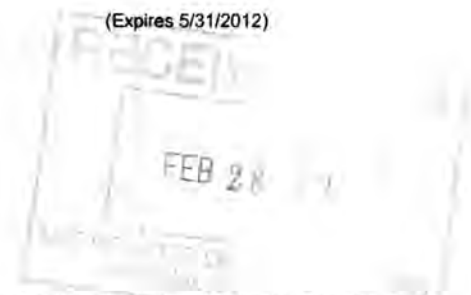


United States Department of the Interior 1000 1051
National Park Service

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Dunbar High School

other names/site number Bessemer Colored High School; Dunbar-Abrams Community Center

2. Location

street & number 2715 6th Avenue North not for publication

city or town Bessemer vicinity

state Alabama code AL county Jefferson code 073

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide X local

Elizabeth Ann Brown
Signature of certifying official

10 December 2010
Date

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register

determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other (explain): _____

[Signature]
Signature of the Keeper

3/18/11
Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	district
0	0	site
0	0	structure
0	0	object
1	0	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

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION: school

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL: meeting hall

WORK IN PROGRESS

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th Century and 20th Century Revivals:
Classical Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: BRICK

walls: BRICK

roof: ASPHALT, METAL

other: STONE, GLASS

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

See continuation sheet

Narrative Description

See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION

ARCHITECTURE

ETHNIC HERITAGE: BLACK

Period of Significance

1923-1960

Significant Dates

1923

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Whilldin, David Oliver (architect)

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance begins with the opening of Dunbar High School in 1923 and concludes with the year 1960 when the high school curriculum was shifted to the newly opened J. S. Abrams High School. The property is not of exceptional significance for the period after 1960, the usual cut-off for National Register significance.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

N/A

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

See continuation sheet

Narrative Statement of Significance (provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance)

See continuation sheet

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

N/A

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 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: **Dunbar High School**

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approx. 1.8 acres
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	<u>16</u>	<u>504720</u>	<u>3696930</u>	3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

The nominated area is depicted on the site plan that accompanies this nomination as Exhibit 1. The nominated area encompasses a portion of the block bounded by 5th Avenue, 6th Avenue, 27th Street, and 28th Street in Bessemer, Alabama.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The boundaries are drawn to include the eligible resource, Dunbar High School, and its front lawn and to exclude the adjacent modern clinic building.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title J. Daniel Pezzoni, Terry Ammons and Susan Enzweiler (AHC NR Coordinator)

organization Landmark Preservation Associates date July 15, 2010

street & number 6 Houston St. telephone (540) 464-5315

city or town Lexington state VA zip code 24450

e-mail dan_pezzoni@rockbridge.net

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive black and white photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Dunbar High School
City or Vicinity: Bessemer
County: Jefferson State: Alabama
Photographer: StudioAmmons
Date Photographed: March 2010
Description of Photograph(s) and number: Front (west) elevation. 1 of 9.

Name of Property: Dunbar High School
City or Vicinity: Bessemer
County: Jefferson State: Alabama
Photographer: J. Daniel Pezzoni
Date Photographed: June 2010
Description of Photograph(s) and number: East and north elevations. Clinic (outside nominated area) to left. 2 of 9.

Name of Property: Dunbar High School
City or Vicinity: Bessemer
County: Jefferson State: Alabama
Photographer: StudioAmmons
Date Photographed: March 2010
Description of Photograph(s) and number: South end of classroom block. 3 of 9.

Name of Property: Dunbar High School
City or Vicinity: Bessemer
County: Jefferson State: Alabama
Photographer: StudioAmmons
Date Photographed: March 2010
Description of Photograph(s) and number: South end of gymnasium block. 4 of 9.

Name of Property: Dunbar High School
City or Vicinity: Bessemer
County: Jefferson State: Alabama
Photographer: J. Daniel Pezzoni
Date Photographed: June 2010
Description of Photograph(s) and number: East elevation of classroom block. 5 of 9.

Name of Property: Dunbar High School
City or Vicinity: Bessemer
County: Jefferson State: Alabama
Photographer: J. Daniel Pezzoni
Date Photographed: June 2010
Description of Photograph(s) and number: Gymnasium interior. 6 of 9.

Name of Property: Dunbar High School
City or Vicinity: Bessemer
County: Jefferson State: Alabama
Photographer: StudioAmmons
Date Photographed: March 2010
Description of Photograph(s) and number: Classroom. 7 of 9.

Name of Property: Dunbar High School
City or Vicinity: Bessemer
County: Jefferson State: Alabama
Photographer: StudioAmmons
Date Photographed: March 2010
Description of Photograph(s) and number: South stairwell. 8 of 9.

Name of Property: Dunbar High School
City or Vicinity: Bessemer
County: Jefferson State: Alabama
Photographer: J. Daniel Pezzoni
Date Photographed: June 2010
Description of Photograph(s) and number: Second-floor corridor. 9 of 9.

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. fo the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Section 7

Summary Paragraph

Dunbar High School, located at 2715 6th Avenue North in the City of Bessemer, Alabama, is a two-story brick school with a classroom block completed in 1923. A gymnasium wing and connector was completed by 1940 (probably in the 1930s) to give the building an asymmetrical U footprint. The west-facing classroom block was designed by architect D. O. Whilldin with shallow peaked parapets over slightly projecting end pavilions on the front façade, a center entry bay with a stone inscription plaque, and a built-up flat roof. Early brick porches survive on the south ends of the classroom and gymnasium wings and a ca. 1950s porch survives at the west (front) entry. The mostly 6/6 windows of the classroom block are covered with plywood, the metal-framed window sashes of the gymnasium were replaced with glass block in 1989, and rows of entries on the sides of the gymnasium have been mostly infilled with brick. The classroom block has a double-loaded corridor plan on both floors with plaster wall and ceiling finishes and wood floors. The gabled gymnasium wing was refurbished in 1989. The gymnasium interior is in good condition whereas the classroom block interior has been extensively vandalized and water damaged. Historically houses and school-related buildings stood on the city block on which the school stands. Presently the only other resources on the block are a modern clinic and the concrete foundation of a former school-related building (these are excluded from the nomination). The foundation appears to relate to one of multiple auxiliary buildings constructed between 1940 and 1956 (as show in aerial photographs of those years). In 1948 the auxiliary complex was described as “a number of separate, temporary buildings [to] house a band room, lunchroom, and a rather extensive shop program.” The building to which the foundation belonged had apparently been removed by 1960. No documentation has been found to date that indicates the specific purpose of this building. Surrounding blocks have mostly small frame dwellings including a number of shotgun houses and there is a large industrial complex to the east.

Narrative Description

Exterior

Both the classroom and gymnasium blocks are constructed of stretcher-bond red brick. Simple decorative courses distinguish the classroom block: a header course at the top of the parapet, a corbelled header-stretcher band at the second-story window sill level, corbelled header sills under the first-story windows, a soldier course at the first-story floor level, and soldier-header lintels over the first- and second-story windows. The gymnasium has header courses at the top of its peaked north and south parapets (the north parapet is mostly obscured by an abutting roof), corbelled header sills under the windows, and single or double header segmental arches over entries and porch openings.

Other materials were used for specialized purposes. The inscription panel over the front entry bay reads “Bessemer Colored High School” and is carved from Indiana limestone. At each end of the panel are semi-octagonal-section columnar elements that may represent scroll reels and which are Classical Revival in inspiration. Either limestone or concrete is used for copings on the porch at the south end of the classroom block and at parapet level on the gymnasium. A poured concrete foundation exists under the corridor walls inside and one presumably exists under the brick perimeter walls as well. The classroom block has cast iron foundation and attic vent covers of rectangular form with bead and reel frames and lattice vents. The north addition to the gymnasium has less ornamental cast iron attic vent grilles stamped “Top Pat. No. 1799123 Victor.” (The patent for this vent was filed by John Will Robertson of Anderson, South Carolina, on February 13, 1930, and granted March 31, 1931. The vents were probably made by the Victor Manufacturing Company of Newburyport,

Massachusetts.) The sheet-metal scupper boxes at the tops of the classroom block downspouts have cove and cyma recta profiles. The parapets of the classroom and gymnasium blocks have ceramic copings. The surviving 6/6 hung windows, now concealed behind plywood and extensively damaged by vandals, have painted wood frames and muntins. There are also a number of 4/4 windows. Painted wood is also used for the twelve-pane transoms over some entries and the exposed roof structure of the classroom block's south entry porch.

The classroom block's south entry porch, like the shallow peaked parapets and the inscription panel, is a Classical Revival-influenced feature. The one-story porch has battered L-section pillars that support a shed roof with parapets at each end and rafters with decoratively shaped exposed ends. Concrete steps with brick and concrete cheeks lead up to it on each side and a low concrete-coped brick wall extends across the front. The porch on the south end of the gymnasium has a shed roof with parapets at each end. Three segmental-arch openings line up with three segmental-arch entries inside the porch. Each entry has replacement double-leaf steel doors inserted in 1989. Historically the entries had double-leaf wood doors with louvered upper halves and stack-panel lower halves. Storage rooms occupy the two ends of the porch, each with a small segmental-arch window in its end wall. In the gable above is a Colonial Revival circular vent with keystone-like motifs formed from brick at its compass points. Below that is a modern sign. A third porch shelters the main entry on the west elevation of the classroom block. The modernist style of the porch, and the fact that it does not appear in early photographs of the school, suggests it was added in the 1950s, perhaps as late as the early 1960s. Square brick pillars and pilasters support a flat roof with a metal fascia and a plywood ceiling with recessed light fixtures. The steps and platform under the porch are constructed of brick and concrete. Originally there was no porch, although one may have been intended and not built as a cost savings. The entryway itself was filled with cinder blocks, probably in the 1980s. Historic photographs show double-leaf wood and glass panel doors and a twelve-pane transom. The glass of the present two-pane transom is painted over.

The school formerly had a cornerstone at the southwest corner of the classroom block but it was stolen in recent years and the brickwork around it damaged. (A dedicatory plaque on Bessemer's contemporaneous white high school is Indiana limestone.) At the other (north) corner of the projection that had the cornerstone is a slight offset of the brickwork about two courses above grade, possibly an error in the construction of the foundation that was caught early and the wall above built to the proper specifications. A square brick boiler flue rises on the east side of the classroom block. The brickwork at the top of the flue may have been rebuilt. Next to it is a low mechanical room of American-bond brick construction. The sides of the auditorium have large rectangular window openings filled with glass block in their upper halves and, below each window, an entryway, most of which have been bricked up but some with replacement steel doors. According to former students, the entries originally had louvered and stack-panel wood doors like those shown in photographs of the south entry doors. A parapet projects through the gymnasium's roof at the location of the proscenium wall within. A 1940 aerial photograph shows one-story additions at the north end of the gymnasium that connected it to the classroom block, creating the overall U-shaped configuration of the school. The aforementioned Victor attic vents indicate that the earliest of these additions was made no earlier than 1931. The additions have been added to and altered over the years, at one point consolidated under a single gable roof with a vinyl-sided gable. A ruinous flat-roofed one-story wing on the north end of the classroom block, added between 1960 and 1967 to provide expanded bathroom facilities, is constructed of brick-faced cinder block.

At the southwest corner of the nominated area is a brick sign that was dedicated in 2000. Outside the nominated area but occupying the same city block as Dunbar High School is a one-story brick-veneered building constructed in recent decades as a clinic. The building has signage reading Sarrell Dental Center (the current occupant) and Dunbar Abrams Community Clinic. The clinic stands off the east side of the gymnasium and its address is 2700 5th Avenue North. To the north of the gymnasium, also outside the nominated area, is a raised

concrete foundation. The foundation may be associated with a building erected at the location in the 1940s or early to mid-1950s, or a later building erected in the 1960s. The south end of the nominated area is paved as a parking lot and the rest of the acreage is lawn. Note: the alternate address 2701 6th Avenue North is sometimes used for the school.

Interior

The classroom block's double-loaded corridor plan has rooms arranged on either side of a central corridor, a common arrangement for schools of this size during the twentieth century. On the first floor the corridor walls are plastered tile block and on the second floor they are plaster and lath over frame. Much of the plaster is missing from the tile-block corridor walls and the exposed block is painted with a green dado and white above, indicating the plaster loss occurred before the school was decommissioned in 1980. Most or all of the perimeter walls are painted brick. Much, perhaps all, ceiling plaster is over metal lath. Some rooms have battens that suggest they are finished with paperboard rather than plaster.

A short transverse hall or foyer extends from the west entry to the center corridor. The principal's office is on the north side of the foyer. The classrooms are of varying sizes and shapes ranging from squarish to more elongated rectangular. Some classrooms have closets or storerooms between them or carved out of them. Doors, most of which are original, have stack panels (horizontal panels stacked one above the other). The first-floor corridor doorways have molded trim, whereas most other windows and doorways have plain trim. There are eight-pane transoms over the corridor doors. Most spaces have deteriorated painted finishes on walls and ceilings, although modern paneling survives in at least one space and grids for suspended acoustic tile ceilings survive in some rooms.

Stairways are located at the two ends of the block, near present (south end) and former (north end) entries. The two-run stairs have solid railings of vertical beaded tongue-and-groove with molded caps. The stairs continue past the second floor to small low-ceilinged water closets at the top of the stairwell spaces. The space under the south stair was enclosed with horizontal beaded tongue-and-groove and plain boards. It has a Dutch door with stack panels in the top and bottom leaves. The space has well-preserved decorative finishes. On the wall area that was once exposed under the stair's upper run is a green dado below a white wall with traces of earlier beige. There are numerous calculations and other notes written on the white paint in pencil. The side of the door facing into the space is stained a dark brown and varnished. Photographs from the 1950s suggest doors throughout the building still had a varnished brown finish. Part of the stair trim, painted green, is exposed in the space.

Another well-preserved area of paint colors is preserved in the office where a former wall-mounted corner cabinet or shelf with a decorative top and bottom, now represented by its ghost on the wall, covered brown dado and ocher wall colors. A 1926 photograph of Principal J. B. Bickerstaff, apparently taken in the office, may show the brown and ocher paint scheme. A brown dado with beige above is visible in the entry hall where shelves once attached to the wall. Most rooms retain surrounds and chalk trays for chalkboards. Cast metal coat hooks, probably original to the school, survive on some wall surfaces. The classroom wing suffered extensive damage in recent decades from vandals smashing windows and individuals breaking through the roof in order to gain access to strip metal from the building. The roof break, made over the second-floor corridor, has resulted in structural damage down to the foundation level. Roof leaks have created similar damage in other spaces. The fact that the interior has not been heated or cooled for probably thirty years has resulted in deterioration of finishes.

The principal space in the gymnasium wing is the gymnasium itself. Historically the gym had unpainted brick walls (it still does), an exposed wood truss roof structure painted white (which survives above an acoustic tile ceiling), and a wood floor. According to one account the wood was added over original concrete in preparation for the 1939 prom. The space presently has vinyl flooring over concrete. As noted in the exterior description the gym has replacement glass block in the window openings and either steel security doors or brick infill in the side doorways. At the north end of the space (originally the north end of the gymnasium wing) is an elevated stage framed by a simple brick proscenium. A ramp on the west side of the stage leads up to restrooms and auxiliary spaces in the additions to the gymnasium wing. These spaces, like the gymnasium itself, were renovated in 1989.

Section 8

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

Dunbar High School is eligible for the National Register at the local level of significance under Criterion A: Education and Ethnic Heritage: Black as Bessemer, Alabama's only African American high school during the period 1923 through 1960, as such a key institution in the city's black community, and under Criterion C: Architecture as the work of acclaimed Alabama architect D. O. Whilldin and for notable features associated with the building's function and development. Dunbar High School served as Bessemer's African American high school from the year of its opening in 1923 until 1960. Dunbar, along with Bessemer's white high school, followed the platoon system of education. The two-story brick school, designed by Birmingham architect David Oliver Whilldin, had for its first principal Professor J. B. Bickerstaff. In 1928 the school's name was changed from Bessemer Colored High School to its present name in honor of black poet Paul Lawrence Dunbar. A gymnasium wing with multiple entries and windows for ventilation was added by 1939. Dunbar's high school curriculum was transferred to another school in 1960 and thereafter the building functioned as Dunbar Primary School. In 1989 the first phase of the school's renovation as the present Dunbar-Abrams Community Center was completed and planning for conversion of the school's classroom block to housing is underway.

Among the individuals and organizations who assisted the nomination project were Alphonso Patrick, Executive Director of the Bessemer Housing Authority, the project contact; Dunbar-Abrams Foundation president and former student Bessie Pippens; former students Ethel Borden and Bill Turner; the Bessemer Hall of History and its Curator, Chris Eiland; Marjorie White, Director, Birmingham Historical Society, who reviewed the draft and offered many helpful suggestions; architectural historian Robert Gamble; James Chu, City of Bessemer; Nicole J. Woods with the Alabama Historical Commission; Lisa Deline, Historian with the National Register of Historic Places; and Susan Enzweiler, National Register Coordinator with the Alabama Historical Commission, who also contributed research to the project. Additional research was conducted at the Bessemer Public Library, the Jefferson County Courthouse in Bessemer, the Birmingham Public Library and the Alabama Department of Archives and History as well as a search of the website www.rosenwaldplans.org. Few records dating from the period of significance exist regarding the curriculum or overall educational program at Dunbar High School.

Narrative Statement of Significance

The city of Bessemer was founded in 1887 by industrialist Henry F. De Bardeleben as a manufacturing center to rival nearby Birmingham. Although the city never attained the stature of Birmingham, it did experience rapid growth in its formative years and by 1890 the population had risen to 4,544 persons. African Americans moved

to Bessemer for job opportunities in mining and manufacturing, bringing with them children in need of schooling. A black elementary school was held in a Bessemer church as early as 1889. In 1891, the year the Bessemer Board of Education was officially established by the state legislature, the city boasted two public elementary schools, one black and one white. Accounts differ as to the number of students who attended this early black school. A 1934 report indicated that the school had 140 pupils taught by two teachers, but in 1962 it was reported that only 49 students attended the early school. The difference may be between full enrollment and daily attendance. Statistics for 1902 count a city enrollment of 574 black pupils with an average daily attendance of 305. The students were taught by eight teachers in one or possibly two elementary schools: the Hard School, built at Arlington and 24th Street in 1894, and the Ninth Avenue School, built ca. 1902.ⁱ

In any case, the education of black children in early twentieth century Alabama was an uphill struggle due to racism and the general underfunding of all public education. The State ignored Federal mandates for separate but equal facilities. For example, the total value of all the equipment in Alabama's schools amounted to just \$262, 218.00 in 1908 and only about 8% of that amount went to black schools. Even as statewide changes around World War I led to improvements in Alabama's school systems, the percentage of the State's total revenue spent on public education dropped from 38% in 1913 to 30% in 1921. Three years later, Alabama was spending less than \$1.5 million on black students but \$13 million on whites, even though blacks comprised 40% of the state population.ⁱⁱ

During this period of gross underfunding of all public education, but particularly black education, Dunbar High School was constructed in 1923 as Bessemer's first African American high school. Several local and regional factors resulted in its construction at this time. In the first half of the twentieth century, Bessemer's black population always outnumbered its white population. The city was 42% white (2,657 persons) and 58% black (3,695 persons) in 1900. Forty years later, 9,545 whites and 13,280 blacks resided in Bessemer. As would be expected, the Bessemer City School System served more black children than white. The only recorded year, 1937, in which this did not hold true there were only fifty-one more whites out of a total student population of 4,401. The greatest disparity in black and white enrollment occurred in 1942 with 3,120 black students and 1,997 white students. In every year from 1937 through 1948 [the only years for which student numbers are available] black enrollment in elementary school exceeded the white enrollment. The junior high classes educated more black than white children from 1940 to 1948. Only in the city's high schools did whites consistently outnumber blacks. The greatest difference was in 1937 with 414 whites and 264 blacks. This fell to a low in 1942 of only eleven students out of a total 781 high schoolers. Higher poverty rates probably forced black youth into the work force sooner than whites. Nevertheless, African Americans' greater numbers gave them some political leverage.ⁱⁱⁱ

Another trend at work in the late 1910s may have directly benefited Bessemer blacks, as it did their counterparts in the neighboring city of Birmingham. Black leaders there secured white support for improved schools as a result of the unique circumstances of World War I. As historian Lynne Feldman notes, "During World War I, the [Birmingham] black community acquired leverage when officials worried about the stability and loyalty of the African American workers, many of whom were migrating north in pursuit of better paying industrial jobs." In Birmingham that leverage translated directly into more and better school facilities for blacks. Bessemer

ⁱ *From the Rough*; Works Progress Administration, *Alabama*, 311; "Bessemer, Alabama," *Birmingham News*, May 20, 1934. Bessemer's population grew most rapidly during the early twentieth century and by 1950 had reached 28,445 persons. City population levels have hovered in the high 20,000s to low 30,000s range since.

ⁱⁱ Rogers, et al., *Alabama: The History of a Deep South State*, 325 and Flynt, *Alabama in the Twentieth Century*, 222, 225.

ⁱⁱⁱ "Report of the Survey of the Bessemer City School System, School Year 1947-48," 6.

blacks also benefited from the progressive policies of Bessemer Board of Education Superintendent Dr. D. L. Vann. According to the anonymous author of a 1962 history, during Vann's term of office (1917-25) "there was notable growth, expansion and improvement of the plant, enrichment of the curriculum, [and] enlargement of staff." Both Dunbar High School and a new white high school, Bessemer High School, were built during Vann's superintendency. Bessemer High School operated as such from its opening in 1923 until the building closed in 1970, and its course offerings included mathematics, English, history, foreign languages, physical education, speech, drafting, chemistry, physics, biology, home economics, civics, music, art, and manual training. Bessemer High was especially distinguished for its sports program, winning the state title in football on six occasions from the 1920s through the 1950s. Historian Marjorie White notes that the city of Bessemer was "politically savvy enough" by 1915 to secure a supplemental Jefferson County courthouse, skills that would likely have come in handy for obtaining school construction funds. All these developments occurred against the backdrop of continued population growth for both races. In particular, Bessemer's black population increased by approximately 300% by 1950.^{iv}

The political and financial support of black higher education epitomized by the educational philosophy of Alabama's own Booker T. Washington, the nationally prominent African American leader and Tuskegee University president, also probably inspired Bessemer blacks as they sought improved facilities for their children. Washington and his followers promoted vocational-agricultural education as a means of bettering the economic situation of American blacks with the ultimate goal of full political and social equality. His approach was demonstrated at the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute (later University), founded in 1881, and garnered the support of northern philanthropists, among them Sears, Roebuck president Julius Rosenwald, whose Rosenwald Fund—conceived with early input from Washington—assisted the construction of thousands of black public schools in the 1920s and early 1930s. Though Rosenwald monies were expended in Jefferson County, they were not used to fund Dunbar High School.^v

Dunbar High School's classroom block was completed in 1923 in the African American neighborhood that occupied the north end of the city. The aforementioned 1962 account states that the school was built in 1922, but that date more likely represents the beginning of construction. According to the author of an anonymous historical sheet on the school, "In 1928 Mrs. Pearl Shelton Blevins suggested a change of the name for the school. In her wisdom, she realized that a name of the school would be relevant as well as inspirational to the lives of black boys and girls; Thus, the school was given the name of Dunbar High School in honor of our Negro poet, Paul Lawrence Dunbar." Mrs. Blevins—remembered as "Miss Shelton" by some former students—was a teacher at Dunbar, possibly in the home economics department. Dunbar apparently functioned as a high school from the outset, as demonstrated by the name "Bessemer Colored High School" inscribed over the front entry. The first principal was J. B. Bickerstaff, known as "Fessor" Bickerstaff. The first class of seven students graduated during his tenure in June 1927. (The year 1927 was four years after the opening of the school, sufficient time for the first graduating class to complete a high school curriculum.) Bickerstaff was followed by Reverend H. M. Shields (1927-34), who was remembered fondly in later years. Shields, according to a historical sheet on the school, "came to us with a deep understanding of young people. He endeared himself to the students as a kind and loving administrator, well prepared academically, for it was he who instituted departmental education or what was then referred to as the platoon system."^{vi}

^{iv} Marjorie White personal communication; Fisk University Rosenwald Fund Card File Database website; Batson, "History of Bessemer High School;" Feldman, *Sense of Place*, 125; *From the Rough*; "Report of the Survey of the Bessemer City School System, School Year 1947-48," 2.

^v Harlan, "Washington, Booker T.," 228-229; Hanchett, "Saving the South's Rosenwald Schools;" Flynt, *Alabama in the Twentieth Century*, 227.

^{vi} *From the Rough*; "History of Dunbar High School"; Bessie Pippens personal communication.

The platoon system, which paralleled aspects of Washington's educational philosophy, was a work-play-study system promoted by the Progressive Movement. This system combined academic studies with physical education, vocational training and the arts. Students above the primary grades were divided into two platoons or groups. While one platoon studied academic subjects in the classrooms, the second platoon used the library, gymnasium, shop or home economics room, the music room and so on. At mid-day, the two platoons switched places. This educational system reportedly accomplished two goals: efficient use of the school facilities and the development of the "intellectual, manual, and recreational skills of the children." Developed in the early 1900s by William A. Wirt, the school superintendent for Gary, Indiana, this educational practice spread to over 200 cities in 41 states and was especially popular in the 1920s. The platoon system was adopted readily by an industrial city like Bessemer which also served as a commercial and service center to its surrounding area.^{vii}

After the institution of the platoon system at Dunbar, a gymnasium building was added to the campus along with a number of separate buildings that housed a band room and a shop program. The high school building itself housed a home economics space, a "beauty culture room", a library and a science laboratory in addition to 19 classrooms. The shop and home ec facilities, and also perhaps the "beauty culture room" and the science lab, also met Washington's vocational training requirements. A 1947-1948 report on the Bessemer City School System by the Alabama Department of Education indicated that the platoon system was still being followed citywide even though it had fallen out of favor nationally by the eve of World War II. The report noted that "recent research in the field of child psychology has clearly indicated that the platoon type of school organization is not the most effective one for [achieving] educational goals" and strongly encouraged Bessemer to "carefully consider the type of educational program that will best fit the needs of the boys and girls in the city and take such steps as may be required to change the present program to the desired one." It is not known at this time if that was accomplished prior to 1960.^{viii}

Principals after Shields included A. D. Shores (1934-39), J. T. Gaines (1939-44), Jackson Solomon Abrams (1945-59), and Walter D. Branch (1959-60). Notably, the two-story classroom block was the principal facility during the early years and vocational programs were housed in auxiliary buildings on the block or in rooms added to the gymnasium during the 1930s-40s period. This suggests greater emphasis initially on a traditional curriculum rather than the vocational training that was important to Booker T. Washington and inherent in the platoon system, although Marjorie White notes that vocational education was popular in area black and white high schools to help prepare students for jobs in industry. Dunbar, for example, was located across the street from the enormous Pullman Standard plant.^{ix}

Dunbar High School's architect was David Oliver Whilldin (1881-1970), a Pennsylvania native and a graduate of the Drexel Institute of Art, Science, and Industry (the present Drexel University) and the University of Pennsylvania, both in Philadelphia. In 1902 the New York engineering firm Ford, Bacon and Davis hired Whilldin to head the architectural department of its southern states branch in Birmingham. Two years later he partnered with Birmingham architect Harry D. Breeding, and one of Breeding and Whilldin's major commissions of the period was the Birmingham High School, a four-story Beaux Arts classical building constructed in 1905-06. In 1906 or 1907 Whilldin set up practice on his own and ultimately became one of the state's most influential and prolific architects.^x

^{vii} "William Wirt."

^{viii} "Report of the Survey of the Bessemer City School System, School Year 1947-48," 42, 54; "William Wirt."

^{ix} Marjorie White personal communication; *From the Rough*; "History of Dunbar High School."

^x Shelby, *D. O. Whilldin*, 3-6, 10, 17-21.

Educational buildings emerged as an important specialization early in Whilldin's career. Among his first commissions as an architect in sole practice were designs for two public schools in Elyton in 1908. One of these, the Elyton School, has features that would later characterize Whilldin's design for Dunbar High School and other school buildings, including brick construction, horizontal massing, projecting end pavilions, a frontispiece or other architectural elaboration at the center of the façade, and banks of classroom windows. Stylistically Whilldin's schools reflected the eclectic tastes of the era, with examples of Tudor Revival (and related Elizabethan-Jacobean or "Jacobethan" Renaissance English), Craftsman, Colonial Revival, Mediterranean Revival, Mission or Spanish Colonial Revival, and Classical Revival influences through the 1920s.^{xi}

An important precursor to Dunbar High School was Whilldin's design for the 1920 A. H. Parker High School (originally Industrial High School), Birmingham's premier African American high school. A Mediterranean theme was chosen that relied on rows of blind arches over classroom windows and a white stucco finish. Stucco was used by Whilldin in other school designs, and as architectural historian Thomas Shelby points out, the material "was considered as glamorous as the movies of Hollywood with which the style was thought to be synonymous." Stucco may also have been a cost-saving measure, Shelby adds. Historic photographs suggest the A. H. Parker High School generally lacked the decorative plaques and trim customary in Whilldin's designs for white high schools. The appearance of the school was more utilitarian, in keeping with the industrial training focus implicit in the school's original name and also likely a reflection of inequitable funding for black schools.^{xii}

Dunbar High School is another Whilldin economy design. This is especially evident when the school is compared to its contemporary, the white Bessemer High School, which stands on 2nd Avenue south of the downtown. The schools share the same form, with long two-story brick classroom blocks bracketed by slightly projecting pavilions with peaked parapets. The white high school, however, is more richly detailed, with a greater number and refinement of decorative stone details, and whereas Dunbar's center bay is modestly expressed, Bessemer High has a large stone-faced oriel over the front entry for emphasis. The lack of a front porch and the evidence for a mistake in the construction of the foundation/wall transition also point to economizing. Dunbar was built without a gymnasium, but that is not necessarily an indication of inequitable funding in and of itself since the white high school also lacked a gymnasium during its early years. According to National Register of Historic Places historian Lisa Deline, Dunbar High School's design is "closely related to the Classical Revival style and exhibits minimal architectural details of stripped classicism."^{xiii}

Former students Bessie Pippens (graduated 1949) and Ethel Borden (graduated 1946) recall many aspects of their experience at Dunbar. Mrs. Borden first attended school at the campus in 1940 when she entered the sixth grade. At the time the elementary program (through sixth grade) was housed in community churches. Mrs. Borden's class was in Sixth Avenue Beulah Baptist Church, which stood at the corner of 6th Avenue and 28th Street in front of the school. Other classes were held in Porter Chapel AME Church and Morning Star CME Church. The elementary children brought bag lunches to school and ate them in their respective church/classrooms. Mrs. Borden and her classmates moved into the school proper in 1941. As an upper classman Mrs. Borden ate in a lunchroom that may have been located in the connector between the classroom block and gymnasium wing. A kitchen was installed in the vicinity of the connector between 1940 and 1946. During the 1940s a restaurant on 24th Street baked cinnamon buns which were served to the students at lunch. In Mrs. Borden's time a music room was located behind the stage in the gym and sewing and cooking classes were

^{xi} Ibid., 22-23, 29, 49-51, 54, 58-63, 66.

^{xii} Ibid., 64-65.

^{xiii} Ibid., 68; Deline, "Dunbar High School;" *From the Rough; Flynt, Alabama in the Twentieth Century*, 227.

held in adjacent rooms. As for the school plant during the period, Mrs. Pippens recalls a “little green building” on the grounds used for shop classes. Thinking back on her experiences at Dunbar, Mrs. Pippens recollects, “Everything was bare bone when I was there.”^{xiv}

Mrs. Pippens and Mrs. Borden also recall the impact of World War II on the school. Black families from surrounding agricultural areas moved to Bessemer in response to wartime employment opportunities and as a consequence the Dunbar student population increased. A 1948 report that provides enrollment figures for the period 1937 to 1948 documents changes from the Depression era through the war to the early post-war years. High school enrollment was low in 1937 and 1938—264 and 267 students, respectively—but began to grow in 1939 and peaked at 385 students in 1942. The faculty was also affected by the war. When Principal Gaines entered the service, Dunbar math teacher Jennie Davis was recruited to serve in his place until he returned toward the end of the war. Davis may have been chosen for her experience as an assistant administrator at the school. After the war some of the families who had moved to Bessemer went on to Detroit, Chicago, and other northern industrial cities. This may account for the small decrease in Dunbar High School enrollment after 1942, which from 1943 to 1948 hovered mostly in the 300 to 350 range. Pippens and Borden do not recall much Civil Rights activity occurring at Dunbar. They note that by the time the movement became most active in the 1960s the high school curriculum had moved to the newly-constructed J. S. Abrams High School.”^{xv}

The date of construction for Dunbar High School’s gymnasium is uncertain but it is known to have been in existence in 1939 when a wood floor was put down in time for a prom and it is shown in a 1940 Soil Conservation Service aerial photograph. Ethel Borden recalled that the gym did not appear new when she attended Dunbar in the early and mid-1940s. Dunbar’s sports program got a boost in 1931 when J. T. “Mule” Knox was hired on as football coach. Knox named the school team the Blue Devils, and the name was adopted for the school paper, the *Blue Devil Herald*, which was apparently first published in the late 1940s as a project of the school print shop. The May 1958 issues of the *Blue Devil Herald* reported on the activities of the Student Council, National Honor Society, New Homemakers of America, Science Club, Girls Athletic Club, and Future Nurses Club. A vocal group known as the Gables performed at Dunbar High School variety shows and on air with Bessemer radio station WBCO. Senior Betty Duff served as a disc jockey at WBCO. The tenth-graders of Class 10-B claimed to be the “most hepped teen-agers in the school.” “The boys are called cool cats and the girls are called slick chicks,” boasted Class 10-B’s correspondent, adding “for sportswear we wear slim jims, sweaters, car coats, bobby socks and black shoes; real cool, eh?”^{xvi}

Dunbar’s gymnasium has a number of interesting features. Its circular front gable vent is a Colonial Revival feature that provides architectural evidence for a later date of construction for the gym. The Colonial Revival style was particularly favored during the New Deal, a period of enhanced funding for school ancillary structures like vocational-agricultural buildings and gyms. Funding for black schools improved as part of the general school construction funding increase that resulted from passage of the Harrison-Fletcher-Black Bill during the New Deal. The Civil Works Administration (CWA), a short-lived 1933-34 New Deal program, funded improvements at a reported 40,000 schools, including renovations at Bessemer’s white high school in 1934. These historical factors combine with architectural evidence to suggest Dunbar’s gymnasium was constructed during the 1930s, perhaps as late as 1939. The gym was specially designed for comfort in the era before air conditioning. The large windows and multiple exterior doors with louvered panels provided ample ventilation.

^{xiv} Ethel Borden and Bessie Pippens personal communication.

^{xv} Ethel Borden and Bessie Pippens personal communication; “Report of the Survey of the Bessemer City School System, School Year 1947-48,” 6.

^{xvi} Ethel Borden personal communication; Soil Conservation Service aerial photographs; “History of Dunbar High School,” *Blue Devil Herald* 9:2 (May 1958).

In these respects the gym is reminiscent of religious camp meeting tabernacle design of the early twentieth century. In 1948 it was reported that the main building included "19 classrooms, a general home economics unit, one beauty culture room, one combination auditorium-gymnasium, a library, and one poorly equipped science library." Also on the site were "a number of separate, temporary buildings [to] house a band room, lunchroom, and a rather extensive shop program." The authors of the report added, "The shop program at Dunbar is a credit to the Bessemer School System, but more adequate facilities are needed and should be provided at the earliest opportunity." Description of a separate on-site elementary building containing "seven rather crude classrooms" apparently referred to the Sixth Avenue Beulah Baptist Church. The report also urged construction of a new junior-senior high school and the conversion of the Dunbar building to an elementary school.^{xvii}

J. S. Abrams High School was completed in 1960 and Dunbar's high school curriculum moved to the new facility. Dunbar was then used exclusively as a primary school, or what a 1976 report described as the Dunbar Elementary and Middle Schools serving kindergarten through grade seven. The 1976 report described noted changes to the building such as acoustic drop ceilings in the classrooms, corridors "renovated with a panel wainscoting to a height of five feet," a concrete-block classroom building constructed in 1942 "behind the main structure," and "four relocatable units" that in toto provided "thirty-one regular classrooms, a library, a cafeteria, a gymnasium-auditorium and administrative offices" for a student enrollment of 463 pupils. The report's authors recommended that Dunbar "be abandoned as soon as possible due to the condition of the buildings and the limited size of the site." In August 1979 about two hundred parents and students picketed the school to express concern about broken windows, a fallen section of ceiling, and other evidence of deterioration. In April of the following year it was announced that construction would begin on a replacement. The new school, J. S. Abrams Primary School, opened for the 1980-81 school year and Dunbar was closed. Isom J. Morgan served as Dunbar's last principal. Dunbar went unused until 1989 when Bessemer Councilwoman Bessie Pippens and others spearheaded the renovation of the gymnasium as a community center. C. V. Foreman chaired the project committee for the work. Plans are now underway to renovate the classroom wing for housing.^{xviii}

Section 9

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^{xvii} Chirhart, "Gender, Jim Crow, and Eugene Talmadge," 87-88; *Birmingham News*, May 20, 1934; "Report of the Survey of the Bessemer City School System, School Year 1947-48," 42-43, 51.

^{xviii} Bessie Pippens personal communication; "Report of a Partial Survey of the Bessemer City School System, School Year 1976-1977," 14-15, 20; *From the Rough; Birmingham News*, August 28, 1979, April 4 and 7, 1980, and May 11, 1989; *Birmingham Post-Herald*, August 22, 1979; *Western Star*, February 15, 1989.

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Exhibit 1: Plan showing nominated area (enclosed by rectangle) and exterior photo angles. Scale is approximately 1:100 (one inch equals 100 feet). The photo angles are shown by triangular markers and are keyed to the photo list by number. The plan is based on a site layout plan by EEFS Company P.C. prepared for the Bessemer Housing Authority dated July 24, 2010. A proposed parking lot is shown outside the north boundary of the nominated area. The earliest historic aerial photograph to show this area, dated 1940, shows two or three dwellings and several buildings that may have been dwellings and/or commercial buildings. By 1956 only one building stood in the area and the remainder was occupied by parking lot.

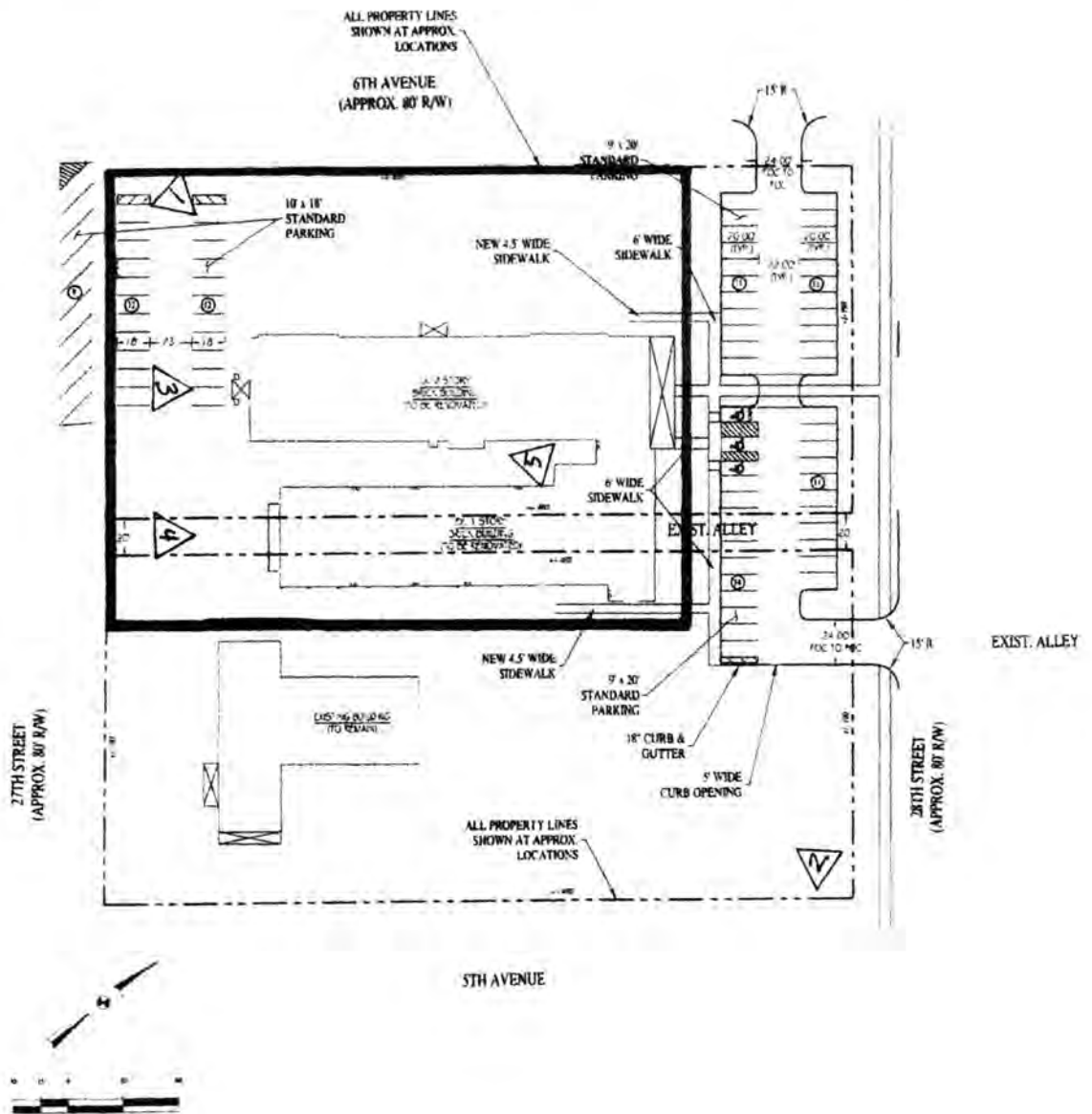


Exhibit 2: First Floor Plan. Photo angles are shown by triangular markers and are keyed to the photo list by number. The plan is based on the Dunbar High School Renovation "First Floor Demolition Plan" by StudioAmmons, February 26, 2010.

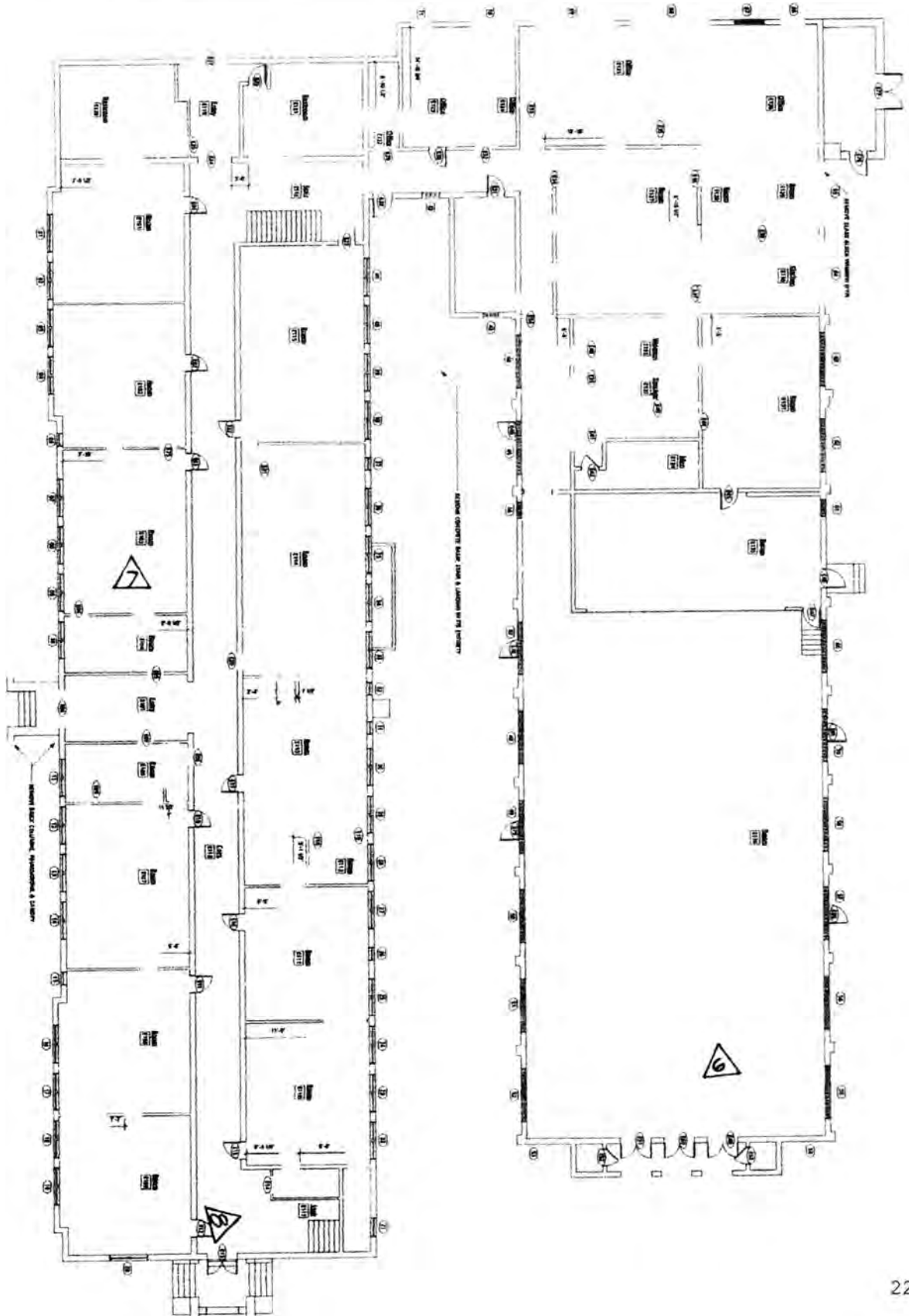
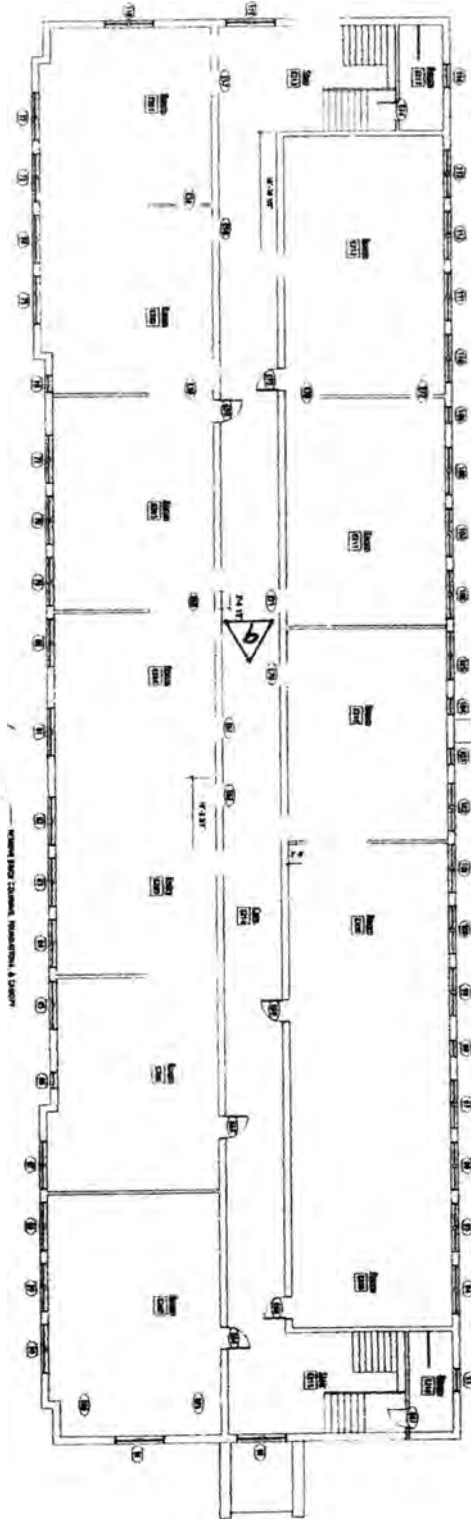


Exhibit 3: Second Floor Plan. Photo angles are shown by triangular markers and are keyed to the photo list by number. The plan is based on the Dunbar High School Renovation "Second Floor Demolition Plan" by StudioAmmons, February 26, 2010.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Dunbar High School

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: ALABAMA, Jefferson

DATE RECEIVED: 11/05/10 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 12/13/10
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 12/28/10 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 12/21/10
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 10001051

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: Y SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: Y NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 12/20/10 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

See attached comments

RECOM./CRITERIA *Return*

REVIEWER *Lisa Tolson*

DISCIPLINE *Historic*

TELEPHONE _____

DATE *12/20/10*

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1849 C Street, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20240

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service National Register of Historic Places

Comments Evaluation/Return Sheet

Property Name: Dunbar High School
Property Location: Jefferson County, Alabama
Reference Number: 10001051
Date of Return: 12/21/2010
Reason for Return:

The nomination is being returned for additional information to adequately document the property's significance in education and to accurately define the building's architectural style. Information is also needed to clarify the site layout plan.

The 1923 Dunbar High School is being nominated at the local level under the Areas of Significance of Ethnic Heritage: Black/Education (Criterion A) and Architecture (Criterion C). The Period of Significance is 1923-1960. As Bessemer's only African-American high school, additional information is needed explaining its role in education during this time period.

The architectural style of the school is more closely related to the Classical Revival style and exhibits minimal architectural details of stripped classicism, an interpretation of Classical Revival. This restrained style was often used for public and institutional buildings during this time period.

Section 7.

The exterior and interior descriptions of the school and c. 1930s gymnasium wing are very thorough; however, the simplified architectural style of the 1923 school is representative of the Classical Revival style. Please correct the architectural classification to: Late 19th Century and 20th Century Revivals: Classical Revival and correct the style name in the text. Section 7 also mentions the "concrete foundation of a former school-related building." What was this former building used for?

Section 8.

Additional information is needed to document the educational significance of this school throughout the period of significance. On page 13, the nomination discusses the educational philosophy of Booker T. Washington and the promotion of vocational-agricultural education. It is unclear what were the local political and financial factors that resulted in the construction of Dunbar High School and/or if it was a recipient of Rosenwald funding. The text continues, indicating Washington's philosophy was "criticized by black leaders" who favored the "applied education" philosophy of W.E.B. Du Bois. Who were these black leaders and because of their concerns, was Dunbar's vocational curriculum modified?

Throughout the period of significance, provide examples of the specific subjects taught. Explain what and how the "progressive policies" were undertaken at Dunbar, by Bessemer's superintendent, Dr. D.L. Vann and include any important contributions made by the various Dunbar principals. In 1928, the school was renamed from Bessemer Colored High School to Dunbar High School after the African-American poet, Paul Lawrence Dunbar. What led to the changing of the school's name? Were students involved in this effort?

Provide contextual information on Bessemer's African-American population, Dunbar's enrollment figures and number of teachers. Provide comparisons to Bessemer High School. As a key institution in the city's black community, what other community activities were held at Dunbar? How did major events such as the Great Depression, World War II, and the Civil Rights Movement affect students and educational programs at this high school?

Additional information about the educational curriculum and comparison to the other local high school will also strengthen the Ethnic Heritage: Black area of significance in this nomination. Please refer to the National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form*, pg. 45, "Writing a Statement of Significance," for additional guidance.

Section 10.

Site Layout Plan. The property description indicates the south end is paved and the rest of the acreage is lawn. The 2010 site layout plan shows a parking lot (outside of the property boundary) on the northeast side. Was this area formerly an athletic field and now paved parking? Please clarify.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. I can be reached at (202) 354-2239 or e-mail at Lisa_Deline@nps.gov.

Lisa Deline, Historian
National Register of Historic Places

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: RESUBMISSION

PROPERTY NAME: Dunbar High School

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: ALABAMA, Jefferson

DATE RECEIVED: 2/28/11 DATE OF PENDING LIST:
DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 4/15/11
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 10001051

DETAILED EVALUATION:

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 3/18/11 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

*Significance education, architecture, then
classical revival style heritage block.
high school in Bessemer, AL.*

RECOM./CRITERIA A+C

REVIEWER Wm. Deane DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE 3/18/11

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N



1.

Dunbar High School
Jefferson Co., Al.



2. Dunbar High School
Jefferson Co., Al.



3. Dunbar High School
Jefferson Co., Al.



RENT ME
200-426-8434

4. Dunbar High School
Jefferson Co., Al.



5. Dunbar High School
Jefferson Co., Al.



G. Dunbar High School
Jefferson Co., Al.



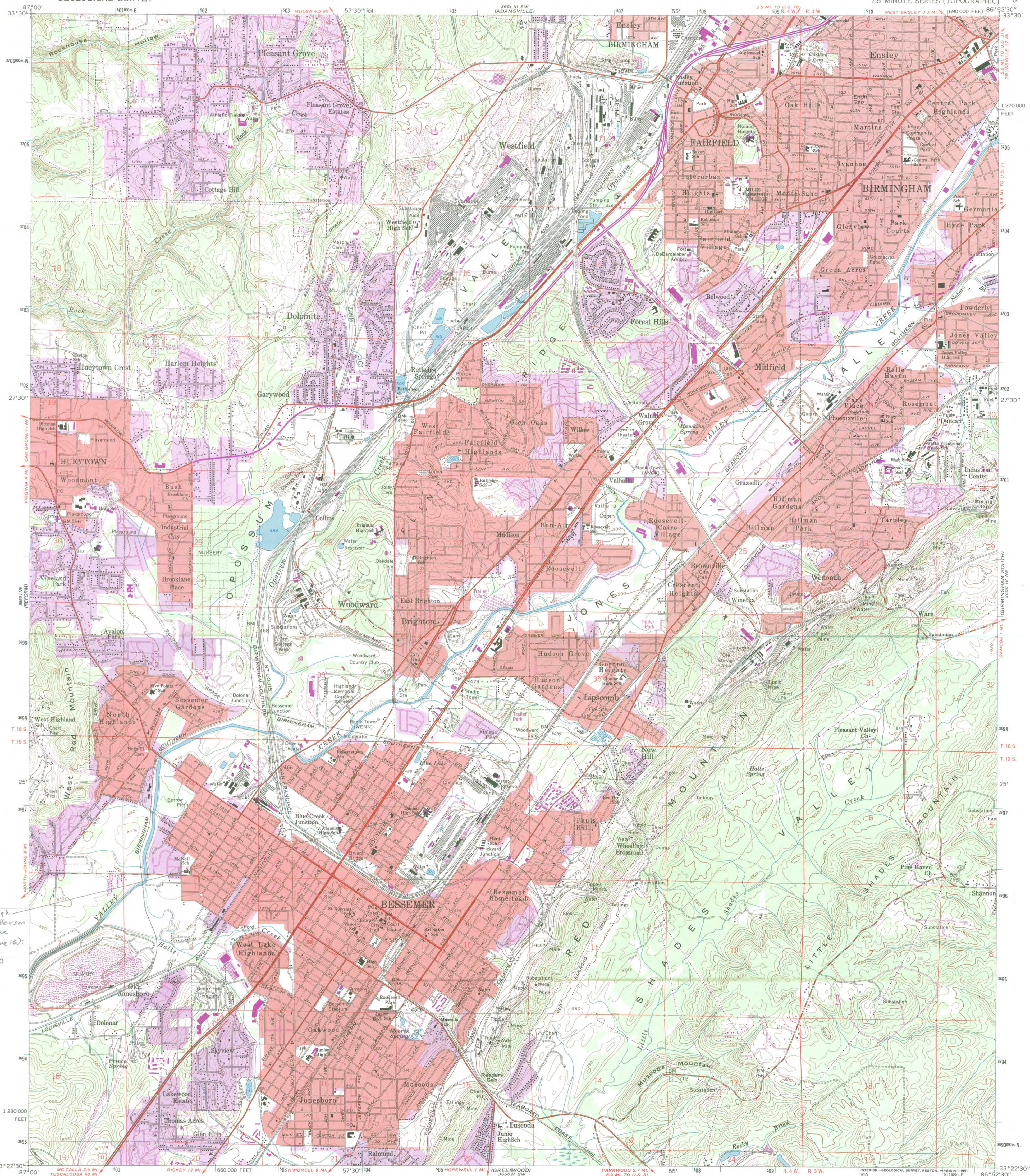
7. Dunbar High School
Jefferson Co., Al.



E. Dunbar High School
Jefferson Co., Al.



9. Dunbar High School
Jefferson Co., Al.



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and USCE
Topography from aerial photographs by photogrammetric methods
Aerial photographs taken 1957. Field check 1959
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Alabama coordinate system, west zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 16, shown in blue
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings
are shown
Revisions shown in purple compiled from aerial photographs taken
1970 and 1975. This information not field checked. Map edited 1978
Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas

UTM GRID AND 1978 MAGNETIC NORTH
DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET
The difference between 1927 North American Datum and North
American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83) for 7.5-minute intersections
is given in USGS Bulletin 1875. The NAD 83 is shown by
dashed corner ticks

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

QUADRANGLE LOCATION
Map photoinspected 1988
No major culture or drainage changes observed

ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Heavy-duty ——— Light-duty ———
Medium-duty ——— Unimproved dirt ———
○ Interstate Route □ U.S. Route ○ State Route

BESSEMER, ALA.
33086-08TF-024
PHOTOINSPECTED 1988
PHOTOREVISED 1970 AND 1978
DMA 3650 IV NW—SERIES V844





The Housing Authority of the City of Bessemer



07/28/2010

Susan Enzweiler
National Register Coordinator
Alabama Historical Commission
468 Perry St.
Montgomery, AL 36104

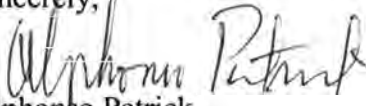
RE: Dunbar School
Bessemer, Alabama

Dear Ms Enzweiler:

I am so pleased on behalf of the Dunbar-Abrams Foundation to advise you that our historic consultant, Dan Pezzoni of Landmark Preservation Associates, is submitting to you a formal National Register Nomination for Dunbar School under separate cover. The Bessemer Housing Authority (BHA) acting through Bessemer Housing & Development Corporation, an "instrumentality" of the BHA, as you know, has been working with and preparing a development plan for the Dunbar-Abrams Foundation over the past year to facilitate their long-term goal of preserving this unique piece of Bessemer history. Formal historic nomination to the National Register is an important step in our attempt to preserve this landmark property. We have shared directly with you and through our architect, Terry Ammons, our goals for the re-use of the property. The Dunbar-Abrams membership and the BHA Board of Commissioners have jointly sanctioned the re-use plans. All of the active longtime Dunbar graduates are at long last seeing their dream of the school becoming a lasting community "Landmark" through this nomination.

We thank you for your enthusiastic interest, advice and consultation to date and eagerly hope and anticipate our application being a successful nomination.

Sincerely,


Alphonso Patrick
Executive Director

Cc: Ms Juanita Bryant
Mr. Jerone Levy
Mr. Terry Ammons
Mr. Dan Pezzoni

JEFFERSON COUNTY COMMISSION



BETTYE FINE COLLINS

PRESIDENT
COMMISSIONER OF FINANCE
AND GENERAL SERVICES
Suite 220
716 Richard Arrington, Jr. Blvd. N.
Birmingham, Alabama 35203
Telephone (205) 325-5070
FAX (205) 325-4881

August 19, 2010



Elizabeth Ann Brown
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
Alabama Historical Commission
468 South Perry Street
Montgomery, AL 36130

RE: National Register Nomination for the Dunbar High School,
Bessemer, Jefferson County

Dear Ms. Brown:

Thank you for your letter regarding the above referenced nomination for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.

Dunbar High School, originally known as the "Bessemer Colored School," certainly qualifies for this designation. The Honorable Arthur Shores, who served as principal until 1939, was a prominent figure in judicial circles and public office. He served with distinction on the first Birmingham City Council. He was the third African American in the 20th century to be certified by the Alabama Bar Association. Attorney Shores was a very high profile litigant during the Civil Rights Movement and beyond. Dunbar High School counts many distinguished citizens among its alumni.

This High School has played a very important role in the history of Jefferson County and should be preserved for future generations.

Please contact me if I can offer further assistance at any time during this process.

Sincerely,

Bettye Fine Collins,
President

BFC/blw



City of Bessemer

Economic & Community Development Department

Forrest Davis
Director



Edward E. May
Mayor

September 9th, 2010

Susan Enzweiler – National Register Coordinator
Alabama Historical Commission
468 South Perry Street
Montgomery, AL 36130-0900

Dear Ms. Enzweiler,

Please be advised that it is my opinion as Mayor and chief local elected official of the City of Bessemer that Dunbar High School, in Bessemer, Alabama, meets the criteria for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Dunbar High School is one of Bessemer's most important landmarks and is worthy of preservation and inclusion on the National Register.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Edward E. May
Mayor

NATIONAL DUNBAR- ABRAMS FOUNDATION, INC
P. O. BOX 443 BESSEMER, AL 35021
Phone: (205) 426-8434

Ms. Juanita Bryant, C.E.O.

Mr. William Turner, C.O.O.

Mrs. Mamie Mullins, C.F.O.

September 23, 2010



Ms. Susan Enzweiler
National Register Coordinator
Alabama Historical Commission
468 Perry St.
Montgomery, AL 36104

Re: National Register for the Dunbar High School
Bessemer, Al, Jefferson County

Dear Ms. Enzweiler,

We are pleased to be under consideration by the Alabama Historical Commission Review Board for nomination to the Register of Historical Places on October 21, 2010.

On behalf of the Dunbar-Abrams Foundation Inc., we concur with and eagerly support the nomination to the National Historic Preservation Act. The nomination will be a milestone in our longtime goal of preserving this very special place in Bessemer's history.

We look forward to further communications.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Juanita Bryant".

Ms. Juanita Bryant
C.E.O., National Dunbar-Abrams Foundation Inc.



STATE OF ALABAMA
ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION
468 SOUTH PERRY STREET
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA 36130-0900



FRANK W. WHITE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

October 21, 2010

TEL: 334-242-3184
FAX: 334-240-3477

Ms. Carol Shull
Keeper of the National Register
U. S. Department of the Interior, NPS
Cultural Resources
National Register, History & Education Programs
1201 "I" Street NW (2280)
Washington, D. C. 20005

Dear ~~Ms. Shull~~: *Carol*:

Enclosed please find the nomination and supporting documentation to be considered for listing the following Alabama resource in the National Register of Historic Places:

Dunbar High School
Bessemer, Jefferson County, Alabama

Your consideration of the enclosed National Register of Historic Places nomination is appreciated.

Truly Yours,

Elizabeth Ann Brown
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

EAB/sme/nw

Enclosures



STATE OF ALABAMA
ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION
468 SOUTH PERRY STREET
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA 36130-0900



FRANK W. WHITE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

February 25, 2011

TEL: 334-242-3184
FAX: 334-240-3477

Ms. Carol Shull
Keeper of the National Register
U. S. Department of the Interior, NPS
Cultural Resources
National Register, History & Education Programs
1201 "I" Street NW (2280)
Washington, D. C. 20005

RE: Reference #10001051

Dear ~~Ms. Shull~~ *Carol*:

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Dunbar High School
Bessemer, Jefferson County, Alabama

Your consideration of the enclosed National Register of Historic Places nomination is appreciated.

Truly Yours,

Elizabeth Ann Brown
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

EAB/sme/nw

Enclosures