
7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Gastonia High School, designed in 1922-1924 by locally prominent architect, Hugh White, Sr.; is a distinguished example of the Tudor Revival as often applied to major public school buildings of the 1920s. Picturesque vocabulary relates the school to the Collegiate Gothic so often used in university buildings during the early decades of the twentieth century and deemed evocative of educational purposes.

The massive building, on a two-block site facing South York Street at the crest of a hill, is the visual focal point of the surrounding neighborhood. It stands three stories high beneath a flat roof enclosed by a parapet. The main (west) facade is dramatized by a four-story frontispiece projecting from the three central bays. The tripartite facade is twenty-one bays long. The two outermost bays project from either end of the facade, dividing the main elevation in three. The tripartite division reflects in elevation the horizontal organization of the E-shaped plan, ten bays deep at its widest.

The school is built of red brick laid in running bond and accented by fine grain grey Indiana limestone trim. The rough vertically-tooled faces of the bricks contrast with the smooth carborundum finish of the limestone. The molded stone string course of quoins, cornices, and other decoration signifies the functional division of the building into piano nobile above raised basement. A molded cornice divides the third story from the roof parapet. Utilitarian parapet spouts are treated as stone-set crenellations. These horizontal elements, like the tripartite vertical divisions, give coherence to the massive facade.

The symmetrical facade is heavily ornamented. The projecting outer bays of the facade above the basement level have blind faces with two-story rectangular panels outlined in decorative brickwork.

Double-hung sash windows are set between molded mullions and surmounted by multi-light transoms. They are framed by stone Tudor moldings and are organized in groups of twos and threes. At the story lines the walls are pierced by small rectangular metal vents. The vents have horizontal louvers. These act as exhausts for the classroom radiators which originally served the building's convection heating system. Slender brick buttresses strengthen the walls between the window bays along sections of the rear.

The central entrance pavilion is most dramatically treated. A huge two-tiered stone staircase is approached by a sidewalk from the street. The sidewalk is lined by flat-paneled cast iron posts, formerly linked by heavy chains inscribed with the names of graduates. The posts rise to gargoyle-like caps, cast in the shape of lions' heads. The staircase begins with a double flight and rises in a single run to the entrance.

The stone frontispiece is divided into a major central entrance bay and two narrower side bays. Pilasters and angle buttresses highlight these divisions which repeat the tripartite division of the entire facade. At the center bay of the principal

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level a bold Tudor arch gives access to the recessed entrance porch at the piano nobile level. The entry features richly molded Tudor arches, mullions, and paterae and a central cartouche with a fleur-de-lis and acanthus leaves.

The whole height of the frontispiece continues the fine Tudoresque decorative program. At the third and fourth stories are strips of five vertical casement windows. Between the third and fourth stories runs a bas-relief band of Gothic letters with names of esteemed pedagogic models: Emerson, Webster, Calhoun, etc. At the attic level a plaque carries the school name, also in Gothic letters. Finial cresting caps the parapet. A center arched shield has replaced the original attic cartouche with its supporting balustrade above the parapet.

The entrance, through the Tudor arch of the frontispiece, has flat-paneled double doors flanked by single ones. The entrance hall is richly finished with molded plaster and chair rail, picture molding, and cornice. The walls have flat panels outlined by torus molding enriched by garlanded reeding. One panel contains a plaque commemorating the founding of the school. From a plaster ceiling medallion of bell flowers and festoons hangs a circular chandelier. The floor has grey and cream-colored tiles, with a Greek fret border. A second Tudor arch links the entrance hall to the long hall running the length of the building.

In plan the building is E-shaped with the central circulation spine parallel to the main facade. Classrooms, offices, restrooms, and storage spaces open off the hall at regularly spaced intervals. Finish throughout most of the building is plastered, with heavy cornices, friezes, panelling, and some use of molded chair rails.

The central eastern wing contains a two-story, elegantly finished, auditorium. The auditorium, with a seating capacity of about 1650, has at the main level three sections of wooden and cast iron seats. The broad proscenium arch of the elevated stage is trimmed with acanthus, bead-and-reel, and garland reed moldings. The walls flanking the stage have flat rectangular panels outlined with Greek fret moldings. Rectilinear grilles with elaborate plaster ornamentation screen the organ pipes to either side of the stage. The wings contain spiral cast iron stairs. The balcony of the auditorium features a flat-paneled fascia with Greek fret borders and a victory wreath superimposed across a double swag anchored by garlanded torches.

A cafeteria and a library are housed below the auditorium in a space originally occupied by a gymnasium and an indoor swimming pool.

Many classrooms have retained the built-in glazed bookcases, paneled walls, chair rail molding, and framed black chalk boards that characterized the classrooms at the building's opening. While most of the classrooms are similar there is a single exceptionally well-lit and airy room occupying the entire attic level of the frontispiece. Remnants of an innovative telephone system remain in several classrooms. These small wired boxes are forerunners of the intercom system standardized much later in the century.

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At the lowest level a cast iron spiral staircase, just north of the main entrance to the basement, winds down into a below-grade boiler room. A coal cellar is adjacent.

Hugh White, principal of the firm of White, Streeter, and Chamberlain, had an extensive local practice in the 1920s and 1930s. The high school, acclaimed at its opening as "one of the finest specimens of school architecture in the State," is not only an individually distinctive monument but part of the larger architectural fabric that White's oeuvre comprises.

The Gastonia High School campus occupies a two-block site between Garrison Boulevard to the north and West Eighth Street to the south, fronting on South York Street. The dramatic front (west) facade of the main building overlooks a formal front lawn which contributes to the character of the school campus and the surrounding community. From South York Street a sidewalk lined with cast iron posts, originally linked by heavy chains, leads to the central entrance stairway. The center foreground of this formal two-tiered stairway contains a flagpole surrounded by sidewalk and large shrubbery. To emphasize the formal symmetry of the 1922 structure, a circular driveway serves as vehicular entry to the school from South York Street. The driveway intersects the central entrance to the building through a porte-cochere formed by the upper level of the entrance stairs. By means of this driveway, one could enter the school at the basement level without being subject to the natural elements.

The large Deodera Cedars dominate the front lawn of the school. Although the trees are not believed to have been on the site originally, they add to the formal character of the front campus. Many other smaller trees and shrubs are located in the school yard.

To the north side of the school is a large parking area accessible from Garrison Boulevard. This parking lot is foreground to the school's original stadium. Directly behind the school lies the original concrete grandstands which were a part of a 450 by 500-foot stadium that seated 5,000 people. The valley of what appears to have been a natural sloping terrain was a perfect location for the playing field of the modern stadium. With the later building additions for restrooms and a pressbox, this stadium still serves an active junior high school.

To the south of the stadium and east of the 1922 school building, a structure was built to serve as a combination band building and field house. Adjacent to the stadium, the site for this two level structure enabled a west entrance at ground level for the upper story and an east entrance for the lower level. The top story served as a band room and the bottom story functioned as the athletic field house. Although not of the Tudor Revival, the simple, red-brick structure fits into the context of the campus. A certain symmetry can be found in the band building/field house. Rectangular in plan, the structure is three bays by four bays. Exterior detail is limited to a common bond brick coursing from footing to the parapet cap surrounding the flat roof.

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The band room can be entered from a raised sidewalk connected to the main building through a central entrance. This west facade contains the double-door entrance with transom flanked on each side by a pair of double-hung sash windows. The north and south facades, not being exact duplicates, are dominated by the eight over eight double-hung sash windows arranged in groups of two at the upper level. The lower level fenestration was more conservative with single sash pairs placed directly under the windows of the upper level. These windows at the lower level are located above normal height and hinged inward to provide ventilation for the dressing rooms. Fenestration on the east facade of the building is composed of smaller eight-over-eight, double-hung sash placed individually, two per bay across the top story. The lower facade contains a center entrance for the field house.

The interior plan of both stories reflect the simplicity of the building's exterior. At the lower level, an office and storage room divide two dressing areas. The upper level plan consists of a central entrance foyer flanked by an office to one side and an equipment storage room to the other. The rear three bays of this level contain the band room, with its hardwood floors and plaster walls.

In the early 1950s, plans were made for a classroom addition to the main building. The site of the 1955 addition is the southeast corner of the existing building only yards in front of the band building/field house. Being connected to the center wing of the main building by an open stair tower, the new three-story addition served as the wall to a newly formed courtyard for the campus. The critical connection for the new addition to the 1922 building was tastefully done with the use of the open area.

The steel frame addition, being six bays long and three bays wide, followed many patterns set by its Tudor Revival predecessor. Maintaining the scale, the new building is three levels above ground beneath a flat roof. Not to complicate the issue of style, this rectangular building incorporates red brick with horizontal bands of glass. No ornamentation is visible on the building addition as it functions quietly as background fabric.

The T-shaped corridors serve duplicate planned floors. Each level has five classrooms, with the exception of the first floor with four classrooms, restrooms, and teacher's lounge. The wide corridors lined with lockers are connected to the southernmost wing of the main building with steel frame bridges at the second and third levels. The basement level is a completely open area in unfinished concrete block. This level serves as the student center and can adapt to varied uses.

The east facade appears as striated brick and glass at all four levels. The fenestration and brick skin reveal the curtain wall system in use. On the south facade, the metal framed windows only reveal two of the three bays, with entry to the basement at street level. The west facade faces the interior courtyard with the steel bridges penetrating the skin at the higher stories.

The Frank L. Ashley Junior High School campus, as can be seen today, represents the evolution of a school as functional changes occurred.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1922, 1924 **Builder/Architect** Hugh White, Sr., Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

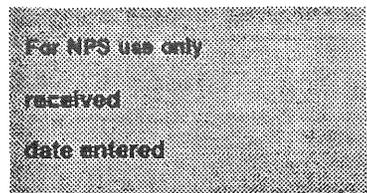
Gastonia High School, completed in 1924, stands as one of the finest extant schools built during the formative years of the state's modern educational system. Large and multi-functional, including a swimming pool and gymnasium, the school symbolized the trend towards smaller classrooms and development of the total student, physical as well as mental. A strong emphasis was placed on vocational training. Designed by local architect, Hugh White, Sr., the \$500,000 building, solidly built and richly ornamented in the Tudoresque style so popular for schools of this era, reflected Gastonia's booming textile prosperity. The school served the educational needs of the community for over half a century. The addition of compatible wings and interior alterations coincided with the growth of the city and statewide efforts to standardize and refine educational policies.

Criteria Assessment:

- A. Gastonia High School is associated with the modernization of the state's educational system in the first quarter of the twentieth century and is one of the finest extant architectural products of that effort.
- B. Gastonia High School is perhaps the largest commission executed by Hugh White, a local architect responsible for many of Gastonia's buildings of the early decades of this century financed by the profits of the textile economy.
- C. Designed and constructed during the years 1922-1924, Gastonia High School is one of the most distinctive, handsomely detailed, and beautifully built examples of Tudor Revival educational architecture in North Carolina. The design and construction of this building is contemporary with the construction of several (now) landmark churches, large residences, and schools, the most accomplished being the west campus of Duke University.

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Construction of the old Gastonia High School between 1922 and 1924 reflected both the prosperity of the decade and the changing philosophy towards public education. By 1919 Gaston County had emerged as a major national textile center and had more cotton mills than any other county unit in the United States. Gastonia, with a 1919 population of about 15,000, had forty one mills whose workers earned up to \$6.50 a day.¹ Prosperity and a population boom brought on by expansion of the textile industry fostered a favorable climate for new school construction. Even though a \$75,000 stone and concrete school had been built in 1914 to house grades 1-11, the \$500,000 bond issue for a separate high school (grades 8-11) passed easily.² Local architect, Hugh White, Sr., founder of the firm of White, Streeter, and Chamberlain, designed the new school, adopting the most up-to-date philosophies of education into his plans for the structure.³

Construction on Gastonia High School began in 1922, but the preceding five years had seen a number of reforms in public education. The six months school term (later expanded to eight then to nine months) had been put into effect; teacher certification came under state regulation and salary schedules were set accordingly; vocational education was extended; school bus transportation was inaugurated; and consolidation of rural school-houses was begun. An altered philosophy of education emphasized the total student development, physical as well as mental, and also included practical training and appreciation of the arts.⁴

Hugh White, whose considerable influence in Gastonia can be seen in the City Hall, Webb Theater, old Gastonia Library, Citizens Bank Building, and numerous residences, planned for the three story brick school to contain twenty nine classrooms, a swimming pool, auditorium, gymnasium, and 1,100 volume library. Telephones in every room served as a precursor of the present intercom system. Back of the main building, plans called for a stadium (capable of seating 5,000) and tennis courts. White acted as the supervising architect while J. A. Gardner of Charlotte was the contractor.⁵ When completed in 1924, Gastonia High School stood ready to meet the needs of a rapidly expanding population and a revised educational philosophy, a philosophy that was in the final stages of forming the modern public school system. The \$500,000 price tag was absorbed entirely by the people of Gastonia who, indicative of the prosperity of the city in the 1920s, contributed a \$15,000 pipe organ for the auditorium.⁶ Gastonia was justifiably proud of its achievement:

The building represents the last word in architect's skill and contractor's ingenuity. It is generally conceded to be one of the finest specimens of school architecture in the state, and one of the most complete school plants in the South. Visitors from large cities commenting on it declare that it is as fine as in any part of the country.⁷

Classes began in September, 1924, with 271 students enrolled in the eighth through the eleventh grades.⁸ Student enrollment peaked in 1967-1968 at 1,476 before dropping back to 1,388 in 1970, the last year of high school service.⁹ But many changes had taken place during that time. Physically, the building underwent several alterations. A north wing was added in 1929, and in 1955 the south wing was begun. Both were so well adapted to the original fabric that it is difficult to detect the additions. The gymnasium and swimming pool were removed between 1947 and 1949 to provide space for a new cafeteria and a larger library. Vocational laboratories, part of White's original design, were remodeled

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for regular classroom use during that same period.¹⁰ Academic changes included the elimination of the eighth and ninth grades (1939 and 1949 respectively) and the addition of the twelfth grade in 1940, transforming the facility into a senior high school according to the prevailing philosophies of effective education.¹¹ The present configuration of the plant reflects its efforts to keep pace with the growth and development of the modern education system.

In 1955, Gastonia High School was changed to Frank L. Ashley Senior High in honor of its retiring principal who had held the post since 1929.¹² By the mid 1960s, the post World War II "baby boom" had swelled the enrollment of high schools, and the student population outstripped the facilities at Ashley Senior High. A new school opened in 1970 and, after nearly half a century, the old structure closed its doors to high school students.¹³

The old Gastonia High School, nevertheless, persevered in its service of education for Gastonia's youth. For the decade of the 1970s, it functioned as Ashley Junior High School. A school bond issue passed in 1979 included the erection of a new junior high to replace Ashley, but concern for the future of the old building and public interest in its preservation have raised questions currently in negotiation.¹⁴ The fate of old Gastonia High School hangs in the balance.

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FOOTNOTES

¹Hugh Talmage Lefler and Albert Ray Newsome, The History of a Southern State: North Carolina (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1973), 583-584, hereinafter cited as Lefler and Newsome, North Carolina; and Robert F. Cope and Manly Wade Wellman, The County of Gaston: Two Centuries of a North Carolina Region (Charlotte: Gaston County Historical Society, 1961), 160-162.

²Records of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, High School Principals' Reports, 1923-1924, Gaston County. State Archives, Raleigh, hereinafter cited as Principals' Reports with appropriate dates; and Gastonia Daily Gazette, May 22, 1924.

³Gastonia Daily Gazette, May 22, 1924; and D. J. Whitener, "Education for the People," The North Carolina Historical Review, XXXVI (April, 1959), 187-196, hereinafter cited as Whitener, "Education for the People."

⁴Whitener, "Education for the People," 193-194; Lefler and Newsome, North Carolina, 601; Gastonia Daily Gazette, May 22, 1924; and Principals' Reports, 1924-1925, Curriculum of Courses.

⁵Principals' Reports, 1924-1925; Gastonia Daily Gazette, May 22, 1924; and The Gastonia Gazette, May 19, 1980.

⁶Gastonia Daily Gazette, May 22, 1924.

⁷Gastonia Daily Gazette, May 22, 1924.

⁸Principals' Reports, 1924-1925.

⁹See Gaston County Historic Properties Commission, "Proposal of the 1924 Gastonia High School, Gastonia, N. C. to the Gaston County Historic Properties Register, August 18, 1981." Typescript copy in Survey and Planning Branch, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, appendix, hereinafter cited as "Gastonia High School Proposal."

¹⁰Gaston County's Educational Heritage (Gastonia: Gaston County Unit of the North Carolina Educators' Association, 1957), 12, 14. See also "Gastonia High School Proposal," 5.

¹¹Principals' Reports, 1938-1940, 1948-1950. For the changing philosophy of education, see David Leroy Corbitt, (ed), Addresses, Letters and Papers of Clyde Roark Hoey, Governor of North Carolina, 1937-1941. (Raleigh: Council of State, 1950), IX-XIV.

¹²Gaston County's Education Heritage, 14. See also "Gastonia High School Proposal," 4.

¹³"Gastonia High School Proposal," 6, appendix.

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¹⁴ The Gastonia Gazette, July 12, 1982; Minutes of the Gastonia City Council, September 15, 1981; and Minutes of the Gaston County Board of Commissioners, July 22, 1982, Adoption of Resolution Number 176, "An Ordinance Designating A Building and Property Known As 'The Former Gastonia High School' On South York Street In Gastonia, North Carolina As Historic Property."

9. Major Bibliographical References

Cope, Robert F. And Wellman, Manley Wade. The County of Gaston: Two Centuries of a North Carolina Region. Charlotte: Gaston County Historical Society, 1961.

10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property 7.86 acres

Quadrangle name Gastonia North

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1	7	4	8	2	8	5	0	3	9	0	0	8	9	0
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B

Zone	Easting				Northing									

C

Zone	Easting				Northing									

D

Zone	Easting				Northing									

E

Zone	Easting				Northing									

F

Zone	Easting				Northing									

G

Zone	Easting				Northing									

H

Zone	Easting				Northing									

Verbal boundary description and justification

See attached tax map. Property outlined in red.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county N/A code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

Architectural description by Mary Alice Dixon Hinson and Tony L. Gray; historical name/title research by Jerry Cross (Staff)

organization Division of Archives and History date

street & number 109 E. Jones Street telephone 733-6545

city or town Raleigh state N. C. 27611

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature William S. Price, Jr.

title State Historic Preservation Officer date February 7, 1983

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Gaston County Historic Properties Commission." Proposal of the 1924 Gastonia High School, Gastonia, N. C. to the Gaston County Historic Properties Register, August 18, 1981." Typescript. Survey and Planning Branch, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.

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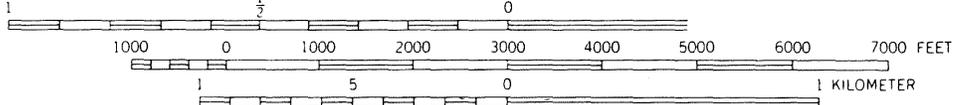
Whitener, D. J. "Education for the People." The North Carolina Historical Review, XXXVI (April, 1959), 187-196.



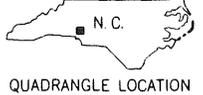
Gastonia High School
 Gastonia North Quad.
 Zone 17 Scale 1:24000
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SOUTH GASTONIA 1.1 MI. (CLOVER 1:62 500)
 YORK, S.C. 21 MI. 4754 II

SCALE 1:24000



CONTOUR INTERVAL 20 FEET
 DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL



QUADRANGLE LOCATION

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
 FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242
 A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

