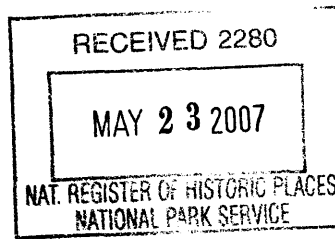


(Oct. 1990)



United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

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 an 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 Montgomery High School

other names/site number Montgomery-Bond-Robinson Community Center

2. Location

street & number Montgomery Avenue (at Montgomery St.) N/A not for publication

city or town Lexington N/A vicinity

state Tennessee code TN county Henderson code 077 zip code 38351

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 for 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/Title Date

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission 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.
removed from the National Register.
other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper: Edson H. Beall, Date of Action: 7.3.07

Montgomery High School

Name of Property

Henderson County, TN

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)

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

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	2	buildings
1		sites
	1	structures
		objects
3	3	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**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION: school

RECREATION AND CULTURE: fair, auditorium

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION: school

WORK IN PROGRESS

RECREATION AND CULTURE: auditorium

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT: art deco

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls brick, concrete

roof asphalt

other metal, glass

**Narrative Description**

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

See 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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ETHNIC HERITAGE: African American
SOCIAL HISTORY
EDUCATION

Period of Significance

1948-1957

Significant Dates

1948-1950

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

NA

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Architect/Builder

Spencer & Ross, architects
Eads, Clifford, builder

Criteria Considerations N/A

(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 moved from its original location.
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): N/A

- 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:

MTSU Center for Historic Preservation

Montgomery High School  
Name of Property

Henderson County, TN  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 7.7 acres Lexington, Tenn 11NW

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 16 373308 3945887  
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 Heather L. Bailey  
organization Center for Historic Preservation date December 5, 2006  
street & number Middle Tennessee State University, Box 80 telephone 615-898-2947  
city or town Murfreesboro state TN zip code 37132

**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 Henderson County Board of Education (contact Cora Mackey, Montgomery Alumni Association)  
street & number 986 Pope Rd. telephone 731-968-3033  
city or town Lexington state TN zip code 38351

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

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1 Montgomery High School  
Henderson County, Tennessee

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## 7. NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Montgomery High School is located in Lexington, TN, (pop. 7,393) in Henderson County. The school, located on Montgomery Avenue, is nestled within a predominantly African-American neighborhood. Built 1948-1950, the school is situated on the north end of the property and the main entrance of the school opens to the west. The school has a minimal Art Deco influence. The contributing c.1953 gymnasium is to the southwest of the school, representing the westernmost portion of the property boundary, and the main entrance faces north. To the east of gymnasium is a modern public restroom facility, located in a separate building. Directly north of that is a non-contributing basketball court, and to the south is a modern picnic pavilion. To the east is the historic football field that also contributes to the nomination.

### 1. Montgomery High School (c. 1948, contributing building)

The Montgomery High School, built 1948-1950, is a one-story T-plan brick school building that has a brick and concrete foundation and an asphalt roof. Built in the Art Deco style with Classical influences, the style and plan resemble those of the New Deal period. Situated in a residential area, the school building is largely abandoned, but is undergoing renovation efforts. The interior is in poor condition, but the building retains sufficient integrity of design and materials. Attached to the north end of the historic school building, a c.1960-1963<sup>1</sup> addition is currently used by the Henderson County Board of Education for a Head Start program. The school is composed of brick, has a brick foundation, and a flat asphalt roof.

The west façade has a symmetrical five-bay central section, with a stepped brick parapet. The attached three-bay entry surround is composed of four nonstructural wood pilasters, and a wood awning window in each bay on either side of the central entrance. Attached to the pilasters on either side of the main entrance is an iron Art Deco wall sconce. The entrance has wood double doors, each with a single glass pane. Above the doors is an eight-light transom. The bay to the north of the surround contains a metal door with a boarded-over transom. The bay to the south of the surround has a wood awning window. Flanking this central section is the classroom wing. At either end of the classroom wing, the façade is slightly stepped, with three sets of paired windows. In between the central section and the ends are two sets of paired wood awning windows. However on the north half of the facade one of the pairs in each set has been bricked in and replaced by a door. Existing windows are original. Decorative wood belt courses run horizontally along this façade at the window sill level and just above the windows.

The south elevation is mostly obscured by brush, but contains the demolished remains of a 1960s addition and one double door side entrance. The two belt courses continue from the west façade at the window sill level and above the awning windows. Multi-light awning windows are visible, but obscured by brush. The brick wall is capped with tile coping. Attached to this elevation is what remains of a south-projecting c. 1963 wing. The roof line of this wing is level with the upper belt course of the original building. This addition was mostly demolished after a fire in the mid 1990s and will be completely removed.

The east elevation is currently completely covered in un-maintained brush that obscures this elevation from view.

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<sup>1</sup> Information on building additions comes from a student handbook that was available from 1958-1963.

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**National Park Service**

# **National Register of Historic Places**

## **Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 2 Montgomery High School  
Henderson County, Tennessee

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The c. 1963 Head Start wing extends from the north end of the north classroom wing. It is a one-story, brick structure that projects slightly from the original portion of the building. The roof line is level with the upper belt course of the original building. The west façade of this addition has three banks of multi-light, metal, awning windows. A single-door entrance is located at the north end of the south bank of windows. On the south end of the wing, where it projects from the classroom wing, is a decorative concrete screen. Aside from the screen, this addition contains little decoration.

The interior consists of ten classrooms, auditorium, teacher's office, principal's office, boys' restroom, girls' restroom, and female teachers' restroom on the main floor. The basement contains a home economics laboratory and the cafeteria. While there is little decoration in the interior of the building, the main entrance hall and the auditorium maintain the highest degree of integrity. The main entry on the west façade leads to an entrance hall with concrete floors, plaster walls, and ceiling tiles all original to the building. Two original wood trophy cases sit on either side of the central auditorium door on the east wall. A double loaded hallway runs north and south from the entrance hall providing access to the classrooms and offices. Three original sets of double doors along the east wall of the entrance hall lead into the auditorium.

The Art Deco influence is again present in the design of this 500-seat auditorium. Located on the east side of the building the auditorium forms the T-shape to the layout. The seats are original and constructed of wood for the back and folding seat section, with ornate metal sides. The seats are arranged into three groupings, with the middle section being the largest. The floor is original wood, as is the raised stage that is located in the easternmost end of the auditorium. The original stage curtains are also in place. The ceiling consists of dropped acoustical tile, the north and south walls are painted concrete block, and the east and west walls are plaster. Along the north and south walls are banks of multi-light wood awning windows covered with original window draperies.

Within the interior of the classroom wing sufficient original materials are still present. A typical classroom is rectangular, has a blackboard, and many have original built-in bookshelves. Several of the classrooms maintain their original concrete block walls, ceiling tiles, and concrete floors. But as the needs of the school changed, there were adaptations to some of the rooms. Some rooms have had the blackboards covered over and the ceilings dropped. A few rooms had partition walls installed to create smaller rooms or closets within a room, or to divide up the larger room. Neglect has also taken its toll on many of the rooms, but changes are reversible.

Lining the classroom wing hallways just below the ceiling are original four-light interior casement windows that circulate air and light between the hallway and classrooms. The double loaded hallway runs north to south and is divided by the atrium that contains the main entrance and the entrance to the auditorium. The hallways maintain much of their original material including concrete block walls, concrete floors, and ceiling tile. Portions of the ceiling, however, have been dropped. Many of the original light fixtures and classroom doors are still in place, and the boys' and girls' bathrooms have all of the original fixtures. Although much of the space is in need of repair, most changes, such as partition walls and dropped ceilings, are reversible.

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3 Montgomery High School  
Henderson County, Tennessee

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The furthestmost end of the north wing contains three classrooms, c. 1963, that were converted to the use of the county's Head Start education program c. 1970. These three classrooms, having been in continual use, retain a high degree of integrity, as the original high metal casement windows are extant, original concrete floors remain, and the original concrete walls are intact. The rooms are configured so that students can receive instruction in all three rooms; restrooms were also installed within two classrooms c. 1970 while the third room also serves as a lunchroom for the students.

## **2. Gymnasium (c. 1953, contributing building)**

The gymnasium was renovated in 1998 and is used as a community center. The building is constructed with brick and has a very low-pitched gable roof. The north façade is divided by brick pilasters into five bays. Projecting from the central three bays of this façade is a shed-roof entrance vestibule, which is original to the structure. The entrance is composed of two sets of wood double doors. Also visible on the north façade is the north wall of an addition to the east elevation. This addition is brick with a shed roof and a single-door entrance. A shed roof supported by two wood posts shelters the entrance.

The west elevation is divided into six bays, separated by brick pilasters, and each bay contains one replacement fixed window at the roof line. It appears that these fixed windows replaced original banks of awning windows. The south and east elevations are covered by a c.1963 addition, containing space for locker rooms and bathrooms, and are constructed of unpainted cinderblock. Windows in the addition have been filled-in with cinderblocks but the brick window sills remain. A brick chimney projects from the southeast corner of the original portion of the gymnasium. This addition is half the height of the original structure.

The interior of the gymnasium has recently been restored and dedicated as the Henderson County Montgomery Bond Robinson Community Center. The gym retains its c. 1953 appearance in that the original gym floor and refreshment stand remain in place and in use. Brown tiles that reach approximately nine feet high line the interior concrete walls. The metal roof trusses have not been enclosed or covered; the original metal hanging lights from c. 1953 still provide the interior lighting for the gym. A metal scoreboard, c. 1980, has been installed at the southeast corner of the gym. In 2005, the gym received minor updating and renovation, consisting of new toilets in the men's and women's restrooms, new kitchen appliances in the refreshment stand, and the repair of the remaining original wood bleachers.

## **3. Football Field (c. 1930, contributing site)**

The historic football field is well maintained and is currently used by the community as a soccer field. The field originally had bleachers, but those have since been removed.

## **4. Picnic Pavilion (c. 1998, noncontributing building)**

Just east of the gymnasium, a modern picnic pavilion was added in 1998 as part of the community center renovations. It is an open-air structure with a metal gable roof supported by brick posts and a poured-concrete floor.

## **5. Restroom Facility (c. 1998 noncontributing building)**

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 4 Montgomery High School  
Henderson County, Tennessee

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A restroom building was added in 1998 as part of the community center renovations to the north of the picnic pavilion. This building is a simple, gabled building composed of textured concrete blocks. It has a raised-seam metal roof and simple metal doors.

**6. Basketball Court (c. 1998, noncontributing structure)**

A well-maintained basketball court is located to the north of the restroom facility.



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Section number 8 Page 5 Montgomery High School  
Henderson County, TN

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## 8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Montgomery High School, at Montgomery Avenue, Lexington, Henderson County, Tennessee, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its statewide significance in African American education and its local significance as an institution associated with important events in African American social history. Built from 1948 to 1950, the school served students from Middle Tennessee and West Tennessee and represented a major improvement in public education opportunities for African-American students from these rural counties.

The current Montgomery High School building opened in 1950 to meet the growing needs of the African-American population in Henderson County and surrounding rural counties in West and Middle Tennessee. It served as the African American high school for Lexington, and students in surrounding counties (Wayne, Perry, Benton, Decatur, Madison, and Henderson) until it closed as part of school integration in 1967. While not the only African American school in these surrounding counties, it was by far the largest, with far more resources than any of the other nearby schools for African Americans, and it was renowned as one of the best schools in the state. The school and grounds were also a significant location for community gatherings and events for the regional African-American community. In strongly segregated rural West Tennessee, Montgomery High School was a pillar of the African-American community. In the words of one Lexington, TN, resident and graduate of Montgomery High School, "This is the only legacy we have."<sup>2</sup> The period of significance ranges from 1948 when construction began on the building to the 1967 integration of Henderson County schools.

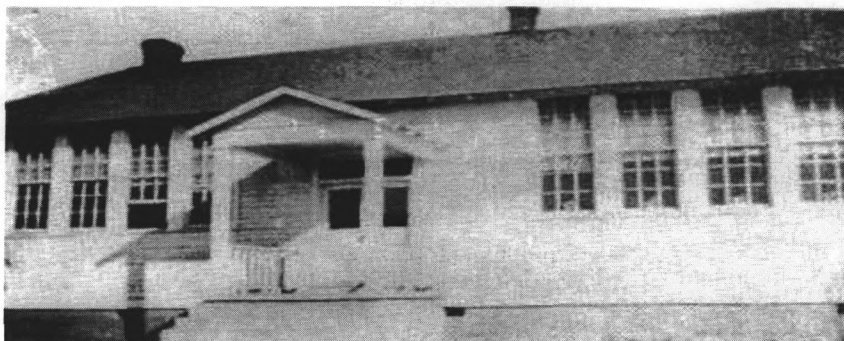


Figure 1. Lexington Colored School<sup>3</sup>

### Background

The predecessor of Montgomery School was the Lexington Colored School, which operated on the grounds of the Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church. In 1923, the African-American community secured a new site for a new school. Through Rosenwald Funds and public support, a new school building was constructed on the

<sup>2</sup> Meeting with the Montgomery Alumni Association, 24 October 2006.

<sup>3</sup> *The Tiger*, Montgomery High School Yearbook, 1966.

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Henderson County, TN

present site of Montgomery High School. The Rosenwald school was named Montgomery School and was located at the northwest corner of Lexington's city limits. It provided a new quality of educational accommodations for students and teachers. The teacher's salaries were paid by both the City and the County Boards of Education, but were supplemented with aid from the General Education Board, Rosenwald Fund, John F. Slater Fund, and George Reid Funds.<sup>4</sup> Securing such funds from northern philanthropies made Montgomery School similar to the Allen-White School (NR 11/9/2005) in Hardeman County.

In 1927, the principal of Montgomery School, A.E. Gray, received permission to reorganize the school as a high school, and the name changed to Montgomery High School. As enrollment continued to increase, it was necessary to increase the teaching staff and expand the facilities with additions in 1928 and 1930. Through gradual land acquisitions, the campus came to include enough land for a playground and football field. The football field was the site of the popular Field Day where African-American students attending regional schools would come together to compete and socialize. For the community, the football field served as the site for the county's Colored Fair. The present-day football field is at the same location.



**Figure 2.** Buses loading in the 1940s (Courtesy Montgomery Alumni Association)

By 1940, the school had added a teacher's home and a dormitory, a building pattern again similar to the Allen-White School in Hardeman County. The dormitory and teacher's home was made possible by the National Youth Administration. Because of the difficulties imposed on residents by the Depression, the dormitory provided affordable housing for students and teachers, and allowed students to receive an education when transportation was not possible. Students who could not afford housing, but still wanted to attend Montgomery High School were placed in homes of families who lived in the African-American neighborhood surrounding the school. The dormitory was torn down c. 1963.

<sup>4</sup> Gracie Timberlake and A.L. Robinson, "A History of Montgomery High School: Lexington, Tennessee," 1988, found on the community history website *Yesterday's Tennessee*, [www.tnyesterday.com/schools/henderson/mhs/1988.html](http://www.tnyesterday.com/schools/henderson/mhs/1988.html), accessed 10/26/2006.

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Henderson County, TN

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New Deal programs intervened both in Tennessee and across the country to provide greatly needed funds to rebuild, renovate, and repair public schools.<sup>5</sup> Beginning in 1933, Nashville began to take advantage of the large amount of federal relief money available through the Public Works Administration. Pearl High (NR 8/2/2002), East High (NR 1/25/2002 as East Nashville High and Junior High Schools), West End High (8/1/2003), and Cameron Junior High (NR 3/15/2005) were built as a result of PWA funds in addition to several other junior high and elementary schools.<sup>6</sup> As well as stimulating the local economy, New Deal schools were built as modern educational facilities, with the goal of developing architectural plans in accordance with new comprehensive curriculum ideas. Moving beyond the traditional reading, writing, and arithmetic subjects, New Deal school building design created space for auditoriums, shops, laboratories, and fine arts classrooms.<sup>7</sup>

## Building the Modern Montgomery High School

The African-American community saw the need to further expand facilities of this growing institution, and began a fundraising campaign in 1944. Many students joined in this effort by picking cotton and donating those proceeds to the building fund. In 1945, supporters and students turned over \$5,000 to the building committee. Due to the shortage of materials immediately after the war, construction was delayed until 1948. With financial support from the County and the City governments, the previous Rosenwald school was demolished and they began construction on a new building. This new school was not completed until 1950, at the final cost of \$170,000.

The only African-American member of the building committee was the principal of Montgomery High School, Claude C. Bond. As an alumnus of Fisk University, he would have been familiar with the African-American New Deal schools in the Nashville area, so it is not surprising that Montgomery High School followed a similar model to those earlier schools. Like those New Deal schools, the Montgomery High School building complex included modern labs for students and featured a beautiful auditorium. On the main floor was the principal's office, classrooms, library, a library workroom, bathrooms for boys and girls, a bathroom for female teachers, and an auditorium with seating for 500. Much like Pearl High, students attending Montgomery High now had an architectural showplace in which to attend classes.

The curriculum consisted of courses in English, Home Economics, Mathematics, Science, History, Government, Geography, Music, Commerce, and Agriculture. It clearly provided a huge step forward in creating better cultural opportunities, especially through music, and gave African-American youths science facilities unheard of in the older school building. In 1953, a gymnasium was built on the school grounds, completing the process of modernizing African-American education at Montgomery High. Physical Education had become an important part of public school education in the 1920s and 1930s. The new gymnasium gave area African-American students the ability to have their own basketball teams, and the gym hosted many other school and community events, such as concerts and plays.

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<sup>5</sup> Carroll Van West, *Tennessee's New Deal Landscapes, A Guidebook* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 96.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>7</sup> Blythe Semmer, Pearl High NR, Section 8, p.9, National Register files, Center for Historic Preservation, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN.

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Figure 4. Science Laboratory (courtesy Montgomery Alumni Association)

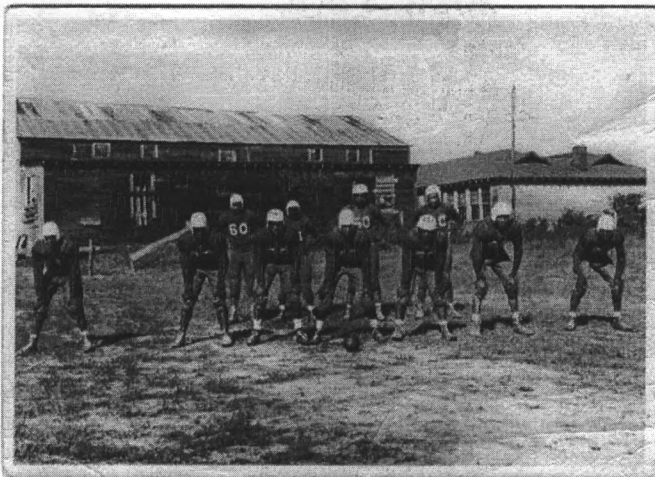


Figure 5. 1949 Montgomery Football Team (courtesy of Janice Beal)

New equipment for other school programs proved much more difficult to get. The federal government may have provided the city with a modern education plant, but that did not ensure that the city and county would keep Montgomery High's equipment on par with that of the white schools. Members of the first football

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team remember constructing their own cleats from plow shoes and using quilts as padding because the used equipment donated from the white schools was inadequate.<sup>8</sup>

Despite these economic and resource deficiencies, Montgomery High brought in students from Wayne, Perry, Benton, Decatur, Madison, and Henderson counties. While some of these students lived in the dormitory or boarded locally, residents of these other counties developed creative ways of transporting these students to Montgomery High School. In one case, McDonald Craig drove his 1954 Chevrolet school bus from Perry County to Montgomery High School every day in order to transport students. This bus is a contributing resource in the Craig Farm (NR 5/15/2006), a Tennessee Century Farm in Perry County.



Figure 6. Montgomery High School (courtesy of Marilyn Henry)

With students flocking to the school, their enthusiasm resulted in several clubs and sports teams. The first clubs in the new building were the Choral Society, English Club, National Homemakers of America, National Farmers of America (both the NHA and the NFA were segregated African-American clubs that served the same purpose as their white counterparts), Dramatic Club, Courtesy Club, and the various athletic clubs. Members of the Glee Club remember being popular performers in the region and were once invited to sing at a local shoe factory where each member was given a new pair of shoes.<sup>9</sup>

Most of Montgomery High's faculty held advanced education degrees and teachers worked with students to cultivate excellence within the school's academic, music and athletic programs. The majority of the faculty earned degrees from either Tennessee State University (NR 6/14/1996) in Nashville or at nearby Lane College (NR 7/2/1987) in Jackson, TN. Arguably the most prominent teacher was Claude C. Bond who earned his BS from Lane and an MA in Education from Fisk University (NR 2/9/1978), and served at Montgomery High from 1935 to 1956. Under his tenure as principal at Montgomery, he was able to secure the support of federal funding and greatly expand the facilities. After serving at Montgomery High for

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<sup>8</sup> Site meeting with the Montgomery Alumni Association, October 24, 2006.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

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twenty-one years, Bond left to accept the principal position at Hamilton High School in Chattanooga and became the first African-American Assistant Superintendent of Chattanooga City Schools.<sup>10</sup>



Figure 7. Glee Club performing in auditorium (courtesy of Marilyn Henry)

Aside from the efforts of Bond, a noted African-American educator in Tennessee during the Civil Rights era, the other teachers were regional activists for civil rights and African-American education. Teachers annually attended meetings of African-American educators at Lane College during the 1950s and 1960s. While Montgomery High School was located in rural West Tennessee, its teachers were actively working with educators and Civil Rights leaders across the state. This activism and political savvy gave rural students educational opportunities that were unheard of elsewhere. And all of this was accomplished in a strongly segregated area of the state and in a rural setting. While the educational structure and the expansion of a modern, state-of-the-art physical plant at Montgomery parallels earlier African-American school improvements in the Nashville area, these teachers were able to provide similar opportunities to the students of these rural counties of West Tennessee.

While Montgomery High School was quite an innovation for African-American education in rural West Tennessee, the timing of its construction is very telling. In anticipation of a ruling like *Brown vs. Board of Education*, many counties and cities across the South constructed better educational facilities for African-American students in an attempt make them more equal while remaining racially segregated. The year after Montgomery's new gymnasium was constructed, 1953, the Supreme Court ruled that racially segregated schools were unconstitutional.

<sup>10</sup> "Giant Leaves Legacy in Education: Dr. Claude C. Bond," found on the community history website *Yesterday's Tennessee*, [www.tnyesterday.com/schools/henderson/mhs/1988.html](http://www.tnyesterday.com/schools/henderson/mhs/1988.html), accessed 10/26/2006.

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 11 Montgomery High School  
Henderson County, TN

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While schools in Memphis desegregated in 1961, it wasn't until 1965 that schools in Henderson County began to do the same. That year, thirteen African-American students enrolled at the previously all-white Lexington High School under the "freedom of choice plan" submitted by the Board of Education in an effort to comply with Civil Rights laws.<sup>11</sup> While no other African-American students enrolled in any of the other previously all white schools, enrollment at Montgomery High School decreased by one-hundred students.<sup>12</sup> It is possible that the larger decrease was in part due to African-American students from other counties deciding to attend previously all-white schools nearer to home. In 1967, all of the county schools were desegregated. At that point there were 170 Montgomery High Schools students left to enroll at Lexington High School. Faculty members were integrated into other schools in the county based upon the enrollment of African-American students attending a particular school.<sup>13</sup>

While the building no longer housed classes for African-American students, it continued to serve as the site for a community and cultural center. An active alumni association maintains the building and develops community events and activities reminiscent of the past. In 1997, the city received \$90,000 from the state to renovate the gymnasium, which was renamed the Montgomery-Bond-Robinson Community Center. This center remains active and hosted a community fair in 1998. The portion of the original school building not used by the Alumni Association houses a Head Start Program.

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<sup>11</sup> Negroes Register for Lexington High But None In County," *Lexington Progress*, 29 May 1965, found on the community history website Yesterday's Tennessee, <http://www.tnyesterday.com/schools/henderson/mhs/closing.html>, accessed 10/26/2006.

<sup>12</sup> Gracie Timberlake and A.L. Robinson, "A History of Montgomery High School: Lexington, Tennessee," 1988, found on the community history website *Yesterday's Tennessee*, [www.tnyesterday.com/schools/henderson/mhs/1988.html](http://www.tnyesterday.com/schools/henderson/mhs/1988.html), accessed 10/26/2006.c

<sup>13</sup> *ibid*

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Henderson County, TN

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## 9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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Pearl High School National Register Nomination, National Register files, Center for Historic Preservation, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN.

*The Tiger*, Montgomery High School Yearbook, 1966.

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Van West, Carroll. *Tennessee's New Deal Landscapes, A Guidebook*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000.

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[http://www.tnyesterday.com/schools/henderson/mhs/MONTGOMERY\\_HS.html](http://www.tnyesterday.com/schools/henderson/mhs/MONTGOMERY_HS.html). Accessed 10/26/2006.



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Henderson County, TN

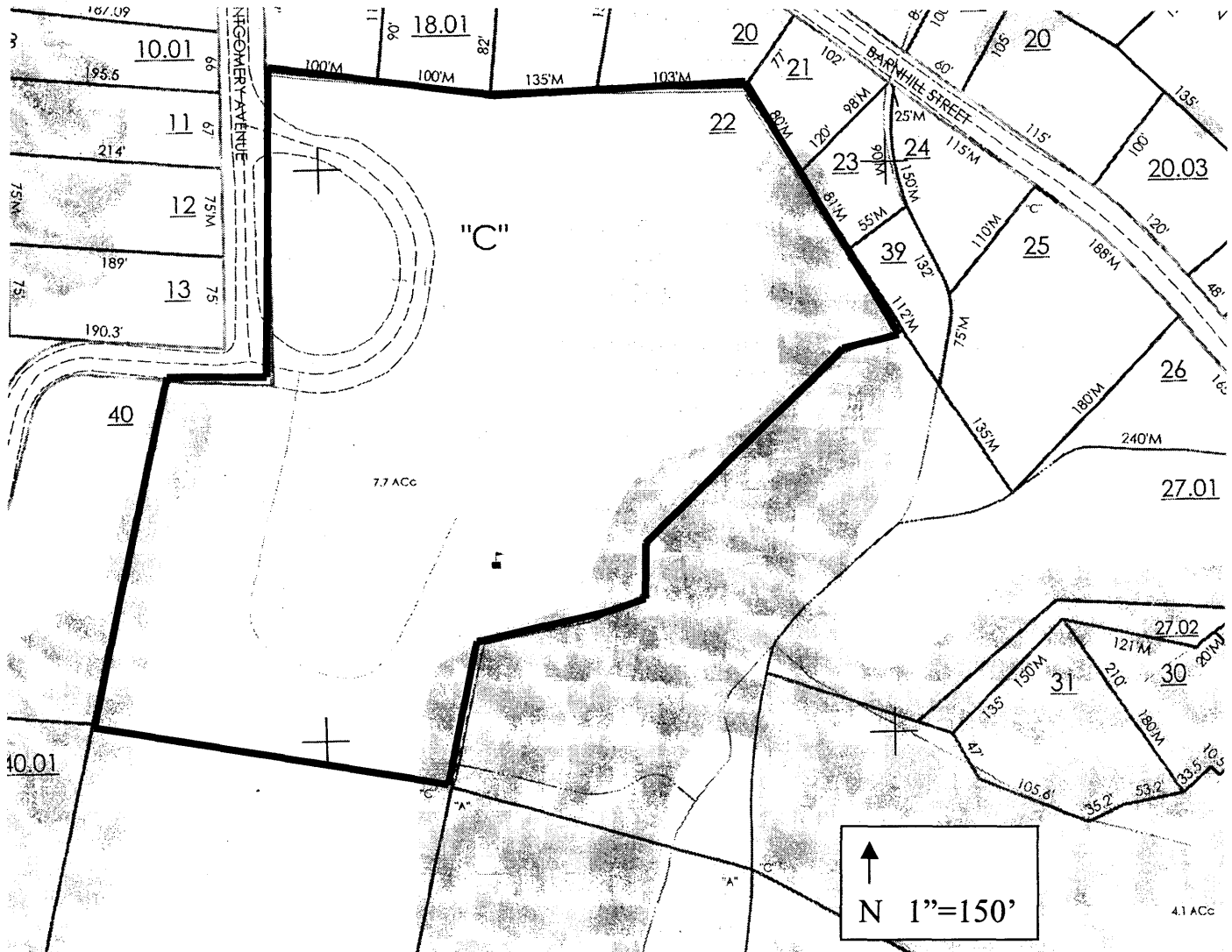
## GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

### Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries for the dominated property are shown on the accompanying Henderson County, Tennessee, tax maps as a portion of parcel number 22.00 on Henderson County tax map 0821.

### Verbal Boundary Justification

The nominated boundaries include the extant historic property associated with the 1948-1967 Montgomery High School and represent the current legal boundaries for the Montgomery School Alumni Association per their lease agreement with the Henderson County Board of Education.



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# National Register of Historic Places

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### PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographs by: Dr. Carroll Van West

MTSU Center for Historic Preservation

Date: Fall 2006

Negatives: Tennessee Historical Commission, Nashville, Tennessee

- 1 of 20 Main entrance, Montgomery High School, photographer facing east
- 2 of 20 West façade, Montgomery High School, photographer facing northeast
- 3 of 20 Exterior wall sconce, photographer facing northeast
- 4 of 20 South elevation, Montgomery High School, photographer facing north
- 5 of 20 West facade, Head Start wing, photographer facing northeast
- 6 of 20 West facade, Head Start wing, photographer facing east
- 7 of 20 Front atrium, Montgomery High School, photographer facing west
- 8 of 20 North hallway, Montgomery High School, photographer facing north
- 9 of 20 Boys bathroom, Montgomery High School, photographer facing east
- 10 of 20 Classroom, Montgomery High School, photographer facing north
- 11 of 20 Auditorium Entrance, Montgomery High School, photographer facing northeast
- 12 of 20 Auditorium, Montgomery High School, photographer facing east
- 13 of 20 Auditorium chair detail, Montgomery High School, photographer facing north
- 14 of 20 North façade, Gymnasium, photographer facing south
- 15 of 20 Southwest corner, Gymnasium, photographer facing northeast
- 16 of 20 Southeast corner, Gymnasium, photographer facing northwest
- 17 of 20 Interior, Gymnasium
- 18 of 20 Basketball court and football field, photographer facing east

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Henderson County, TN

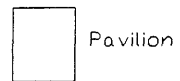
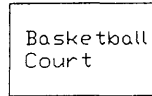
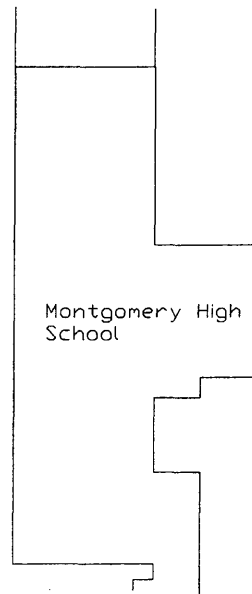
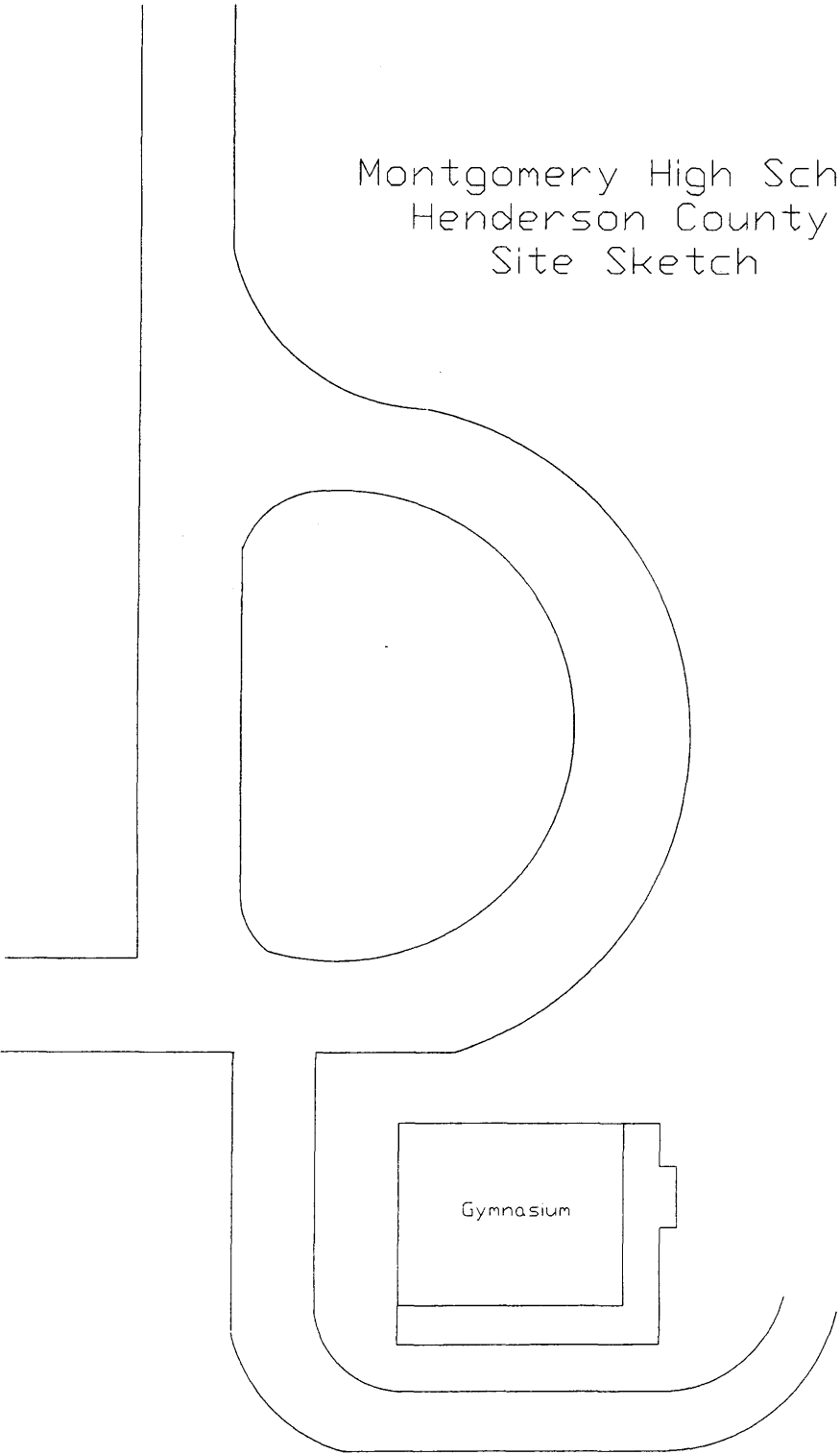
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19 of 20 Pavilion and restrooms, photographer facing southeast

20 of 20 Surrounding African-American neighborhood, photographer facing west

Montgomery High School  
Henderson County  
Site Sketch

North  
Not to scale



Football Field

# Montgomery High School

