

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Wakelon School

AND/OR COMMON

Middle Building (Zebulon Elementary School)

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

S.W. side N.C. 96 (Arendell Street), just S. of U.S. 64

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Zebulon

VICINITY OF

4th

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

North Carolina

37

Wake

183

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

__DISTRICT

PUBLIC

OCCUPIED

__AGRICULTURE

__MUSEUM

BUILDING(S)

__PRIVATE

__UNOCCUPIED

__COMMERCIAL

__PARK

__STRUCTURE

__BOTH

__WORK IN PROGRESS

EDUCATIONAL

__PRIVATE RESIDENCE

__SITE

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

ACCESSIBLE

__ENTERTAINMENT

__RELIGIOUS

__OBJECT

__IN PROCESS

YES: RESTRICTED

__GOVERNMENT

__SCIENTIFIC

__BEING CONSIDERED

__YES: UNRESTRICTED

__INDUSTRIAL

__TRANSPORTATION

__NO

__MILITARY

__OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Wake County Board of Education

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Raleigh

VICINITY OF

STATE

North Carolina

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC

Wake County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Raleigh

STATE

North Carolina

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

__FEDERAL __STATE __COUNTY __LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Wakelon School, now the Middle Building of the Zebulon Elementary School, is a rather large, ambitious school building of eclectic design, with its exterior essentially unchanged since its construction in 1908-1909 and expansion in 1913-1914. Its interior retains much of the original plan and fabric. The brick building is handsomely sited far back from the road with a pleasantly landscaped front lawn.

The structure, which features a front central tower is two stories high beneath a rather steep deck-on-hip-roof. It combines elements of the Italianate and Neo-Classical styles, and employs a rich variety of materials--red brick, tan brick, stone, slate, and wood--resulting in a building of distinctive character that is a landmark in the small town of Zebulon.

The school building is roughly H-shaped in plan, with a front block and a rear block joined by a narrower link. (The rear extension was added in 1913-1914 and is nearly identical in finish to the front block.) Each block is seven bays wide and six deep, and the linking portion is three bays long. Each side elevation is further articulated by the slight projection of the two bays of each block on either side of the linking portion. In addition, three-bay central pavilions project from the front and rear facades, and an engaged tower projects from the front pavilion. Throughout the building, the main wall surfaces are of red brick, set off by wide quoins of tan brick, which define not only the corners of the elevations but of the projections and pavilions as well. They stop several feet short of the roofline. Tan brick panels are used beneath the windows, and the same brick defines the water table as well. The bays are separated by pilaster strips, and most (except for the pavilions) contain double windows which contain modern metal sash with the exception of a few which retain earlier sash. The window openings are trabeated with stone lintels at the front level and stilted segmental-arched at the second. The latter are accented with tan brick arches with keystones; these are linked, and spring at each corner from a molded band atop the quoining, creating a continuous segmental-arched arcade across the upper facade. In each of the upper corners above the quoins is a white plaster wreath with garlands, of ornate curvilinear form, a contrast to the strongly linear character of the two-tone brick ornament that dominates the building. The rather steep deck-on-hip roof is covered with slate, and it is interrupted to accommodate the various projections and pavilions.

The main facade is dominated by the treatment of the entrance pavilion. Its central feature is the tower, which is demi-octagonal, with a polygonal slate-covered domical roof rising free above the main roof. At the first level there are three openings--all apparently originally windows, with the front one now made into a doorway. These are trabeated with stone lintels above multi-panel transoms. At the second level are truncated segmental-arched windows with heavy keystone arches, unlinked. Above this is a molded band, and above it in turn are, on the three front faces, plaster panels with classical garlands in relief. At the third level, all five faces have openings--simple trabeated windows with splayed lintels. Above a corbel cornice the heavy molded cornice of the main building is repeated. The domical roof springs from a louvered drum. The louvers recur on the lantern, which is crowned by a sort of cresting of linked finials.

To either side of the tower at the first level is a masonry porch, one bay wide and one deep, protecting the entrances on either side into the main block. The porches feature open arches on front and outer side faces, of tan brick with keystones, springing

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from tan brick impost. A heavy entablature with dentils underlines the flat roof of each porch.

Comparison with an architect's sketch of the school and with a ca. 1913 photograph shows relatively little change. These documents show a balustrade atop each porch, chimneys and arched dormers on the roof, and the window rather than door in the front bay of the tower. Except for these changes and the replacement of the sash within the window openings, the building looks as it did in the drawing.

The interior of the school retains much of its original plan, but a good deal of re-finishing has been done for continued use. The chief change in plan has been the removal of the original wooden stair, which rose in an impressive open well; a concrete stair with metal railings, enclosed and with fire doors, now fills much of the tower space. Some rooms have been expanded or subdivided, floors covered with tile, and ceilings lowered. Nevertheless the original plan remains recognizable: a central rotunda in the front block with rooms in the four corners, and a central hall extending back from that, flanked by rooms of various sizes. Lowering the ceilings has only partly concealed the series of arches that define the bays along the hall; on the second floor, the arches are still exposed. The walls are plastered with most of the molded baseboards and chair rails in place. Doors have a vertical series of horizontal panels, and most of the transoms (some filled in) are still in situ; the door frames are also intact. At many projecting corners of the interior there is an engaged turned element with upper and lower finials--apparently to prevent chipping of the corner plaster.

In the rear section, there is a finished basement, originally used for lunchroom and restrooms. It is simply finished, and the lunchroom window is in place. The basement is now used for other purposes.

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 1908-1909 BUILDER/ARCHITECT C. E Hartge

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Wakelon School, which opened in 1909, was built in response to the 1907 act of the General Assembly to authorize and fund high schools across the state. The remarkably unchanged eclectic brick building with its distinctive tower and colorful brickwork is a reminder of the state's dramatic early twentieth century progress in education. Now the Middle Building, Zebulon Elementary School, it is an important landmark in the small town of Zebulon, which was incorporated in 1907, only two years before the school was built.

The first decade of the twentieth century brought unparalleled progress in the field of public education. Charles B. Aycock "turned the partisan gubernatorial campaign of 1900 into a crusade for public education, and he pledged his administration to the promotion of this cause." A Central Campaign Committee for the Promotion of Public Education in North Carolina--composed of Governor Aycock, James F. Joyner, and Charles D. McIver--launched "the most remarkable educational campaign in the history of North Carolina," which had widespread and dramatic results: the largely rural and conservative population was "convinced . . . of the wisdom and economy of voting local school taxes, consolidating school districts, and providing for more and better schoolhouses, longer terms, and higher salaries for teachers." Between 1900 and 1910 nearly 3,000 schoolhouses were built--an average of about one a day; the number of special local tax districts increased from 18 to 1,167, a compulsory school law was enacted in 1907; the percentage of illiteracy among persons ten years old and above dropped from 28.7 to 18.5. The total value of school property increased from about \$1 million to more than \$5 million; and the annual cost of public schools from about \$1 million to over \$3 million.

In 1907 the General Assembly passed "an act to stimulate high school instruction in the public schools," and appropriated \$45,000 annually for the purpose. "Not more than four high schools in any one county could receive aid, . . . and high schools in towns of more than 1,200 people could receive no aid whatsoever." Within four years "some two hundred high schools had been established in ninety-three of the state's one hundred counties."

In Wake County, a high school in Cary was established immediately under the authority of the act. As noted in the 1905-1907 biennial report of the county superintendent, Zeb V. Judd, Wake County was also entitled to three other public high schools. After considerable competition, the remaining high schools were located at Bay Leaf, Holly Springs, and Wakelon. The superintendent related:

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The contest for the latter was especially spirited. It resulted in a compromise and the school was built between the two small villages of Wakefield and Zebulon which are hardly more than a mile apart. Citizens and friends of these places donated ten acres of land as a school site and \$8,000.00 for the building.

(Wakefield was a small rural community incorporated in 1899. When its citizens failed to sell land for the railroad right-of-way, the railroad was located a short distance south; around it grew up the town of Zebulon, which was incorporated in 1907 and named for the state's Civil War governor Zebulon B. Vance.)

The report also shows a sketch--in a charming primitive perspective with tiny human figures strolling the walks around the school--the new Wakelon building, inscribed by C. E. Hartge, Architect, Raleigh, North Carolina. Raleigh city directories of the period show Hartge, an architect, as a resident for several years after 1905-1906. He is believed to be the architect of the large stone building of Good Shepherd Church, Raleigh. Said to be a native of Germany, Hartge designed primarily churches and public buildings; he was elected president of the AIA in North Carolina in 1916.

The catalogue for the "Wakelon Public High School, Wakefield, Zebulon, North Carolina, First Session, 1908-1909," reveals much about education during the school's first year of operation. The school year ran from October 6 to May 21; for 1909-1910, it was to run from September 14 to April 29. The faculty included R. C. Holton, Ph. D., principal, in charge of high school grades; the other faculty members were all women, in charge of high school and intermediate grades, first and second primary grades. There was also a music department. The board of trustees was chaired by Dr. G. M. Bell, who donated the ten-acre site for the school and had been influential in the locating of the school. The catalogue, evidently written in the spring of 1909 for the upcoming year, reported that the "handsome brick building of eleven rooms, with steam heating, is to be ready by September 1st next--this building is thoroughly modern in equipment! This magnificent new home for the new district is the pride of our people." The school, being public, was to be strictly non-denominational, but it was stated that

Since literary culture without moral growth is largely a failure, we strive to cultivate the moral life in harmony with the literary culture. . . . We emphasize the truth, the beauty, and the goodness of life and have as little as possible to say about error, misfortune, and depravity . . . Our discipline is kind and patient, but firm. Insubordination and impudence are not tolerated, and moral lepers will be excluded from the school.

The catalogue emphasized the healthiness of the location and the firm scholarly approach of the curriculum. The high school was to consist of the eighth through the eleventh grades, "designed to fill in substantially the four years of high school work between the public school and the University." Lower grades were included as well. Tuition for Wake County high school students was free; for those outside the county,

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\$3.00 per month. The first full school year, 1910-1911, had an average attendance of 221, with eight teachers.

Another aspect of the school was its emphasis on practical agriculture:

Besides playgrounds and flower garden, our ample grounds furnish a School Farm of about three acres. . . . /It/ is being put in fine preparation and planted in cotton and corn. We purpose to make of this a model and observation farm for the community; so our pupils may learn how to do better farming and more sensible farming.

The 1913-1914 catalogue called the institution the "Wakelon High School and Farm Life School." The "history" recorded that the growth of the school since its founding had been remarkable, and that in 1913 a \$15,000 bond issue was passed to double the size of the school (the addition of the rear portion of the building, shown in a photograph in the catalogue). In addition, the school was given a "farm site worth \$2,000," plus state and county appropriations "for the purpose of teaching agriculture and domestic science."

The 1916-1917 catalogue again shows a photograph of the school with its rear addition and records the construction of a 30-room brick dormitory building. The main building was described as having 23 rooms, including four laboratories which are "being well equipped as fast as we can secure the funds," to teach agriculture, botany, chemistry, physics, carpentry, and home economics. There were fifteen faculty members and an average attendance of 416.

By 1931, according to an article in the Zebulon Record, the school, which had been among the first consolidated schools, had become "the largest rural school in Wake County, having last term an enrollment of 971 pupils and a corps of 28 teachers." By 1927, according to the article, "the increasing size of the student body necessitated the erection of a high school building." The original building was converted into an elementary school, a purpose it served for many years. In 1974 it was announced that the building would be replaced; this caused strong opposition among many teachers and former pupils, as well as the members of the community at large. By the spring of 1975, the plans had been changed to provide for renovation of the building.

¹Lefler, Hugh Talmage and Newsome, Albert Ray. The History of a Southern State: North Carolina. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1963.

²Wake County Public Schools, Biennial Report, 1905-1907 (1909), Southern Historical Collection.

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Wake County Records, Wake County Courthouse, Raleigh, North Carolina (Subgroups: Deeds).
Wake County Records, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina (Subgroups:
Deeds).

Wakelon Public High School, catalogues, 1908-1909; 1913-1914; 1916-1917; originals in
possession of Zebulon citizens, copy in report supplied by Edith Tippett, in files
of Survey and Planning Branch, Archives and History.

Zebulon Record, March 21, March 28, 1974, May 29, 1975. Original in Tippett report,
files of Survey and Planning Branch.

Zebulon Record, September 5, 1931. Excerpts in Tippett report, copy in files of Survey
and Planning Branch.

1908-1968

