



Reflections



Georgia African American
Historic Preservation Network

Volume XVI, No. 1

November 2019

EDUCATION BY DESIGN: STORY OF TWO EQUALIZATION SCHOOLS

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After World War II (1941-1945), States throughout the American south undertook ambitious campaigns to build new public schools for white and black communities alike. In their efforts to build new facilities, they also pushed to modernize [consolidate] education standards and reinforce the social practice of racial segregation, which had been categorized in the “separate but equal” ruling in the US Supreme Court’s 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision.¹ In the 1950s, tax measures were passed across the south to fund so called “Equalization Schools” for African-American school construction to placate the growing demands from black citizens for equal treatment under law. Equalization was offered up as the solution to fight off integration. Even after the historic *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* ruling ordered the desegregation of public education nationwide in 1954, Southern states continued to build equalization schools well into the late sixties². While their equalization programs ultimately did not succeed in creating truly “separate but equal” facilities for black students, the programs did transform the physical architecture of education in Georgia. In 1949 Herman Talmadge, Georgia’s two-term segregationist governor pushed through a three-percent state sales tax for new school construction. Funds from this initiative were tagged as “equalization grants” for the construction of schools in black communities throughout the state.³



Springfield Central High School served grades one through twelve. Courtesy of Effingham Board of Commissioners

Effingham County’s Springfield Central High School is an outstanding example of an equalization school built during this time period.

In 1952 the Effingham County School Board mobilized its forces to develop a nine point building improvement plan for county schools. During a regular meeting on March 4, 1952, the Effingham County Board of Education took action toward implementing this plan. The Board authorized the purchase of a 15-acre tract of land from Hollis Tebeau. Located in Springfield, Georgia, bounded by Wallace Drive to the south, Standard Drive to the west, Burke Drive to north, and woodlands to the east, this land became the future site of the Springfield Central High combination school for African American

1 Dembling, Sophia, National Trust for Historic Preservation, “Equalization Schools: A Lesson in Education and Civil Rights, http://www.dahp.wa.gov/sites/default/files/Building_for_Learning_in_Postwar_Schools.pdf

2 Ibid

3 Moffson, Steven, “Equalization Schools in Georgia’s African American Communities, 1951-1970,” Historic Preservation Division, Department of Natural Resources, Atlanta, Georgia

EDUCATION BY DESIGN: SPRINGFIELD CENTRAL HIGH, EFFINGHAM COUNTY

Sharon Simmons continued from page 1

students.⁴ At that same meeting, the board authorized the purchase of a 49.2 acre tract from Rappard M. Hinely along Georgia Highway 119 South in Springfield, Georgia for a new centralized high school for white students.⁵ During its August 5, 1952 meeting, the Board of Education adopted a resolution indicating acceptance of the terms regarding its building improvement program and forwarded it to the State School Building Authority on August 8, 1952. In this nine-point plan, a Effingham County High and Elementary School (colored) was listed as priority number. 2.⁶

Springfield Central High School opened on April 9, 1956 under the leadership of Principal Clifton Wiggins. The school's physical plant, which was made up of nine buildings, accommodated grades one through twelve and was Effingham's first county-wide consolidated high school for African-American students. In September of 1956, 410 African American students in grades one through eight from Springfield entered the school, creating the largest enrollment among all schools in the county. The highest white school enrollment was 330. When open house was held on September 4, 1956, Central High had a staff of professionally certified teachers and a vastly improved curriculum, making it a source of immense pride for the county's entire African-American community.⁷

In its appearance and construction Springfield Central High School's physical plant shows how architects and builders nationwide adapted postwar International Style modernism to their modest budgets and local building traditions. The International Style was developed at the famed Bauhaus School of Applied and Fine Arts in Weimar, Ger-

4 Effingham County Board of Education, March 4, 1952, Effingham County Board of Education Minutes Archives at the main office building 405 N. Ash St. Springfield, Georgia

5 Ibid

6 Effingham County Board of Education August 5, 1952, Effingham County Board of Education Minutes Archives at the main office building 405 N. Ash St. Springfield Georgia. 2

7 School Held Open House Last Sunday," The Springfield Herald, September 4, 1956, Archives at the Effingham Herald main office building 586 S. Columbia Avenue, Rincon, Georgia

many in the 1920s and early 30s. Characterized by simple geometrical forms, asymmetrical site plans and buildings, facades without ornamentation, steel frame and concrete slab construction, expansive glass curtain walls, flexible floor plans, simple brick work, basic color palettes, and an interplay between open and closed spaces, the style was popularized by the architects Walter Gropius, Eliel Saarinen and others throughout Europe before finding an audience in the United States. A small group of highly publicized buildings constructed in United States between the late



Bus loading at Springfield Central High, circa 1950s.

Courtesy of Effingham County Board of Commissioners

thirties and early fifties popularized the style among progressive thinking architects, educators, politicians, and CEOs.⁸ Eliel Saarinen's Crow Island Elementary School in Winnetka, Illinois (built 1939-1940) — designed by a team including his son Eero Saarinen and the firm Laurence B. Perkins, E. Todd Wheeler and Philip Will Jr. of Chicago — provided the architectural DNA for thousands of local variations on this new style in school construction. Built in a wealthy

Chicago suburb for upper middle class and wealthy white suburban families,

Crow Island School's innovations were its low-rise, long corridor buildings with connecting L-shaped classrooms, individual gardens between classrooms, expansive use of windows on two exposures, and lower ceilings heights common to residential architecture. Crow Island School was widely published and became the go-to model for post-war architects who designed schools with progressive ideals in mind.⁹

The spread of low-rise school plants with single or double-loaded corridors and bilaterally lit, self-contained classrooms with lowered ceilings was spurred by on-going critical praise of the Crow Island School, the availability of inexpensive building technology, and new ideas about lighting and furnishing. Post WWII architects regularly emulated many aspects of Crow Island idea by adapting its 8 Droste, Magdalena. Bauhaus, 1919–1933, Updated Edition, New York: Taschen, 2019; Wodehouse, Lawrence Wodehouse, The Roots of International Style Architecture, West Cornwall, CT: Locust Hill Press, 1991 9 Ogata, Amy F, "Building for Learning in Postwar American Elementary Schools," Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, vol. 67, No. 4, Dec. 2008. (For a discussion on early experimental International Style school buildings in the United States, especially the importance of the Crow Island School in Winnetka, Illinois). 3

progressive design features to economical construction that changed the look of public school architecture significantly.¹⁰ Important regional examples of period include the Toney Elementary School, DeKalb County, GA (1953), and the E. Rivers School, Atlanta, GA (1949-1950).¹¹

The Springfield Central High School complex possesses many of the signature features that became synonymous with International Style design in school construction during this period. The simple geometry of austere red brick buildings offer a calculated contrast to the organisms and greenery of the landscape that surrounds the site. Springfield Central's architecture and site plan are an outstanding embodiment of the progressive ideals that shaped the public education of mid-twentieth century America. The historic campus is organized around an expansive, asymmetrical "U-shaped" common that faces southward toward Wallace Drive. Fourteen buildings occupy the site today. Nine of these, which are arranged in an asymmetrical pinwheel plan, form the original nucleus of the campus. This original grouping consists of six single-loaded, low-rise classroom buildings that form two parallel columns made up of three buildings each. These buildings feature expansive glass walls on their north face, gently sloped flat roofs, and red brick walls on their southern exposure. Classrooms open onto covered walkways on the south side of each building. Sited on an east-west axis, these buildings form the backbone to the U-shaped court.

Walkways oriented in a north-south direction intersect through and frame the middle buildings in the low-rise classroom grouping, creating the north-south arm of the pinwheel and connecting these buildings to a large cafeteria hall that forms the southeast enclosure to the common.

The administrative and cafeteria buildings are austere, rectangular, red brick structures. The largest of the two, the

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Moffson, Steven, "Equalization Schools in Georgia's African American Communities, 1951-1970," Historic Preservation Division, Department of Natural Resources, Atlanta, Georgia. 4

cafeteria is a rectangular hall structure with its lightweight steel frame visible at its corners and along its flat roofline. The building's austerity is relieved by the asymmetrical placement of doors on its front and rear facades, a spare rectangular canopy over its rear door, and areas for expansive glass windows — now boarded over.

Constructed with red brick, girders, trusses, and a high pitched roof, the gymnasium features bilateral symmetry on its main facade, where two doors, a single canopy, and a set of glass window expanses were located (now bricked in) to west and east of the doors to balance out the building's simple design features. The east-west walkway connects the gym to the original campus buildings. Today, the gym is used by the County Recreation Department.



Home of the Championship Springfield Central High Panthers (Boys and Girls Basketball) 1959 to 1969. Credit: Melissa Jest/Georgia Historic Preservation Division

Between 1956 and 1970 about 700 students graduated from Springfield Central High School. Since then, the campus has served Effingham County in many various ways. In September 1970 the campus opened as Springfield Central Junior High School.¹² In May 1989 it became Springfield Central Elementary School.¹³ In March



The Springfield Central campus blends built and greenspaces. Credit: Melissa Jest/Georgia Historic Preservation Division

2003, the Effingham County Board of Education relocated its pre-kindergarten program, pre-school handicap program and the Alternative School program to the campus.¹⁴ With the help of the Springfield Central High School Association, Inc., which was established in 2011, there are hopes that the campus will be renovated and used for community services. This architectural treasure holds a significant place in Georgia's and the nation's educational and architectural history and deserves to be preserved,

celebrated, and revitalized to continue to serve as a beacon for the future. ■

¹² Effingham County Board of Education, May 3, 1989 Minutes. Located in Effingham County Board of Education minutes archives at the main office building 405 N. Ash St. Springfield, Georgia 31329

¹³ Effingham County Board of Education March 12, 2003 Minutes. Located in the Effingham County Board of Education Minutes Archives at the main office building 405 N. Ash St. Springfield, Georgia 31329

¹⁴ Ibid

EDUCATION BY DESIGN: HART COUNTY TRAINING SCHOOL, HART COUNTY

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Hart County Training School, the segregated public school for blacks, was one of thirteen schools created after the first consolidation of schools in Georgia in the 1920s.¹ Prior to the 1920s, black children were educated in black churches and only received an elementary level education.²

Hart County Training School (HCTS) was a part of the Rosenwald School Building Program that matched funds with community donations to build schools for educating African American children in Hart County during segregation.³ Professor George E. Archibald was the first principal of HCTS.⁴ Mr. Leonard N. Rogers became the principal of the new equalization school and he remained principal until it closed.⁵ The gymnasium that is currently on campus now and located adjacent to the current school building was built by the school and community during the latter part of the Rosenwald era.

The title of training school was to indicate that the educational focus would be vocational or manual skills, home economics, and agriculture. The overarching belief was these educational methods would bring success to the black community.⁶ HCTS combined a classical academic curriculum with the more practical subjects. Students were also in a number of extracurricular activities such as chorus, drama club, pep squad, track, and basketball. To graduate, girls had to demonstrate that they could make their own dresses and were able to prepare and serve meals. Relative to agriculture, some of the best cotton in Hart County came from the planting projects by the boys in HCTS's Agricultural Department.⁷

HCTS's original building was erected in 1924 on Richardson Street in the Rome Street community.⁸ It emerged as one of the premier schools for African-Americans. The other black schools operating in Hart County included Flat Rock School, New Light School, Harmony Grove School, and Teasley's Grove School. While

1 Bryant, Tony and Kaufhold, Shirley. "The Hart of Georgia A History of Hart County" W. H. Wolfe Associates. March 1991.

2 Ibid.

3 Hilliard, Sam Bowers (n.d.). "A Century of Rural Education Hart County, 1860-1960" Historical Series, Vol. III. LifeSprings. n. d.

4 Hart County Training School All Class Reunion 1924-1970 Program Brochure. HCTS Planning Committee. May 2012

5 Bryant, Tony and Kaufhold, Shirley. "The Hart of Georgia A History of Hart County" W. H. Wolfe Associates. March 1991

6 Ibid, 178.

7 Gray Jr., Hugh (n.d.). "A History of the Consolidated Schools of Hart County." Gray's Printing

8 "Chapter Six: Historic Resources" 6.1.1. Hart County. Retrieved May 20, 2019 from Internet <http://hartcounty.ga.gov/compplan/compplan6.htm>.



*Hart County Training School now houses Head Start/Pre-K
Credit: Melissa Jest/Georgia Historic Preservation Division*

the school focused on agricultural education along with home economics, its social importance to the community was undeniable.⁹ HCTS eventually became the only high school in Hart County for the African-American community until integration took place in 1970.

Initially, the consolidated yet segregated schools served grades one through nine as the county consolidated system did not have a high school. The twelve white schools of the thirteen consolidated schools were funded by the County Board of Education. There is no reference to indicate Hart County Training School received funding from the County Board of Education.¹⁰ Hart County Training School, for the most part, received its financial support from private donors, grants from the County Board, and outside philanthropic foundations such as Rosenwald.¹¹ White students from the other twelve white schools attended Hartwell High School, which along with Hart Grammar School formed the city public school system. This process of transferring to the city school system did not apply to the HCTS. Instead, the HCTS educated first through 11th grades. 12th-grade education did not begin until 1952. There was a second consolidation of schools that year.¹²

9 Gray Jr., Hugh (n.d.). "A History of the Consolidated Schools of Hart County." Gray's Printing.

10 Baker, John Williams, "History of Hart County" Wolfe Publishing. Third Printing 2000

11 Hilliard, Sam Bowers (n.d.). "A Century of Rural Education Hart County, 1860-1960" Historical Series, Vol. III. LifeSprings. n. d.

12 Bryant, Tony and Kaufhold, Shirley. "The Hart of Georgia A History of Hart County" W. H. Wolfe Associates. March 1991

It was in 1953 that the first 12th grade class graduation from HCTS. From 1955 to 1970, all African-American children in Hart County attended the HCTS until integration in 1970.¹³

The existing HCTS building, although altered over the years, was constructed in 1955 during Georgia's Equalization School construction period. It saw its first class in September of that year. The 1955 HCTS building was designed in the International Style which was a staple in the visual vocabulary of Equalization Schools across the southeast. While the school was operational it was known as "the principle colored high school in the county."¹⁴ Schools in Hart County were officially integrated in the 1970-1971 school year and HCTS was converted into Hart County Junior High School.¹⁵ The last graduating class of HCTS was the class of 1970.¹⁶

Many HCTS students continued on to institutions of higher learning and successful careers in a plethora of occupations and businesses. For example, HCTS produced students who went on to serve as a Buffalo



Walkway leads to Gym (foreground) built in 1958.
Credit: Melissa Jest/Georgia Historic Preservation Division

Soldier and were killed in action at the Battle of Carrizal Mexico.¹⁷

Many graduates served in the military Armed Forces and left their global footprints in several wars including the Korean War, Vietnam, and World War II. And some made the ultimate sacrifice for our country.

The school's representation of the education consolidation movement in the county and state, and its importance to the Black community of Hart County acknowledges the often underrepresented history of African-American education.

Today, graduates and alumni are enormously proud of their school, and have united in their commitment to preserving HCTS's outstanding legacy.¹⁸ ■



Commemorative plaque at front entrance in Hartwell.
Credit: Melissa Jest/Georgia Historic Preservation Division

The Springfield Central High School Association is a nonprofit organization with mission to preserve and revitalization this historic school campus. For more information, contact Drs. Franklin and Cheryl Goldwire at email, goldwire@planters.net and P. O. Box 532, Guyton, Georgia 31312.

The Hart County Training School Historical Recognition Sponsor Group Inc., a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, is dedicated to putting in the hard work and effort to preserve and protect the rich history of their beloved school. For information, contact: Dr. Nathaniel Clark at email, nathnlclark@comcast.net.

13 Ibid

14 Hilliard, Sam Bowers (n.d.). "A Century of Rural Education Hart County, 1860-1960" Historical Series, Vol. III. LifeSprings. n. d.

15 Gray Jr., Hugh (n.d.). "A History of the Consolidated Schools of Hart County." Gray's Printing.

16 Hart County Training School All Class Reunion 1924-1970 Program Brochure. HCTS Planning Committee. May 2012

17 Pvt. DeWitt Rucker Retrieved Internet June 6, 2019 from <https://www.hmdb.org/marker.asp?marker=38367> and <http://www.concordiacemetery.org/Bufalo-Soldiers-Names.html>

18 Hoffschwelle, Mary S. "Preserving Rosenwald Schools." National Trust for Historic Preservation. 2012

NATIONAL PTA LEADER BEGAN AT YONGE STREET SCHOOL, ATLANTA

Deniseya Hall, African American Programs Assistant
Georgia Historic Preservation Division



Selena Sloan Butler, c. 1940
Courtesy of Auburn Avenue
Research Library, FCLS

Being an Atlanta native, I wanted to find those lesser known places that could inspire as I began my Public History graduate studies. I found the Henry Rutherford Butler School, formally known as the Yonge Street School, in Atlanta's Old Fourth Ward to be such a place. Although the school is no longer there, it represents modern changes in this historically black community. Yonge Street School was the first

brick school built in a black Atlanta neighborhood and was home to the first black parent teacher association that gave a voice to black public-school education concerns.¹

The Yonge Street School was built at a time when Blacks received little funding for public school education for their children. Black voters used their voting power to push for the city to build and subsidize a school for African American children. The school was built in Old Fourth Ward which had the highest population of black residents.² Prominent leader and Methodist clergyman Bishop Henry McNeal Turner sold the lot at 98 Yonge Street (now William Holmes Borders Senior Dr SE) to the City of Atlanta for the construction of a neighborhood school. The Yonge Street School was completed in 1911.³

Shortly after Yonge Street School opened, Selena Sloan Butler with support from the school's principal, Cora Finley, organized the Colored Parents and Teachers Unit there. This advocacy group focused on the educational wellbeing of the black students.⁴ Selena S. Butler born in Thomasville, Georgia in 1872, graduated from Spelman College and worked as an educator in Georgia and Florida. After completing their higher education in Massachusetts — her husband Henry Rutherford Butler studied medicine, the couple moved to Atlanta. Mr. Butler became a partner in Georgia's first African American owned drugstore that was located on Wheat Street (later

Auburn Avenue)⁵ while Mrs. Butler focused on childhood education.⁶ While raising her son Henry Jr., she noticed a lack of early childhood programs in the community and then created an at-home kindergarten to teach him.

Mrs. Butler did not teach at the school but advocated for it through the Colored Parents and Teachers Unit, a support group of parents and teachers held inside the Yonge Street School starting in 1911 soon after the school was built.⁷ The meetings spread into other black communities in Atlanta and grew to become the Georgia Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers, with Mrs. Butler as the president.⁸ Awareness of the new congress spread as more black parents, teachers, and neighbors supported public school success for black children. On May 7, 1926 the National Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers (NCCPT) was founded due to nationwide recognition.⁹



Members of National Congress of Colored Parents and Teacher in Atlanta, 1949. Mrs. Butler, center.

Courtesy of Auburn Avenue Research Library, FCLS

1 Yonge Street School, National Register of Historic Places nomination, 80001079, 1979 page 2.

2 Ibid, pp. 2-3.

3 Ibid, p. 2.

4 Ibid, p. 3-4.

5 Breffle, Marcy. "Oakland Tours in Focus: Henry Rutherford Butler and the Prince Hall..." Oakland Cemetery, Oakland Cemetery, 8 Nov. 2018. Accessed October 4, 2019. <https://oaklandcemetery.com/oakland-tours-in-focus-henry-rutherford-butler-and-the-prince-hall-masons/>.

6 "One of Georgia's Finest, Selena Sloan Butler." People, Locations, and Episodes. African American Registry. Accessed September 13, 2019. <https://aaregistry.org/story/one-of-georgias-finest-selena-sloan-butler/>.

7 Yonge Street School, National Register of Historic Places nomination, 80001079, 1979 page 2-3.

8 Womack, Carlise E. "Selena Sloan Butler (Ca. 1872-1964)." *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, 15 April 2005. Accessed October 4, 2019. <https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/selena-sloan-butler-ca-1872-1964>.

9 Katz, Patricia. "Selena S. Butler Park Master Plan," City of Atlanta Parks and Recreation 2011.

Mrs. Butler’s NCCPT merged with the National PTA in 1970, six years after her passing. This merged group would solicit quality public education for children regardless of race.¹⁰ To honor Selena S. Butler, the National PTA recognized her as one of its founders for her educational leadership of uniting all races into one organization — posthumously.¹¹



Mrs. Butler and son, Henry Rutherford Butler, Jr. stand with the historical arker for NCCPT installed at Yonge Street School, c. 1950. Courtesy of Auburn Avenue Research Library, FCLS

Mrs. Butler witnessed The Yonge Street School renaming H.R. Butler School in 1955 in memory of her late husband, according to the Atlanta Board of Education’s policy, where schools were not named after a living person. The renaming honors Mrs. Butler’s legacy as a true educator and community leader.¹²

10 National Parent Teacher Association. “History-About PTA: National PTA.” PTA.org website, <https://www.pta.org/home/About-National-Parent-Teacher-Association/Mission-Values/National-PTA-History>. Accessed September 11, 2019.

11 Jones, Jae. “Selena Butler: Founder of the National Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers Association (NCCPT).” Black Then website, 30 Oct. 2017. Accessed October 4, 2019. <https://blackthen.com/selena-butler-founder-national-congress-colored-parents-teachers-association-nccpt/>.

12 Yonge Street School, National Register of Historic Places Registration, 80001079, 1979, page 4.

H.R. Butler Elementary school stayed active until 1980 when it transitioned into a community center according to sources dated in 1996.¹³ The historic school was later torn down. A City recreation center was built in its vicinity.

In 1959 the City of Atlanta bought a piece of the land to form a park adjacent to H.R. Butler School, in her honor, and later named it the “Selena S. Butler Park” in 1966.¹⁴ She continued to advocate for African Americans and childhood welfare until her passing in 1964, being laid to rest at the Oakland Cemetery in Atlanta beside her husband.



Sign and Historical Marker at f Selena S. Butler Park. Credit: Deniseya Hall/Georgia Historic Preservation Division

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13 US Geographical Survey, GNIS Detail “ H R Butler School (Historical)” entry, 03 December 1996. Accessed October 30, 2019. https://geonames.usgs.gov/apex/f?p=gnispq:3:0::NO::P3_FID:1704656.

14 Katz, Patricia. “Selena S. Butler Park Master Plan,” City of Atlanta Parks and Recreation 2011.

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ABOUT GAAHPN



Georgia African American
Historic Preservation Network

The Georgia African American Historic Preservation Network (GAAHPN) was established in January 1989. It is composed of representatives from neighborhood organizations and preservation groups. GAAHPN was formed in response to a growing interest in preserving the cultural and built diversity of Georgia's African American heritage. This interest has translated into a number of efforts which emphasize greater recognition of African American culture and contributions to Georgia's history. The GAAHPN Steering Committee plans and implements ways to develop programs that will foster heritage education, neighborhood revitalization, and support community and economic development.

The Network is an informal group of over 3,000 people who have an interest in preservation. Members are briefed on the status of current and planned projects and are encouraged to offer ideas, comments and suggestions. The meetings provide an opportunity to share and learn from the preservation experience of others and to receive technical information through workshops. Members receive a newsletter, *Reflections*, produced by the Network. Visit the Historic Preservation Division website at www.georgiashpo.org. Preservation information and previous issues of *Reflections* are available online. Membership in the Network is free and open to all.

Reflections

Published quarterly by the
Historic Preservation Division
Georgia Department of Natural Resources

Dr. David Crass, Division Director
Melissa Jest, Editor

This publication has been financed in part with federal funds from the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, through the Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources. The contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of the Interior, nor does the mention of trade names, commercial products or consultants constitute endorsement or recommendation by the Department of the Interior or the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. The Department of the Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, or disability in its federally assisted programs. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility, or if you desire more information, write to: Office for Equal Opportunity, National Park Service, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20240.