sashes, one per floor, with the typical soldier course of brick above and the continuous cast stone sill below.

Roof

The original 1915 school has a shallow hipped asphalt roof that runs north-south with its ridge parallel to North Warwick Road (photograph #1, 5, 8). It is punctuated by rectangular metal-clad vents to either side of the main (west) façade pediment and a stuccoed brick chimney at the southeast corner. The roof over the 1922 and 1925 additions includes two shallow hipped asphalt roofs which extend east-west and are perpendicular to the 1915 roof. The hipped roofs are separated by a narrow rectangular flat roof with a brick and cast stone parapet wall. Rectangular brick and metal vents, one each at the west side of the hipped roofs, are visible above the roofline. The flat rubber roof over the 1953 addition is lower than that of the 1915 and 1925 building and features straight brick parapet walls with cast stone caps and original and modern HVAC equipment.

Plan and Circulation

The Lawnside School generally follows a linear floor plan that is organized around north-south double-loaded corridors on the first and second floors, which are connected via three internal stair towers: two in the original 1915 construction and one in the 1953 addition. The 1915 building and 1922 and 1925 additions all contain three full floors (basement, first, and second), while the 1953 addition has two floors (first and second) without a basement (see historic and current floor plans).

The plan of the 1915 school is organized with a small single-loaded corridor on the first and second floors, with the former classrooms, office, and main lobby extending to the west (photograph #12, 13, 17, 18; historic photograph #12, 14). Internal stair towers at the north and south ends of the school provide access to all three floors of the building. These stair towers are identical in their design and materials, and are separated from the rest of the building by interior metal fire doors at the basement, first, and second floor landings. The spaces are defined by closed stairs, poured concrete steps, painted exposed brick walls, metal pipe handrails and plaster ceilings (photograph #10, 11; historic photograph #8, 9). With the construction of the 1922 and 1925 additions to the east, the original corridor became a double-loaded corridor and there were no changes to the existing stair towers.

The 1953 addition is internally connected to the earlier building at the south stair tower, making this a center stair that provides the transition space between the different floor levels of the 1915 school and 1953 addition. The plan of the 1953 addition also incorporates a double-loaded corridor with the 1915 stair to the north and an internal stair tower to the south, with internal metal fire doors at the first and second floors.

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This space is defined by an open stair, steel steps, painted exposed brick walls, plaster ceiling, and tall metal picket railing (photograph #23; historic photograph #19).

Basement

The Lawnside School has a fully excavated basement in the 1915 building and 1922 and 1925 additions, which that is accessed by the north and central stair towers and two exterior entrances, one each on the north and east facades. This includes former cafeteria in the 1915 building that has parged and painted stone walls, low dropped ceilings, and vinyl tile flooring; the school's cafeteria kitchen is located in the 1925 addition and is similarly finished (photograph #9; historic photograph #10). The remainder of the basement is dedicated to utilitarian mechanical and utilitarian rooms, located in the 1915, 1922, and 1925 sections, which have concrete floors, parged or painted exposed stone and brick walls, and both low finished and unfinished ceilings.

As part of the 2013 historic tax credit rehabilitation, the basement spaces were preserved and used as for mechanical rooms and storage space. The limited changes include the installation of vinyl tile floors at the base of the stair towers and new rated doors in internal doorways.

First and Second Floors, 1915 Building and 1922 and 1925 Additions

Despite their different construction dates, the upper floors of the original building and its 1922 and 1925 additions share a common vocabulary of plan, materials, and level of finish. The 1915 school has four former classrooms, two per floor per to either side of the lobby, and each addition has two rooms, one per floor, to either side of the center vestibule on each floor (see previous and current floor plans). In the 1915 building, the main entrance lobby and former library above are in the center of the west side of the school; opposite of these spaces to the east are a vestibule and small room between the 1922 classrooms to the south and the 1925 classrooms to the north.

The first and second floor corridors are small square spaces defined by painted exposed brick walls, plaster ceilings, and carpeted concrete floors (photograph #12, 13, 17, 18; historic photographs #11, 12, 14, 15). Within the corridors, round and segmental arches define the size and shape of the openings. These include single metal fire doors and paneled wood closet door to the north and south, former classroom and cloak room entrances, originally with glazed wood doors, on all walls, and former office entrance in the vestibule on the east wall (see historic photograph #). The first floor entrance lobby on the west corridor wall is simple in character with painted exposed brick walls and a textured plaster ceiling (photograph #12; historic photograph #11). The first and second floor vestibules on the east corridor wall of the 1925 addition have plaster walls, plaster ceilings, and tall wood wainscot with chair rail (photograph #13, 18; historic photograph #12, 15). On the second floor, the former library above the lobby is finished with plaster walls, high ceiling, carpet, and wood wainscot and chair rail (photograph #17; historic photograph #14).

The eight classrooms, four pre floor, are now individual apartments (photograph #14, 15, 16, 19, 20, 21). As classrooms, the spaces were generally defined by painted plaster walls, wood and vinyl tile floors, high ceilings, one wall of windows, narrow cloak rooms, wood wall and door trim, and chalk boards (historic photograph #13, 16). The original window trim was removed with the installation of replacement windows in the late 20th century and most of the original slate chalk boards had been replaced by the school district. In the 1915 classrooms, the cloak rooms were originally accessible from the corridor and the classroom; these spaces were converted to restrooms and storage closets in the early 20th century and access from the classroom closed. In the 1922 and 1925 classrooms, the cloak rooms were originally accessed only within the classrooms.

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A key focus of the 2013 rehabilitation was to retain the corridors, vestibules, lobby, and stair towers and their historic materials, features, and relationships. Alternations to these spaces are limited to new openings in the side walls in the lobby to create a public sitting area, the installation of fire-rated doors in apartment entrances, carpeting, and the relocation of the a limited number of original doors. Within the apartments, original character-defining features of the classrooms like finished walls, tall window banks, wood trim, high ceilings along the perimeter wall, and chalk boards are preserved. Alterations to these spaces include the installation of frame walls to create bedrooms, kitchens, and bathrooms, carpet over the wood floors, and lowered ceilings over the interior rooms for utility chases. An elevator was installed adjacent to the corridor in the southeastern room of the 1922 addition.

First and Second Floor, 1953 Addition

The plan of the 1953 addition is also organized around a double-loaded corridor, which continues the north-south line of the 1915 corridor (photograph #22; historic photograph #17). The plan of the first floor includes a lobby on the east side of the building adjacent to the 1915 south stair tower, a narrow double-loaded corridor, and, originally, classrooms and later medical offices to the north and south (historic photograph #18); the rooms are now individual apartment units. The small rectangular lobby includes the rear entrance from the east parking lot on the east wall and two sets of glazed fire doors, one to the stair tower to the north and one to the corridor to the south. These latter doors open to a shallow landing and a short run of wide stairs which provides the transition from the height of the lobby floor, which is in line with the first floor of the 1915 building, to the addition's first floor level. At the southern end of the corridor, a set of wire glass fire doors to the south stair tower are centered in the corridor wall. Moving north to south, the original plan included the lobby, offices, and the multi-purpose room to the east of the corridor and two classrooms to the west. In the 1990s, the first floor lobby and classrooms were subdivided for medical suites and late-20th century elements like dropped acoustical tile ceilings were installed (historic photograph #18).

The second floor of the 1953 addition retains its original plan and character. The plan is arranged with a double-loaded corridor in center of the addition that connects to the 1915 stair tower to the north and the 1953 stair tower to the south. The corridor is defined by painted plaster walls, vinyl tile flooring, high ceilings, flat veneered plywood doors and wood classroom doors with small ocular windows, both of which are set in plain metal frames (photograph #24, 25; historic photograph #20). Spaces on this level included utility rooms, restrooms and one classroom to the east, and two to the west wall. The former classrooms featured painted plaster walls, vinyl tile floors, vinyl baseboard, acoustical tile ceilings, and narrow closets (historic photograph #21).

In 2013, the first and second floor rooms were rehabilitated into apartment units and support spaces for the senior residents. On the first floor, the lobby was expanded to include the new entrance on the rear (east) wall (photograph #5) and the corridor, stairs, and stair tower were preserved (photograph #22). New residential units were built to the north and south of the corridor in the location of the original classrooms and multi-purpose room to take advantage of the arrangement of the exterior window bays. On the second floor, the corridor remains intact and alterations are limited to the installation of fire-rated doors in apartment entrances, installation of carpet, and relocation of select original doors (photograph #24). Laundry and community space are located in the former restrooms and apartments in the classrooms. Within the apartments, original character-defining features of the classrooms like finished walls, window spans, high ceilings along the perimeter wall, and original classroom doors are preserved (photograph #26, 27). Alterations to these spaces include the installation of frame walls to create bedrooms, kitchens, and bathrooms, carpet over the linoleum/vinyl tile floors, and lowered ceilings over the interior rooms for utility chases.

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Integrity

The Lawnside School is in good condition. Prior to the certified historic tax credit rehabilitation, the school had been vacant since the 1980s and there was evidence of building damage and deterioration from deferred maintenance and vandalism. During the building's use as a school from 1915 through the early 1980s, the Lawnside School Board changed the exterior doors and windows, added additional paved areas around the building, installed new lighting, added a new heating system, and added restrooms. The 2013 rehabilitation of the school into affordable neighborhood senior housing through the National Park Service Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credit program included replacing the inappropriate exterior doors and windows with new units to match the existing, in-kind repairs, preservation of historic interior and exterior features and materials, a second residential building behind the school, sensitively designed apartment units and public space throughout the school. The building's and site's changes over time have not diminished its ability to communicate its historic function as an educational facility and community center through its setting, architectural design, floor plan, and materials.

The Lawnside School retains integrity as a 20th century elementary school and reflects its period of significance as an important community institution from the early- and mid-20th century. The quality of the 2013 rehabilitation, which was certified in 2014, focused on the preservation of the building's historic character and maintaining its role as a significant community landmark by finding a compatible and sensitive re-use for the vacant and blighted property. The building retains integrity of location and setting as a neighborhood school, and the placement of an independent residential building behind the historic building at the rear of the lot does not detract from the school's prominent location along the busy thoroughfare of North Warwick Road. It also retains integrity of design, materials, and workmanship because the original interior and exterior historic fabric and characteristics are preserved in the rehabilitated to reflect the craftsmanship in the building's construction, detailing, massing, form, and plan. The school building also retains integrity of feeling and association, as the 1922, 1925, and 1953 additions to the 1915 school strengthen the building's historic association as an active neighborhood school for close to a century.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

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

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance for the Lawnside School begins in 1915 with the construction of the original school building and ends in 1964, in line with the National Register's fifty-year guideline for evaluating significance. This span of forty-nine years represents a period during which this educational and community center evolved from a single building with few classrooms to a large elementary school whose additions reflected the needs of a growing community. The property continued to serve as the borough's only school until it was closed in 1982.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION

Period of Significance

1915-1964

Significant Dates

1915-1918

1922

1925

1953

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Coneys, John L. (architect, 1915 building, 1922 addition)

Edward & Green Architects
(architect, 1925 addition)

Von Duffel, George, Jr. (architect, 1953 addition)

N/A

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

The Lawnside Elementary School is an early 20th-century public elementary school building in the Borough of Lawnside, Camden County that is locally significant under Criterion A for Education because of its association with African American education and history in the former Centre Township and because of its role as a community institution associated with the founding and development of the Borough of Lawnside, which was incorporated in 1926 as the only self-governed African American municipality north of the Mason-Dixon Line. The original four-room brick building, designed by architect John L. Coneys, was constructed in 1915-1918 by the Centre Township Board of Education and was expanded three times, in 1922, 1925, and 1953, for additional classroom and community space. The Lawnside School housed the community's only school and its municipal and community groups from 1915 through 1982 when the building was closed and the school moved to a new facility. Because of this long-standing relationship, the school's period of significance is 1915 to 1964, in keeping with the National Register's fifty-year guideline for historic significance.

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

Lawnside School is locally significant under Criterion A for its association with African American history and education in former Centre Township in Camden County and because of its role as a community institution associated with the founding and development of the Borough of Lawnside, which is recognized as an important historically African American community in New Jersey. The kindergarten through eighth grade school was built to serve the residents of southeastern Centre Township, which included the large African American population at Snow Hill, which was officially renamed as Lawnside in 1907 with the construction of the Philadelphia and Atlantic City Railroad.

Historians and sociologists studying the African American culture in New Jersey have noted stark differences in the experience of blacks in the northern and southern counties, particularly in the area of education. The northern counties, which "felt no need for separate schools and was not interested in them," were more readily influenced by New York City and New England. The southern counties were more influenced by Philadelphia, Delaware, and Maryland, with the area south of Princeton to Cape May, "every city or town with a considerable Negro population supported a dual system of education for Negro pupils of the grammar grades. In the high schools the races were mixed."¹ They observed that, in southern counties, which tended to be populated largely by African Americans from the south, school segregation was "readily accepted" by blacks "because of the similarity of living conditions ... [and] to life in those states from which they had come."²

Centre Township, with its significant African American population from Maryland and Virginia, was no different than its neighbors and this culture is embodied in the Lawnside School. While overt and covert racism played a role in education in Centre Township, and later the creation of Lawnside borough, there was not a significant amount of documented discrimination by the Centre Township Board of Education toward the students attending the Lawnside School. Racism and discrimination was, however, practiced by white families throughout the township, and their petitions to the Board to avoid integration and interaction met with mixed success. At the same time, black families did not petition the Board to allow their students to attend other schools on the basis of the quality of education or facilities or to challenge the practice of segregation in education in southern New Jersey.

¹ Marion Thompson Wright, Ph.D., *The Education of Negroes in New Jersey*, (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1941), 184.

² Wright, 158.

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Lawnside School is not distinguished from Centre Township schools of the same period by a lesser investment of consideration or resources. Approximately 98% of the Lawnside School's students were African American and the building, materials, and quality of the teaching staff was comparable to other Centre Townships schools with all white student bodies. John L. Coneys, the architect responsible for the design of the 1915 school also completed several other grammar schools in the same style and plan for the Centre Township Board of Education in the early 20th century. The Board actively maintained the building and, like other schools of the same period and construction, varied between poor and good condition and at times being the best or worst school in the district. Similarly, new books, supplies, and furniture for Lawnside were regularly purchased and upgraded along with the other Township schools. The Board employed local residents and African American teachers from Camden, Trenton, and Philadelphia at the school, with most students continuing their ninth through twelfth grade education at the regional, racially-integrated Haddon Heights High School. Teacher pay at Lawnside was equal to or slightly higher than that of most other Township schools.

The New Jersey phenomenon of school district boroughs resulted in Centre Township shrinking to one-fifth its original size by the early 1920s. The incorporation of Lawnside in March 1926 was the result of a de facto legal separation of the neighboring white communities from the educational affairs of the African American community. Throughout the late 1910s and early 1920s, developed towns and villages in Centre Township incorporated as municipalities largely in an effort to control, fund, and govern their local school and avoid funding education for African Americans or school integration. The racially-charged battle between the Centre Township Board of Education and the residents of Brooklawn about Lawnside in 1923 was directly related to the incorporation of Brooklawn as a municipality. The remainder of Centre Township went to Lawnside, forcing the creation of the Borough of Lawnside. In June 1926, all of the new boroughs, except Lawnside, voted to take control of their schools from the Centre Township Board of Education, again forcing the residents of Lawnside to assume control over another municipal function and expense.

The newly-formed government was based in the Lawnside School until a new municipal facility was built in the 1940s, as were the Board of Education and municipal offices such as the health and recreation departments. In addition to housing the school and local government, the school building also served as the base for civic and social initiatives such as private and public health and welfare outreach programs. The establishment of its of school district did not end Lawnside's struggles against racism; the Camden County Superintendent of Schools had a very different approach to the African American school and Board minutes point to obvious racially-charged struggles between the county agency and local school board. Despite the economic challenges of the Great Depression that almost bankrupt the school district and social challenges that had plagued the African American school for decades, the Lawnside School emerged as a symbol of pride, progress, and promise for the new municipality and its African American residents. Today the school building stands as one of the last remaining historic buildings in the Lawnside community from the early 20th century and one of the few that has tangible and intangible ties to the establishment and operation of this community, which has played a significant role in the narrative of New Jersey's African American history.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

The area now known as Lawnside was settled by free African Americans in the late 18th century as a small community known as "Snow Hill"; other such communities around Camden County were Guinea Town, Davistown and Hickstown in Gloucester Township, and Blackwood and Sadlertown in Haddon Township.³ In the 1840s, Ralph Smith, a local Quaker abolitionist who owned the Snow Hill land, divided his land into

³ Jeffery M. Dorwart, *Camden County, New Jersey, 1916-1976* (Camden, NJ: Camden County Cultural and Heritage Commission, 1976), 49.

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plots for the African American community to develop.⁴ By the late 1840s, the community had several residential buildings, acres of surrounding farmland, dedicated streets, an established A.M.E. (African Methodist Episcopal) Church, and a school.⁵ African Americans escaping from southern slavery made their way to Snow Hill via the local Underground Railroad routes that came through southern New Jersey and Philadelphia. From the mid-1840s to the late 1800s, the unincorporated village became part of Centre Township and was renamed "Free Haven," which, during the Civil War (1861-1865), was code for a place of refuge for free blacks and slaves that offered security from persecution. The name changed back to "Snow Hill" around 1893 until 1907, when the Pennsylvania Railroad company established a new station called "Lawnside" along their Philadelphia and Atlantic City route.⁶ The community has been known as Lawnside since 1907.

Since the early 19th century, the area now known as Lawnside has had a very large, at times exclusive, African American population with an active religious, commercial, residential, and social structure, and was one of only a handful of independent African American communities in New Jersey, far outnumbering white residents within the town and the surrounding areas.⁷ This self-sufficient community of free African Americans grew into a traditional small town, with a substantial growth in institutions by and for African Americans such as: Catholic Church (1859); Mt. Zion Methodist Episcopal Church; jazz clubs; several fraternal and beneficial organizations like the Masons (1875), the Odd Fellows (1862), the Ebenezer Mann Beneficial Society (1842); an Industrial School for Boys (1890), a United States Post Office (1898), and School #3 at Snow Hill (1889).

When the Centre Township Board of Education was established in July 1894, this agency inherited all of the public school buildings serving the citizens of the Township; this included ten schools: School #1 at Mt. Ephraim, School #2 at Greenland, School #3 at Snow Hill, School #4 at Hillside, and School #5 at Magnolia. As early as 1848, several years before Centre Township was formed in 1855, the district trustees for Snow Hill established a separate school for approximately seventy black children in and around Greenwich Township. The students, it is said, had "full proportion of the appropriation with the whites."⁸ The Snow Hill school inherited by Centre Township was a two-story frame building built around 1872 and located on the southeast side of town along Davis Road near its intersection with Warwick Road. The Board was created as a result of chapter CCCXXXV in the Public Laws of 1894, which called for all hitherto separate districts in the township to be consolidated. Although the 1894 law was amended after a rash number of municipalities were incorporated to have their own schools, the precedent had been set and would result in the dissolution of Centre Township and its Board of Education forth years later.⁹

The Board's first directive was to take stock of the existing schools, supplies and teachers; its second was to enact a resolution declaring that all students of the township must attend the school that is nearest to their houses.¹⁰ The schools all had primary and grammar departments (generally equivalent to the first through sixth grades of the modern United States system) with at least one teacher for each and no high school. Over the next few years, the school board struggled with many of the same issues in all their school buildings and

⁴ Dorwart, 50.

⁵ For a comprehensive community history, see Charles C. Smiley, *A True Story of Lawnside* (Camden, NJ: Robert J. Wythe, 1925).

⁶ James L. Conyers, ed., *Racial Structure and Radical Politics in the African Diaspora*, Africana Studies Volume 3, (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2009), 200. Ellen Jackson Benson, transcript of an oral history conducted by Dr. James Rada and Linda Shockley, August 10, 2006, *Tell Lawnside's Story: Oral History Project*, (Lawnside, NJ: Lawnside Historical Society, 2008), Disc 1, page 2.

⁷ Robert Craig, "Black Historic Sites in New Jersey" (The New Jersey Historical Commission, 1984).

⁸ George R. Powell, *The History of Camden County* (Philadelphia: L.J. Richards and Co., 1886), 708.

⁹ Alan J. Karcher, *New Jersey's Multiple Municipal Madness*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 82.

¹⁰ Minutes of the Centre Township Board of Education, Centre Township, NJ, November 7, 1894. Originals held at New Jersey State Archives, Trenton, NJ.

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appears to deal with them all in the same routine and pragmatic manner. Maintaining the schools immediately claimed most of the Board's time and money and would prove to be the Board's most consistent and continuous battle in its short lifetime. There were chronic problems with the wells at the Snow Hill and Greenland schools, repairs and repainting at Snow Hill, Magnolia, and Mt. Ephraim, and new supplies for all of the schools. One issue unique to School #3 was the quality of the teaching staff. In several references between 1894 and 1898, the Board discusses issues with teachers working full days, teachers reporting for work as expected, and teachers not being able to pass the required exams for their teaching certificate. Salaries for the African American principal and teachers at Lawnside were commensurate, and often slightly higher; it is unclear from the records if the higher salaries were for teaching more children in crowded classrooms or because the Board had difficulty finding qualified African American teachers. One suggestion of racism in the education system is that the Board never held its monthly public meetings in Lawnside but yet circulated between the other township schools; Board members would attend concerts and opening and closing ceremonies at School #3, but citizens wanting or needing to attend a meeting would not be asked to travel to the African American community.¹¹

In 1898, the Board divided the Township into eight precincts; approximately 590 children were attending the public schools. A new frame school was built in Bellmawr in 1897 (School #6) and another a few years later in 1901 at Mt. Ephraim. By 1907, the Board dropped the number system for labeling schools, and referred to them simply by their place names. The records for the Board meetings through the first decade of the 20th century show that the mid- and late-19th century school buildings in the majority of the township's communities were falling into a state of disrepair and many were overcrowded.¹² Impending action would be required to move the Centre Township school system into the 20th century and bring them up to current architectural standards with regard to light, air, and fire safety and pedagogical standards such as dedicated per grade classrooms and classrooms for special subjects.

Snow Hill's growth continued to accelerate in the early 20th century, particularly after the Pennsylvania and Reading Railroad established their new "Lawnside" station along its Atlantic City line in 1907; from this date forward, the community of Snow Hill was known as Lawnside. In 1915 the Armstrong Association of Philadelphia cited Lawnside as a "healthy" and "respectable" place to live, with a population of 2,000 (of which there were only eight white families), two hundred property owners, a "colored" Y.M.C.A., three churches, and other various improvements except for a Borough Hall. The school in Lawnside was used exclusively by African American students, as the few white students in the community attended school at nearby Magnolia, Centre Township.¹³ There is no discussion in the Board minutes to indicate that the Board required the students living in Lawnside to attend Lawnside School, that white parents petitioned the Board to attend Magnolia School, or the Lawnside residents took any concerns over this obvious slight to the Board. The Magnolia School was a mile and a half from the Lawnside School and, without transportation, the white students would have had to walk at least a half hour to attend a school with an all-white student body rather than attend school with black children.

As early as 1905, the school board had considered expanding the school at Lawnside because of overcrowded rooms and to accommodate the some of the students from the nearby Greenland School, which closed after the 1904-1905 school year. The Board routinely rented rooms from nearby businesses to house students, instituted measures such as half day attendance by grade, and heard petitions from Lawnside parents for a new building. By 1907, the 1889 school had been closed and a new frame school built on the site of the

¹¹ See Centre Township Board Minutes for 1894 through 1900.

¹² See Centre Township Board Minutes for 1897 through 1907.

¹³ Armstrong Association of Philadelphia, *A Study of Living Conditions Among Colored People* (Philadelphia: The Armstrong Association of Philadelphia, 1915), 37-38. The Armstrong Association was a private organization dedicated to the betterment of and advocacy for the African American public in and around Philadelphia; in 1957, it became affiliated with the National Urban League.

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current Lawnside School building.¹⁴ In Centre Township, the Board of Education was also faced with rampant overcrowding in its six public schools (one each at Magnolia, Lawnside, Barrington, Mt. Ephraim, Bellmawr, and Runnemede), decaying physical plants, and increasing petitions from parents regarding new schools.¹⁵

By the mid-1910s, a shift was underway in the approach to and practice of education throughout much of the country, particularly in the mid-Atlantic and Northeast, with statewide educational policy reforms, shifting population centers, and the Progressive emphasis on the importance of education; these all created a demand for larger and better-equipped school buildings to address the ever-evolving standards for curriculum and facilities. To deal with these school issues, the Board presented three scenarios to the township in June 1914. The first option was to construct a new building at Barrington for \$13,500, a new building at Lawnside for \$13,000, an addition to the school at Mt. Ephraim for \$7,000, and a two room addition to the Runnemede school for \$6,000, for a total of \$39,500.00. The second option was to vacate the existing buildings, construct two new schools, one each for the east and west halves of the township at a cost of \$33,000. The third option, favored by the Board, called for all schools to remain and for a new central school building for the fifth through eighth grades.

Scenarios two and three called for some form of integrated schooling and were met with "great opposition," which is not clarified in the minutes.¹⁶ At a June 1914 referendum, voters overwhelmingly supported and authorized scenario one, which maintained a de facto separate but equal education policy that did not require white students to attend school with black students. The Board, however, continued to move toward plans for a central school building throughout the summer months until the fall, when they changed their stance; the meeting minutes do not suggest or state why. The recording of an exchange between a delegation of parents from Lawnside and the Board is the only recorded discussion:

"The Parents and Teachers Association presented a petition containing 60 names asking the Board to call a special meeting of the voters to take action on a Central School proposal, petition was rec'd and filed. Mr. Karnell spoke for the Association, and he was asked by the President of the Board if a local school proposition was submitted, if it would be satisfactory to the PTA. After speaking to some of the ladies present, he answered in the affirmative."¹⁷

The minutes do not provide any additional information, such as whether or not the Lawnside Parents and Teachers Association (PTA) was pushing for the central school because it was the most fiscally conservative, to counter the racist attitudes that voted down the central school option, or because they believed their children would receive a better education in a newer larger, and separate, building. Immediately, the Board financed the building campaign that would provide the residents of Lawnside with a new facility commensurate with other schools in the township and "relief would be afforded for a long period in each town."¹⁸ The resolution for the new school at Lawnside was overwhelmingly approved 239 to 32.

It was within this context that the current Lawnside School was commissioned in 1915.¹⁹ The Board of Education contracted with Philadelphia architect John L. Coneys (1881-?) to prepare plans for new schools at Lawnside, Barrington, and Highland Park; he was also responsible for the Centre Township schools at Bellmawr, Brooklawn, and Mt Ephraim. Coneys was trained in Philadelphia at the Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Art, and studied in the studio of renowned Philadelphia architect William Price. Later in

¹⁴ Centre Township Board Minutes for 1905 through 1907.

¹⁵ Centre Township Board Minutes for 1907 and 1914; volumes from March 1907 through April 1914 missing.

¹⁶ Centre Township Board Minutes, October 9, 1914.

¹⁷ Centre Township Board Minutes, June 1914.

¹⁸ Centre Township Board Minutes, June 2, 1914.

¹⁹ New Jersey, Department of Public Instruction, "Approved High School and Manual Training Courses and School Building Plans," *Education Bulletin* (Volume 1, No. 8, April 1915), 15-16.

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his practice, he was also associated with architects D.K. Boyd (1914 to 1925), John Carlin (1925-1930), and L. Valentine Scherr (1923-1930).²⁰ Some of Coney's other commissions besides schools include several residences in Philadelphia and the Radnor Presbyterian Church in Pennsylvania.

Coney's designed the Lawnside School as a two-story rectangular brick school with four classrooms and a basement. Sited at a principal intersection in Lawnside next to the earlier frame school building, the new brick school was arranged with two rooms on each floor along a single-loaded corridor. This plan created the impression of a larger and more imposing school along the main street rather than a less impressive single-story building and, more importantly, afforded the flexibility to enlarge the building as needed. A notice in the trade serial *Engineering and Contracting* described the plans for Lawnside, Barrington, and Highland Park: "Buildings are to contain four class rooms, and to be 87x38 ft. Type of construction follows: Brick walls above 1st floor, and rough stone below; wood floors in classrooms and reinforced concrete floors in hall, stair, and entrance; brick and frame partitions, colonial exterior finish, stone concrete foundations, slate roof."²¹ All three "fireproof" schools had the same specifications, were built in a vernacular Classical Revival style with four rooms along a single-loaded corridor, and were finished with yellow pine trim. The cost, investment, and appearance of each school were the same.

Construction for the new Lawnside School began in the summer of 1915, and immediately had problems with costs and contractors. In the meantime, the Board had received a report from the State Inspector of Buildings in 1915 that found the school buildings at Lawnside, Bellmawr, and Magnolia in horrible condition. At Lawnside, which had just been built in 1906, stairs lacked stability and handrails, proper fire escapes, crumbling plaster, inhospitable outhouses, and blackboards that were "simply a piece of black oil cloth tacked against wall."²² Bellmawr School was cited as being so "poorly constructed" that it was "completely in bad shape" with plaster falling off in sheets, one wood stair, no fire escapes, and outhouses with no vents or windows.²³ The Board immediately authorized repairs at two of the worst buildings, Lawnside and Bellmawr, while Coney struggled to find and work with adequate contractors at the new school building site in Lawnside.

The new Lawnside School opened in July 1918 (see historic photograph #1).²⁴ In the three years it took to complete this building, the Board maintained the earlier poorly-built 1906 frame school at Lawnside and managed its growing student body much the same way it had in the past. Concurrently, the other schools in the district suffered from the same challenges, with the Board moving students between schools and enacting voter-supported resolutions for new buildings or additions to existing buildings; for example, the school at Mt. Ephraim accommodated ninety students between two rooms, and the school at Highland Park was only slightly better with eighty children between two rooms.²⁵ Lawnside continued to have the largest student body, which the board addressed by splitting days in half for one graded class per classroom in the morning and another in the afternoon. Lawnside had six employed teachers and a principal; in comparison, Barrington and Mt. Ephraim each had four, Bellmawr had three, and only two at Runnemede. Based on teacher salaries and building insurance figures, the Board of Education did not insinuate or reflect direct discrimination or racism between Lawnside and the other schools; however, there were other conditions and situations that implied such racism and discrimination, such as not building the central school for the district

²⁰ Sandra Tatman, "Coney, John L. (fl. 1903-1930)" on Philadelphia Architects and Buildings, www.philadelphiabuildings.org.

²¹ "Prospective Work, Pennsylvania," *Engineering and Contracting* (Vol. XLIII, No 1, January 6, 1915), 38. Preliminary research suggests that the school in Barrington was the Culbertson School, which was near the corner of Clements Bridge Road and Gloucester Pike and demolished ca. 1985. The Highland, NJ school is likely the Irving School at Central Ave and South 11th Street, which is still active as part of a much larger facility.

²² Centre Township Board Minutes, February 5, 1915.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Centre Township Board Minutes, July 9, 1918.

²⁵ Centre Township Board Minutes, March 17, 1918.

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because it would have required white and black students to integrate. In 1916, public school transportation was instituted and by 1917, physical education was added to the curriculum.²⁶ The Board also voted that community events and gatherings like Red Cross fundraisers, funerals, and an industrial school could be held at Lawnside, and the school joined the church as a foundation of the community.

Continuing the long-standing tradition, the new school at Lawnside was attended only by the area's African American children; its 270-pupil student body was exclusively African American. Lawnside was not *technically* a segregated school, which had been outlawed by the New Jersey legislature in 1881, but ever since there had been a school in Lawnside, the few white children in the district voluntarily attended the public school in Magnolia Borough, which was approximately a mile south of Lawnside on Warwick Avenue. The students, and parents, in the township did have to accept integrated classes at the high school level when students from any of the township schools attended nearby Haddon Heights High School for ninth through twelfth grades. The board minutes show that the township could not afford its own high school, let alone pay for or justify a second one for the African American graduates of Lawnside. In Lawnside, the issue of segregated schools was opposite that of many other communities around the state. The matter was not that African American children were being sent to separate schools and their families and leaders were objecting; rather, white students and their families were demanding that a separate education be provided for them because they did not want to attend the school closest to their homes, Lawnside School.²⁷

Almost immediately, the Lawnside School was overcrowded and the four classrooms in the new school and the two maintained in the old school were not adequate to educate all of the township's African American students in grades one through eight. Between 1910 and 1920, the overall Township population itself expanded by 1,000 residents, despite the boroughs of Magnolia and Barrington incorporated with their own school districts in 1916 and 1917, respectively.²⁸ The board authorized Coney to add two classrooms, one each per floor, to the school; these were built perpendicular to the 1915 school at the southeast corner to create an L-shaped plan. The practicality of Coney's 1915 plan allowed for this type of future expansion, with the flexibility to enlarge the school to the east into the open lot. The interior and exterior character of the addition matched that of the original building design, with modest vernacular Classical Revival detailing, large banks of classroom windows, and traditional early 20th century classrooms.²⁹

Suggestions of direct or indirect racial prejudice are not, for the most part, reflected in the minutes of the Board of Education's regular or special meetings. While much was likely left unwritten, the official record does not reveal covert or overt discrimination or racism by the Board in the treatment of the faculty, building condition or maintenance, or funding on the part of the Board members. However, two separate incidents discussed in the meeting minutes in the early 1920s indicate the underlying tones of racism on the part of white citizens and likely led to the dissolution of Centre Township to avoid school integration. As singular incidents, they may not hold overriding significance in and of themselves, but together they serve as an example of the undercurrent of bigotry that was active in southern New Jersey that affected the Lawnside community. It is not clear why the issue of integration of the Centre Township schools became more prominent in the 1920s than it had been since the township district had been established in 1894, but may have been due to the migration of a significant number of African Americans from the South during the Great Migration, the rise of organizations like the Ku Klux Klan, and southern New Jersey's cultural traditions.

²⁶ Centre Township Board Minutes, April 11, 1916 and August 14, 1917.

²⁷ For a discussion of school segregation in the early 20th century, see Howard L. Green, "DRAFT: Classrooms Struggle: A History of School Construction in New Jersey," (Preservation New Jersey, 2011). Manuscript provided by NJ HPO.

²⁸ Ancestry.com. 1920 United States Federal Census [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2010. Images reproduced by FamilySearch. John P. Snyder, *The Story of New Jersey's Civil Boundaries, 1606-1968*, (New Jersey Geological Society, 2004, reprint), 104.

²⁹ Edward & Green, Architects, "Lawnside School Addition," architectural plans, December 10, 1925. Originals held in New Jersey State Archives, Trenton, NJ. Centre Township Board Minutes, June 4, 1921 and April 22 1922.

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The first incident of this overt institutional racism is recorded in the August and September 1922 Board minutes and surrounds Centre Township's students attending high school at the nearby Haddon Heights High School. Since about 1907, the district had paid tuition for their students to attend high school and later in the late 1910s, began providing transportation. In late August 1922, the Haddon Heights Board of Education sent a letter to the Centre Township board stating that Haddon Heights High School could not accommodate the recent eighth grade graduates from Lawnside School. With the approval of county school Superintendent Charles Albertson, the Board voted to open a ninth grade at Lawnside, which would be run by the principal with the help of an extra teacher. Less than a month later, Lawnside parents protested the Board's decision and during the same meeting a letter was read from Haddon Heights High School reframing their position to state that they cannot accept any eighth grade graduates. Superintendent Albertson stepped in to referee the issue between the two districts, and space was found in the Haddon Heights High School for the seventeen Lawnside high school students.³⁰

The second incident, only nine months later, occurred in May 1923 when the Board announced that the township's commencement exercises would be held at the large Methodist church in Lawnside; this was the first mention of any type of school district gathering in Lawnside since the Board was founded in 1894. Within ten days of the announcement, a special meeting was called because the decision "caused contention" and the Board needed to hear complaints about "why people of the district, especially Brooklawn, oppose and what can be done."³¹ Members from the public and the Brooklawn Community Association (all parents of students at Brooklawn School) attended to object to the decision, citing two main arguments: only thirteen of the fifty-six graduates were from Lawnside and that there were no transit facilities to get people to Lawnside.

The former position, introduced by a member of the Brooklawn Community Association, could be solved by the board being agreeable to moving the ceremony elsewhere, like the Brooklawn School auditorium. There was no solution offered for the latter position, raised by a family from Woodcrest, presumably because if the Board offered to transport parents from Woodcrest, they would have to attend an African American church to see their children graduate; issues with transportation to and from ceremonies had never before been taken to the Board. One gentleman stated that "the arrangement seeming peculiar to him on account of so few colored children" attending graduation; Board member Rivers objected to the reference to "colored children," and stated "that the colored question does not need to be mentioned."³² The Board firmly held their position, with two members noting that parents with issues with the decision should "stay away," and that the motion would not be withdrawn and students who did not attend would receive their diplomas by mail. Graduation ceremonies were held at Lawnside on June 7, 1923. The September meeting minutes report that eleven of the township's forty-nine students in high school were from Lawnside and that the citizens of Brooklawn were preparing to incorporate as a borough, thereby removing themselves from the educational affairs of Centre Township.³³ The municipality of Brooklawn was officially created on March 11, 1924.

Now with Magnolia, Barrington, and Brooklawn boroughs removed from Centre Township, the Board of Education was responsible for the school buildings at Lawnside, Mt. Ephraim, Bellmawr, and Runnemede. Issues with school size and maintenance plagued the board, and the minutes include countless entries of chronic overcrowding, few resources, and endless problems with providing adequate healthy water at each school. In 1925, enrollment at Lawnside consisted of the following spread across six classrooms: first grade – twenty-seven students, second grade – thirty students, third grade – thirty-seven students, fourth grade – thirty-three students, fifth grade – thirty-five students; sixth grade – eighteen students, seventh grade –

³⁰ Centre Township Board Minutes, August to October 1922.

³¹ Centre Township Board Minutes, May 23, 1923 and June 5, 1923.

³² Centre Township Board Minutes, June 5, 1923.

³³ Centre Township Board Minutes, September 4, 1923.

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eighteen students, eighth grade – eighteen students.³⁴ Despite having completed a two-room addition in 1922, the school board in 1925 eventually approved and funded a substantial addition to Lawnside School to alleviate overcrowding; this decision was hastened by the collapse of the frame school, which provided two first grade classrooms, when a gust of wind “took off the roof” when it swept through the walls because there were no windows in the building.³⁵

In early 1925, the New Jersey state Board of Education approved a two-room addition to the Lawnside School for \$24,000 at the northeast corner of the original 1915 school.³⁶ Executed by Edward & Green architects, this large square addition mirrored the character of Coneys’ 1922 addition, and included two classrooms and two offices (or meeting rooms) for other groups like municipal, health, relief, and service agencies based at the school. Founded in the early 1920s by Byron H. Edwards (1893-1968) and Alfred Green (ca. 1895 – 1978) in Philadelphia, the firm of Edwards & Green were responsible for many types of commissions throughout Philadelphia and southern New Jersey. They were active in New Jersey until disbanding in 1958 and are noted for their numerous institutional, commercial, and municipal buildings like Penns Grove High School, the Cape May County Courthouse, and the Camden Courthouse Annex.³⁷

With the completion of the addition in 1926, Lawnside School accommodated the recognized needs of quality modern educational buildings, such as the substantial amount of natural light, the circulation of fresh air with large window openings and interior door transoms, a cafeteria, and flexible classrooms. The building, when compared to the others built and maintained by the Board of Education, was not inferior to the district’s white schools by the quality of construction of materials, which was uncommon throughout New Jersey’s southern communities in the first half of the 20th century.³⁸ The curriculum and, in particular, the extra-curricular activities like the newspaper, baseball, social boys’ club, and academic clubs, followed the Progressive-era education model with community assemblies, the safety patrol, community-assisted school lunch program (a local mother started serving hot lunches in the cafeteria in the basement of the Lawnside School in the 1920s, having started in her home several years before), on-site community nurse, regular visits by a doctor, and an active PTA.³⁹ Between 1920 and 1925, the school board moved to formalize and modernize the overall system by providing the same textbooks for each school, lengthening the school day, establishing a forty-week school term, instituting universal district-wide record keeping, and requiring teacher meetings with the principals and board for communication and accountability.⁴⁰

At the start of the 1925-1926 school year, the Centre Township school district had four buildings in its jurisdiction. The school at Bellmawr was in the worst condition, with a significant amount of repairs needed compared to those listed for the other three schools; at Lawnside, the board continued their ongoing struggle with water issues, particularly after Camden County superintendent of schools refused to provide financial assistance under Section 181 of the New Jersey school law.⁴¹ The minutes cite a total school population at one thousand fifty four students, with an attendance record of ninety three per cent. Mt. Ephraim was the largest school with three hundred and eight pupils in seven grades, followed closely by Lawnside with two hundred and forty one students in grades one through eight. Following Lawnside, Runnemede had the third largest student body with two hundred and twenty-nine children in grades one through seven. Bellmawr was

³⁴ Centre Township Board Minutes, May 21, 1925.

³⁵ Centre Township Board Minutes, March 10, 1925.

³⁶ New Jersey Department of Public Instruction, “New Jersey School Building Program,” *Education Bulletin* (Volume 8, No. 10, June 1925), 170.

³⁷ Sandra Tatman, “Edwards, Byron Henry (1893-1968)” on Philadelphia Architects and Buildings, www.philadelphiabuildings.org. Tatman, “Green, Alfred (c. 1895 - 1978).”

³⁸ Wright, 193.

³⁹ Lawnside Board of Education, “A Brief History of Our School at Lawnside, NJ,” (Lawnside, NJ, 1947), 5. Hilda Hicks, transcript of an oral history conducted by Andrea McDonald, Dr. James Rada and Linda Shockley, June 24, 2006, *Tell Lawnside’s Story: Oral History Project*, (Lawnside, NJ: Lawnside Historical Society, 2008), Disc 8, page 4.

⁴⁰ Centre Township Board Minutes for 1924 through 1925.

⁴¹ Centre Township Board Minutes August 27, 1925 through December 10, 1925.

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the smallest school by almost one hundred students – only one hundred and twenty four students in grades one through six had registered for the school year.⁴² The board dealt with overcrowding at its schools by transporting students to other district schools, except for Lawnside.

This school year also marked the beginning of the end for Centre Township. Since the beginning of the 1920s, the “unwieldy” Centre Township rapidly decreased in size as long-established boroughs were incorporated into separate municipalities, referred to by Alan Karcher in his *New Jersey's Multiple Municipal Madness* as “school-district boroughs.”⁴³ Haddon Heights incorporated in 1904, and Magnolia and Barrington in 1915 and 1917, respectively. Tavistock was the first area to secede in 1921 (because they wanted to be allowed to play golf on Sundays), followed three years later by Brooklawn in 1924, which was related to the school board’s position about graduation at Lawnside. On March 23, 1926, the boroughs of Bellmawr, Mt. Ephraim, and Runnemede separated from Centre Township to become their own municipalities and Highland Park was annexed to Gloucester City.⁴⁴ The “remainder” of Centre Township went to Lawnside and the area became Lawnside Borough the next day, on March 24, 1926.⁴⁵ In June 1926, the mayors and borough councils of Mount Ephraim, Bellmawr, and Runnemede requested elections “to determine whether the boroughs shall remain a part of Centre Township School District or become separate school districts.” The representatives from Lawnside are notably absent on the issue and are not requesting the election, perhaps because they were reluctant to assume the burden of maintaining and funding such a large school in a somewhat poor community. The measure passed, and the Board of Education closed its books with their last meeting of final business on June 30, 1926.⁴⁶ Similarly, the division of nearby Berlin Township in 1927 was also driven by arguments over schools and education, some claiming that it was racially motivated.⁴⁷

The forced incorporation of Lawnside as an independent municipality created the only self-governed “all Negro” town within New Jersey and north of the Mason-Dixon Line.⁴⁸ The legislature dictated the boundaries of the town, which included the African American community at Lawnside and portions of the white community of Woodcrest Heights; the total black population was approximately 89%.⁴⁹ This political independence gave Lawnside the opportunity to elect its own officials and regulate its own political, economic, and educational affairs, but without much funding to do so. Within this new borough, the Lawnside School served as the center of community life. In the absence of a borough hall, the school housed offices for the municipal government and the school board. A 1927 newspaper article states the following about the school and its role in Lawnside:

“A borough hall has not been erected, but in its place the public school is made the center of community activities. This institution is situated on Warwick Road, about a quarter of a mile from the pike...The educational, fraternal, social, and religious aspects of life are well provided for. The schoolhouse is a modernly equipped two-story brick structure, containing seven classrooms and principal’s office, together with a large lunchroom...adequate facilities for serving luncheon to the children at a very nominal price. The building cost \$60,000... There is a principal, which (sic) instructs the 247 children. The curriculum covers the first eight grades of public instruction that prepares the children for high school. Last

⁴² Centre Township Board Minutes, September 3, 1925.

⁴³ Dorwart 244. See also Karcher, “School-District Boroughs.”

⁴⁴ Centre Township Board Minutes, March 26, 1926. Snyder, 104.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Centre Township Board Minutes for May through June 1926.

⁴⁷ Dorwart, 245

⁴⁸ Harold M. Rose, “The All-Negro Town: Its Evolution and Function,” *Geographical Review* (Vol. 55, No. 3, July 1965), 1. The “all-Negro” town was defined by this sociologist as a physically and politically independent place with a population of 1000 or more, of whom 95% or more are classified as “non-white.”

⁴⁹ New Jersey Conference of Social Work, Interracial Committee. *The Negro in New Jersey*, (Trenton, NJ: New Jersey Department of Institutions and Agencies, 1932), 32.

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year the borough provided the transportation and tuition charges of forty-six pupils who attended the high schools at Haddonfield and Haddon Heights, six of whom graduated in June from these institutions."⁵⁰

Continuing through the late 1920s and the 1930s, the issue of racial intolerance and education again continued in Lawnside and was driven largely by white families from the borough's Woodcrest Heights section, who, because of the Great Depression, could no longer afford to pay tuition to attend another school, fund a private school, or move to an all-white community. When the boundaries for the Borough of Lawnside were established in 1926, the small white community of Woodcrest was included as part of the new municipality administered by a wholly African American government. Immediately, the residents wanted to secede from Lawnside and incorporate as their own borough, Woodcrest Heights, in order to have their own school to avoid the integration of white and black children at Lawnside School.⁵¹ This was not a new challenge in the former Centre Township school district or in Camden County, as white residents of the defunct Centre Township had fought against white children in Lawnside School since the late 19th century.

By the 1930s, because of the poor economic climate of the Great Depression and the lack of a local industrial base, Lawnside's prosperity faltered and the community found itself struggling to pay its bills, maintain the school, and continue its municipal responsibilities. While African Americans from in and around New Jersey moved into Lawnside because of its status as a black-governed municipality, the growing population meant more problems for the borough, and the school board, rather than less.⁵² By the early 1930s, the borough had significant trouble finding money to install necessary upgrades like a sewer system or running water, and staunchly opposed annexation, as suggested by the county, to the nearby wealthy white communities out of a concern for their African American identity; given the Board of Education's experiences with integrated schooling, the white communities would have opposed such a move as well.⁵³ In addition to its governance, this rich identity included well-established nightclubs and venues on the African American entertainment circuit, often leading to people referring to Lawnside as "Little Harlem."⁵⁴ The Lawnside School and the three local churches were the few community institutions that had survived this downturn, with many of the stores and social, beneficial, and fraternal organizations closing their doors. During this period, in addition to municipal agencies, groups like the Lawnside Y.M.C.A., Boy Scouts, American Legion Post, and local Works Progress Administration (WPA) projects used the space of the Lawnside Community Center, which was housed in the school.⁵⁵

In 1932, the almost bankrupt Lawnside school district began receiving emergency funds from the New Jersey State Department of Education because the Board was not able to meet its payroll or pay its bills. As a prerequisite to getting the funds, Lawnside had to acknowledge two requests by the Commissioner of Education:

"You have recently received a formal communication from this office advising you of the amount of money which our State Commissioner of Education is recommending to the State Board of Education that you receive from the 1% emergency fund to assist you in keeping your schools open during the coming year. He has fixed this sum at Seventy-five hundred dollars

⁵⁰ "Lawnside end first year under own borough rule; Success of self-government wins praise," August 30, 1927 (Reprint in "Lawnside: The Way It Was," newsletter of the Lawnside Historical Society, February 19, 1990, 2).

⁵¹ Lawnside School Board Minutes, June through August 1932. Originals held at Office of the Lawnside School District, Lawnside, NJ.

⁵² Benson, oral history interview, Disc 1, page 4.

⁵³ Lorenzo Johnston Greene, *Selling Black History for Carter G. Woodson: a diary, 1930-1933* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1996), 279.

⁵⁴ Clarence Still, transcript of an oral history conducted by Veronica Tingle and Dr. James Rada, August 10, 2006, *Tell Lawnside's Story: Oral History Project*, (Lawnside, NJ: Lawnside Historical Society, 2008), Disc 11 page 2.

⁵⁵ Lawnside Board of Education, 9.

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(\$7,500.00), with the distinct understanding that several instructions be carried out by your Board of Education. May I take this opportunity, therefore, to make his position and mine entirely clear in this matter.

First of all, it is expected that a considerable portion of this money be used to meet the tuition obligations which you have with the Haddon Heights Board of Education. Furthermore, the Commissioner and I join in asking you to see that those few white children who live in your district, be properly educated during the coming school year.

While the law distinctly says that they shall attend the school in the district which they live, you and your Board of Education realize that this would be a rather embarrassing situation if the law were enforced. It would probably be very wise for your Board of Education to send them to the nearest white school, and we are asking that you make the necessary arrangements, if they so desire, to see that they are afforded this opportunity and that the expenses be met out of this Emergency Fund money. This would involve the tuition and transportation if necessary. The majority of these children reside in Woodcrest Heights and could be sent to either the Stafford School in Delaware Twp. or the Ashland School in Voorhees Twp.

May I urge, that in view of the splendid attitude of the Commissioner in awarding you this large sum of money, which is larger than all the other districts in the County taken together, that you give these matters your earliest and sincerest consideration and that you advise your County Supt., at an early date, of your decision in regard to the same."⁵⁶

The School Board responded by emphatically stating that they objected to letter, and that by placing such requirements on state monies was an act of discrimination against the African American students, teachers, and families of Lawnside. The school board could barely maintain the school they had for over 250 students, yet the county superintendent was illegally asking that they spend what little financial assistance they got on tuition and transportation for white students from Woodcrest Heights. This situation at Lawnside is an example of racism in education that existed in southern New Jersey in the early part of the 20th century until World War II.⁵⁷ Sociologist Harry S. Ashmore in his *The Negro and the Schools* (1954), "New Jersey has long had a statute outlawing segregation in public schools, but until provision was incorporated in a new state constitution adopted in 1947 it was often observed only in the breach – particularly in the ten southernmost counties with have been described as 'the Georgia of the North'."⁵⁸

The board agreed to pay the necessary tuition and fees to Haddon Heights for the Lawnside students that attend the high school, but "refuse to pay tuition and transportation to outside districts for any children of elementary school age residing in the Lawnside district while the Lawnside School is in operation, even though such refusal may result in the withdrawal of State Aid offered upon such conditions."⁵⁹ In addition to objecting to the segregation in principle, Lawnside residents and elected officials also opposed the measure on two grounds. First, the loss of so many families would reduce tax ratables and raise costs for those left in the borough. Second, the school board felt that "every opportunity was given the white citizens of the Woodcrest section of the borough to have a say in borough affairs and particularly school matters."⁶⁰ The white citizens expressed their displeasure with the African American municipality by burning crosses throughout town. The Woodcrest citizens did not succeed in separating from Lawnside Borough, and the issue did not resolve itself for several years. There is no documentation in the Board of Education minutes to indicate whether the Board ultimately followed the Superintendent's instruction, did not follow the

⁵⁶ Lawnside School Board Minutes, August 24, 1932.

⁵⁷ Green, 48.

⁵⁸ Harry S. Ashmore, *The Negro and the Schools* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1954), no page number.

⁵⁹ Lawnside School Board Minutes, August 24, 1932.

⁶⁰ "Decision reserved on plea to split Lawnside Borough," March 7, 1939 (Reprint in "Lawnside: The Way It Was," newsletter of the Lawnside Historical Society, February 19, 1990, pg 3).

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instruction but were allowed to keep the money, or maintained their legal position and lost the county and/or state funding.

Slowly, Lawnside had begun to recover from the difficult decades of the 1930s and 40s. Throughout the 1940s, local workers from the local Works Progress Administration (WPA) branch made improvements to the school grounds and building. Many residents from the 1940s and 1950s characterized Lawnside “as a typical small town America. You would not have to put African American in there. It is just old typical small town.”⁶¹ Lawnside School was a long-standing landmark, and its role as a public school held a significant place in the community for what it achieved and represented. In the African American community, the school “formed the center of community pride and optimism, especially within the segregated system in New Jersey.”⁶²

In the 1940s, Principal James H.C. Kelly acknowledged that the school and curriculum needed to be improved with some basic amenities that were, by the 1940s, almost universally found in most New Jersey school districts. He stated that courses in manual training (courses designed to train students in the hands-on, practical skills of woodworking, metalworking, etc.), cooking, sewing, and home care were needed to educate the students to be better citizens, as well as a dedicated auditorium and gymnasium.⁶³ In response to these needs, the district made some physical and programmatic changes within the existing school to accommodate some of these needs, such as altering the basement rooms into an area for indoor recreation, and dedicating a classroom as the auditorium. By the 1940s, larger and/or more affluent school districts had had these types of programs and facilities since the 1910s or 1920s.

Principal Kelly played a significant role in the lives of the Lawnside students, and not just in improving the quality of education. Kelly felt a strong need to prepare students graduating from Lawnside for the challenges they may encounter when moving to the integrated Haddon Heights High School, which, for many students, was their first time around white children and teachers.⁶⁴ As a somewhat sheltered, all black school, many children had no experience with racism and discrimination.⁶⁵ Kelly made a point of preparing students moving to the high school with self-confidence in their academics, by teaching them a basic level of understanding of algebra and other subjects that were not part of the Lawnside curriculum; he would “sit us [eighth grade students] down in class and explain to us ‘it’s not going to be like this when you get to Haddon Heights... You’re going to have to do this, you’re going to have to do that.’”⁶⁶ Lawnside’s students did experience racist attitudes from some teachers, with the most blatant discrimination by the football coach, who refused to let African Americans join the team; they simply went on to make their own.⁶⁷ Under Kelly’s guidance, the PTA also started the Lawnside Scholarship Club, which awarded high achieving seniors at Haddon Heights High School money to continue and provide for their education.⁶⁸

One of the more interesting programs Kelly started at Lawnside in the 1940s was the Honor Roll, a club that students could join through the accumulation of “credits.” The Honor Roll was intended to curb absenteeism and poor behavior, and instead develop good community citizens. Students earned “credits” for good attendance, appropriate behavior, punctuality, and generally taking school seriously. They could even earn credits for having their parents attend PTA meetings and for using their leisure time out of school

⁶¹ Flora Dorsey Young, transcript of an oral history conducted by Dr. James Rada and Linda Shockley, June 23, 2006, *Tell Lawnside's Story: Oral History Project*, (Lawnside, NJ: Lawnside Historical Society, 2008), Disc 12 page 3.

⁶² Walter Greason, *The Path to Freedom: Black Families in New Jersey*, (The History Press, 2010), 67.

⁶³ Lawnside Board of Education, 6.

⁶⁴ Walter Gaines, transcript of an oral history conducted by Dr. James Rada and Shamele Jordon, June 24, 2006, *Tell Lawnside's Story: Oral History Project*, (Lawnside, NJ: Lawnside Historical Society, 2008), Disc 6 page 1.

⁶⁵ Benson.

⁶⁶ Gaines

⁶⁷ Still.

⁶⁸ Benson.

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wisely. One component of the program, which is not typically found in a secular public school, was the school's relationship with the three community churches. Students were awarded credits toward the Honor Roll for attending Sunday school and other religious activities in the community.⁶⁹ This is one example of a church-school connection, which, according to historian Walter Gleason, provided the strong and meaningful foundation for most African American communities. According to Gleason, schools and churches reinforced the lessons of the other: the church taught purpose and the schools taught the method, together religious leaders and public school teachers shaped community life.⁷⁰ No additional information about or examples of the church-school connection at Lawnside were uncovered during the research for this nomination.

In the late 1940s, the borough built a Borough Hall and removed the offices of the school board and borough from Lawnside School; the other civic and social organizations, like the Baby Well Clinics, Y.M.C.A. and Household Aid Project, continued to meet and operate from the school. In 1947, the school numbered almost 300 students over eight grades in seven classrooms, and the school board was already planning for a 40% increase in attendance over the next few years. A year later, in 1948, approximately a century after the establishment of a school for the African Americans living in and around Lawnside, Camden County officially directed its school districts to desegregate following the official changes to the state constitution in 1947.⁷¹ Like its predecessors, the Lawnside School Board was faced with an aging school plant, state-mandated curriculum changes, and an expanding student body.⁷²

While the number of homes and families in the town of Lawnside were not increasing, new suburban developments within the municipal limits were expected to bring an influx of new students into the Lawnside district.⁷³ Like most school districts across the state, the Board ultimately determined that it made more financial sense to enlarge the existing school building rather than to build an additional or wholly new facility.⁷⁴ The stagnant community growth and revisions in the New Jersey tax laws meant that the Board would not be able to generate enough money for the construction of a new school facility. In June 1951, the Board engaged Haddonfield architect George Von Duffel, Jr. (1905-1981) to draw up plans for an addition to the school. Duffel had a successful architectural career throughout the mid-20th century, and was very active within the Haddonfield area and southern New Jersey. Examples of his work include the Haddonfield Library addition (1950s) in Haddonfield, the M. Buten Paint Store addition with Louis Kahn (1947-48) in Camden, and Haddon Township High School (1962) in Westmont.⁷⁵

The new vernacular International Style addition, constructed in 1953, included four classrooms, a kindergarten, a cafeteria, restrooms, and multi-purpose classroom with stage.⁷⁶ The design of the addition reflects many of the characteristics of the mid-century post-World War II aesthetic, which was popular for school architects influenced by period design publications and school districts looking to economize. The new addition continues the vernacular character of the earlier building but with modern-era design elements like narrow horizontal bands of windows, large blank facades without detail or ornament, unadorned rooflines and simple exterior door openings. Modern interior features include the exposed concrete blocks walls, plywood classrooms doors with ocular glazing, larger spaces, flexible multi-functional rooms, fluorescent lighting, and stark finishes.⁷⁷

⁶⁹ Lawnside Board of Education, 5.

⁷⁰ Gleason, 67.

⁷¹ Dorwart, 292.

⁷² "Dedication of the Addition to the Lawnside Public School," (Dedication Program, September 11, 1954), 3.

⁷³ Lawnside Board of Education, 4. Young.

⁷⁴ Lawnside School Board Minutes, 1949 through 1952.

⁷⁵ Sandra Tatman, "Von Duffel, George, Jr." William B Brahm, *Haddon Township* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2011), 56.

⁷⁶ "Dedication."

⁷⁷ For a discussion of the modern period in school construction, see Howard L. Green, "DRAFT Classrooms Struggle:

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Even with the 1955 addition, classroom overcrowding at Lawnside School continued into the 1960s, with the school district eventually building a new middle school in the borough for the 7th and 8th grades; high school students still attended the high school in Haddon Heights. One of the more notable events associated with the school was on April 9, 1968, when the Lawnside school district passed a resolution at a special session proclaiming January 15th to be a legal school holiday in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Passed just days after Dr. King's assassination on April 4, 1968, the resolution may be the first formal recognition in New Jersey of Dr. King's birthday as a day of service in his name.⁷⁸ According to The King Center website, Michigan Congressman John Conyers called for such recognition on April 8, 1968.⁷⁹ Such a resolution is another example of Lawnside's – and the school's – continued strong African American identity through the late 20th century.

In 1982, the original Lawnside Elementary School was closed, with the administration citing declining enrollments and rising costs. Population growth in the 1950s through 1970s skyrocketed, by approximately 23% in 1950, approximately 38% in 1960, and approximately 30% in 1970, it was declining considerably by the time the school closed in the early 1980s. Between 1970 and 1980, the population grew at a slow 10%, and between 1980 and 1990, the population dropped to a -6.6%.⁸⁰ In order to avoid the \$500,000 in renovations required to bring the building up to state mandated standards, the school board vacated the building and moved the elementary school students into the Charleston Ave. School with the middle school students.⁸¹ The property sat vacant for several years until 1988, when a local doctor purchased the building and renovated the first floor of the 1950s addition into a medical clinic that operated into the mi-1990s.⁸² In 2011, recognizing a need for safe, quality housing for the area's low-income senior citizens (people over 65 were approximately 20% of the population, and approximately 12% of that senior population lived below the poverty line), a local real estate developer began working with the Borough of Lawnside; the arrangement appealed to the Borough as a way to provide appropriate housing for the poor, aging population while saving one of its landmark buildings from demolition. Beginning in late 2012 and continuing through 2013, the school was rehabilitated into apartments for local senior citizens using the National Park Services' Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credit program. Many of the school's residents now live in the classrooms they once attended.

A History of School Construction in New Jersey," (Preservation New Jersey, 2011). Manuscript provided by NJ HPO.

⁷⁸ Lawnside School Board Minutes, April 9, 1968. Beyond what is captured in the minutes, no additional information has been found to date to further discuss the board's resolution.

⁷⁹ See "Making of The King Holiday," <http://www.thekingcenter.org/making-king-holiday>, accessed January 19, 2015.

⁸⁰ United States Census Data, Lawnside Borough, Camden County, 1950 through 2000.

⁸¹ James Samuel, "Lawnside May Close Grade School," *Camden Courier-Post*, February 3, 1982.

⁸² Arlene Martin, "Doctor Buys Lawnside School Building," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 6, 1988.

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Lawnside School
Name of Property

Camden County, NJ
County and State

Society, reprint, 2004.

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Wright, Marion Thompson, Ph.D. *The Education of Negroes in New Jersey*. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1941.

Young, Flora Dorsey. Transcript of an oral history conducted by Dr. James Rada and Linda Shockley, June 23, 2006. *Tell Lawnside's Story: Oral History Project*. Lawnside, NJ: Lawnside Historical Society, 2008.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

Primary location of additional data:

<input type="checkbox"/> preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)	<input type="checkbox"/> State Historic Preservation Office
<input type="checkbox"/> previously listed in the National Register	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other State agency: NJ State Archives
<input type="checkbox"/> previously determined eligible by the National Register	<input type="checkbox"/> Federal agency
<input type="checkbox"/> designated a National Historic Landmark	<input type="checkbox"/> Local government
<input type="checkbox"/> recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____	<input type="checkbox"/> University
<input type="checkbox"/> recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other
<input type="checkbox"/> recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____	Name of repository: <u>Lawnside Historical Society</u>
	<u>Lawnside School District</u>
Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):	<u>N/A</u>

Lawnside School
Name of Property

Camden County, NJ
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.36
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

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

Runnemedede, NJ Quadrangle

1	<u>18</u>	<u>497089</u>	<u>4413169</u>	3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

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

The proposed boundary of the property is its current tax parcel, Block 1215/Lot 1 and Block 1215.01/Lots 1 and 2.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The property within the proposed boundary has been associated with the Lawnside Public School since its construction in 1915 to the present day.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Shelby Weaver Splain
organization Keystone Preservation Group date June 2014
street & number P.O. Box 831 telephone 215-348-4919
city or town Doylestown state PA zip code 18901
e-mail swsplain@keystonepreservation.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Lawnside School
Name of Property

Camden County, NJ
County and State

Photographs:

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

Name of Property: Lawnside School

City or Vicinity: Lawnside Borough

County: Camden **State:** NJ

Photographer: Shelby Weaver Splain

Date Photographed: November 2013

Processing: Prints made by Mpix.com using true color processing on Fujifilm Professional paper.

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

1. Looking west at main (west) façade of Lawnside School.
2. Looking west at main (west) façade of original 1915 Lawnside School.
3. Detail, main entrance bay on main (west) façade of original 1915 Lawnside School.
4. Looking southeast along main (west) façade toward 1953 addition.
5. Looking northwest at rear (east) walls of 1920s additions (at right, with cornice) and 1953 addition (left).
6. Looking southwest at rear (east) wall of 1953 addition.
7. Looking northwest at the rear (east) walls of 1953 addition (to right) and south wall of 1953 addition (to left).
8. Looking northeast at Lawnside School grounds near the intersection of North Warwick Road and Brown Street.
9. Looking east in former cafeteria in basement.
10. Looking north toward side entrance in north stair tower in 1915 school; south stair tower is identical.
11. Looking south in north stair tower in 1915 school toward first floor hallway; south stair tower is identical.
12. Looking northwest in first floor corridor in 1915 school at the west and north walls and original main entrance lobby.
13. Looking east in first floor corridor in 1915 school at east wall; doorway at right is 1922 addition and vestibule (center) and doorway at left are 1925 addition.
14. Detail, typical preserved chalk board and other historic fabric in residential units on first floor.
15. Looking southwest in the living room in a residential unit in a former classroom.

Lawnside School
Name of Property

Camden County, NJ
County and State

16. Looking northeast in the living room in a residential unit in a former classroom.
17. Looking west in second floor corridor in 1915 school at west wall. Center doorway leads to a community room in the former library and the flanking doors to cloakrooms.
18. Looking east in second floor corridor in 1915 school at east wall.
19. Detail, typical preserved chalk board and other historic fabric in residential units on second floor.
20. Looking northwest in living room in a residential unit in a former classroom.
21. Looking northwest in bedroom in a residential unit in a former classroom.
22. Looking south along the first floor corridor in the 1953 addition.
23. Looking north in stair tower at south end of 1953 addition.
24. Looking south in the second floor corridor in the 1953 addition.
25. Detail, preserved classroom door in the 1953 addition.
26. Looking southwest in the living room in a former classroom.
27. Looking southwest in the bedroom in a former classroom.

Property Owner:

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

Name Lawnside Urban Renewal, LLC
c/o Charles Lewis

Street & number 20000 Horizon Way, Suite 180 Telephone 856-793-2082

City or Town Mt. Laurel State NJ Zip code 08054

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. 460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC,



Google earth



Site Plan:
Lawnside School
23 North Warwick Road
Lawnside Borough
Camden County, NJ

Block 1215/Lot 1 and Block 1215.01/Lots 1 and 2
UTM 18 497089 4413169

White line indicates tax parcel and National Register boundary
Brown line indicates extent of new construction

Prepared June 2014 by preparer from GoogleEarth

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation Page 1

Lawnside School

Name of Property


Camden County, NJ
County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Site Plan: Detail

Not to Scale; see also attached Google Earth map

North: 

National Register Boundary is current tax parcel and is indicated by black line.



Site Plan:

Lawnside School
23 North Warwick Road
Lawnside Borough
Camden County, NJ

Block 1215/Lot 1 and Block 1215.01/Lots 1 and 2
UTM 18 497089 4413169

Black line indicates tax parcel and National Register boundary

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation Page 2

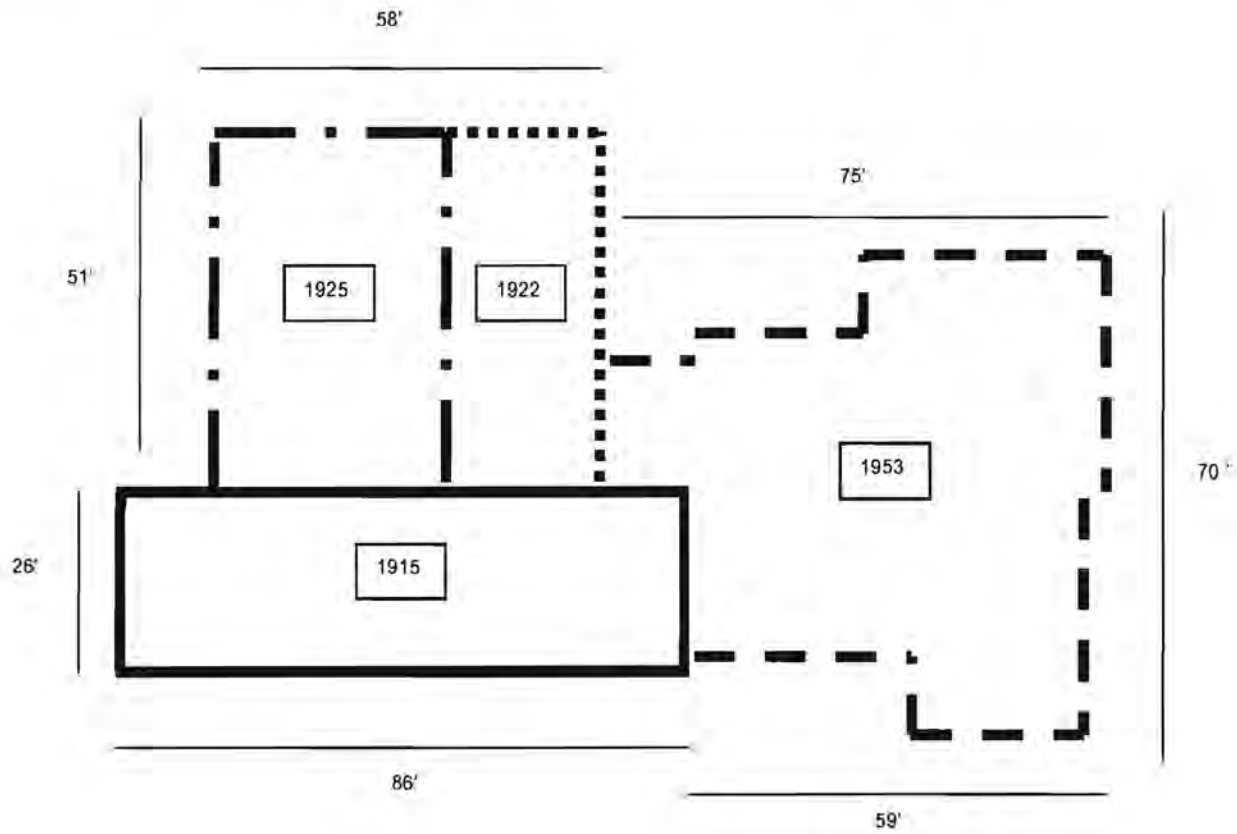
Lawnside School
Name of Property
Camden County, NJ
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Building Plan

Scale: Not to Scale

Dimensions are approximate to the nearest foot.

North: ←



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation Page 3

Lawnside School
Name of Property
Camden County, NJ
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Basement Floor Plan: Current (Not to scale)
Photograph Key

North: ↓



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation Page 4

Lawnside School
Name of Property
Camden County, NJ
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

First Floor Plan: Current (Not to scale)
Exterior and First Floor Photograph Key

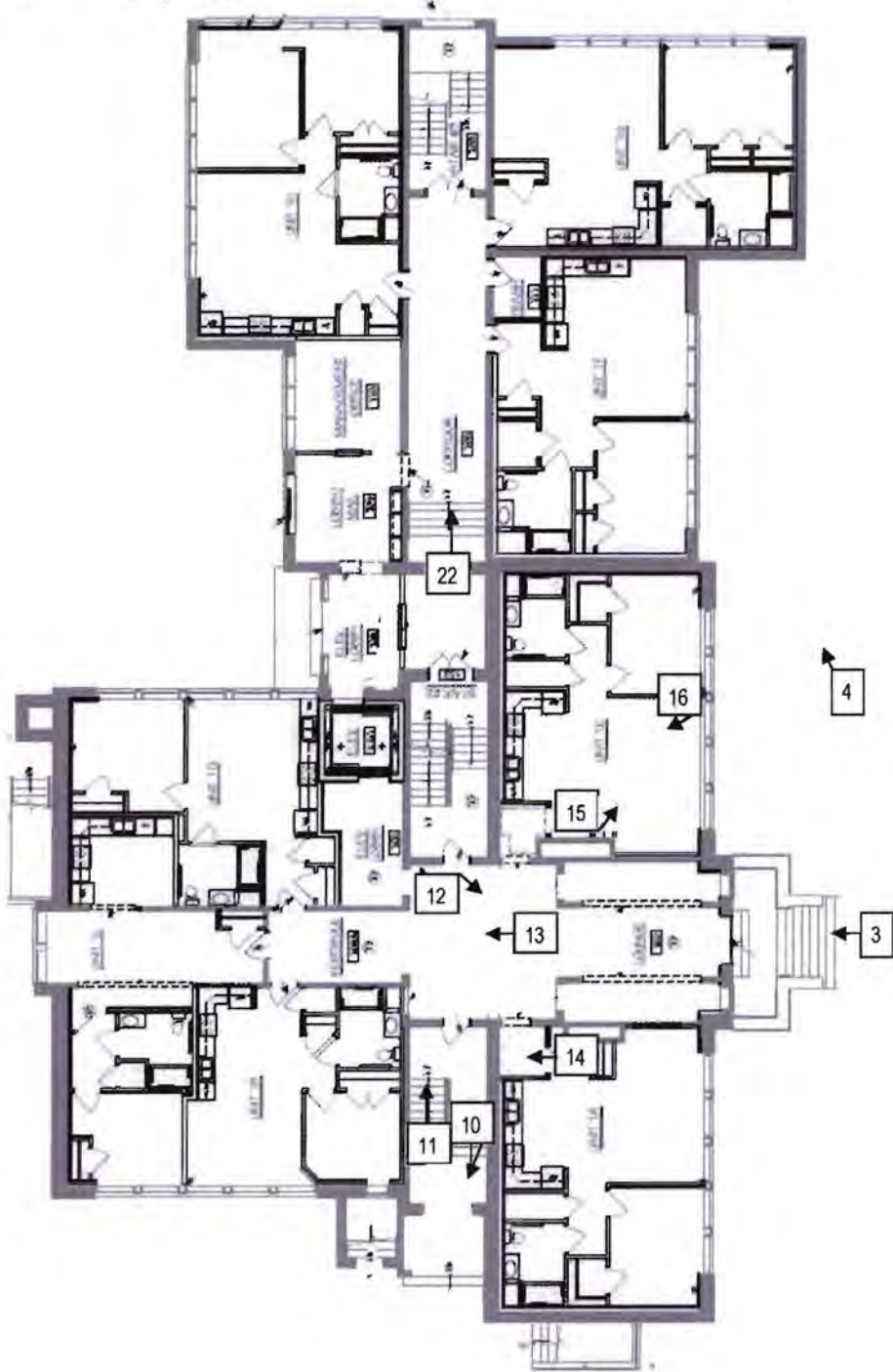
North: ↓

8

7

5

6



1

4

2

3

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

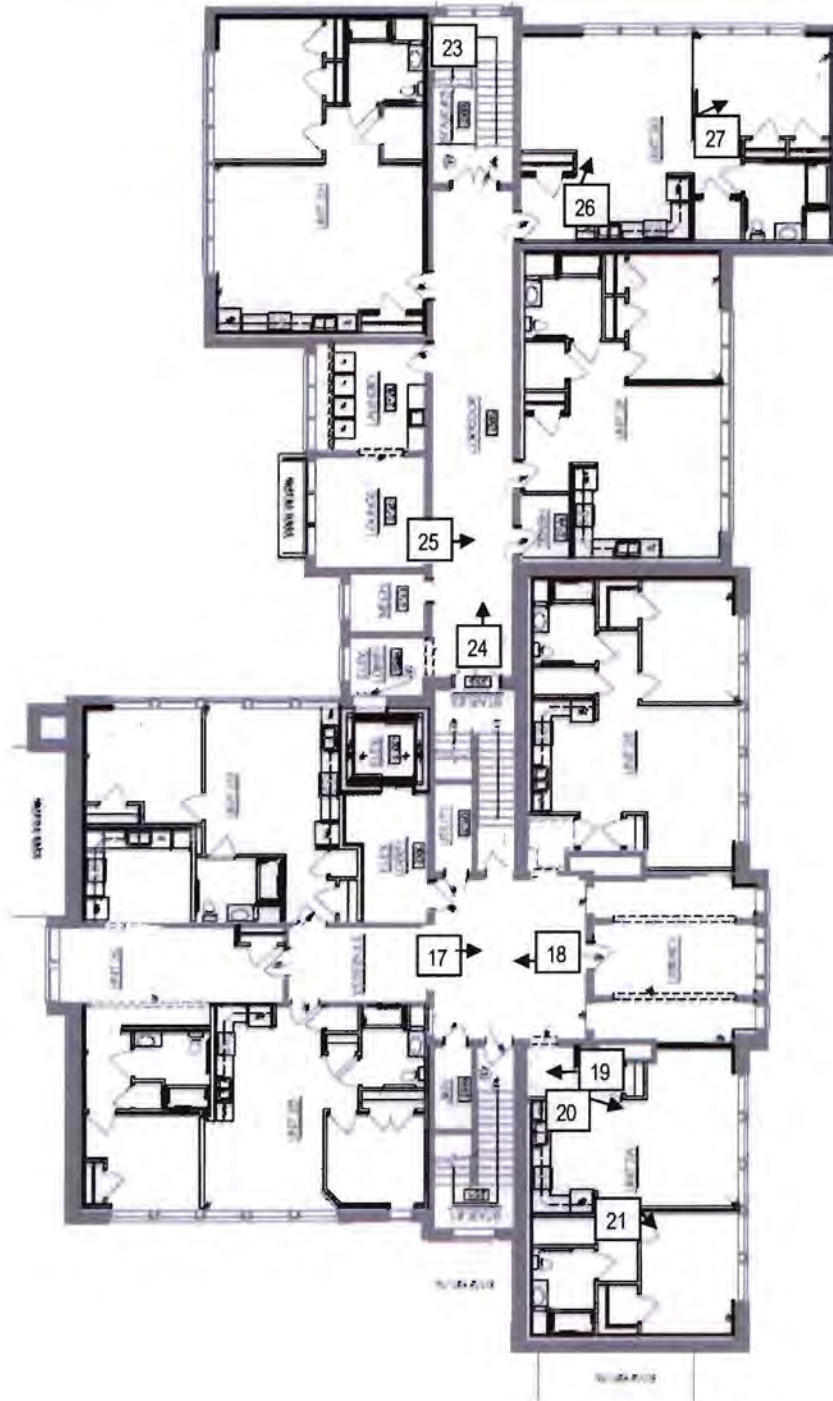
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation Page 5

Lawnside School
Name of Property
Camden County, NJ
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Second Floor Plan: Current (Not to scale)
Photograph Key

North: ↓



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation Page 6

Lawnside School
Name of Property
Camden County, NJ
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Basement Floor Plan: Historic/Previous (Not to scale)
Historic Photograph Key

North: ↓



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

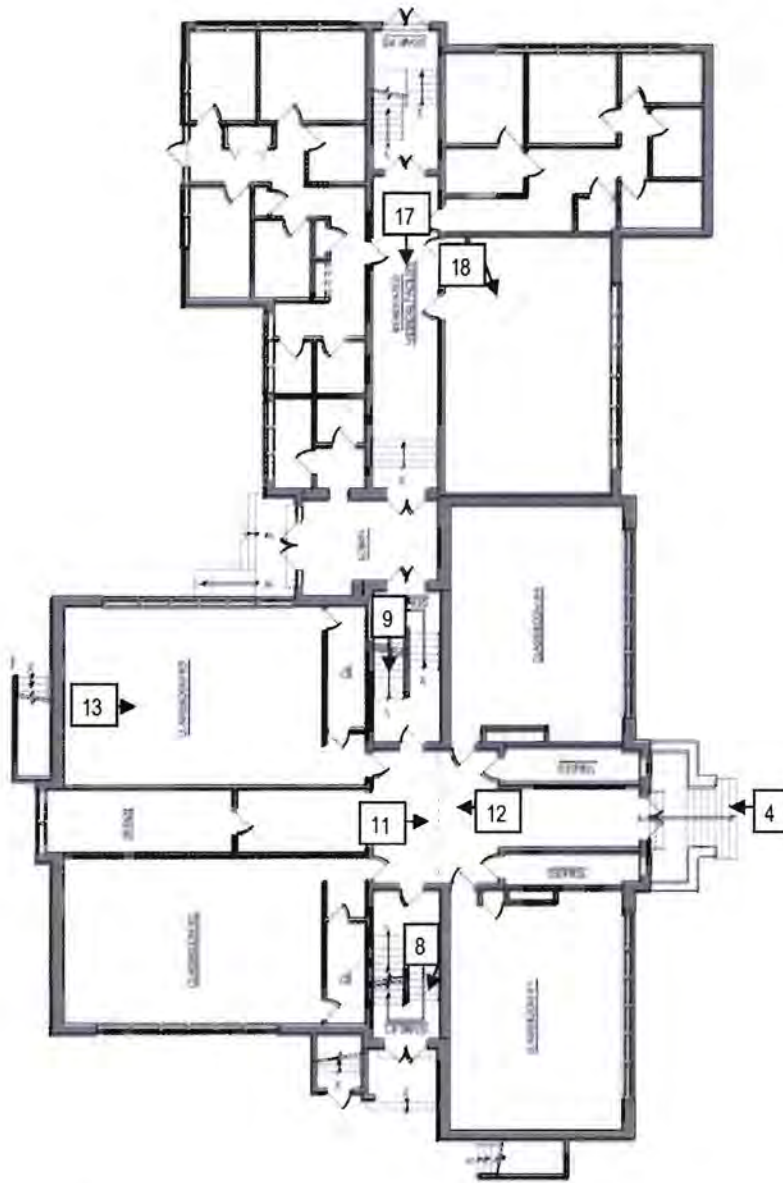
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Lawnside School
Name of Property
Camden County, NJ
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation Page 7

First Floor Plan: Historic/Previous (Not to scale)
Exterior and First Floor Historic Photograph Key

North: ↓



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

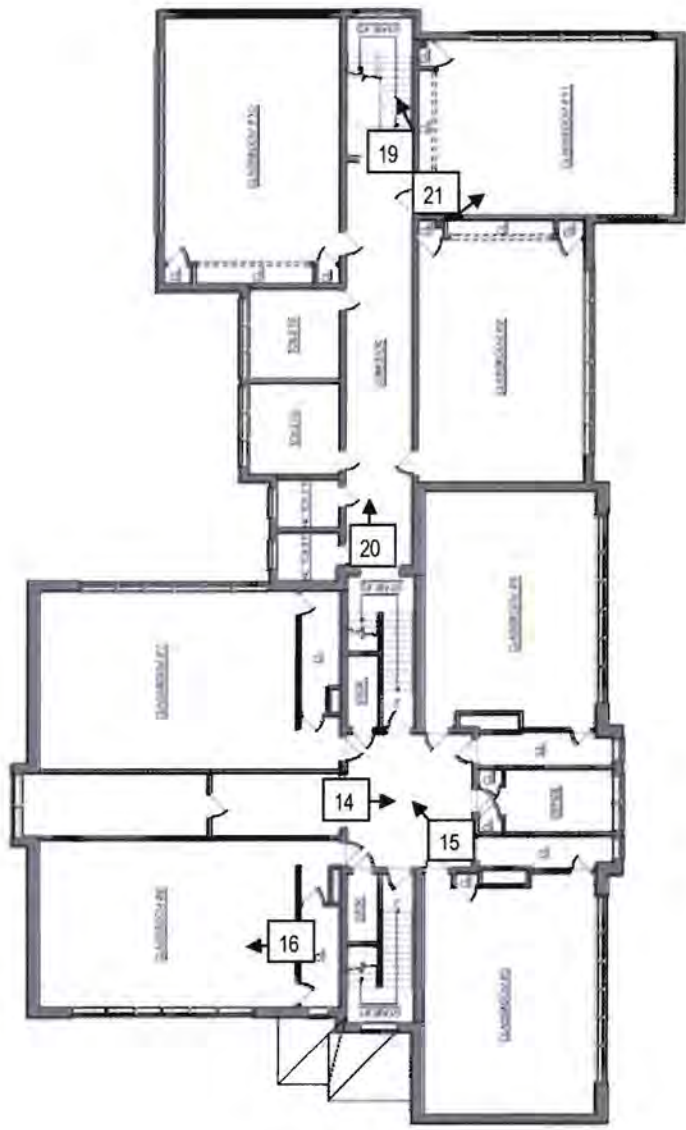
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation Page 8

Lawnside School
Name of Property
Camden County, NJ
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Second Floor Plan: Historic/Previous (Not to scale)
Historic Photograph Key

North: ↓



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation Page 9

Lawnside School

Name of Property

Camden County, NJ

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Historic Photographs



LAWNSIDE PUBLIC SCHOOL

Historic Photograph #1: Looking east at main (west) façade of the original 1915 school. Source: Lawnside Board of Education, "A Brief History of Our School at Lawnside, NJ." Lawnside, NJ, 1947.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation Page 10

Lawnside School

Name of Property

Camden County, NJ
County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)



Historic Photograph #2: Looking east at main (west) façade, 2012



Historic Photograph #3: Looking northeast at main (west) façade of 1915 school, 2012

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation Page 11

Lawnside School

Name of Property

Camden County, NJ
County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)



Historic Photograph #4: Detail, main entrance in center of main (west) façade of 1915 school, 2012.



Historic Photograph #5: Looking southwest at north façade of 1915 school (left) and 1925 addition (right), 2012.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation Page 12

Lawnside School
----- Name of Property
----- Camden County, NJ County and State
----- N/A Name of multiple listing (if applicable)



Historic Photograph #6: Looking northwest at rear (east) façade of 1922 addition (left) and rear (east) and south facades of 1953 addition (right), 2012.



Historic Photograph #7: Looking northeast at main (west) of 1953 addition, 2012.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation Page 13

Lawnside School
Name of Property
Camden County, NJ
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)



Historic Photograph #8: Looking north in north stair, typical stair condition, 2012.



Historic Photograph #9: Looking north in south stair, typical stair condition, 2012.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation Page 14

Lawnside School
..... Name of Property
..... Camden County, NJ County and State
..... N/A Name of multiple listing (if applicable)



Historic Photograph #10: Looking east in former cafeteria in basement, 2012.



Historic Photograph #11: Looking west in first floor corridor, 2012.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation Page 15

Lawnside School
Name of Property
Camden County, NJ
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)



Historic Photograph #12: Looking east in first floor corridor, 2012.



Historic Photograph #13: Typical first floor classroom in 1915 school and 1922 and 1925 additions, 2012.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation Page 16

Lawnside School
----- Name of Property
----- Camden County, NJ County and State
----- N/A
----- Name of multiple listing (if applicable)



Historic Photograph #14: Looking west in second floor corridor, 2012.



Historic Photograph #15: Looking southeast in second floor corridor, 2012.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation Page 17

Lawnside School

Name of Property

Camden County, NJ

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)



Historic Photograph #16: Typical second floor classroom in 1915 school and 1922 and 1925 additions, 2012.



Historic Photograph #17: Looking north in first floor corridor in 1953 addition, 2012.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation Page 18

Lawnside School
Name of Property
Camden County, NJ
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)



Historic Photograph #18: Typical first floor room in 1953 addition, 2012.



Historic Photograph #19: Southern stair tower in 1953 addition, 2012.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation Page 19

Lawnside School

Name of Property

Camden County, NJ
County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)



Historic Photograph #20: Looking south in second floor corridor in 1953 addition, 2012.



Historic Photograph #21: Typical second floor classroom in 1953 addition, 2012.



Warwick

GRAND
OPENING

NOW
LEASING





LAWN SIDE
SCHOOL













NO PARKING

NO PARKING





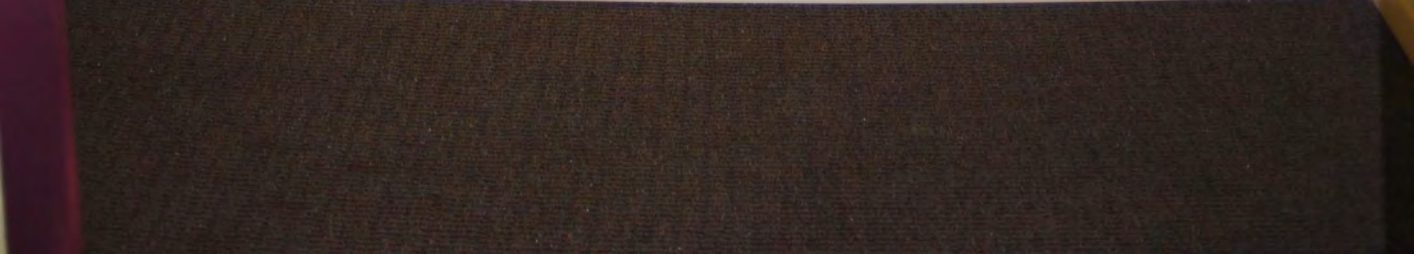
Service Center
The Service Center
County











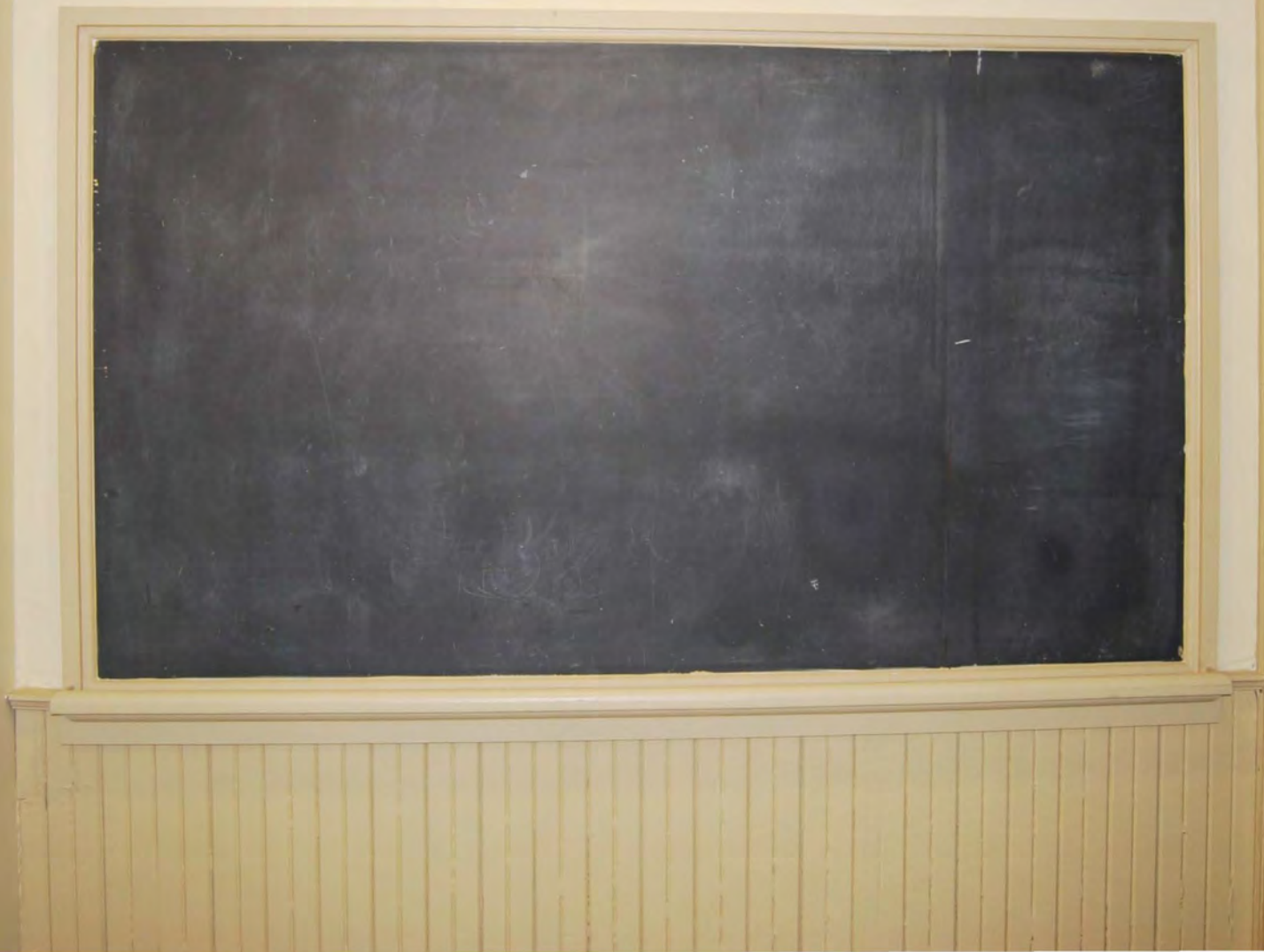




<EXIT>













EXIT







EXIT

TOILET

212







UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Lawnside School
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: NEW JERSEY, Camden

DATE RECEIVED: 1/30/15 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 3/05/15
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 3/20/15 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 3/17/15
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 15000092

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 3-17-15 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



Proj. #13-1921
Chrono #:A2015-223

State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

NATURAL & HISTORIC RESOURCES

Office of the Assistant Commissioner

MAIL CODE 501-03A

PO Box 420

Trenton, New Jersey 08625

609-292-3541/ FAX: 609-984-0836



CHRIS CHRISTIE
Governor

KIM GUADAGNO
Lt. Governor

BOB MARTIN
Commissioner

January 22, 2015

Paul Loether, Chief
National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Mr. Loether:

The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the nomination for the Lawnside School, Lawnside Borough, Camden County, New Jersey.

This nomination has received unanimous approval from the New Jersey State Review Board for Historic Sites. All procedures were followed in accordance with regulations published in the Federal Register.

Should you want any further information concerning this application, please feel free to contact Daniel D. Saunders, Administrator, New Jersey Historic Preservation Office, Mail code 501-04B, P.O. Box 420, Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0420, or call him at (609) 633-2397.

Sincerely,

Rich Boornazian
Deputy State Historic
Preservation Officer