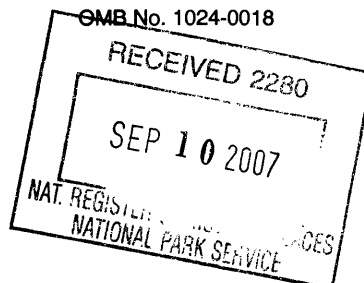


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



1109

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 The Progressive Club
other names/site number

2. Location

street & number 3377 River Road not for publication
city or town Johns Island vicinity
state South Carolina code SC county Charleston code 019 zip code 29455

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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 of certifying official Elizabeth M. Johnson Date 9/7/2007
Elizabeth M. Johnson, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, S.C. Dept. of Archives and History, Columbia, S.C.
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
 determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
 determined not eligible for the National Register
 removed from the National Register
 other (explain):
Signature of the Keeper Linda McClelland Date of Action 10/24/07

The Progressive Club
Name of Property

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources)

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Category: Social
Social
Social
Education
Education
Commerce/Trade

Subcategory: Meeting Hall
Clubhouse
Civic
School
Dorm
Store

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Category: Vacant/Not In Use

Subcategory:

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

No Style

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete Block
walls Concrete Block

roof Asphalt; Metal/Tin
other _____

Narrative Description

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

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General Description

The Progressive Club Sea Island Center is a one-half (1/2) acre rural property sited on Johns Island, South Carolina, located at 3377 River Road at the intersection of River Road and Royal Oak Drive. Since 1956 the club has served as a vital community center for the African American needs of island residents, providing a home for the Progressive Club's legal and financial assistance program, adult education program as a "Citizenship School" and as a community recreational and meeting place and grocery store. In 1963, with the construction of the existing one-story cement block structure, the club expanded its role as a community center by providing a multi-purpose gymnasium, commercial kitchen, patio (later a screen porch and reading room), dormitory rooms, and exterior space for fuel pumps and a recreational volleyball court. The existing cement block structure is an irregular shaped rectangular one-story structure consisting of four distinct sections. A 30' x 50' commercial store facing River Road, the main 50' x 76' multi-use gymnasium, and a rear 9' x 73' dormitory are original to its 1963 construction. At the southeast intersection of the gymnasium and rear dormitory is a 19' x 23' original patio area. Shortly after construction the patio was covered as a screen porch and in 1965 it was enclosed for use as a sunroom/reading area. While the 1965 porch enclosure's exterior siding is a mustard yellow, the general exterior is painted white and retains a green signage band trimmed in yellow along sections of its east and north elevations. At the front northeast corner is printed "The Progressive Club" as the painted band turns upward to run over the "store" section's front entry door and storefront window. The signage band was not original to the building being added in the 1970s.

The site facing River Road retains its mid-20th century rural Sea Island context. River Road is characterized as a slow winding, narrow, two lane, paved road lined with large ancient live oaks that form a canopy over the highway. The site was the former location of the Mt. Zion Elementary School, a public school designated for the Island's African American children. Immediately to the east of the site is a ca. 1961 subdivision (Walpole Subdivision) whose neighborhood of eighteen quarter acre residential lots and modest one-story homes facing River Road is typical of the small Island subdivisions developed for sale to the African American community of the era. The property next door to the Progressive Club has a 133'-long chain link fence and was the home of Esau Jenkins. At the intersection of Royal Oak Drive and River Road just to the west of the site are large brick piers that serve as the entry to the modern River Oak's subdivision. The subdivision is set back toward Abbapoola Creek and is not visible from River Road. Surrounding the area remain large cleared tracks of farmland and overgrown wooded fields with drainage ditches and old banks of scrub oaks, magnolia and other 20th century local vegetation.

In 1956 the Progressive Club purchased the old Mt. Zion Elementary School property. The old school lacked electrical wiring and indoor plumbing. The Progressive Club members repaired and renovated the building and utilized the front portion as a community grocery store and the back portion for community meetings, adult education and citizenship classes.

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In 1963, Club members demolished the old Mt. Zion Elementary School building and built the existing Progressive Club structure at a cost of \$23,000.00 to accommodate the growing needs of the Island community. With volunteer help from the Progressive Club members and their extended family, local builder Esakia Jones completed the structure. The building expanded the existing community center uses of the site. Its architectural configuration was designed to accommodate additional multi-use community meeting, classroom and recreational needs, kitchen facilities, day care, dormitory space, as well as providing for a larger space for the community grocery for home and agricultural fuel needs (gas and kerosene).

The 30' x 50' "store" section with its narrow end facing River Road was designed to accommodate the commercial grocery store use of the overall structure. Its simple rectangular form has a cement slab floor, 8" x 16" exterior concrete block walls thirteen blocks high, and a 2" x 6" stick-built gable roof system. The storeroom was constructed with a center column line of five 6" x 6" posts that support a 6" x 6" exposed horizontal ceiling girt which runs from the north to south wall. The two end posts were set abutting the front and rear walls of the room with the three center columns being evenly spaced. Both posts and girt are wrapped with simple square cut 1" material as a finish. The 2" x 6" wood framed roof structure has a 2" x 6" ridgepole with roof rafters 24" on center. Irregularly spaced 2" x 4" vertical king's post transfer load from the ridge to the 2" x 6" ceiling rafters that are overlapped above the mid-span of the 6" x 6" front to rear central girt. The roof rafters have a small lap cut into their lower surface at the wall plates. The rafter ends extend out 5" to form a shallow boxed eave faced with 1" material along the exterior east and west elevations of the "store". The "store" section was constructed with continuous 1" x 6" tongue and groove roof sheathing that extended out over the front gable about 10" to 12". It has an asphalt shingle roof. The front gable had horizontal 1" x 6" "German" or novelty siding and a center triangular attic gable vent. A 1" x 6" bargeboard completed the exterior gable design. Approximately 95% of the existing roof is collapsed into the building. Due to the nominal lumber dimensions and availability of intact rafters and roofing at the south end of the storeroom sufficient documentation exists to restore and maintain the historical integrity of the space. The original 6" x 6" posts, 65% of the main girt, entry doors and windows are repairable and will be retained.

The front or north "store" section elevation facing River Road has a main entry and a large storefront window. The entry at the east of the elevation has of a pair of 3'-0" x 6'-8" wood doors each with a full pane of sheet glass. The picture-like storefront window had a single sheet of fixed sheet glass held in a site-built 2" x 4" frame. The opening measures 52.5"x 98.5". Both the entry and window have solid concrete lintels, redbrick sills, and their glass areas are covered with a heavy metal security grills of a diamond shaped mesh design bolted to the exterior frames. Until recently when the glass was vandalized the storefront window had a single bullet hole shot into the building on June 6, 1968, the day after Senator Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated in Los Angeles. The "store" section's east elevation has from south to north a single 3' x 6'-8" entry door and two small windows (16"x22") at the upper two courses of block-work.

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The windows have simple 2" x 6" and 2" x 4" frames and are covered at the exterior with metal security grills. The "store" section's west elevation has two matching windows in the upper two courses of block-work. The southern opening was infilled with a window air conditioning unit.

The open floor plan of the "store" section had a small wood framed office (6' x 14') at its interior southwest corner where Esau Jenkins kept a desk. A single door led from the store into the office. The office had a door leading directly into the multi-use gymnasium section of the building. The only other architectural feature of the store is an open window through the CMU wall between the "store" and the adjacent kitchen area of the multiuse "gymnasium". It retains a heavy steel angle iron frame with horizontal steel bars and a metal security grill. This window allowed the sale of limited merchandise during hours when the grocery store was officially closed but would continue to serve the public when events were ongoing in the adjacent "gymnasium" facility. Many of the "store's" interior wall surfaces were covered in modern times with 1/4" wood veneer paneling painted blue. The original white exposed painted cement block surfaces are, however, still visible in many locations.

Extending 10' out from either side of the "store" section and running to the south 76' is the main rectangular multiuse "gymnasium" section (50' x 76'). It is nineteen blocks high with a cement slab floor and is covered with a series of clear span scissor trusses 18" to 24" on center forming an open vaulted ceiling at the interior. The north and south gabled ends are framed with 2" x 4" and 2" x 6" stud construction with "German" or novelty exterior siding. The south gable has a central triangular attic vent. Shallow 2" x 6" outriggers form a 1" boxed exterior cornice at both north and south gables. The roof trusses are made of double 2" x 6" construction and rest on a single 2" x 6" plate at the exterior east and west walls. In the triangular upper section of the truss design are double 2" x 6" king's posts fastened at the top chord and at the main horizontal bottom chord with steel 6" x 6" square four-hole plates. The steel plates are randomly positioned either horizontally or diagonally and have either two or four 3/8" bold and nuts. The lower chord of the outer scissor truss is a single 2" x 6" member as are the vertical intermediate members of the truss design. At the exterior ends of the trusses are 2" x 6" outriggers that form a 24" overhang and boxed cornices at the exterior east and west elevations. The sheathing is of random spaced 2" x 6" construction with a v-crimp galvanized metal roof.

The main entry to the "gymnasium" section is at the 10' exterior north wall facing River Road at the section's northeast corner. At the east elevation in the original patio area at the southern end of the "gymnasium" was a second rear exterior entry that now has a modern, hollow, metal 6-panel door. The only other entry door was from Jenkins's office area from the "store" section of the building. All of the doorways were simple 3'-0" x 6'-8" openings. In the upper block-work of both east and west elevations are two glazed window openings with concrete lintels and red brick sills.

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The windows, which are typical to the overall construction, are triple-vented, crank-out, awning style aluminum windows. The openings are roughly 36 ¾" wide by 38" tall with the cement block formed to accept the aluminum frame without additional jamb material.

In plan the "gymnasium" section has a single male and female restroom area at its northwest corner with the doors facing south into the main room. The restrooms, consisting of a small sink and toilet, served the front "store" and the multi-purpose "gymnasium" room. A cast iron plumbing stack extends to the west exterior face of the restroom area and runs up to the roof. Just to the east of the restrooms between the office door and the main exterior entry along the north wall was the location of the commercial kitchen. Heating was from individual stand-alone propane heaters. Donated auditorium seating aligned the west and east walls of the multi-purpose room; portable chairs provided additional seating on an as-needed basis. A portable stage was located at the south end of the "gymnasium" which was moved for basketball games. In the late 1960s when the community's new St. John's High School was constructed providing the first public gymnasium facility that allowed African American use, a permanent stage was built at the south end of the room. At the same time a suspended acoustic ceiling was added to the space for community meetings, weddings, and events.

At the south end of the "gymnasium" section is the 9' x 73' "dormitory" section of the original 1963 structure, which runs in an east west configuration. Beginning flush with the west wall of the "gymnasium" section, the narrow, shed roofed "dormitory" section extends 73' to the east, 23' past the east wall of the gymnasium's exterior east wall where the roof becomes a low-pitched hip configuration. The 23' wing faces what was originally a 19' x 23' exterior courtyard or patio at its north elevation. The patio had an original 38" tall bulkhead or wall of 8" x 16" cement block with an entry near the rear entry of the "gymnasium".

The dormitory was constructed as a series of four small bedrooms with restrooms between each two dormitory rooms with interior connecting doors. Each room held three or four beds to sleep out-of-town visitors. A small bath with a shower divided the two rooms at the east end while a small restroom and closet area divided the two rooms at the west end. The ceilings are 8'-2" in height and are of drywall construction. The lateral interior partitions are 4" x 16" cement block with the exception of the partition at the west wall of the eastern most bath, which is 8" thick. All of the dorm rooms were faced in modern times with ¼" wood veneer paneling.

The west exterior elevation of the "dormitory" section has a single center window. The south elevation from west to east has a door/ window/ bath window/ door/ window / door/ window/ bath window/ window configuration. The east projecting wing elevation has a single center window opening and the north elevation facing the patio has from east to west a door and window configuration. The three west dormitory rooms entries faced the rear with the eastern dorm room opening directly onto the patio area. All doorways are standard 3'-0"x 6'-8" openings with red brick sills. The dormitory windows are the triple-vented crank-out awning style aluminum windows matching those in the "gymnasium"

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section. The openings are roughly 36 $\frac{3}{4}$ " wide by 38 " tall with solid concrete lintels and red brick sills. Five of the original dormitory aluminum windows have been lost and four have been replaced with interior plywood shutters. The two small bath windows measure 18.5" x 27" and are of aluminum construction having two horizontal, crank-out awning sash. Alongside the exterior elevation of each of the two bath windows runs a cast iron plumbing stack. The cast iron vents extend up through the overhanging soffit of the exterior eave.

As originally constructed the eastern most dormitory room's 2" x 8" shed roof returned to the gymnasium wall as a low-pitched hipped roof. The eave at the dormitory section extends out 30.5" and has a wide soffit faced with 1" x 8"s. The roof is asphalt single. The roof is in a deteriorated condition and will have to be rebuilt.

Very shortly after the completion of the main building the patio area was enclosed with an open shed roof and the walls screened as a porch. In 1965 the screening was removed and an infill of T1-11 over a 2" x 4" stud frame and 2/2 aluminum sash windows were installed making the room into a reading room known to Club members as the "Saunders Sun Porch". One window was centered in the porch's east elevation with two windows and a door installed at its north elevation. The roofing was asphalt shingle. The roof of this area has collapsed and will have to be rebuilt.

The detailed description has been made to document the original construction based on the structure's deteriorated condition as a significant "fragile resource" eligible to the National Register. Hurricane Hugo in 1989 collapsed portions of the roof and so damaged the building that it has been open to the elements since that time. No insurance was carried and FEMA funds could not be obtained for repair. Once eligibility was determined in 2006, Club members have begun a careful stabilization process that has included the hiring of an architectural/engineering firm. Removal of collapsed roof trusses and interior debris that were forcing the exterior concrete block walls outward into an increasingly unstable condition is underway. This includes the majority of the roof from the "store", "dormitory", and "patio/reading room" sections and about half of the roof and trusses from the "gymnasium" section. The original footprint, exterior walls and openings will be retained. The remaining roof sections will then be covered as a temporary stabilization measure and sound existing historic fabric stored until plans and funding can be obtained for the property's restoration. A \$150,000 grant was awarded to facility for immediate stabilization. When restoration and rehabilitation is begun, the Progressive Club has adopted the use of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, which will involve careful oversight from the SHPO. Plans will be developed based on retaining the historic spaces of the structure, reusing existing fabric, and on replacing fabric to match the 1963 construction techniques and materials through the use of both historic and recent photographs and from measured drawings of existing fabric.

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The structure will be used as a community center for education and recreational needs retaining much of its historic use and promoting its historic integrity under Criteria A and B and Criteria Consideration G for its role as a Citizenship School and its association with events and persons important in the Civil Rights Movement from 1963 to 1972.

The Progressive Club
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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

- a owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- b removed from its original location.
- c a birthplace or a grave.
- d a cemetery.
- e a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- f a commemorative property.
- g less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Social History
Ethnic Heritage/Black

Period of Significance

1963-1972

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Jenkins, Esau

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Jones, Esakia (Builder)

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository:
Avery Research Center, Charleston, S.C.

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Statement of Significance

The Progressive Club Sea Island Center at 3377 River Road, Johns Island is historically significant as a structure and site that have attained exceptional importance to American history during the last fifty years (Criteria G) for its role as a Citizenship School and its association with events and persons important in the Civil Rights Movement. The Club building is also historically significant for its association with the development in the areas of continued adult education, social history, politics, ethnic heritage, recreation, and commerce for the African American community of the Sea Islands beginning with the building's construction in 1963 until the death of the Club's founder Esau Jenkins in 1972. From the building's construction in 1963 the Progressive Club Sea Island Center played a vital role in the advancement and empowerment of African-Americans. The structure and site served as a vital community center for the African American needs of the Sea Island residents providing a home for the Progressive Club's legal and financial assistance program, adult education program, dormitory lodging, and as a community recreational, child care, meeting place and grocery store. The building is the only remaining structure of the era built to house a "Citizenship School" in South Carolina where adult education classes and workshops enabled African American citizens to register, vote, and become aware of the political processes of their communities. The Progressive Club Sea Island Center is historically significant under Criteria A and Criteria B for its association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history and is associated with the lives of persons significant to the Civil Rights Movement. The curriculum for the "Citizenship School" was designed by local civil rights leaders Septima Clark and Esau Jenkins and by the school's first teacher Bernice Robinson with the aid of the Highlander Folk School of Moultrie, Tennessee. While the first citizenship school class at the Progressive Club site was held in January 1957¹, the Citizenship Schools became a model for Civil Rights leaders for similar efforts throughout the South during the late 1950s and continued as classes and workshops at the Progressive Club Sea Island Center well into the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. Jenkins was the Progressive Club's key founder and organizer. The workshops, classes, and folk festivals hosted by the Progressive Club since 1963 were either attended or facilitated by people who were later catapulted to the national stage in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. Some of these included Miles Horton, Conrad Brown, Septima Clark, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Andrew Young, Rev. Ralph Abernathy, Kwame Ture (Stokely Carmichael), Cleveland Sellers, Hosea Williams and Fannie Lou Hamer. The death of Club founder Esau Jenkins in 1972 saw the end of many organized programs held at the Center, including the popular folk festivals, though the community continued to utilize the building until Hurricane Hugo in 1989.

¹ Carl Tjerandsen, *Education for Citizenship: A Foundation Experience*, 1980, 12.

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Historical Background and Significance

Located on Johns Island, The Progressive Club Sea Island Center in 1963 became the regions central community center constructed to promote the development of adult education, social history, politics, ethnic heritage, recreation, and commerce specifically for the neighboring Sea Island African American community. The local Sea Islands directly affected by the Progressive Club Sea Island Center where Johns Island, James Island, Wadmalaw Island, Edisto Island, St. Helena Island, and Daufuskie Islands.

Johns Island History

Johns Island is separated from the mainland by a network of rivers, tidal creeks and inlets. Being the largest sea island in Charleston County, it is thirty-two miles long and thirty miles wide. Johns Island's fertile land served the production of important cash crops such as indigo and rice during the colonial and antebellum period and later sea-island cotton. During the colonial period and into the twentieth century, the majority of the population of Johns Island was black.² The majority of the black colonists were slaves, bringing with them much of their African heritage. Island slaves were agricultural workers or house servants; a minority worked in skilled occupations such as carpentry, brick masonry, blacksmithing or boatman.³

After the Civil War and the emancipation of slaves, Johns Island blacks began acquiring land with their new freedoms; in the 1880s blacks owned approximately ten percent of the lands on the Sea Islands of Johns Island and nearby James Island.⁴ African-Americans also began establishing their own institutions after the Civil War on Johns Island, in particular churches. In addition, praise houses were an important institution to the island; they provided a limited setting for interdenominational religious services as well for social, fraternal and charitable functions. While emancipated slaves gained the right to vote this changed with the adoption of the South Carolina Constitution of 1895, which restricted black suffrage.⁵ After this time, prospective voters had to read and write any section of the state constitution to the registrar's satisfaction in order to qualify to vote. Until the construction of Haut Gap High School in 1951, schools for blacks on Johns Island only went to the seventh grade with one teacher for all grades.⁶ With blacks receiving little to no formal educational training, their participation in elections after the 1895 amendment dropped significantly.

² Preservation Consultants, *James and Johns Island Historical and Architectural Inventory*, 1989, p. 13.

³ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁴ Jim Hayes, *James and Related Islands* (Charleston: By the Author, 2001), p. 131.

⁵ *James and Johns Island Inventory*, p. 27.

⁶ Townsend Davis, *Weary Feet, Rested Souls* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1998), p. 321.

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During the Reconstruction period from 1865-1876, federal law provided equal civil rights protection. This ended with the passing and enforcement of Jim Crow laws by state and local governments in southern states between 1876-1965. Jim Crow laws mandated "separate but equal" status for African-Americans, allowing whites to legally segregate blacks. Public schools, public places, public transportation had separate facilities or designated places for blacks. On Johns Island, where the majority of African Americans lived in extreme poverty, public facilities were scarce to begin with. This severely limited island blacks from equal education, use of public civic and health facilities and social services. This lack of resources combined with widespread economic poverty of African American Island residents had a significant impact on their quality of life.

Johns Island remained a very isolated community, both culturally and physically, well into the twentieth century. A regular ferry service was established in 1916 to carry islanders to and from the city of Charleston, which took eight hours through creeks and swamps.⁷ Not until 1926 was a bridge built to connect Johns Island with James Island, which was connected to the peninsula of Charleston by a series of bridges.⁸ Due to its isolation, the Islanders retained their repository of a rich Gullah culture which developed out of African, Caribbean and European influences. Connecting the island by a roadway afforded the opportunity for island blacks to take better jobs in the city as well as attend the more modern, larger public schools in the city, provided transportation was available.

The Progressive Club

Two African American Island residents, Esau Jenkins and Joe Williams, organized the Progressive Club in 1948. These two visionaries realized the necessity for an organization such as the Progressive Club when an African American Johns Island resident, Sammy Grant, was shot by a white man for kicking at the man's dog in an effort to defend himself from an attack. When the white magistrate refused to issue an indictment against the dog owner, finding that the dog owner "had a right" to shoot Grant, Jenkins and Williams organized Island residents to pool their funds to hire an attorney to appeal the magistrate's decision. The dog owner was eventually tried, convicted and fined for the aggravated assault and battery. From these beginnings, the Progressive Club took shape and came into being. The organization received its Charter #1145 in 1948 from the Secretary of State of South Carolina.

Esau Jenkins was the Progressive Club's first president. Under his leadership and guidance, the 15 members of the Club in 1948 met in the Moving Star Hall every third Sunday collected monthly dues for the purpose of aiding any of its members who had to contend with the legal and law enforcement systems. This money was used for such purposes as to pay bail for African Americans often charged

⁷ Jerome D. Franson, "Citizenship Education in the South Carolina Sea Islands, 1954-1966" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, George Peabody College for Teachers, 1977), p. 38.

⁸ Davis, p. 321.

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for unjust violations. After a period of time, the Club began to lend to its members funds to buy cars, fertilizer, and other necessities to alleviate the hardships of Island life for its African American residents.

In 1948 Esau Jenkins also decided to buy buses to transport islanders who commute into Charleston to work. According to Jenkins, "I decided to get a group in the bus in the mornings and teach them how to read the part of the Constitution that we have to read before we are able to become registered citizens." One of the passengers—Mrs. Alice Wine—asked him to help her learn to read and write so that she could get her voter registration certificate and become a "first class citizen." Jenkins not only responded to her request, but secured and circulated copies of the South Carolina constitution and voting law among all his passengers."⁹

In August 1954, Esau Jenkins was encouraged to travel to Tennessee to attend a workshop and to meet with Miles Horton of Highlander Folk Center.¹⁰ The events, which led to Highlander's involvement with Johns Island, began with Anna Kelly's attendance in 1953 at a Highlander workshop on school desegregation.¹¹ The following summer she persuaded Septima Clark to attend a similar workshop. Clark, a native of Johns Island, would eventually begin working as a field representative for the Highlander Folk Center. She had been fired as an elementary school teacher by the State of South Carolina because of her membership in the N.A.A.C.P. At the August 1954 workshop Jenkins explained that the Island community needed trained persons to establish an adult education and citizenship class to teach adult African American Island residents how to read and write. The week's workshop stimulated Esau's interest in developing more political action on the island by finding and interesting more people in getting the Negro population registered. He planned to run for Trustee on the Board of Education, "not that there is any hope of getting elected," Esau said, "but to prove that a Negro can run for office and not get killed."¹² Jenkins invited Highlander staff to attend a NAACP-sponsored dinner given in Charleston for Judge Waring and Thurgood Marshall on November 6, 1954. Zilphia Horton accepted Jenkins's invitation to attend as well as his invitation to stay at his home that weekend. The purpose of this trip was to further investigate Esau's possibilities as a potential trainee for democratic leadership under a grant funded by the Emil Schwarzhaupt Foundation, and to learn more about Johns Island as a possible demonstration community and to establish friendly contacts."¹³ On the basis of her report, it was decided, "Johns Island had good possibilities as a demonstration community."

⁹ Carl Tjerandsen, *Education for Citizenship: A Foundation's Experience* (Santa Cruz, Cal.: Emil Schwarzhaupt Foundation, 1980), p. 3.

¹⁰ Guy and Candie Carawan, eds., *Ain't you got a right to the tree of life?* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989), p. 198.

¹¹ Tjerandsen, p. 2.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

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Eventually it was Jenkins' decision to run for school trustee that provided the incentive for blacks on Johns Island to register. To run for school trustee, it was necessary to get 100 signatures. His strategy of trying to get a group of blacks to register each month throughout the year maintained his efforts momentum. Jenkins lost the election but a political base of registered voters began. Myles Horton and the Highlander Folk School continued to work with Esau Jenkins, making trips to Johns Island, and eventually by the middle of 1956, twenty leaders from Johns Island had participated in a workshop at Highlander.

Esau Jenkins, with Septima Clark as a field representative for Highlander, used his Club meetings to promote greater interest in community involvement. Clark, with her niece Bernice Robinson, developed the curriculum for the Citizenship School program with organizational aid from the Highlander Folk School. In the latter part of 1956, Charleston County placed the vacant Mt. Zion Elementary School for sale. Jenkins had been thinking about a building to house a kind of cooperative supply enterprise. With the financial support of Highlander, he was able to buy the abandoned Mt. Zion Elementary School to provide a home for both the co-op and a meeting center for the Progressive Club's Citizenship School program. The first citizenship class meeting was held on Johns Island in January 1957 with Bernice Robinson as the primary teacher.¹⁴

The Highlander's purpose was, "to help people learn to solve their own problems in their own way." The school's approach was, "not a school for teaching reading, writing and arithmetic, but a school for problems."¹⁵ Contrary to Highlander's purpose, the citizenship school on Johns Island integrated reading, writing and arithmetic into their core curriculum of shaping an effective citizen. Since the majority of those attending the classes never received a formal education, elementary objectives of learning how to read and write became the first order of business. The schools taught Islanders how to read and write so they could become registered citizens and vote. The popularity of these classes soon spread, those who attended would encourage friends and family to do to same. Septima Clark and Bernice Robinson also began a program at the Club to train new citizenship school teachers; Fannie Lou Hamer and Hosea Williams traveled to Johns Island in order to organize a program in their respective communities in Mississippi and Georgia.^{16*} While Citizenship classes developed on nearby Wadmalaw Island with one of Jenkins's daughters, Ethel J. Grimal, as the primary teacher, and at Edisto Island with Eileen Brewer Woods as the primary teacher, they were also established at St. Helena Island, Dafuskie Island, and the north area of Charleston.¹⁷ The success of the school was evident in the nearly 600 blacks registered to vote in Charleston County by 1960.

¹⁴ Carawan, p. 202.

¹⁵ Tjerandsen, p. 1.

¹⁶ Carawan, ix.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

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Instructors of citizenship classes did not adhere to a strict curriculum, rather they listened to the needs of their students. Attendees wanted to be able to read and write letters to out-of-town relatives, order from catalogues and make money orders.¹⁸

Citizenship classes also provided a forum for asking questions and discussing the problems of the community as well as providing the tools and resources needed to formulate solutions. Citizenship classes made people aware of the political situation in their area, creating a grass-roots basis of new statewide political organizations in South Carolina as well as Georgia, and Mississippi. The Highlander Folk School in Tennessee remained the program's main funding source and administrative branch of the Citizenship School until the program was taken over by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in 1961.¹⁹ Many elected black officials and political leaders throughout the south started their careers in the training program of Highlander and the Citizenship School.²⁰ The school's successful voter registration program helped lay the groundwork for the major civil rights groups of the 1960s who were pursuing their own voter registration campaigns.

With the Citizenship School's success in the community becoming a model for other towns throughout the South; groups would travel to Johns Island to see first hand the programs and services offered by this revolutionary enterprise. The Progressive Club was soon getting enough attendance by local African-Americans and attention by outsiders curious of their program to warrant an expansion.

After the adult education and citizenship classes were established, Jenkins identified other needs that required urgent attention. For instance, there were no recreational facilities on Johns Island. The State of South Carolina refused to build a gymnasium at the white high school because if it did, it also had to build a gymnasium at the black school under the "separate but equal" doctrine enunciated in the infamous 1896 Supreme Court decision of *Plessy v Ferguson*.

In 1962, the old Mt. Zion Elementary School was razed for the current, larger building called The Progressive Club Sea Island Center. The new building broke ground in October of 1962 and was completed in March of 1963.²¹ The new building retained the uses of the previous building but was now able to provide more services and programs to a larger area; the new center was able to serve not only Johns Island, but also those from nearby James and Wadmalaw Islands. The new structure included a grocery store with fuel pumps in the front of the building; a multi-purpose "gymnasium" room that was used as a gymnasium, classroom, community center, day care and commercial kitchen; and four dormitories for over-night visitors. The facilities created a safe environment for whites and blacks to congregate and hold meetings. Due to the amenities of the new facility and the

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

¹⁹ Tjerandsen, p. 1.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

²¹ Charles Dibble, "Esau Jenkins Proud of Club's Progress." *The News and Courier* (Charleston, S.C.), 19 August 1964.

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isolated environment of the Club, many workshops were held here and often led or attended by nationally recognized Civil Rights leaders. Martin Luther King, Jr. came to Johns Island twice to attend meetings and workshops at the Progressive Club and stayed at the home of Esau and Janie Jenkins. The workshops offered at the new center represented the development of the Progressive Club's initial mission of literacy education and voter registration. The program was moving to a wider stage, providing an outlet to political stirrings in black communities in the South, resulting in political sophistication of the African American community and the formation of statewide political organizations.²² Residential workshops focusing on voter education, community development and minority leadership, to name a few, were held at the new center. The new center was able to accommodate these multi-day workshops by providing lodging on-site; the rear dormitory rooms could accommodate 25 guests.²³ The residential workshops at the Progressive Club Sea Island Center in the 1960s were a direct outgrowth of the citizenship classes started on the same site in 1957.

At the conclusion of many of the workshops, Jenkins would often transport the participants in one of his buses to Atlantic Beach, South Carolina, located approximately 110 miles from Charleston, South Carolina. Atlantic Beach was an all Black unincorporated town and one of the few public beaches for African Americans in the segregated South. Jenkins and his wife had purchased a parcel of land in the town in 1946 on which they constructed a restaurant and motel.

During the MUSC Hospital Strike of 1969 in the city of Charleston, The Progressive Club Sea Island Center served as the meeting place for organizing protection of strikers as well as working out solutions to the crisis. Stokley Carmichael attended the meetings at the Club.²⁴

The Progressive Club Sea Island Center's simple construction, adaptable interior layout, and use of durable but inexpensive building materials reflected the needs and economic and social position of the African-American community of the Sea Islands during the pivotal 1960s. Organizers desired a building large enough to accommodate not only those from Johns Island, but also those from surrounding communities as well as frequent out-of-town visitors. Its simple layout with large, multi-purpose rooms allowed the club's organizers to offer numerous services for a variety of age groups. This unassuming building significantly helped to expand the programs developed during the Club's first years at the Mt. Zion School building, creating a strong foundation of local support for the nationally important Civil Rights Movement. The scarce use of windows provided added security to the building as well as privacy to the work and classes being conducted inside.²⁵ The work

²² Tjerandsen, p. 15.

²³ Esau Jenkins Collection, Avery Research Center, Charleston, S.C.

²⁴ Interview with Bill Saunders, 3 April 2007.

²⁵ Davis, p. 326.

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accomplished at The Progressive Club Sea Island Center between 1963-1972 created an atmosphere of change and advancement for islanders; more and more African Americans were learning to read and write, resulting in more registered voters and increased awareness of civil injustices and problems.

Significant activities at the Progressive Club Sea Island Center included: networking with other grass-roots community organizations throughout the South, discussing in a safe setting what things were working and what things were not working in the struggle for human and civil rights, hammering out common strategies, and promoting fellowship with one another.

Fellowship and recreational activities were an essential part of the gatherings held at the Progressive Club Sea Island Center. Fellowships and festivals attracted locals as well as noted performers. Christmas Folk Festivals were common gatherings at the Club. According to Bill Saunders who was in charge of the festivals, in 1965, a major folk festival was held there.²⁶ In attendance were Bernice Johnson Reagon of "Sweet Honey in the Rock"; folksingers Guy and Candy Carawan, authors of the seminal work, *Ain't You Got A Right to the Tree of Life? The People of John's Island, South Carolina---Their Faces, Their Words and Their Songs*; the legendary Moving Star Hall Singers of Johns Island; the Georgia Sea Island Singers; SNCC's choir, and many, many more. The basketball games in the gymnasium and volleyball games in the side yard volleyball court became vital recreational activities that involved widespread community participation.²⁷ The community utilized the building as well for church services, weddings, anniversary parties, dances, talent shows, child care, boy scouts club and for church teas.

In a letter dated January 12, 1965 to receive grant funding for the Progressive Club and for the Citizen Committee of Charleston County, Jenkins underscores the importance of the Progressive Club's role in providing for the children and young adults of the Island community. He states, "I am a native of John's island...I have been having monthly meetings with people over the years, trying to obliterate ignorance, to promote health and social, educational and civic welfare, and to combat juvenile delinquency—to secure a more rich and abundant life for ourselves and for posterity...The people with whom I work are some of the poorest ones on God's earth, I believe. If I were to tell you all the conditions of some of the homes I have visited, I don't think you would believe that these conditions still exist in America at this day and time...Because of the conditions noted above, we have obligated ourselves and denied ourselves, and borrowed and begged for money to help build a center that our boys and girls and adults could use. It's the one place on the island where they can play basketball, table tennis, and other games, or skate." He goes on to say:

²⁶ Interview with Bill Saunders, 2 April 2007.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

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The following are the things these poor people are requesting:

1. Day care for pre-school age children from seven A.M. to six P.M.
2. Classes in sewing, knitting and ceramics and other crafts for the 16-21 age group in the evenings from seven to nine.
3. Evening classes in basketball, weight lifting, adult remedial reading, music, and workshops on moral and citizenship responsibility, including taking part in registration and voting and learning to use the voting machine.
4. The creation of some jobs for children who have left school, and after-school jobs for school children.

"These request have come from approximately thirty parents who make from \$600.00 to \$2,000.00 a year and have from two to eight children in their homes. About fifty of these children are too young to go to school, causing the school-age children to stay out of school two or three days a week to take care of the younger ones when the mother and father are out working to support the children and the homes. This condition causes many of our children to drop out of school. Absence from classes and poverty are the reasons. The children become too old and too large for the low grades, and younger children tease them about this and they become ashamed and quit school... Our kitchen, plumbing and sleeping quarters at the Progressive Club Center have been inspected by the Board of Health and approved. At the present we have enough beds to put 38 children in for their mid-day rest, and also a place large enough to feed them. These facts are known by the many hundreds of people who have benefited from our services in one way or another."²⁸

The Progressive Club's grocery store was operated profitably by the organization until 1975. Thereafter, a group of Island residents came together and leased the grocery store for a period of time. The structure was severely damaged by Hurricane Hugo in 1989. Since the building was not insured, the organization was not able to repair the substantial damages nor was it successful in obtaining funds from FEMA to make repairs.

Esau Jenkins

Esau Jenkins led a life of wanting more and better for himself, his family and his community. He recognized the inequalities in his life and those of fellow African Americans and came to institute programs to overcome those hardships and injustices. Born July 3, 1910 on Johns Island, Esau left Legareville Elementary School in the fourth grade to help his father, a farmer.²⁹ Jenkins then went on to work on a boat, returned to farming and grew cotton, bought a truck and began truck farming. He

²⁸ Esau Jenkins, "Letter to Mrs. Gedney Howe, Chairwoman, Antipoverty Program" 12 January 1965, Avery Research Center, Charleston, S.C.

²⁹ Billy Bowles, "Esau Jenkins Engineers Changes For Negro People," *The News and Courier* (Charleston, S.C.), 28 July 1968.

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was able to succeed in his truck farming business by adapting to the market; he took classes in Greek in order to sell his products to the predominately Greek-speaking vegetable-store owners. As his truck-farming business grew, he began investing in other business ventures, like the J & P motel and café in downtown Charleston and later in 1950, one in Atlantic Beach, SC.³⁰ His business success afforded him the opportunity to begin to help others. In 1945, he bought a bus to transport island children, including his own, into the city of Charleston to attend the black public high school. He later bought more buses to carry islanders into Charleston for work and school; this transporting turned into a business for Esau, the E. Jenkins Bus Line Tour.³¹ During the commute, he used this time to teach riders how to read the part of the Constitution found on voter registrations. Jenkins then went on to organizing the Progressive Club after a trip to the Highlander Folk School. Jenkins learned methods and practices of establishing and operating citizenship schools from Myles Horton and the Highlander Folk School's United Nation Workshop.³² Jenkins visit to the Highlander School in 1953 enabled him to duplicate the process locally; upon his return to Johns Island he established the lowcountry's first citizenship school on Johns Island. In 1957, the first classes were held at the Progressive Club's first building, the old Mt. Zion Elementary School.

Jenkins led and organized a drive for a black public high school to be located on Johns Island; in 1953 the Haut Gap High School opened on the island for blacks. Though he was never given credit for getting the school, his efforts were well known throughout the community. Black teens no longer had to travel to Charleston to attend the all-black Burke High School downtown. This was a major accomplishment of Jenkins and The Progressive Club; Johns Island received a consolidated high school for blacks before nearby James Island and Adams Run.³³

Esau became involved in local politics when he ran for the Trustee of the Charleston County School Board in 1956; his loss by 100 votes roused many blacks to register to vote for the first time.³⁴ He later went on the serve on the school board in 1969, thirteen years after his unsuccessful run.³⁵ During the 1960s, Esau continued his missions of voter education, health care, and improving the social and economic conditions of African-Americans. He conducted voter registration drives and served as President of the Citizens Committee of Charleston, which advocated increased social services to blacks, creation of a voter information office in Charleston, and promoting school integration.³⁶ He founded the Community Organization Credit Union in 1966 to loan money at low

³⁰ Dibble, 4A.

³¹ Nan Woodruff, Esau Jenkins: A Retrospective View of the Man and His Times. Avery Collection, 1984.

³² Tjerandsen, p. 2.

³³ Dribble, p. 4A.

³⁴ Davis, p. 328.

³⁵ Sandra Oldendorf, "Highlander Folk School and the South Carolina Sea Island Citizenship Schools: Implications for the Social Studies," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Kentucky, 1987, p. 104.

³⁶ Ibid, p. 103.

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interest rates to blacks.³⁷ He served on the board of Highlander Folk School, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the South Carolina Conference on Human Relations and as a steering committee member of the Charleston chapter of the NAACP.³⁸ He later expanded his concerns for those of migrant families, which flooded his island community in the late 1950s and early 1960s when the majority of blacks had left island employment for better opportunities in the city. His concern resulted in the creation of Rural Missions, a social services organization that provided daycare and health programs for migrant families. Rural Missions later became the Sea Island Comprehensive Health Center with a nursing home and low-income housing. Esau Jenkins' dedication improved and advanced the lives of numerous minorities in the local community.

³⁷ Davis, p. 329

³⁸ Dribble, p. 4A.

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EVERY RESEARCH CENTER, CHARLESTON, S.C.

Esau Jenkins Collection

PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

Bill Saunders, Interview by phone, 2 April 2007.

Abraham (Bill) Jenkins, Interview on Johns Island, 21 March 2007.

Elaine Jenkins, Interview by email, March 2007.

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre (.44 acres)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing
17 589813 3615631

___ 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 John Laurens and Leigh Scott
organization Historic Preservation Consultants date April 2, 2007
street & number P.O. Box 1112 telephone (843) 723-1746
city or town Charleston state S.C. zip code 29402

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

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

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

Photographs

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

Additional items

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

Property Owner

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

name The Progressive Club c/o Mr. Abraham Jenkins, President
street & number 1206 Symmes Drive telephone _____
city or town Charleston state S.C. zip code 29407

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.). **Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary of The Progressive Club is shown as the thick black line on the accompanying map entitled, "Boundary Survey For Progressive Club of Johns Island, Located on Johns Island, Charleston County, South Carolina, January 7, 1992." The thick line represents the property lines for the nominated building and site.

VERBAL BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

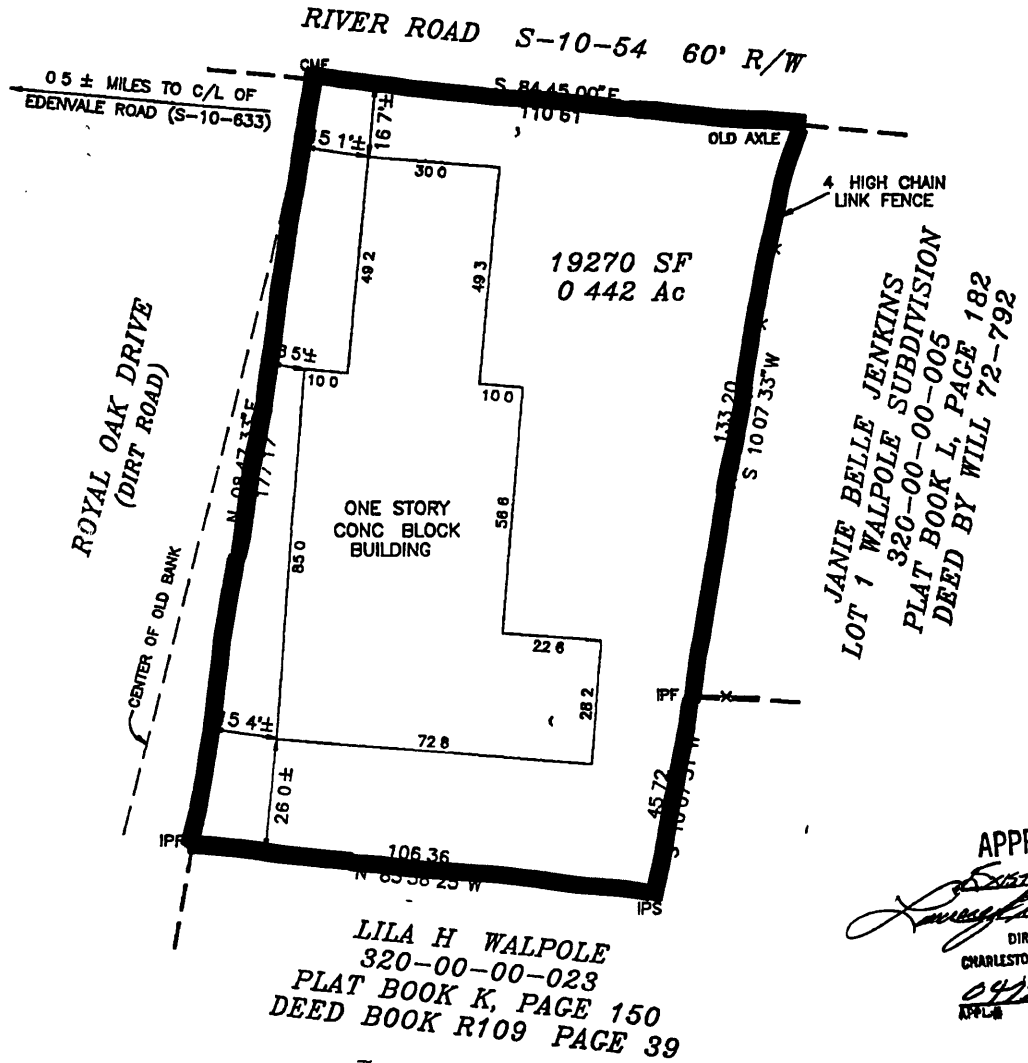
The nominated property includes the entire current parcel of The Progressive Club at the corner of River Road and River Oaks Drive on Johns Island.

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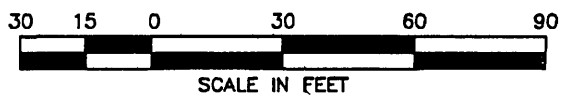


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The following information is the same for each of the photographs:

Name of Property: The Progressive Club
Location of Property: 3377 River Road
John's Island
Charleston County, South Carolina

Name of Photographer: Leigh Scott
Date of Photographs: April 2007
Location of Original Negatives: S.C. Department of Archives and History, Columbia, S.C.

1. North (Main) Elevation
2. Detail, North (Main) Elevation
3. West Elevation, Store and Gym; North Elevation, Gym
4. West Elevation, Store
5. West Elevation, Gym
6. West Elevation, looking North
7. South (Rear) Elevation
8. South (Rear) Elevation
9. South (Rear) Elevation
10. East and North Elevations, Patio Enclosure
11. North Elevation, Patio Enclosure
12. East Elevation, Gym; North Elevation, Enclosure
13. East Elevation, Gym
14. East Elevation, Store and Gym; North Elevation, Gym
15. North Elevation, Gym; East Elevation, Store
16. Interior of Store, looking North
17. Interior of Store, looking South
18. Interior of Store, looking Southeast
19. Interior of Gym, looking East
20. Interior of Gym, looking South/Southeast
21. Interior of Gym, looking North
22. Interior of Gym, looking North at Restroom
23. Interior of Gym, looking South
24. Interior of Gym, detail of south gable end
25. Interior of Gym, detail of truss plates
26. Interior of patio enclosure, looking Southeast
27. Interior of Dormitory Rooms, looking East
28. Dormitory Bathroom, looking South
29. Eastern-most Dorm Dormitory Room, looking East

Charleston News and Courier, Charleston, S.C.

30. Historic Photograph of The Progressive Club, ca. 1964-1968