

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 Delgado School

other names/site number Washington Catlett School

#### 2. Location

street & number 1930 Colwell Avenue N/A not for publication

city or town Wilmington N/A vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county New Hanover code 129 zip code 28403

#### 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 forth 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.)

Jeffrey Crow SHPO 8/17/01  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources  
State of 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

I hereby certify that the property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<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): _____	_____	_____

Delgado School  
Name of Property

New Hanover County, NC  
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 the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	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

Education Related Warehouse

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

Domestic / Institutional Housing

Work in progress

**7. Description**

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

Neo-classical Revival

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Brick

roof Tin

other \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

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

Delgado School  
Name of Property

New Hanover County, NC  
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** a birthplace or grave.
- 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.

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

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Education

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1914-1951 - education

1914-1938 - architecture

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1914, 1924, 1938 additions

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Gause, James F., Jr.

McCarl, Roger C.

Boney, Leslie N., Sr.

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Cape Fear Museum / New Hanover Co. Library

Delgado School  
Name of Property

New Hanover County, NC  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property 1.27 acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 18 230780 3791250  
Zone Easting Northing  
2         

3           
Zone Easting Northing  
4         

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 Gregory C. Gaweda, Administrator

organization Wilmington Housing Finance and Development date April 10, 2001

street & number 305 Chestnut Street telephone 910-341-4661

city or town Wilmington state NC zip code 28401

**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 Good Shepherd Ministries, Inc. Randall Medlock, Director

street & number 511 Queen Street telephone 910-251-1124

city or town Wilmington state NC zip code 28401

**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 listings. 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 20503.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Delgado School  
Wilmington, North Carolina

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### Setting

Delgado School is located on 1.27 acres of land in an area of mixed commercial and residential use that is the former Delgado Mill Village in Wilmington, North Carolina. The setting was originally rural, but was engulfed by urban activity and annexed by the City of Wilmington in 1940. The school currently undergoing restoration is a single story, Neo-classical Revival Style, brick building with approximately 13,000 square feet. The school grounds are generally flat and consist of a mature mixed grass lawn and a mature dogwood tree in front of the school. Numerous mature azaleas are flourishing along the foundation and several mature longleaf pines border the property on both sides. A stand of mature longleaf pines is directly behind the building. There is a concrete sidewalk along the roadside curb. A concrete driveway apron located on the east-side of the building transitions into a gravel driveway leading to a gravel parking deck in the rear of the building.

### The Exterior

Delgado School was built in 1914 and enlarged through a series of additions in 1924 (auditorium and central classrooms), 1938 (east and west wings) and 1953 (kitchen). There is also evidence that the 1924 renovation included a change in floor plan to the existing building. The additions were compatible in style, scale and materials with the original Neo-classical Revival style of this one-story building. The Neo-Classical Revival features are identified by the symmetrical massing and treatment of the central entrance pavilion.<sup>1</sup> The exterior walls are red brick laid in a stretcher bond. The low-pitched gable and hip roof is sheathed in terne metal construction, with notable plateaus at the crown of each pitched roof, typical of the period of construction. There is a parapet wall separating the roof of the east wing and the roof of the center portion of the school. The parapet wall corresponds with the original exterior wall prior to the 1938 addition. Terne metal roofing was used on the original structure as well as the 1924, 1938 and 1953 additions.<sup>2</sup> The roof has been restored to its original condition by utilizing terne metal on areas that were not salvageable. In-roof gutters run the entire length of pitched roof on the original structure and most of the 1938 addition. A wood entablature with molded cornice and simple molding near the base of the plain frieze runs uninterrupted around the entire building except for the auditorium wing. Similarly, a cast stone water table, just above the crawl space ventilation grates runs the entire building perimeter except on the auditorium.

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The structure has several types of windows, each type specific to its phase of construction. Most are tall double-hung sash, which have been removed for restoration or replacement in kind. The front windows of the structure built in 1914 are six over six, double-hung, sash windows. The panes are 23" X 12". Each sash is 50"L X 40.5"W. Six-light transoms of the same style flank the main entrance. There are twelve windows of this variety on the front of the building. There are ten window openings on the rear of the building in which the windows and casings were completely deteriorated. The remainder were eliminated during the 1938 addition. All windows have concrete windowsills. The second type of window used are those found in the additions built in 1924 and 1938. These windows are nine over nine, double-hung, sash windows. The panes are 14" X 12". Each sash is 45.75"L X 40"W. The total length of each window is 90.25". They are hung with 1/2" cotton rope and weighted with 12" tubular ballast. These windows are prevalent in the east and west wing additions as well the auditorium. In the 1924 auditorium addition, windows have three-light transoms. The third window type used is virtually identical to those of the 1924 and 1938 additions. The notable exception is that they operate on a spring-loaded slide instead of a sash rope mechanism. These windows were used in the 1953 addition. The glide mechanisms must be replaced. Windows are typically installed in casement groups except in the 1953 (kitchen) addition.

The front entrance gable presents Classical Revival features with Doric order details. The pediment is trimmed with a combination of four-inch and five-inch crown moldings. There are 13 triglyphs spaced at three-foot intervals on the frieze. Each triglyph is headed by a 5" X 7" modillion block trimmed with 3/4" quarter round trim. Each triglyph is adorned with a guttae at its base. There is a modillion course of 15 blocks on the entablature, also trimmed with quarter round. The tympanum of the gable is finished with plaster and the base topped with terne metal. The center of the gable features a circular window with a floral muntin pattern. The circular window casing is separated in quarters by milled wood keystones. Two twenty-foot Doric columns in antis are flanked by brick walls with pairs of heavy brick pilasters. On each side, between the pilasters is a six over six double-hung sash window with cast stone keystones. Each pilaster is topped with a heavily crowned capital, which is of solid construction rather than applied milled moldings.

The front entry doors are complimented with sidelights. The side entrance to the school leads to a vestibule in the west wing. It has a cast stone keystone and three-light transom

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Wilmington, North Carolina

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over the doorway. The rear kitchen door has a cast stone keystone and transom leading directly into the wash room. The exterior of the auditorium has a porch at each of the three entrances. A chimney is on the southwest corner of the auditorium. The chimney vented a coal furnace located in a basement beneath the auditorium. The exterior walls feature brick pilasters with tapered capitals. The Auditorium has transoms over each window and door. The rear door is 41" wide. There are double door exits on both sides of the auditorium. Large transoms top the double-doors on both sides. The rear entrance to the east wing leads to a vestibule and the main corridor. It has a cast stone keystone and a transom on top of the doorway.

### **Interior**

The original 1914 building, composed of a central hall and two large classrooms, was shorter in length, amplifying the impressive front gable and pediment. The original building was renovated, creating the corridor leading to the east and west wings. The corridors turn south in conjunction with the 1938 additions. The corridor has two swivel doors separating the 1914 building from the 1938 additions. The swivel doors are the only doors separating hallways throughout the building.

When entering the main entrance, there is a secondary entry arch that creates a small foyer on the main hall. The hall continues down the center of the east and west extensions, and classrooms adjoin the corridor on both sides. Four classrooms are on the front of the building and two on the back of the building. The corridors turn ninety degrees and extend to the 1938 additions that are now the east and west wings. The west wing originally had two classrooms added in 1938. One classroom was converted to a cafeteria after the 1953 kitchen addition was built. The east wing contains a small library and two classrooms, and the corridor leads to a vestibule on the rear of the building. Doors in the main hall lead to the rear of the stage. The halls also lead to the two entrances for the Auditorium. The walls in the hallways are adorned with a chair-rail and 8 1/4" baseboard.

The classrooms are all generally 30' X 20'. Transoms for ventilation typically top doorways. Chalk boards and tack boards are present in the west wing hallway and in the former classrooms. Twelve-foot ceilings accommodate the high windows throughout the school except in the auditorium. The original plaster ceilings are nonexistent except in the 1953 kitchen. Interior walls were finished with plaster throughout the structure. Plaster

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Wilmington, North Carolina

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on interior walls is mostly intact. Exterior plaster walls are refitted with sheetrock. The flooring is tongue and groove heart pine. Where it has deteriorated beyond repair, it is replaced with plywood sub-flooring and salvaged or new pine flooring.

The 1924 Auditorium, commonly referred to as the "Chapel" by students, has five-inch crown molding that creates a more formal atmosphere. The stage is decorated with substantial pilasters and heavy dentil moldings. The stage base, lined at the front by footlights, has a series of trimmed panels. The end panels are removable, permitting access to storage under the stage. The Auditorium is well lighted due to the numerous windows and transoms surrounding the exterior walls. The windows on the sides of the auditorium are in casement groups of two. The windows in the rear are in single-window casements. The maple floor is slanted from the rear down to the side doors. Forty-eight of the original seats have been re-affixed.

The restrooms are located at the end of the 1938 additions, next to entrances on the east and west wings. Both restrooms have clay tile floors. Commodes are separated by beaded board partitions.

The kitchen was built in 1953. The plaster ceiling is the only remaining section of plaster ceilings in the building. The interior walls of the kitchen are painted cinder block. The floors are clay tile. There is a can wash room and a small bathroom at the rear of the kitchen. Very minor changes have been made to the exterior of the building since 1978. Two handicap ramps have been added. One ramp is on the rear of the building at the east wing, the other is on the side entrance of the west wing. The vestibules at each of these entrances have been enclosed to permit indoor access to the existing restrooms. All restroom fixtures have been updated to accommodate adults and the kitchen has a more residential atmosphere than the once demanding needs of the school.

### Statement of Significance

The Delgado School building is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of education. It is of local significance as it served as a public school in Wilmington beginning in 1914, and the period of significance for Criterion A extends from 1914 to 1951. Renamed in honor of Professor Washington Catlett in 1940, the school remained in educational service until 1978. It has been

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Delgado School  
Wilmington, North Carolina

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determined that the building does not possess exceptional significance, and therefore the fifty-year cut-off date for Criterion A is the end of the period of significance.

The original frame Delgado School building, located on Delgado Street in Wilmington, was founded by a public-private partnership between Delgado Cotton Mill and the New Hanover County Board of Education in June, 1900,<sup>3</sup> the same year the North Carolina State Legislature enacted compulsory education laws. A new era of education reform began with the administration of Governor Charles B. Aycock (term 1901-1905). State-directed efforts resulted in an improved educational curriculum and expanded growth of the public school systems across the state. Subsequently, New Hanover County leaders sponsored bond programs resulting in over \$500,000 toward new school construction between 1914 and 1915. The New Hanover County Board of Education replaced the old Delgado School with the current brick building in 1914. Additions to the brick building were built in 1924, 1938 and 1953.

The original wood frame school was built by Delgado Cotton Mill to educate children of the mill village. The Mill also used the school for vocational education. It was staffed by the newly formed New Hanover County Board of Education. When the mill village required greater school capacity, a land exchange was arranged between Delgado Mills and the New Hanover County School System. Delgado Cotton Mill provided the land. Primary education was conducted at the school until 1968. The School then served as a special-needs education facility and subsequently an audiovisual warehouse for the New Hanover County School System. Acquired by a local developer in 1988, the School was left vacant for over twenty years.<sup>4</sup> The property was purchased by Wilmington Housing Finance and Development (WHFD) in 1999, and the school building is currently (1999-2000) being rehabilitated as housing.

The Delgado School is also eligible for the National Register under Criterion C in the area of architecture as a significant local example of the nationally popular, Neo-Classical Revival style, a style commonly used for schools and civic buildings throughout the state in the early 1900s. Delgado School is one of only three surviving public school buildings of the era in New Hanover County that exhibit classical design. The remaining historic schools were generally built later in the Art Deco style. The period of significance for architecture is from 1914 through 1938, the date of the last addition built more than fifty years ago.

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Many of the schools constructed during the early 1900's were the product of compulsory education laws passed in 1900 or were founded as private institutions. Schools built in the 1920's and 1930's were larger masonry multi-classroom structures due to countywide school consolidation efforts. Delgado School was the notable exception to this trend in school design, in that its almost exclusive service to the Delgado Mill Village limited its initial size. Nonetheless, the larger county schools subsequently consolidated the Delgado School student population in 1968 when the mill closed.

### **Educational Context: The Creation of State Compulsory Education 1900-1920 and The Consolidation Era of the New Hanover County School System 1920-1968**

Very little is known about public education in Wilmington prior to 1850. It appears that educational endeavors before the 1830s were created by missionary organizations, or individual private tutors were retained to educate the children of Wilmington's upper class. Attempts to set up public schools in Wilmington occurred as early as 1843. The Cape Fear Lodge No.2 of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows established a school and named as principal Robert McLaughlin. Levin Meginney made a second effort at the same site in 1856.<sup>5</sup>

By the end of the 1850s public sentiment began to support the creation of a statewide public school system. A combination of public and private interests resulted in the establishment of the Union Free School in Wilmington. Local citizens raised enough funds to purchase a lot and build a school on South Sixth Street. The school opened in 1857 and operated until July 1, 1863 with a combination of public and private funds.<sup>6</sup> During the Civil War years most educational endeavors throughout the south closed. When hostilities ceased, efforts emerged to address the three major educational problems: education of freed slaves, church schools for whites and development of public education. The American Missionary Association of the Congregational Church led efforts to educate the emancipated black population. As early as 1865, the Association opened a school for freed slaves.<sup>7</sup> Mary Washington Howe, the daughter of free blacks, returned to Wilmington to teach her own people. She was educated by private tutors and at a Quaker school in Philadelphia. She became a teacher and subsequently the principal of the Williston Grammar School, which opened in 1873. Williston Grammar School was the first public school for African American children.<sup>8</sup>

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In 1869, the Academy of Incarnation opened on the corner of Second and Nun streets to become the first Catholic school in North Carolina. The Unitarian Church sent Amy Bradley to North Carolina with the intention of educating blacks and whites together. Upon finding that the American Missionary Association had already been an active educational ministry within the African American Community, she focused on educating poor whites.<sup>9</sup>

In 1882, the first effective educational organization was formed as the City Public Schools. The organization was directed by M.C.S. Noble. By 1883 two more schools for African American children were opened: Peabody Graded School and Williston Graded School.<sup>10</sup>

The County Board of Education was organized under the leadership of the five county commissioners. The schools were organized into districts under the stewardship of three committeemen in each district. The Committeemen exercised all the general management functions for each school district.<sup>11</sup>

In 1886, a new Union School building was constructed on the corner of Sixth and Ann streets. All pupils attending public school were transferred to the new building. In 1889, the Hemenway School was built at the corner of Fifth and Chestnut streets. Fires later claimed the 1886 Union School and 1889 Hemenway School. The lost buildings were immediately replaced on the same property. The City was given control of the Tileston Normal School in 1897. This development created full-scale, free public education program in Wilmington.<sup>12</sup>

On July 5, 1897, a separate Board of Education was established. The Board consisted of three members, one of whom was black. Professor M.C.S. Noble was elected as county supervisor of schools. He was succeeded by John J. Blair.<sup>13</sup> In 1900, statewide compulsory education laws marked the beginning of a major expansion in public education. High schools became state funded. The first bond issue was passed in 1912, which raised \$500,000 for the purpose of building new schools. In the early 1900s, New Hanover County built several schools including: Hemenway, William Hooper, Cornelius Harnett, Williston Industrial, Winter Park and Delgado schools. Tileston School and Isaac Bear School construction was funded from private sources, as was the land contribution for Delgado School. The Isaac Bear School was paid for with a donation

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from the estate of the late Isaac Bear.<sup>14</sup> Tileston School was built in 1872 and operated as a private school until it was given to the Wilmington City School system in 1897. Education in early twentieth century Wilmington and New Hanover County, although segregated, was very progressive for the majority African American population. Williston Industrial School opened in 1915 within several blocks of Delgado School to provide vocational education to the African American community while Delgado School served the white community of Delgado Village.<sup>15</sup> In 1920, the Wilmington and New Hanover County School Boards consolidated under unified leadership. In the same year, New Hanover High School was finished and placed into service. With the exception of Williston Industrial School, New Hanover High School was huge in comparison to other local schools.

In 1924, national Child Labor laws were enacted resulting in an increase in student population statewide. Several schools received additions or outbuildings to accommodate the increased student population. Delgado School received an additional expansion during the Depression as part of a Public Works Administration project.<sup>16</sup> By 1953, Williston High School was opened. School consolidation continued throughout the 1950's and 1960's. In 1968, desegregation forced the closure of Williston High School. The student bodies of Williston and Washington Catlett (Delgado) School were consolidated into New Hanover High School. Williston became an integrated junior high school and Washington Catlett (Delgado) School was utilized as a remedial education school and audiovisual warehouse.<sup>17</sup>

### **Architectural Context: Early Twentieth Century School Buildings in Wilmington**

Prior to 1900 there were no brick public schools within the county and very few throughout the state. After 1900, numerous large schools were built in New Hanover County. The proliferation of school construction in the early 1900s was the result of statewide compulsory education laws passed in 1900. There were already numerous small community schools throughout the county and some larger private schools. Most rural schools were small one or two room structures of frame construction. The original Delgado School of 1900 at the outskirts of Wilmington was no different.

The current 1914 brick school was typical of its time and amongst the first schools in the state to be designed by a professional architect.<sup>18</sup> During the early 1900s, many civic

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buildings, including schools, were designed in the Neo-classical Revival style. School building designs incorporated these stately characteristics because the formality raised the level of significance society placed on a particular building. John J. Blair, Superintendent of Wilmington City Schools presented a paper at the State Teachers Assembly in 1914 addressing the importance of "Buildings, Grounds, Equipment, and Physical Conditions". He stated "The buildings in which the school system is housed should rank with churches and public buildings in beauty of architecture".<sup>19</sup> In New Hanover County, these popular styles were vividly exhibited in masonry educational buildings after the local passage of a school bond in 1912. As funds became available from the bond in 1914, school construction began to proliferate. It was not until the Art Deco and Art Moderne styles became popular that larger, countywide consolidated schools were built.

Cornelius Harnett, Hemenway, Hooper, Isaac Bear and Tileston schools are the only other historic schools that exhibited the traditional Neo-classical Revival architecture prevalent in civic construction in the late 1800's and early 1900's.<sup>20</sup> Tileston School (1872) is completely restored, modernized and operating as a private school. The Cornelius Harnett School (1914) is in a ruinous state. The William Hooper School (1914) has been restored and renovated for housing. The Isaac Bear School (1912) has been demolished.

Delgado School and its school district was smaller in size than many other schools and districts of the same era. Its original design was particularly stately due to its prominent front portico and relatively short building length. The new brick school was completed in 1914. The structure was of "fireproof" masonry construction and had three rooms. Out-buildings behind the new school continued in use for teaching separate grades. The brick school cost \$8,055.25.<sup>21</sup> The school was expanded in 1924, due to the enactment of Child Labor laws that prevented children under the age of fourteen from working in the mill.<sup>22</sup> The 1924 addition included an auditorium and a reconfiguration of classroom space.

The school was again expanded in 1938-1939 with four classrooms, as a Depression era Public Works Administration project. The increase of students attending school precipitated the addition of classrooms on each end and the rear of the building. Two wings were built on the east and west end of the structure to accommodate the new rooms.<sup>23</sup> Classes were also conducted in wood frame buildings (no longer standing), located behind the brick school building. In 1953, a kitchen was added.

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In spite of its numerous expansions, Delgado School remained small in comparison to its contemporaries and its diminutive size was amplified by the later construction of countywide consolidated schools. The size of Delgado School is perhaps the leading reason for its eventual abandonment by the school system.

James F. Gause, Jr., AIA (1885-1922) was the architect of the 1914 Delgado School. He was born in Wilmington, North Carolina, on June 15, 1885 to James F. Gause and Fannie Caroline Jones. His family was very prominent in business, especially shipping. He was married to Esther Edson Gause. James F. Gause, Jr., specialized in institutional buildings and became very prominent throughout the state. His most notable local works were the Saint Andrews Church of the Covenant, Kenan Memorial Building and Fire Station #2. His office was staffed by another notable architect, Leslie N. Boney, AIA who completed all of Mr. Gause's unfinished business upon his death on June 2, 1922.<sup>24</sup>

Roger C. McCarl, AIA (1890-1942), designed the 1924 additions. He was born in Florida on September 18, 1890. His family moved to Deadwood, North Dakota while he was a youth. He earned a degree in Architecture from the University of Pennsylvania in 1909 and became affiliated with Lynch and Ford Architects in Wilmington, North Carolina, for whom he worked from 1910 to 1918. Mr. McCarl was drafted into the United States Army during World War I and he was released from service in 1919. He worked independently in southeastern North Carolina and subsequently joined the office of a prominent Wilmington architect Leslie N. Boney, where he specialized in institutional buildings. Mr. McCarl eventually set up his own practice in Statesville, N.C.<sup>25</sup>

Leslie N. Boney, AIA, designed the 1938 and 1953 additions to the school. Leslie N. Boney (1880-1964) was born in Wallace, N.C. in 1880. He was educated by a private schoolmaster. He enrolled in the North Carolina College of Agriculture and Mechanics in 1899. He was convinced to enroll in the textile curriculum but changed course in his junior year. His innate drawing ability attracted him to the architectural field. Lacking the money to attend an additional year to earn a degree in architecture, Mr. Boney took all the architecture classes he could and graduated with a degree in textiles in 1903. He first came to Wilmington by accepting a draftsman position with a notable local architect Charles McMillen. After working for several other architectural

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firms throughout the Carolinas, he returned to Wilmington in 1920, to work for James F. Gause, AIA. When Mr. Gause died in 1922, Mr. Boney continued to manage their unfinished projects and to operate as an architect specializing in school designs from 1922 until his death in 1964.<sup>26</sup>

### Historic Background

The history of Delgado School is inextricably tied to the history of the cotton mill and mill village of the same name. The first cotton mill in North Carolina was built near Lincolnton around 1813. By the 1840s the textile industry was surging in the South. Following industry-wide turbulence throughout the mid-1800s, the industry again gained momentum in the 1880s. Climate, lower taxes, inexpensive land, cost of building, and proximity to cotton sources, all contributed to heightened competition between cotton mills of the south and those of New England. This is evidenced by the national southward migratory trend of the textile industry. Southern mills generally were more profitable operations than mills in the north. Early southern cotton mills often had no population base from which to draw their labor. Most often, mills would construct entire communities in which to house and sustain their work force drawn from area farms and utilized entire families as a means of production. Mills often provided churches, schools, medical care and consumer goods to employees and residents of their communities. An example of such an early textile community was Delgado Village, built by Delgado Mills in New Hanover County, North Carolina, in 1899-1900. In 1899, Edwin C. Holt, son of a pioneering Alamance County textile manufacturer, began exploring textile opportunities in the Wilmington area. On May 12, 1899, *The Weekly Star* reported that Mr. E.C Holt had made known his plans to build a cotton mill in the area. The mill was to be named in honor of his wife, the former Miss Delores Delgado Stevens of Charleston, South Carolina. *The Weekly Star* reported on May 26, 1899, that a board of directors was established and that it included General Julian S. Carr (Durham), Colonel K.M. Murchison (New York), Mr. E.C. Holt, Mr. E.J. Powers, Mr. James H. Chadbourn and Mr. R.R. Bellamy, the latter three all of Wilmington.

The 100-acre site for the new mill was purchased from Mr. William Augustus Wright, a prominent local attorney and real estate investor. The mill site was chosen due to its proximity to the Atlantic Coastline Railroad and the Wrightsville Turnpike (currently Wrightsville Avenue) which intersected the railroad and a mineral spring. Delgado Mills

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began construction of the mill and a host of cottages simultaneously. The initial homes were prefabricated and brought in by rail, most of the later cottages were built on site. The cottages were intended to house 250 families, whom Delgado Mills projected would fulfill its labor force. The TideWater Power Company built a trolley system in 1907 to transport Wilmington citizens to a new beach resort being built at Shell Island. Until 1935, the trolley was the only land access to the island now known as Wrightsville Beach. The trolley tracks ran through the heart of Delgado Village making the village a very attractive settlement for low to middle income residents. The 1900 census indicates that the mill population was 650. The boom village had become affectionately known as Delgado Village. The TideWater Power Company electric streetcar service offered easy access to city conveniences and weekend beach outings. The community had all the basic necessities, including water and electricity. The company store provided consumer goods and the mill management offered mill families the opportunity to farm unused land.

On January 12, 1900, *The Morning Star* reported that Mr. E.C. Holt, President of Delgado Mills, discussed the construction of a school with Captain Ed Wilson Manning, Superintendent of New Hanover County Schools. It was agreed that a school was required for educating the children and labor force at Delgado Village. In the same article it was disclosed that the mill would assist in construction of the school and that the public school system would provide the administration of the facility. Mr. Holt also made known his intentions to build a church in the community as soon as possible. On April 10, 1900, *The Wilmington Messenger* reported that Mr. Holt contributed \$200 toward the construction of the new school, estimated to total \$650. The same article went on to describe the school as a twenty-two by thirty-eight foot building and that two additional buildings would be included to teach third, fifth and sixth grades, while the fourth and seventh grades would be taught in the main building. On June 21, 1900, *The Morning Star* reported that construction had started on Delgado School the previous day. Captain E.W. Manning designed the original wood framed school. The structure had two rooms. The front room was twenty by twenty-four feet and the back room fifteen by twenty-six feet. The rooms were separated by a folding partition so that when necessary a larger room could be created by opening the partition. The building was designed with a capacity to teach 71 students. New Hanover County Schools employed two teachers to instruct students at the school. The same year the North Carolina State Legislature enacted compulsory education laws applying to all children in the state.

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In 1914, the new brick school was built to replace the wood frame structure. Delgado Mills transferred property ownership of the school grounds to New Hanover County Schools. Delgado School provided primary school and vocational studies.<sup>28</sup> Delgado School was used by the mill to train employees at night. A small school would have likely been managed directly by the Superintendent of Schools with several teachers assigned. Early schools were organized by district under the management of a committee. The founding Committee members for the Delgado district (district #6) were J.C. Reed, J.H. Steakhouse and J.M. Barr. The first known teachers were Miss Leila V. Keathy and Miss Augusta Wiggins. The committee members seated when the new school opened were W.A. Woods, J.W. Goley, Z.C. Jarrel. The first known principal was Ms. Willie Ficklin, who taught the third grade class for a number of years.<sup>29</sup> Her tenure as principal was brief. She was followed by Kenneth Blakesly, who served from 1934 to 1943. During Mr. Blakesly's tenure the school was renamed to memorialize Professor Washington Catlett who had served the area school system for over fifty-five years until his death in 1934. Mr. Blakesly also taught the eighth grade class. Atlas Lawrence Cheek followed Mr. Blakesly and served as principal until 1957. He was succeeded by Billy Mason, who served until 1959. Several individuals served as principal in quick succession in the 1960s. The school had become an informal training opportunity for principals. The superintendent habitually assigned principals to the smaller school before they transitioned to a larger school.

County wide school consolidation eventually caused the closure of Washington Catlett (Delgado) School.<sup>30</sup> However, for many years Spofford Mills maintained enough local political leverage, keeping the school open within its community. The excellence of the Delgado School's construction also contributed to its continued service. In 1968, desegregation forced the closure of Williston School.<sup>31</sup> The same year, Spofford Mills closed its doors due to increased foreign competition. The student bodies of Williston and Washington Catlett (Delgado) School were consolidated into New Hanover High School. Williston became an integrated junior high school and Washington Catlett (Delgado) School was utilized as a remedial education school and audiovisual warehouse. Elementary school students were integrated into Peabody Elementary School. John Bryan managed the school after 1968, when it became an audio-visual warehouse for the New Hanover County School System until 1978.<sup>32</sup>

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The school is one of four masonry structures affiliated with the Delgado Mill. The four structures were the mill's administration building, the school, the Delgado Presbyterian Church and the mill. Three of the structures still stand. In 1972, after the mill was leveled, the mill site was sold to local developers, but the administration building has been preserved. It is currently zoned and used as retail and office. The Delgado Presbyterian Church is being used as office space. Currently, the school is owned by Wilmington Housing Finance and Development, Inc. and Good Shepherd Ministries Inc. The auditorium and classrooms of Delgado School are being renovated into low-income, single-room occupancy housing.

### ENDNOTES

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10. History, p. 15.
11. History, p. 17.
12. History, p. 18.
13. History, p. 20.
14. History, p. 22.
15. "The Board of Education , Monthly Meeting Yesterday," The Morning Star, 13 Jan 1914, p. 5.
16. Interview with Leslie N. Boney, Jr., AIA, (President of Leslie N. Bonēy Architects of Wilmington), May 23, 2000.
17. Interview with Dr. Heyward Bellamy (Superintendent of New Hanover County Schools 1968-1981), May 30, 2000.
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19. "Paper by John J. Blair, Read Thursday Morning Before State Teachers' Assembly in session at Charlotte," The Morning Star, 28 Nov 1914, p. 5.
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21. "Delgado School", The Morning Star, May 2, 1914, p. 5.
22. "Child Labor Laws" The Morning Star, January 18, 1925,.
23. Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Map of Wilmington, N.C. 1914.

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24. Interview with Leslie N. Boney, Jr., AIA, (President of Leslie N. Boney Architects of Wilmington), May 23, 2000.
25. Interview with Mary Wilson (Daughter of Roger C. McCarl, AIA) April 19, 2000.
26. Interview with Leslie N. Boney, Jr., AIA, (President of Leslie N. Boney Architects of Wilmington), May 23, 2000.
27. Abarno, Fiona, Ginger Brinkley, Keith Chafin, David Harrison, Bill Hennesse, Page Logsdon, Kim Mager, Ben Moore, Sean Ricketts, Frank Rivers, Gary Robinson, Darren Saxton, Chris Stojanowski, Todd Stratman. The Delgado-Spofford Mill: an Ethnohistorical Study. Wilmington: University of North Carolina in Wilmington and Cape Fear Museum, 1994
28. The Morning Star, May 2, 1914, Delgado School
29. New Hanover County Board of Education, Historical and Statistical Report 1916-1917, Wilmington, North Carolina, Wilmington Printing Company, 1917.
30. Interview with Dr. Heyward Bellamy (Superintendent of New Hanover County Schools 1968-1981), May 30, 2000.
31. Committee of New Hanover County Retired School Personnel, History of Education in New Hanover County 1800-1980, Wilmington, North Carolina, 1980.
32. Interview with Dr. Heyward Bellamy (Superintendent of New Hanover County Schools 1968-1981), May 30, 2000.

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Interview with Dr. Heyward Bellamy (Superintendent of New Hanover County Schools 1968-1981), May 30, 2000.

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Interview with Leslie N. Boney, Jr., AIA, (President of Leslie N. Boney Architects of Wilmington), May 23, 2000.

Interviews with R.C. Fowler, (resident of Delgado Village and student at Delgado School), February 19, 2000.

Interview with James M. McCarl (Son of Roger C. McCarl, AIA) April 20, 2000.

Interview with Robert McCarl (Son of Roger C. McCarl, AIA), June 27, 2000.

Interview with Mary Wilson (Daughter of Roger C. McCarl, AIA) April 19, 2000.

### **Section 10: Geographical Data**

#### **Verbal Boundary Description:**

The boundaries follow those described as 1930 Colwell Avenue, known as the Delgado Tract, Tax Parcel # R05411-008-008-000 as indicated on Tax map 54-11. The property is recorded in New Hanover County Register of Deeds Book 2557 page 0712.

#### **Boundary Justification**

The parcel includes the immediate surroundings of the historic school building. The boundaries encompass all of the property historically and currently associated with Delgado School. The front and sides are framed by landscaped lawn. The 1.27 acre lot provides an appropriate setting for the 1914 Delgado School.



Dalgado School  
Wilmington, NC  
20118 N3791250 E230780

WILMINGTON QUADRANGLE  
NORTH CAROLINA  
7.5-MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)



