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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 William R. Allen School
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number Mitchell Avenue not for publication
city, town Burlington City vicinity
state New Jersey code 034 county Burlington code 005 zip code 08016

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

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 *James R. Bell* Date 8/10/90
Acting Assistant Commissioner for Natural & Historic Resources/DSHPO
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

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. *Patrick Andrews* 8/8/91
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION: school

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Vacant

7. Description

Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th Century: Colonial Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick and stone
walls Brick
roof Metal
other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The William R. Allen School, situated at Mitchell Avenue, Burlington, New Jersey, appears as a typical early 20th century colonial revival brick schoolhouse common in urban areas of the state. The seminal section of the current site replaced an earlier circa 1870 woodframe schoolhouse erected on land donated to the City for the sole use of educating black children. The building is a unified rectangular block with gable roof with an extended appendage to the rear which contains two classrooms. The principal facade along Mitchell Avenue measures 126 feet and the widest point of the building from front to rear is fifty-eight feet. The schoolhouse consists of three distinct construction phases; the original 1900 structure, a 1914 classroom addition and a major 1924 expansion that doubled the size of the building.

A structural investigation by Herbert J. Githens, architect, yielded the following information: The southwest wing was the first part to be built 1900 and consisted of two classrooms. It was a simple gable-roofed brick masonry structure 50 x 36 feet with an appendage to the east side 17 1/2 x 19 feet. The exact layout of the original classrooms is not precisely known. The east end gable contains the school title block "William R. Allen School" carved in sandstone. This acknowledges the more prominent frontage along Federal Street (the name of the first schoolhouse at the site) even though the building faces Mitchell Avenue. The opposite gable is currently concealed intact within the 1924 addition.

The simple two-room classroom format was altered by a 1914 addition to the northeast. This added a single classroom 25 x 34 feet and probably modified the original layout as well. A corridor was installed to give internal access to

6. 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 N/A

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Education
Ethnic Heritage - Black
Social History (segregation)

Period of Significance

1900-1941

Significant Dates

1900, 1924

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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

The William R. Allen School, Burlington City, New Jersey, stands today as a physical reminder of the evolution of the public policy of segregation during the critical period in the decades following the American Civil War. This was a period in which school segregation was becoming entrenched in southern states, disappearing in northern states, while New Jersey was divided in its actions on this issue. The history of the Allen School serves as a microcosm of this aspect of American social history.

The evolution of segregation in Burlington City began with the sincere attempts by Quakers and black community leaders to educate an enslaved and disenfranchised race in its quest for equality during the 18th through mid-19th centuries. Education of black youth however, evolved into a social practice of de facto school segregation characteristic of Jim Crowism once commonly thought only to exist in southern states. The Allen School site exemplifies the development of segregation in southern New Jersey during the century after the Civil War.

A brief overview of the educational history of Burlington is presented so as to set the Allen School in its proper context. The City, second oldest permanent settlement in the province of West Jersey, was settled by Quakers prior to 1725 and later by a large number of members of the Church of England. The founding of this latter congregation resulted chiefly from the conversion of Quakers during the "Keithian schism." Prior to 1805, the educational needs of the City

9. Major Bibliographical References

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: Merabash Museum, Willingboro

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property approximately 4 acres Bristol Quad

UTM References

A

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4	4	3	5	7	6	0
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Zone Easting Northing

C

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B

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Zone Easting Northing

D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at the corner of East Federal Street and Mitchell Avenue, along Mitchell Avenue to Assiscunk Creek, southerly to State Highway Route 130 and thence to the rear lot lines of lots 1, 2, 3, and 9 of Block 223 to East Federal Street.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

Block 223, Lots 1, 2, 3, and 9. This is the tract of land donated by Mitchell and Mott to the City for the sole purpose of erecting a school for the education of black children.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Richard S. Walling, Planner

organization MERABASH Museum date March 1, 1990

street & number P.O. Box 752 telephone (609) 877-3177

city or town Willingboro state New Jersey zip code 08046

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

AUG 16 1990

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2 William R. Allen School, Burlington
City, Burlington County, NJ

each room as well as to the toilet rooms. The new classroom configuration yielded a rectangular room to the southwest and a square room to the northeast of the older section. These rooms are still extant. The 1900 and 1914 sections have wood floor joists which span from the outer brick foundation walls to intermediate girders on brick piers. The 1908 Sanborn Insurance Map of the neighborhood describes the school as having steam heat, but no lights. A large furnace in the basement of the 1900 section may date to this period of the building's history.

The classrooms from 1900 and 1914 are simply appointed with plastered walls and ceilings, two-inch tongue-and-groove oak flooring, continuous run bulletin and chalk boards and some mid-20th century storage shelves. The rooms are approximately 18 feet in height and circa 1924 lighting fixtures are intact above a drop ceiling suspended some two feet below the original. Door openings in this section continue the colonial motif found in the exterior facia treatment, ie. colonial-style decorative side panels set along the interior wall space and six lite transom above the classroom doorways.

The school grew substantially in 1924 when three additional classrooms and a basement cafeteria were appended to the northeast side of the building. The design effectively utilized the existing 1900 and 1914 sections as is and the new sections were a mirror-image of the old. The primary design difference incorporated in the 1924 expansion was the use of hip roof for the rear classroom and entrance ell.

A new formal entrance was placed along Mitchell Avenue which led to a longitudinal corridor. This circulation element organized all of the classrooms. The old 1900 appendage was altered to include a new stair and girls toilets. A similar unit was placed within the 1924 scheme at the opposite end for boys toilets and egress. Each end of the corridor had direct access to the schoolyard. The 1914 wing was not effected by the 1924 addition. The 1900 structure had its window fenestration modified to conform with the new

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

AUG 16 1990

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

William R. Allen School, Burlington
City, Burlington County, NJ

design. The 1900 appendage was gutted, a new concrete floor installed for the toilet room and for the new stairs. The new stair configuration also gave two means of access/egress to the new cafeteria space in the basement. This 34 x 60 feet space was serviced by an adjoining 24 x 30 feet kitchen. The expanse of the basement cafeteria was achieved by steel columns and girders which created spans of 24 feet for the first floor.

The architectural motif of the earlier building was carried into the 1924 addition with subtle differences. Main classroom windows contain 9 over 9 double hung wooden sash whereas the earlier sections have 12 over 12. The red brick walling is very similar. The standing seam metal roofing is nearly identical. The gable windows in the later section are rectangular with six lites; the earlier gables have circular sash.

The attic details are intact; the roofing system consists of rafters butted at the ridgeline, covered with planking to which the metal roof is applied. Diagonal upright supports are notched into the rafters and also to the floor joists. Of special interest in the attic is the intact east gable of the 1900 building, complete with its circular sash. This gable end was entombed during the 1924 addition.

The effect of the 1924 addition and remodelling was to transform the Allen School from a small scale schoolhouse into a modern six classroom facility with excellent accommodations of toilets, egress and circulation. It served the adjoining community for over half a century. The dimensions of the school lot are nearly the same as when the land was first donated to the City; the only exception being the presence of a neighborhood firehouse at the corner of East Federal Street and Mitchell Avenue.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

AUG 16 1990

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 4

William R. Allen School, Burlington
City, Burlington County, NJ

The last use of the school was as a Life Skills Center run by Burlington County during the 1970's and early 1980s. There is a minimum of repairs needed to maintain the integrity of the brick walls and most of the interior features are in good to very good condition. In three of the classrooms, wooden partition walls have been erected which are easily removed without any loss to the architectural integrity of the site. Updated electrical service was installed when the building was used by the County. Only one water damaged area was found on an interior wall localized at the juncture of the 1900 and 1914 sections. The William R. Allen School clearly conveys its original early 20th century architectural heritage as an example of a southern New Jersey Jim Crow school.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

AUG 16 1990

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

William R. Allen School, Burlington
City, Burlington County, NJ

were met by the efforts of the Quakers and Episcopalians; that year witnessed the construction of the first public school, financed from the proceeds from rents received from leasing the City-owned Burlington Island.

In 1824 the State Legislature passed "an act to incorporate the managers of the Island School Fund for the education of youth in the town [city] of Burlington." In 1848, the island managers were combined jointly with the public school trustees for all general school purposes within the boundaries of the city. All of the public schools erected in the city throughout most of the 19th century, except for the Allen School, were funded by either the rents from the island or by private contribution. The only exception was a special tax in the amount of three thousand dollars levied to erect a "colored school."

In 1812, the first classes for black children were held in the home of a black woman. By 1866, the city had in operation a small wood frame school for black children located on Wood Street, although the center of the African-American community in Burlington was several blocks away, east of York Street. This school was severely criticized in an 1866 letter to the "Dollar Newspaper & Burlington County Advertiser" by Theodore Gould: "This school...occupies a room 18 or 20 feet square with a ceiling 7 or 7½ feet high. There are about 110 or 120 children of color in the city... of this number, the Trustees have only made provision for 40."

In 1868, two prominent area businessmen, John Mitchell and Richard F. Mott, donated a tract of land between East Federal Street and Assiscunk Creek to the City of Burlington for the sole purpose of erecting a school for the education of the city's black children. Mitchell, born in 1803, was a prominent area businessman in both agriculture and real estate. He was described as "the embodiment of sympathy for the needy...an opposer to oppression of the poorer classes by the rich and strong, and a liberal contributor to all worthy local enterprises and objects (History of Burlington County)." Richard Mott, a Quaker, was born in 1825 and

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

AUG 16 1990

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

William R. Allen School, Burlington
City, Burlington County, NJ

spent most of his life as a farmer. He was active in several local businesses and was also elected to the Island Managers.

As stated earlier, a special tax in the amount of three thousand dollars was raised to erect a school for the city's black children. No written description exists of this site, however the building is depicted in an 1874 birds-eye view of the city. The Federal Street School appears as a two story wood frame structure situated on Earle Street (later Mitchell Avenue). The schoolhouse sat in a large, vacant lot in an undeveloped section of the city. Unlike the earlier Wood Street school, this site was closer to the black neighborhood. Other nearby community centers included an African Meeting House depicted on an 1849 map, and the 1857 St. Mary AME Church which is still active. Community leaders during the latter half of the 19th century believed that this section of the city would continue to attract more African-American residents.

For further context of the relationship between the Burlington experience and what was occurring generally within the state, the following information from Dr. Marion M. Thompson Wright's landmark volume The Education of Negroes in New Jersey is summarized. The 1844 State Constitution required that annual appropriations be made for "the support of public schools, for the equal benefit of all the people of the state." With this provision, black children began to share in the funds made available by the state for education in both mixed and separate schools. In 1850, the legislature authorized the creation of a special school district in Morris Township for the exclusive use of colored children. This established a precedent for the legal sanction of such schools. In 1863 the state superintendent of public instruction strengthened this precedent through his interpretation of the school laws.

In 1881, after Republicans gained control of the legislature, the state reacted to a situation which occurred in Fair Haven. Blacks in that community demanded the right to attend the white school; this crisis led the state to pass a

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

AUG 16 1990

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4 William R. Allen School, Burlington
City, Burlington County, NJ

law prohibiting the exclusion of any child from any school because of nationality, religion or color. As a consequence of this law, the remaining segregated schools in the northern counties were discontinued. In the southern counties, however, not only did those segregated schools in operation continue, but new ones were built without protest from the authorities or the black community. In fact, in many communities, black leaders utilized the law as a way to gain new and upgraded school buildings as the price of accepting continued segregation and continued employment of black teachers.

From 1870 to 1900 the Federal Street School served as the only school in the city for the education of its black youth. This school was the subject of a New Jersey Supreme court action during this time. In 1883, the Reverend Jeremiah H. Pierce, pastor in one of the city's black churches, attempted to enroll his children at an all-white school in his neighborhood. When he was denied by the school district, Pierce challenged the decision based on the 1844 Constitution and the 1881 New Jersey School Law. In 1884, the State Supreme Court ruled in Reverend Pierce's favor and directed that Burlington allow black children be enrolled in schools in their neighborhood.

For several years after this decision, Burlington school officials did allow a minimal amount of black students to attend white schools, but most still went to the Federal Street schoolhouse. For example, in 1894 Maria Holcomb applied for admission to attend the secondary school, but was denied on the grounds that she lived closer to the Negro school. The "New Jersey Mirror" stated in a September 12, 1894 article, "that since that time [of the Pierce Case], the Rev. Pierce having removed, the colored children have been gradually weeded out until none remain." Students advancing to the high school level were refused permission to enter and were directed by the Board of Education to remain at the segregated school.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

AUG 16 1990

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5 William R. Allen School, Burlington
City, Burlington County, NJ

In 1899, the City initiated a major facilities improvement project. In August, 1899, plans were made for the erection of a new and larger brick building, to replace the wooden structure at the Federal Street site. Completed in 1900, the new school was named for William R. Allen, well-known businessman and staunch Unionist mayor during the Civil War. Allen had been instrumental in reorganizing the city's educational system in 1856 when it was divided from one large district into four smaller neighborhood districts.

The new brick structure was built at approximately the same location as the prior wooden school. Archeological investigation may yield information related to the exact site and dimensions of the 1870 schoolhouse. Records related to the development of this site are lacking. Construction contracts, architectural design information, etc. are not available for analysis.

In 1914, due to increasing enrollment related to the general industrialization of Burlington, a third classroom was added to the two room plan. From 1914 to 1924, the black population in the city increased dramatically during the Great Migration of southern blacks to northern cities. The Allen School was soon affected by the large number of recent arrivals and the staff of three teachers was no longer adequate.

As a result of the increase in enrollment, the Board of Education in 1923 rented a basement room in the Pearl Street Bethel AME Church and expanded the teaching staff. The following year, the three room Allen School was expanded to twice its size. School enrollment continued to climb and by 1934, white students were moved out of the James Fenimore Cooper School and the overflow from the Allen School was sent to the Cooper facility. According to a county report, the greatest enrollment during this time was 310 with a 1943 enrollment at 280 handled by nine teachers and a principal.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

AUG

200

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6

William R. Allen School, Burlington
City, Burlington County, NJ

The practice of segregation in Burlington City schools remained widespread until the late 1940s when the State Constitution expressly forbade such practices. However, the practice of enrolling students in neighborhood schools meant that the Allen School was effectively an all-black facility until its closure in the 1960s. From the mid 1970s to the early 1980s, the County conducted special classes in the building. Since 1984, the school has been vacant.

African-Americans have played a vital role in the history of Burlington; this history has been documented by works ranging from Dr. James Still's 1877 autobiography and more recent works by Dr. Clement Price and Ernest Lyght. The social patterns of settlement, treatment and community life detailed by these authors follow the general patterns analyzed by Giles R. Wright in Afro-Americans in New Jersey. An observation made by Wright and others is well stated in the following excerpt from a 1954 volume Schools in Transition: "New Jersey provides in microcosm a picture of many facets of race relations in the nation - two points of cleavage and agreement between Northern and Southern policies... it is especially illuminating to look at the developments in a state where the interplay of social forces considered 'Southern' and 'Northern' are apparent, and where the lower half of the state has usually followed Southern traditions and customs in shaping its community life, particularly in those areas affecting elementary education."

The William R. Allen School meets ~~the~~ **National** Register criteria. Under CRITERIA A, the school stands as a physical reminder of the period in American history when social policy and custom allowed for, and actively encouraged forced segregation of Americans based on race. The school also reminds us of the important role played by African-Americans in the development of the City and State from the earliest settlement of Burlington, through the Great Migration and down to the 1960s, an era of social upheaval and change.

The William R. Allen School may also meet Criterion C, but that discussion is not developed here. The Allen School

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NOV 16 1990

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7

William R. Allen School, Burlington
City, Burlington County, NJ

embodies the Colonial Revival architectural style prevalent in the period from 1894 to 1933. Stylistically, the schools which were built in the post-1894 period conform a period characterized by "revivalism". A 1984 planning document from the Office of New Jersey Heritage notes that schools from this period are under represented on the State and National Registers. The use of architectural detailing to convey a colonial motif was a common feature in public schools dating to this period. The development of the facility from the 1870 structure to the extensive expansion in 1924 of the turn-of-the century brick schoolhouse, demonstrates the evolution of public policy toward providing upgraded facilities for the community's black population. The improvements to the site are not to be confused with the issue of adequate funding for the operation of the school.

The Federal Street/William R. Allen School retains its integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. The site is significant under CRITERIA A as described above. The schoolhouse and surrounding yard provide insight into the role of education for African-Americans in the State and the development of segregation as a social policy from the time of the American Civil War to the era of the Civil Rights movement one century later.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

AUG

1990

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 2 William R. Allen School, Burlington
City, Burlington County, NJ

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William R. Allen School
Burlington, New Jersey (Burlington County)
Richard S. Walling, Photographer
Photographs taken July 1989
Negatives retained by MERABASH Museum

Views:

1. Mitchell Avenue facade (main entrance).
2. Federal Street (1900 structure) facade depicting title stone.
3. Side and rear views of 1900 structure.
4. Side and rear views of 1900 structure and 1914 classroom.
5. Side and rear view of unified 1926 expansion.
6. Typical classroom, 1900 structure. South gable-end.
7. View of 1900 gable-end classroom windows.
8. Typical colonial-revival detailing; 1900 doorway from hallway to rear entrance ell.
9. Detail of 1900 structure roof construction. View towards north gable-end entombed by 1926 expansion.

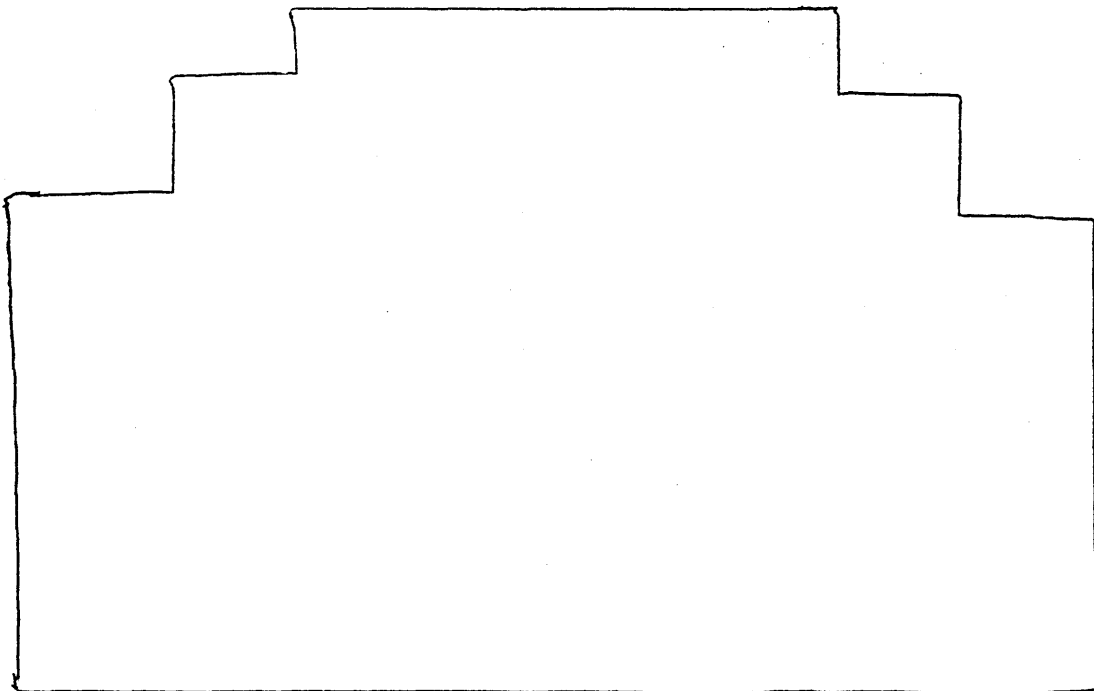
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Exterior Views

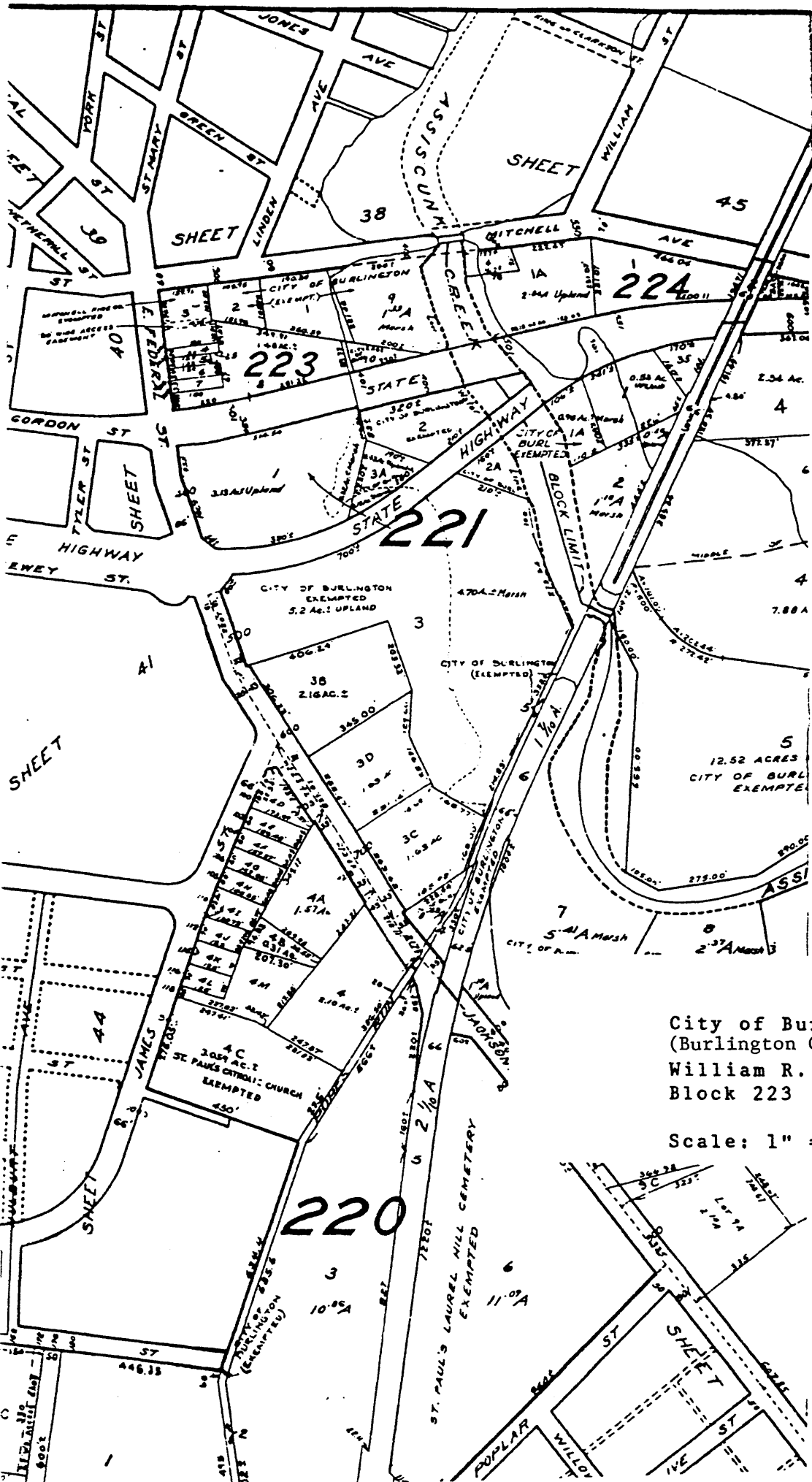
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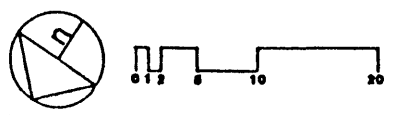
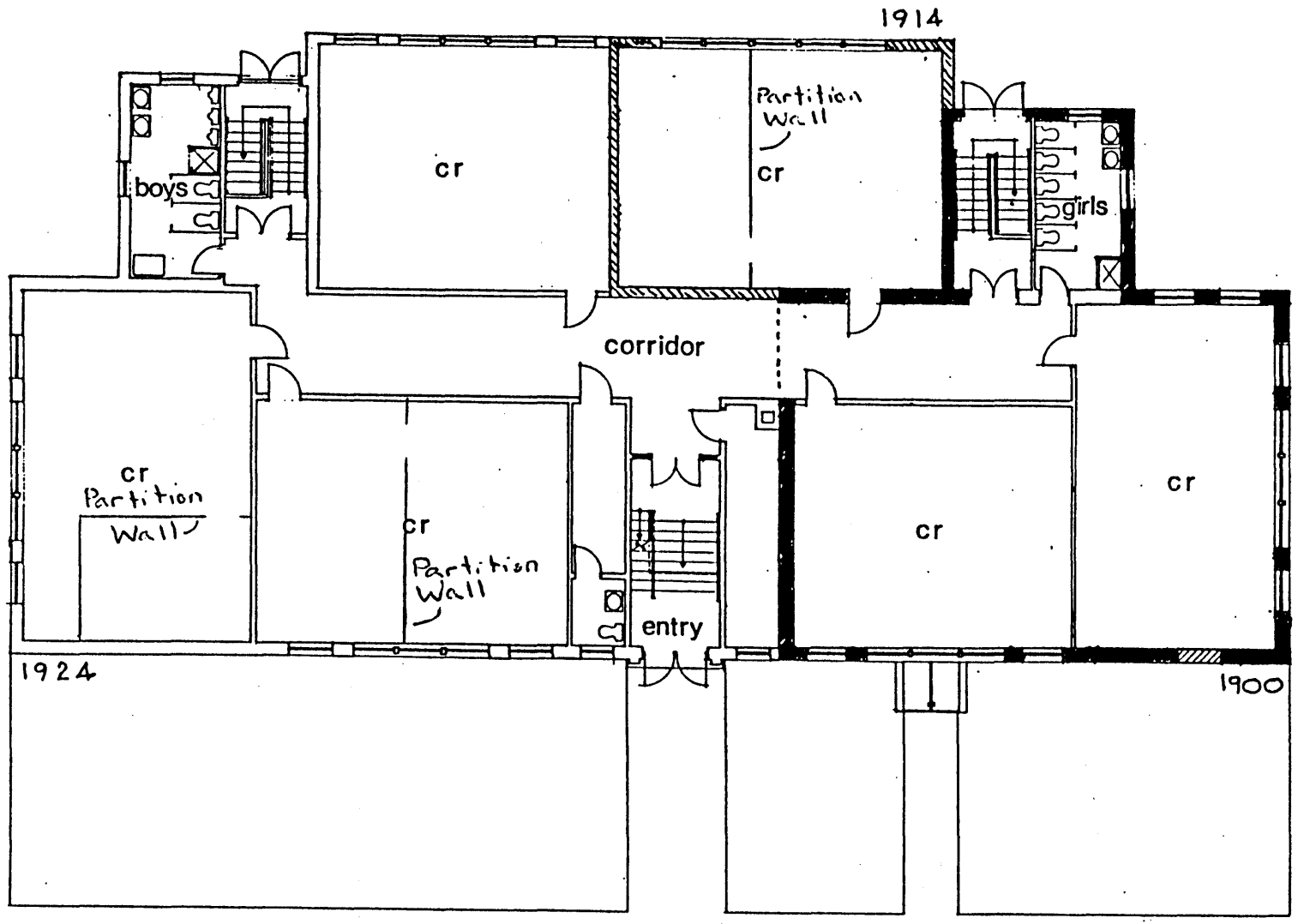


City of Burlington Tax Map #52
 (Burlington County, NJ)
 William R. Allen School
 Block 223 Lots 1A, 1, 2 and 3

Scale: 1" = 200'

AUG 16 1992

-9-



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

MITCHELL AVENUE

HERBERT J. GITHENS
 ARCHITECT
 7 Park Street
 Room #3
 Montclair, N.J. 07042
 201 746-4911

N.J. O 8547
 P.A. B 9308

PROJECT NO.

DATE:

REVISIONS:

DRAWN BY:

THE
 WILLIAM F. ALLEN
 SCHOOL
 DUPLINGTON, N.J.

Burlington
 County