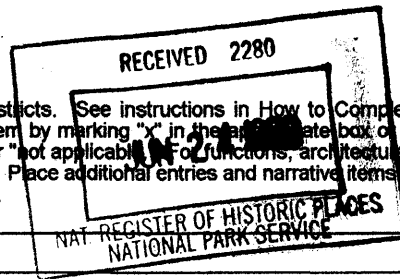


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

864



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Cox, John F. Grammar School

other names/site number John F. Cox Elementary School/PO3410

2. Location

street & number 1005 N. Massachusetts Avenue n/a  not for publication

city or town Lakeland n/a  vicinity

state FLORIDA code FL county Polk code 105 zip code 33805

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

*George W. ...* 6/14/99  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Florida State Historic Preservation Officer, Division of Historical Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

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

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

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

*Edson H. Beall*  
Signature of the Keeper

7/22/99  
Date of Action

Cox, John F. Grammar School  
Name of Property

Polk Co., FL  
County and State

**5. Classification**

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

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

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

- buildings
- district
- site
- structure
- object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	1	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	1	total

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

n/a

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

0

**6. Function or Use**

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

Education: School  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

Education: School  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

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

Late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Revivals:  
Italian Renaissance  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick  
walls Brick  
\_\_\_\_\_  
roof Composition Shingles  
other Cast Stone  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

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

**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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

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

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

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

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Architecture
- Education
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1928-1949

**Significant Dates**

1928

**Significant Person**

n/a

**Cultural Affiliation**

n/a

**Architect/Builder**

Architect: Poteet, Albert J. and Whitmore, Henry P.

Builder: Berg Marshall, Inc.

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of Repository  
# \_\_\_\_\_

Cox, John F. Grammar School  
Name of Property

Polk Co., FL  
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property Approximately 2 acres

UTM References

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1	7	4	0	6	2	8	0	3	1	0	3	6	2	0
	Zone		Easting					Northing							
2															

3													
	Zone		Easting					Northing					
4													

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

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

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Alma Hubbard/Consultant, Lisa Parks/Consultant, Barbara E. Mattick/Historic Preservationist Supervisor

organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date May 1999

street & number R.A. Gray Building, 500 S. Bronough Street telephone (850) 487-2333

city or town Tallahassee state Florida zip code 32399-0250

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

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

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

Photographs

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

Additional items

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

Property Owner

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

name Polk County Board of Public Instruction

street & number P.O Box 391 telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town Bartow state Florida zip code 33830

**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 amend listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

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

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Section number 7 Page 1 **COX, JOHN F. GRAMMAR SCHOOL  
Lakeland, Polk Co., FL**

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**SUMMARY**

John F. Cox Grammar School is located at 1005 North Massachusetts Avenue, Lakeland, Florida. The building was constructed in 1928 in the Italian Renaissance style. The school is a two-story structure, rectangular in shape with wings at the south and north ends, with a rear projection which houses an auditorium on the second floor. The building is of brick construction, utilizing buff-colored brick and cast stone as decorative elements. The Italian Renaissance style is reflected in hipped roofs with wide eaves with brackets on the wings and arched pavilions. The foundation is a poured concrete footing covered with a brick veneer, and the roof is covered with composition shingles. Fenestration is generally six over six and two over two sash.

**SETTING**

The John F. Cox Grammar School is located at the northeast corner of Lakeland Hills and Memorial Boulevards, but maintains its original address of 1005 N. Massachusetts Avenue. The building faces west onto Lakeland Hills Boulevard (Photo 1). It sits several blocks to the west of one of the largest of the area's fourteen natural lakes, Lake Parker. Situated in an area which had once been mostly residential, the area surrounding the school now includes recreational and commercial properties. A plan view of the three-acre site forms an irregular shape in the landscape as the western boundary gently triangulates toward the northeast corner. Thus, the property is bounded to the south by Memorial Boulevard, to the east by N. Iowa Avenue, and to the west and sloping northeast by Lakeland Hills Boulevard.

When the school was erected in 1928, Memorial Boulevard was known as North Street. Instead of Lakeland Hills Boulevard, Massachusetts Avenue continued north across North Street to intersect with N. Iowa Avenue and formed the facing boundary of the building. The original address of the school was 1005 N. Massachusetts Avenue (Sanborn Insurance Maps 1929/33). The historic school building sits on the northernmost two-thirds of the property, with the playground, tennis court-turned-basketball court and sand playing field just to its south. The grounds, once studded with symmetrically placed palms (Sanborn 1938), are now graced with azalea bushes, pine trees, magnolias, and oaks hung with Spanish moss.

The school site is approximately 3.37 acres. Initially the John F. Cox Grammar School site was on approximately one acre of land. When the Lake Morton School within the City of Lakeland burned down in the 1950s, the City wanted the site for a library. The Polk County School Board traded to the City the Lake Morton site in exchange for approximately two acres adjacent to the John F. Cox Grammar School site.

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Section number 7 Page 2 **COX, JOHN F. GRAMMAR SCHOOL  
Lakeland, Polk Co., FL**

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**ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION**

**Exterior**

The John F. Cox Grammar School is a brick, two-story, Italian Renaissance building (Photo 1). It has a central block plan with two symmetrical wings located on the north and south ends. The building sits on poured concrete piers with a clay tile foundation supporting 13-inch thick walls (Poteet and Whitworth 1927a:3). The ridge of the low pitched hip roof runs north to south with cross-hips at the wings and a cross-gable at the central location which forms the west-facing pavilion at the entrance. The original roofing of variegated blue-black asbestos slate has been replaced with clay-colored composition shingles. All visible exterior walls of the building are faced with buff-colored sand and lime brick manufactured by the Lakeland Brick and Tile Company (Poteet and Whitworth 1927b:5). All face brickwork is laid in garden bond with every seventh course full headers, except for the pavilion panels, which are laid in Flemish bond.

A distinctive feature of the entrance pavilion is the two-story high round arch composed of white artificial cast stone (Poteet and Whitworth 1927b:6) (Photo 2). Each of the 31 voussoirs of the entrance arch is studded with a smooth-finished round disc of 22-inch diameter which projects one-quarter inch from the surface. The original construction of the arched entrance contained wood-framed casement windows which opened out from the second floor. The casements were removed during a circa 1970 renovation, and replaced with two small metal awning windows. Suspended and centered just below the casements, there originally hung a tubular steel window-type flag pole (Poteet and Whitworth 1927v:9).

Just above the arch, the name of the school is inscribed with 10-inch cast bronze letters (Photo 3). A corbel table composed of 19 small brick arches runs along the pedimented parapet and is completed on each end by brick pilasters running from the ground to the top of the parapet. The brickwork contained within the pavilion is diapered, laid with Flemish Bond with every header in every third course projecting one inch. Located just inside the entrance pavilion on the south wall is a carved marble tablet inscribed with the name and date of the school, the names of six school board members at the time of construction, and the names of the architects and contractor responsible for the design and construction of the school.

The arch of the front pavilion is echoed on the east and west facades of both wing pavilions (Photos 1 & 4). They are diapered in the same Flemish Bond brickwork whose projecting headers provide textural interest with a diagonal patterning effect, but have no openings. The window openings, although symmetrical along both sides of the other parts of the west facade, do not fall into regular bays, but are arranged in groups of one, two, and three. This pattern is repeated on the second floor. All windows throughout have brick sills, and those located along the ground story have brick lintels as well. All windows are double hung sash, with most

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containing six over six lights, the only variation being the narrow windows which originally opened onto interior cloakrooms and contain two over two lights arranged vertically (Photo 5). Most windows still contain the original rolled glass and are in excellent condition, the exception being those removed for the installation of air-conditioning units.

At the center of the rear (east) facade, there is a gabled projection which houses the second floor auditorium (Photo 6). Two exterior sets of central stairs lead to the first and second floors. The second floor door has been preplaced and windows have been boarded over (Photo 7). Centered on the north and south elevations of the wings are one-story square, projecting porticoes with a three foot iron balconet atop (Photos 8, 9 & 10). Centered at each balconet is a six over six, double hung sash window.

**Interior**

On the first floor there is a central, north-south corridor (Photo 11). Narrower corridors intersect the main corridor in the center of the building. First floor rooms include nine classrooms, a boiler room, and restrooms. The original restrooms though somewhat modified, retain the original stalls (Photo 12). The second floor is accessed by stairways at the north and south ends of the main corridor and small stairways near the center of the building (Photo 11). These retain the original wood stairs, balustrade, rail and newel post (Photos 13 & 14).

The approximately 8 ½ foot wide corridors and classroom spaces have been maintained. The corridors, with carpeting laid over the original wood floor, retain their plaster walls and cork tack boards (Photos 15 & 16). Classrooms have a five-paneled wood doors with a glass pane in the second panel inset, with a single-pane transom above (Photo 17). Classroom floors are wood, with wood trim including baseboards, and picture molding at the ceiling. Walls are plaster, and original tongue and groove ceilings are visible in some of the classrooms (Photo 18 & 19); in some instances, a drop ceiling has been installed. The original blackboards and cork tack boards still exist. Each classroom has its original "wardrobe" which was created by erecting an interior wall along one wall of the classroom, with openings at each end of that wall to allow access to the wardrobe area which was equipped with coat hooks (Photo 20). Original lighting has been replaced with florescent fixtures.

**Non-contributing Resources**

There one non-contributing resource within the nomination boundary, a lunchroom running along the northern portion of the school building's east facade (Photo 21). A small physical education administration building and a storage room, both located just to the south of the school, are outside of the nominated boundary. All three date from more recent times and do not contribute to the historic significance of the site.

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**ALTERATIONS**

The building has seen some alterations over the years. Most of these have occurred as remodeling efforts to the interior, and the overall architectural integrity of the building remains to a high degree. The most recent alterations occurred in 1983-84 with the remodeling of the administrative offices as the entrance on the first floor (Photo 22). During this alteration, the northernmost entrance door was fixed in a closed position and the interior side of the opening was enclosed with metal studs and a drywall partition, leaving only the southernmost door for the entrance. The addition of a handicap ramp at the front entrance (Photo 2) and the construction of the physical education office building were the exterior alterations made at this time.

Circa 1974/75, the assembly room on the second floor was converted into a media center and library (Photo 23), replacing the original small library on the first floor. The ceilings were lowered and the steps to the old stage were removed. The original dressing rooms were converted into storage rooms for audio-visual equipment and a workroom. Dark wood paneling was placed floor to ceiling and the south walls were removed and the openings replaced with wood, leaving no window openings in the room. Air conditioning was also added at this time.

Sometime after 1966, the casement windows of the entrance arch were removed, most of the arch was filled in, and two small metal awning windows were added (Photo 2). A wood-frame lunch room, which runs along the northernmost portion of the building's east facade, appears to date from the early 1950s, replacing the original lunch room and kitchen located inside the building on the first floor. Another noteworthy addition to the exterior occurred in 1942 with the vertical setting of a bench mark in the west wall, located two feet south of the northwest corner of the school. This mark was placed by the University of Florida State Geodetic Survey (Gunter 1948:877).



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**SUMMARY**

The John F. Cox Grammar School is locally significant under Criteria A and C in the areas of Education and Architecture. Built as a grammar school in 1928, the building is significant for its relationship to the public education system of Lakeland, Florida, during the 1920s, when the Lakeland Special Tax School District was established. It is one of the few extant school buildings in the county built prior to 1948. The school is architecturally significant as a fine example of the Italian Renaissance style of architecture as adapted to a brick academic building. It has the style's characteristic symmetrical massing, masonry walls, hipped roof with wide, bracketed eaves, and round-arched recessed entrance. There are few existing Boom Times examples of this style which have the same level of historic integrity in Lakeland. The school was designed by Poteet & Whitworth of the architectural firm Associate Architects of Lakeland, Florida. The school was named for John F. Cox, who served as the Lakeland mayor for eleven years.

**HISTORIC CONTEXT**

**Early Development of Lakeland (1881-1900)**

In 1881, Abraham G. Munn, a wealthy manufacturer from Louisville, Kentucky, purchased several thousand acres of southern Florida from the trustees of the Florida Internal Improvement Trust Fund. His son, Morris G. Munn, was sent to locate the lands. An eighty acre tract of land among many lakes was selected as a town site and was later surveyed and platted by a second son, Samuel Munn. This site was to become the City of Lakeland.

Development for the state was accelerated by a renewed emphasis on the expansion of railroads. Between 1881 and 1891, 2,566 miles of railroad were placed into operation in the state. The Seaboard Air Line, traversing more than half of northern Florida, began to join the Atlantic Coast Line (Plant System). Abraham Munn granted the railroad significant concessions to ensure that a train stop was brought to Lakeland. In addition to the provision of right-of-way and several acres of terminals and track, at his own expense Munn constructed a station which was more typical of those in larger communities. The completed main line of the South Florida Railroad (later Plant System) from Tampa to Sanford, running through Lakeland, was opened to the public on February 11, 1884. This was the beginning of Lakeland's importance as a railroad town and contributed significantly to its development.

That same month in 1884, Abraham Munn organized the Lakeland Improvement Company along with Samuel A. Hartwell and Charles E. Hillmand for the purpose of laying out "streets, avenues and lots, . . . [for] the sale of the town lots so marked and mapped." Growth was rapid, and Lakeland became incorporated within one year,

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on January 1, 1885. By 1893, Lakeland had become an important shipping and rail yard site, with twenty trains arriving and departing daily. Due to the Lakeland's access to markets, including the Port of Tampa, a local agricultural export industry was created. By the turn of the century, a growing phosphate industry joined citrus production as a local generator of rail traffic and business activity.

**Lakeland's Expansion (1900-1920)**

Initial growth within Lakeland was significant; the population grew to 1000 by 1901, and between 1903 and 1908, it grew from 1200 to 4500. The growth continued, and by 1913, the population reached 8000. Growth brought with it greater demands for public services. Although the state of Florida would receive its greatest impetus for expanding its roadways under Governor John W. Martin's administration in 1925, Polk County would lead the way from 1914 through 1920. A bond issue, the largest ever passed in the South exclusively for road construction, was passed overwhelmingly to create "a road from every town in Polk County to every other town," a goal of 217 miles of new hard surfaced roads. By 1925, an official with the American Automobile Association stated that Polk County was the only county in the United States for which this was true. The highways connected with all the national systems, making Polk County "a veritable paradise for the motorist."

This action had the desired effect of gaining recognition for Polk County and its largest municipality, Lakeland. As a city providing services to its residents, Lakeland was one of the earliest to provide electric lights (1891), followed shortly thereafter in 1901 with a telephone exchange. By 1909, the voters had passed a bond issue for school improvements, light and water improvements, and the extension of water mains. In 1913 a City Hall/Fire Department was constructed, and in 1914 a \$165,000 bond issue was approved for the expansion of the light and water distribution system, fire department and the construction of a hospital. In that same year, Lakeland played host to many statewide conventions, including those of the Florida Bankers Association, Twentieth Annual Session of Women's Clubs, and the Florida Educational Association. Recognizing its many opportunities, Lakeland established its first tourist headquarters in 1916. Lakeland had a population of 1180 in 1900, but became a city of more than 7000 permanent residents by 1920. By 1925, growth in Lakeland pushed the population to 17,064.

**The "Boom Times" in Lakeland**

In the 1920s, publications touted Florida as a garden paradise. The opportunities for manufacturing were also lauded, with Florida described as the source of numerous raw materials; all that was lacking was manufacturing plants to convert them into products. The question remained: how was Florida to lure these investors? The reply came back, "advertise, advertise, advertise, to tell the world about its climate and its soil, and bring people within its boundaries." Publications were stating that Florida was growing faster than any other part of the

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United States. And "the greatest of all the industries in Florida is building - building homes, hotels, business structures and houses, to provide for the needs of the multiplying population and the increasing swarm of winter visitors." Further contributing to the allure of Florida cities was the constitutional amendment prohibiting state income and inheritance taxes. This resulted in a recruitment of capital into Florida banks and a corresponding speculation on property. Bank clearings of \$88,011,566.97 among the four Lakeland banks in 1924 was indicative of the growth in the area.

The state legislature, through an unusual provision of the Florida Statutes, allowed local governments the privilege of levying a direct tax for publicity purposes. These opportunities boosted many local Chambers of Commerce. Lakeland was recognized as having one of the largest chambers in the country, exceeded only by Los Angeles, which had a population of 1 million. Even among the non-publicity or advertising publications of 1925, Polk County was recognized for its achievements: "Polk County leads the world in production of oranges and grapefruit. A third of Florida's citrus crops are grown here. Nearly half of the world's supply of phosphate is dug from Polk County's soil."

In 1922, Florida Southern College relocated to Lakeland around Lake Hollingsworth, spurring development along the northern shore. In 1924, financiers from Cleveland, Ohio, came to Lakeland, attracted in part due to its serving as the training grounds for the Cleveland Indians. On the southern shore of Lake Hollingsworth they began developing several hundred acres into a grand subdivision, Cleveland Heights. The development included a golf course and lakefront club house.

During the peak "boom" years for Lakeland, 1924 and 1925, the rapid population increase strained the capacity of public utilities, housing and other facilities. The public sector responded with heavy bond issues to meet the abnormal demand. Public improvements on a large scale were launched, and building programs already underway were accelerated until an average of three buildings or more were completed every twenty-four hours. Within the downtown business district, the first high rises were constructed, reflecting the optimism of the period. With the change in scale came stylistic changes as well. Formerly, masonry buildings were predominantly of a vernacular design. With the 1920s came the Mediterranean Revival style that was popularized in South Florida by architect Addison Mizner.

In the latter part of 1925, the building boom slowed, and by 1926 it was evident that the speculative buying craze was over. Contributing to the decline was a breakdown in transportation services, precipitated by a railroad embargo which slowed the shipments of building supplies, and rumored tax changes during 1925 further impacted property transactions. When a hurricane struck Miami in 1926, the hopes of reviving the "boom times" ended. Lakeland, which suffered the decline of the boom as well, continued with its civic improvements which had been previously bonded. By 1928, when the improvements were completed, Lakeland

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found itself an “up-to-date city, an addition to all its natural advantages.” Many of these civic improvements were designed in the stylistic preoccupation of the period, Mediterranean Revival. These included the new city hall and auditorium, public library, fire/police station and public hospital. The Lake Mirror Promenade (NR 1983) was completed that year, having been designed by nationally noted landscape architect Charles Wellford Leavitt. Consistent with the City Beautiful movement, the grand Promenade was constructed as the easterly entrance into the city. Also that year, was the dedication of the National Home of the United Carpenters and Joiners of America, a complex in the Spanish Mission style on 1,950 acres to the north of the city.

**The Great Depression Era**

The effects of the Great Depression were experienced earlier in Florida than elsewhere in the country. The land speculation which had driven prices to inflated levels was common across the state. Lakeland had its share of land speculation, and the economic downturn started appearing in the city as early as the latter part of 1925. Lakeland banks began to fail. The Polk County Trust Company closed for liquidation in July 1926, reopened shortly thereafter, only to close for good in March 1928. The Central State Bank and Trust Company closed its doors in April 1928, and by May 1929, the First National Bank of Lakeland closed. In June of 1930, the Lakeland State Bank and Trust Company closed as well. Had it not been for DuPont interests, the City would have been without a bank. The Florida National Bank was opened by the DuPonts in September 1929, and a second new bank, Peoples Savings Bank, was opened in 1931.

During the 1930s, Lakeland became the spring training camp for the Detroit Tigers (1934), and Frank Lloyd Wright began his architectural designs for the campus of Florida Southern College. Public works projects funded under the Works Progress Administration were undertaken and the city began to revitalize. During the years of World War II, Lakeland and other Central Florida cities served as training grounds for military operations. In 1940, what was later to be known as the Lodwick School of Aeronautics, was established to serve as a primary pilot training school in Lakeland. With the establishment of Drane Field as a base of the U.S. Air Force, the city hosted thousands of airmen. By 1945, Lakeland’s population was 31,461. With the closing of defense installations following the war, however, some residents moved away, and in 1950, the population decreased to 30,851.

**Establishment of Local School Districts**

Earliest written records of the public school system in Polk County are dated from 1886. At the time there was the state Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction in Tallahassee, the state capital. This state office was responsible for reviewing the status of school funds under the local boards of public instruction. County school

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superintendents and treasurers were to maintain the financial records of the local schools, but the record keeping was often less than satisfactory.

During this early period of 1886, the Board of Public Instruction of Polk County was responsible for establishing "public free schools" where needed within the county. The County Board established the "Special Tax [School] Districts," which individually served the local communities. These local districts were able to vote on millage and to elect three trustees who served as the district's Board of Trustees. These trustees then had to be officially commissioned by the County Board of Public Instruction. The "Lakeland District" was one of the earliest districts and is referenced in the County Board's minutes of June 1886. The Lakeland District was given an annual budget of \$420, twice the amount of any other district.

Funding for public schools came in part from the county's apportionment of state aid under chapter 5381, known as the "80 percent act." However, during difficult times, such as in 1907, the County Board of Public Instruction found itself requesting the county's share of money from the state. During this period, teachers went without pay for a year. The major source of funds for capital projects came from the leveraging of a millage. A typical action for establishing a millage was for the "Special Tax School District" within the county to obtain a petition representative of twenty-five percent of the qualified electorate in favor of the bond issue. The county Board of Public Instruction then would pass a resolution concurring that the bonds were required for the stated purposes; that the Board agreed with the rate of interest and payment schedule; and that the Board authorized the full election. If the bond issue was passed by a majority of the voters within the district, the County Board of Public Instruction would certify the results, then authorize and execute the issuance of bonds on behalf of the Special Tax School District. The bonds were to be repaid from the taxes obtained from the Special Tax District in which the bond referendum was held. During the 1920s, bonds were issued to support white as well as "colored" schools in Lakeland. By 1935 there were 58 Special Tax School Districts and consolidated Special Tax Districts across the county.

Over time, proposals were made at the County Board of Public Instruction for the further consolidation of districts. One proposal was for the consolidation of the Highland City District with the Lakeland District. This was opposed by the patrons of the Highland City District who requested that they be consolidated with the Bartow District. By 1941, Chapter 20691 of the 1941 Acts of the Florida Legislature had been established which called for "adequate districts." The Polk County Board of Public Instruction passed a resolution that divided the county "into ten consolidated districts in order to have more adequate school districts in the county and in order to comply with the provision of said law." They placed the issue on a referendum ballot for approval by the qualified electorate for the reorganization of the districts, the election of trustees, and for determination of the district tax millage to be levied for the ensuing biennium. The newly created District 1 then became known as Consolidated Special Tax School District #1, Lakeland, Polk County, Florida. By the

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late 1950s statewide, school districts were consolidated into county districts, eliminating subdistricts at the county level.

**HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE**

The initial bids accepted by the Board of Public Instruction of Polk County for the construction of the John F. Cox Grammar School were \$41,866 for construction with the addition of \$8,620 for plumbing. These bids were from Berg & Marshall, Inc. and Modern Plumbing Company, respectively. Mr. R.L. Marshall, contractor and builder, was operating his own firm in Lakeland as early as 1912, providing plans and building residences, specializing in the bungalow. The Lakeland architectural firm of Albert J. Poteet and Henry P. Whitworth, the designers of the Lakeland's Central Avenue School in 1926, was awarded the contract by the Board of Public Instruction to design the Iowa Avenue School, later named the John F. Cox Grammar School.

\*John Franklin Cox, born in Silmone, Mississippi, on July 29, 1874, moved to Lakeland in 1890. Upon arriving in Lakeland he entered the grocery and mercantile businesses, later became involved with city affairs, and served in the Florida legislature. By 1904, he served his first of four intermittent terms as mayor of Lakeland. He also served as president of the Lakeland Real Estate Board, was director on the Board of the Chamber of Commerce, and at one time served as City Treasurer. Cox was one of the first developers of real estate in the city, having been a developer within the Bon-Air and Dixieland subdivisions. He died on February 7, 1924.

The school has served the educational needs of the Lakeland community for over seventy years, with only a brief hiatus in 1991. In June of 1991, the school closed its doors as an elementary school and reopened in September of that year as the new center for the CYESIS Program, which is also part of the Polk County school system. CYESIS, which means birth in Greek, is an alternative program for teenage parents which both assists and encourages students to continue their academic courses during the time of pregnancy.

**ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT:**

**Italian Renaissance (1890-1935)**

The Italian Renaissance style was part of the Eclectic movement, which began in the 1880s and continued through the 1940s. The Eclectic movement stressed relatively pure copies of architectural traditions as originally built in different European countries. The Italian Renaissance style was based on the Italianate style of the nineteenth century and on the Italian models from the Renaissance. With the development of new masonry veneering techniques after World War I, the Italian Renaissance style was particularly popular for monumental buildings, often in vernacular versions. Some characteristics of the Italian Renaissance style

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include low-pitched hipped or flat roofs, roof tiles, symmetrical facades, masonry walls, an accented entry area, round arches, and wide bracketed eaves. Many have recessed entry porches.

**Lakeland School Architecture**

Across the country, the designs of many new schools in the 1920s reflected the latest educational theories of the time, incorporating specialized use areas in addition to classrooms within a large building format. Innovative approaches in presenting curricula were implemented. The buildings also reflected a new interest in the aesthetics of design as an element of community pride, resulting in the hiring of professional architects to design buildings using not only the latest construction techniques but also up-to-date stylistic features.

While the styles among school buildings constructed in Lakeland are different, there are some broad similarities among them. The buildings may be one or two stories in height. The masonry finish material of choice was brick. While the buildings were typically not highly ornamented, brick was employed in decorative elements through the use of corbelling and different course types. Cast stone is another material frequently utilized for ornamentation. Among the distinguishing characteristics of the school architecture, including the masonry vernacular style, is the existence of a well defined entry, typically centered on the main elevation. The masonry buildings utilize a parapet at the front entry, adding to the perceived height of the building. The roofs were usually hip or gabled. Fenestration is generally regular, though windows may be double or single hung sash and/or awning, always of multi-lights. Floor plans often had a rectangular central portion with wings or projections, though variations exist. The interior plans usually had a corridor off which there were classrooms. In some instances the corridors were double loaded. School houses of the period contained an auditorium or "assembly room."

**Albert J. Poteet and Henry P. Whitworth**

Poteet and Whitworth were architects from Lakeland, Florida. Albert J. Poteet was a native of Louisiana who lived most of his life in Lakeland. He was born circa 1879 and died in Lakeland on May 6, 1949. It was Poteet who had drawn the plans in 1915 for the city of Lakeland's early hospital, Morrell Memorial Hospital. During the mid 1920s, Poteet and Whitworth were voted by the Polk County Board of Public Instruction to design other schools in addition to John F. Cox Grammar School. Among these schools were the Central Avenue School, the Polk City School, and the Dundee School.

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**ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE**

The John F. Cox Grammar School, with its central block plan and two symmetrical wings displays many of the characteristics of the Italian Renaissance style. Its low-pitched hip roof with broadly overhanging boxed eaves with decorative brackets, is highly characteristic of this style. Also common to this style are its round arches, recessed entry, and symmetrical elevations. The school is significant as an example of the Italian Renaissance style as adapted to an academic building, and as an example of the designs adopted for progressive schools in the 1920s.



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**BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The boundary includes that part of "all E of Lklnd Hills Blvd Hwy in SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  less add R/W SR #600-A" as shown on the attached site plan.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The boundaries for the John F. Cox Grammar School incorporate only that part of the school property that includes the historic school building, the lunch room, and the area immediately around them that has historically been associated with the school.

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**Inventory of Photographs**

1. John F. Cox Grammar School  
1005 North Massachusetts Avenue
2. Lakeland, Polk County, Florida
3. L.L. Parks
4. 1997
5. City of Lakeland, Community Development Department
6. View of front (west) facade, main entrance, camera facing southeast
7. Photograph 1 of 23

Items 1 through 5 above pertain to all photographs listed below, unless otherwise indicated.

6. View of west facade main entry, camera facing east
7. Photograph 2 of 23
  
6. View of entry parapet with brick detailing and cast stone coping, camera facing east
7. Photograph 3 of 23
  
6. View of decorative arched panels of brick and cast stone, camera facing east
7. Photograph 4 of 23
  
6. View of brick face and brick detailing at lentils, sills, and floor line, camera facing east
7. Photograph 5 of 23
  
6. View of east (rear) facade with wings and central projection shown, camera facing northwest
7. Photograph 6 of 23
  
6. View of east facade of rear two-story central projection, camera facing west
7. Photograph 7 of 23
  
6. View of south facade of south wing, camera facing northwest
7. Photograph 8 of 23
  
6. View of north face of north wing, camera facing south
7. Photograph 9 of 23

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- 6. View of entry on south wing, camera facing north
- 7. Photograph 10 of 23
  
- 6. View of interior of first floor corridor, camera facing north
- 7. Photograph 11 of 23
  
- 6. View of interior of restrooms with original stalls, camera facing west
- 7. Photograph 12 of 23
  
- 6. View of interior stair at north wing, camera facing south
- 7. Photograph 13 of 23
  
- 6. View of interior central stair from first floor, camera facing west
- 7. Photograph 14 of 23
  
- 6. View of stair at south wing, camera facing south
- 7. Photograph 15 of 23
  
- 6. View of second floor corridor, camera facing south
- 7. Photograph 16 of 23
  
- 6. View of original interior five-panel classroom door with three-light transom
- 7. Photograph 17 of 23
  
- 6. View of interior of north end classroom with original chalkboards, wood floors and trim, camera facing southeast
- 7. Photograph 18 of 23
  
- 6. View of original classroom chalkboards, cork boards, wood floors, and trim, camera facing northeast
- 7. Photograph 19 of 23
  
- 6. View of original wardrobe interior with original shelving and coat hooks, camera facing east
- 7. Photograph 20 of 23

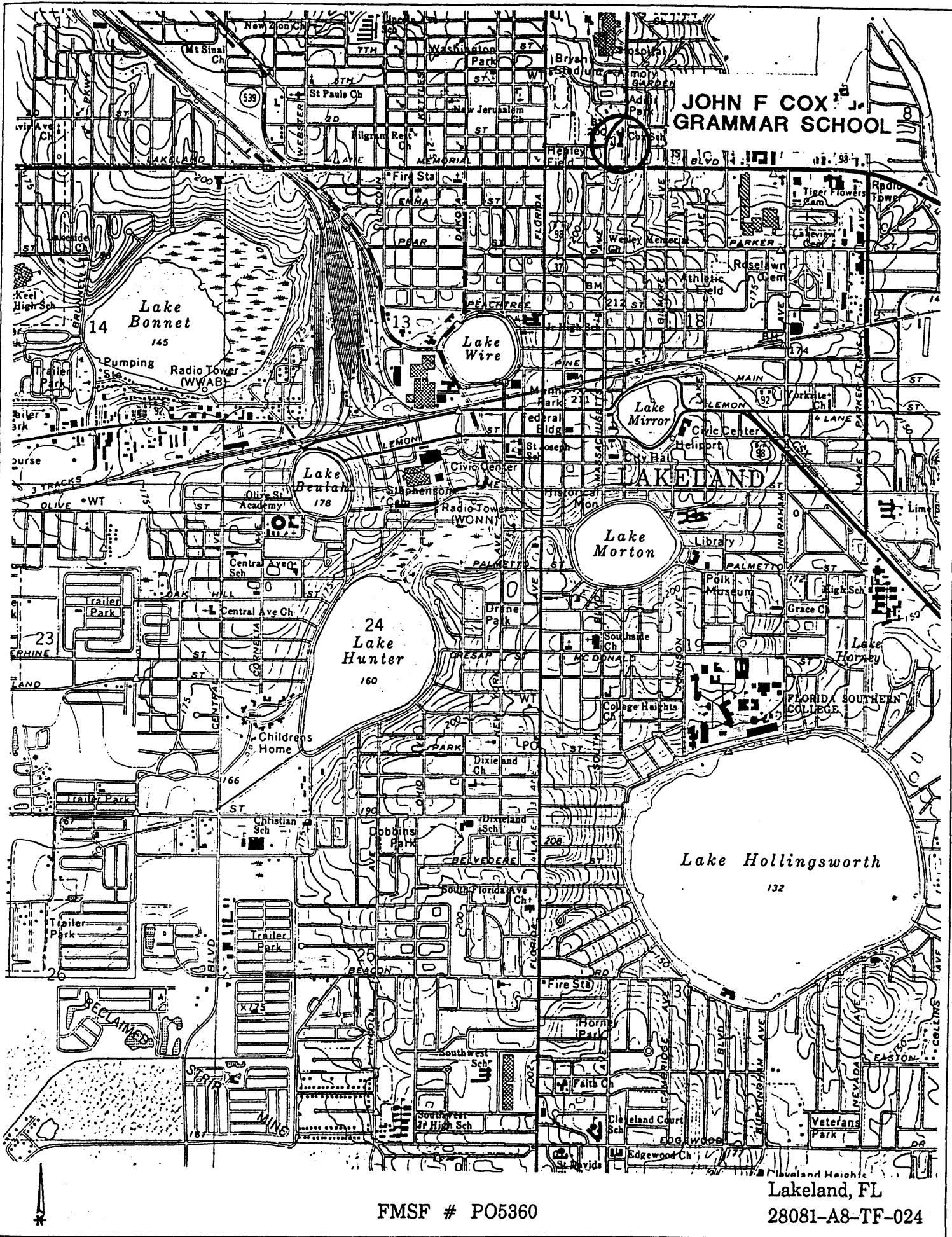
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- 
3. Alma P. Hubbard
  4. April 1993
  5. Janus Research/Piper Archaeology
  6. Lunchroom on rear (east) elevation, camera facing southwest
  7. Photograph 21 of 23
  
  6. View of altered front entry interior, camera facing west
  7. Photograph 22 of 23
  
  6. View of interior of altered second floor auditorium, camera facing southeast
  7. Photograph 23 of 23



**JOHN F COX**  
**GRAMMAR SCHOOL**

Lake Bonnet  
145

Lake Wire

Lake Mirror

Lake Denton  
178

Lake Morton

Lake Hunter  
160

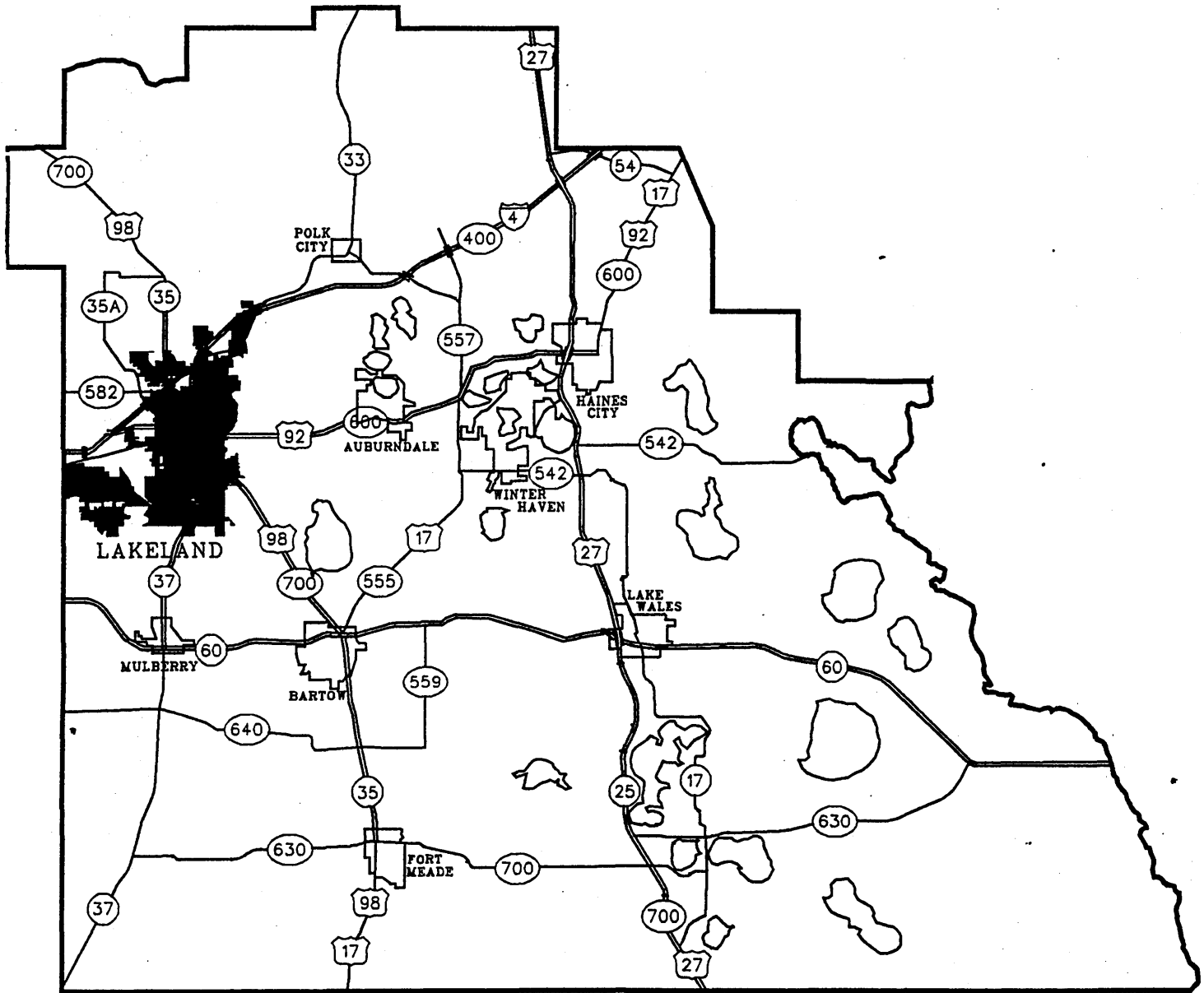
Lake Hollingsworth  
132

Lakeland, FL  
28081-A8-TF-024

FMSF # PO5360



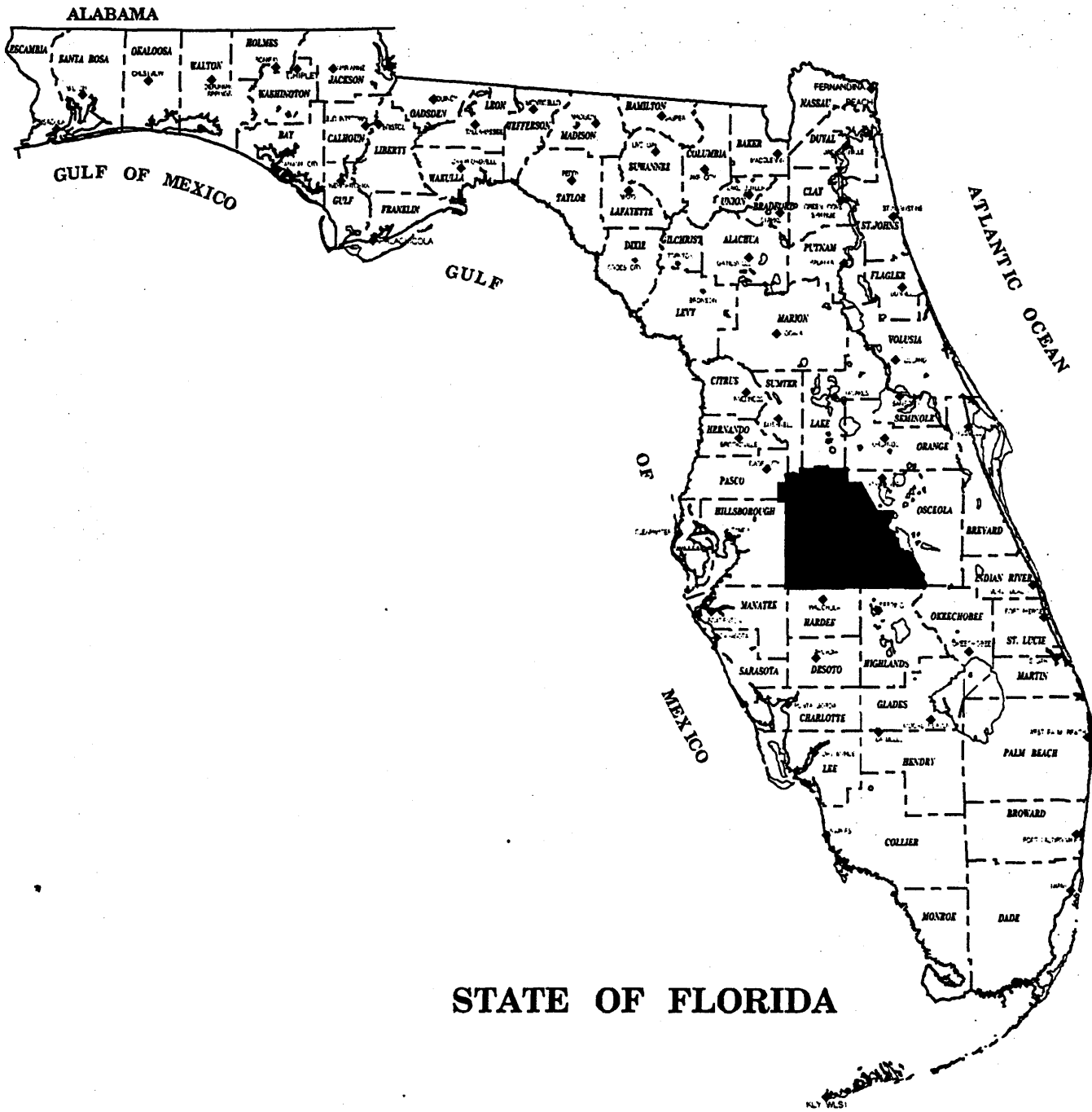
# LOCATION MAP CITY OF LAKELAND



## POLK COUNTY



# LOCATION MAP POLK COUNTY

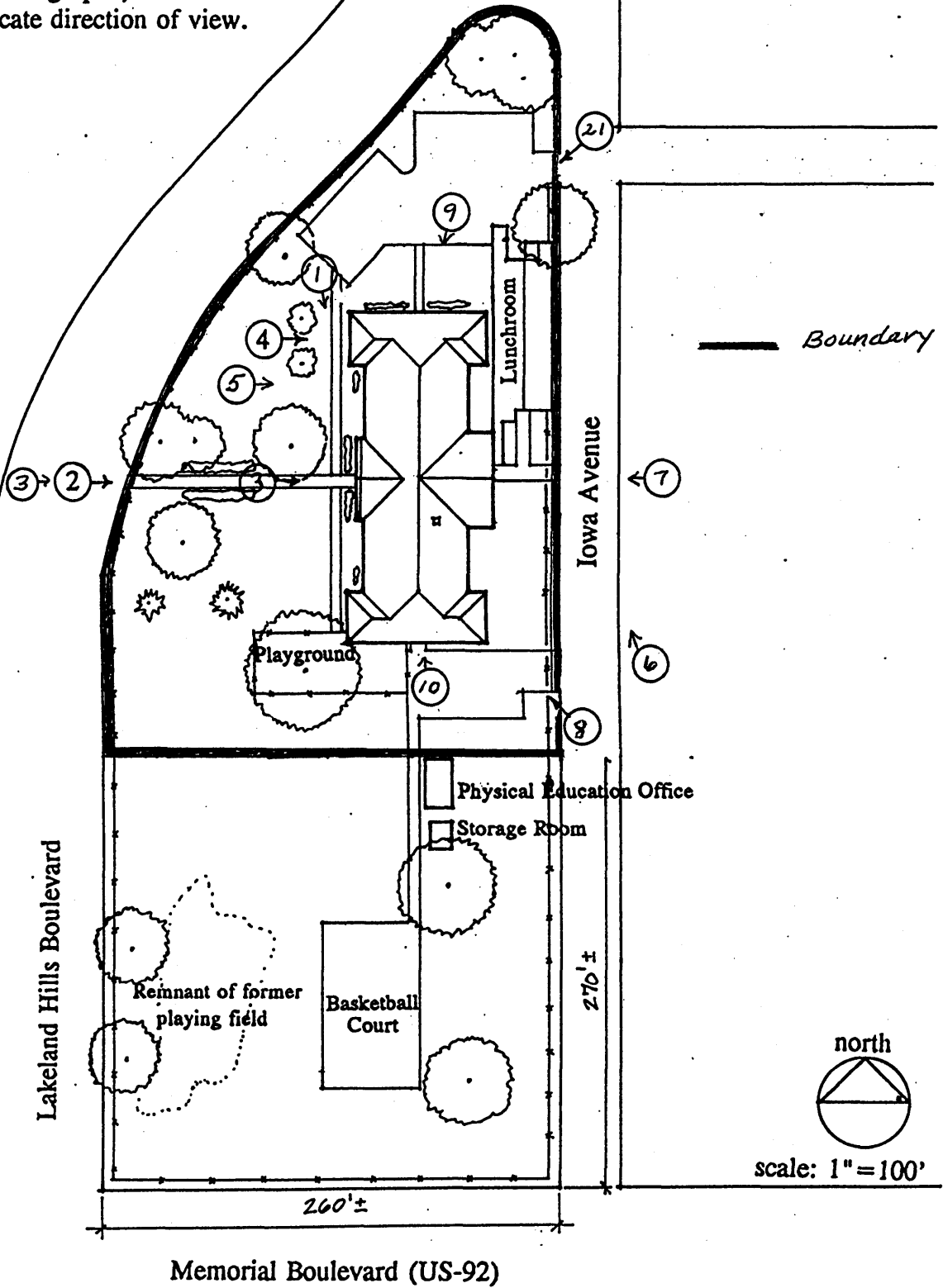


STATE OF FLORIDA



**NOTE:**

Encircled numbers are keyed to photographs; their arrows indicate direction of view.

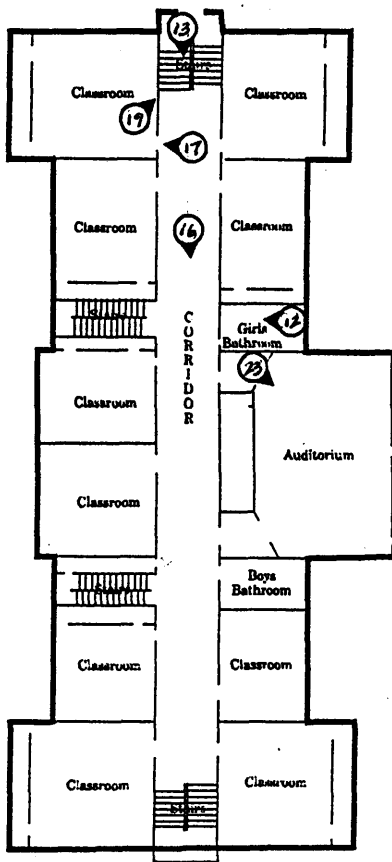


The John F. Cox Grammar School  
1005 N. Massachusetts Avenue  
FSF # 8-PO-3410

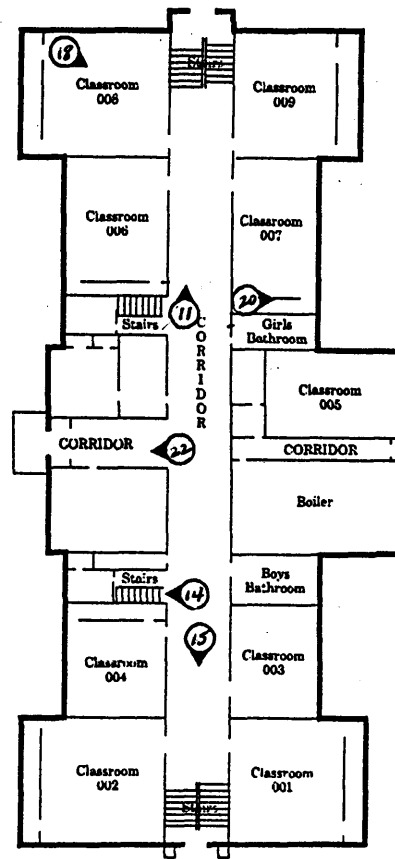
# JOHN F. COX GRAMMAR SCHOOL

## Floor Plans and Inventory of Photographs

### National Register Nomination



**SECOND FLOOR**



**FIRST FLOOR**

**SCALE**

