

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) McIver, Charles D., School

other names/site number

### 2. Location

street & number 617 West Lee Street

N/A not for publication

city, town Greensboro

N/A vicinity

state North Carolina

code NC

county Guilford

code 081

zip code 27403

### 3. Classification

#### Ownership of Property

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

#### Category of Property

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

#### Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	1	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	1	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.

Signature of certifying official *William S. Rain*

Date 2-12-92

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

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)  
Education/school

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)  
Commerce/Trade/business

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Classical Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

walls brick

roof other: built-up tar/gravel

other stone

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

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Greensboro, Guilford Co., NC

The former Charles D. McIver School is a long, symmetrical, classically detailed, two-story building faced with dark, wire-cut bricks. Located just southwest of downtown Greensboro, it is set back from West Lee Avenue behind a deep front lawn dotted with mature oaks. Built in 1923, it was designed by the New York architectural firm of Starrett and Van Vleck.

The school's classical decoration is concentrated at the auditorium pavilion which projects forward at the center of its front facade. The front of this pavilion is opened up by an arcade of five tall, airy, compound windows topped by semicircular transoms. Each window unit holds three double-hung sash windows, the narrow side sash separated from the central sash by attenuated colonettes. Brick pilasters separate the windows, which are surmounted by an arcade of connected, semicircular, limestone arches crowned by molded keystones. A limestone beltcourse runs above the arches, continuing around the sides of the school. Above the beltcourse and the central three windows is a limestone cornice panel pronouncing the building the "Charles D. McIver School." To either side of the panel are round, scalloped medallions. At the top of the pavilion is a parapet wall with limestone coping that hides the school's flat roof. Five sets of limestone balusters, some of which are broken or missing, pierce the parapet above the arched pavilion windows. Beneath the parapet wall is a heavy limestone cornice which caps the front and sides of the pavilion but does not continue around the sides of the school.

The main body of the school, both front and side facades, is more simply finished than the central pavilion. Like the pavilion, it has a foundation of granite blocks, a limestone beltcourse beneath its windows, and a heavy limestone cornice. This cornice is one of the subtler elements of the school's design. It matches the cornice of the pavilion, but is aligned not with that cornice, but with the pavilion's upper beltcourse. From a distance the building appears to have one contiguous cornice, which was not possible because the pavilion is a few feet taller than the main body of the school. At the front facade, to either side of the pavilion, and at the side elevations are wide bands of windows marking the classrooms. Each band is formed of four double-hung sash windows separated by narrow wooden pilasters.

The school's two front entrances are located at the junctions of the pavilion and the main block. The double-doors of these entrances, topped by semicircular transoms, open into the main block. They are

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shielded from the weather by one-story, quarter-round porticos supported by brick pilasters and two limestone columns. The flat roofs above the columns and limestone entablatures are edged with decorative iron railings.

The school's rear elevation has additional plainly finished principal entries placed in two deep recesses. These recesses divide the rear into three sections. The central section is faced with the same dark wire-cut bricks, and pierced by the same bands of windows, as the front and side facades of the main block. The remainder of the rear facade is faced with lighter colored, plain, smooth bricks. The rear facade has no cornice but, at the central section, a narrow band of concrete is set into the brick between the tops of the second-story windows and the flat roof.

The inside of the school is simply finished and functional. The auditorium occupies its front pavilion, and corridors, off of which classrooms open, run down the center of its first and second stories. The corridors have functional terrazzo floors and wide picture rails set at eye level in their masonry walls. Two vertical panels set beneath wire-reinforced windows mark the doors to the classrooms. Wire-reinforced transoms, mounted on hinges above the classroom entries, and narrow windows near the ceiling which open onto the corridors, provide cross-ventilation. The classrooms are plainly finished. Although partitioned off as offices or converted into artists' studios, they retain their long, dark gray blackboards. The stairwells at either end of the building are lit by skylights and separated from the corridors by fire doors. The bathrooms, two on each floor, retain many early plumbing fixtures.

The focal point of the interior is the auditorium. Brightly lit by the large, arched, front windows, it is two stories tall, the balcony at its rear reached by a metal spiral stair. Although simply finished, the auditorium is more ornate than the classrooms or corridors. Its raised stage is framed by a segmental arch. Beneath its wide plain picture rail is wainscoting formed of wide vertical boards. A false arcade is set in the auditorium's rear wall, reflecting the arcade of five windows. The wood floor still retains the taped outlines of a basketball court, a reminder of the room's original dual use as an auditorium and a gymnasium.

To the rear of the school is a non-contributing cafeteria constructed in 1956. Attached to the original building by a metal-

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roofed, open walkway, it is a functional, one-story, flat-roofed, brick and concrete block structure with bands of floor to ceiling windows. Behind the cafeteria is an asphalt basketball court and a deep lawn which served as a playground.

**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)

Architecture  
Education  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance

1923-1941  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates

1923  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder

Starrett and Van Vleck, architects  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

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Greensboro, Guilford Co., NCSummary

The Charles D. McIver School, opened in 1923, was one of the first substantial brick schools built in Greensboro in the 1920s, a decade of tremendous growth and consolidation of the city school system. Its neat classical organization and finish, unaltered over the years, is representative of large brick schools built in the city during that decade. The school's architects were the New York firm of Starrett and Van Vleck, designers of institutional and commercial buildings for clients nationwide. The firm paid particular attention to the front pavilion of the school. Containing the school's major common area, its auditorium/gymnasium, the pavilion is the focal point of the design, adorned with an arcade of five two-story windows and limestone arches, balusters, and cornices. McIver's period of significance runs from its 1923 opening to World War II. It falls within the second of Greensboro's historic contexts, Modern Suburbanization and Industrialization, 1900-1941, particularly the subsection covering education. Its architecture is covered by the discussion of educational buildings at Property Type 5 and by the description at Property Type 1 of classical revival styles in early twentieth-century Greensboro.

Historical Background

Charles Duncan McIver (1860-1906), for whom the McIver school was named, was born on a farm near Sanford, North Carolina, and educated at the University of North Carolina. A leading proponent of women's education in late nineteenth-century North Carolina, he summed up his educational philosophy by stating, "Educate a man and you educate an individual; educate a woman and you educate a family" (Arnett 1973:191-192). When the Normal and Industrial School for White Girls (now the University of North Carolina at Greensboro) was opened by the state in 1892, he was named its first president (Arnett 1955:107-109 and 1973:199-201; Greensboro Daily News, February 6, 1960). McIver was also active in promoting elementary and secondary school education in the county, serving as a member of the Guilford County Board of School Improvement at the opening of the twentieth century (Guilford County Board of School Improvement 1905).

The McIver School was preceded by the West Lee Street School, a four-room brick building erected between 1907 and 1913 (Greensboro Record, December 23, 1946; Sanborn Map Company 1907 and 1913). There had been plans to demolish this building when the new school was

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constructed, but it was retained for several years, probably because of a classroom pinch that persisted until a second major school building program in the city in the late 1920s (Greensboro Daily News, February 11, 1923). Standing immediately in front of the 1923 school, between West Lee Street and the entrance, the earlier building was demolished by 1933 (Sanborn Map Company, 1925 map corrected through 1933).

McIver was built in 1922-1923 along with Caldwell, Price, and Aycock schools as part of a major school building program in the city. A newspaper article of June, 1923, stated that it was set to open before Thanksgiving of that year (Greensboro Daily News, June 24, 1923). A million dollar bond issue had provided for the acquisition of land for, and construction of, the four schools. About \$245,000 of this went for construction of McIver (Greensboro Daily New, February 11, 1923). A contemporary newspaper account of the four schools commented on their modernity and safety:

The buildings themselves are high types of modern construction. They have large auditoriums and gymnasiums, each of them, specially planned heating, ventilation and lighting arrangements, cafeterias, shower baths, rooms for many special purposes, concrete, steel and brick predominate in the structures. They are as nearly safe from fire as they can be made. Each of them has a number of specially built tower-stairs, cut off from the remainder of the building, for the children to use in event of fire...(Greensboro Daily New, February 11, 1923).

A 1930 Greensboro School District account of the McIver School continued to take pride in its fireproof construction, which was aided by alarm bells and fire drills. It also noted that the school was steam heated and had revolving fans. In addition to its fifteen classrooms, it had a library, a combined gymnasium and auditorium, hot and cold shower baths, and separate washrooms and drinking fountains for boys and girls at each floor ("Greensboro School Journal," February, 1930).

The New York firm of Starrett and Van Vleck was engaged to draw the plans of the four schools with assistance from local architects (Greensboro Daily News, February 11, 1923). Starrett and Van Vleck had been formed in 1907 by Goldwin Starrett (1874-1918) and Ernest Alan Van Vleck (1875-1956). They specialized in large commercial, public, and institutional buildings, including schools, which they

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built around the country. Among their major commissions in New York City were the Lord & Taylor, Saks Fifth Avenue, and Bloomingdale's department stores, and the Downtown Athletic Club (New York Times, May 10, 1918 and August 1, 1956; Stern, Gilmartin, and Melins 1987).

From its opening until 1929, McIver was a junior high school serving seventh and eighth graders (Greensboro Record, December 23, 1946). In 1930 its fifteen classrooms held 490 first- through sixth-grade children ("Greensboro School Journal," February, 1930). Additional classrooms were housed in a one-story, frame building to the school's rear, which stood in the late 1920s and early 1930s and possibly later (Sanborn Map Company, 1925 map and 1925 corrected through 1933). The cafeteria to the rear, built approximately on the site of this frame building, was constructed in 1956 (Arnett 1973:426; Sanborn Map Company, 1925 corrected through 1957). Last used as a school in the 1970s, the school building is now home to an urban ministry, which uses its auditorium and has partitioned its classrooms as offices or converted them to art studios.

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 6.5

UTM References

A 

1	7	6	0	7	9	6	0	3	9	9	1	4	2	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of the former Charles D. McIver School are those of Greensboro Tax Map 36, Block 14, Parcel 1.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the former Charles D. McIver School include all of the lot historically and currently associated with the school.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Marvin A. Brown date 9-15-91  
 organization Greensboro Preservation Society telephone 919-272-5003  
 street & number 447 West Washington Street state North Carolina zip code 27402  
 city or town Greensboro

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

Greensboro Daily News. February 11, 1923. Clipping of article entitled "That is What 1922 Means for the City in Terms of Training Greensboro's Future Men and Women" located in the vertical files of the Greensboro Public Library.

\_\_\_\_\_. June 24, 1923. Clipping of article entitled "New Schools in Greensboro Worthy of Names They Bear" located in the vertical files of the Jackson Library, University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

\_\_\_\_\_. February 6, 1960. Clipping of article entitled "School Names: McIver Pioneer State Educator" located in the vertical files of the Jackson Library, University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Greensboro Record. December 23, 1946. Clipping of article entitled "McIver School Named for Famed Educator" located in the vertical files of the Jackson Library, University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

\_\_\_\_\_. 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.

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

New York Times, May 10, 1918. Obituary of Goldwin Starrett located on microfilm at the Jackson Library, University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

\_\_\_\_\_, August 1, 1956. Obituary of Ernest Alan Van Vleck located on microfilm 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.

Sanborn Map Company. 1913, 1919, and 1925. "Greensboro, North Carolina." Microfilm of 1913, 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.

Stern, Robert A. M., Gregory Gilmartin, and Thomas Melins. 1987. New York 1930: Architecture and Urbanism Between the Two World Wars. New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc.

