

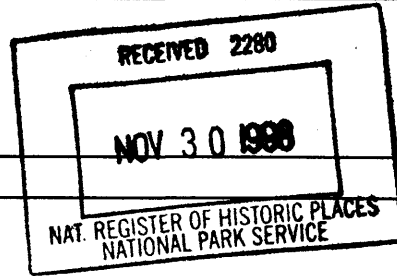
1559

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in "Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms" (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name                      Rock Gym  
other names/site number        Auditorium, Armory



### 2. Location

street & number    45 Forest Avenue  
city, town        Elberton  
county            Elbert            code GA 105  
state Georgia    code GA        zip code 30635

( ) vicinity of

( ) not for publication

### 3. Classification

#### Ownership of Property:

- ( ) private
- (x) public-local
- ( ) public-state
- ( ) public-federal

#### Category of Property:

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

#### Number of Resources within Property:

#### Contributing

#### Noncontributing

buildings	1	0
sites	0	0
structures	0	0
objects	2	0
total	3	0

Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: n/a

Name of previous listing: n/a

Name of related multiple property listing: n/a

**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination 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 the National Register criteria. ( ) See continuation sheet.

Richard Clowers 11-20-98  
Signature of certifying official Date

Mark R. Edwards  
State Historic Preservation Officer

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency or bureau

**5. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register

Wilson H. Beall 12/31/98

( ) determined eligible for the National Register \_\_\_\_\_

( ) determined not eligible for the National Register \_\_\_\_\_

( ) removed from the National Register \_\_\_\_\_

( ) other, explain: \_\_\_\_\_

( ) see continuation sheet

for \_\_\_\_\_  
Keeper of the National Register Date

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## 6. Function or Use

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### Historic Functions:

DEFENSE/armory  
RECREATION AND CULTURE/auditorium  
EDUCATION/education-related

### Current Functions:

WORK IN PROGRESS

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## 7. Description

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### Architectural Classification:

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS/Other: Stripped Classical  
MODERN MOVEMENT/Art Moderne

### Materials:

<b>foundation</b>	stone
<b>walls</b>	stone
<b>roof</b>	asphalt
<b>other</b>	concrete, wood

### Description of present and historic physical appearance:

The Rock Gym was constructed in 1941 and is located on the campus of the Elbert County Middle School complex, which encompasses nonhistoric academic buildings, a nonhistoric gymnasium, and a nonhistoric stadium. The "T"-shaped building features a two-story rectangular main block with a two-story centered rear ell. The building is constructed of local granite, which was donated by local granite companies, and is approximately 27,000 square feet. The granite building features a random pattern of cut stones of varying sizes (see photo 1).

The two-story rectangular main block features a one-story, stone, front portico with a sculpture made from gray Elberton granite. The Art Moderne-style sculpture was carved in 1940 by Richard Cecchini (b.1903-d.1981) in the form of a Phoenix. The sculpture is approximately two-feet tall and eight-and-a-half-feet wide (see photo 5). Located just below the sculpture is the recessed main entrance with three sets of double doors with transoms. The front facade features wide single and paired casement windows as well as a ribbon of wide casement windows above the one-story portico (see photo 4). The rear two-story ell addition features large bays along the ground floor and large casement windows along the second floor (see photo 2). The ground floor originally functioned as a motor pool and the four bays allowed for the passage of vehicles.

The floor plan of the building has remained mostly intact. The main lobby, located in the rectangular main block, is an open space with classrooms and restrooms located on either side of the lobby. A staircase leading to the second floor is located off the main lobby. The second floor is divided into

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

### Section 7--Description

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several different-sized classrooms. The largest room was the "band room" and the smaller rooms functioned as academic and vocational classrooms. The intact features include the wood floors, granite support columns, plaster walls, and windows. The large open space of the auditorium is located on the second (main) floor of the rear ell. Four doorways from the main block lead into the open auditorium/gymnasium space (see photo 7). The large space features exposed granite stone walls and a stage on the far east end of the room (see photo 6). A doorway, which leads to a stairwell to the ground (basement) level, is located on either side of the stage (see photo 9).

The ground level originally functioned as a motor pool and featured a large open space with granite support columns and bay openings along the southern facade (see photo 10). The large bay openings are still apparent, though they have been enclosed during the 1970s with concrete block (see photo 2). The interior space has been divided into classrooms; however, the original granite columns still remain intact (see photo 11).

The Rock Gym originally faced an open courtyard with the historic (no longer extant) Elberton High School at one end. A parking lot, built to service the motor pool, is located on the northeast side of the building. When the Elberton High School burned in 1955, the current school was built on the site of the courtyard. Over the past decades, other buildings have been constructed on the campus and little of the original courtyard still remains. The surviving portion of the courtyard is included in this nomination.

A free-standing bust of Franklin D. Roosevelt, sculpted by Richard Cecchini in 1941, was originally located near the main entrance of the Rock Gym (see photo 12). The bust was moved to a location next to the main entrance when the new school was built in the late 1950s. The bust was removed from the campus during the mid 1990s for restoration and relocated to a site just north of the Rock Gym, within the nominated property.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

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**Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:**

nationally       statewide       locally

**Applicable National Register Criteria:**

A       B       C       D

**Criteria Considerations (Exceptions):**  N/A

A    B    C    D    E    F    G

**Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions):**

ARCHITECTURE  
POLITICS/GOVERNMENT  
ART

**Period of Significance:**

1940-1948

**Significant Dates:**

1940      Construction of the Phoenix sculpture .  
1941      Construction of the Rock Gym and Franklin D. Roosevelt sculpture.

**Significant Person(s):**

n/a

**Cultural Affiliation:**

n/a

**Architect(s)/Builder(s):**

Hunter J. Price, Sr./architect  
National Youth Administration (NYA)/builder  
Civilian Conservation Corporation (CCC)/builder  
Newton Brothers/masons  
Richard Cecchini/sculptor

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

### Section 8--Statement of Significance

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#### **Narrative statement of significance (areas of significance)**

The Rock Gym historically functioned as an armory, gymnasium, and auditorium. The property is significant in the areas of architecture, politics/government, and art at the statewide level of significance.

The Rock Gym is significant in the area of architecture as an excellent example of a WPA-era community landmark building. The building is constructed of granite, provided by Elberton granite companies, in the Stripped Classical style. The character-defining features of this WPA-era building type include the use of local granite as the building material, a rectangular center block with a large rear ell functioning as the auditorium/gymnasium, and interior floor plan providing for several rooms to function as educational, vocational, industrial, recreational, and arms storage (see photo 1). The character-defining features of the Stripped Classical style include a flat roof, band of wide windows creating a sense of bays, and overall symmetry (see photos 1 and 2).

The Rock Gym also is architecturally significant as a relatively rare example of the use of load-bearing stone masonry in the construction of a large building. Although building stone is plentiful in north Georgia, there are relatively few stone buildings in this part of the state or anywhere else in Georgia, and even fewer community landmark buildings like this gym. According to the Georgia Historic Resources Survey, which encompasses one-third of the state, less than one percent of the surveyed buildings in Georgia are constructed of stone. More than 80% of the surveyed buildings are wood-framed and just over 7% are brick-bearing. Other identified stone gymnasiums from the state survey include the Stone Mountain Recreation Center in DeKalb County, constructed in 1910, and M.D. Mobley Hall in Newton County, constructed by the NYA in 1941. The Rock Gym in Elberton is an excellent example of the use of this distinctive, indigenous building material in an area known world-wide for its granite quarries.

The property was designed by a local Elberton architect, Hunter J. Price, Sr (1896-1959). Price was born in the Elberton area and graduated from the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta, Georgia with an architectural degree in 1921. He completed most of his work in Elberton, but also worked in Hart and Wilkes counties. He designed residences, commercial buildings, recreational buildings, textile mills, and institutional buildings. One of his more noted buildings is the Samuel Elbert Hotel, built 1925, located on the courthouse square in Elberton.

The property is significant in the areas of politics/government for its association to the Works Projects Administration (1933-1943). In 1939, the Elberton City Council secured a loan of \$10,000 and labor without cost through the National Youth Administration (NYA), established in 1935, and Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), established in 1934. Both the NYA and CCC were created through the Works Progress Administration (WPA) to assist in the construction of public works

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

### Section 8--Statement of Significance

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buildings. On March 20, 1940, a bond issue was passed in Elberton and a professional architect, Hunter J. Price, Sr., was hired and the construction completed by relief workers from the NYA and CCC in 1941.

Workers from the CCC camp in Anderson, South Carolina traveled to Elberton to help complete the construction of the school. Most of the construction was completed by labors of the NYA. The NYA, a lesser known program than the CCC, was established by Franklin D. Roosevelt on June 26, 1935 through Executive Order No. 7086. The functions and duties of the NYA were "to initiate and administer a program of approved project which...[should] provide relief, work relief, and employment for persons between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five who...[were] no longer in regular attendance at a school requiring full time, and who...[were] not regularly engaged in remunerative employment (Corely, 1993)." Although the NYA was established by Franklin D. Roosevelt, Eleanor Roosevelt took control and was "its chief advisor, its chief publicist, its chief investigator (Corely, 1993)." NYA youths in Georgia built more than 300 buildings and remodeled abandoned buildings for productive uses. Many of the buildings, including the M.D. Mobley Hall, located at the Future Farmers and Future Homemakers of America Camp in Newton County were constructed by the NYA.

The property is significant in the area of art for its excellent examples of WPA-era sculptures. In recognition of the services provided through the WPA, two sculptures were constructed. The first sculpture is a carved eagle, known as the Phoenix, located above the main entrance to the Rock Gym. The sculpture was created by Richard Cecchini (1903-1981) in 1940 and features an eagle with wings spread in the Art Moderne style. The Art Moderne style is associated with Roosevelt's New Deal program. Sometimes referred to as "New Deal architecture" or "Depression-era architecture" the use of the Art Moderne style during the period was common. The smooth surface and flowing lines of the wings are character-defining features of the Art Moderne style.

The second sculpture, located in the northern corner of the National Register boundary, is a granite bust of Franklin D. Roosevelt. The sculpture was started by an artist named Prezzi but completed in 1941 by Cecchini. The sculpture is approximately eight-feet tall and features the bust of Roosevelt. Cecchini is credited with other sculptures in Elberton including Christ in Gethsemane (1944), located in Elmhurst Cemetery, and the Ursina Memorial (1954), located on the campus of the Elbert County Middle School. Cecchini is also credited with the Confederate Monument (1965), located on the grounds of the Nelson County Courthouse in Lovingston, Virginia.

### National Register Criteria

The Rock Gym is eligible under National Register Criterion A for its historical association to the significant themes of education and art and under National Register Criterion C as an excellent example of a WPA-funded community landmark building.

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**Continuation Sheet**

Section 8--Statement of Significance

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**Criteria Considerations (if applicable)**

n/a

**Period of significance (justification)**

The period of significance for the Rock Gym begins in 1940 with the construction of the Phoenix sculpture and ends in 1948, the end of the historic period. The period of significance is extended to the end of the historic period, since the Rock Gym continuously functioned during the historic period as a community landmark building for the city of Elberton

**Contributing/Noncontributing Resources (explanation, if necessary)**

The three contributing resources encompass one historic building, the Rock Gym, and two historic objects, the Phoenix and bust of Franklin D. Roosevelt. There are no noncontributing resources within the National Register boundary.

**Developmental history/historic context (if appropriate)**

**\*\*Note: The following history was prepared by the Hard Rock Kids of Elberton Middle School, "Rock Gym," Historic Property Information Form, March 17, 1995. On file at the Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Atlanta, Georgia.**

Elbert County was set up, extending from the mouth of the Broad River. Elbert County developed from the district called Petersburg in 1790. Elberton is built upon rock, which is called Blue Granite. This granite is found only in one other section of the United States. In 1878, the Elberton Air Line Railway was completed. After the railroad came through, the city of Elberton began to grow, as did the granite industry, which developed into Elberton's main industry. Elberton is now a large granite town.

From the town's beginnings in the early part of the 19th century, urban development was confined to the areas nearest the town square. In the antebellum period, Elberton experienced growth and development. After the Civil War, the prosperity of the Victorian era--caused in part by the expansion of the granite industry-- yielded unprecedented growth in Elberton. The early 20th century was marked by continued growth as commercial development increased the size of the central business district. Industrial development replaced homes along practically the entire stretch of the railroad line within city limits.



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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

### Section 8--Statement of Significance

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Consistent with the rest of the nation, the Great Depression era which began in the late 1920's and continued through the first part of the 1930's was characterized by relatively slow growth. In 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt took office. In his first term, Roosevelt established the New Deal which brought the United States out of the Great Depression.

Prosperity returned to Elberton with the entrance of the country into World War II, resulting in new suburban expansion along the fringes of already established neighborhoods and some fill in commercial and residential areas. On February 23, 1939, a delegation from the Junior Chamber of Commerce met with the City Council to promote the building of an auditorium-armory. Louis Patz and Thes W. Therten made talks and outlined the plans proposed by the Jaycees. A loan of \$10,000 was made by that body and labor was secured through the National Youth Administration (NYA).

On October 2, 1939, the Georgia National Guard Company "I" 122nd infantry desired to sell the lot of property located on the southwest corner of Church Street and South Oliver Street, which was known as the Roberts Hotel, to get the money to help in building an auditorium-armory. October 23, 1939, Lanier Development Company purchased a lot of land in the city of Elberton. On March 12, 1940, the City Council held a bond issue, 893 people voted for it, while only 17 voted against it. After being built, the Rock Gym was used as a armory for the National Guard, for home high school basketball games, for proms, and as a theater.

A granite monument of Franklin D. Roosevelt is located just north of the gym. This monument was started by the sculptor named Presi, an immigrant from Italy. During the making of the monument, Presi, who was forty-nine years old, died from black lung disease, a disease very common at that time for granite workers. Richard Cecchini took his place and finished the monument. On March 14, 1941, the monument was dedicated along with the gym/armory.

In the summer of 1970, one wing of the basement was upgraded. The basement was used for ROTC's shooting range, armory vehicles, and bus maintenance. In the fall of 1988, the ROTC left the basement and the Adult Learning Center took its place. In December of 1992, the Adult Learning Center vacated the building and currently the Rock Gym is abandoned.

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## 9. Major Bibliographic References

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Brown, Jennifer, Melissa Cliett, Joanne Dejausserand, and Amy Groover. The Rock Gym Historic Structure Report. University of Georgia. School of Environmental Design. Masters of Historic Preservation Program. 1994

Central High School Yearbook. Eidolon. Elbert County High School. 1963.

Central High School Yearbook. Eidolon. Elbert County High School. 1970.

Coulter, Ellis M. Old Petersburg and the Broad River Valley of Georgia. Foot & Davies. Doraville, Georgia. 1965

Casey, Susan, Todd Cleveland, Virginia Harris, Guy Whelchel, Clayton Whitehead, and Catherine Wilson-Martin. Historic Resources in Elberton Georgia. The University of Georgia. 1988

Corley, Florence Fleming. "The National Youth Administration in Georgia: A New Deal for Young Blacks and Women." The Georgia Historical Quarterly. Winter 1993: 728-756.

Hodler, Thomas. Schretter, Howard. The Atlas of Georgia. Institute of Community and Area Development-The University of Georgia. 1986

McIntosh, John M. History of Elbert County Georgia 1790-1935. Cherokee Publishing Company. Atlanta. 1968

**Records**-Elbert County Tax Commissioner's office, Elbert County Courthouse, -Elberton, GA

**Newspaper**-**"The Elberton Star"** Friday, March 14, 1941

### **Personal Interviews-**

Lee Atkinson - Elberton, GA.

Mrs. Warren C. Bryant - Elberton, GA.

Nell Blackmon - Elberton, GA.

Wallace Edwards - Elbert County Middle School principal; National Guard member

Angie Foster - Elberton, GA.

Frank Griffith - Elberton, GA. - Elbert County School Superintendent

Bill Hyde - Elberton, GA. - President of the Elbert County Historical Society.

Clara Lee - Elberton, GA.

Becky Maxwell - Elberton, GA.

Doug Maxwell - Elberton, GA.

Sandy Maxwell - Elberton, GA.

Ed Mimms - Elberton, GA. - was on one of the original committees that helped build the Rock Gym.

Helen Norman - Elberton, GA.

Betty Williford - Elberton, GA. - former head of Adult Literacy Program.

Jane Wilhite - Elberton, GA.

James Larry Wilson - Elberton, GA. - Math teacher at the Elbert County High School.

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Section 9--Major Bibliographic References**

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**Maps-**

Sanborn Map. 1959.

United States Department of the Interior Geological Survey (USGS) Map.  
Plat Map. Central School Property. Plat Book #3, page 10. Feb. 27, 1956.

**Previous documentation on file (NPS): (x) N/A**

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

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State historic preservation office
- Other State Agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other, Specify Repository:

**Georgia Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** EB-EB-310, Elbert County

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## 10. Geographical Data

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**Acreage of Property**                      Approximately 1 acre.

### UTM References

A)    Zone 17        Easting 327340        Northing 3775820

### Verbal Boundary Description

The National Register boundary for the Rock Gym is indicated by a heavy black line on the attached USGS NE Elberton West, US Quad orthophoto, which was supplied by Microsoft TerraServer.

### Boundary Justification

The National Register boundary for the Rock Gym encompasses the gym, remaining courtyard, and free-standing bust of Franklin D. Roosevelt. The Rock Gym is located near the southern end of the boundary, the remaining courtyard is located just northwest and northeast of the gym, and the free-standing bust of Franklin D. Roosevelt is located in the far northern corner of the boundary.

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## 11. Form Prepared By

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### State Historic Preservation Office

**name/title** Amy Pallante/National Register Specialist  
**organization** Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources  
**street & number** 500 The Healey Building, 57 Forsyth Street  
**city or town** Atlanta **state** Georgia **zip code** 30303  
**telephone** (404) 656-2840 **date** October 1998

**Consulting Services/Technical Assistance (if applicable)**                      ( ) not applicable

**name/title** Jimmy Blackmon, Chris Dyal, Jill Hamilton, Nicholas Hanson, Robert Hardy, Jenni Jesser, Erica Lee, Britney Maxwell, Stephanie Poon, Blair Shiver, Andrew Taylor, Ross Tankersley, Kelli Webb/students  
**organization** Hard Rock Kids (Having A Real Dream, Restoring Our Cultural Keepsakes)  
**street and number** 45 Forest Avenue  
**city or town** Elberton **state** GA **zip code** 30635  
**telephone** (706) 283-2275

( ) **consultant**  
( ) **regional development center preservation planner**  
(x) **other:** Elberton Middle School students.

(HPD form version 02-24-97)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
**Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

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**Name of Property:** Rock Gym  
**City or Vicinity:** Elberton  
**County:** Elbert  
**State:** Georgia  
**Photographer:** James R. Lockhart  
**Negative Filed:** Georgia Department of Natural Resources  
**Date Photographed:** March 1997

**Description of Photograph(s):**

- 1 of 12 View of a side elevation of the Rock Gym; photographer facing southwest.
- 2 of 12 View of a side elevation of the property; photographer facing northwest.
- 3 of 12 View of the rear facade of the property; photographer facing west.
- 4 of 12 View of the front facade of the property; photographer facing southeast.
- 5 of 12 Detail view of the front entrance with Phoenix sculpture; photographer facing east.
- 6 of 12 View of auditorium space; photographer facing east towards the stage.
- 7 of 12 View of auditorium space; photographer facing west towards main entrance.
- 8 of 12 Detail view of exposed granite and fixed windows with an inset awning window.
- 9 of 12 Detail of staircase.
- 10 of 12 View of exposed granite walls and structural system.
- 11 of 12 View of original granite support columns.
- 12 of 12 View of Franklin D. Roosevelt bust.

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Elberton, Georgia, United States  
Photographed on **28 Jan 1993**

View Map | Zoom Out | 16m | Window Size | Small | Medium



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Photograph courtesy of the United State

**National Register Map**

Rock Gym

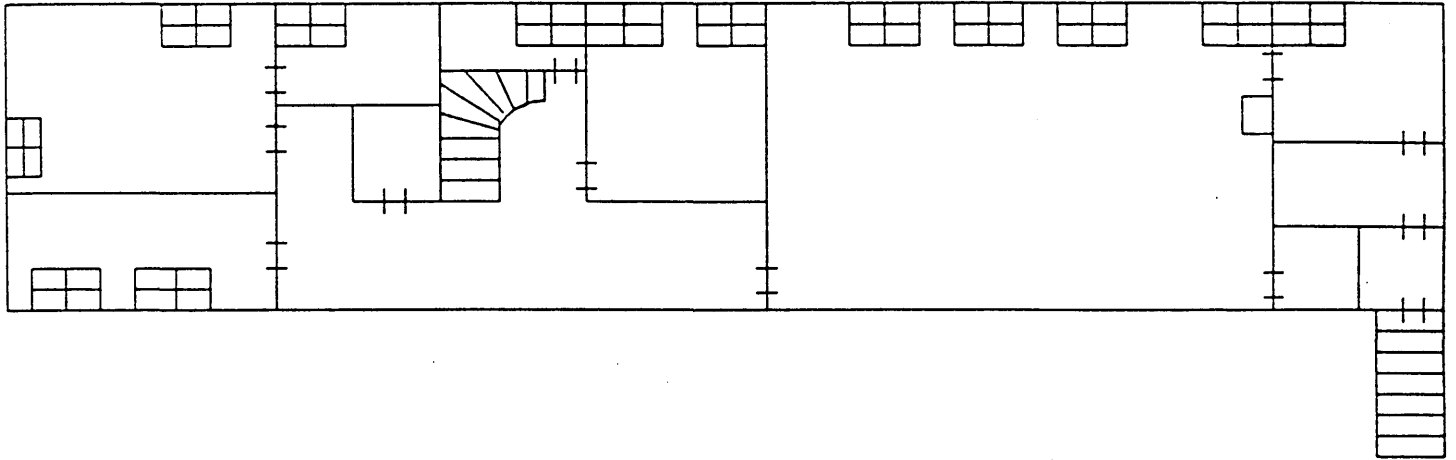
Elberton, Elbert County, Georgia

Source: Microsoft TerraServer

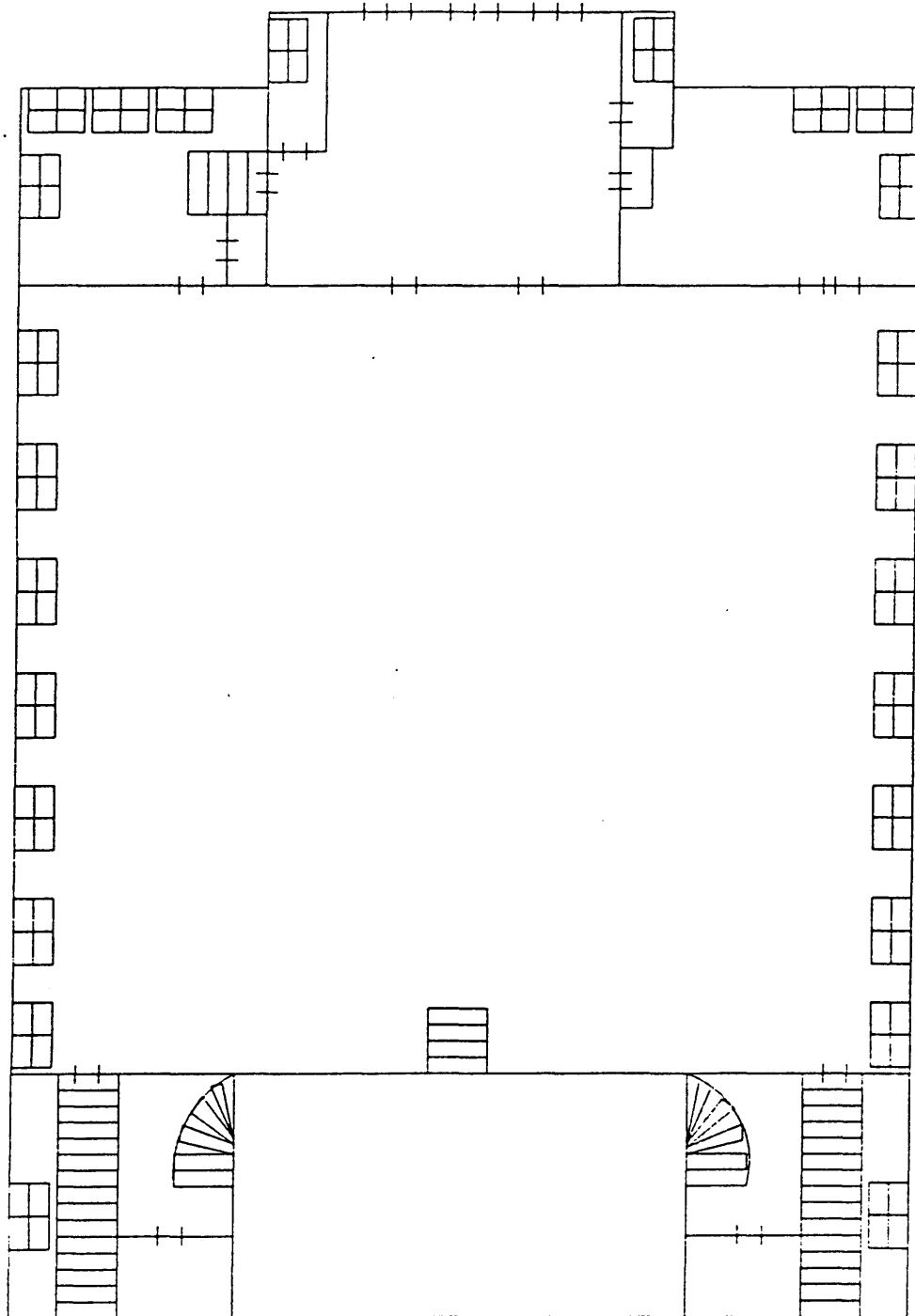
Scale: 1" = 226'

 = National Register boundary

**National Register Map/Interior Site Plan**  
**Rock Gym**  
**Elberton, Elbert County, Georgia**  
**Second Floor**  
**Source: Sponsor**  
**Scale: Not drawn to scale**



**National Register Map/Interior Site Plan**  
**Rock Gym**  
**Elberton, Elbert County, Georgia**  
**First (main) Floor**  
**Source: Sponsor**  
**Scale: Not drawn to scale**





**National Register Map/Interior Site Plan**  
**Rock Gym**  
**Elberton, Elbert County, Georgia**  
**Basement Level**  
**Source: Sponsor**  
**Scale: Not drawn to scale**

