

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

DEC 14

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Dennis High School
other names/site number Dennis Elementary School, Dennis Primary School

2. Location

street & number 410 West Cedar Lane not for publication
city or town Bishopville vicinity _____
state South Carolina code SC county Lee code 061 zip code 29010

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Mary W. Edmonds 12/9/04
Signature of certifying official Date

Mary W. Edmonds, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, S.C. Dept. of Archives and History, Columbia, S.C.
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register Edson B. Beall Signature of the Keeper Date of Action 1/26/05
 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): _____

Dennis High School
Name of Property

Lee County, South Carolina
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

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

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing
1	0
_____	_____
_____	_____
1	0

buildings
sites
structures
objects
Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

African-American Primary and Secondary
Public School Buildings in S.C., ca. 1895-1954

Number of contributing resources previously listed
in the National Register
0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Category: Education

Subcategory: School

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Category: Vacant

Subcategory:

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Classical Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Brick

roof Asphalt

other Concrete

Narrative Description

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

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 5

Dennis High School
Name of Property
Lee County, South Carolina
County and State

Dennis High School was constructed in 1936 and was renovated and expanded in 1954. It is located at 410 West Cedar Lane in the city of Bishopville. The nominated property contains approximately 1.14 acres bordered on the southwest by West Cedar Lane, on the northwest by a residential lot, on the southeast by Albert Street and on the northwest by residential lots.

The original Classical Revival style school building is an L-shaped, one-story, load-bearing red brick structure that rests on a masonry foundation. The exterior walls of the school are constructed in a five-to-one variant common bond pattern with every fifth course consisting of alternating heavily-fired headers and red stretchers. They also feature a water table constructed with heavily-fired headers. The elongated main block faces West Cedar Lane and includes two primary entrances to the building. Recessed symmetrical wings flank the main block. A third wing, which houses the auditorium and gave the building its original L-shape, faces Albert Street. In 1954, a single classroom addition was built on the northern end of the rear elevation.

The lateral gable roof has a shed section across the rear. The roof is sheathed with asphalt shingles and has exposed rafter tails. The gable ends are finished in stucco. Two large, graduated chimneys with dual clay pots originally flanked these gables. The southern chimney has been removed, while the northern one has been damaged. Two other interior corbel-capped chimneys rise from the front slope of the central main block.

The central main block of the facade contains twelve-over-twelve light, double-hung wood sash windows arranged in three groupings of four bays each. These have fired brick header sills and are topped by stuccoed blind arches with heavily-fired brick header surrounds and cast keystones and impost blocks. The main entrances to the building are dual projecting, gabled entrance pavilions. The pavilions flank the central main block and feature cast stone steps with brick parapet [cheek] walls. The entry portals are arched with heavily-fired brick header surrounds with cast keystones and impost blocks, mirroring those over the windows of the central main block. The upper portion of each entrance gable contains a checkerboard pattern field of alternating brick stretchers and cast stone squares. The design appears to be a variation on a basket weave pattern. Double-leaf entry doors served as entrances to the school. A pair of sidelights provides illumination for each pavilion.

At either end of the central block are symmetrical wings that are slightly recessed, lower profile, less ornate, and nested within the central block's gable end. The facades of these wings contain a set of triple windows with single flanking windows, all consisting of double-hung, nine-over-nine light sash. These windows contain simple brick header sills and soldier course lentils.

The rear elevation of the building is less ornate than the facade. It contains three sets of triple windows with single flanking windows, with double-hung, nine-over-nine sash, and brick sills with soldier course lentils. The middle section of the rear elevation has three double-hung, six-over-six

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 6

Dennis High School
Name of Property
Lee County, South Carolina
County and State

light sash windows and a double-leaf door entrance at grade, some or all of which is an alteration from the time of the building's renovation. Two chimney flues rise near the edge of rear shed roof extension.

The third wing, which served as the school's auditorium, faces Albert Street and is constructed similarly to the central main block. It also contains three twelve-over-twelve light, double-hung wood sash windows on the Albert Street elevation and two of the same configuration on the northwest [interior side] elevation. These windows feature heavily-fired brick header sills and are topped by stuccoed blind arched heads with heavily-fired brick surrounds, cast keystones and impost blocks. There are also entrances to the auditorium on the Albert Street side and the interior court side, each of which is sheltered by a wooden awning. Two six-over-six light, double-hung wood sash windows are located near the corners of the auditorium's gable end or northeast elevation. A chimney flue pierces the auditorium roof near the southwest corner of the Albert Street elevation, while another rises between the entrance and first window of the interior court elevation.

The northwest side of the building has windows similar to those of the front wings. It has a grouping of five nine-over-nine light, double-hung wood sash windows. The 1954 addition elongated this elevation, and a grouping of seven nine-over-nine light, double-hung wood sash windows was added. All of these windows contain heavily-fired brick header sills and soldier course lentils. Similar brick and the same brick pattern as the original building was used in the construction of this addition.

The interior of the school is generally intact. In 1954, the auditorium was converted to a cafetorium, and an adjacent classroom was converted to a kitchen. A water heating system was also added at this time, and took the place of cast iron wood or coal burning stoves. One classroom was also converted, in 1954 or sometime later, to girls' and boys' restrooms. Minor renovations to the interior were made in the 1970s.

The grounds of school contain several different kinds of playground equipment, as well as a concrete block shed, which was built during the 1980s for storage. A water fountain to the right of Albert Street auditorium entrance was added in the early 1940s. The cement foundations of the school's original outdoor bathrooms for boys and girls are also clearly seen on the grounds. The original outhouses were later converted to flush toilets. The northern part of the lot, although vacant today, was the location of a small wooden kitchen and dining area for the students before the cafetorium was added.

Dennis High School
Name of Property

Lee County, South Carolina
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Education
Ethnic Heritage/Black

Period of Significance

1936-1954

Significant Dates

1936, 1954

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Edgeworth and McBride Contractors (1936)
E.C.B. Construction Company (1954)

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository:
S.C. Dept. of Archives & History,
Columbia, S.C.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7

Dennis High School
Name of Property
Lee County, South Carolina
County and State

Dennis High School, constructed in 1936, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, because of its importance in the education of African-Americans in Bishopville and Lee County and for its representation of the inequalities of South Carolina's "separate but equal" educational system. In addition, the renovation of Dennis High School in 1954 is an excellent example of the state's efforts to change these perceptions during the "Brown vs. Board of Education" era.

When Dennis High School was constructed, South Carolina's segregated educational system was one of wide disparity. White South Carolinians in power during the Depression had little money with which to fund education and improving the state of African-American education was not their chief concern. The year Dennis High School was built, for example, the annual cost per pupil in Lee County was \$48.38 for every white student and \$5.68 for every African-American student.¹

In 1936, two new schools were constructed in the town of Bishopville. Bishopville High School was built for Bishopville's white students at a cost of about \$71,000 and was designed by noted architect Henry Dudley Harrall. Dennis High School was constructed by Edgeworth and McBride Contractors of Cheraw for Bishopville's black students. It was built at a cost of \$17,500 on land donated by local philanthropist Rebecca Dennis. Bishopville High was funded in part with money from the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works (PWA).² Although it is not clear who funded the construction of Dennis School, it is likely that the PWA also financed this project. The similarities between the designs of the two schools suggest that Henry Dudley Harrall had some hand in the design of Dennis High School also.³

Despite the disproportionate amount of money allocated for the two schools, Dennis High School was an important improvement upon the building that it replaced. The original Dennis School was a wooden two-story building about three blocks northwest of where Dennis High School currently sits. Dennis High School is a substantial brick building with a handsome facade and considerably more architectural detailing than most rural black schools of the time. The school has many more classrooms than the original school, and these were well lit by large windows and electrical lighting. Dennis High School also had a large auditorium, which was the only one of its kind in the African-American community.

¹ "Sixty-Eighth Annual Report of the State Superintendent of Education of the State of South Carolina: 1936," *Reports of State Officers Boards and Committees to the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina* (Columbia: Joint Committee on Printing, 1937), vol. 2, p. 136.

² "\$71,000 High School Begun," *Lee County Messenger* (Bishopville, S.C.), 5 March 1936; National Register of Historic Places nomination for Bishopville High School, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, S.C.

³ Both schools are L-shaped brick buildings with a pair of gabled entrance pavilions. Identical sidelights provide illumination for the schools' entrances and recessed symmetrical wings flank both schools.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8

Dennis High School
Name of Property
Lee County, South Carolina
County and State

Dennis High School was originally intended to function as an elementary school, while high school students remained in the old school.⁴ Unfortunately, shortly before students were scheduled to begin classes, the old school burnt to the ground. According to the *Lee County Messenger*, "The new school building was only recently completed and the one burned may or may not be a problem as to more room."⁵ The financially strapped educational system did not construct another building. Instead, the elementary and high schools were combined in the new Dennis High School building. Double sessions, with one group of students taking morning classes and another group taking afternoon classes, were implemented to handle the excess of students.⁶

Despite this overcrowding, Dennis High School was an important asset to the local African-American community. Most notably, it was the only high school for black children in the county. Because of this a good number of students from rural areas outside of the town of Bishopville walked many miles every day to attend classes at Dennis. Most rural schools in the county only went through eighth grade so classes at Dennis High School became the only way for these children to further their education. Dennis High School's auditorium was also an important social center for the community. It hosted plays, dances, oratorical contests, glee club meetings, and commencement ceremonies.

Overcrowding continued to be an issue, however, and in 1948 a new Dennis High School was built a short distance down the road. Despite the move, high school students still returned to what was now the Dennis Elementary School auditorium for their commencement.⁸

In 1951 Governor James F. Byrnes, a staunch segregationist, convinced the legislature to enact the "Educational Revolution." This initiative called for exponential growth in the monies allocated to fund African-American education in a desperate attempt to prove the equality of education in South Carolina.⁹ Under this "Educational Revolution," a new Dennis High School and Elementary School were built in 1954. On May 13, 1954, the *Lee County Messenger* announced that bids would be accepted for improvements to the 1936 building, which was now Dennis Primary School. The next week, however, the Supreme Court made its landmark decision outlawing segregation in "Brown vs. Board of Education," and Byrnes halted all pending school construction. The contract for Dennis Primary School was not let until three months later, when Byrnes lifted the ban after realizing integration was not imminent. An additional classroom was then added to the school, a central heating system replaced stoves in the classrooms, and the auditorium was converted to a cafetorium with the conversion of an adjacent classroom to a kitchen.¹⁰ After these changes, Dennis Primary

⁴ Oral interviews with Blanch V. Joe, Mozelle Isaac, Rev. Phillip Mixon, Daniel Isaac, Bernice Bradley, and Bettie Toney, Dennis School, Bishopville, S.C., 10 August 2004.

⁵ "Fire Saturday Night," *Lee County Messenger* (Bishopville, S.C.), 27 August 1936.

⁶ Oral Interviews.

⁷ Oral Interviews.

⁸ Oral Interviews.

⁹ Walter B. Edgar, *South Carolina: A History* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), p. 522-523.

¹⁰ "Go Ahead Given for 2 Negro School Building projects in Lee County," *Lee County Messenger* (Bishopville, S.C.), 29

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 9

Dennis High School
Name of Property
Lee County, South Carolina
County and State

School continued to educate the community until 1970 when schools were integrated in Lee County, sixteen years after "Brown vs. Board of Education."

For over thirty years, Dennis High School served the African-American community of Bishopville and Lee County. Through a time of segregated unequal education in South Carolina, Dennis High School supported Lee County as an important educational institution for thousands of its children. Dennis High School's distinguished list of graduates includes: Dr. Odell Stuckey (an administrator with the South Carolina State Department of Education), Charlie Smith Dannelly (Deputy President Pro Tempore of the North Carolina Senate), and Drink Small (blues musician).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 10

Dennis High School
Name of Property
Lee County, South Carolina
County and State

Select Bibliography

Columbia, S.C. South Carolina Department of Archives and History. National Register of Historic Places Files. Nomination for Bishopville High School.

Edgar, Walter B., *South Carolina: A History*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998.

Lee County Messenger (Bishopville, S.C.), 5 March 1936, 27 August 1936, 13 May 1954, 29 July 1954.

Oral interviews with Blanch V. Joe, Mozelle Isaac, Rev. Phillip Mixon, Daniel Isaac, Bernice Bradley, and Bettie Toney, Dennis School, Bishopville, S.C., 10 August 2004.

"Sixty-Eighth Annual Report of the State Superintendent of Education of the State of South Carolina: 1936," *Reports of State Officers Boards and Committees to the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina*. vol. 2, Columbia: Joint Committee on Printing, 1937.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 11

Dennis High School
Name of Property
Lee County, South Carolina
County and State

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary for the nominated property is indicated by the heavy black line marked "Dennis High School" on the accompanying Lee County Tax Map (Tax Map Number 030-06, Parcel 36), drawn at a scale of 1" = 100'.

Boundary Justification

The nominated acreage contains the school and its associated grounds.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Photographs Page 12

Dennis High School
Name of Property
Lee County, South Carolina
County and State

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

Name of Property: Dennis High School
Location of Property: 410 West Cedar Lane, Bishopville
Lee County, South Carolina
Name of Photographer: Andrew W. Chandler, South Carolina SHPO
Date of Photographs: 10 August 2004
Location of Original Negatives: S.C. Department of Archives and History, Columbia, S.C.

1. Southeast oblique view of Cedar Lane façade
2. Southeast oblique view of Cedar Lane façade
3. Northwest oblique view of Cedar Lane façade
4. Northwest elevation showing rear ell addition
5. Entry pavilion at south end of main block
6. Detail of gable of entry pavilion at south end of main block
7. Detail of brickwork and remains original Art Deco/Streamline Moderne entry sconce
8. Detail of window in main block of Cedar Lane façade
9. Southeast elevation, end of original wing at left and auditorium at right
10. Detail of brickwork, entrance and windows along southeast elevation of auditorium
11. Southeast oblique view of auditorium
12. Northeast oblique view of auditorium
13. Northeast view of auditorium [interior rear court elevation]
14. Northeast [rear] elevation of main block
15. Interior corridor and entrance to auditorium
16. Classroom interior [oblique view]
17. Auditorium interior
18. School kitchen adjacent to auditorium