

**NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE**  
Office of Archives and History  
Department of Cultural Resources

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

**Gibsonville School**

Gibsonville, Guilford County, GF3267, Listed 8/18/2014  
Nomination by Heather Slane  
Photographs by Heather Slane, December 2013



School façade view



Home Economics Building and Gymnasium (in background)

**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 for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Gibsonville School  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Location**

Street & number 500 Church Street N/A  not for publication  
city or town Gibsonville N/A  vicinity  
State North Carolina code NC county Guilford code 081 zip code 27249

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
I hereby certify that the property is:		
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other, (explain:)	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Gibsonville School  
Name of Property

Guilford County, North Carolina  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

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

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
3	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
3	0	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

n/a

**Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

n/a

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Education: school

Recreation & Culture: sports facility

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Vacant

Education: library

Recreation & Culture: sports facility

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Colonial Revival

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

walls brick

roof membrane, asphalt

other

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Gibsonville School  
Name of Property

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County and State

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** moved from its original location.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Education  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1924-1964  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1924  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

n/a  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

n/a  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Hunter, Herbert B. (architect)  
Larsen, Gustav (contractor)  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Gibsonville School  
Name of Property

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County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** Approximately 5 acres

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>17</u> Zone	<u>631040</u> Easting	<u>3996840</u> Northing	3	<u>          </u> Zone	<u>          </u> Easting	<u>          </u> Northing
2	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	4	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>

See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

## 11. Form Prepared By

Name/title Heather Wagner Slane & Sunny Townes Stewart  
organization hmwPreservation date January 24, 2014  
Street & number P. O. Box 355 telephone 336.207.1502  
city or town Durham state NC zip code 27702

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

#### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

#### Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

#### Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

### Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

Name Guilford County Board of Education  
Street & number 712 N. Eugene Street telephone             
city or town Greensboro state NC zip code 27401

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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National Park Service

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Gibsonville School  
Guilford County, North Carolina

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**Narrative Description**

Gibsonville School is located at 500 Church Street in Gibsonville, North Carolina, just north of the central business district. The school was built in 1924 as part of the school consolidation movement in Guilford County and initially served grades one through eleven. Designed by Burlington-based architect Herbert B. Hunter and built by Burlington-based contractor Gustav Larsen, the two-story school features a Colonial Revival-style entrance and a U-shaped plan with an original rectilinear-plan structure at the front with parallel projecting 1930s wings at the rear and a 1967 addition at the north end of the east rear wing. A 1937 home economics building (now the Gibsonville Public Library) stands to the west of the school and a 1951 gymnasium is located behind the school.

Gibsonville School stands just north of, and faces the intersection of, Church and East Joyner streets. It is oriented at a slight angle, with the entrance of the school facing southwest, but will be described using cardinal directions as though it faces due south. The school stands on a 33.86-acre tax parcel that includes a 2006 Gibsonville Elementary School to the east of the historic school. The 2006 school was built on the site of two 1950s buildings, a classroom building and a cafeteria building, that were part of the historic school complex. The National Register boundary of the Gibsonville School includes approximately five acres at the southwest corner of the parcel on which the historic school, home economics building, and gymnasium stand.

A concrete sidewalk extends from the intersection of the two streets to the centered front entrance of the main building, with a flagpole supported by a stepped concrete base on the left (west) side of the walkway. The sidewalk is flanked at the street by brick piers with pyramidal concrete caps and limestone panels inscribed with the words "Class of 1934" and "Not At The Top; Still Climbing" on the left and right piers, respectively. A grassy, tree-shaded lawn extends across the front of the building with shrubs planted near the foundation of the building. A concrete walkway extends across the façade of the building and wraps around the corners to entrances on the east and west elevations. The 1937 Home Economics Building stands immediately to the west of the school, at 506 East Church Street, and there is a freestanding 1951 Gymnasium north of the school. With the exception of the grassy area immediately behind the school, between the rear wings, the rear of the site is paved, with the pavement extending along the north and east sides of the Home Economics Building and around the perimeter of the Gymnasium.

**Gibsonville School - 1924, c. 1934, c. 1937, 1967, 1980s**

**C-Building**

The two-story Gibsonville School is seven bays wide with a running bond brick veneer and a flat roof behind a stepped parapet with concrete coping throughout, except on the three projecting bays on the façade, which have terra cotta coping. The second, fourth, and sixth bays project slightly from the symmetrical façade with molded cast-stone crosssetted hoods atop the second-story fenestration on these bays. A cast-stone water-table extends across the façade and forms the continuous lintel for the basement-level windows on the left end of the façade. The central entrance features a double-leaf one-light-over-two-panel door with a ten-light transom. The entrance is inset slightly and framed by a

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classical surround with a broken pediment incorporating dentil molding and a decorative finial. The pediment and a wide cornice are supported by Doric columns that are fluted on the bottom one-third. The entrance is accessed by a wide uncovered brick stoop and brick steps with metal pipe railings. Installed in the 1980s, replacement metal-framed windows, arranged in groups of five on the façade and side elevations, feature fixed opaque panels at the top half of each window and covering the spandrels between floors.

On each end of the façade is a stair tower with a single, narrow fixed window centered vertically on the façade, a single window, smaller than the other first- and second-floor windows, on the side elevation, each with stretcher- and soldier-course surrounds, and arched brick openings at the first- and second-floor levels of the side elevations. These openings lead to inset, open-air “porches” with metal railings and paired nine-light-over-one-panel doors with five-light transoms opening to the hallways at each floor level. A metal fire stair extends from the north elevation of the west stair tower and a concrete ramp extends from the north elevation of the east stair tower and is sheltered by a metal canopy. A corrugated-metal awning supported by metal posts extends from the east elevation of the east stair tower, sheltering both the brick steps with brick knee walls and concrete caps, and the concrete walkway that formerly connected to a 1950s classroom and cafeteria wing that has since been demolished.

Two two-story wings projecting from the rear of the building are nearly identical. The front (south) two bays of each wing were constructed in 1924 as part of the original school and the rear two bays of each wing, of clay-tile construction, were built around 1934 (east wing) and 1937 (west wing) resulting in the current U-shaped form. Windows on the rear wings match those on the façade with groups of five windows marking each classroom space and paired windows located in the second bay delineating the bathrooms on each floor. A partial raised basement on the left (west) end of the façade and extending the depth of the west wing has matching replacement windows, though they are shorter than those on the upper floors. A basement-level entrance on the south end of the west elevation has an arched opening and inset paired nine-light-over-one-panel doors with a five-light transom matching those on the stair tower above.

The rear of the building features five replacement windows evenly spaced across the auditorium section of the main block, each two stories tall with metal spandrels between the first- and second-floor windows. The east wing has two window bays on its west elevation, each with a single replacement window at the first- and second-floor levels and a metal spandrel between the floors. The west wing has asymmetrically-arranged individual replacement windows at the basement-, first-, and second-floor levels. The north elevation of the west wing has a one-light-over-one-panel door with an eight-light transom at the basement level, paired four-light-over-one-panel doors with a ten-light transom at the first-floor level, accessed by a metal fire stair, and a single four-light-over-one-panel door with eight-light-transom at the second-floor level with no access.

A 1967, two-story, six-bay-deep, concrete-block addition is connected to the north end of the east wing by a single-bay, two-story, flat-roofed stair tower. The addition and the stair tower each have a

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running-bond brick veneer, a flat roof on metal trusses behind a brick parapet with metal coping, and paired metal awning windows (boarded at the first-floor level) with spandrels of white, glazed brick between the first- and second-floor windows. Inset entrances centered on the north elevation and on the east elevation at the stair tower have paired half-light metal doors with a one-light transom. A flat-roofed, metal awning shelters the entrance on the east elevation of the stair tower and there is a group of paired metal awning windows centered above the entrance on the north elevation. Paired, hollow-core metal doors are located in the northernmost bay of the east elevation.

The building interior features a single-loaded corridor with classrooms along the south side of the main building and outer sides of the rear ells, resulting in a U-shaped plan with six classrooms and school offices on the first floor and seven classrooms on the second floor. A two-story auditorium is located within the "U" created by main block and ells. The 1934 and 1937 additions to the rear ells created four classrooms on each floor and accentuated the U-shaped plan. The main entrance leads to a hallway flanked by offices at the first floor. Interior windows between the offices bring light from the south elevation into the interior offices. The main east-west corridor terminates at each end with a double-leaf six-light-over-one-panel door with ten-light transom leading to the exterior stair towers.

Classrooms measure approximately twenty-feet by thirty-feet and feature hardwood floors, three-part baseboards, plaster walls, and a combination of plaster and acoustic-tiled ceilings with later crown molding. In addition to picture molding and wood-framed chalkboards and bulletin boards, there are metal radiators in each room and shallow storage cabinets along the south or east wall of each classroom. Each set of cabinets features five two-panel doors with a system of ropes and weights that allows them to be raised up into the wall cavity to access the storage behind. Replacement windows retain original wood frames and sills on the interior.

Hallways have wood floors, three-part baseboards, plaster walls, picture molding, and a combination of plaster and acoustic-tiled ceilings with later crown molding. One-light-over-one-panel doors with functional three-light transoms lead to the classrooms and four sets of paired one-light-over-one-panel doors with wide, ten-light transoms lead to the auditorium, three from the south corridor and one from the east corridor. Restrooms, one per floor in each ell, feature six-light-over-one-panel doors, narrower than those leading to the classrooms, ceramic-tiled walls, terra cotta-tiled floors, and wood stalls. The extensions to the ells, added in 1934 and 1937, match the original hallways and classrooms in form and detail with the exception that doors from the hallway are nine-light-over-one-panel doors with three-light transoms.

The two-story auditorium is accessed only from the first floor and features a floor that slopes down to the west, necessitating steps down at the western entrances from the hallway. Seating has been removed from the auditorium and the ceiling has been covered with acoustic tiles, though the space retains original hardwood floors, plaster walls, and original baseboards and window surrounds. The stage is raised approximately thirty-two inches above the floor level with beadboard along the raised platform, hardwood flooring, and plaster walls. The stage is flanked by steps up that lead to six-light-over-one-

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panel doors that provide access to stage left and stage right. The rear (west) part of the stage has been divided into numerous backstage "rooms" with temporary frame walls and is accessed by a double-leaf door with a transom that opens to the west ell corridor.

The two-story 1967 addition at the right rear (northeast) is offset slightly from the main building and connected to the building by a two-story stair tower. It has a double-loaded corridor with three classrooms on the west side of the hall at the first- and second-floor levels. There are two classrooms and several small storage and office spaces on the east side of the hall at the first-floor level and a large library space with small offices on the east side of the second-floor level. Classrooms are roughly square, measuring approximately twenty-six feet by twenty-seven feet and the library is the approximate size of two classrooms. A second stairwell is located at the north end of the hallway with an exit located down a short flight of stairs.

On the interior, concrete floors have been covered with vinyl tile in the hallway and classrooms. Walls are exposed concrete block with tiled baseboards and there are dropped acoustic-tiled ceilings throughout. Classrooms are minimally detailed with metal-framed chalkboards and bulletin boards on the walls, metal radiator covers on the exterior walls, and metal-framed wood doors with a single light centered on the upper part of the door accessing the classrooms. The library has carpet and vinyl baseboards. Stairwells feature steel-framed concrete stairs with rubber treads and metal railings.

The main building of the Gibsonville School has experienced alterations and some deterioration since construction, but the changes have not significantly diminished the overall integrity of the structure. Exterior alterations include the removal of gabled parapets on the three projecting bays of the façade, visible in 1950s photographs of the school, and the installation of terra cotta coping on those bays. Original wood nine-over-nine, wood-sash windows throughout the 1924, 1934, and 1937 portions of the building were replaced with metal-frame windows and opaque metal panels in the 1980s. Inside, the layout of the hallways and rooms remains intact, though several changes have been made to the office spaces at the front of the 1924 section and to the library space in the 1967 addition. Additionally, the roof of the 1937 wing at the northwest has collapsed, causing damage to the first and second floors, though the walls remain structurally sound. All of the alterations can be reversed and the roof and floors in the 1937 wing replaced. These changes do not notably affect the overall integrity and readability of the spaces.

**Home Economics Building – 1937, c. 1976**

**C-Building**

Located just west of the school at 506 Church Street, this one-story, front-gabled building is five bays wide and double-pile. It has a brick veneer laid in a running bond, a projecting brick watertable, two interior corbelled brick chimneys, and stucco in the pedimented front gable and porch gable. The building has an asphalt-shingled roof with deep, boxed eaves finished with beadboard and six-over-six wood-sash windows, which are paired in the two rear rooms of the building. Centered on the façade, in a projecting entrance bay, is a double-leaf one-light-over-one-panel door flanked by four-light-over-one-panel sidelights and topped by a ten-light transom. The entrance is sheltered by a pedimented portico with a

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wide cornice supported by heavy columns. The portico rests on a concrete stoop and is accessed by concrete steps flanked by brick knee walls topped with a concrete cap. The rear of the building features partial gable returns, a single solid-metal door accessed by a metal fire stair, and a single basement-level door that accesses an unfinished storage area. Modifications to the exterior of the building are limited to the installation of a wood ramp over the right half of the front steps and the bricking-in of a window on the east elevation.

The interior of the Home Economics Building is laid out with four irregularly sized classrooms and a series of small storage rooms and a bathroom on the right side of the building. The building has carpeting in the classrooms and vinyl flooring in the lobby, bathroom, and storage rooms. It has plaster walls, dropped acoustic-tiled ceilings, and two-panel wood doors between the classrooms. Interior woodwork includes original eight-inch baseboards with a molded cap and flat, five-inch door and window surrounds with molded lintels.

The front left (southwest) room has a brick fireplace with a brick hearth, metal fireplace insert, and wood molded mantel; a plaque on the mantel indicates that the unit was given by the class of 1936. The left rear (northwest) room has had its southwest corner walled off to create a small story-time room accessed by a solid wood Dutch door. The rear (north) two rooms feature built-in closets along the north wall that extend approximately seven feet, stopping short of the ceiling. Three sets of paired two-panel wood doors have been removed from the closets in the northwest room, revealing open shelves, though a single two-panel door on each end of the wall of closets remains. The northeast room features three sets of paired doors and a single door on the east end that access the cabinets. The closets do not extend the full width of the north elevation; rather, there is an exterior door on the west end of that wall.

A portion of the northeast room has been walled-off to create a bathroom accessed by a short hallway on the right (east) side of the building. The hallway, bathroom, and storage areas retain no original finishes; they have hollow-core doors with narrow door molding dividing the space, wallpaper, and a later chair rail. The building likely underwent minor alterations when it was converted to a public library in about 1976.

**Gymnasium – 1951, c. 1964**

**C-Building**

Located behind (north) the main building, the gymnasium is a one-story, truncated-hipped-roofed structure with flat-roofed wings on the east and west elevations. The building is of concrete-block construction with a brick veneer laid in a one-to-five common bond, an asphalt-shingled roof, and industrial metal-framed windows, with operable central awning panes and continuous concrete windowsills, spanning the full width of the north and south elevations. Three metal chimneys rise from the truncated roof and there are foundation vents along the north and south elevations.

A one-story, flat-roofed lobby, restroom, and service wing extends nearly the full width of the west elevation and is three bays wide and two bays deep. A one-story, flat-roofed locker room wing on

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the east elevation is five bays deep. Both wings have a brick veneer laid in a one-to-five common bond, six- and twelve-light metal-framed windows with concrete sills, and a membrane roof. On the west elevation of the entrance wing, two pairs of solid-wood doors, each with a single light near the top of the door, are each topped by a single-light transom. The entrance is recessed slightly and sheltered by a flat roof supported by projecting brick walls pierced by square holes. A later, concrete ramp extends across the south end of the west elevation. The locker room wing is five bays wide and is symmetrical with an interior brick chimney near the southwest corner and inset entrances on the west end of the north and south elevations, nearest the gymnasium. Each entrance features paired solid wood doors with single lights near the top of the door, one-light sidelights, and a three-part transom. There is a concrete ramp to the south entrance and the north entrance is accessed by concrete steps and further sheltered by a corrugated, flat metal canopy supported by metal posts. To the east of each entrance are four six-light, metal-framed windows with concrete sills.

The east elevation is further extended by a one-story, flat-roofed brick addition, slightly narrower than the original wing, which is three bays wide and five bays deep. This addition, with architectural drawings dated 1964, was built to accommodate a band room for the school, and is similar to the entrance and locker room wings in materials and details with a five-to-one common bond brick veneer and six-light metal-framed windows on the east elevation. Unlike the windows on the main block of the building, the windows on this wing have brick windowsills and two of the window openings on the east elevation have been enclosed with wood. The north and south elevations have paired hollow-core metal doors, each with a single light, topped by a one-light transom and sheltered by a corrugated, flat-roofed awning supported by metal posts. Each entrance is flanked by twelve-light, metal-framed windows with operable, centered six-pane awning windows.

The interior of the gymnasium has a polished wood floor, exposed concrete-block walls, and exposed metal trusses at the walls and ceiling, supporting the exposed wood sheathing of the roof. Built-in wood bleachers on wood risers line the north and south elevations of the gymnasium and there are exposed mechanical and electrical systems along the ceiling. On the west end of the gymnasium, two pairs of wide solid wood doors, each with a single-light near the top, lead to the lobby, and are flanked by two openings that lead to service areas on each side of the lobby. Single-light, fixed windows at the north and south ends of the west elevation of the gymnasium light the service areas. The lobby, as well as the service areas and restrooms that flank it, features a concrete floor, exposed concrete-block walls, and a plaster ceiling. Frosted one-light-over-two-panel doors lead to the restrooms and double-hung panels on the south elevation of the lobby accesses a ticket or refreshment booth.

On the east end of the gymnasium, two pairs of double doors, matching those on the west end, lead to small entrance vestibules on the north and south ends of the locker room wing. Each vestibule also features a three-panel solid-wood door that leads to a locker room. The symmetrical locker rooms, now used only for storage, have exposed brick walls, plaster ceilings, and terra cotta-tiled floors. Shower rooms at the center of the building feature tiled walls and metal partitions delineate stalls in the restrooms.

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The interior of the 1964 addition has a slightly lower floor level, necessitating two brick steps to access the north locker room from this wing. There is carpet and vinyl tile over the concrete floors, painted brick and concrete-block walls, and dropped, acoustic-tiled ceilings with exposed roof supports spanning the space from east to west. In the 1970s, the band room was divided to create an additional locker room on the north end of the building. At that time, the north elevation was likely modified to include the single door sheltered by an awning that appears today, but is not shown on the 1964 plans.

**Integrity Assessment**

The Gibsonville School, including the main building, the home economics building, and the gymnasium, illustrate the continued growth of the school throughout the early to mid-twentieth century and the demand for additional space as well as use-specific buildings to serve the growing student population. While two 1950s buildings, a classroom and a cafeteria, were removed to allow for the construction of a new school on the property, the three structures that remain and the site on which they are arranged provide the necessary context for the school. Additionally, while material changes and deteriorative to the main building, home economics building, and gymnasium have occurred, including the replacement of original windows and the partial collapse of the roof of the main building, the buildings retain sufficient material integrity for listing on the National Register for its significant association with the history of education in Gibsonville.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance**

The Gibsonville School in Guilford County, North Carolina, meets National Register Criterion A for Education, as a consolidation-era school, constructed as part of the movement to centralize and modernize the state's education system at the turn of the twentieth century, serving the educational needs of the local white students.<sup>1</sup> The Gibsonville School is the only extant twentieth-century public school within the Gibsonville city limits and its period of significance extends from 1924, the date of construction, to 1964. Although the building continued to serve as an elementary school from 1964 to 2007, its educational use after 1964 is not of exceptional significance and does not meet National Register Criterion Consideration G. Also included in the nomination are the 1937 home economics building, which illustrates the prominent role of vocational training in the curriculum, and the 1951 gymnasium.

Designed by architect Herbert Bernard Hunter and built by contractor Gustav Larsen—both of Burlington—the school's architectural integrity has been somewhat compromised due to the installation of replacement windows and the collapse of the roof on the northwest wing of the school. However, the school remains structurally sound and illustrates an early twentieth-century statewide effort to build larger consolidated school facilities that accommodated more students—including elementary, middle, and high school students—and served as a source of community pride.

**Historical Background and Educational Context**

The town of Gibsonville is located on the border of Alamance and Guilford counties, in the heart of the state's textile manufacturing region. Named for Joseph Gibson (1785-1857), whose father established farming and gold mining operations there as early as 1775, it was incorporated in 1871.<sup>2</sup> However, its origins as an organized town can be traced to 1855, when it became a stop along the new North Carolina Railroad line that ran between Raleigh and Greensboro.<sup>3</sup> In the early years, Gibsonville was known as a "rough place" where it was "not safe to be on the streets after dark, especially on Saturday nights."<sup>4</sup> However, the opening of a number of textile mills in the late 1800s fueled substantial growth and the increase in population led to the construction of homes, churches, and schools. The Minneola Mill, which was eventually acquired

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<sup>1</sup> For more on the school building campaign of the 1920s and the accompanying education reform, see M. Ruth Little and Patricia A. Sullivan's Draft Thematic National Register Nomination: "North Carolina Public Schools Pre-1941" (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Archives and History, 1989); Jim Sumner, "A Brief History of North Carolina's Early Twentieth Century Public School System" (North Carolina Historic Preservation Office Newsletter, Spring 1990); and Jim Sumner, "The Development of North Carolina's Public School System through 1940," unpublished, on file with the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office.

<sup>2</sup> Melvin O. Wyrick, *History of Town of Gibsonville, North Carolina* (February 1971), 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 3, 5.

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by the Cone family, opened in 1887 and by the turn of the century, “there were 80 homes, 2 cotton mills, 3 or 4 merchandise establishments”<sup>5</sup> and the population had risen from 120 residents in 1890 to 521 residents in 1900.<sup>6</sup> Over the next ten years, the population would double again to 1,162 and further increase to 1302 residents by 1920.<sup>7</sup> By the year 1921, “records show there were approximately 500 homes, two cotton mills, one hosiery mill, [and] a chair factory.”<sup>8</sup>

Initially, only a small number of Gibsonville’s children received a formal education. As was common, the first schools were tuition-based “subscription schools.”<sup>9</sup> In 1903, Gibsonville had three such schools: a school housed within the Masonic Lodge, a two-story frame building on East Joyner Street, the “Yellow School”, located near the present Central Baptist Church, and a third school located near Friedens Lutheran Church. However, none of these school buildings remain.

Despite efforts by reformers and the legislature to encourage the creation of public schools in the 1800s, the state’s education system was hampered by misappropriation of funds and general lack of support. It continued to be among the worst in the nation through the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>10</sup> In 1880, the state’s illiteracy rate was more than 30 percent, ranking seventh in the nation.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, it lagged behind a number of national averages, including a required school year of 80 days versus the standard 145, an average teacher salary of \$25 a month compared to the national average of \$48, and only about half of the state’s school-age population attending school.<sup>12</sup>

The statewide Populist party political victories between 1890 and 1900 and Progressive-era ideas of reform prominent at the turn of the twentieth century marked an important period of transition in North Carolina’s education system. In 1900, Charles B. Aycock was elected governor on an education-dominated platform and subsequently introduced a number of initiatives designed to improve the state’s schools, including a bill passed by the General Assembly in 1903 that authorized loans to counties for the purpose of building public schools.<sup>13</sup> This led to a boom in school construction; over the next fifteen years, nearly 3,500 schools were

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. Fourteenth Census of the United States (1920): Population of Incorporated Places. Prepared by William C. Hunt, Chief Statistician for Population. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1921.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 10, 16.

<sup>9</sup> Wyrick, *History*, 8; Sumner, “Development,” 1.

<sup>10</sup> Sumner, “Brief History,” 1; Sumner, “Development,” 1.

<sup>11</sup> Sumner, “Development,” 4.

<sup>12</sup> Edgar W. Knight, *Public School Education in North Carolina* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1916), 338; Sumner, “Brief History,” 2.

<sup>13</sup> Sumner, “Brief History,” 2.

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built across the state. Guilford County had been among the first municipalities in North Carolina to offer public education supported by tax revenue.<sup>14</sup> The county embraced the Progressive ideology of the governor and built a number of new schools.<sup>15</sup> Among them was a seven-room wooden structure in Gibsonville, called the “Green School” because of its color, which opened in 1904 on three acres of land just east of the Gibsonville School.<sup>16</sup> The small school employed one principal and two teachers, including Etta Mendenhall (later Etta Burke), who would found the first North Carolina Parent Teachers Association in the 1930s.<sup>17</sup>

By the 1920s, reformers began another push to modernize and improve the state’s education system, contending that many of the structures built in the early 1900s were small, poorly insulated, and “unsuited to the modern age.”<sup>18</sup> When Eugene Clyde Brooks became the Superintendent of Public Instruction in 1919, he made updating the state’s school facilities a high priority. Arguing that the one- and two-room frame schools spread out across rural areas were ineffective and limited in the curriculum they could offer, Brooks initiated a “consolidation” campaign designed to “provide higher quality education for a greater number of students.”<sup>19</sup> In 1920, a Division of Schoolhouse Planning was established to develop minimum standards for educational facilities and, in 1923, the division published a list of suggestions for county officials planning to construct new schools.<sup>20</sup> Recommendations ranged from the number of teachers schools should employ (no fewer than six) to modern amenities that should be offered, including pressurized water fountains; proper lighting, ventilation, and heating; and music rooms and auditoriums. State officials also maintained that “union schools,” which included both elementary and high school grades, were not only more cost-effective but also provided students with the best educational opportunities.<sup>21</sup>

In 1923, construction began on a new Gibsonville School (called Gibsonville Central School on the 1924 Sanborn Map), which opened next door to the “Green School” in 1924.<sup>22</sup> The school appears to have incorporated many of the state’s recommendations. Principals’ reports

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<sup>14</sup> In 1870, Greensboro opened the state’s first graded school system for whites, a separate system for African Americans six years later, and the county’s first “standard” high school (defined as a school that offered three or four years of study beyond the seven years of elementary education) in 1899. Blackwell P. Robinson, *The History of Guilford County, North Carolina, U.S.A. to 1980, A.D.* (Greensboro, NC: Guilford County American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, 1976), 229.

<sup>15</sup> John Batchelor, *The Guilford County Schools: A History* (Winston-Salem, NC: John F. Blair, Publisher, 1991), 62.

<sup>16</sup> Wyrick, *History*, 8.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 8, 10.

<sup>18</sup> Sumner, “Brief History,” 3.

<sup>19</sup> Little and Sullivan, “North Carolina Public Schools,” 3; Sumner, “Brief History,” 3-4.

<sup>20</sup> Sumner, “Development,” 13.

<sup>21</sup> Sumner, “Development,” 7-8, 13-15.

<sup>22</sup> The “Green School” was destroyed in a fire the following year. Wyrick, 8-9.

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from early in the school's history indicates that the school employed eighteen teachers who taught in sixteen classrooms of suitable size equipped with an sufficient number of desks and ample blackboard space; satisfactory lighting, ventilation, and heating, which was generated by steam; pressurized water fountains placed throughout the halls; adequate lavatories in good condition; space for students to receive instruction in music; and an auditorium that seated 475 people.<sup>23</sup>

The inclusion of an auditorium was particularly important for reformers, as they saw the new facilities as “the agent of social, intellectual, and moral uplift for the entire rural community.”<sup>24</sup> Superintendent Brooks noted that “[a] school auditorium in the country is one of the best assets of a community. It affords an opportunity for the people to meet in large assemblies and for young people to have entertainment and a richer social life. As a result of this type of building, the school is becoming the community center.”<sup>25</sup> Auditoriums were to be built to accommodate audiences one-third larger than the total school population, with the intention that the space would be used for community events.<sup>26</sup> Given that the Gibsonville School population was 400 students in 1929-30, it seems likely that the auditorium was designed according to the state's advice based on enrollment numbers from the early 1920s when the school was constructed. The auditorium likely also served as a makeshift gymnasium, with basketball games taking place on the stage, until the freestanding athletics complex was constructed in 1951.<sup>27</sup>

Due to the state's efforts, the number of smaller schoolhouses—particularly one-room schools—declined significantly during the 1920s, as did the number of rural schools in general. By 1929, nearly 1,000 North Carolina schools were categorized as “consolidated.” In the place of small, rural schools were larger, more centralized facilities like Gibsonville School. Guilford County alone saw the construction of eleven schools for white students and three schools for African American students between 1921 and 1925.<sup>28</sup> In addition to Gibsonville School, a one-story, brick, six-teacher school for African American students, known as Gibsonville Colored School, was constructed in 1924 approximately one-thousand feet to the northwest of the water treatment facility at the intersection of S. Railroad Avenue and Cayuga Street, later 10<sup>th</sup> Street (not extant).<sup>29</sup> In 1929-30, the State Department of Education required that school building

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<sup>23</sup> Division of Institutional Services, *Elementary and Secondary Education Section: Elementary and High School Principals' Annual Reports, 1924-1949*, Department of Public Instruction, Raleigh: State Archives Research Room.

<sup>24</sup> Sumner, “Development,” 8; Sumner, “Short History,” 4.

<sup>25</sup> Sumner, “Development,” 8.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 7, 15.

<sup>27</sup> According to Jim Sumner, this was a common arrangement. Sumner, “Development,” 14.

<sup>28</sup> Timeline of Education in Guilford County. Guilford County Schools website.

[http://www.gcsnc.com/pages/gcsnc/District/History\\_of\\_Education\\_in\\_Guilfo/History\\_of\\_Education\\_in\\_Guilfo](http://www.gcsnc.com/pages/gcsnc/District/History_of_Education_in_Guilfo/History_of_Education_in_Guilfo). Accessed 1 April 2014.

<sup>29</sup> Sanborn Map Company. Gibsonville, North Carolina. 1924 and 1934.

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information be submitted for school buildings with more than seven rooms and Gibsonville School was the only school in Gibsonville to submit a report, though reports for black schools may not have been required.

Throughout the state, the number of schools built of brick increased during the 1920s from 248 to nearly 1,000.<sup>30</sup> The average value of schools in the state also increased significantly during the decade, from less than \$2,000 in 1918-1919 to approximately \$18,000 ten years later.<sup>31</sup> According to the principal's report from 1924-1925, Gibsonville School, which had cost \$62,500 to build the year before, was valued at \$75,000.<sup>32</sup> Yearly reports indicate that regular efforts were made to improve the facility over the years, including adding laboratories (no longer extant); landscaping projects such as "grassing the grounds," paving walkways, and planting shrubbery; enhancements to the cafeteria; and other examples of general maintenance and beautification.<sup>33</sup>

The success of this modernization and consolidation movement was made possible in part by advances in transportation, including the 1921 Highway Act, "which led to the construction or improvement of more than 6,000 miles of North Carolina roads."<sup>34</sup> This allowed for busses to reach more students in rural areas, which had been previously inaccessible. Between 1919 and 1923, the number of school busses in the state increased from 150 to 1,909 and "by the end of the decade, the total was in excess of 4,000."<sup>35</sup>

New facilities and expanded bus routes led to dramatic increases in school attendance. Total attendance across the state for the 1929-1930 school year was 872,895, nearly double the total from a decade earlier.<sup>36</sup> The Gibsonville School population followed this trend, continuing to grow after the construction of the new building. In 1924-25, the total enrollment was 481 students, with 413 elementary students (grades 1-7) and 68 high school students (grades 8-11). During the 1929-30 academic year, 511 students (400 elementary and 111 high school) attended the school. Five years later, the enrollment had grown to 636, with 494 elementary students and 142 high school students.<sup>37</sup>

According to principals' reports, the school adhered to the state-mandated course of study, which included elementary school instruction in reading and literature, arithmetic, language, spelling, geography, science, history and citizenship, health and physical education, art, and

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<sup>30</sup> Sumner, "Brief History," 4.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>32</sup> By comparison, the Gibsonville Colored School cost \$13,650 to build, employed six teachers, and had a population of 624 students.

<sup>33</sup> *Principals' Reports*, 1924-1949.

<sup>34</sup> Sumner, "Brief History," 3.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>37</sup> *Principals' Reports*, 1924-1949.

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music, and high school courses in English, math, history, science, civics, and French. The school provided its students with state-adopted textbooks. Supplementary instruction in “home economics” and “trade and industry” was also available.<sup>38</sup> Early twentieth-century Progressive-era ideology embraced the philosophy that schools should offer “education that would be the most beneficial to the maximum number of students.”<sup>39</sup> This philosophy, along with a desire to provide students—especially those in rural areas—with practical training, led to the development of programs in industrial education, such as woodworking, mechanical training, and other trades, for young men and home economics, which included training in sewing, cooking, canning, and other skills, for young women. In 1934-1935, one section of Home Economics I was offered, during which twenty-six students acquired cooking skills using the book *Everyday Foods*. In two sections of Home Economics II, thirty-one girls studied standard home economics books *A Girl's Problems in Home Economics* and *Art in Home and Clothing*.<sup>40</sup> The addition of a separate “home ec” building at Gibsonville School reflects the important role that vocational education programs continued to play through the mid-twentieth century.

Gibsonville School expanded over time to accommodate a growing population. In 1934 and 1937, rear wings were built, and in 1937, a home economics building was added to the school campus. Construction projects in the 1950s and 1960s indicate that Gibsonville School continued to grow during this time. The gymnasium was built in 1951 and a cafeteria and additional classrooms were added in 1955 and 1959. A final expansion to the main building was made in 1967.

The gymnasium, which was expanded in 1964, retains a high level of integrity. The one-story wing on the east end of the structure was constructed to house a large band room, though it was subdivided in the 1970s to create a football locker room. The gymnasium is notable as the home court of sisters Kay, Deborah, and Susan Yow, each of whom went on to be successful coaches and athletic directors. Kay Yow, in particular, achieved prominence as the first full-time women’s basketball coach at North Carolina State University, a role she held from 1975 until her death in 2009, and the coach of the 1988 Olympic women’s basketball team.

Gibsonville remained a union school until Eastern Guilford High School opened in 1973. The home economics building was converted to a public library shortly after the new high school was constructed, but the first floor of the main structure continued to serve as an elementary school until a new elementary school was built next door in 2006. While the 1950s freestanding classroom and cafeteria buildings have been demolished, the main building, including the 1967 rear wing, home economics building, and gymnasium are still extant.

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Little and Sullivan, “North Carolina Public Schools,” 14.

<sup>40</sup> *Principals' Report*, 1934-1935.

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According to the State Historic Preservation Office, there were more than 4,000 public school buildings in North Carolina in 1941, many of which had been built during the 1920s. By 1990, fewer than 1,000 of these schools remain.<sup>41</sup> According to historian Jim Sumner:

...surviving 1920s and 1930s public school building are important because they mark the first appearance of many modern characteristics. Consolidation, large-scale busing, and the increased use of the school as a community resource were all relatively new aspects of the school system. ... North Carolina's remaining pre-World War II schools are important and vivid reminders of that important period.<sup>42</sup>

Given the dwindling number of these facilities, Gibsonville School is a significant testament to this era of statewide educational reform.

A statewide focus on education in the 1920s resulted in the construction of new brick schools throughout the state. Gibsonville School replaced not only the subscription schools of the early twentieth century, but also the frame "Green School", the town's first public school, which burned in 1924. Due to the loss of Gibsonville Colored School, Gibsonville School remains the town's only twentieth-century school building and an important building from the consolidation era.

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<sup>41</sup> Sumner, "Brief History," 1.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 5.

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

The property boundary is shown as a heavy black line on the accompanying map at a scale of 1 inch equals 200 feet.

**Boundary Justification**

The property boundary includes the approximately five-acre southwest portion of the 33.86-acre parcel historically associated with Gibsonville School. The boundary encompasses the remaining historic school buildings. The east portion of the full tax parcel was excluded as it contains a modern school complex as was a heavily wooded area to its north and east. The north portion of the parcel was excluded as it contains only a modern parking lot and later athletic fields.

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**PHOTOGRAPHS**

The following information pertains to all photographs:

Name and Town: Gibsonville School, Gibsonville

County and State: Guilford County, North Carolina

Photographer: Heather Wagner Slane and Sunny Townes Stewart

Date: December 2013

Location of Digital Masters: State Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh, North Carolina

1. Main Building, Gibsonville School  
facing northwest
2. Main Building and 1967 Addition, Gibsonville School  
facing northwest
3. Main Building and Home Economics Building, Gibsonville School  
facing north
4. Main Building, Home Economics Building, and Gymnasium, Gibsonville School  
facing southeast
5. Main Building and 1967 Addition, Gibsonville School  
facing east
6. Main Building, Gibsonville School  
second-floor hallway, facing west
7. Main Building, Gibsonville School  
typical classroom
8. Main Building, Gibsonville School  
auditorium, facing west
9. Main Building, 1967 Addition, Gibsonville School  
typical classroom
10. Home Economics Building, Gibsonville School  
facing northeast
11. Home Economics Building, Gibsonville School

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classroom closets, facing northeast

12. Gymnasium, Gibsonville School  
facing northwest

13. Gymnasium, Gibsonville School  
interior, facing west



Gibsonville School  
500 Church St., Gibsonville  
Guilford County, NC

- 1. Main Building
- 2. Home Economics Building
- 3. Gymnasium

**Tax Map with National Register Boundary**

 National Register Boundary

Scale: 1" = 200'

