

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER/GEORGIA REGISTER NOMINATION

1. Name: Emery Thomas Auditorium

2. Location: 100 Riverview Drive, Dublin, Laurens County

3a. Description: The Emery Thomas Auditorium is a one story, rectangular auditorium and assembly building located inside the Riverview Golf Course, approximately 290 yards west of the Oconee River and 1.3 miles southeast of downtown Dublin. Built in 1956, the auditorium is situated at the center of the golf course facing Riverview Park Drive. The building sits on a slab foundation hidden from view and is built of concrete block that is faced with brick veneer. The building has a flat roof with cantilevered eaves on all sides. I-shape in plan, the tallest part of the building is its central rectangular mass. The mass has lower rectangular extensions that project off the front and rear elevations. To the east, the entrance lobby, flanked by restrooms, is set in a lower, full-width rectangular mass that is symmetrical. At its center, five ganged doors in metal with inset plate glass are framed by a section of smooth concrete veneer set below an extension of the roof's cantilevered eave. The front façade of the building's central mass, recessed beyond the entrance vestibule, has three evenly spaced square vents. The building's side elevations have fixed tripartite windows in aluminum set in historic openings, which are outlined by thin limestone trim that is uniform on all sides. The rear elevation features a central extension of the building's main mass, to accommodate the auditorium's stage. At the center of the rear façade is a roll-up garage door in aluminum that is entered from a square concrete platform set in a continuous brick foundation. Set in the same plane of the rear facade, two shorter symmetrical rooms extend away from the stage, projecting slightly out from the north and south facades. Used as storage rooms, each of these extensions have smaller tripartite windows with slender concrete sills. The majority of the interior is a central open assembly space with smaller secondary spaces adjacent, to include an entry foyer and side halls that lead to restrooms and rear storage spaces, respectively. The interior is characterized by painted concrete block walls, vinyl composition tile floors, acoustical tile ceilings, and milk globe light fixtures.

3b. Period of Significance: 1957-1968

3c. Acreage: Less than one acre

3d. Boundary Explanation: The proposed boundary includes the footprint of the Emery Thomas Auditorium, the only extant building associated with the Dublin 4-H Center.

4a. National Register Criteria: A

4b. National Register Areas of Significance: Education and Black Ethnic Heritage

4c. Statement of Significance: The Emery Thomas Auditorium is significant at the state level in the areas of education and ethnic heritage (black) as the only remaining building of the first and only 4-H Center built exclusively for African American youth in Georgia. The Emery Thomas Auditorium was constructed in 1956 as an addition to the campus of the Dublin 4-H Center, which was established approximately 16 years earlier. Until the formation of the Dublin 4-H Center, there were no comparable sites available for use by African American youth involved in 4-H in Georgia. In the rural early twentieth century South, many African American families relied on family farms for income and sustenance. The agricultural skills and leadership abilities fostered by Dublin's 4-H Center were practical tools for everyday living that improved life at home and expanded the programs available to African American youth in Georgia during the Jim Crow era. Pairing training in leadership, health education, first aid, civil defense, and 4-H project club work with recreational activities such as swimming, baseball, boxing, horseshoe pitching, and relay racing, the Dublin 4-H Center combined educational and recreational opportunities in a camp-like setting that allowed for multi-day visits for boys and girls. For years, the State Negro 4-H Council and Congress meetings were held at the Dublin 4-H Center. At its height, Extension agents conducted more than 150 meetings for roughly 5,000 youth annually. The formation of the Dublin 4-H Center was the vision of Georgia's first African American 4-H Leader, P.H. Stone; Laurens County's first African American Extension agent, Emery C. Thomas; and others. Made possible by the outspoken support of State 4-H Leader G.V. Cunningham, the Dublin 4-H Center was financed through real estate and monetary gifts from the community and the state of Georgia, and through the donation of labor and services from a variety of individuals and entities. Directly fueling increased enrollment in the Negro 4-H program in Georgia, the expansion of the Dublin 4-H Center and the construction of the auditorium was a direct reflection of this growth. Immediately following the construction of the auditorium, dining hall, and three cabins, the Dublin 4-H Center was officially dedicated November 15, 1957. After the Civil Rights Act of 1964, African American youth in Georgia were integrated, after which all members were invited to attend the Rock Eagle 4-H Center in Eatonton. As a result, attendance in Dublin declined and in 1968 ownership of the Dublin 4-H Center site was reverted back to the Dublin Chamber of Commerce.

4d. Suggested Level of Significance: The Emery Thomas Auditorium is being nominated at the statewide level as the only remaining building of the first and only 4-H Center built exclusively for African American youth in Georgia.

5. Sponsor: The nomination is sponsored by the City of Dublin, and nomination materials were prepared by Rebecca Fenwick of Ethos Preservation.