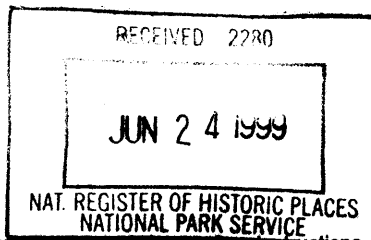


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

865



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If 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 Central Avenue School

other names/site number Central Avenue Elementary School/PO5362

2. Location

street & number 604 South Central Avenue n/a  not for publication

city or town Lakeland n/a  vicinity

state FLORIDA code FL county Polk code 105 zip code 33815

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

[Signature] 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) \_\_\_\_\_

[Signature]  
Signature of the Keeper

7/22/99  
Date of Action

Central Avenue 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	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	total

**Name of related multiple property listings**  
(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)

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

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

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

**7. Description**

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

Other: Masonry Vernacular  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick  
walls Brick  
\_\_\_\_\_  
roof Asphalt  
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**

1926-1949 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1926 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

n/a \_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

n/a \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Architects: Poteet, Albert J. (Poteet & Whitworth)

Builders: Streater Brothers

\_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

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

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

City of Lakeland \_\_\_\_\_

# \_\_\_\_\_

Central Avenue School  
Name of Property

Polk Co., FL  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** Approximately 1 acre

**UTM References**

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1	7	4	0	4	3	4	0	3	1	0	1	2	5	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 Lisa L. 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 Post Office 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 Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 1 **CENTRAL AVENUE SCHOOL  
Lakeland, Polk Co., FL**

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**SUMMARY**

Central Avenue School, located at 604 South Central Avenue, Lakeland, Florida, is a two-story masonry building from the mid 1920s. The building is an example of the local school architecture expressed in the Masonry Vernacular style. The building, of hollow-clay tile with red face brick, was constructed in 1926, the year in which the Florida "Boom Time" came to an end. Built as a grammar school, the building has a prominent two-story entry of cast stone which projects from the brick wall. Both brick and cast stone are materials used as decorative elements on the building. The building's floor plan is a modified "T" in shape, with the entry along a rectangular facade and a central rear projection housing the kitchen/cafeteria on the first floor and auditorium above on the second floor. The foundation is a poured concrete footing, with a flat roof on the main body of the building and a hip over the rear projection housing the auditorium. Although alterations have been made, the building retains its architectural integrity to a significant degree and is representative of vernacular school architecture of its era.

**Setting**

Central Avenue School is located at the corner of South Central Avenue and West Hickory Street, with the main front entry facing Hickory Street. Central Avenue is a north-south collector road which lies to the immediate west of the original core of the City of Lakeland. The development surrounding Central Avenue School remains predominantly residential, with single family residences. Central Avenue itself retains a residential character at the site of the school. Contributing to the residential character of the area are the sidewalks and tree canopy. The school's front entry is set back from and accessible off the Hickory Street sidewalk. The entire school property is approximately 4.45 acres, containing the original and non-contributing buildings and parking areas. A non-historic building is attached to the historic Central Avenue School by a covered walkway.

**Exterior**

Central Avenue School was built in 1926 during the Florida "Boom Time" era in the masonry vernacular style of school architecture, utilizing brick and cast stone as elements of detail. This two-story building has a "T" shape plan, with the main body of the building having a rectangular plan and a central projection at the rear which housed the boiler room and original cafeteria on the first floor and the auditorium on the second (See Floor Plans). This projection contains a hip roof. Classrooms and administrative offices occupy the remainder of the space off central corridors. The building is constructed of hollow-clay tiles with variegated red face brick. The brick is laid in stretcher bond fashion with each seventh course laid with alternating headers and stretchers (Photos 1, 6 and 7). Portions of the west and east faces have been re-bricked (Photos 2 and 8). The use of brick as an ornamental element is exhibited in many of the window sills and lintels. The brick sills are of

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Section number 7 Page 2 **CENTRAL AVENUE SCHOOL  
Lakeland, Polk Co., FL**

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header bricks and the lentils are formed with soldier bricks (Photos 6 and 9). At the floor line there is a decorative belt of header bricks (Photo 7). On the rear (south) projection (housing the auditorium) there is a decorative brick belt which occurs eight courses below the roof line (Photo 9). The belt is comprised of a course of soldier bricks topped by a course of header bricks. At the roof line, the top course is of header bricks. The hip roof on the projection has projecting eaves with exposed rafters (Photos 6 and 9). There are awning windows with 20, 15, or 12 lights.

On the main rectangular body of the building, the roof is flat and a brick parapet extends above a decorative cast stone band, with the parapet being topped by a smaller stone coping (Photos 1 and 7). The cast stone band is prominent on the main body of the building, wrapping the front facade and sides. The band serves as the lentils for the second story windows along these faces, with cast stone serving as the sills of the larger windows. Cast stone is used in contrast to the red brick at the projecting central entrance. This front facade, two-story height projection is approximately six feet deep and is of cast stone (Photo 10). The cast stone band runs through the projection and is topped by a stepped parapet at the entry. Surrounding the second story windows on this entry projection are cast stone quoins between which the red brick face is visible. The stones themselves are of both large square and rectangular size, with gauged stone over the entryway (Photo 11). The second floor fenestration includes original twelve-light windows with the central six panes in an operable awning frame. The first floor windows in the entry have been replaced with paired six-light awning windows, as have the larger remaining windows on the main body of the building. The smaller, original awning windows remain.

The use of cast stone in the quoins further unifies the building. These are oversized quoins which begin at the brick belt at the floor line and extend to either the cast stone belt on the main body of the building (Photo 8), or to the brick belt at the second story of the rear projection (Photo 9).

**Interior**

The interior of the building retains much of its original configuration, housing classroom and administrative offices in the main block. The central corridors which run east-west (Photos 12 and 13) have wood floors covered by carpet. The walls and ceiling are plaster, with the addition of paneling on the administrative offices on the first floor, west end of north wall. Baseboards are wood, and wood hand rails extend the length of the corridors. Access to the second floor is found in staircases at both the east and west ends of the central corridor; at the central entry; and in two stairwells off the corridor on the south wall which are on either side of the entry to the rear projection (Photos 14 and 15). The stairs are the original wood stairs with open string. The newel post, handrail, and balustrade are wood, with the newel and balusters being of a simple square design.

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Lakeland, Polk Co., FL**

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Classroom doors are original five panel wood doors with three light transoms (Photo 16). Some of the classrooms retain the original chalkboard and cork tack board frames (Photos 17 and 18), as well as the "wardrobes" (Photos 19 and 20). These wardrobes were 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 and cubicles. The floors are wood covered with vinyl tiles, and the walls are either plaster or applied paneling. The ceilings have been dropped.

The cafeteria area has been altered with a south end addition, though the original free-standing wood posts remain visible (Photo 21). The flooring has been covered with vinyl, but historic 4-inch beveled wood baseboards remain. The ceiling has been dropped.

The auditorium on the second floor retains its original character and materials (Photo 22). The entry is through two sets of five-panel wood double doors (Photo 23). Each set of doors has a five light transom. The walls are plaster and the ceiling dropped. The auditorium has a sloped original pine wood floor. The original metal and wood seating remains bolted to the floor (Photo 24); though there is evidence that at one time rows of seats between the current rows were removed, potentially to create expanded leg area. Seating is arranged with a center section consisting of ten seats per row, with two side sections of six seats per row. The metal awning windows are deeply recessed. The auditorium is equipped with a stage, wings and dressing areas. The walls of the stage are wood tongue and groove paneling and unfinished exposed lath. Dressing rooms are on both sides of the stage. On the west side there is a restroom with unfinished, exposed hollow clay tile walls (Photo 25).

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**SUMMARY**

Central Avenue School is significant at the local level under Criteria A and C in the areas of Education and Architecture. Built as a grammar school in 1926, 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. It is architecturally significant as a reflection of the use of a vernacular style with cast stone and brick ornamentation, and the incorporation of modern school designs that reflected changing concepts of education in the public schools in the 1920s. Central Avenue School was designed by Poteet & Whitworth Architects of Lakeland, who were responsible for other Lakeland civic buildings, including Morrell Memorial Hospital and the John F. Cox Grammar School. The builders were Streater Brothers of Lakeland, who also served as contractors on school buildings in Mulberry and Auburndale, as well as the Webster Avenue and Cleveland Court schools in and around Lakeland.

The Central Avenue School has remained under the ownership of the Polk County School Board. Although the setting surrounding the school remains residential, the school no longer functions as an elementary school, but is now an adult education facility.

**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



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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, 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.

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**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 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.

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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 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.

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**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 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

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

The designs of 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. There, 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.

**ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT: Masonry Vernacular Schools**

By definition a vernacular style refers to one which does not entirely conform to a prescribed style. Reasons for the origins of vernacular styles can range from the creative skills of the architect to the more typical and more practical reflection of readily available materials and skills of the local craftsmen and laborers. To some degree, economic constraints dictated the design, both interior and exterior, for the schools buildings of the period. These were public buildings and their funding at the time was based on the desires of the voting public within their own small district.

While vernacular styles among school buildings constructed in Lakeland are different, there are some broad similarities. 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.

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Floor plans often had a rectangular central portion with wings or projections, though variation 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."

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

As part of the "Lakeland Special Tax School District Number 1," the Polk Board of Public Instruction approved the plans prepared by the architectural firm of Poteet & Whitworth of Lakeland for the construction of the Central Avenue School. At the April 29, 1926 meeting of the Board, the contractor, Streater Brothers of Lakeland, was awarded as the lowest bidder on the contract for the construction of the school. The Streater Brothers bid totaled \$58,200. Both firms were well known in Polk County, having worked on other major buildings.

Poteet & 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 & Whitworth were voted by the Polk County Board of Public Instruction to design other schools in addition to Central Avenue School. Among these schools were the John F. Cox Grammar School, the Polk City School, and the Dundee School.

The firm known as Streater Brothers was formed circa 1925 by John Baxter Streater with his brothers, W.H. and Joe. John Streater was born in Chesterfield, South Carolina, on November 2, 1874. After completing his schooling in South Carolina, he moved with his parents to Lakeland, Florida, 1893. He began his work initially in Lakeland with his uncle, W.D. McRae, until became an independent contractor. After a brief partnership with W.F. Kennedy, working under the name of Streater & Kennedy, he established the Streater Brothers contracting firm circa 1925. Among the buildings Steater was responsible for constructing in Polk County were the Davenport City Hall, Polk County Trust Company building, the Methodist Church in Winter Haven, and public schools. The schools constructed within Polk County, in addition to Central Avenue School, included Cleveland Court School, Webster Avenue School, and the high school in Davenport. Streater's work in Duval County included the Stockton Building and brick plant in South Jacksonville.

Central Avenue School is an example of the local Masonry Vernacular style expressed through school architecture. Common structural materials, such as hollow clay tile were used and surfaced with variegated red brick. Enhancement of the brick facades was through the use of cast or "art" stone. Cast stone at Central Avenue School was utilized extensively at the projecting front facade entry, in bands at the parapet, in quoins, and in cast sills of windows. The brick itself is used as a decorative element, as evidenced through the belt

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course at the floor line and at the roof line of the rear projection. Multi-light windows are a common feature of the local school architecture and range from original 20 lights to six-light awning windows. Consistent with the vernacular style of local school architecture is the prominent central entry. Classrooms are double-loaded off unconditioned wood-floored corridors. Each school had a boiler room which provided the steam for heat. Typical of the period, the classrooms have high ceilings with original cork and black boards in many rooms. Schools of the period had dedicated auditoriums. A distinctive feature of the Central Avenue School is its second floor auditorium, which remains essentially unaltered, retaining its original sloped pine floor and original wood and metal seating.

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**Interviews**

Ketcham, Nell, former Central Avenue School student circa 1945, by L.L. Parks, March 1997.

Sawyer, Nancy, former Central Avenue School student circa 1941, by L.L. Parks, March 1997.



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**BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The boundaries of the historic Central Avenue School are that part of W  $\frac{1}{2}$  of S  $\frac{1}{2}$  SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  in Township 28 S, Range 23 E, Section 24 enclosed by the boundary line shown on the accompanying site plan. The historic school is bounded on the north by W. Hickory Street, on the west by S. Central Avenue, on the south by the southern property line, and on the east by a line running half way between the historic building and a nonhistoric building that is attached to the east elevation by a covered walkway.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The boundaries encompass all of the significant historic resources and the area immediately around them that were associated with the school during the period of significance from 1926 to 1949.

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**Inventory of Photographs**

1. Central Avenue School  
604 South Central Avenue
2. Lakeland, Polk County, Florida
3. L.L. Parks
4. 1997
5. City of Lakeland, Community Development Department
6. View of front (north) facade, major entrance, camera facing southeast
7. Photograph 1 of 25

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

6. View of west facade, camera facing southeast
7. Photograph 2 of 25
  
6. View of south facade of main body of building, camera facing north
7. Photograph 3 of 25
  
6. View of west facade of rear two-story projection, camera facing east
7. Photograph 4 of 25
  
6. View of south facade of rear two-story projection, camera facing northwest
7. Photograph 5 of 25
  
6. View of east face of rear projection, camera facing west
7. Photograph 6 of 25
  
6. View of south facade of main body of building, camera facing north
7. Photograph 7 of 25
  
6. View of east face of main body of building, camera facing northwest
7. Photograph 8 of 25
  
6. View of cast stone quoins and brick face, camera facing northwest
7. Photograph 9 of 25

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6. View of front projecting entry of cast stone, camera facing south
7. Photograph 10 of 25
  
6. View of cast stone and original windows, camera facing south
7. Photograph 11 of 25
  
6. View of interior of first floor corridor, camera facing west
7. Photograph 12 of 25
  
6. View of interior of second floor corridor, camera facing east
7. Photograph 13 of 25
  
6. View of central interior stair from first floor, camera facing west
7. Photograph 14 of 25
  
6. View of interior central stair from second floor
7. Photograph 15 of 25
  
6. View of original interior five-panel classroom door with three-light transom
7. Photograph 16 of 25
  
6. View of interior of north end classroom with original chalkboards
7. Photograph 17 of 25
  
6. View of interior of classroom with original cork and chalk boards and plaster walls
7. Photograph 18 of 25
  
6. View of south end classroom with original wardrobe visible, camera facing west
7. Photograph 19 of 25
  
6. View of interior of wardrobe with original shelving and coat hooks visible
7. Photograph 20 of 25
  
6. View of interior of cafeteria with original wood posts visible, camera facing south
7. Photograph 21 of 25

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- 6. View of interior of second floor auditorium; stage and original seating visible, camera facing south
- 7. Photograph 22 of 25
  
- 6. View of interior of second floor auditorium, original pairs of five-panel double doors and five-light transoms visible, camera facing north
- 7. Photograph 23 of 25
  
- 6. View of original wood and metal auditorium seating
- 7. Photograph 24 of 25
  
- 6. View of back-stage restroom with original structural clay tile visible, camera facing west
- 7. Photograph 25 of 25

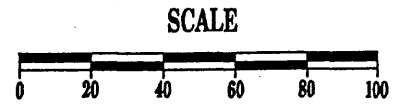
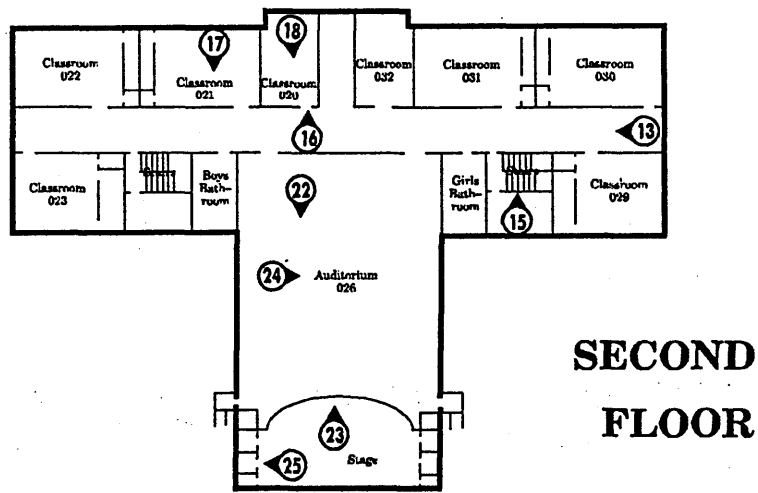
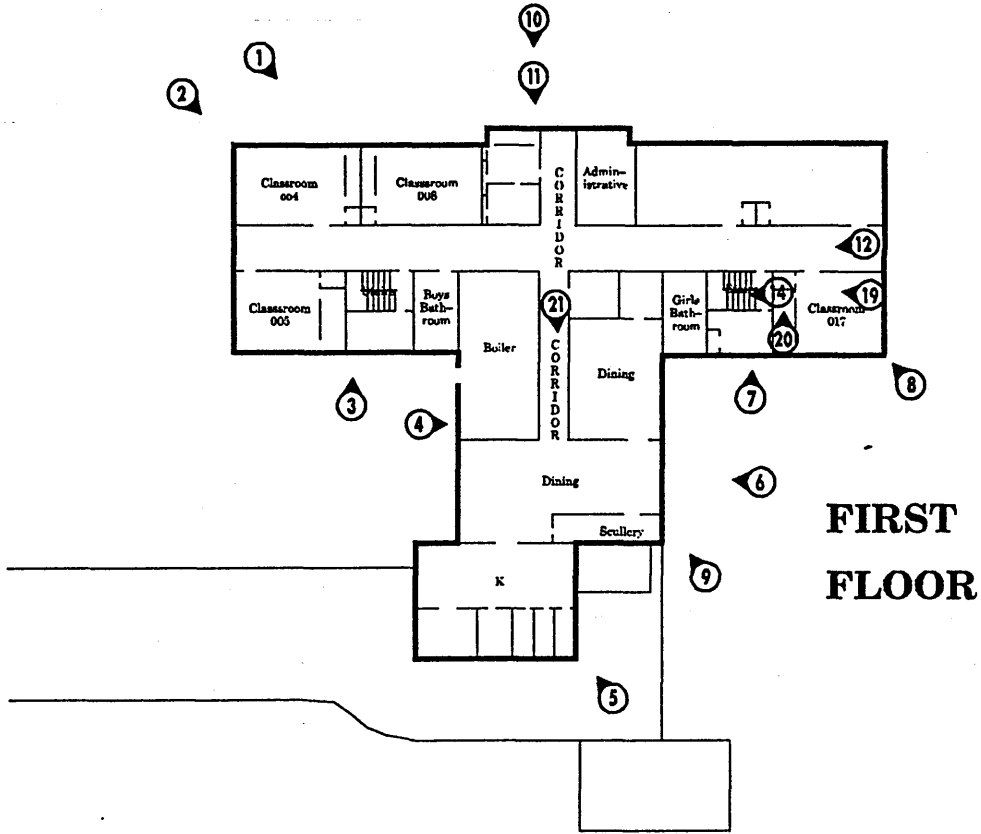




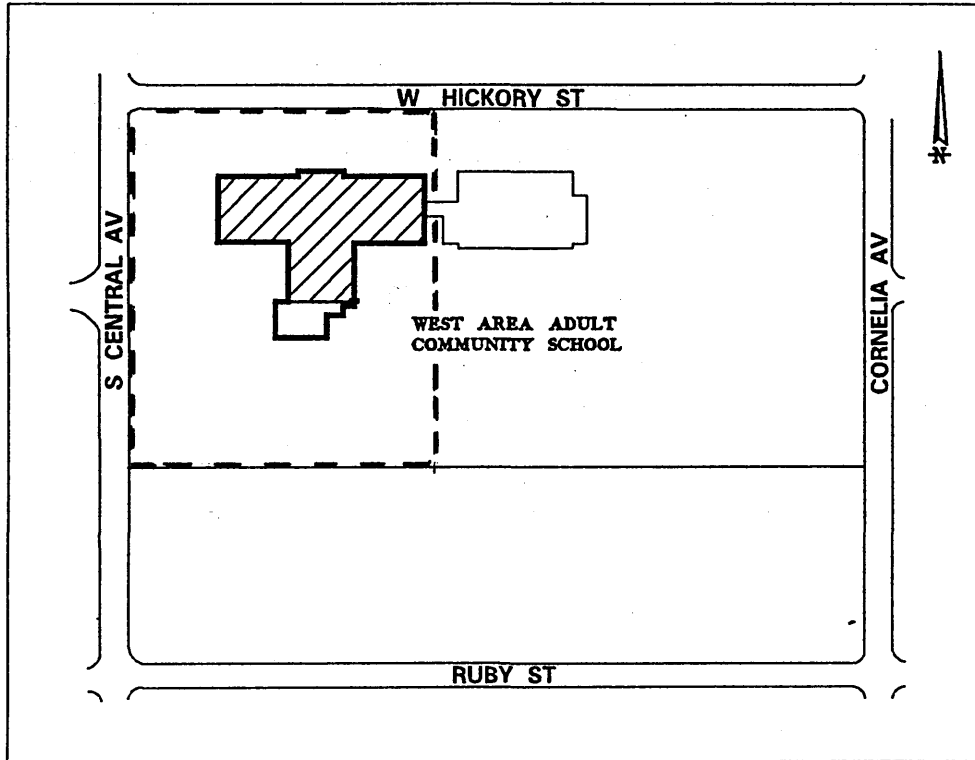
# CENTRAL AVENUE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL


## Floor Plans and Inventory of Photographs

### National Register Nomination



# CENTRAL AVENUE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL Boundary and Contributing Structure Map



- Boundary Line
-  Original Structure

Note: Temporary portable structures not shown

No Scale

Central Avenue Elementary School  
604 South Central Avenue  
Lakeland, Florida