

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name (Former) East White Oak School  
other names/site number East White Oak Community Center

### 2. Location

street & number 1801 Tenth Street N/A not for publication  
city, town Greensboro N/A vicinity  
state North Carolina code NC county Guilford code 081 zip code 27405

### 3. Classification

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

Name of related multiple property listing: Historic and Architectural Resources of Greensboro, North Carolina, 1880-1941 Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

### 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

William S. Price, Jr. 2-28-92  
Signature of certifying official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

### 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

**Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)  
Education/school  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)  
Social/civic  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)  
  
Colonial Revival  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Materials (enter categories from instructions)  
  
foundation brick  
walls weatherboard  
  
roof asphalt  
other wood  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

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The 1916 modest, frame, one-story former East White Oak School has a simple but complete Colonial Revival style exterior. Its symmetrical, seven-bay, weatherboarded front facade is enframed by a baseboard, cornerboards, a friezeboard, and a boxed cornice, all unadorned but for very narrow projecting boards in the stead of capitals atop the cornerboards. Its six, large, twelve-over-twelve windows, three to either side of the entry, are similarly enframed by flush board surrounds capped by narrow board projections. The facade's dominant feature is the entry portico. Its four solid wood columns support a triangular pediment filled with a lunette that originally held a fanlight window and now contains a board in which a square metal ventilator is centered. The double doors of the entry have been replaced with Colonial Revival six-panel doors; the original doors had five raised panels each, one atop the other. A single sheet of glass now fills the transom, which initially had ten rectangular lights.

The school was originally T-shaped. The side elevations and centered rear wing mirror the front facade, marked by identical baseboards, cornerboards, friezeboards, cornices, windows, and surrounds. The triangular pediments at the side elevations have the same semicircular openings as the front portico; the rear pediment is blank. The east elevation has three twelve-over-twelve windows. The west has two windows separated by a later-added door and stoop shielded by a shed roof.

In the late 1920s or 1930s, one-story additions were added at either side of the rear wing, changing the shape of the building from a T to a square. One must look carefully to discern that they are later additions as they have the same finish, windows, and entrances as the original building. Brick chimney stacks rise between their gently sloped shed roofs and the gabled roofs of the main block. There are entries at either side of the additions, both of which are shaded by heavy hoods supported by long slender brackets similar to extended triangular knee braces. The door of the entry to the west addition has been replaced, but it is capped by its original transom. The one at the east is unaltered, retaining both its ten-pane transom and double five-panel door. Its porch has been removed, however, and only the two brick piers that supported its floor are still in place.

The school's site slopes away to the east side and rear. At the rear it has a full height basement, which initially held the boys and girls bathrooms. A shallow lawn separates the building from Tenth

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Street. Its original landscaping is not known. The present trees were planted in the 1980s. The surrounding neighborhood has changed dramatically. To the east of the school are small one-story houses built in the late 1950s. Modern trailers are arranged in rows to its south. To its other two sides, new one-story houses, fronting newly graded and paved streets, are under construction.

The interior of the school initially had two classrooms at the front divided by a narrow hallway that led to the rear ell. The partitions of this hallway have been removed and some smaller rooms have been partitioned off at the west. By the 1930s an auditorium that sometimes doubled as a classroom occupied the rear ell and the east addition. An additional classroom was located in the west addition (personal communications with Julia Gant Duke and John W. Gant, who attended the school in the 1930s, July 8, 1991). The classroom is still intact, retaining its blackboard, but the auditorium has been divided into smaller rooms, including a kitchen, and cloakrooms have been converted into bathrooms. At the rear rooms a few original six-panel doors with transoms above are still in place. A 1916 photograph of the interior of the school pictures horizontal and vertical beaded wallboards. These have been replaced by plasterboard. Although always simply finished, the interior of the school has been compromised by its many changes.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Education

Ethnic Heritage: Black

Period of Significance

1916-1941

Significant Dates

1916

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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

See continuation sheet

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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(Former) East White Oak School  
Greensboro, Guilford Co., NC

### Summary of Significance

The sole school within northeast Greensboro's only black mill village, the 1916 former East White Oak School educated the children of the black employees of the Proximity Manufacturing Company for three decades. The last surviving original structure within the East White Oak mill village, the building speaks of the educational opportunities of the black mill children who attended it and of the lot of the black mill families that lived around it. More broadly, it is a reminder of what schools were like for the majority of Greensboro children, black and white, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is the last extant example of its type; no other small frame school buildings from that period still stand in the city. The exterior of the school appears little different than it did in a 1925 photograph, still displaying airy twelve-over-twelve windows and a Colonial Revival style portico supported by four solid wood columns. The interior, always simply finished, has been altered and compromised over the years. Used as a community center since the mill village was sold in the mid-1950s, the former school still stands less than a half-mile east of the White Oak textile mill that prompted its construction.

The school's period of significance, which extends from its 1916 construction to the onset of World War II, falls within the second of Greensboro's historic contexts. Modern Suburbanization and Industrialization, 1900-1941. The most relevant subsections within that context are those covering education, mill village development, and the textile industry.

### History

The White Oak textile mill opened in 1905 about two-and-a-half miles northeast of the county courthouse, outside of Greensboro's corporate limits. The biggest of the Greensboro mills built by Moses and Ceasar Cone and operated by the Proximity Manufacturing Company, it was by the late 1930s the largest denim mill in the world (Balliett 1928; Half-Century Book 1941; Arnett 1965:171-173; Fripp 1982:57-58). Arrayed on grids of streets radiating out from White Oak were hundreds of mill houses and subsidiary schools, churches, and YMCAs. Among these, about a half-mile to the east, was the black mill village of

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East White Oak, which included the former East White Oak School (Sanborn Map Company, 1919 and 1925).

The school building was constructed in 1916, at which time the village of East White Oak--the only village built for the black employees of the Proximity Manufacturing Company--was also probably erected. The village consisted of about seventy frame, one- and one-and-a-half-story, rectangular or L-shaped houses, two churches, and the East White Oak school. The buildings were symmetrically placed on a grid of streets four blocks long and one or one-and-a-half blocks wide (Sanborn Map Company 1919; personal communications with Julia Gant Duke and John W. Gant, July 8, 1991).

According to the final teacher's report of 1916-1917, the school had eighty-seven students its first year. Sixty-eight were in the first grade, ten in the second, six in the third, two in the fourth, and one in the fifth ("Teacher's Final Report" May 18, 1917). A photograph from the first year, in the collection of the Cone Mills Corporation in Greensboro, pictures children's clothing and other items sewn by the students displayed on an interior wall of the school. Written across the front is the legend "East White Oak School, 1916, Mrs. C.J. Jordan, Mrs. N.G. Washington--Teachers." Mrs. Jordan was the principal, for which she was paid \$40 a month for the eight-month term. Her assistant, Mrs. Nannie G. Washington, earned \$35 a month ("Teacher's Final Report" May 18, 1917).

The school initially had eighty-four store-bought, rather than homemade, desks. It had no garden, baseball diamond, tennis court, or basketball court, but it did have a piano. Cooking and sewing and "some simple hand crafts for boys," such as mat and basket making, were taught. Agriculture was also taught, from a book ("Teacher's Final Report" May 18, 1917). The school lacked books other than textbooks. In her third year-end report, Principal Jordan, responding to the question of what the school's most pressing needs were, wrote: "We are in need of a library. A supplementary library would be of great value as a means of securing the general information on the texts studied. So little or no such information can be secured in the homes" ("Teacher's Final Report" May 30, 1919). More than books were lacking from the homes of the students. In November, 1916, two students had excused absences, one of three days and the other of ten, because of "insufficient clothing." Another pupil, a boy of nine, had an excused absence because he had to work ("Teacher's Monthly Report to Attendance Officer and County Superintendent" November 24, 1916).

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As the Proximity Manufacturing Company's only black mill village, East White Oak provided laborers not only to the White Oak Mill, but also to the Revolution and Proximity Mills and the Proximity Print Works. The East White Oak school, therefore, educated the children of all of the company's black work force. These children came from homes where the fathers toiled at unskilled jobs and the mothers tended house (White Oak Villages 1932 Census).

Although they had previously made up a significant percentage of the city's skilled work force, by the turn of the century black workers had been ejected or barred from skilled positions in all of the city's mills and factories (Kipp 1974:239). A Proximity Manufacturing Company publication of 1925 indicates the low position of blacks within the company work force and the stereotypical views held of them:

Cotton always calls to mind the Southern negro, and though he does only common labor in the mills, he is the starter of the job. He breaks the cotton bale and feeds the contents into the first machine, and what he has to do, he does with a rag-time song and a merry grin (Balliett 1925).

The inhabitants of East White Oak, according to a company census of 1932, did indeed hold unskilled positions. Those on Gordon and 11th streets, who worked in the White Oak Mill, were primarily employed in the opening room, the yard, the boiler room, the dye house, or as janitors. Most of the employees on Water and 10th streets, who worked at the company's other plants, held similar positions or worked in the Revolution barns. The women kept house. In 1932 all of their children between the ages of six and fifteen, and a few older children as well, attended the school (White Oak Villages 1932 Census).

In 1923, when city limits were expanded to encompass East White Oak and the other mill villages, the Proximity Manufacturing Company retained control of its schools, in which it took great pride. According to the company, its teachers were paid more than county teachers and an illiteracy rate of from thirty to forty percent had been reduced to less than one percent through the efforts of its schools. In 1925 there were 1,611 children, taught by forty-three teachers, attending the company's four schools--White Oak, East White Oak, Proximity, and Proximity Kindergarten. At East White Oak the enrollment had grown to 123 and a third teacher had been added (Balliett 1925).

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The East White Oak school building was not equal to the large, fine, brick schools provided by the company in the 1920s and 1930s for children of its white employees. Its services, however, were equivalent to those provided for black children by the city school system. The city did not provide an accredited high school program for blacks until 1926 and there was no black city high school until 1929, when Dudley High School was opened (Greensboro Record, January 9 and January 10, 1947).

The school was closer in size and style to the many small schools constructed throughout the city and the county in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Its frame construction, modest size, and Colonial Revival finish was equivalent to that of many of its contemporaries (Guilford County Board of School Improvement 1905). However, in the 1920s the small city and county schools were replaced by large, brick buildings and East White Oak is the only small early twentieth-century school building surviving in the city (Greensboro Record, November 16, 1940).

The schools of the Cone Mills villages were finally brought into the city school system in 1946. The school board decided not to retain the East White Oak school, but rather to consolidate it with the black Jonesboro school near North Carolina A & T. This was done because the East White Oak school was privately owned and only had three teachers. The Jonesboro school, a city school, had four teachers and eight classrooms. When its enrollment was increased by the students transported to it from East White Oak, Jonesboro was turned into an accredited school (Greensboro Record, February 21, 1946). After it ceased to function as a school, East White Oak was converted into a black YMCA by the company (personal communications with Julia Gant Duke and John W. Gant, July 8, 1991; Carolina Peacemaker, January 31, 1976).

In 1955, when the Cone Mills Corporation sold the village to Hillside Homes, Inc., the community looked much the same as it had when it was built (Sanborn Map Company 1925, 1925 corrected through 1933, and 1925 corrected through 1957; Guilford County Deed Book 1611, Page 298; personal communications with Julia Gant Duke and John W. Gant, July 8, 1991). In the next twenty-five years many of its houses were removed. About 1981 its remaining original houses were demolished (personal communications with Julia Gant Duke and John W. Gant, July 8, 1991).

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Unlike the rest of the village, the school building was saved. It was still a YMCA in 1955 when the neighborhood desired to retain the structure as a community center. In 1956 they formed East White Oak Community Center, Inc. and purchased the building (Guilford County Deed 1611, Page 298, and Deed 1671, Page 304). Its preservation and conversion to a community center was due to the efforts of the local residents, led by Truman Gant, who had come to East White Oak around 1922, at the age of seventeen, to work in the mills (personal communications with Julia Gant Duke and John W. Gant, July 8, 1991; Carolina Peacemaker, January 31, 1976). Since 1956, the former East White Oak School has continued to serve the neighborhood as a community center.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 0.5

UTM References

A 17 611590 3995660  
 Zone Easting Northing

C \_\_\_\_\_

B \_\_\_\_\_  
 Zone Easting Northing

D \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of the former East White Oak School are those of Greensboro Tax Map 256, Block 123, Parcel 2.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the former East White Oak School include the lot historically associated with the school.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Marvin A. Brown

organization Greensboro Preservation Society date 9-15-91

street & number 447 West Washington Street telephone 919-272-5003

city or town Greensboro state North Carolina zip code 27402

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Arnett, Ethel Stephens. 1955. Greensboro, North Carolina, the County Seat of Guilford. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.

Balliett, Carl J. 1925. World Leadership in Denims, Through Thirty Years of Progress. Baltimore: Privately printed by the Thomsen-Ellis Co. for the Proximity Manufacturing Company. Company publication located at the Greensboro Public Library, Caldwell-Jones Room.

Brewer, R.W. 1913. "Map of the City of Greensboro, North Carolina." Greensboro: M.M. Pruden. Located at Guilford County Register of Deeds, Greensboro.

Carolina Peacemaker. January 31, 1976. Clipping of article entitled "Truman Gant: A Man Who Helps Others" located at the East White Oak Community Center.

Chafe, William H. 1980. Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom. New York: Oxford University Press. Located at the Greensboro Public Library, Caldwell-Jones Room.

Fripp, Gayle Hicks. 1982. Greensboro. A Chosen Center. Woodland Hills, CA: Windsor Publications. Located at the Greensboro Public Library, Caldwell-Jones Room.

Greensboro Record. November 16, 1940. Clipping of article entitled "Greensboro City Schools Always Leader" located in the vertical files of the Jackson Library, University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

\_\_\_\_\_. February 21, 1946. Clipping of article entitled "Three Schools to be Put in City District" located in the vertical files of the Jackson Library, University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

\_\_\_\_\_. January 9, 1947. Clipping of article entitled "First Negro Schools in City" located in the vertical files of the Jackson Library, University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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\_\_\_\_\_. January 10, 1947. Clipping of article entitled "Dudley High Has Outstanding Rating Among Negro Schools" located in the vertical files of the Jackson Library, University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Guilford County Board of School Improvement. [1905] "Progress of Public Education in Guilford County, North Carolina, 1902-1905." Greensboro: Chas. G. Harrison Printing Company. Pamphlet located in the vertical files of the Jackson Library, University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Guilford County Deed Books. Located at Guilford County Courthouse, Greensboro, North Carolina.

Guilford County Plat Books. Located at Guilford County Courthouse, Greensboro, North Carolina.

Half Century Book, 1891-1941. 1941. Greensboro: Cone Export & Commission Co. Company publication located at the Greensboro Public Library, Caldwell-Jones Room.

Kipp, Samuel Millard III. 1974. "Urban Growth and Social Change in the South, 1870-1920: Greensboro, North Carolina, as a Case Study." Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University. Located at the Jackson Library, University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Pease Engineering Co. 1927. "Map of the City of Greensboro, North Carolina, Towns of Hamilton Lakes and Pomona 'the pivot of the piedmont.'" Greensboro: Pease Engineering Co. Located at Guilford County Register of Deeds, Greensboro.

Personal communication. July 3, 1991. Julia Gant Duke, longtime resident of East White Oak community.

\_\_\_\_\_. July 3, 1991. John W. Gant, longtime resident of East White Oak community.

\_\_\_\_\_. July 3, 1991. Marilyn Gant, longtime resident of East White Oak community.

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Sanborn Map Company. 1919 and 1925. "Greensboro, North Carolina." Microfilm of 1919 and 1925 maps located at the Jackson Library, University of North Carolina at Greensboro; originals of two separate sets of 1925 maps corrected through 1933 and through 1957 located at Greensboro Historical Museum.

"Teacher's Final Report." May 30, 1919. Report for October 2, 1916 - May 18, 1917 school year located in Bernard M. Cone files at Cone Mill Corporation archives in Greensboro.

\_\_\_\_\_. May 30, 1919. Report for September 2, 1918 - May 30, 1919 school year located in Bernard M. Cone files at Cone Mill Corporation archives in Greensboro.

"Teacher's Monthly Report to Attendance Officer and County Superintendent." November 24, 1916. Located in Bernard M. Cone files at Cone Mill Corporation archives in Greensboro.

White Oak Village 1932 Census. Photocopy of typewritten census in files of Cone Mills Corporation, Greensboro.

GREENSBORO QUADRANGLE  
 NORTH CAROLINA-GUILFORD CO.  
 7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

5056 11 NW  
 (BROWNS SUMMIT)



GREENSBORO QUAD  
 White Oak New Town  
 Hist. Dist.  
 Greensboro, Guilford Co., NC  
 ZONE 17 1:24000  
Easting Northing  
 A 609800 3996500  
 B 610190 3996330  
 C 609860 3995920  
 D 609630 3996200

(Former) East White Oak School  
 1801 Tenth Street  
 Greensboro, Guilford Co., NC  
Easting Northing ✓  
 611590 3995660  
 ZONE 17 1:24000

GREENSBORO QUAD  
 ZONE 17 1:24000  
 Fisher Park Hist. Dist.  
 Greensboro, Guilford Co., NC  
Easting Northing  
 A 608770 3994190

