

**North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
State Historic Preservation Office**

Ramona M. Bartos, Administrator

Governor Josh Stein
Secretary Pamela B. Cashwell

Office of Archives and History
Deputy Secretary Darin J. Waters, Ph.D.

July 23, 2026

MEMORANDUM

TO: Shelby Reap sreap@ncdot.gov
Historic Architecture Group
NC Department of Transportation

FROM: Renee Gledhill-Earley *Renee Gledhill-Earley*
Environmental Review Coordinator

SUBJECT: Historic Structure Report: HS-2405K: Install Traffic Signal with High Visibility Crosswalk and Connect to the Raleigh Signal System at SR 2026 (N. Person St) and Polk Street, Wake County, WBS No. DF18313.2100719, PA No. 26-01-0001, ER 26-2939

Thank you for your July 9, 2026, memorandum transmitting the Historic Structures Survey Report (HSSR) for the above-referenced undertaking. We have reviewed the report, accepted it as final, and offer the following comments.

We concur that the Murphey School (WA3935) is Eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under Criterion A, but we do not concur that it is Eligible under Criterion C due to a loss of integrity of the interior of the main building.

Although the investigator did not go inside the building, the report provided evidence of significant interior changes, and the reviewer has been inside the building within the last five years and observed a significant loss of material, design, workmanship, and feeling integrity on the interior.

The above comments are made pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's Regulations for Compliance with Section 106 codified at 36 CFR Part 800.

If you have questions concerning the above comment, contact Renee Gledhill-Earley, environmental review coordinator, at 919-814-6579 or environmental.review@dnrc.nc.gov. In all future communication concerning this project, please cite the above referenced tracking number.

cc: Mary Pope Furr, NCDOT
Sarah Potere, NV5

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HISTORIC STRUCTURES SURVEY REPORT

INSTALL TRAFFIC SIGNAL WITH PEDESTRIAN SIGNALS AND HIGH VISIBILITY CROSSWALKS AND CONNECT TO THE RALEIGH SIGNAL SYSTEM AT SR 2026 (N PERSON ST) AND POLK ST INTERSECTION IN RALEIGH WAKE COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

TIP #: HS-2405K

WBS #: 50977.1.12

PA #: 26-02-0013

June 2026

Prepared For:

Environmental Analysis Unit

North Carolina Department of Transportation

1598 Mail Service Center

Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-1598



N|V|5

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HISTORIC STRUCTURES SURVEY REPORT

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1598 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-1598

Prepared By:

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Sarah Potere - Principal Investigator

June 2026

Sarah Potere, Principal Investigator
NV5

Date

Mary Pope Furr, Supervisor
Environmental Analysis Unit, Historic Architecture Group
North Carolina Department of Transportation

Date

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) proposes to install a traffic signal with pedestrian signals and high visibility crosswalks and connect to the Raleigh signal system at the SR 2026 (N Person Street) and Polk Street Intersection in Raleigh, Wake County (TIP HS-2405K; WBS No. 50977.1.12; PA 26-02-0013). The project is subject to review under the 2020 *Section 106 Programmatic Agreement for Minor Transportation Projects* between NCDOT, the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (NCHPO), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and the United States Forest Service (USFS).

NCDOT architectural historians defined an Area of Potential Effects (APE) for the project and conducted a reconnaissance-level survey to identify and assess all resources of approximately fifty years of age or more within the designated APE. One resource was identified as warranting further NRHP eligibility assessment and is the subject of this report. NCDOT contracted with NV5 Engineers and Consultants (NV5) to complete an intensive-level assessment and investigation of this resource. NCDOT architectural historians determined that all other properties within the project APE do not warrant further study or evaluation due to lack of historical significance and/or integrity.

This report presents the findings of NV5's intensive-level evaluation per Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, including photographs of resources and landscapes; historic and architectural contexts; an evaluation of NRHP eligibility; comparisons to similar types of resources; and carefully delineated and justified boundaries, as appropriate. This survey conforms to the *Historic Architecture Group Procedures and Work Products* (NCDOT 2015) and *Report Standards for Historic Structure Survey Reports/Determinations of Eligibility/Section 106/110 Compliance Reports in North Carolina* (NCHPO 2022).

As a result of this investigation, NV5 recommends the Murphey School (WA3935) as eligible for NRHP listing. The following table summarizes this NRHP eligibility recommendation. This report is on file at NCDOT and NCHPO and is available for review by the general public.

Table 1. Summary Table of Surveyed Resources

Resource Name	NCHPO Survey Site Number	NRHP Eligibility Recommendation and Criteria
Murphey School	WA3935	Recommended NRHP Eligible under Criterion A (education, ethnic heritage: Black, social history) and Criterion C (architecture)

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1.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND METHODOLOGY

NCDOT proposes to install a traffic signal with pedestrian signals and high visibility crosswalks and connect to the Raleigh signal system at the SR 2026 (N Person Street) and Polk Street intersection in Raleigh, Wake County (TIP No. HS-2405K; WBS No. 50977.1.12; PA No. 26-02-0013). The project is subject to review under the 2020 *Section 106 Programmatic Agreement for Minor Transportation Projects* between NCDOT, the NCHPO, the FHWA, the USACE, and the USFS.

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The project APE falls entirely within Wake County, and its location is depicted at Figure 1. The location of the evaluated resource is depicted at Figure 2. In June 2026, NV5 Architectural Historian Sarah Potere, who meets the Secretary of Interior's (SOI) Qualifications for Architectural History (CFR 36 CFR Part 61), completed the fieldwork for this effort. This involved visiting and documenting the subject resource through photography and visual observation. Field investigation also included the identification and photography of comparable resources for the evaluated resource. These were located through a review of NCHPO Web data prior to the field investigation. Following the completion of fieldwork, Ms. Potere conducted thorough documentary research at various physical and digital repositories. Research included: further review of NCHPO Web and survey files held at the NCHPO; a review of Wake County GIS data, tax records, and property deeds and plats; in-person research at the State Library of North Carolina; in-person research at the Olivia Rainey Local History Library in Raleigh; and a review of numerous digital repositories. A full list of resources referenced and consulted during the completion of this report may be found at the Bibliography (Section 4.0).

As a result of this investigation, NV5 recommends the Murphey School (WA3935) as eligible for NRHP listing. This report is on file at NCDOT and NCHPO and is available for review by the general public.

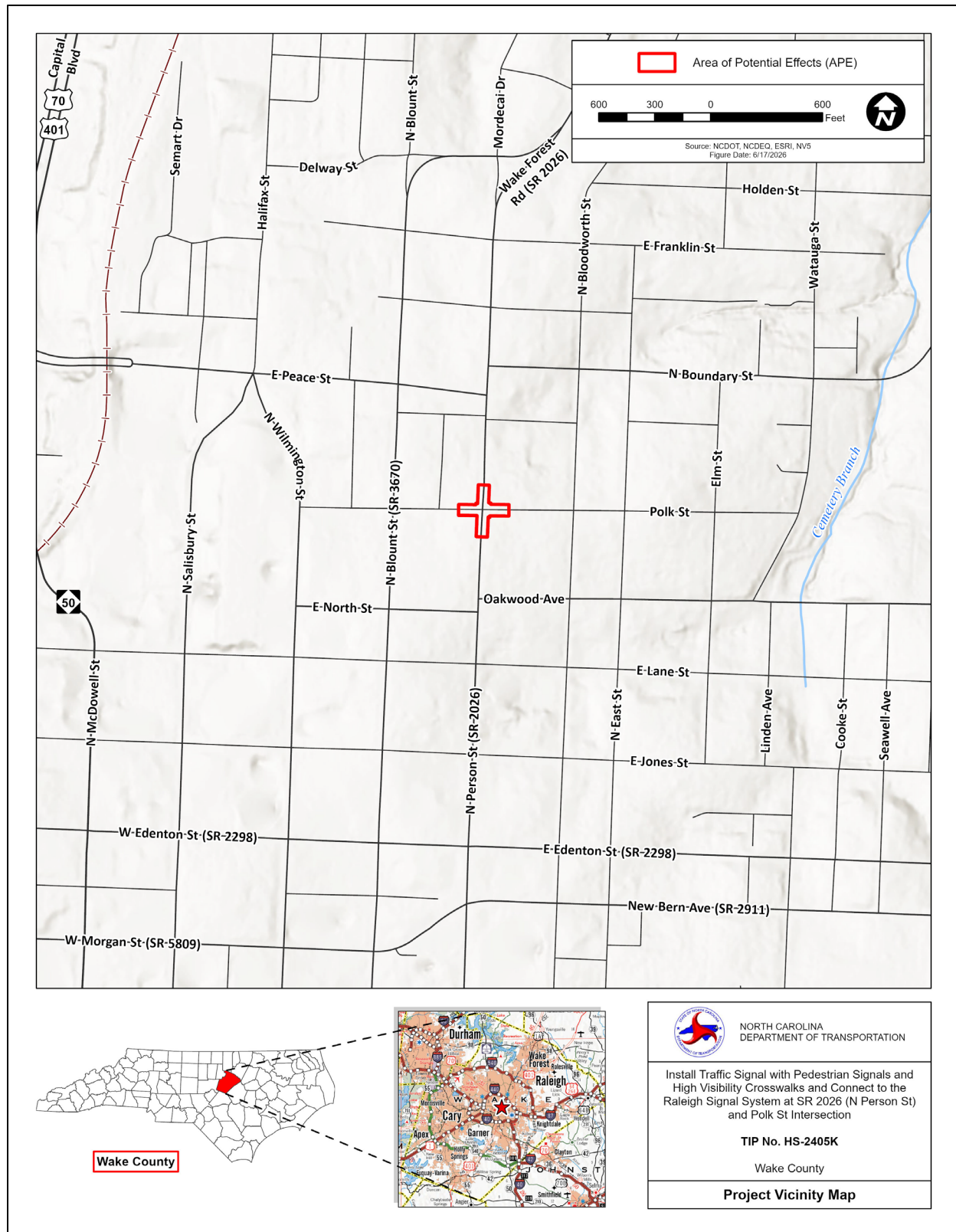


Figure 1. Project Vicinity Map

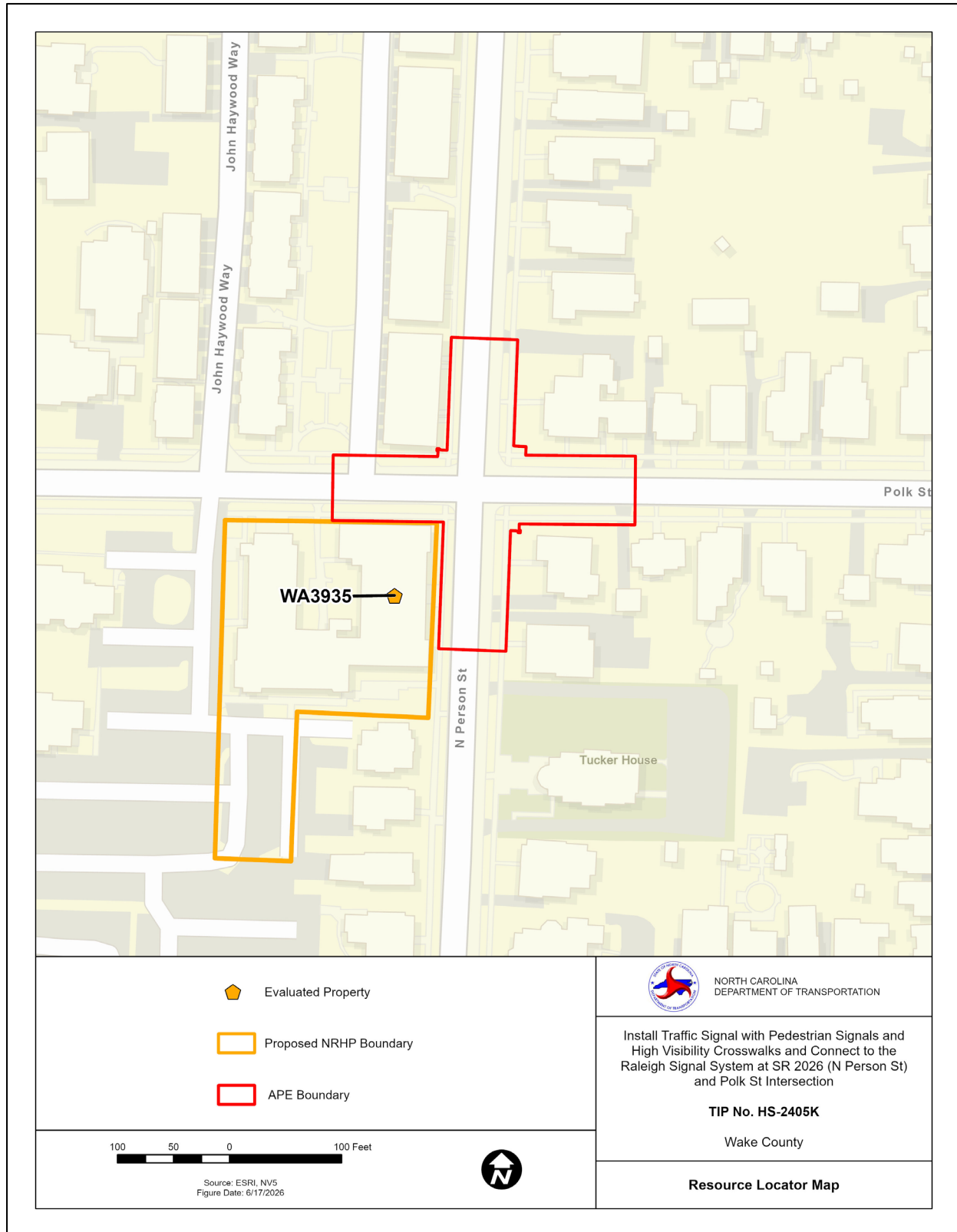


Figure 2. Resource Locator Map

2.0 INVENTORY AND EVALUATIONS

2.1 MURPHEY SCHOOL (WA3935)



RESOURCE NAME	Murphey School
NCHPO SURVEY SITE NUMBER	WA3935
STREET ADDRESS	443 N Person Street, Raleigh
PIN	0422815
CONSTRUCTION DATE	1916-1917
NRHP RECOMMENDATION	Recommended Eligible for NRHP Listing under Criterion A (education, ethnic: Black, social history) and Criterion C (architecture)

Site Description

The early-twentieth-century Murphey School stands near the center of downtown Raleigh, just two blocks north of the Governor's Mansion. It occupies an L-shaped 0.9-acre parcel of land at the intersection of Polk Street and N Person Street and is oriented east toward the latter. Three distinct building blocks comprise the school complex and include a 1916-1917 two-story-with-basement brick building; a 1927 two-story brick classroom addition, which connects to the 1916-1917 building at the southwest; and a 1927 one-story auditorium, which extends from the northern elevation of the 1927 classroom addition and faces north to Polk Street. Both the original 1916-1917 block and the 1927 classroom addition now house low-income apartments and the auditorium functions as a theater. Together, the collection of three buildings creates a U-shaped complex which encompasses most of its parcel and features a brick courtyard at its interior. Mature trees heavily populate the northwest and southeast corners of the parcel and largely obscure the school from view. Multiple large trees also stand within the interior courtyard and provide shade for the non-historic benches situated within this space. A small parking lot extends to the south of the building complex, creating the lot's L-shape. It is accessed by a paved alleyway, which it shares with other parcels within its block, and runs parallel to the school building to the west.

The school is bounded to the north by Polk Street, with late-twentieth century town houses lying on the north side of the street. N Person Street bounds the property to the east and retains a collection of large early-twentieth century historic single-family residences on its eastern side opposite the school.

A number of similar residences remain extant to the south and west of the school, but many have been converted into offices. A site plan detailing the location of the school is shown at Figure 3, and contextual photographs are shown at Figure 4 through Figure 6.



Figure 3. Murphey School (WA3935) Site Plan with property parcel outlined in blue (Basemap: Google Earth).

Architectural Description

Exterior

The main block of the Murphey School stands two stories tall with a partially exposed basement level and is clad in a five-to-one common bond of pressed red brick (Figure 7 through Figure 20). Designed by Raleigh architect James M. Kennedy (1881-1948) in the Neoclassical Revival style, the 1916-1917 school building presents an I-shaped plan, comprised of a center block with slightly projecting two-story pavilions at its north and south ends. The east-facing facade of the early-twentieth century school retains the symmetry of its original design and is divisible into five distinct sections. A central pavilion projects slightly from the facade and holds the building's primary entrance. It is connected to the north and south end pavilions by recessed wings which hold bands of large one-over-one windows at their

first, second, and basement levels. While the window units of these wings are vinyl replacements, their arrangement and glazing patterns replicate the design of the building's original windows, and they rest on original stone sills which span the length of each window band. The facade of both the north and south projecting pavilions are void of openings at their first and second stories, alluding to the location of interior stairwells. In lieu of windows at these levels, the pavilions are clad entirely in brick and display a decorative rectangular design delineated by rows of stacked bricks which are met at their corners by square cornerstones.

The building is capped with a flat roof fronted by a brick parapet which gradually steps to pointed arches as it reaches the top of each pavilion on the building's east-facing facade. Within these pointed arches lies stone lettering, within a rectangular border. The numbers "1916" rest within the arches of both end pavilions and the school's name "MURPHEY" is imprinted beneath the central arch. The level parapet encircles the remainder of the school's roof and is capped with stone. A heavily molded stone cornice lies beneath it and projects forward from the main building plane. Beneath the cornice, a band of brick is painted a light tan to mirror terracotta. Plain corbeled brick subsequently lies beneath this painted band, just above the facade's window openings and at the top of the end pavilions. A stone water table encircles the building above the partially exposed basement level.

The school's primary entrance is recessed within the central pavilion on the facade and holds a pair of replacement steel doors which display a large single light over two small, raised panels echoing the design of their predecessors. Marble plaques are affixed to the walls of this entry alcove, the north panel listing the name of the school's building committee and the southern panel denoting the names of the Raleigh Township Committee at the time of the school's construction. The entrance is framed by a carved stone surround which is flanked by carved pilasters and topped with a shallow-hipped lintel supported by stone corbels. A carved shield framed by cornucopia motifs rests atop the lintel. Below the lintel are the carved words: "MURPHEY PUBLIC SCHOOL." The entryway is approached by a small flight of granite steps which lead directly to the public sidewalk. A tripartite window, which also holds replacement vinyl window units, rests atop the entryway at the second-floor level above the doorway and is true to the building's original design.

Although carrying over many details employed at the building's facade, such as its parapet, cornice, and water table, the school's secondary elevations are much simpler in their overall design. The school's north and south side elevations display bands of replacement one-over-one windows resting on stone sills at their first, second, and basement levels. The window bands are divided by a centrally placed brick pilaster which creates two distinct bays. The building's rear (west) elevation is largely obscured by trees, but it too displays a similar two-bay fenestration pattern with bands of windows at each level. At the building's northwest corner, a small two-story brick appendage hugs the building's northern elevation and likely holds a staircase based on its fenestration. Historic aerial imagery suggests its construction predates 1959 (historicaerials.com).

A two-story, rectangular, 1927 classroom addition (Figure 21 through Figure 31) extends from the southwestern corner of the 1916-1917 school and is connected to the former by a two-story brick hyphen. The addition carries over many of the design elements employed at the earlier building including its brick cladding, stone water table, flat roof, and parapet. Unlike the 1916-1917 school, this later addition does not display an exposed basement level. The addition is divided into three bays

at its north and south elevations, each bay delineated by a wide brick pilaster. The bays hold bands of replacement windows resting on brick sills and are topped with brick corbeling. Twelve-over-twelve vinyl windows rest within each opening and keep with the same design of those units they replaced. The addition's secondary western elevation displays just two openings at its first and second floors, one being a twelve-over-twelve replacement window and the second being a window-sized opening, which is screened, that leads to an alcove. Within this alcove at each floor rests a pair of multi-light wooden doors topped by a multi-light transom, which presumably leads to interior hallways. The remainder of the elevation is void of openings and likely holds a staircase behind. The addition's eastern elevation does not display openings at its second floor, and any openings at its first floor have been obscured by the installation of a new plate-glass entryway, which likely dates to the late twentieth century.

The third block of this sprawling school complex is the 1927 auditorium addition (Figure 32 through Figure 45), also designed in the Neoclassical Revival style. The front-gabled building abuts the northwestern end of the 1927 classroom addition and faces north toward Polk Street, lying parallel with the 1916-1917 school building. Displaying a running brick bond, the single-story auditorium is fronted by an imposing classically styled pedimented portico supported by four Tuscan columns. A molded cornice and dentils adorn the pediment and entablature below. Beneath the portico the facade stands three bays wide, its central bay holding an original pair of nine-over-nine wood-sash windows resting on a singular brick sill. The unit is topped by original recessed wooden panels. Pairs of multi-light wood-panel doors occupy the facade's remaining openings and are capped with multi-light wooden transoms, which also appear original. Original beadboard clads the portico ceiling. The facade is approached from the sidewalk by concrete steps framed at either end by brick knee walls capped with concrete. The auditorium's secondary east and west elevations hold bands of original twelve-over-twelve wood-sash windows, each topped with multi-light wooden transoms. The windows at the northwest corner of the auditorium's western elevation have been removed and supplanted by a pair of multi-light wooden doors topped by multi-light transoms. Both elements appear historic in their materiality and are likely reclaimed from another building. An original single-leaf wood-panel door with fixed lights above punctuates the southern corner of both the east and west elevation.



Figure 4. Contextual view of Murphey School looking north along N Person Street.



Figure 5. Contextual view of Murphey School from intersection of N Person Street and Polk Street, looking southwest.



Figure 6. Ca. 1985 contextual view of the Murphey School with 1927 auditorium addition at front, original Murphey School building at left, and 1927 classroom addition at rear right (Source: NCHPO Murphey School survey file).



Figure 7. Oblique view of 1916-1917 Murphey School building, east facade and south elevation, looking northwest.



Figure 8. View of 1916-1917 Murphey School building east facade, looking west.



Figure 9. Oblique view of 1916-1917 Murphey School building, east facade and north elevation, looking southwest.



Figure 10. Ca. 1985 oblique view of 1916-1917 Murphey School building, east facade and north elevation, looking southwest (Source: NCHPO Murphey School survey file).



Figure 11. View of 1916-1917 Murphey School building east facade, looking west.



Figure 12. Detail view of 1916-1917 Murphey School building east facade, looking west.



Figure 13. Detail view of 1916-1917 Murphey School building east facade, looking west.



Figure 14. Detail view of plaques at front entrance of 1916-1917 Murphey School building.



Figure 15. View of 1916-1917 Murphey School building north elevation, looking south.



Figure 16. Oblique view of north and west elevations of 1916-1917 Murphey School building, looking southeast.



Figure 17. View toward interior courtyard with 1916-1917 Murphey School building at left, 1927 classroom addition at center, and 1927 auditorium addition at right.



Figure 18. View of 1916-1917 Murphey School building west elevation, looking east.



Figure 19. View of 1916-1917 Murphey School building west elevation, looking east from interior courtyard.



Figure 20. View of 1916-1917 Murphey School building west elevation at junction with classroom addition, looking southeast from interior courtyard.



Figure 21. View of 1927 classroom addition north elevation, looking south with 1916-1917 Murphey School building at left and 1927 auditorium addition at right.



Figure 22. Ca. 1985 view of 1916-1917 Murphey School building at left and 1927 auditorium addition at right (Source: NCHPO Murphey School survey file).



Figure 23. Ca. 1985 view of 1927 auditorium addition at right and 1927 classroom addition at center (Source: NCHPO Murphey School survey file).



Figure 24. Oblique view of 1927 classroom addition, south and west elevations, looking northeast. Southern elevation of 1927 auditorium is seen at left.



Figure 25. Oblique view of 1927 classroom addition, south and east elevations, looking northwest. Southern elevation of 1927 auditorium is seen at left.



Figure 26. Oblique view of 1927 classroom addition, south and east elevations, looking northwest.



Figure 27. Ca. 1985 oblique view of 1927 classroom addition, south and east elevations, looking northwest with south elevation of 1927 auditorium addition visible at far left (Source: NCHPO Murphey School survey file).



Figure 28. View of 1927 classroom addition, south elevation, looking northwest.



Figure 29. View of late-twentieth century doorway at juncture of 1927 classroom addition (left) and 1916-1917 Murphey School building (right).



Figure 30. View of 1916-1917 Murphey School building, south elevation, looking northeast. Twentieth century door at juncture of building and 1927 classroom addition visible at left.



Figure 31. Oblique view of 1916-1917 Murphey School building, south elevation and east facade, looking northwest.



Figure 32. View from front steps of 1927 auditorium addition looking east toward west elevation of 1916-1917 Murphey School building.



Figure 33. Ca. 1985 view of 1927 auditorium addition north facade, looking south (Source: NCHPO Murphey School survey file).



Figure 34. View of 1927 auditorium addition, north facade, looking southeast.



Figure 35. View of 1927 auditorium addition, north facade, looking southeast.



Figure 36. Detail view of 1927 auditorium addition cornice, looking south.



Figure 37. Detail view of 1927 auditorium addition front doors and transom, looking south.



Figure 38. Oblique view of 1927 auditorium addition, north and west elevations, looking southeast.



Figure 39. Oblique view of 1927 auditorium addition, north and west elevations, looking southeast with 1916-1917 school building in background at left (Source: NCHPO Murphey School survey file).



Figure 40. View of 1927 auditorium addition, west elevation, looking northeast.



Figure 41. View of 1927 auditorium addition, northern corner of west elevation, looking southeast.



Figure 42. View of 1927 auditorium addition, southern corner of west elevation, looking east.



Figure 43. View of juncture of 1927 auditorium addition with 1927 classroom addition, looking east at west elevations.



Figure 44. View of juncture of 1927 auditorium addition with 1927 classroom addition, looking southwest at east elevation of auditorium addition and north elevation of classroom addition.



Figure 45. View of 1927 auditorium addition, east elevation, looking west from courtyard.

Interior

Despite multiple attempts, access to the interior of any of the school's three building blocks was not achieved. While photographs taken ca. 1985 prior to the Murphey School's conversion to apartments reveal that much of the building's interior had been compromised by the late twentieth century, they likewise reveal the preservation of the building's exterior shell and overall fenestration pattern. Limited views into the 1927 classroom addition through windows along the northern side of the building revealed all modern finishes at the visible common space housed at the first floor within this part of the school. Access or views into a former classroom-turned-apartment was not made available. A view into the front (northern) windows of the auditorium in turn revealed a modern vestibule space complete with a food counter. A digital online tour of the auditorium interior revealed an entire reconfiguration of the auditorium space (Burning Coal Theater Company 2026). Current and historic interior photographs of the school's interior are shown at Figure 46 through Figure 64.



Figure 46. Ca. 2026 view through primary entrance doors at east facade of 1916-1917 Murphey School building, looking east.



Figure 47. Ca. 1985 interior view from top of stairs looking east toward east facade entrance of 1916-1917 Murphey School building (Source: NCHPO Murphey School survey file).



Figure 48. Ca. 2026 view through window north juncture of original building and the 1927 classroom addition. View is looking south into 1927 addition.



Figure 49. View looking south into interior of 1927 classroom addition through window at north elevation.



Figure 50. Ca. 1985 interior view of the Murphey School, location unknown (Source: NCHPO Murphey School survey file).



Figure 51. Ca. 1985 interior view of the Murphey School, location unknown (Source: NCHPO Murphey School survey file).



Figure 52. Ca. 1985 interior view of Murphey School stairwell, location unknown (Source: NCHPO Murphey School survey file).



Figure 53. Ca. 1985 interior view of Murphey School bathroom, location unknown (Source: NCHPO Murphey School survey file).



Figure 54. Ca. 1985 interior view of Murphey School hallway, location unknown (Source: NCHPO Murphey School survey file).



Figure 55. Ca. 1985 interior view of Murphey School classroom, location unknown (Source: NCHPO Murphey School survey file).



Figure 56. Ca. 1985 interior view of Murphey School classroom, location unknown (Source: NCHPO Murphey School survey file).



Figure 57. Ca. 1985 interior view of Murphey School classroom, location unknown (Source: NCHPO Murphey School survey file).



Figure 58. Ca. 1985 interior view of Murphey School basement, location unknown (Source: NCHPO Murphey School survey file).



Figure 59. Ca. 1985 interior view of Murphey School basement, location unknown (Source: NCHPO Murphey School survey file).



Figure 60. Ca. 2026 view through north facade window of 1927 auditorium addition, looking south.



Figure 61. Ca. 2026 view of 1927 auditorium interior (Source: Burning Coal Theater Company website).



Figure 62. Ca. 2026 view of 1927 auditorium interior (Source: Burning Coal Theater Company website).



Figure 63. Ca. 1985 interior views of 1927 auditorium addition (Source: NCHPO Murphey School survey file).



Figure 64. Ca. 1985 interior views of 1927 auditorium addition (Source: NCHPO Murphey School survey file).

Historical Context

In 1887 the first Murphey School building was constructed at the corner of N Person and Polk streets in downtown Raleigh on the site of the current brick-clad Murphey School (Wake County Genealogical Society 1983:81). The two-story, frame, Second Empire building was built four years following the construction of the Governor's Mansion which stood just a block to its south (Figure 65). The construction of the Mansion is alleged to have "spurred the influx of prominent families into the area" (*News and Observer* 1984 – August 7) subsequently necessitating the construction of a new school for their many children. Named in honor of Archibald DeBow Murphey (1777-1832), a staunch advocate for public education within North Carolina (North Carolina Department of Archives and History 2026), the school is said to have been only the second public school building within Raleigh at the time of its construction (Wake County Genealogical Society 1983:81). On July 1, 1915, the first Murphey School burned, set ablaze by arsonists in the early hours of the morning (*News and Observer* 1915 – July 2). The fire damaged the building beyond repair, and the Murphey School students were forced to utilize a neighboring high school for their lessons. A split-day schedule was devised to accommodate the students, with high school students attending in the mornings and the younger graded school students from the Murphey School utilizing the building in the afternoon (*News and Observer* 1915 – September 27).

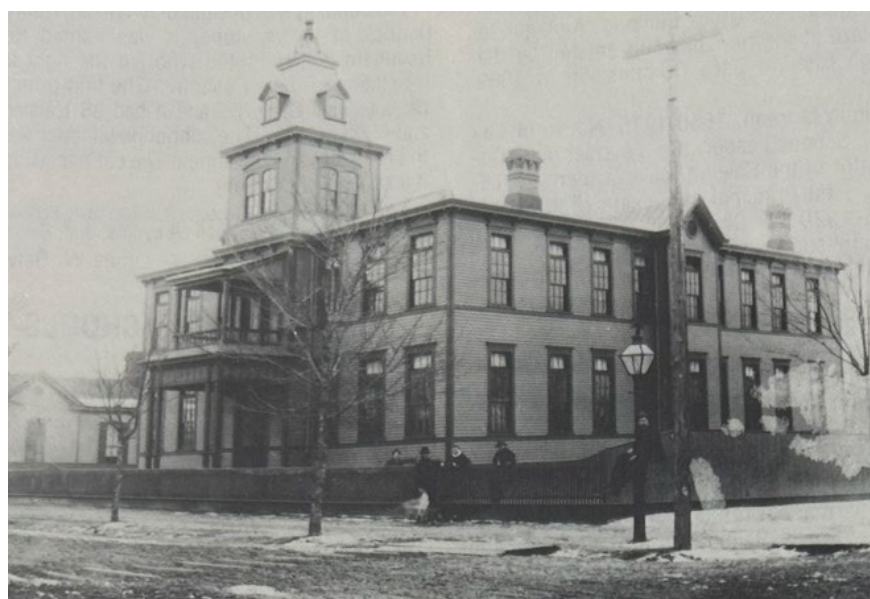


Figure 65. Ca. 1890 photograph of the original Murphey Graded School (Source: *The Heritage of Wake County* 1983:82).

In the days following the fire, multiple opinion pieces published in Raleigh's local newspaper, the *News and Observer* (*Observer*), displayed overwhelming support for the construction of a new fireproof building as opposed to repairing the burnt structure (*News and Observer* 1915 – various). After much discussion, it was determined that a new fourteen room schoolhouse would be constructed on the site of its burned predecessor for the price of \$39,000. Plans for the building were accepted by the school board in October 1915 and were delineated as follows (*News and Observer* 1915 – October 29):

[the new Murphey School] will be a fire-proof building of brick and concrete, two stories high, with basement. The floors and stairways will be of concrete as will the roof. The basement will be taken up with toilets and play rooms, the latter facility being on a larger scale than in any of the other buildings. There will be fourteen standard class rooms and a principal's room. There are only eight class rooms in the old Murphey building... The main entrance will be as now on Person Street.

By March 1916, demolition of the charred school building was nearly complete, and construction of the new school began shortly thereafter (*News and Observer* 1916 – March 20). Local architect James M. Kennedy (1881-1948) was commissioned to design the new building, and a rendering of the proposed design of the new school was published in the *Observer* in October 1916 (Figure 66). A graduate of North Carolina State University, Kennedy is noted for his work on North Carolina public schools, although a complete list of his designs has not been compiled (NC Architect 2026). He additionally is credited with the design of Raleigh's City Market building which stands at the center of the city and the Raleigh Woman's Club, which no longer stands (NC Architect 2026).

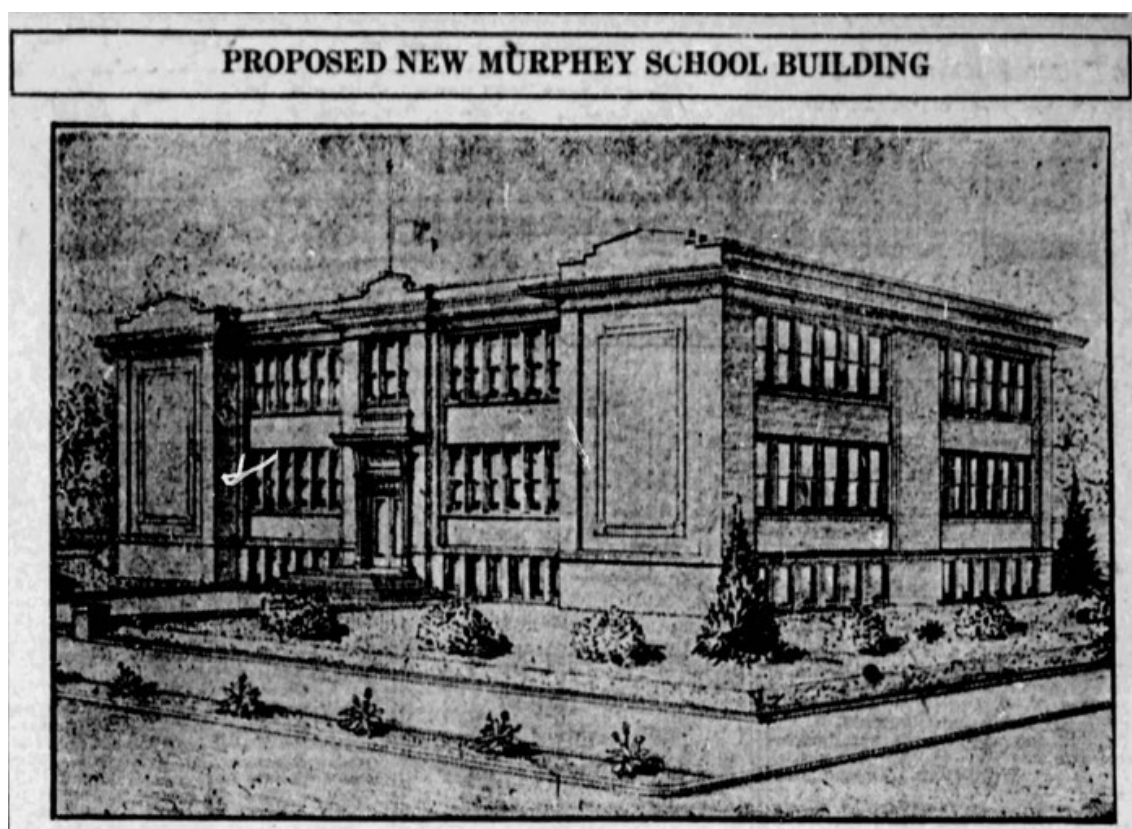


Figure 66. Rendering of the proposed new Murphey School as published in the *News and Observer* on October 29, 1915.

While archival sources assign a 1916 date of construction to the new Murphey School, and the school itself displays two “1916” date stones at its parapet, the *Observer* reports that the building was not completed and occupied until March 12, 1917. At the time of its completion, the *Observer* reported the building's final construction cost of \$47,000 and provided the following description:

The handsome, new Murphey school... will be formally occupied Monday when 480 students will enter the building for their first day's instruction under the new roof...Built of red pressed brick and stone trimmings, the new Murphey school is a modern school building in every respect. It contains 15 classrooms with a seating capacity of 40 students each, office for the principal, teachers' rest rooms and store rooms. There are seven class rooms on the first floor and eight on the second. The basement contains two large play rooms for use in rainy weather which can be turned into an auditorium, toilets, furnace and fuel room and motor room...The building has tower stairway construction for safety from fire, the first floor being completely cut off from the basement and the second floor cut off from the first floor... The school is steam heated with self regulated heat and also is mechanically ventilated. The floors in the class rooms are ample while the floor in the corridors are terrazzo...It is the fourth brick school building to be erected in Raleigh (*News and Observer* 1917 – March 11).

Despite its modern construction, including a heavy emphasis on fireproofing, the Raleigh public quickly found fault with the building due to its lack of an auditorium which some believed rendered "the school valueless as a community center or a means of fostering school spirit" (*News and Observer* 1917 – December 7). It would be the better part of a decade before this shortcoming was amended. A photograph of the school directly following its completion, as published in the *Observer*, is shown at Figure 67.



Figure 67. Photograph of the completed new Murphey School as published in the *News and Observer* on March 11, 1917.

By 1922, the enrollment of the new Murphey School had almost doubled since its opening in 1917, increasing from 480 students to 708. In an attempt to mitigate heavily overcrowded classrooms, the basement was utilized for additional classroom space (*News and Observer* 1922 – March 22). The problem of overcrowding perpetuated at both Murphey and other Raleigh schools, and in April 1926 the Raleigh School Board requested a \$1.3 million bond to help address multiple infrastructure issues across the district. As part of this referendum, the Board stated that an addition would be made to the Murphey School to include an auditorium and twelve additional classrooms (*News and Observer* 1926 – April 21). The bond passed and by September 21, 1926, advertisements for construction and design bids were run in the local newspapers (*News and Observer* 1926 – September 17) and the Jewell-Riddle Company of Sanford was awarded a \$38,420 contract (*News and Observer* – September 22). The exact completion date for the classroom and auditorium additions remains allusive, but an April 27, 1927 article in the *Observer* recounts that the school's PTA met within the "new auditorium" of the Murphey School for the first time revealing its completion by this date (*News and Observer* — April 27, 1927). The additions solved the significant overcrowding issue that had plagued the school almost since its construction ten years earlier and provided a much-desired community meeting space with the construction of the auditorium.

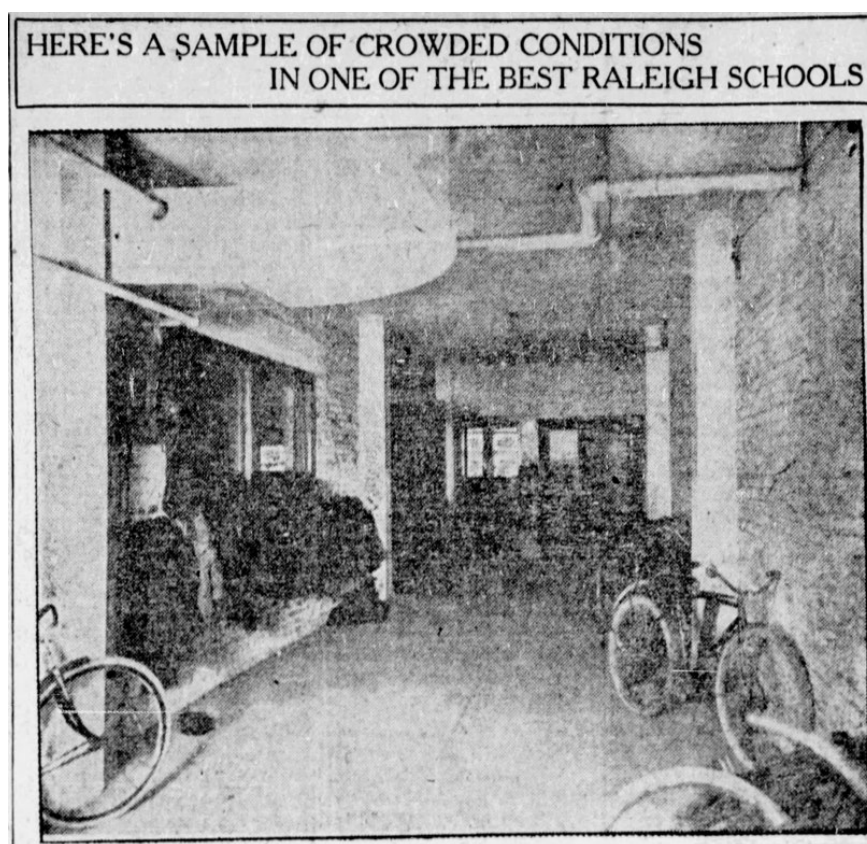


Figure 68. Photograph of the interior hallway of Murphey School as published in the *News and Observer* on March 3, 1922.

While motive behind the construction of the Murphey School stemmed from the need to replace the previously burned building, its expansion in 1927 was closely tied to the broader school consolidation movement witnessed within North Carolina in the first decades of the twentieth century. In their 2004 National Register Nomination of Raleigh's Washington Graded School, Raleigh's first all-black public school, Woodard and de Mirada provide a thorough exploration of the history of the school consolidation movement within North Carolina, and more specifically, Wake County:

The 1920s saw a concerted effort to consolidate small, scattered rural schools into centrally located facilities serving a larger student body... Consolidation's physical legacy is the erection in the 1920s of hundreds of new brick school buildings and the closure of thousands of one- and two-room frame school buildings across the state... Beyond the school buildings themselves, another improvement to the state's educational system came in the 1920s when the State Department of Public Instruction began accrediting high schools (Woodard and de Miranda 2004:16-17).

Like many other schools constructed within Raleigh's City limits – such as the Washington Graded School – Murphey's overcrowding efforts stemmed largely from the state's consolidation efforts, which was largely completed by the 1960s. School reform within the North Carolina did not end with consolidation, however, and by the late 1950s public education was faced with another major change: integration.

In the 1954 landmark Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education* the Supreme Court reversed the decision of the earlier 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* which affirmed the constitutionality of "separate but equal" (Public School Forum of North Carolina 2026). A year prior to this ruling, Raleigh's Cardinal Gibbon's High School (then known as Cathedral Latin) became North Carolina's first integrated school in 1953 (Cardinal Gibbons 2026); however, integration within North Carolina's public schools would not begin until 1957. At the start of this school year, a small number of African American students were enrolled at public schools in Charlotte, Greensboro, and Winston-Salem (Colomb et al 2006).

It was not until the fall of 1960, six years following the *Brown* ruling, that integration began within Raleigh's public schools, specifically at the Murphey School. In September 1960 three African American students sought admission to then all white public schools in Raleigh, and their cases were heard before the school board. Only one application was approved, that of seven-year-old William Campbell. He was assigned to the second grade at Murphey School, and on September 7, Campbell became the first African American student to attend a previously all white public school within the Raleigh school district (*News and Observer* 1960 – September 2 and September 7). Campbell would eventually become the third African-American mayor of Atlanta serving from 1994-2002, before being imprisoned for tax evasion in 2006 (Fox News 2006).

Despite the unanimous approval by the Raleigh School Board on the matter of Campbell's reassignment to the Murphey School, public sentiment differed greatly, and numerous articles were published in the *Observer* throughout the fall of 1960 recounting petitions and other efforts on behalf of "concerned parents" to protest and reverse this decision. At the beginning of November 1960 - two months after Campbell's assignment to the Murphey School - the *Observer* reports a specific petition signed by over 400 parents of Murphey School students demanding the boy's reassignment. The

article claimed that Campbell's presence at the school resulted in "a considerable amount of disturbance" and "disrupted the school." It was also "reported that some teachers had threatened some children with bad grades if they did not play or associate with the... boy." The petition additionally requested that these latter penalties be halted should the board not reverse their decision, which it did not. Upwards of 50 applications for school reassignment of white students from the Murphey School were requested and subsequently granted (*News and Observer* 1960 – November 9).



Figure 69. Historic photograph of William Campbell walking to school for the first time with his mother following his reassignment to Murphey School in September 1960. Republished in the *News and Observer* February 9, 2004.

The plight of the "concerned" white parents was all for naught and Campbell remained enrolled at the school. In December 1960 it was announced that the children of the incoming North Carolina governor Terry Sanford would attend the Murphey School beginning in January 1961, making them the first children of a Southern governor to attend an integrated school, and subsequently affirming the move toward integration (*News and Observer* 1960 – December 21; 1961 – January 10). The following school year, eight more African American students were reassigned to white Raleigh public schools, one of these being Murphey, with 37 additional African American students receiving their reassignments in 1962 (*News and Observer* 1961 – June 28; 1962 – July 4). Slowly, but steadily, these gradual reassignments paved the way to full school integration which was finally achieved in 1971 (Woodard and de Miranda 2004:19).

By 1973 enrollment had significantly decreased at the Murphey School and the Raleigh Board of Education voted to shutter the building at the end of that school year. The building was sold to the State of North Carolina for just \$250,000 and subsequently utilized as office space for state employees (*News and Observer* 1973 – August 1). The state vacated the building by 1984 at which time a motion was placed before the Council of State to demolish the building which by then had fallen into disrepair and was described as “a health and safety hazard” (*News and Observer* 1984 – August 7). Although the school was approved for demolition in August 1984, as of November 1987 it remained extant as the State lacked appropriate funds to either demolish or renovate it. Musings of potential rehabilitation opportunities from private investors began around this time (*News and Observer* 1987 – November 3). By 1988 public interest in the building had renewed, and the Murphey School was designated as a Raleigh Landmark, having once again barely escaped demolition. That same year a proposal was made, and approved, for a forty-year lease of the school to the City of Raleigh for the sum of \$1,000 (NCHPO Murphey School survey file; *News and Observer* 1988 – June 22; June 30).



Figure 70. Photograph of the Murphey School published in the *News and Observer* on June 30, 1988.

In June 1988 an announcement was made that former Raleigh mayor and private developer G. Smedes York – son of James York, a member of the Raleigh School Board credited with casting the “pivotal vote” in the Campbell reassignment case 28 years previous – would oversee the development of the school into apartments meant for state employees and the conversion of the 1927 auditorium into a daycare center (*News and Observer* 1988 – June 30; 2008 – January 13). By October of the

same year, this plan had shifted slightly, and it was announced that York would “rehabilitate the classrooms into about 50 apartments for elderly people” (*News and Observer* 1988 – October 25). Costing roughly \$3 million, the project was completed in 1990 and resulted in 52 low-income housing units. The *Observer* described the completed project:

[the School’s] 35,000 square feet are being divided into one-and-two-bedroom apartments, each between 400 and 800 square feet. There also will be meeting space and a commons room. The first of three floors will have units equipped for the disabled. Apartments will have large, numerous windows and high ceilings. Few entrances to the building will make it easy to secure (*News and Observer* 1990 – October 11).

Multiple photographs of the building’s interior were published in the *Observer* following the reopening of the building and are shown at Figure 71 through Figure 73.

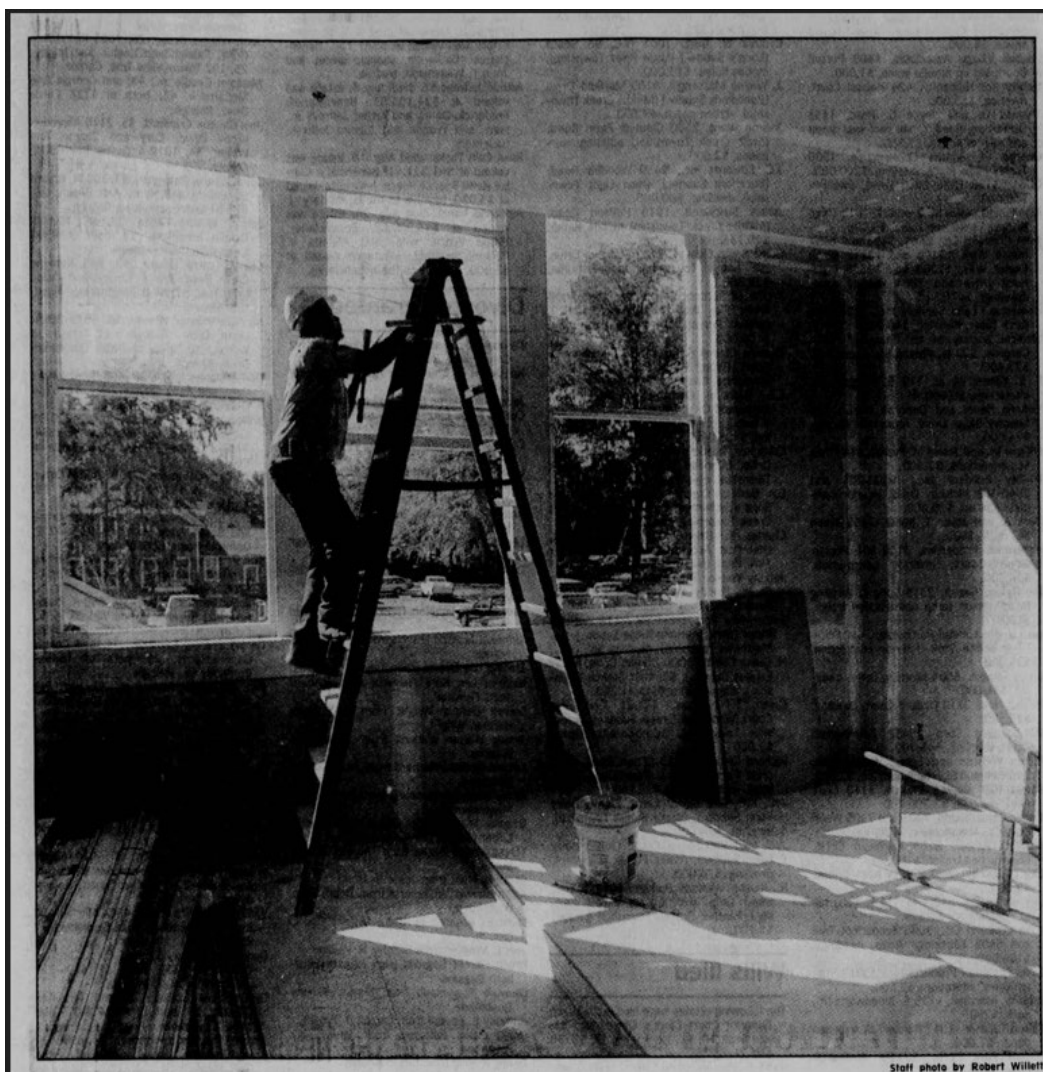


Figure 71. Photograph of the Murphey School as published in the *News and Observer* on October 11, 1990 providing a partial interior view of a classroom-turned-apartment.

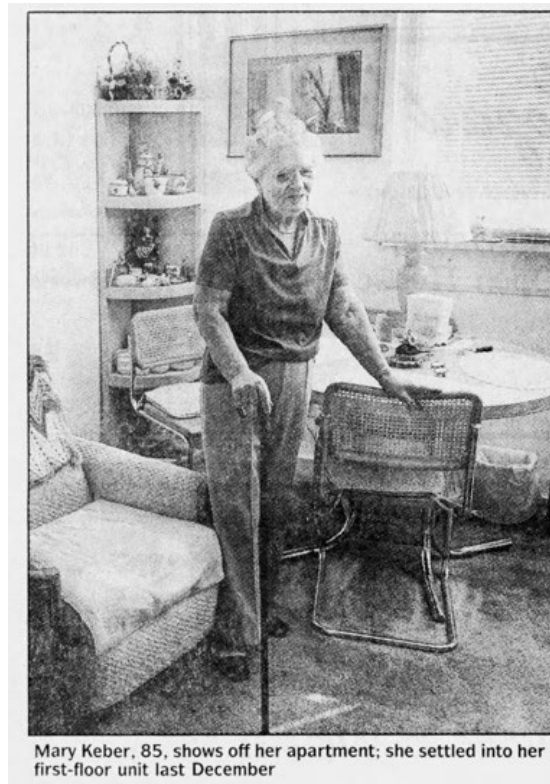


Figure 72. Photograph of a converted apartment within Murphey School published in the *News and Observer* on November 11, 1991.

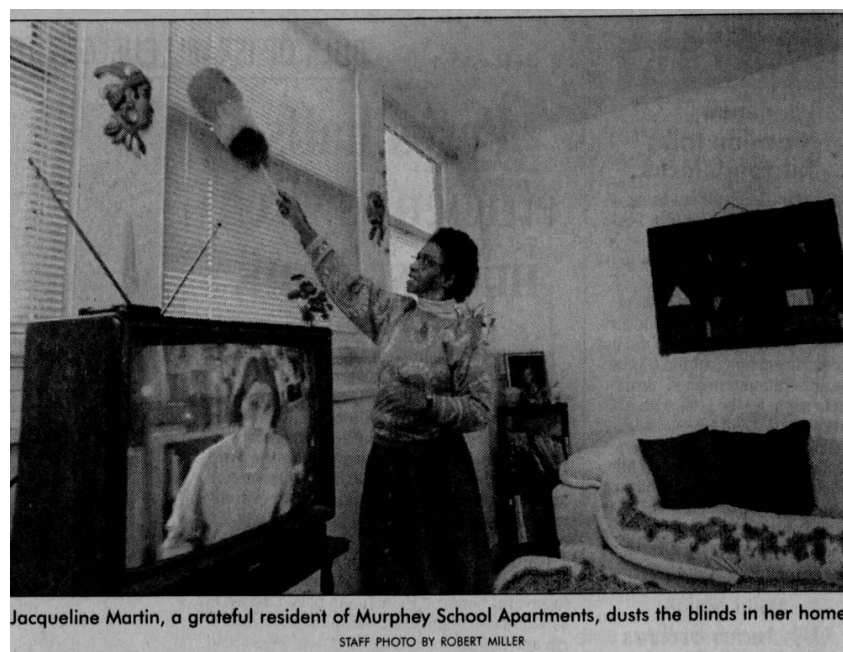


Figure 73. Photograph of a converted apartment within the Murphey School published in the *News and Observer* on November 15, 1995.

York's apartment transformation ultimately encompassed just the 1916-1917 Murphey School and 1927 classroom addition; the 1927 auditorium remained untouched. Serious considerations of rehabilitation efforts for this latter space began in October 1992 when the City of Raleigh revealed plans to renovate the space to house a community theater group; however, these never came to fruition (*New and Observer* 1992 – October 6).

Over ten years later in 2003, the Burning Coal Theatre Company acquired a 23-year sublease of the auditorium, at a rate of \$3,000 per year, and began the effort to raise funds to renovate the auditorium into theater space. Work began in September 2006 and in January 2008 the new theater was inaugurated (*News and Observer* 2008 – January 13). The theater group remains in residence at the Murphey School auditorium as of June 2026.

In 1977 the Murphey School was determined a contributing resource to the Study Listed and National Park Service certified Blount Street Local Historic District.



Figure 74. Photograph of the Murphey School Auditorium under construction published in the *News and Observer* on January 13, 2008.

Architectural Context: Comparable Resources

The Murphey School stands as one of many imposing early-twentieth century brick graded and high schools within Wake County. Constructed during the first decades of the twentieth century, these

buildings, whose population numbered well over a dozen by the 1930s (NCHPOWeb), marked a pointed shift in institutional building trends across North Carolina. In her 1995 publication *North Carolina Architecture*, a comprehensive review of the state's architectural heritage, Catherine Bishir observed that the state "invested unprecedented sums in public education, including consolidated high schools and grade schools" as part of the statewide school consolidation movement (Bishir 2005:464). Woodard and de Miranda subsequently noted in their contextual study of early-twentieth century Wake County institutional architecture that:

North Carolina's school consolidation of the 1920s produced great change in school design. The local and state efforts to consolidate one- and two-room schools into larger buildings in turn prompted state officials to create design standards for new school buildings. The standards aimed to provide fireproof, sanitary buildings and symbols of civic pride. The new recommendations included prominent locations, athletic facilities, flowerbeds, steam heat, indoor plumbing, standard lighting, drinking fountains, and an auditorium that could also be used for the community. To satisfy the demand for fireproof construction, brick, concrete, and stone emerged as the preferred construction materials. E-, U- and T-shaped floor plans created wings to house auditoriums, libraries, and gymnasiums while providing more exterior wall space to accommodate windows and let in natural light (Woodard and de Miranda 2004:27).

The construction of the Murphey School was prompted by a need to replace its frame predecessor, which burned in 1915; however, the overall design and construction methods employed at the school heavily reflect the shift in approach noted by Bishir, Woodard, and de Miranda. Constructed near the start of this consolidation period, the Murphey School set precedent for the many other Wake County graded and high schools constructed during this period, many of which still stand.

The former Garner High School (WA0390) stands at 712 W. Garner Road in downtown Garner (Figure 75). Built between 1921 and 1923, the building was placed on the Study List in 1990 and determined NRHP-eligible in 1995 (NCHPOWeb). Aerial imagery suggests the original core of this brick-clad complex displayed an E-shaped footprint which was gradually added on to at its rear. The facade of the two-story school is almost identical to that of the Murphey School with a central projecting pavilion connected to two end pavilions by window-banded wings. While James M. Kennedy could not be confirmed as the building's architect, the Murphey School almost certainly served as inspiration for the building. As a result, the school displays elements of Neoclassical Revival design through the employment of carved stone at its doorways and stepped parapets topping its pavilions. The school presents a similar degree of material and design integrity to the Murphey School at its exterior and retains its original fenestration pattern even though its nine-over-nine windows are all replacement. Today the school serves as a performing arts center.



Figure 75. The (former) Garner High School (WA0390) at 712 W. Garner Road in Garner. Built ca. 1921-1923, Study Listed in 1990 and Determined Eligible in 1995.

Standing roughly one-half mile to the southeast of the Murphey School, on the east side of downtown Raleigh, the A. A. Thompson School (WA2344) stands at 567 East Hargett Street and was built ca. 1922 (Figure 76). Unlike the Murphey School, the impressive two-story brick Tudor Revival building displays a generous setback from the roadway and rests atop a small rise which is fronted by a stone retaining wall. The building displays a notable amount of carved stone detailing at its door and window surrounds and at its encircling parapet, resulting in an overall more ornate design than that employed at the Murphey School. While originally constructed as an all-white school, the building was converted to an African American high school in 1959 (Elliott et al 1990:18). Unlike the Murphey School, the Thompson School continues to function as an educational building and currently houses the Wake Young Men's Leadership Academy. It has never been individually assessed for NRHP eligibility but does stand as a contributing resource to the NRHP-listed East Raleigh-South Park Historic District.



Figure 76. The A.A. Thompson School (WA2344) at 567 East Hargett Street, Raleigh. Built ca. 1922.

Washington Graded and High School (WA3360) was Raleigh's first African American public high school when it was completed in 1924 (Figure 77). Displaying elements of the Tudor Revival style, not unlike the Thompson School, the Washington School stands on a slight rise at 1000 Fayetteville Street in the southern half of downtown Raleigh. In their 2004 National Register Nomination, Woodard and de Miranda describe the building as:

a two-story brick building laid in five-to-one common bond with glazed terracotta and cast stone trim on a full-height brick basement. The main block and three wings create an E-shaped footprint. The roof is hidden behind the parapet but is probably nearly flat. The symmetrical facade comprises five sections... (Woodard and de Miranda 2004:6).

Like the Murphey School, the Washington School heavily employs molded stone ornamentation at its doorways and windows, the latter of which are found in bands at its various elevations. Designed by Christopher Gadsden Sayre, the building has continuously functioned as a school since its initial construction, although a 2002 renovation "gutted the building's interior." Despite this loss of material and design integrity at its interior, the building merited NRHP-listing in 2004 under Criterion A and C.



Figure 77. Washington Graded and High School (WA3360) at 1000 Fayetteville Street in Raleigh.
Built ca. 1924 and NRHP listed in 2004.

Built in 1926, the Wiley School stands at 301 Saint Mary's Street in Raleigh's historic Cameron Park neighborhood, which was NRHP listed in 1985 (Figure 78). The handsome two-story brick-clad building rests on a full basement level and is one of, if not, the best examples of an early-twentieth century Tudor Revival consolidated school within Wake County. Also designed by Christopher Gadsden Sayre, the building's facade and secondary elevations are dominated by bands of windows in stone surrounds and edged with stone quoins. Arched doorways are prominently placed and framed with stone surrounds and its flat roof is fronted by a parapet. Like the Murphey School, its plan is I-shaped with a central projecting pavilion and slightly projecting wings at either end of its facade. Originally named the Wiley Grammer School (Dutton and Brown 1985:5-6), the architecturally notable building remains a part of the Wake County School system and operates as Wiley Magnet School.



Figure 78. The Wiley School (WA3945) at 301 Saint Mary's Street in Raleigh. Built ca. 1926.

National Register of Historic Places Evaluation

National Register of Historic Places Evaluation Summary

The Murphey School (WA3935) retains high integrity of location, feeling, and association and medium integrity of setting, design, materials, and workmanship. Due to its largely intact exterior and the significant role the school played within the integration of Raleigh's public schools – being the first school to integrate – the school is recommended eligible for NRHP listing under Criterion A (education, ethnic heritage: Black, and social history) and Criterion C (architecture).

Evaluation: Criteria A, B, C & D

In order to merit NRHP eligibility under Criterion A, a resource must demonstrate an association with “events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of history.” The Murphey School stands as the first public school to integrate within the Raleigh public school system when seven-year-old William Campbell received his reassignment to the school in September 1960. Campbell's placement at the school initiated the gradual integration of Raleigh public schools which was not completed until 1971. Due to its significant role within the movement of Raleigh's public

school integration, the Murphey School merits NRHP eligibility under Criterion A in the areas of education, ethnic heritage: Black, and social history.

The Murphey School is not recommended NRHP eligible under Criterion B, which requires resources to maintain an association with the lives of persons significant in our past. The School maintains an association with William Campbell, who was the first African American to attend a Raleigh public school and later went on to serve as the third African-American mayor of Atlanta from 1994-2002 before being imprisoned for tax fraud in 2006; however, the school does not meet Criterion B as it is not “associated with a person’s [Campbell’s] productive life” as a politician (National Register Bulletin 1995). The School likewise does not merit eligibility for its association with local architect James M. Kennedy, whose architectural catalog does not rise to such a level of notability as to merit his significance. The Murphey School therefore does not merit listing under this Criterion B.

To garner NRHP eligibility under Criterion C, a resource must embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, represent the work of a master, or possess high artistic value. The Murphey School largely retains its post-1927 footprint with limited additions made at its exterior. While historic photographs suggest the building’s interior has been largely altered, it retains a high level of material integrity at its exterior including many original Neoclassical Revival design elements such as its stepped parapet, stone water table, and numerous decorative carved stone details. The building is reflective of early-twentieth century consolidated school design trends within North Carolina and stands as an excellent example of its type. A survey of comparable buildings within Wake County reveals it to demonstrate a comparable level of material and design integrity to the Washington Grade School, which garnered NRHP-listing under Criterion C despite similar material loss at its interior. For these reasons the Murphey School is recommended eligible for NRHP listing under Criterion C in the area of architecture.

The Murphey School is not recommended NRHP eligible under Criterion D as there is no evidence that the resource has or may be likely to yield new information pertaining to the history of building design or technology.

Evaluation: Aspects of Integrity

Table 2. Aspects of Integrity Evaluation Table: Murphey School (WA3935)

Aspect of Integrity	Level of Integrity	Evaluation
Location	High	The Murphey School stands at its original place of construction and therefore retains high integrity of location.
Design	Medium	The school retains its original brick-clad building envelope, and exterior alterations to its footprint are largely limited to its 1927 classroom and auditorium additions. While most window units have been replaced with modern vinyl sash, the building's various blocks retain their original fenestration pattern and original stone sills. Original Neoclassical Revival design elements are readily visible at the building's exterior and include its stepped parapet, stone water table, and decorative carved stone details at the facade. While the building's exterior reflects Kennedy's original design, photographs suggest all three blocks of the building have been heavily altered at their interior resulting in overall medium design integrity.
Setting	Medium	As it was at the time of its construction, the Murphey School remains largely surrounded by late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century residential buildings. Some buildings have been recently demolished to the school's southwest to accommodate a parking lot and some modern residential infill lies to its north, resulting in an overall medium integrity of setting.
Materials	Medium	The school retains its original brick-clad building envelope, and exterior alterations to its footprint are largely limited to its 1927 classroom and auditorium additions. While most window units have been replaced with modern vinyl sash, the building's various blocks retain their original fenestration pattern and original stone sills. Original Neoclassical Revival design elements are readily visible at the building's exterior and include its stepped parapet, stone water table, and decorative carved stone details at the facade. While the building's exterior retains a notable amount of original material, photographs suggest all three blocks of the building have been heavily altered at their interior resulting in overall medium material integrity.

Aspect of Integrity	Level of Integrity	Evaluation
Workmanship	Medium	Given the school's medium material and design integrity, the Murphey School retains medium workmanship integrity. The school retains a notable amount of original material and is true to its original Neoclassical Revival design at its exterior; however, photographs and limited views through windows suggest that its interior has been heavily altered, resulting in medium workmanship integrity.
Feeling	High	Despite material loss at its exterior, the Murphey School retains its post-1927 footprint and its original Neoclassical Revival design elements. Although the building has been converted into apartments, its exterior has not been updated to reflect this change and still captures the feeling of an early-twentieth century graded school. It therefore has high integrity of feeling.
Association	High	The Murphey School boasts a significant association with Raleigh's Civil Rights and school integration movement standing as the first school to integrate within the capital city. Its design and material alterations over time at its interior do not compromise the building's integrity of association which is therefore noted as high.

Proposed National Register of Historic Places Boundary Description and Justification

The recommended NRHP boundary for Murphey School (WA3935) includes all 0.94 acres of its associated parcel (PIN 0422815), all of which is believed to be historically associated with the school. The proposed boundary is synonymous with the school's legal parcel boundary. At its north, the school is bounded by Polk Street, and N Person Street bounds to its east. The boundary does not extend into the NCDOT-maintained right of way on either side. The proposed boundary likewise follows the parcel boundary to the west along an unnamed alleyway. To the south, the parcel's boundary borders a parking lot and the rear (western) edge of residential parcels along N Person Street. The proposed boundary for the Murphey School encompasses the school and a portion, if not all, of its historically associated lands. It is believed to provide sufficient setting and context to support the resource's significance under Criteria A and C. The proposed boundary is shown at Figure 79.



Figure 79. Map of Murphey School (WA3935) Proposed NRHP Boundary

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