

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only
received APR 7 1981
date entered MAY 12 1981

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Thomas Jefferson Elder High and Industrial School

and/or common T.J. Elder Elementary School

2. Location

street & number 316 Hall Street _____ not for publication

city, town Sandersville _____ vicinity of _____ congressional district 10th - Douglas Barnard

state Georgia code 013 county Washington code 303

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Ronald Jackson, Chairman; Washington County Board of Education

street & number P.O. Box 716

city, town Sandersville _____ vicinity of _____ state Georgia 31082

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Superior Court

street & number Washington County Courthouse

city, town Sandersville _____ state Georgia

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title None has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date _____ federal _____ state _____ county _____ local

depository for survey records _____

city, town _____ state _____

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Elder High and Industrial School is in good condition, having been actively used and maintained since its erection. Facing south, the building has an elongated "H" shape. The front porch, with the auditorium, form the cross-wise section. The vertical side parts of the original building are formed by two classrooms that flank either side of the porch onto which they open, and by another pair of classrooms projecting behind. The stage on the east end of the auditorium and a classroom equipped with a folding door on the west complete the original building.

In 1938, six classrooms and restrooms were added to the rear wings, three on each side. Other structural changes have been few. Inside, the beaded ceilings remain above suspended ceilings. Original wooden floors are sound. The beaded wainscoating is intact but some of the plaster needs repair. Some changes have been made in the small rooms used as offices, and one front classroom has had its storage-cloak room opened to enlarge the classroom.

The stage has curtains. The old footlights are in disuse and boarded up for safety.

The exterior was spray-painted about ten years ago. Masonry and roof are in good condition. Windows have aluminum sashes, but size and placement conform to the original. Some exterior wooden trim needs repair or replacement; porch flooring has been replaced.

The building is on its original site, and except for moderate changes in paint, windows and wear from use, looks as it did when new. It is in a residential neighborhood next to the modern elementary school. The grounds have a minimum of landscaping and include paved sidewalks and the graves of Mr. and Mrs. T.J. Elder. Two pillars frame the front walk as it meets the Hall Street sidewalk. There are no outbuildings, but there is a flagpole. It is the only building left from a once-larger school complex.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below		
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) Black History

Specific dates 1927-28 **Builder/Architect** Chafin Construction Company

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Thomas Jefferson Elder High and Industrial School is significant as being an authenticated Rosenwald Plan School with an intact H-plan and original interior and exterior finishes. One of the Rosenwald Fund's goals was to improve public education for Southern blacks by assisting in building model schoolhouses. In education, the school is significant as the oldest remaining school building in the county. It was built on a site associated with the county's education since 1889. It pioneered the manual arts (vocational) training and trained other teachers under the leadership of T.J. Elder. In social-humanitarian history, it is significant for the Rosenwald Fund's efforts to improve education in the South. This building was erected with the help of the Fund in 1927-28, although the majority of the costs came from local public support and city funds. It was the Fund's goal to support local school systems by requiring that local funding exceed that of the Fund. In this case, donations in the amounts of \$1 to \$250 were collected from both blacks and whites. In black history, the school is significant as the manifestation of the efforts of Thomas Jefferson Elder (1869-1946).

Architectural Significance

The Elder School is architecturally significant because it is an authenticated Rosenwald Plan School. It has a typical "H" shape and is constructed of brick. Inside details include beaded ceilings and wainscoting, plaster walls and pine floors.

The objective of the Rosenwald Fund was to improve, through public education, the opportunities of Southern, rural blacks. A major thrust was to stimulate the erection of "model schoolhouses" by providing seed money to stimulate better schools. By 1932, Georgia had 242 Rosenwald schools. Washington County had three. The Elder building was the only brick structure here and the only structure remaining.

Educational Significance

Educationally, the Elder School is significant as the oldest school building remaining in Washington County, Georgia. It occupies a site dating back to 1889 as a school and yard -- almost 100 years of education.

Through a combination of state and local funds, foundation grants, tuition fees and donations, it has been a strong and influential educational force in the

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9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet,

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

10. Geographical Data

UTM NOT VERIFIED

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Sandersville, Ga.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

1	7	3	3	0	2	4	0	3	6	5	0	0	3	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing							

C

Zone		Easting				Northing							

D

Zone		Easting				Northing							

E

Zone		Easting				Northing							

F

Zone		Easting				Northing							

G

Zone		Easting				Northing							

H

Zone		Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property is marked on the enclosed sketch map. It is all that remains associated with the school building parcel out of a larger portion owned by the board of education.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title a) Josephine N. Cummings b) Kenneth H. Thomas, Jr., contact

organization a) Washington County Historical Society
 b) Historic Preservation Section, Ga. DNR date September 25, 1980

street & number a) 210 S. Smith Street telephone a) (912) 552-6047
 b) 270 Washington Street, S.W. b) (404) 656-2840

city or town a) Sandersville state a) Georgia 31082
 b) Atlanta b) Georgia 30334

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Elizabeth A. Lyon*
 Elizabeth A. Lyon

title State Historic Preservation Officer date 3/31/81

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

for Delores Byers
 Keeper of the National Register

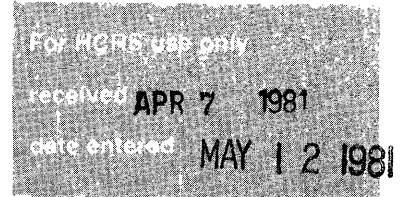
Entered in the National Register date 5/12/81

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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community. It pioneered in manual arts curriculum, it was designated a County Training School, and it trained teachers for rural black schools under the continuous leadership of Thomas Jefferson Elder.

Black History Significance

The Elder School is significant in black history since it represents the influential contributions of Thomas Jefferson Elder to his community.

Thomas Jefferson Elder (December 24, 1869 - June 5, 1946) was "the one man who had meant most to the educational, social and spiritual advancement of the colored people of the county for almost 60 years." So great was the appreciation of his personal contribution for black education that by joint resolution in 1933, the city council and school board of Sandersville changed the name of the Sandersville High and Industrial School to honor him. He "instilled in his students the will to be honest and upright and his person set for them a sterling example." He devoted his life to educating black youth in Sandersville and Washington County, Georgia, despite opportunities to earn more money elsewhere.

Born and reared in Watkinsville, Elder came to Sandersville after finishing Atlanta University, in 1887. He brought his wife and fellow teacher, Lillian Phinizy Elder of Athens, a graduate of Spelman Seminary. In 1889, Elder led in forming a trustee group to purchase land and construct a suitable school, as classes were being held in Springfield Baptist Church. Elder's school soon grew to probably the largest black school in central, rural Georgia, averaging over 330 students per term at the turn of the century.

Elder's school was the first in this section of Georgia to establish manual training in its curriculum, an important factor in its growth. In 1898, sewing and woodworking classes were introduced. Professor Elder, as he was widely called, and Mrs. Elder studied in Chicago at Morgan Park Academy and Chicago Summer School for this. Upon hearing of their accomplishments with their students at a nationwide meeting in Capon Springs, Virginia, R. Fulton Cutting of New York donated \$1,000 for industrial education in Washington County. Half of this went to Elder's school for land purchase and a workshop, built and equipped within three months of receiving the donation. Much of the construction was donated by patrons and students.

In a manner necessary at the time, Professor Elder combined state school funds, local funds, student fees and foundation grants to build a school of exceptional quality with high standards and long terms. Students who could not afford tuition fees came on scholarships or paid through the year as they could. Mrs. Elder managed to purchase fabric for sewing classes by selling food prepared

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in cooking classes.

It was designated a County Training School as early as 1913, one of two in the state. Only the better schools could be County Training Schools; they offered excellent secondary work and trained teachers for rural black schools.

Professor Elder so clearly spent his energy, ability and leadership in unselfishly building up the community that his requests met prompt, hearty response from the community. In 1911, the city and county school boards invested in enlarging Elder's school, noting in the minutes that the quick reply recognized "Elder's long and satisfactory service as a teacher and his integrity as a citizen" and because he trained most Negro teachers for the county.

Elder also led the teacher-training institutes for upgrading classroom teachers, and he taught at the summer school of Knoxville College in 1904.

About 1917, a domestic-science building was built with the help of the Rosenwald Fund. The school also had a two-story dormitory for boarding students. By 1927-28, when this brick Rosenwald building was erected, the school had five buildings and an enrollment of 300, down from a high of 500. Professor Elder's plea for this building generated a building committee of leading businessmen, a city donation and such a widespread public donation that the building was dedicated within nine months. At a cost of about \$11,500, nearly \$8,000 came from public subscription; \$2,500, from the city; \$1,400 from Rosenwald Funds.

The achievement of Thomas Jefferson Elder, teamed with his wife and other teachers and the community, reached a new peak at the dedication of the building, which was described as a "monument" to his work at the time. Locally, the whole school plant was seen as his work; the response to him shows widespread, biracial interest in what one man did for one community. Even in 1928, the building was called "a memorial" to T.J. Elder, "one of the foremost Negro educators in Georgia."

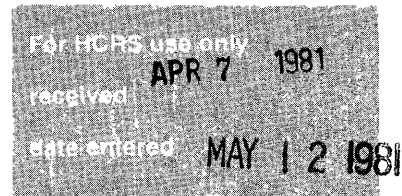
Surpassing this recognition, a climax of appreciation for Elder's accomplishments and service came in 1933 when the name of the school was changed to "Thomas Jefferson Elder High and Industrial School."

Thomas Jefferson Elder, "a man whose greatness transcended all the barriers which his color had decreed was laid to final rest in the soil of a community immeasurably enriched by his exemplary life." Upon his death on June 5, 1946, Professor Elder received tribute from the entire spectrum in the county. His funeral was held in the school auditorium. He was eulogized by black and white, ministers, educators and others, including E.G. Orahood, W.N. Summerlin and J.D. Counts, and he was carried to his grave in the schoolyard by white pallbearers.

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The last tribute was planned by George D. Warthen, prominent banker and civic leader, and C.B. Chapman, newspaper editor, about the time the brick structure was erected.

Mrs. Elder, who had died in 1943, is buried beside Professor Elder in the schoolyard.

Professor Elder recognized that he was educating leaders, and his influence has extended far beyond the community as these youth have served in professions and businesses all over Georgia, the South and the nation. In the last fifteen years, graduates of the school have organized "Elderites", a non-profit, alumni group that draws members from states as far away as Washington and California.

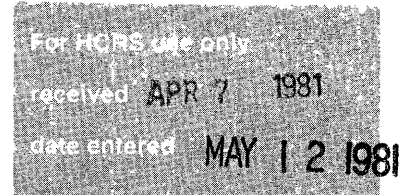
Social-Humanitarian Significance

The Elder School is significant in social-humanitarian history because it is a Rosenwald School. The support of the Rosenwald Fund for Elder's school speaks for its quality. One of the goals of Julius Rosenwald (1862-1932) of Illinois was to improve educational opportunities for rural blacks through public education. The Fund provided funds and standards to stimulate the erection of permanent, model schools by helping a county do more than it could do alone. Local contributions had to exceed Rosenwald funding, and biracial support was encouraged. This building project certainly fit the proposed pattern. Donations ranging from \$1 to \$250 from black and white citizens were published. The Rosenwald Fund was established in 1917, and under the terms of his will, it closed out in 1946 rather than continuing in perpetuity. The schools funds stopped in 1932.

The Thomas Jefferson Elder High and Industrial School was downgraded around 1960 to an elementary school when a new high school was built. It continued in that capacity until 1980 and is now unoccupied, awaiting adaptive reuse.

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Bibliography

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