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United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NATIONAL REGISTER

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Old Sopchoppy High School Gymnasium other names/site number

2. Location

street & number Corner of Second Avenue & Summer Street n/a not for publication city, town Sopchoppy n/a vicinity state Florida code FL county Wakulla code 129 zip code 32358

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: private, public-local (checked), public-State, public-Federal. Category of Property: building(s) (checked), district, site, structure, object. Number of Resources within Property: Contributing (1), Noncontributing (1), Total (1). Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0.

Name of related multiple property listing: n/a. Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0.

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination 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. See continuation sheet. Signature of certifying official: Florida State Historic Preservation Officer. Date: 4/25/90.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet. Signature of commenting or other official. Date. State or Federal agency and bureau.

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is: Entered in the National Register (checked). Determined eligible for the National Register. Determined not eligible for the National Register. Removed from the National Register. other, (explain:). Entered in the National Register. Signature of the Keeper. Date of Action: 6/1/90.

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Education: school

Recreation & Culture: sports facility

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Vacant: not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Other: Masonry Vernacular

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Limerock - Limestone

Concrete

roof Asbestos

other Wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

PLEASE SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

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

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Education

Entertainment/Recreation

Significant Person

n/a

Period of Significance

c1940

Significant Dates

c1940

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Architect/Builder

Stripling, James A./Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

PLEASE SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

PLEASE SEE 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 # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property Approximately 1 acre

UTM References

A

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3	3	2	7	7	0	0
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 Zone Easting Northing

B

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 Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 213, 214, 219, 220 and the North half (N $\frac{1}{2}$) of Lots 215 and 221, per unnumbered map of West side of Sopchoppy, recorded in Plat Book One (1) of the Wakulla County, Florida Public Records, and being in Township 5 South, Range 3 West of Section 12.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the city lots that have historically been associated with the property.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jenny S. Underwood/Barbara E. Mattick, Historic Sites Specialist
 organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date April 1990
 street & number R.A. Gray Bldg., 500 S. Bronough Street telephone (904) 487-2333
 city or town Tallahassee state Florida zip code 32399-0250

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Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 1 Old Sopchoppy High School Gymnasium, Sopchoppy,
Wakulla Co., FL

SUMMARY

The Old Sopchoppy High School Gymnasium is a c1940 one story, masonry vernacular building located in a residential neighborhood in Sopchoppy, Wakulla County, Florida. The main block of the building has a front gabled roof with a Mission Style parapet on the front and rear elevations. A one story, hip roofed area extends from the rear elevation. All windows are 6/6, double hung sash of various sizes, with limestone surrounds. The most distinctive features of the building are its native limestone construction, and wooden truss system. The original design, workmanship, materials, location, and setting of the building remain intact.

SETTING

The Old Sopchoppy High School Gymnasium is located in a residential setting on the southeast corner of Summer Street and Second Avenue. It is situated on a one acre lot of City owned property across Second Avenue from the old Sopchoppy High School (now the Sopchoppy Elementary School). After 1963, other buildings were added to the school plant, including a new gymnasium, and a library, located just south of the old Gymnasium (see Site Plan). In 1977 tennis courts were built on the old Gymnasium site and are a noncontributing structure on the property. The surrounding area remains residential or open, grassy spaces with pine trees and scrubs.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Exterior:

The west elevation (main facade) is dominated by a round, Mission Style parapet which covers the west gable end (photo 4). The parapet has concrete coping. Two attached, flat roofed entry porches/ticket booths, with arched entrances and windows, are located at the north and south ends of the elevation. The double wooden doors of the main entrances are panelled. The doors and windows have four-light fanlights (photo 5).

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The south elevation carries five equally spaced limestone pilasters which create six bays. The four central bays contain paired, 6/6 double hung sash windows. The west end bay carries a single window and an interior chimney passes through the roof and rises above this bay to the ridge line. In the east end bay there is an arched doorway with a four-light fanlight. It is approached by poured concrete steps flanked with cheeks. The south elevation also includes the east wall of a rear, hip roofed extension of the building. This wall has a single, 6/6 double hung sash window (photo 6).

The east elevation (rear elevation) includes a round Mission Style parapet which covers the gable end, rising above the rear, hip roofed extension. There is no ornamentation on the face of the parapet. Fenestration on the extension is 6/6, double hung sash with limestone arches and surrounds. Single windows at the north and south ends are 6'8" tall, and the six single windows across the elevation are 5'2" tall. An offset, limestone, interior chimney rises at the juncture of the hipped roof and parapet (photo 7).

The north elevation nearly mirrors the south elevation, except that the location of the single window and door in the end bays is reversed. A limestone chimney rises at the east end bay, which, in addition, has an arched doorway with a four-light fanlight. The entry is protected by a hip roofed porch supported by pipes (photos 8 & 9). The west end bay has a single 6/6 double hung sash window.

Interior:

The main interior space is a single room, 94' x 73 1/2' with a regulation size (94' x 50') basketball court (photo 10). Bleachers line the north and south walls. The floor is of pine and the walls are plastered (photos 11 & 12). The roof is supported by open wooden trusses, and wooden posts located on each side of the basketball court, in front of the bleachers (photos 13, 14, 16, 17 & 18). Interior pilasters buttress the end walls. Single, arched doorways at the north and south ends of the east wall lead to girls' and boys' locker rooms, showers, sinks and toilets, and

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coaches' offices (photos 14 & 15). Floors in this area are poured concrete.

Alterations:

With the exception of the removal of the original scoreboard, clock, and basketball goals, the Old Sopchoppy High School Gymnasium has not had any intentional alterations. The building is in a state of disrepair because of neglect. The major areas of damage are the roof, floor, and fenestration. The original limestone, however, remains intact beneath an overgrowth of vines and shrubs, and the building retains its integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and setting.

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SUMMARY

The Old Sopchoppy High School Gymnasium is significant under Criterion A in the areas of Education and Entertainment/Recreation as a community recreational facility, as well as its association with school athletics and physical education. The gymnasium, which was built as a Works Progress Administration project c1940, has contributed to the social development of the City of Sopchoppy and rural Wakulla County as a facility for the development of high school athletic teams, physical education, and community sporting events. It is significant under Criterion C as a fine example of limestone masonry construction and local workmanship employed in many WPA projects in Florida, and as the work of a prominent Florida architect, James A. Stripling.

CONTEXT

Sopchoppy

Sopchoppy is a small town with approximately 500 citizens, located on the edge of the Apalachicola National Forest in Wakulla County, Florida. The name "Sopchoppy" is derived from the Creek Indian word "Sokhe" which means twisted, and "Chapke" which means long. The combination of the words means "long twisted stream", a name which aptly describes the river that borders the town on the west and north sides.

Whites first settled in the Sopchoppy area c1840. The Comte de Castelnau, a French traveller, described the area in 1842 saying,

Since my trip on this river [Wakulla River in 1838] I have learned that several planters had come to settle in its fertile neighborhood, but last year they were all massacred by a Seminole war party and their homes burned and pillaged; near the river Oclockone and the little stream of Secheopoko [Sopchoppy], one has recently installed a mill.

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After the Second Seminole War (1835-1842), a small community known as Sopchoppy arose on the west side of the Sopchoppy River and a post office was established there in 1848.

The 1870 census, the first one to record specific figures for Sopchoppy, showed the Sopchoppy precinct to have a population of 387. The census of 1880 showed the precinct to have a population of 542. The area's economy was based on naval stores and farming. Crops included corn, oats, rice, sugar cane, peanuts, grapes, potatoes, and turnips. In October 1893, the Carrabelle, Tallahassee & Georgia Railroad Company completed a line from Tallahassee to Carrabelle on the Florida Gulf Coast. The fifty-two mile line included a segment east of the Sopchoppy River. People living on the west side of the river began to move to the east side to gain access to the railroad. They were further encouraged to move when the Scottish Land Improvement Company began to plat a new town and sell lots in 1895. The new community prospered, and Sopchoppy was incorporated as a town on September 11, 1905.

By 1911, the Sopchoppy precinct boasted a population of 853; the Town of Sopchoppy's population was about 300. The citizenry included a physician, dentist, and photographer. There were four general stores, two churches, an opera house, hotels, a restaurant, a drug store, and a newspaper. The town's prosperity was based on the turpentine industry which reached its height in the early 1910s and 1920s. Sopchoppy's population increased to about 350 by 1918. New establishments included a hotel and a public school. In January 1918, for some unknown reason, the citizens voted to abolish their franchise, and the Town of Sopchoppy was unincorporated. Growth continued, and in 1925 the population was about 400. A 1928 hurricane, however, destroyed much of the pine crop in the area, and drastically hurt the naval stores industry and economy of the community. In 1939, the population, which still depended on the lumber and naval stores industries, remained at 400. The community was reincorporated as a city in 1955. In recent years, Sopchoppy has diversified its economy to include earthworm harvesting and beekeeping, as well as timbering, farming, and recreational hunting and fishing. In spite of these

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changes, Sopchoppy remains a small community with little growth.

Works Progress Administration

The Works Progress Administration (WPA) had a significant impact on the Florida economy during the New Deal era by redirecting funds from direct relief to the support of the performance of useful labor. It provided a way to employ both skilled and unskilled workers, providing income for them and direct products of their labors. The WPA funded the labor costs of projects, which usually accounted for over half of the cost. The remainder of the funding was provided by sponsors of specific projects who would pay for materials, supplies and equipment.

Historian Charleton W. Tebeau sites in his book, A History of Florida, that by 1940 the WPA effort in Florida had constructed 6,206 miles of highway and streets, built 245 new schools and improved 278 others, had constructed 1,237 bridges and viaducts, 6,272 culverts, 146 parks, 191 playgrounds and athletic fields, and 24,533 sanitary privies. From 1935 to 1940, Wakulla County benefitted from the program. A total WPA expenditure of \$397,874 in the county (\$267,169 WPA funds, plus \$130,795 from sponsors) resulted in the construction of fifty-eight miles of new roads, the planting of 46,990 bushels of seed oysters, health and education programs, and the construction of three new schools and two school additions.

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

Throughout most of the 1920s there was no accredited standard high school for black or white students in Wakulla County, because none of the five school districts in the county had an enrollment high enough to support such a school. The Sopchoppy School, a facility for white students, provided the highest level of instruction, equivalent to a standard junior high school education. In 1928, the Sopchoppy School became a consolidated high school, which served white students from Sopchoppy and the neighboring communities of Smith Creek, McIntire, Curtis Mill, and Ashmore. For several years the school provided

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the only standard four year high school program in the county. In 1932, the county maintained thirty-one buildings, thirty of which were frame buildings; there was one concrete building. In 1934, a new building for the Sopchoppy High School was completed with WPA funding.

In late November 1938, a proposal for the WPA to fund the \$11,148 construction of a gymnasium for the high school was approved, and the citizens of the Sopchoppy School District bonded themselves to meet the necessary cost of sponsorship of the project. Their contribution paid for materials, supplies, and equipment, while the WPA funds paid for the labor.

James A. Stripling, the architect for the Florida State Board of Education, completed blueprints for the gymnasium on August 24, 1939. No record has been found of the exact date of completion of construction, but the gymnasium probably opened for use in 1940. The completion of the facility brought sports to the community of Sopchoppy as basketball games and tournaments were scheduled in the city. The high school had a winning basketball team; programs in gymnastics, football, and tennis; and a planned physical education curriculum.

In 1963, the Wakulla County School Board determined that the Sopchoppy School needed new physical education facilities, and recommended that the existing gymnasium be torn down and replaced with a new gymnasium instead of being repaired and renovated. The citizens of Sopchoppy were violently opposed to its demolition, and a compromise was reached. The old gymnasium would remain as a hurricane evacuation shelter, storage facility, and classroom area, and a new gymnasium would be built at another location on the site. The old gymnasium was left to stand, but without proper maintenance, it began to decay.

In 1966-67 a new Wakulla County High School was established with a new facility in Medart. The old Sopchoppy school buildings were turned over to the Sopchoppy Elementary School. In the mid 1970s, when the Wakulla County School Board once again proposed to tear down the old gymnasium, concerned citizens banded together and pressured

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the Wakulla County School Board to deed the land and gymnasium to the City of Sopchoppy. The deed was transferred in August 1977. The city built tennis courts east of the gymnasium later that year, but no funds were available to maintain the gymnasium, and it continued to deteriorate. In 1989 the City of Sopchoppy was recommended to be a recipient of a state grant to restore the building. When completed, the gymnasium will be used as a community center for Wakulla County.

ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

James Aaron Stripling (1902-1978):

James Aaron Stripling was born December 8, 1902, in Gordon, Alabama. He was the sixth of eight children of the Reverend James A. Stripling and Claudia Rena Pool Stripling. James' father, who died June 19, 1916, was a circuit rider in the Alabama Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church South (now South Alabama-West Florida conference of the United Methodist Church).

Soon after his father's death, Stripling's family moved to Montgomery, Alabama. Upon graduation from Sidney Lanier High School in Montgomery, he entered Alabama Polytechnic Institute (now Auburn University), where he received the baccalaureate degree in architecture in 1925.

In 1930, after working with architectural firms in Montgomery and Birmingham, Alabama, Stripling accepted a position as school architect with the Division of School Plant Design and Construction in the Georgia Department of Education. This was a new division which had been created by a grant of money from a national foundation in an attempt to improve public school building design and construction in the state of Georgia. When Eugene Talmadge became governor of Georgia, in 1933, he started "playing politics" with personnel in this division, as well as in other units of state government. This resulted in the grant money from the foundation being transferred from Georgia to the Florida Department of Education, where Stripling was offered a similar post. He and his wife moved to Tallahassee in 1934,

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and he became Florida's first State School Architect. During the next several years in Florida, Stripling personally designed and supervised the construction of school buildings in many parts of the state. Later, when Florida started a massive school building program, he became a consultant in school building design and construction.

In 1945 Stripling retired from the Florida Department of Education and established his own architectural firm in Tallahassee. His firm designed and supervised the construction of many public buildings and large private homes throughout Florida, especially in Tallahassee, West Florida, and in Lee and Collier Counties. In Tallahassee, he developed the site plan and designed the first unit, or educational building, for St. Paul's United Methodist Church. Some of his other Tallahassee works are the state headquarters for the Florida Education Association United, and the late 1960 renovation and addition to the Leon County Courthouse. He designed the site plan for Chipola Junior College in Marianna, as well as a number of the buildings, including the Administration Building, the Library, the Forestry Building, the Science Building and the Auditorium. Among the buildings in Southwest Florida are the Ft. Myers High School (1948), the Pine Island Elementary School (1950), the Immokalee High School (1952), and the Tommie Barfield Elementary School on Marco Island. He also designed several large residences on Captiva Island.

From 1943 through 1946, Stripling was president of the Florida Association of Architects. Under his leadership the Florida Association united with the American Institute of Architects. For many years he was the national consulting architect for his college social fraternity, Pi Kappa Phi.

After Stripling's wife died in 1972, he moved back to Montgomery and lived in the family home with one of his sisters until his death on May 3, 1978.

Limestone Construction:

The earliest recorded use of local limestone as a building material in Wakulla County was the 1739 construction of a stone fortification by the Spanish at San

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Marco de Apalache at the confluence of the St. Marks and Wakulla Rivers. The stone was cut from deposits located near the fort. Limestone walls also remain from a Civil War hospital at the same site.

During the 1930s, limestone was used for numerous Florida Works Progress Administration construction projects, particularly school projects. Some examples of such limestone buildings in North Florida include: Crawfordville Elementary School, Sopchoppy Elementary School, and the Old Sopchoppy High School Gymnasium in Wakulla County; the Webster School in Sumter County; the Yankeetown School in Levy county; the Mayo School in Lafayette County; and Woodville Elementary School in Leon County.

Limestone is found naturally in Florida, and there are quarries in several northern counties. Now used primarily in a crushed form for road construction, in the 1930s limestone was quarried and hand carved with stone axes and chisels into building stones. It is a highly durable material.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Old Sopchoppy High School Gymnasium is architecturally significant as a fine example of building techniques that are no longer commonly used. The limestone walls are load bearing not veneered. Each of the rocks was quarried from a Wakulla County limestone quarry and hand carved by local stone masons. The use of this "native Wakulla fieldstone", as it is identified on the blueprints, and the employment of local craftsmen reflects the Works Progress Administration's preference for the use of local materials and labor for its projects.

The heavy, pine timber trusses of the gymnasium are also architecturally significant. Prior to World War II, trusses were usually fabricated at the construction site. Because heavy wood was the most commonly used material, large expanses were spanned by joining several timbers. Sag bolts were sometimes inserted between the roof and trusses to carry the tensile stress. During the war, new techniques and materials such as prefabricated, lightweight wood and

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steel trusses were developed, eliminating the need for the old, heavy timber methods. The old techniques were employed in the construction of the Sopchoppy gymnasium to create a clear span large enough to accommodate the purposes of the building. According to the restoration architect, Mays Leroy Gray,

The pine timber roof trusses which are exposed to the interior of the Sopchoppy Gymnasium utilize the old job-built, wood timber type roof trusses. They are unusual and very significant architectural/structural interior elements. The top chord truss members and bottom chord truss members are tied together with wood timber strut (web) members. Those gymnasium truss web members subject to compression stresses are constructed of solid wood timbers and those web members subjected to tension stresses are constructed of steel tension rods (sometimes referred to as ties or sag rods). The steel tension tie rods are provided with steel threaded nuts and large steel washers. The steel washers bear against the wood surfaces of the top and bottom chords and spread and pressures so as not to crush the wood, and to distribute the superimposed roof stresses. The wood truss joints and splices are connected with steel bolts.

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Interviews

E. Bonner, former principal of Sopchoppy High School,
Sopchoppy, Florida.

Mr. Randy Bristol, Director of Maintenance and Facilities,
Wakulla County School Board, Crawfordville, Florida.

Mr. Mark Coil, current principal of Sopchoppy Elementary
School, Sopchoppy, Florida.

Ms. Beverly Crowson, Wakulla County News, Crawfordville,
Florida.

Mr. Amos Langston, Sopchoppy, Florida.

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Mr. George Strickland, Sopchoppy, Florida.

Ms. Faye Rouse, Sopchoppy, Florida.

Ms. Norma Rudd, Teacher at Sopchoppy High School 1926-1963,
Sopchoppy, Florida.

Mr. Bill Stephens, Director of Public Works, Sopchoppy,
Florida

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Photographs 1 Old Sopchoppy High School Gymnasium, Sopchoppy,
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- 1 1) Old Sopchoppy High School Gymnasium
 2) Sopchoppy, Wakulla Co., FL
 3) Jenny S. Underwood
 4) November 1988
 5) Bureau of Historic Preservation, Tallahassee, FL
 6) Streetscape showing the intersection of Summer
 Street and Second Avenue, camera facing E
 7) 1 of 18

Items 1-5 are the same for the remaining photographs.

- 2 6) Streetscape of 2nd Avenue showing Sopchoppy
 Elementary School buildings, camera facing S
 7) 2 of 18
- 3 6) E elevation and tennis courts, camera facing SW
 7) 3 of 18
- 4 6) Main (W) elevation, camera facing E
 7) 4 of 18
- 5 6) Entrance at N end of main elevation, camera facing E
 7) 5 of 18
- 6 6) S elevation, camera facing N
 7) 6 of 18
- 7 6) E elevation, camera facing W
 7) 7 of 18
- 8 6) E end of N elevation, camera facing SE
 7) 8 of 18
- 9 6) W end of N elevation, camera facing SW
 7) 9 of 18
- 10 6) E Wall, camera facing E
 7) 10 of 18
- 11 6) NW corner, camera facing NW
 7) 11 of 18

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

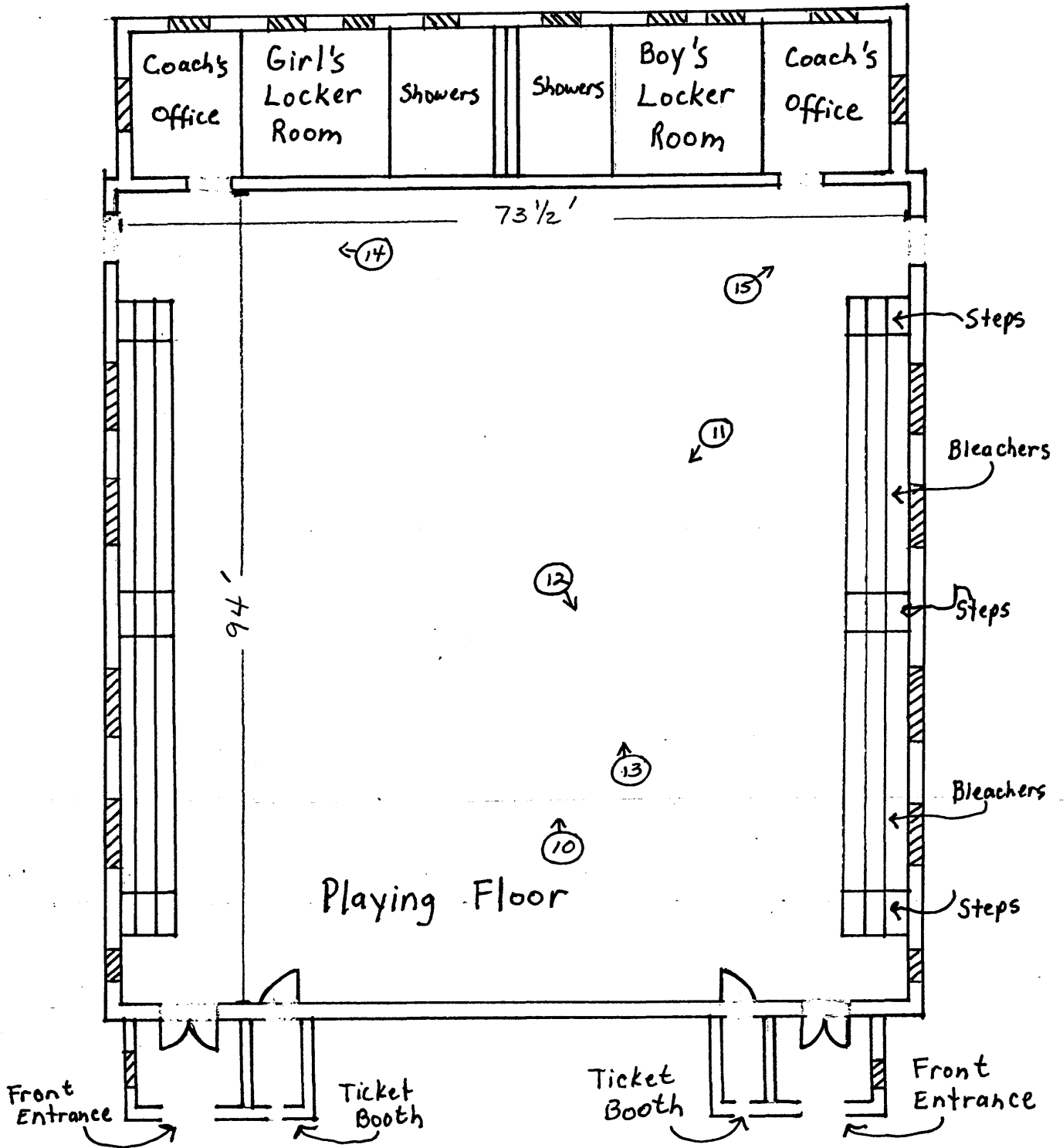
**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Photographs 2 Old Sopchoppy High School Gymnasium, Sopchoppy,
Section number _____ Page _____ Wakulla Co., FL

- 12 6) SW corner, camera facing SW
7) 12 of 18
- 13 6) Detail of truss system, camera facing E
7) 13 of 18
- 14 6) Side entrance and entry to Girls' Coach's Office,
camera facing N
7) 14 of 18
- 15 6) Side entrance and entry to Boys' Coach's Office,
camera facing SE
7) 15 of 18
- 16 1) Old Sopchoppy High School Gymnasium
2) Sopchoppy, Wakulla Co., FL
3) Mays Leroy Gray, Architect
4) 1989
5) Mays Leroy Gray, 511 N. Duval St., Tallahassee, FL
6) Truss system showing sag rods
7) 16 of 18

Items 1-5 are the same for the remaining photographs.

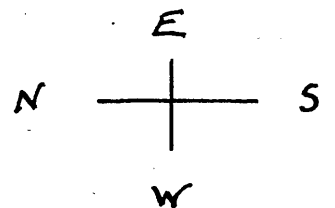
- 17 6) Truss system showing sag rods and cross bridging
7) 17 of 18
- 18 6) Joint between support post and tie beam
7) 18 of 18

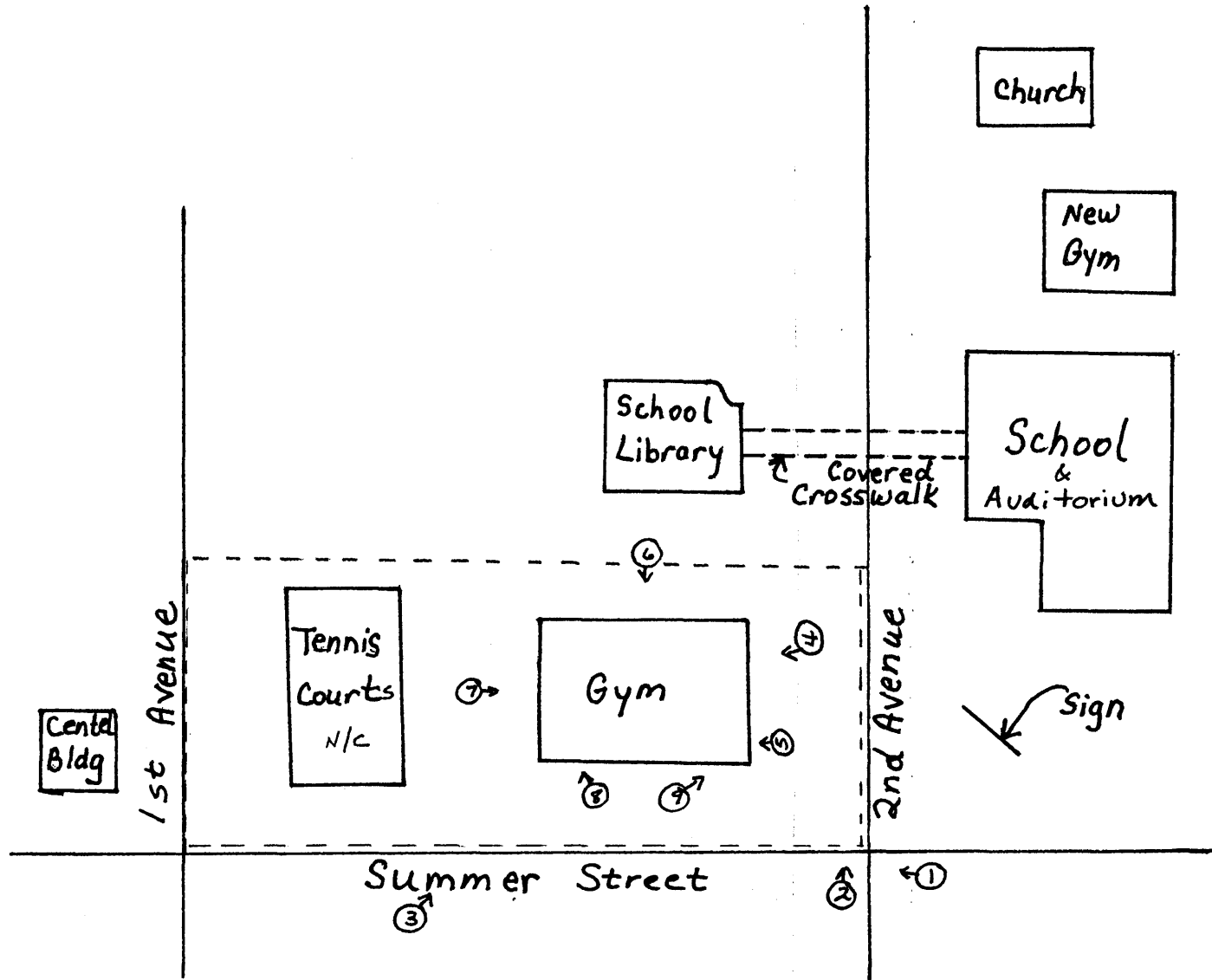


1" = approx. 17'

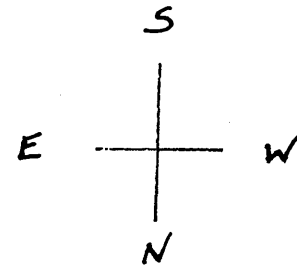
⑤ photograph & camera direction

Floor Plan





Old Sopchoppy High School Gym
Site Plan

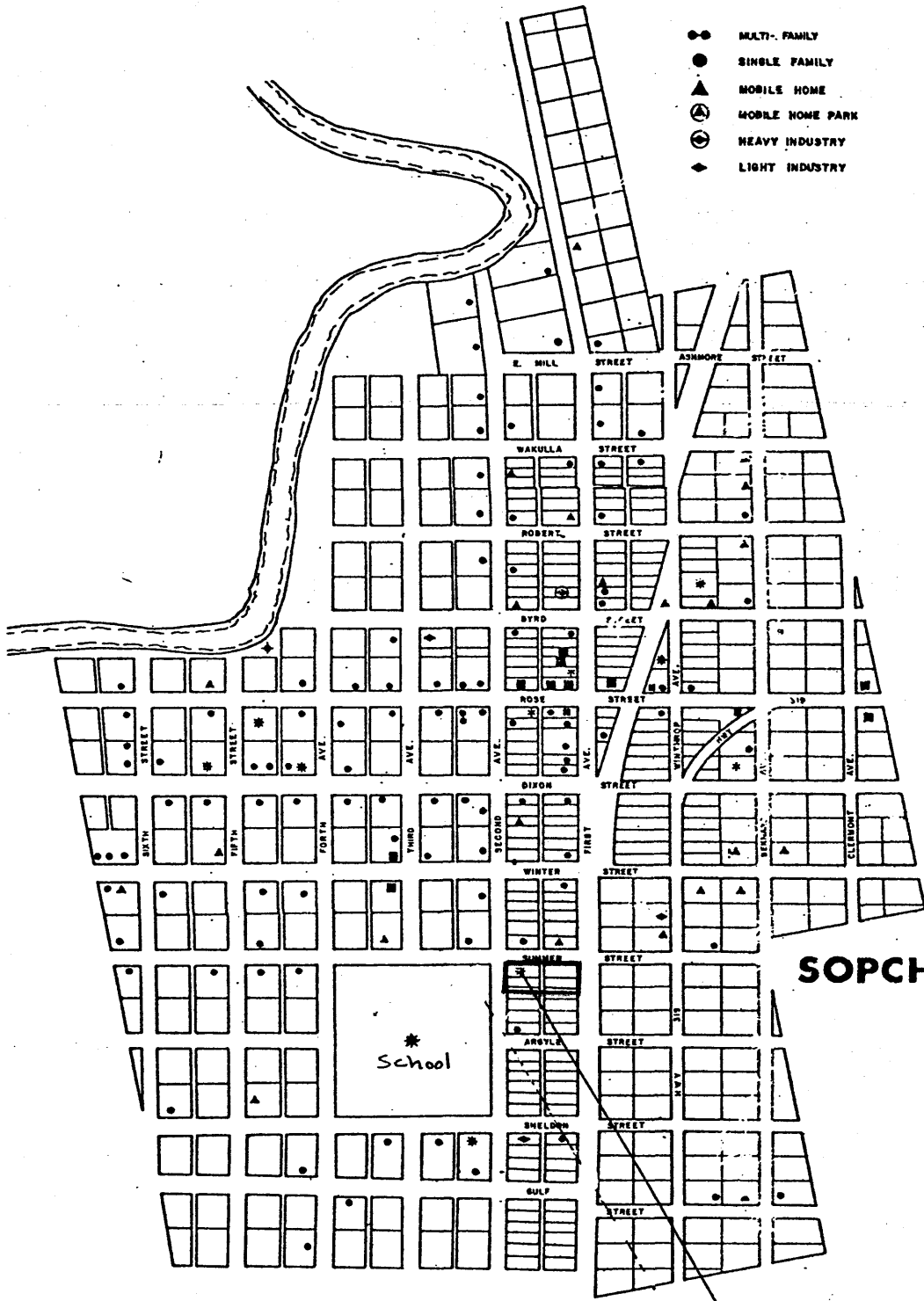


Not to scale

① → Photograph + camera direction

--- Boundary of lots deeded to the City of Sopchoppy

- MULTI-FAMILY
- SINGLE FAMILY
- ▲ MOBILE HOME
- ▲ MOBILE HOME PARK
- ⊙ HEAVY INDUSTRY
- ◆ LIGHT INDUSTRY
- ✳ PUBLIC & SEM-PUBLIC
- ◆ RECREATIONAL OPEN SPACE
- ⌒ AGRICULTURE
- ⌒ TRANSIENT LODGING
- RETAIL GOODS
- ✳ PROFESSIONAL OFFICES & SERVICES



SOPCHOPPY FLORIDA

Old Sopchoppy High School
Gymnasium