

Bath School
Study List Application

10. A. Description

The Bath School was constructed in phases. The classroom buildings were constructed between 1918 and 1921, the gym in 1939 and the kitchen added in the early 1950s. Over time the interiors of the buildings have been slightly altered to address the changing needs of the school; while the exterior of the school is largely unaltered and very much reads as it did during the school's years of operation from 1918-1990.

1918 Building – The first building to be constructed on the site was the 1918 classroom building. This west-facing two-story, five-bay hipped-roof brick structure is laid in six:one common bond. The structure was topped with a shingled roof with exposed rafter tails. Small brick chimneys pierce the roof-line. Windows on the lower level of the building were paired six-over-six double-hung sash windows. The upper level had tripled/ribboned six-over-six double-hung sash windows. The building was accessed at the ground level through a solid door in the central bay with a six-light transom. The upper level was accessed by a frame exterior stair on the south elevation that led to a solid door with three-light transom.

The 1918 building has seen the most alteration. The minor changes, which are common to all three classroom buildings, are the change in roof material from shingle to metal (date unknown) and the enclosure of the exterior stairs which occurred in the early 1930s. The most dramatic change to the building occurred in the early 1950s when the large one-story kitchen structure was added off the building's façade. In addition to obscuring the building's façade all the lower level classrooms were eliminated and the interior walls removed to create a cafeteria to serve the school's approximately 1,500 students. The school's original kitchen on the upper level kept its stove and Hoosier and along with its adjacent classroom served as the school's Home Economics department.

1920 Building – The 1920 building was the second building constructed on the site and is similar in size scale and finish to the 1918 building. This west-facing two-story, five-bay hipped-roof brick structure is laid in six:one common bond. The structure was topped with a shingled roof with exposed rafter tails. Small brick chimneys pierce the roof-line. Windows on the both levels are tripled/ribboned six-over-six double-hung sash windows. The central entry bay on the lower level façade is inset under a brick-arch with a keystone. The entry-doors are half-glazed with multi-light sidelights and transom. Exterior stairs accessed the upper level on the north and south elevations.

At the time the building was constructed it housed five classrooms on the upper level and four on the lower level. When the kitchen and cafeteria were added in the early 1950s the school's offices were moved into the first floor's northwest classroom and that room was divided into three smaller rooms.

1921 Auditorium Building – The final building to be constructed on the site during the school’s initial building phase was the 1921 Auditorium Building. In keeping with the existing school buildings the 1921 Auditorium structure is a two-story brick structure laid in six:one common bond under a hipped-roof with exposed rafter tails. Small brick chimneys pierce the roofline. Unlike the two classroom buildings the auditorium’s façade faces north - on the building’s short end. The entirety of the buildings lower level is the auditorium; which remains intact with stage, side rooms and original seats. The buildings upper story retains its five original classrooms. The classroom that stretches across the south elevation of the building’s upper story was converted to the library in the early 1950s when the cafeteria was added.

During the construction of the third classroom building in 1921 the wide, two-story hallway that connects the three buildings was created. This hallway housed the student’s lockers, served as the lunchroom until the 1950s, and provided the school’s only interior stair. The enclosure of small parts of this hallway allowed for the addition storage rooms a small supply store and the addition of bathrooms with flushing toilets – one of only three in the county according to 1930 Beaufort County Schools records. The two-story hallway/connector is brick on each elevation except for the west where it is the only non-brick finish on the school’s exterior.

1939 Vocational Building - Twenty years after the Bath School was begun the vocational building was added. The one-and-one-half-story west-facing gable-roof structure with two one-story wings off the north and south elevations was constructed in 1939 by the Public Works Administration. With the exception of being constructed in brick the buildings form and finishing elements are unlike the school’s three previous buildings. Laid in running bond the tall one-story main block sits under a front gable roof. The two entry doors have been bricked-in with a solid wood door added to the southern entry. Tall nine-over-twelve windows line the main block’s north and south elevations. The one-story side gable ells that flank the main block are each seven-bays wide with nine-over-nine double-hung sash windows. Interior brick chimneys are present in each of the ells. An exterior stovepipe brick chimney site on the rear of the main block.

There is a one-story, front gable concrete block storage building that’s sits on the south portion of the parcel. This structure is considered non-contributing as it has n affiliation with the school.

The entirety of the Bath School campus retains a high degree of integrity. Exterior alterations are limited to the replacement of the original shingle roof with a metal roof (date unknown), the enclosure of the original stairwells (completed in the 1930s) and the 1950s addition of the kitchen. The interior of each of these buildings is remarkably intact. While the windows have been boarded up on the outside, they remain intact when viewed from the interior. With the exception of the changes related to the cafeteria, all classrooms retain their original doors with transoms, blackboards, beaded-board interior walls, coat closets and hardwood floors. The buildings even retain their original ceilings

with modern lighting added through wiring added on top of the ceiling's finish material (as opposed to dropping the ceiling altogether).

10. B. History

The Town of Bath is best known for its Colonial-era history as North Carolina's oldest town; incorporated in 1705. The history of education in this small Beaufort County town is less well-known. There is reference to land being set aside for use as a public school in deeds dating back to 1722. In 1730 Edward Moseley gave lots 30 and 31 to the St. Thomas Parish "for the use of a public school master, or reader, or minister." An 1807 map also shows lots 29-31 as being set aside for use as a public school.

It is unknown whether a school was actually constructed on this site. Local histories on the area focus on Bath's first century of existence, but do not mention the presence of a school. The few publications that discuss post-1800 Bath do so in the epilogue, again with no discussion of the Town's schools. According to residents, a small local school existed in a lodge building (no longer extant) located at the site of the town marker where the road from Washington used to come in to town. This was a small one-room school that was used by the town's white residents.

When Beaufort County began planning for the construction of its consolidation schools – part of a statewide-movement to combine numerous small rural schools into larger regional educational institutions – there was no school planned in Bath. The school was planned to be constructed in Ransomville. But, when the materials arrived at the Bunyon depot the funds for the materials were not available. A Bath resident, T.A. Brooks, offered the funds to pay for the building materials provided the school be built in Bath on land that he owned.

In 1918 the first of the Bath School buildings was constructed in Bath. The area being served by the school included the small rural communities of Everett's, Woodards Pond, Possum Hill, Athens, Ransomville, and Douglas Crossroads. The interest in education in this area was great and additional classroom buildings were added to the site in 1920 and 1921. The school served as an elementary, middle and high school. The addition of the vocational building in 1939 illustrates the school's focus on providing an education that served its local agricultural community.

By the 1950s the school housed approximately 1500 students. A kitchen and cafeteria were added at this time and remain today. Kindergarten was added in the 1960s. The school remained in operation as K-12 until the late 1980s when the high school was moved to Northside High School. The K-8 classes were moved to a new structure in 1990. The buildings have been used by the school board for storage in recent decades.

Significance: The Bath School campus is significant under Criterion A for Education and Criterion C for Architecture.